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### Urban peripheries: The political dynamics of planning projects

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# SOURCES OF POLITICAL POWER IN THE URBAN PERIPHERY

URBAN DEVELOPMENT IN AMSTERDAM, MILAN, AND PARIS

### ABSTRACT

*This paper questions the political and financial drivers of urban development in the contemporary context of multi-actor and multi-level governance. It focuses on the processes that drive spatial planning and large scale development projects in the inner periphery of three metropolitan areas: Amsterdam, Paris, and Milan. Peripheral development is conceptualized as the outcome of the realignment of three major sources of urban power: the national government, the core city, and large market investors. Early research has largely demonstrated how each of these elements influence metropolitan transformations, often separately, with special focus on economic logics of development. We propose to instead empirically investigate the political logics, hypothesizing that the changing relationship between these three power sources depends on a combination of electoral and financial dynamics. Focusing on three particular projects, this paper shows how different spatial outcomes of peripheral development spring from different combinations of electoral strategies, political confrontation between emerging parties, and their (dis)connections with business interests.*



*Creative Spaces in De Scheepshoofdgebouwen, NDSM, Amsterdam North, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 2012.*

## INTRODUCTION

This paper questions the political drivers of urban development in the contemporary context of multi-level governance, with a particular spatial focus on the urban periphery. The different spatial manifestations of polycentrism in metropolitan development have been an object of geographical and sociological investigation for the last twenty years (Knox, 2008). One of the most relevant planning questions is how to successfully introduce progressive planning concepts that support smart growth, environmental sustainability, and balanced socio-economic development in the very dynamic, politically splintered, and private investment dominated fringe areas of today's metropolis (Raco & Street, 2012; Grant, 2009; Wilkinson, 2012). The emerging socio-economic polycentric morphology is not yet fully crystallized into effective sustainable practices because of institutional inertias, political fragmentation, and rigid regulatory frameworks (McLaughlin, 2012; van Rijswijk & Salet, 2012).

Major urban development projects play a pivotal role in the spatial development of the new polycentric region. Inner urban fringes in particular have become the preferred location for (often contested) investments because of the combination of lower current land values and high opportunities of profit in the long run. New university campuses with start-up facilities (e.g. science parks), conference and exhibition centers, retail and entertainment complexes, and spectator sports facilities have started to dominate the spatial planning agenda of areas that in the past were called 'the periphery'. While we can witness an increased dynamism of inner peripheries, the consolidated practices and institutions of metropolitan planning are often not tailored to address their new economic relevance in respect to core city economies. The spatial, social, environmental, and economic results of these interventions show large local varieties. These areas bring about large opportunities for planning, but it is not yet clear how these qualities can be enhanced towards progressive planning solutions. The final goal of the research is to understand what determines planning outcomes in the periphery

in order to inform practice and research on possible sources of paradigmatic change for polycentric metropolitan areas.

Early research demonstrates that the socio-economic outcomes of spatial interventions can depend on numerous factors, from the role of national government to the re-framing of problems and from land use norms to the role of business interests (Oosterlynck et al, 2011; Salet, 2008; Majoor, 2009). Others have underlined that new urban spaces express different local responses to capital restructuring and shifting strategies of investment (Swyngedouw et al, 2002). All these are fundamental components explaining the establishment of developmental policies for outer urban areas, but they exclude other factors that are equally important to explain the variation of planning and spatial outcomes. This article constructs a conceptual framework that could complement this knowledge by selectively looking at the political drivers of peripheral development in combination with emerging economic trends.

Projects in the periphery take place with political tensions and changing power constellations, reorganizing around developmental objectives. In these dynamic political spaces, the contrasting forces of national government, core cities, and market actors are negotiating for control of development. However, current research tends to under-investigate the role of electoral, symbolic, and ideological elements at play and thus does not give a full account of socio-political contexts in development policies. This paper will focus particularly on the behavior of political groups. After introducing the major concepts and hypothesis in the next section, the paper will provide an in-depth analysis of three cases to elaborate on these dynamics.

### **SOURCES OF POWER IN FRINGE AREA DEVELOPMENT**

Existent research has detected three major sources of power underlying area development in metropolitan fringes: (a) national governmental actor strategies; (b) core city government strategies; and (c) private land development strategies.

*National governmental actor strategies*<sup>1</sup>: despite arguments that suggest a ‘hollowing out of the state’ in some countries (Rhodes, 1994), empirical works in Europe demonstrate that national planning agents are not fully abdicating their role in steering local development (Alterman, 2001; Greenwood & Newman, 2010). Many European national planning systems still integrate regulative and legislative instruments that allow the national government to influence localized processes of decision making in land use (e.g. national subsidies, specific exemption regulations, or fiscal zoning) (Savini, 2012b; Fainstein, 2008). Yet, there is a shift in the forms of state governance, which today is based on a higher degree of specialization and localization, executed through new instruments based on bilateral negotiations between governmental levels (Lascoumes & Le Galès, 2007). Unlike the past, national governments often specialize their role to focus on urban economic ‘champions’ where local economic development is expected to generate national gains. We are interested in the political and economic nature of this new ‘spatial selectivity’ of the national state towards outer locations which is fostered by means of ‘hegemonic projects’ (Crouch & Le Galès, 2012; Jones, 1997).

*Core city government strategies*: recent empirical studies have demonstrated that polycentrism does not necessarily mean power symmetry between city-regional nodes, often entailing a bipolar regional geography (Halbert, 2004). Particularly in the European context the economic interdependency of inner and outer locations is high. Core cities become the central node of an ‘archipelago’ of poles and maintain key political powers to influence regional spatial policies (Pain, 2008; Salet, 2006). These cities can still benefit from historically built political alliances with higher governmental levels and have closer connections with active global investors. However, the development of the inner periphery – just outside their jurisdiction – entails a tension between these centripetal politics and centrifugal economic dynamics. While inner cities remain pivotal leaders in determining city-regional policies, the periphery

becomes a necessary partner for realizing many projects. We are here interested in the different ways the core city's pivotal role in urban peripheral development is orchestrated (Lefèvre 1998; Kantor et al, 2012).

