KU LEUVEN

ARENBERG DOCTORAL SCHOOL
FACULTY OF ENGINEERING SCIENCE

Creating room for socially innovative planning practice under post-political conditions

A metareflexive action research on the daily struggles of a transformative planning office

Seppe De Blust

Supervisors:
Prof. Frank Moulaert
Prof. Jan Schreurs

Dissertation presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Doctor of Engineering Science (PhD): Architecture.

June 2019

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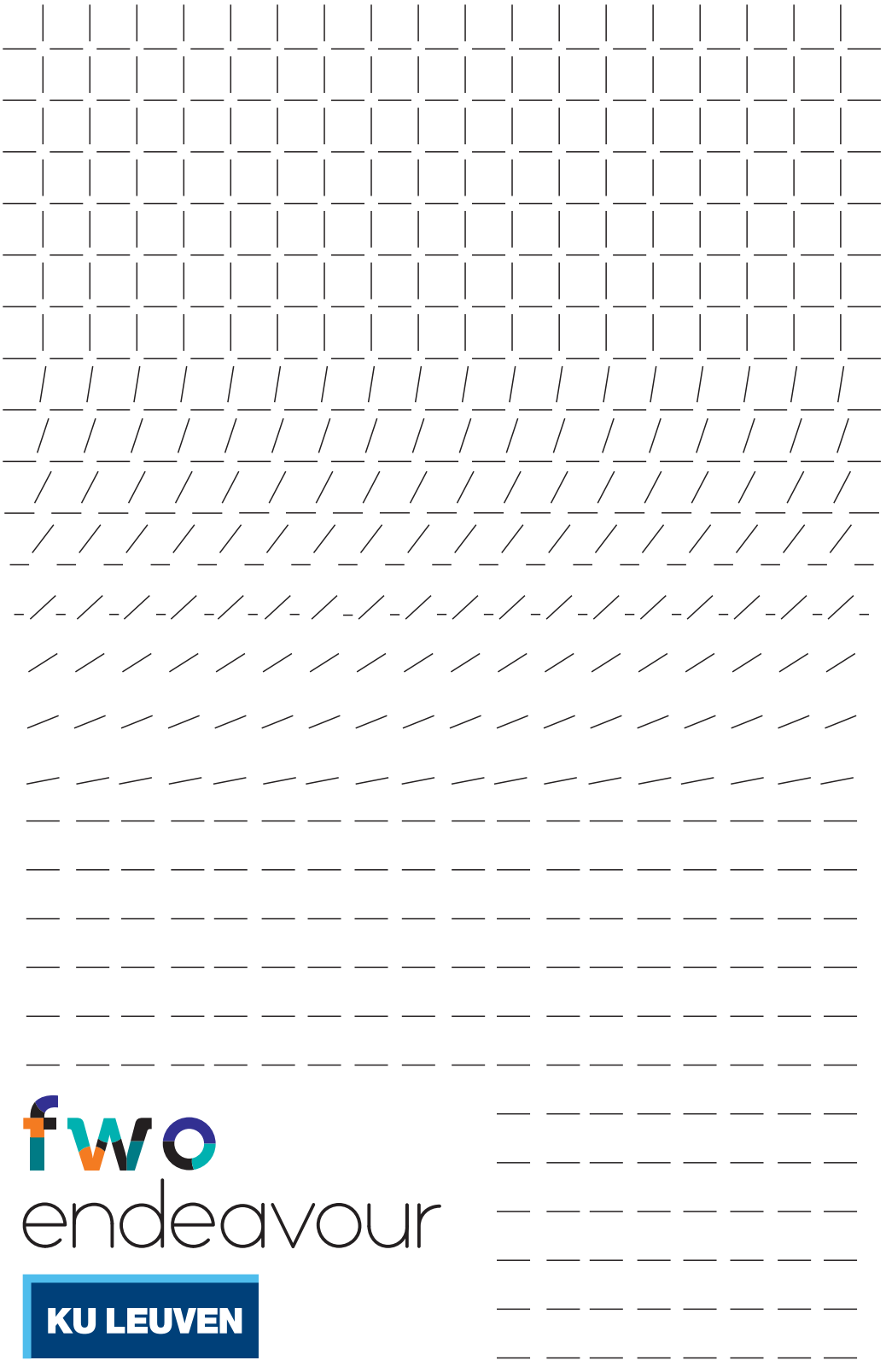

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SEPPE DE BLUST

Supervisors:
Prof. F. Moulaert
Prof. J. Schreurs

Members of the
Examination Committee:
Prof. L. Albrechts
Prof. J. Berlamont
Prof. E. Gualini
Prof. N. Harris
Prof. J. Hillier
Prof. M. Loopmans
Prof. P. Van den Broeck

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I. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This PhD thesis tries to deconstruct how we think about and organize transformative planning practice. By organizing an office for socio-spatial research: *endeavour*, I try to develop a detailed and operational understanding of the room for manoeuvre for transformative planning under current post-political conditions.

