

Flexibility, public accountability and financial results in municipal land development projects

Keywords: governance, land development, flexibility, public accountability, policy instruments

OTB Department / Governance of Geoinformation and Land Development

Area of Research: Land Development and Land Policy



Research Summary: This research project investigates two seemingly conflicting demands for flexibility and accountability in municipal land development projects for residential areas. Public land development has an entrepreneurial aspect, involving public investment and various risks associated with uncertainties in the process of land acquisition, servicing and disposal (Korthals Altes 2010). This raises a question about the so-called double-hat dilemma, i.e. how to make a range of financial and spatial-planning considerations balanced and integrated without hampering the integrity of public administration. While municipalities play a regulatory role via statutory planning, legalizing change of land-use, assigning property rights and supervising building activities, they also play an investor's role, acquiring land, servicing it with infrastructure and transferring parcels to developers. Flexibility in decisions for land development needs to be justifiable to relevant stakeholders, which involves public accountability relationships. This research project aims to analyze how two different demands for flexibility and public accountability are coped with and reconciled, and to provide insight into practices of municipal land development projects in order for them to truly deliver on public value.

Research Methodology: The main methodology is a critical case study (Flyvbjerg 2006, 229) and a comparative case analysis (Pickvance 2001). Since Dutch municipalities have long institutionalized the implementation of public land developments and public accountability arrangements within the municipal organization and in relation to external parties, Dutch practices are primarily focused on from an international comparative perspective with foreign case-studies.

Key Publications:

- KANG, V. and GROETELAERS, D. Forthcoming. "Regional governance and public accountability in planning for new housing areas." *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*. (Online published September 29, 2017)
- KANG, V. and KORTHALS ALTES, W.K. 2015. "Public Accountability in Planning for New Housing Areas." *Proceedings of the ICE - Municipal Engineer* 168(4): 235-243.
- KANG, V. and KORTHALS ALTES, W.K. 2015. "Flexibility and Public Accountability in Public Land Development Projects in Progress." *European Planning Studies* 23(8): 1609-1626.



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Main Question: How do municipalities cope with two different requests for flexibility and public accountability in organizing public land developments? Can they be reconciled to deliver better outcomes? If so, how?

Deliverables: Four peer-reviewed articles. Two are on internal and external public accountability relationships by Dutch municipalities. The other two are comparative case-analysis in relation to planning law and municipal finance.

Link: www.otb.bk.tudelft.nl

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