*Private land development strategies:* it has been largely proven that city-regions reflect a process of capital restructuring and that metropolitan planning is the new territorial scale to govern investment opportunities for global capital (Jones, 2001). Recent works have suggested that the outcomes of these initiatives can be predicted by looking at capital accumulation circles and market shifts (McGuirk, 2012). Inter-municipal policies have thus been associated with the need to address the redistribution of urban activities in response to changing geographies of investment, the need to coordinate public investments to enable growth, and the need to address negative externalities at the regional scale. Research has shown that projects around major cities are often guided by a strategy of land valorization, and thus are activated by growth-oriented coalitions composed of local entrepreneurial governments and globalized business interests. These projects often represent a strongly *depoliticized* planning practice with hybrid organizational structures between public governments and private investors (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2012). Less clear in contemporary literature is the influence of private peripheral land development dynamics on the political dynamics of alliance formation at the local level. While the connection between market interests of capital accumulation and local polities has been investigated in respect of inner city development (e.g. growth machines), this relationship has not yet been addressed at a regional scale that includes polities other than core cities. This is where our interest in this research lies.

These three sources of power address changing conditions in peripheral development. It is crucial to construct an integrated framework able to understand how different constellations explain the variety of emergent urban patterns. Following Phelps, Wood, and

Valler (2011), a careful study needs to be made of the *policy tensions* between these forces in achieving progressive peripheral development planning values. While existent literature has already emphasized the relevance of market and capital restructuring in changing these constellations, the political linkages between the other two remain under-investigated. These linkages are not only economic, but they have *ideological and symbolic* nature, following different forms of rationality. The next section will briefly explain these drivers, introduce the conceptual framework, and establish the hypothesis of this study.

#### **THE MISSING ELEMENT IN CONTEMPORARY PLANNING RESEARCH: POLITICAL-ELECTORAL DYNAMICS**

The role of political and economic power in research on urban development is certainly not a novelty and metropolitan areas are recognized as political constructs (Jonas, 2012). Since the 1990s, local practices have been explained by looking at electoral tactics of political subjects and investment ambitions of businesses (Mollenkopf, 1994; Savitch & Kantor, 2002; Stone, 1993). Early studies clearly asserted that urban development is accountable to electoral and financial strategies of power consolidation (Elkin, 1987). However, they do not apply the same dynamics within politically constructed metropolitan action spaces (Phelps & Wood, 2011), nor are they specifically geared towards understanding the complex governance processes that take place in large-scale urban development projects.

Inner-metropolitan divisions can be understood as the product of instrumental strategies of power consolidation and ideological differentiation (De Maesschalck, 2011) around major societal categorizations or cleavages, like center/periphery, labor/capital, and rich/poor (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967; Keil, 2001). While political scientists have largely mapped the changing geography of consensus and preferences in current national, urban, and suburban governments

(Oliver and Ha, 2007), it is not yet clear how these changes affect decisions on land use and city-regional development policies. Spatial planning is a political process of power reconfiguration (Healey, 2006) and as such is also driven by electoral variables, which are mostly kept in the background by planning research (Campbell, 2001). However, electoral dynamics are fundamental in grasping the relationship between social change, shifts in public opinion and popular consensus over territorial policies, and more complex changes in urban politics. The ambition of political parties to gain democratic power is still a major component in urban politics. In particular, when looking at the governance of peripheral change *“the ownership and organizational structure of the suburban (and post-suburban) economy and the role of political coalitions in driving the development of these settlements remain underexamined”* (Phelps et al, 2011, 374). The changing position of political coalitions and of business interests is also *“inextricably interlinked with the role of the state in facilitating development [...] and yet the vitally important role of the state in the production of post-suburbia has barely begun to be explored”* (idem).

To explain the different planning outcomes in the periphery we concentrate on the hypothesis that the relationship between the three sources of power introduced above depends on a combination of electoral dynamics and financial dynamics. While the second of these factors has been largely investigated in the literature on the politics of urban development, we more selectively discuss the role of political dynamics and their interaction with economic factors. These drivers are prominent in the confrontation between different political arenas to address market shifts. Government executives, emergent political parties, and pressure groups in local political contexts are in confrontation with broader interests like national authorities, national cabinets, regional councils, and emergent national parties. The former are more concerned with the costs and gains of land development while the latter instrumentally view local urban change as a resource for regional growth and broader geo-politics. Peripheral municipalities are not powerless in front

of market dynamics, and they follow specific logics of action that do not necessarily entail objectives of capital accumulation and growth. The electoral tactics of city governments always build on symbolic and ideological strategies of consensus management and political power accumulation. This means a focus on the interactions, confrontations, and negotiations between groups that own political power in regional policy making. Planning strategies might express a tactical use of specific rhetoric, demands, and ideological statements oriented to construct consensus, aggregate interests, and seduce constituents (Downs, 1959; Swanstrom, 1988). Peripheral spaces are in this sense a political construct, instrumentalized by different groups to restructure geo-political configurations of power in city-regional governance. Development corporations and land investors become part of this power game, but not necessarily the major players. In the periphery, these political negotiations are not simply local issues but affect city-regional growth as well, with their dominant perceptions to be translated into concrete land use policies. They directly affect land use choices, infrastructure, and economic and social policies within polycentric cities, and thus pose the conditions for social redistribution at wider levels.

By implication, we expect that when the tensions between these sources of power lead to the dominance of one, urban development interventions in the periphery will show less balanced (social, spatial, and equitable) outcomes or long standing political gridlocks. These gridlocks will thus reflect conflicting politics, whose explanation must be found in electoral confrontation. When investment projects are dominated by national strategies they are likely to stimulate one-sided top-down developments that accommodate nationally relevant economic functions (e.g. high speed train station, intermodal transport hubs, large business centers). This might create negative effects on localities, with splintering between national-global and local development (Graham & Marvin, 2001). Predominately core city-driven political alliances might produce urban development strategies of spatial 'domination' in more vulnerable fringe locations, with projects geared to assist city-core

economic growth. Large municipalities (especially national capitals) are the major electoral basin for national parties. Finally, peripheral developments dominated by private market-led regional coalitions are likely to increase land speculation in outer vacant land and decrease community benefits (e.g. environment with poor urban amenities). This also risks the reproduction of disconnected urban environments, with possible generation of urban sprawl or even the emergence of patterns of self-excluded urbanism, like gated communities, in outer localities. Figure 5.1 gives a visual summary of our conceptual framework and hypothesis.