This research could be described as a chaotic process of collective wayfinding: an attempt to redefine what we actually understand under transformative planning practice, not only by continuous reflection but by actually challenging the way we organize planning processes as well.

With endeavour I tried to do things differently; I tried to develop approaches and positions that would make planning practice less vulnerable for cooptation or delusions.

Such a risky exercise can't be done alone.

First of all, I want to thank Maarten and Tim to join me on this ride. Five years ago we were brave enough to join forces and start our own office. It's because of this collaboration that we created the right conditions, the openness and energy to develop new approaches, to make mistakes and to rethink the practice of the planner/architect.

Secondly, I would like to thank the different co-authors of the research chapters that form the intellectual core of this thesis. The collaboration with Maarten Desmet, Oswald Devisch, Tim Devos, Michael Kaethler, Bruno Meeus, Frank Moulaert, Jan Schreurs & Pieter Van den Broeck challenged me in my thinking, sharpened concepts and created the possibility to creatively combine and rethink the theoretical frameworks I used to conceptualize.

Some of these chapters were based on long-term engagements for research and action. Both the expertise that could be developed in the planning studio and the work of the participation lab and studio were crucial to create a long-term condition to continuously and iteratively strengthen my critical understanding. The chances and dynamic discussions that popped up from these collective endeavours were crucial to construct this rich environment for research. In this respect I would like to thank Oswald Devisch and the VRP to believe and 'codesign' the participation lab and studio and equally the research group P&D to co-host the planning studio for several years. During various project-based collaborations I was lucky to experience a large diversity of creative, strategic and warm moments of collective thinking with colleagues of *endeavour,* Ringland, Damcomité and 51n4e. Each of these moments were crucial mirrors and everlasting memories of this PhD trajectory.

Of course none of this would be possible without the financial support of *endeavour*, P&D and FWO (special PhD grant) and the unrestrained confidence of my family (Geert, Magda, Andres and especially Marieke & Rocco). You're all wonderful people.

Lastly I would like to thank Frank Moulaert and Jan Schreurs for the five year-long conversation on challenging planning practice, for the way they urged me to always work and describe in great detail and not at least for helping me to finish my PhD on time. Working with both of them not only made me (a better) researcher, but also showed me the strength and necessity of solidarity in these challenging times.

Enjoy reading!

Seppe
Antwerp, 23 May 2019

II. SUMMARY

With this metareflexive action research I try to construct an in-depth understanding of the room for manoeuvre of socially innovative planning practice under post-political planning conditions.
I start from the idea that a critical analysis of depoliticized planning under post-political planning conditions challenges how democracy and the epistemological basis of planning practice can be understood. With this research I try to develop an epistemological consciousness in order to deal with the immanent confusion of planning practice to understand and operationalize concepts as social justice, collective action, moments of opportunity and ambiguity.

The metareflexive action research was structured by starting an office for socio-spatial research called *endeavour* in collaboration with two colleagues Maarten Desmet and Tim Devos. *Endeavour* functions as a collective experiment to critically understand the room for transformative planning practice under post-political planning conditions. The metareflexive action research combines a direct engagement in six local planning trajectories with a reflexive exercise on how these concrete experiences change both the way *endeavour* positions itself and how an underlying epistemology is constantly de- and reconstructed.

The main results of this PhD research are presented in this PhD dissertation. The introduction of this dissertation elaborates on the need to develop an epistemological consciousness and presents a first theoretical interpretation of the problems to be addressed. I start from the idea that new, coproductive, ways of working can be developed, that capitalize on moments of opportunity and strengthen the socially innovative capacity of planning, through a direct collaboration between planning agents and collectives situated outside the institutional planning process. Ambiguity would create the opportunity for planning agents to engage with both institutional processes and external processes of collective action and as such develop a more critical position.

