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Urban Transformations of Former Industrial Neighborhoods: Scrutinizing urban networks – a comparison of Savamala (Belgrade) and NDSM Wharf (Amsterdam)

The comparative case study examines the transformation of the former industrial neighborhoods Savamala (Belgrade) and NDSM Wharf (Amsterdam), both located on riverfronts. By employing a blend of network theoretical and empirical approaches, the research examines governance in urban regeneration programs. The research focuses on three objectives. The first objective is to explain the differences in governance in the regeneration between the two selected case studies. The research thus explores the urban policy formation in both cases: involvement of different stakeholders, the decision-making process, policy goals, and network dynamics. The network of stakeholders includes actors from the public and private sectors. The policy network theoretical and empirical approach is applied to explore the policy-making process. Likewise, the analytical approach of Emirbayer and Goodwin (1996) explores the social-structural, cultural, and social-psychological contexts in which the actors are embedded, and is applied to explore individual and collective social actions, thus providing an explanation of how those actions have led to the creation of policy outputs. The second objective of the research is to explore policy implementation through the utilization of the network governance approach (Provan and Kenis, 2008). The goal is to identify, distinguish, and explore the modes of governance and thus provide an explanation of the power relations in the implementation of regeneration programs in the selected urban environments. The third objective is to question the effectiveness of the governance modes that have been discovered, on two levels, namely on the network (collective) and community level (Provan and Milward, 2001; Provan and Kenis, 2008). This research thus provides answers to whether and why the network and community level goals have or have not been achieved, and to what extent. In the first case study, the research findings suggest the existence of two contrasting policy networks with the different actors' attributes and structural variables and policy goals behind them. Those policies have also produced two different modes of governance. In the initial phase of the regeneration of Savamala, a fragmented-governed network mode is detected. Whilst, hierarchy is observed in the second phase of the regeneration process. Conversely, in the second case study, a coherency in urban politics can be detected and the modes of network governance developed by Provan and Kenis (2008) are discovered in both phases of the regeneration process. The results of the comparative analysis suggest that network governance modes generate a greater degree of overall effectiveness. Furthermore, the positive outcomes of the regeneration process can be discerned in the urban contexts that support the development of this type of governance structure. This underscores the significance of network governance theory, particularly in the investigation of the regeneration of former industrial riverfronts. Conversely, a governance mode such as hierarchy exhibits limited overall effectiveness, while a fragmented-governed network mode exhibits overall effectiveness to a great extent, but with robust limitations. The former is not effective, as it is not inclusive and relies heavily on the interests of private actors and a handful of political elites, while the latter may lack the stability necessary to engender positive outcomes over the long term.