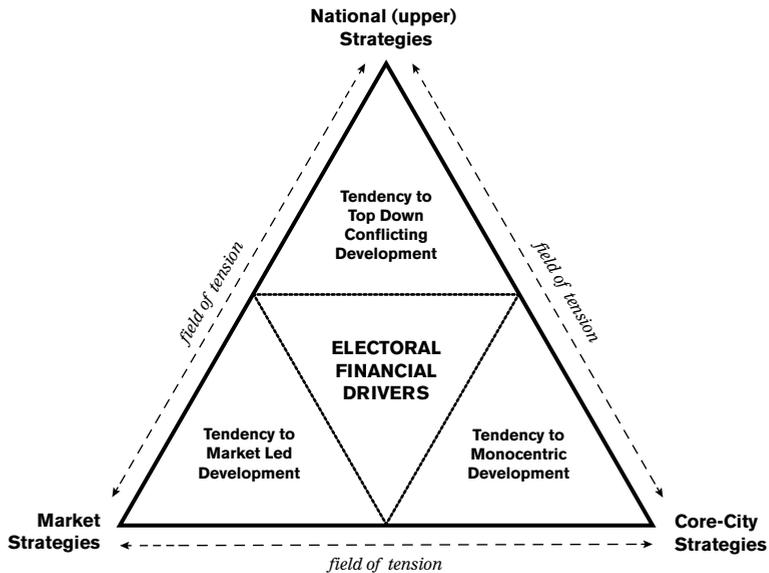


Fig. 5.1: Conceptual model to study peripheral urban development projects.

### METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

The hypotheses will be tested by empirical investigation on concrete ongoing strategic urban projects. To do this we concentrate on inner peripheral zones, mostly characterized by early 20<sup>th</sup> century industrialization and urbanization, in three major European metropolises that are witnessing peripheral revitalization: Amsterdam, Paris, and Milan. Our particular interest in these areas is due to the combination of opportunities for land development and the difficult conditions for enabling urban change. The three selected projects show similar spatial and socio-economic patterns. They are patchworks of different urban spaces, often polluted and in need of remediation, and relatively outside of the core real estate markets. Yet, they can capitalize on their strategic location within dense urban areas connected by existent infrastructures.

In data collection, particular attention has been given to the role of politicians, the position of party agendas, and to the historical ideological issues at stake. The material has been collected through extensive fieldwork on-site, desk research (policy documents, newspapers, archives), and around 35 in-depth interviews per project with politicians, academics, and planners<sup>2</sup>. Questions posed addressed the motivations behind land use and infrastructure choices. These data have been cross-analyzed, looking at debates taking place within municipal councils. Particular attention has been given to the different perceptions between officials in upper tiers of government, core cities, and neighbor municipalities affected by the development. The quantitative and qualitative political data have been combined with the financial and economic prospects of projects in order to discover the effect of changed political conditions. Data on electoral turnout have been used to address this point when available. The research also looked at the financial construction of the interventions and land ownership to detect the long-short term profit expectations of both private and public actors involved. In particular, we used interviewing to reveal whether strategies of stakeholders were supported by cohesive coalitions that either overcame fields of tension or reinforced confrontation (Savini, 2012a; 2012b).

### THE RAISING OF THE INNER PERIPHERY IN PARIS, MILAN, AND AMSTERDAM: DIVERGENCE IN CONVERGENCE

Paris, Milan, and Amsterdam show centrifugal spatial urban expansion in combination with a more recent activation of policies for inner city densification (Kunzmann, 2004). The three cities have been following comparable trends, with a light population spillover in the 1980s and an increase of core city population since 2000 (to a lesser extent in Paris). The three cities share common trajectories of urban polycentrism: the upcoming of outer development areas coupled with the emergence of strategic corridors between the core city and key transport locations<sup>3</sup>. These new morphologies establish the inner periphery as the interface between centrifugal trends of extension of the functional space and the consolidated cores of the metropolis.

Recent planning documents in the three cities have recognized this significant developmental potential in the inner ring of peripheral locations, where dense urban textures are combined with urban voids and potentially high land values. The Amsterdam Structural Vision (*Structuurvisie Amsterdam 2040*) expresses a strategy of 'inner-city out-rolling' into the inner ring area with urban densification to create outer attractive environments. Similarly, Paris has activated a policy of regeneration for the inner ring in 2001, the Great Project of Urban Renewal (*Grand Projet de Renouveau Urbain*), consisting of 12 priority areas around the périphérique. In Milan, to a lesser extent, the current Territorial Government Plan (*Piano del Governo del Territorio 2011*) locates major project areas along corridors extending towards the city's border. These policies identify similar social, spatial, and economic 'progressive' objectives for peripheral development: new 'spatial qualities', mixed land uses, environmentally sustainable structures, reuse of vacant spaces, and densification against urban sprawl.

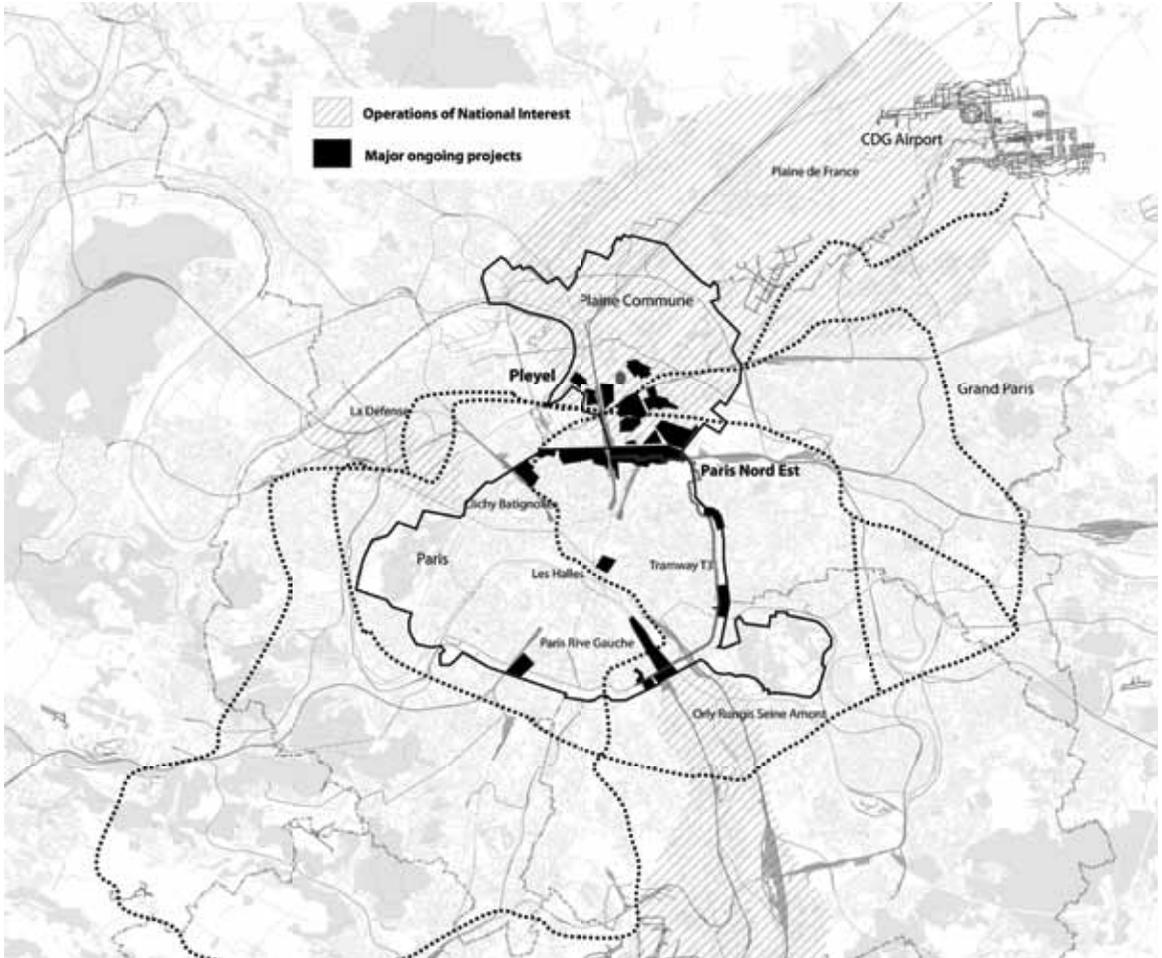
Paris Nord-Est (PNE), Sesto San Giovanni Falck (Falck), and Amsterdam North-West (ANW), are among the most relevant projects of urban development taking place within these locations.