First I redefine how I understand the room for manoeuvre for socially innovative planning in four research chapters. In the first research chapter I describe the complexity of participatory processes and elaborate on the instrumental role of nostalgia to organise settings for dialogue in the case of the redevelopment of the Slaughterhouse Site in Antwerp. In a second research chapter I elaborate on a more operational and detailed way of analysing multiple processes of collective learning in order to help spatial planning professionals to understand these processes and take position. In a third research chapter I reflect on the role of strategic ambiguity as a potential discursive resource for practitioners to remain active within influential urban decision-making processes while sustaining a critical position and practice. In a last research chapter I define four reflective responses to the delusions of strategic spatial planning that are inspired by a social innovation based ontology and introduce Spatial Development Analysis and Planning as a new and critical planning approach.

In the conclusions of this dissertation I describe how this research redefined the room for manoeuvre of socially innovative planning practice under post-political conditions by
(1) composing a theoretical framework that strengthens a reflexive understanding of transformative planning as critically navigating between the strategic and selective actions of others, tracing mechanisms of exclusion while collectively constructing possibilities for action, and
(2) a methodological approach that is based on organizing an embedded case study research that results in a more holistic identification of the possiblities for transformative action and a stronger solidarity based cooperation between different socially innovative initiatives.

The work of *endeavour* essentially shows how this reflexive planning practice can be organized through different collaborative actions, often beyond the planning field. The work stresses the need to develop a specific organisational structure that makes it possible to work pro-actively, not limited to an institutionalized demand, and to integrate a process of strategic and precise navigation in order to collectively understand the limits of planning and the specific possibilities to define or support transformative actions.

III. SAMENVATTING

In dit metareflexief actieonderzoek probeer ik de manoeuvreerruimte van een door sociale innovatie geïnspireerde planningspraktijk te begrijpen binnen een postpolitieke context. Ik start van het idee dat een kritische analyse van planning als een gedepolitiseerde praktijk het planningsveld uitdaagt om haar begrip van democratie en epistemologische uitgangspunten in vraag te stellen. Met dit onderzoek probeer ik een epistemologisch bewustzijn te ontwikkelen om de onduidelijkheid binnen de planningspraktijk rond begrippen als sociale rechtvaardigheid, collectieve actie, opportuniteit en ambiguïteit verder aan te scherpen.

Het metareflexief actieonderzoek werd gestructureerd door het oprichten van een sociaal-ruimtelijk onderzoeksbureau *endeavour* in samenwerking met twee collega's: Maarten Desmet en Tim Devos. *Endeavour* vormt de basis om collectief de manoeuvreerruimte voor transformatieve planning binnen een postpolitieke context te onderzoeken. Het metareflexief actieonderzoek combineert een direct engagement in zes lokale planningstrajecten met een reflexieve oefening rond hoe deze ervaring een invloed had op de manier waarop *endeavour* werd gedefinieerd en op basis waarvan de epistemologische keuzes achter het werk van *endeavour* veranderden.

In deze verhandeling worden de belangrijkste resultaten van dit onderzoek gepresenteerd. De inleiding van deze verhandeling gaat dieper in op de noodzaak om een epistemologisch bewustzijn te ontwikkelen en presenteert een eerste theoretische interpretatie van de probleemstelling. Ik vertrek van het idee dat een transformatieve planningspraktijk zich kan ontwikkelen op basis van een directe, coproductieve samenwerking tussen planningsactoren en collectieven die, in eerste instantie, buiten het planproces vallen. Deze samenwerking kan het inspelen op opportuniteiten en de sociaal innovatieve kracht van een transformatieve planningspraktijk verder versterken. Strategische ambiguïteit speelt een belangrijke rol in dit proces door aan planningsactoren de mogelijkheid te geven zich, zowel binnen institutionele trajecten als in externe processen van collectieve actie te engageren en zo hun kritische positie verder te versterken.

Via de vier onderzoekspapers wordt deze interpretatie van de manoeuvreerruimte stap voor stap geherdefinieerd. In een eerste onderzoekspaper beschrijf ik de complexiteit van participatieprocessen en hoe nostalgie instrumenteel is in het organiseren van dialoog bij de herontwikkeling van de Slachthuissite in Antwerpen. In een tweede onderzoekspaper operationaliseer ik hoe meervoudige collectieve leerprocessen kunnen worden geanalyseerd en hoe dit planningsprofessionals kan helpen om zich te positioneren. In een derde onderzoekspaper reflecteer ik over de rol van strategische ambiguïteit als een mogelijk discursief instrument voor mensen uit de planningspraktijk om ondanks een kritische positie actief te blijven binnen stedelijke besluitvormingsprocessen rond ruimtelijke ontwikkeling.
In een vierde onderzoekspaper ten slotte definieer ik vier reflectieve manieren om te reageren op de desillusie van strategische ruimtelijke planning. Deze vormen de basis

voor sociaal-ruimtelijke analyse en planning als een nieuwe en door sociale innovatie geïnspireerde vorm van strategische ruimtelijke planning.