With a comparable size (PNE 2m sqm, Falck 1.5m sqm, and ANW 2.5m sqm<sup>4</sup>), they share common morphological features: fragmented vacant spaces, disconnected areas, obsolete infrastructures, polluted land, and an alternation of scattered residential zones (mostly social housing built in the 1960s-70s). They are urban voids within densely built urban structures, and represent spatial fractures between core city functions and outer fringe residential locations.

The following sections show why the planning processes and outcomes of these three projects substantially diverge despite their comparable locations and socio-spatial features. Although they have all been activated between 1999 and 2002, Paris Nord-Est is today an example of relatively successful, well-balanced cross-border area development. The Falck area has been suffering from a long lasting political grid-lock, while Amsterdam North-West turned into a planning laboratory of organic development.

#### **PARIS NORD-EST: CROSS-BORDER COALITION FOR SPATIAL INNOVATION**

The transformation of the north-east sector of Paris Municipality became more than a simple project of urban redevelopment after the first left-wing executive of Paris took power in 2002. The redevelopment of the area surrounding the border of the city became a political issue of confrontation between an emerging local left-wing coalition and the consolidated national right wing parties. Paris Nord-Est is today an experiment of inter-municipal cooperation aimed at reconnecting the inner city with its *banlieue* spatially and politically. It targets 2m sqm of the poorer districts of Paris Municipality (18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>), a patchwork of disconnected plots, social housing, and the lowest land values in the city. Despite great developmental opportunities in the Parisian real estate market, the project does not resemble the pro-growth development we would expect from traditional state-endorsed large projects. Instead, PNE is an attempt to overcome a governance context characterized by



*Fig. 5.2. Major projects in Paris and Plaine Commune.*

inter-municipal competition that has paralyzed innovative metropolitan policies for decades (Fourcaut & Flonneau, 2007; Lefèvre 2002). The project attempts to combine social and economic objectives, focusing on social housing development, intermodal public transport, innovative building structures, and reuse. The project forecasts a total built area of 1,374,639 sqm, with 44% comprising housing (50% of which is social housing), large infrastructural works (including a new station and the covering of the highway), and a series of green connections between Paris and its outside urban area<sup>5</sup>.

This cross-border project is the expression of a combined system of authoritative state policies, core city strategies, and private interests, all concentrated on the redevelopment of the dense inner periphery (Savini, 2012a). The redevelopment of the area is driven by municipalities attempting to build electoral alliances with neighboring cities on progressive developmental agendas. The city executive elected in 2001 pushed for a policy of 'rupture' and 'metropolitan cooperation', aware that their major policy objectives of democracy, equality, and livability could not be achieved without the cooperation of outer municipalities. In its governing agenda, the Paris executive recognized opportunities for power consolidation within an area that has become the major basin of the progressive left in the region and where innovative experiments of urban regeneration can be undertaken. Paris' left-wing government, chaired by the socialist Mayor Bertrand Delanoë, turned PNE into a political tool to reconstitute bonds with the red progressive groups of Plaine Commune<sup>6</sup>. The recent development of Paris Métropole, a cooperation of 199 municipalities in the region, started in 2007 under the leadership of Pierre Mansat (Communist Party), the alderman responsible for Paris' inter-municipal relationships. It is the political umbrella whereby a series of agreements between Paris and its banlieue are achieved on cross-border concerns of land management, social services, and urban amenities improvements (Desjardins, 2010). Different sub-projects in PNE reveal this attempt to enable spatial and political cooperation. Examples are the

prolonging of a tramway surrounding the eastern districts of the city and the development of an 'inter-municipal' neighborhood, the Gare De Mines/Fillettes.

This shift from Paris-centered politics to more inclusion of border cities instrumentally combined with emerging strategies of land developers and real-estate investors interested in valorizing their properties outside of Paris' jurisdiction (see Lefèvre and Halbert in this issue). Private actors are interested in cross-border planning in order to capitalize unused land and retail-office estates developed outside of the Paris border (where prices are lower) and combine them with the demand generated by residential development in Paris. These actors are national railway companies, today operating as private developers of their obsolete infrastructures (e.g. *Paris petite ceinture* and the SNCF land at Porte de la Chapelle), and large land owners and banks, seeking office space just outside of the city (e.g. BNP). Organized into regional networks (e.g. MEDEF), they benefit from the promotion of outer poles, especially if connected to the Grand Paris. This activism is translated into experiments of public-private partnership to achieve spatial innovation. For example, ICADE-Foncier, a large land developer in the Paris region, has engaged with the city developers (SEMs) and national investment banks (*Caisse des Dépôts and Consignations*) to redevelop the Entrepôt Macdonald, one of the core projects within PNE. This involvement was motivated by the need to coordinate the PNE housing-office programming with the redevelopment of the large area of EMGP (*Entrepôts et Magasins Généraux de Paris*).