In de conclusie van deze verhandeling beschrijf ik hoe het onderzoek de manoeuvreerruimte van een door sociale innovatie geïnspireerde planningspraktijk heeft geherinterpreteerd door
(1) een reflexief theoretisch kader voor te stellen dat planning bekijkt als het op kritische wijze navigeren doorheen de grote diversiteit aan acties van anderen. Dit proces gebeurt in samenspraak met een grote diversiteit aan mensen en is gebaseerd op een voortdurende wisselwerking tussen het identificeren van vormen van uitsluiting en het zoeken naar mogelijke nieuwe vormen van actie, en
(2) een methodologische benadering te ontwikkelen die vertrekt van het opzetten van een casestudie van waaruit er samenwerking kan worden aangegaan met een grote verscheidenheid aan initiatieven die bezig zijn met sociale innovatie om zo een brede kijk op veranderingsgerichte planning te kunnen ontwikkelen.

Het werk van *endeavour* toont aan hoe deze vorm van reflexieve planning kan worden georganiseerd via verschillende vormen van samenwerking voorbij de planningspraktijk. De verhandeling benadrukt de noodzaak om te investeren in het onderzoeken van deze organisatiestructuren om zo een flexibele en transformatieve vorm van planning mogelijk te maken.

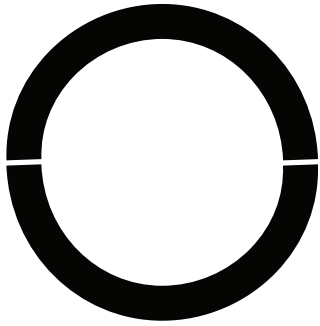

Figure 1: "O" according to *endeavour*

IV. TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	2
II.	SUMMARY	4
III.	SAMENVATTING	6
IV.	TABLE OF CONTENTS	9
0.	ONE YEAR OF ENDEAVOUR	15
1.	INTRODUCTION	23
1.1.	PREQUEL	24
1.1.1.	THE IMPORTANCE OF A PLANNING PRACTICE BASED EPISTEMOLOGY	24
1.1.2.	A METAREFLEXIVE ACTION RESEARCH	26
1.2.	A PLANNER'S ROOM FOR MANOEUVRE	28
1.2.1.	POST-POLITICS IN PLANNING	28
1.2.2.	SOCIAL INNOVATION, MEANS AND ENDS	31
1.2.3.	A PLANNER'S ROOM FOR MANOEUVRE	34
1.3.	NOTES	36
1.4.	REFERENCES	40
2.	THEORETICAL EXPLORATION	47
2.1.	A FIRST (THEORETICAL) UNDERSTANDING	48
2.2.	AMBIGUITY	50
2.3.	SOCIALLY INNOVATIVE ACTION	52
2.4.	COPRODUCTION	54
2.5.	SUBQUESTIONS	60
2.6.	NOTES	62
2.7.	REFERENCES	63
3.	RESEARCH TRAJECTORY, METHODOLOGY & STRUCTURE	67
3.1.	RESEARCH TRAJECTORY	68
3.2.	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	72
3.2.1.	A SPECIFIC RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE	72
3.2.2.	RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODS	73
3.3.	STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS	79
3.4.	ABSTRACTS OF CHAPTERS	81
3.5.	OVERVIEW OF DATA	84
3.6.	NOTES	88
3.7.	REFERENCES	89