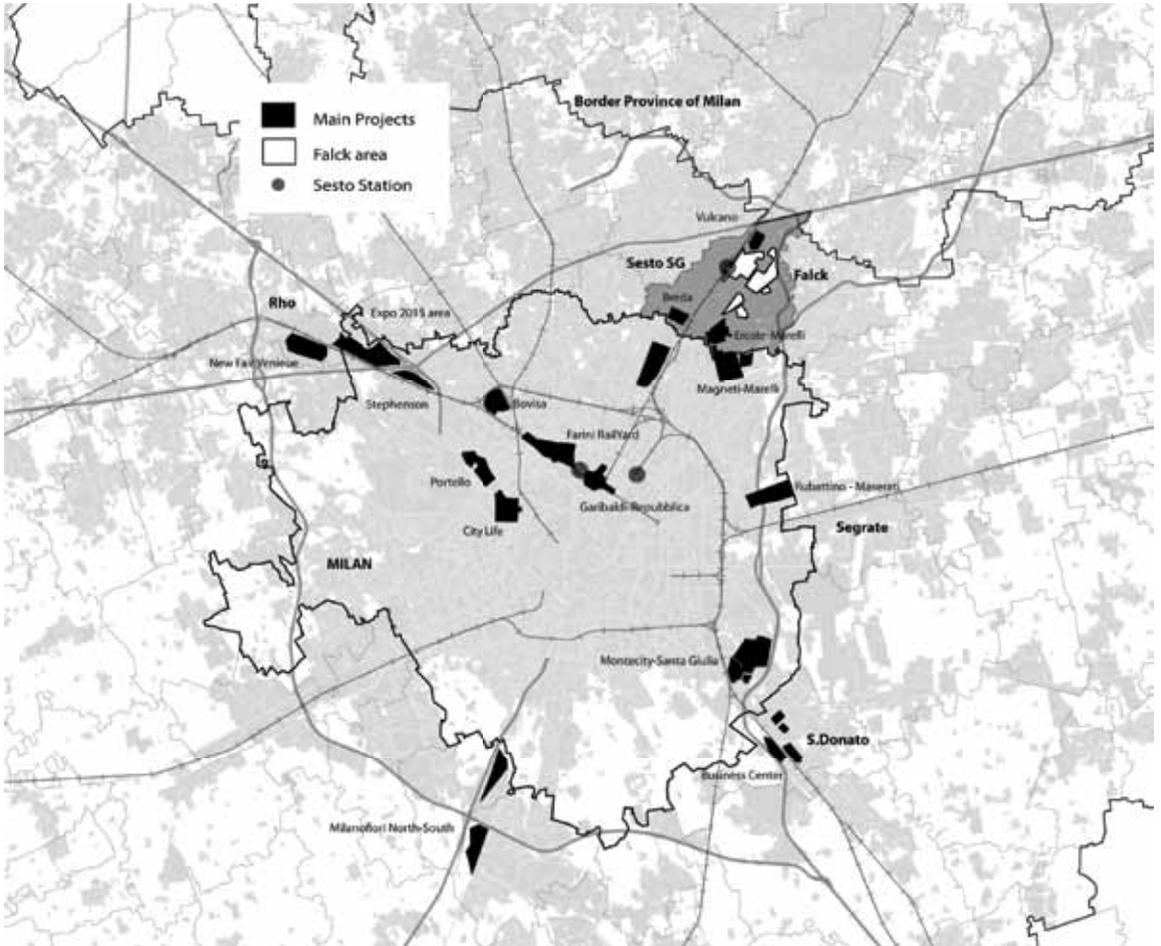
The Paris periphery is a field of confrontation between these local dynamics of left-wing power consolidations, under the leadership of Paris' mayor, and national right wing majorities seeking domination of the economic core of the country. The north-east of Paris and the whole dense zone of the metropolitan area is a space of political conflict between local coalitions and national powers, which makes the area highly dynamic for planning. It is part of a national strategic sector, between the core city and Charles de Gaulle International Airport, where new infrastructure nodes are

planned. Although administrative decentralization has been implemented in the last 20 years, the national government is still deeply involved in area development. This involvement is executed by the *Operations of National Interest* and, more recently, with the *Grand Pari(s)*<sup>7</sup>. Local planning responses in PNE are an expression of the political struggle between these top-down initiatives and bottom-up achievements of cooperation, crystallized around infrastructural investments (*Contrat de Projet*) (Pinson & Le Galès, 2005; Nicholls, 2005). PNE illustrates this state-city power struggle and political cooperation becomes an active tactic to counterbalance national strategies of authority, as seen in the Loi Grand Paris<sup>8</sup> which allows the state to overrule land use planning competences of municipalities in station areas.

To conclude, the Paris Nord-Est project became a political tool to enable cross-border cooperation, advancing progressive policies of social housing, transportation inter-modality, and inter-municipal planning. It is sustained by the political alignment of Paris and its proximate banlieue towards leftist progressive policies of urban regeneration. This electoral tactic is set in opposition to attempts of national right wing executives to control the legacy of Paris metropolitan planning, but is supported by proactive businesses whose profit interests are complemented by the political strategies of local governments.

### **MILAN FALCK: POLITICAL ISOLATION AND LOCAL GRIDLOCKS**

The north-east periphery of Milan shows a different picture from that of Paris. The Falck site is located in the border municipality of Sesto San Giovanni (80,886 inhabitants) and it is 1.5m sqm of brownfield, formerly a steel factory, covering approximately 13% of the whole municipal area. Despite its pollution and the heavy costs involved with land recovery, it occupies a strategic location within the north-east corridor of Milan-Monza as it sits in the midst of a dense urban area with connection to the northern and western ring



*Fig. 3.2. Main ongoing projects in Milan and Sesto San Giovanni.*

highways. In 2011, the area was also named as a UNESCO heritage site for its importance in industrial history. After the deindustrialization of the 1990s large private corporations envisaged opportunities of residential and office development here. The area is also interesting for city government, as public returns from its development could increase supply of public services, social housing, and scarce green spaces. However, since the factory's foreclosure in 1994, the area never found a new future; it is still the object of contention between local political coalitions and private developers, locked into political stalemate, while land speculation continues<sup>9</sup>. In the Lombardy negotiated planning system, the success of the project depends on a bilateral agreement between local government and the developer on gains and benefits from interventions (*Programma Integrato d'Intervento*). This legacy is the expression of a critical position that peripheral municipalities occupy in Milan's metropolitan area: they are loci of great opportunities but they suffer institutional isolation from both core city policies and regional strategies of development.

The geo-political confrontation between the Milan municipality and upper levels of government emerged in Sesto in response to market pressures. After deindustrialization, the Falck site soon became an area to valorize by building real estate. The first attempts were undertaken by Falck area industry itself, through a specific think-tank (*Parco Scientifico-Teconologico Ambientale*). A second attempt was undertaken in 2001 by a local developer in cooperation with *Banca Intesa*, one of the largest banks in the region. These attempts repeatedly clashed against the reluctant local government. The latest attempts, undertaken by a powerful joint stock company (*Risanamento Spa*) and designed by Renzo Piano, proposed a dense residential development that has repeatedly encountered local skepticism. With deindustrialization, Sesto's municipal executive has been concerned by socio-political change within the process of urban change. Deindustrialization triggered a potential increase in high-middle classes in the area, workers of financial economies and third sectors, at the expense of bulk of the city's left-wing constituency

(existing workers communities and smaller manufacturing). Yet, this parochial approach has brought negative effects, with long lasting vacancy and increased public dissatisfaction at the local level. Defensive political tactics resulted in the creation of a masterplan in 2011 that lacks clear benchmarks for implementation, while continuing to increase the stock of large retail and private housing. These factors have since led to the electoral defeat of the coalition in power in 2012.