4.	AN INTRODUCTION TO ENDEAVOUR	93
4.1.	FACTS & FIGURES	94
4.2.	THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ORGANIZATION	96
4.2.1.	NDVR, TAKING ON A NEW ROLE	96
4.2.2.	THE ORGANIZATION AS A MEANS FOR ACTION	98
4.2.3.	FROM COPRODUCING TO HACKING THE CITY	102
4.2.4.	AN ENDEAVOUR MANIFESTO	106
4.3.	6+2 PROJECTS OF ENDEAVOUR	110
4.3.1.	PROJECT 1. THE DAM PROJECT (ANTWERP)	110
4.3.2.	PROJECT 2. THE PLANNING STUDIO (KU LEUVEN)	116
4.3.3.	PROJECT 3. MUIDE MEULESTEDE MORGEN (GHENT)	119
4.3.4.	PROJECT 4. AGLASUN (TURKEY)	126
4.3.5.	PROJECT 5. THE PARTICIPATION LABS (FLANDERS)	129
4.3.6.	PROJECT 6. COVERING THE RING ROAD OF ANTWERP	132
4.3.7.	WE KOPEN SAMEN DEN OUDAAN/OPP	137
4.3.8.	SPATIAL SAFETY	144
4.4.	NOTES	151
4.5.	REFERENCES	151
5.	THE POLITICS OF NOSTALGIA	153
5.1.	INTRODUCTION	154
5.2.	THE CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH	156
5.3.	NOSTALGIA AND AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY	157
5.4.	CONSTRUCTING A SENSE OF LOCAL COMMUNITY	158
5.5.	CONSTRUCTING THE DAMCOMITÉ	159
5.6.	INSPIRING NOSTALGIA	160
5.7.	THE URBAN PLANNING VS THE NOSTALGIC REPERTOIRE	161
5.8.	CHALLENGING GENTRIFICATION	163
5.9.	CONCLUSIONS	166
5.10.	REFERENCES	168
5.11.	REFLECTIONS	171
6.	SITUATIONAL LEARNING	177
6.1.	SOCIAL INNOVATION & COLLECTIVE LEARNING	178
6.2.	METHODOLOGY	180
6.3.	TOWARDS A FRAMEWORK 103	181
6.4.	LEARNING FROM THE CASES	185
6.4.1.	THE LIVING STREETS IN GHENT	185
6.4.2.	THE “EASTERN RAIL PARK” (PSO) IN ANTWERP	189
6.5.	CONCLUSIONS	193
6.6.	REFERENCES	195
6.7.	REFLECTIONS	197

6.8.	REFERENCES	199
7.	AMBIGUITY AS AGENCY	201
7.1.	INTRODUCTION	202
7.2.	LITERATURE REVIEW	203
7.2.1.	CONTEXT AND DESIGN IN NEOLIBERALISM	203
7.2.2.	STRATEGIC AMBIGUITY AND PARTICIPATORY PRACTITIONERS	205
7.3.	CASE STUDY AND METHODOLOGY	207
7.3.1.	CASE STUDY	207
7.3.2.	METHODOLOGY	208
7.4.	DISCUSSIONS	209
7.4.1.	FROM TACTICAL TO STRATEGIC AMBIGUITY	209
7.4.2.	DIFFERENT ROLES, DIFFERENT IDENTITIES	210
7.4.3.	DELUSION, OPPORTUNITY OR ACTION?	211
7.5.	CONCLUSION	212
7.6.	REFERENCES	214
7.7.	REFLECTIONS	216
7.8.	NOTES	218
8.	SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT ANALYSIS AND PLANNING	221
8.1.	THE DELUSIONS OF STRATEGIC SPATIAL PLANNING	222
8.2.	A SOCIALLY INNOVATIVE PERSPECTIVE	223
8.2.1.	THE INSTITUTIONAL EMBEDDEDNESS OF SSP	224
8.2.2.	THE DIALECTICS OF KNOWLEDGE AND ACTION	225
8.2.3.	EMBEDDED IN A RADICAL MULTI-ACTOR APPROACH	226
8.2.4.	SOCIO-ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE	227
8.3.	SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT ANALYSIS AND PLANNING	230
8.3.1.	DEFINING POWER DIFFERENCES	232
8.3.2.	DEFINING STRATEGIC ALLIANCES	233
8.3.3.	COLLECTIVE PROBLEMATIZATION & STRATEGIC ACTION	234
8.3.4.	THE ETHICAL, ORGANIZATIONAL AND POLIT. CONSEQUENCES	234
8.4.	CONCLUSION	236
8.5.	REFERENCES	238
8.6.	REFLECTIONS	243
8.7.	REFERENCES	247
9.	CONCLUSION	249
9.1.	AN OVERVIEW	250
9.2.	A THEORETICAL REFLECTION	251
9.2.1.	CHANGING THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS	251
9.2.2.	A SOCIAL INNOVATION BASED UNDERSTANDING	253
9.2.3.	REDESCRIBING COPRODUCTION	254