Seeing the great opportunities of land development, the project was largely instrumentalized by local leftist-communist coalitions in power within Sesto. They saw an opportunity to build their local constituency and sustain left-wing politics, today rapidly declining in a region historically dominated by the neo-liberal right and a breeding ground of former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's constituency. The Milan metropolitan area is today a field of political contestation rather than a scale of policy innovation. The city has been the historical stronghold of the liberal right in the country and it benefitted from a strong political axis with the region, fostering radio-centric infrastructural policies. Milan and its fringe compete for profitable developments and scarce subsidies from the provincial and regional levels. The inward looking focus of Milan's urban policies is also instrumental to maintain the substantial political power of Milan's constituencies at the regional scale and to sustain the capacity to lobby for regional investments in the city against an expanding (and politically challenging) hinterland. The linkages between the core city and its periphery are thus non-cooperative, non-institutionalized, and highly politicized (Balducci, 2003). Several experiments of cooperation between Milan and its fringe since the 1970s have been jeopardized by party politics and power struggles over regional planning. The *Piano Intercomunale Milanese* in the 1970s and the *Città di Città* strategic plan of 2005 (Balducci et al. 2011) did not survive electoral shifts, and this same parochialism also hindered the implementation of annexation policies in the 1990s (Law 142/1990). This fragmentation is alimented by inward looking strategies of core-city development;

Milan's structural plan (*Piano del Governo del Territorio*, 2011), for example, confirms a mono-centric strategy of urban growth, pushing for profitable development within its borders: a 'solitary post-modern municipalism' (Boatti, 2011). It is based on a supply-oriented planning strategy, traditionally supported by neo-liberal right wing majorities, aiming at inner city growth and concentration of high value economic activities (finance, services, knowledge economy, higher education).

The political position of higher levels of government did not help in capitalizing Milan's peripheral opportunities into a mature polycentrism. The region and the province (the authorities with planning competences) tend to occupy a protective position in peripheral change, strongly focused on infrastructural issues and environmental management<sup>10</sup>. The redevelopment of strategic sectors, such as Milan's north-east, is left to local negotiations and suffers weak strategic thinking at regional and provincial levels. Differently from the past, the inner periphery is now relatively isolated despite its opportunities. In the 1990s, the region and the province could enable inter-municipal strategic planning during the early phases of deindustrialization. In those years, upper tiers of government instituted a program of post-industrial transition, enforced by subsidies for strategic areas, enabling land development to accommodate new SMEs. The North Development Agency (*Agenzia Sviluppo Nord Milano*) was one of the projects supported by regional urban policies in those years. It is still today one of the most successful attempts to govern urban development across four municipalities, aligning private, local, and provincial interests around developmental objectives (Lefèvre, 1998). However, these examples of coordinated governance for post-industrial development were driven by an electoral alliance of labor groups, large industrial businesses, and national-regional policy oriented to reindustrialization. The north of Milan is today a patchwork of nostalgic left-wing groups and a left-wing entrepreneurial government. These are in contraposition with the largely neo-liberalized city of Milan, now a location of expanding financial industry.

The periphery is thus at the crossroad between its position of dependency to Milan's economic power (i.e. suburbanization scenario) and a scenario of 'economic recovery' with new production settled in the area. This would require synergy between market investments, regional policies, and core-city agendas, but political fragmentation jeopardizes the strategic placement of peripheral development. The proactive developers encountered a vacuum of politics, with fractures between parochial majorities in Milan and Sesto San Giovanni. Milan's development policies today do not consider the future of its border and do not create planning synergies. The institutional isolation of the planning process gridlocked negotiations into the vicious circle of localism that ultimately favored opportunistic strategies of developers.

#### **AMSTERDAM NORTH-WEST: ORGANIC DEVELOPMENT AS RESPONSE TO POLITICAL UNCERTAINTY**

The redevelopment of the north-west waterfront of Amsterdam shows a third type of peripheral urban change. After the 2000s, ANW rapidly became a fluid, flexible, and undefined endeavor to push housing-production within the west-north-west axes of the metropolitan area. It is a cluster of projects stretching from the most central locations of Amsterdam North (Overhoeks and Buiksloterham) to outer fringe locations along the Zaan river in the adjacent municipality of Zaanstad. The Amsterdam government has recently approached the spatial change of these peripheral locations with a planning approach that differs from the master-planned techniques traditionally employed in the city (Van der Cammen & de Klerk, 2012) by privileging organic and incremental approaches. The major objectives are the creation of new areas of living and production to favor housing production within the limit of the urbanized area. The current approach consists of small scale design, experimental land use mixes, temporary approaches, and stimulation of local activities, knowledge intensive economies, and creative economies. However, the success of this strategy depends on the