9.2.4.	THE DELUSION OF AMBIGUITY	256
9.3.	THE ROLE OF METAREFLEXIVE ACTION RESEARCH	257
9.3.1.	A SPECIFIC APPROACH	257
9.3.2.	A CHALLENGING PRACTICE	257
9.3.3.	A SOCIALLY INNOVATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH	259
9.4.	THE ROOM FOR MANOEUVRE RECONSIDERED	262
9.4.1.	METAREFLEXIVE ACTION RESEARCH AS A FRAMEWORK	262
9.4.2.	TRACING PROCESSES OF LOCALISATION	263
9.4.3.	A PEDAGOGICAL OPERATIONALISATION	263
9.5.	NOTES	265
9.6.	REFERENCES	266
10.	ANNEX	269
10.1	FROM ACTIVISTS TO SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS, AND BACK?	270
10.2	VALUATING NARRATIVE ACCOUNTS	274
10.2.1.	INTRODUCTION	274
10.2.2.	STORYTELLING AND THE NARRATIVE MODE OF REASONING	275
10.2.3.	VALUATING THE NARRATIVE MODE	276
10.2.4.	A PARTICIPATORY TRAJECTORY	277
10.2.5.	THE CONSTRUCTION OF SHARED NARRATIVES	283
10.2.6.	REFERENCES	284
10.3.	SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW, SOMETHING BORROWED, SOMETHING BLUE	286
10.3.1.	COMMONING	287
10.3.2.	OPENNESS	289
10.3.3.	REFERENCES	291
10.4	SEIZING MOMENTS OF OPPORTUNITY FOR CO-PRODUCTION	292
10.4.1.	INTRODUCTION	292
10.4.2.	SEIZING MOMENTS OF OPPORTUNITY	294
10.4.3.	ACTIVIST PLANNING RESEARCH	296
10.4.4.	A METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK	297
10.4.5.	CASE DAM	300
10.4.6.	CONCLUSIONS	308
10.4.7.	REFERENCES	310

292
294
296
297
300
308
310

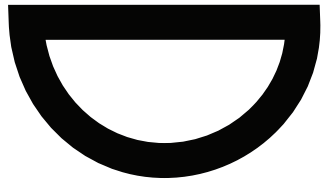

Figure 2: "V" according to *endeavour*

0. ONE YEAR *ENDEAVOUR*



Figure 3: *Endeavour* Morse

ONE YEAR *ENDEAVOUR* (DEVISCH, 2015)[1]

Dear friends of endeavour,

Seppe, Tim and Maarten asked me a couple of weeks ago if I wanted to reflect on the first year of existence of endeavour.
This question seemed to me rather weird since the three of them are PhD researchers and consequently spend half the time on reflecting on what they are actually experimenting with. Moreover, July and August are widely known as bad months for thinking. The sun, the sea and the beach do not stimulate the concentration.

Nevertheless, I accepted the challenge making the mental note not to take it too seriously. I will confine my reflection to some frivolous thoughts. Some of them are maybe too quickly jumping to conclusions, where others sometimes run around in an excess of sun, sea and beaches. I hope you can enjoy it.
In the next twenty minutes I'll try to grasp the phenomenon endeavour. And as you'll notice, that isn't an easy task. Despite searching shells and catching crabs, I found the time to write not less than five chapters (and five pages) about this phenomenon. For those who find this a bit exaggerated, the next words I'll often use are 'practising, DIY and activism'. So, you have the essence.

For the others. Here I present chapter 1, with the expressive title: ***"What is endeavour not?"***
You may be surprised, but there are quite a lot of things endeavour is not. Or at least, endeavour doesn't want to be. They do not want to call themselves a design office, because these offices are more working towards the end result, the realization of a physical object. They also do not want to call themselves a participation office, because these kinds of agency work much on commission and are therefore not to be trusted.
Finally, they do not want to call themselves researchers. Indeed, who wants to spend most of the time in such an ivory tower? Endeavour in any case not, even if they would get paid for it (sorry Tim, I'm talking about Seppe and Maarten now).
Does this exercise in elimination help us any further? It is not really something you can put on your business card: non-designer, non-participation consultant and non-researcher. But maybe it does work as a first character sketch.

Chapter 2 then. This is based on a number of discussions that I had with endeavour over the last year. It was given the title: ***"What does endeavour say about itself?"*** *and is organized along three so-called life mottos (which could probably fit a business card).*

Motto 1: Make sure you are paid to practice

Another thing that endeavour did not want was to start with competitions. For those who are not familiar with the world of young design offices: in Flanders (but also in the rest of Europe) you start your own office with either drawing plans for small renovation projects, or by winning design competitions. This was not endeavour's cup of tea. The former because they do not

want to build and the latter because they don't want to sit and wait behind their computer to finally win a competition.