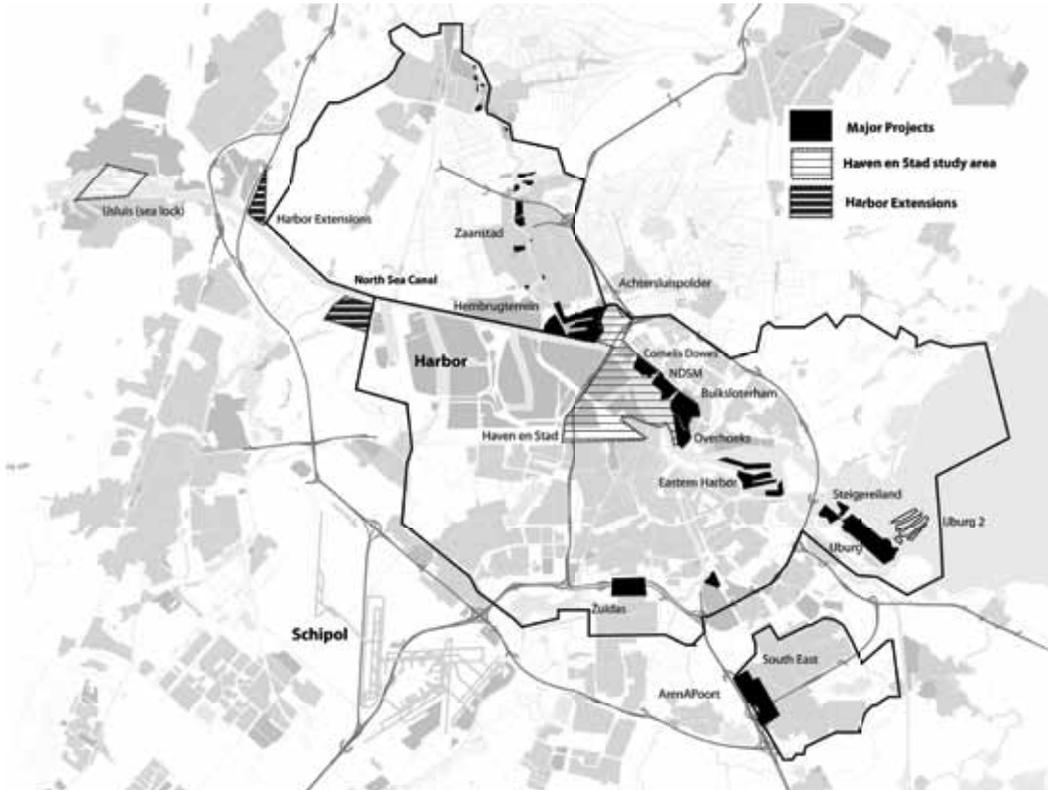


Fig. 5.4. The North Sea Canal Area including major planned interventions.

management of three major spatial trends in the area: the growth of the sea harbor, housing production for the north wing of the Randstad<sup>11</sup>, and environmental management around and within the city.

The organic transformation of ANW illustrates the slow change in the geo-political equilibrium of the region and the emergence of new political fractures over developmental policies. In particular, national and local governments are confronted around issues of housing development, economic growth agendas, and green development and environmental sustainability. These political fractures connect with major debates on the role of public investments, primarily from higher levels of government, and the engagement of the city in regional planning. The north-west periphery became a unitary target for new development in 2009 when the *Gebiedsagenda Noord West Nederland*<sup>12</sup> identified areas of possible housing expansion. The document was built on an agenda already defined by local government through the Noordvleugel (renamed *Metropoolregio Amsterdam*) platforms, identifying the waterfront (ZaanIJ) as a major structuring project for the metropolitan area (Janssen-Jansen, 2011). The sector was identified as a potentially relevant endeavor for regional (and thus national) economies, to accommodate housing for knowledge workers, and to address urban restructuring<sup>13</sup>. The development of ANW is, however, a major project pushed from an emerging local alliance of the new left in the north-west axes of the region. The area, formerly governed by labor-socialist parties anchored to the industrial workers constituencies, is today a breeding ground for progressive leftist movements representing emerging middle-classes. The north was a major constituency of the Social Democrats (PvdA) but in the last 6 years it's support has decreased by 10%, combined with an average decrease of 8% for the Socialist Party (PS) in the same northern districts<sup>14</sup>. The incoming political groups in the city thus instrumentalize urban change to sustain new urban patterns. They push for existent mixes and structures, relatively close to the inner city, that were attractive for knowledge industries, R&D, and booming creative industries. This agenda is sustained by an emerging entrepreneur-

ial left in Zaanstad that joins Amsterdam in a 'red-progressive' political axis in the north-west (Louter & Eikeren, 2012). ANW is thus a political instrument of a proactive new left, seeking to accommodate incoming constituencies and to compensate for suburbanization trends in southern and eastern development areas around Schiphol, Zuidas, Bijlmermeer, and Almere.

The organic approach to ANW is underpinned by a misalignment between these emerging agendas and the growth strategies of national executives, moving towards the liberal political spectrum but more uncertain on major urban and economic policies than before. In the Netherlands, the state has always been a partner in local development, both for its historical capacity to shape urban growth<sup>15</sup> and for its position in a fiscally centralized system. Yet, a series of liberal reforms have substantially reshaped the Dutch planning tradition and made inter-governmental alignment more dependent on area-based negotiations (Roodbol-Mekkes et al, 2012). ANW is one key political issue within a more general strategy for development of the *North Sea Canal area*, one of the locations of national economic interventions (Ministerie IenM, 2011). Organic planning is advanced as a means to progressively align public agendas towards a common developmental strategy and to facilitate this process by unpacking the problem into different issues. This tactic allows more effective negotiations between the agendas of the concerned parties, reflecting perhaps the pragmatic capacity of Dutch politics to achieve political compromise. Yet, the middle point is not yet clear. The liberal government pushes for housing growth and sustains investments in the sea harbor and logistic economy, but does not address the related effects on landscape. It pushes for deregulated housing development and localization but it does not seem to give (fiscal) means to cities to achieve their own housing policies. On the other hand, the liberal forces at the province and city are focusing on the harbor for economic growth, clashing with Amsterdam's strong greens. Here, the green-left pushes for new housing within existing urban borders and in doing so needs to address political conflicts with both pro-harbor groups and pro-suburbanization parties.

The organic development approach is an attempt to generate, rather than address, opportunities of development. The ANW area became an agenda issue as soon as new political forces emerged in Amsterdam and Zaanstad, pushing for transformation of its industrial structure and new forms of economy. This endeavor has been stimulated from the bottom by emerging political groups pushing for specific typologies of urban spaces for a new constituency of urban dwellers, while the role of national government has reduced, with pursuit of unclear socio-economic and territorial strategies over the area. The state is politically pressing and endorsing the project (also by legal constraints), but it does so without any sort of direction due to progressive decentralization of competences. This strategy is best geared to address small scale investments, enabling self-financing by smaller land owners and end users among incoming populations. It is also an inevitable response to the lack of proactive market actors. Market pressure unexpectedly seems to focus on many other sites in the city-region, like the south (Schiphol, South Axis) and east (towards Utrecht) with rather different planned outcomes than ANW.

## CONCLUSIONS

Peripheral locations are nowadays key areas for development. In Paris, Milan, and Amsterdam urban planning policies demonstrate how the fringe of core municipalities have turned into a space for intensification, new economic development, and planning innovation. We focused on these spaces because of the large opportunities that they bear for innovation in polycentric city-regions. In this paper we looked at planning as political confrontation and cooperation between three major sources of power: core city strategies of growth, national (and regional) development strategies, and market investment patterns. We hypothesized that in order to understand different trajectories of metropolitan development it is important to look at how political-electoral dynamics affect the relationship between these sources of power.