No, endeavour just moved in the streets and started. Without clients and without competition. Without money too. But that wasn't a problem, because they would later earn it back at double its value. Nice, isn't it? Their own assignment became 'Den Dam', a neighbourhood well known to most of you. In short, they succeeded within a period of two years to get residents, local entrepreneurs and the city to work together. And to attune the ambitions of the city to the local dynamics of the Den Dam today. That in itself is a merit, if you know that there are more people working in the city administration than living in the Dam. But, Den Dam was especially important for endeavour itself. They have been able to try things out, to practice. And so, have been able to create their own niche, to be able to outline their reason for existence. Somewhere in the middle between everything they did not want to be. Nice. With their own methods, tools and, a website.

At the Dam they have decided for themselves that they should continue to work like this. Initiating projects themselves. To keep it exciting, but also to constantly explore new strategies and tools. What they also decided is that they wanted to be paid the next time. But where do you find a client who wants to invest in a group of idealists who wants to try out something new? For those among you who also want to be paid to practice, maybe endeavour can pass on some names in a couple of years.

Motto 2: Do-it-yourself

After Den Dam, endeavour started their tour of Flanders. During that tour they noticed how many municipal authorities were desperately looking for new ways to tackle socio-spatial challenges. Superdiversity, safety, aging, basic mobility, and so on. What the municipal authorities are clearly aware of, is that they have to present the electorate the results of their term in order to be elected again. The guys of endeavour realize that they have created the right niche during their year at Den Dam. And at the right time. They make business cards and present themselves as 'rescuers of the desperate municipal authorities'.
Their approach works. They are invited to start processes in Ghent and Brussels. Still without participating in competitions. But pure Do-it-yourself. They have created their own market, on their own terms. In parentheses, in the meantime, they do participate in competitions. But at the request of other agencies. Because of their business cards.

Motto 3: Don't write reports

Another thing they learned on the way: there are enough reports. Usually these are somewhere at the bottom of a shelf, or in the dark sides of the cloud. Writing reports seemed to them even worse than sitting in an ivory tower. No, endeavour wants to have an impact. Not by creating a building somewhere, but by straightening distorted power relations. You can call such a

thing 'social innovation. Or, in the words of Rudy Roose, Maria Bouverne-De Bie and Griet Roets (2013, p.45): "increasing the possibility of a social system to deal with competitive points of view and to pursue greater equality of possibilities to act". Yet another report will not help a community to deal with conflicts. This calls for actions, on the ground; for agreements with residents, organizations and politicians about concrete locations, responsibilities, financial resources, contracts, etc. And those who read the Gazet van Antwerpen or watch ATV know that Endeavour is good in this.
I am through my three mottos. The fog seems to have disappeared. "Endeavour is a group of activists" who wants to tackle processes of spatial exclusion. And do this. Successfully. And all this in a period of one year. Chapeau! The job is done. We know what endeavour stands for. Time for the frivolous thoughts that I had promised you. So, time for MORSE. Because, for those who have not noticed, Inspector Morse is mentioned on top of your invitation.

Hence, chapter 3 received the simple title ***"Endeavour Morse".***
As Tim, Maarten or Seppe have probably already told you, endeavour refers to the name of Inspector Morse. Together with many of you, I have been wondering for a while what they think is so inspiring about this Inspector. Because a name is something you choose very carefully. I'll give it a try. Wikipedia describes Morse as particularly intelligent. This in itself seems to me to be already a sufficient reason. With a huge memory, which is another advantage I think. But at the same time, he is also very mysterious. We do not know much about his past, his dealings with women. We know that he likes beer (real English ale), Wagner and crossword puzzles. And that he can be very short-tempered.

Well. Yet what seems to me a bit thin. Where are the three life mottos of endeavour? The practicing, DIY and social innovation? With some goodwill you could say that Morse reveals 'marginal' issues, things that all others overlook or do not want to see (see action research). Is that the link? There must be more in it. In the last chapter I make a new attempt.
Could it be that I scrolled too quickly through the life mottos? These come -more or less- directly out of the mouth of the men of endeavour. Maybe they should be taken with a grain of salt. Because, of course, the practice is always different from the theory. I therefore went through my notes again and this time I also read between the lines.