	<b>PARIS NORD-EST</b>	<b>MILAN FALCK</b>	<b>AMSTERDAM NORTH-WEST</b>
<b>CORE CITY – NATIONAL (UPPER) GOV. STRATEGIES</b>	National pro-growth right wing coalition conflicting with local red progressive coalition.	Mono-centric conservative politics. Lack of regional coalition on peripheral development.	Development oriented progressive politics on the border, focused on creative industries and new spatial qualities
<b>NATIONAL(UPPER) GOV. STRATEGIES – MARKET</b>	Pro-growth strategies of peripheral development.	Lack of inter-governmental political coalition on growth strategy. Regional development jeopardized by electoral strategies	Fragmented approach. Weak political coalition on priorities and typologies of investments
<b>CORE CITY – MARKET</b>	Socially progressive local agendas combined with land development strategies of poorer districts.	Core city centered pro-growth coalition. Conservative peripheral politics towards market	Public led projects with ambitions to create new development opportunities. Market invests in different areas.
<b>POSITION OF THE PERIPHERAL MUNICIPALITY</b>	Politically aligned with the core city. Dependent on core city investments	Inward looking and isolated. Conflicting with core city interests	Dependent on core city and politically aligned. Seeking to join Amsterdam trends.
<b>TREND IN PERIPHERAL DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>CROSS-BORDER</b> Progressive planning coalition for border area to counter balance national domination. Major investments on border areas endorsed by public governments	<b>ISOLATED</b> Political gridlock springing from conservative planning Resistance of local ‘red’ coalition to post-industrial change.	<b>ORGANIC</b> Ill-defined project with uncertain outcomes. No unitary agenda. No strong investments on border area

*Fig. 5.5. Summary table on fields of tension in peripheral development.*

The three cases show different patterns of development (see table 2). In some cases market actors are central in the development process and decisions seem to reflect political and ideological rationalities rather than calculations of development's costs and gains. This is why the position of peripheral spaces where projects are developed differs from case to case. In Paris, a cross-border coalition of local politics, emergent market actors, and national governments was formed to redevelop the dense inner periphery. The electoral-political conflicts between local left-wing progressive majorities and national right-wing constituencies have pulled towards innovative planning solutions that stimulate cooperation based on electoral alignment. To the contrary, in Milan the redevelopment of the large and strategically located Falck brownfield has been jeopardized by inter-municipal conflicts and has thus pushed local coalitions into a hopeless resistance to market trends. The project became the stronghold of a nostalgic red coalition in Sesto San Giovanni, losing a regional power game with inward looking strategies. In Amsterdam, a local left-wing progressive coalition for creative city development emerged between Amsterdam and Zaanstad. There still seems to be uncertainty on the urban future of the area due to unclear political influence at the national level, the advancement of disconnected policies, and inactive markets in that specific zone. Political negotiations around locations, typologies, and the developmental agendas of the broad metropolitan areas have triggered less straightforward planning, instead employing more organic (with uncertain yields) attempts to generate, rather than respond to, shifting markets.

In the article we arrive at three major conclusions: first, new urban patterns in the periphery of cities are not only an expression of shifting geographies of investment but also entail political and electoral calculations by public actors in power, which are often different (or even in conflict) from logics of economic growth. These factors can thus be a space for further investigation to understand the structural factors that might enable or hinder progressive planning solutions. This is especially significant when planning must

adapt to economic recession. Secondly, this paper shows that peripheral development entails a redefinition of broader geo-political configurations at the regional level, between the three major powers of core cities, upper levels of government, and regional investors. The periphery is thus a political object, often instrumentalized by different political groups to advance particular views and authority over the regional space. Accordingly, peripheral development requires a larger scope of analysis than simple land use planning. Third, this paper suggests that although the periphery is becoming a key metropolitan space, the asymmetries between peripheral municipalities and traditional sources of power hinder integrated planning. Peripheral municipalities seem to have not yet gained the political power to influence regional growth policies. Yet, the periphery is an object of debate rather a well-defined planning endeavor. We thus suggest that in order to achieve progressive spatial development in city-regional planning it is important to shift focus from core-periphery to more symmetric geo-political frames.

Planning certainly is, and will always be, a political task. This paper contributes to this understanding with an empirical account of the electoral dimension of this political process. This is a dimension that is sometimes not considered in the field of urban politics and even less in planning studies. This paper shows that an electoral-spatial approach can explain policy responses to planning problems. Further research could look more specifically and operationally at how specific party politics influence urban policies. International comparison and large N case studies might complement single-outcome case studies like this one. In this paper we suggest that this method has large potential but it is not yet mature. It can uncover alternative explanations to polycentric city morphologies and thus reveal alternative manners to address the spatial implications of macro-economic shifts.

**NOTES**

- 1) In some cases, the planning role of national government is less relevant and the major upper level involved is the region (e.g. Italy and Germany).
- 2) Transcripts of all these interviews are available from the authors.
- 3) For example, the South Axis-Schiphol corridor in Amsterdam, the Plaine de France-Charles de Gaulle corridor in Paris, and the Bovisa-Rho convention center towards Milan Malpensa airport.
- 4) This size includes the Noordelijke IJ-Oever project, 1.95m sqm (NDSM, Buiksloterham, and Overhoeks) plus the study areas of Hembrugterrein and Achtersluispolder (total approximate 0.5m sqm). The project also invested in the southern part of the city (i.e. Haven en Stad study area).
- 5) Data, March 2009, *Stratégie Urbaine*, Paris Municipal office.
- 6) Plaine Commune is a collective body managing planning for 5 municipalities that was traditionally in a conflicting position towards Paris but today fosters more entrepreneurial policies (Subra 2011).
- 7) The Grand Pari(s) is a political instrument of Nicolas Sarkozy's national right-wing government that until mid-2012 was searching for authority in the red Capital region. With the election of François Hollande this is likely to change but it is not yet clear in what way.
- 8) The *Loi Grand Paris* is the the juridical translation of the *Grand Pari(s)* project,
- 9) From 2002 to 2011 the price inflated from 220m euros to 433m euros, while the built program boomed from 750,000 sqm to 1.1m sqm.
- 10) The *Territorial Regional Plan* and the *Territorial Plan of Provincial Coordination* are de facto tools to fix the limits of local development but rarely inform on strategic choices of polycentric growth.
- 11) Today it amounts to a total of 150,000 units within 2040, with a yearly production deficit of 5000 dwellings.
- 12) An operational device to implement the national *multi-year investment program* (MIRT, 2012).
- 13) 30,000 new houses and 40,000 economic activities were theoretically forecasted in this sector.
- 14) Electoral data are available at the Amsterdam Statistical Office yearly overview <http://www.os.amsterdam.nl/publicaties/amsterdamincijfers/>
- 15) Examples of this are seen in bundled suburbanization, VINEX, and National Key projects.

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