Chapter 4 was therefore entitled ***"endeavour according to Oswald".***
Let us return to the first motto: "Make sure you are paid to practice".
Practicing suggests doubt. You admit that you do not know it all and therefore want to try it first. Without promising anything. Because whoever practices, always first falls off his bike a few times. Practicing also means asking others for help. Others, who have more or different experiences. And that is exactly what endeavour did in Den Dam.
But at the same time endeavour is already working on a book in which they explain their approach, even before they have blown out their first candle. They train civil servants in the deployment of this approach. And they have the ambition to export it throughout Europe in the coming years. Because apparently, municipalities are also there desperately looking for clear

solutions. This Sturm und Drang does not really fit in with practicing, with the careful search for a role, with the step-by-step development of a strategy tailored to a specific situation.
The second motto then, "do-it-yourself". Writing and executing assignments yourself requires a solid knowledge of the local situation. In Den Dam, endeavour has developed an in-house method to collect this knowledge. It is a mix of long-term fieldwork, an extensive network, an army of students, endless energy, and courage.
But at the same time endeavour is contacted today by other agencies, as I mentioned earlier, to submit tenders together. And with success. Because in the meantime they are allowed to work in Ghent, Genk and Brussels, ... as a consultant. And that goes a bit against the do-it-yourself principle. As a consultant, they will never be fully critical, even if they are allowed to use their own method. In their self-initiated assignments however, they can do that.

Also on the third motto - "we do not write reports" - there seems to be some noise. Social innovation requires concrete changes in the field: in the physical space, in the operation of a service, in the use of space by people. These only come after a long period of negotiations, actions, and explorations. But at the same time Tim, Seppe and Maarten are all working on their own PhD. And a researcher has a different agenda than an activist. The researcher wants to understand the present, while the activist wants to talk about tomorrow. This is a tension that comes back in every action research. And consequently, also in the discussions with Endeavour. We only want to build up local knowledge. Then it is up to the actors themselves. No, we also want to change things ourselves. Together with the actors.
After reading between the lines, the profile of endeavour is not that sharp anymore. Can they be described as activists? Or maybe consultants? Or researchers? Or am I just lost in my own thoughts?
Perhaps Morse can help me back on the road. He is last but not least a senior Criminal Investigation Department officer.

The last - fifth chapter 5- I therefore called ***"endeavour according to Morse"****. In Wikipedia - in addition to the story of that beer and Wagner - Morse characterizes himself as someone who works very deductively. He first collects as much information as possible in order to interpret it subsequently in a systematic way. This seems very close to the approach of endeavour which is based on unlocking local knowledge.*
But, again according to Wikipedia, it would not be Morse who works deductively, but the pathologists. You know, those people that in the series, examine a car in search of a hair, or those that can determine the moment of death to the minute on the basis of an autopsy. Morse, on the contrary, would actually work very intuitively.

I had to sit down for a minute. Would the men of endeavour have read that too? Because then the picture would be correct. Then theory and practice would coincide. Let me explain this.
I was once involved in a research in which we related the principle of 'improvisation' to the way city districts change over time. I have learned there that improvising does not mean the same as shaking things up quickly but must be understood as a very concentrated activity that requires

tons of experience and knowledge. And that improvising is about the process, and not about the end result. As such a musician knows what he starts with, but never where he will end up. After all, there is no score, only a theme that musicians can fall back on when they have to catch their breath.

To me this suddenly seemed to fit endeavour, after reading the text about Morse on Wikipedia, very well. They throw themselves into a situation, feel it, and respond to it. Not from intuition. But from understanding and experience. And with a clear-political motive. Again, this time: the Oudaan is for sale. Because they do not want a developer to privatize the tower, they have decided to buy it with Endeavour. Without a business plan. That will take shape along the way. The first motto, Practice, may not be understood as doubting; as learning something new. But rather as training. After all, the approach of endeavour is fixed. It is only the situation that is changing. Practice is then about refining this approach. Learning to play together with new parties. And then be able to go full speed in concrete situations. The duration of an intervention is not that important anymore.

And the second motto, Do-It-Yourself, may not be about proactively formulating your own assignments. And so, about the need for a solid preliminary process. But focusses perhaps more on rewriting an assignment. Together with all involved actors. In the form of an improvisation session. In that case, the pathologists - just like with Morse - would supply all data. And then it's about interpreting together, making conflicts visible, adding missing perspectives. The need for a solid preliminary process may not be that great anymore.
And the third motto, writing reports, may not be about the tension between activist and researcher. After all, improvising is both an action (people come to listen) and a research method. Some actors, for example, would hold improvisation sessions to study new roles. Improvising with endeavour would then be a method to study a spatial issue. To come to shared stories, session after session, about the daily heavy life and the light life of tomorrow. Stories that grow, in the minds of people.

Would it be that simple? That the men (and ladies) of endeavour are just improvisers. And thus, be part of an age-old metier. From musicians, storytellers, actors, and artists who introduce their audience to other ways of looking at their own world and which - and that makes Endeavour a little bit an unusual improviser - provide this audience with the tools to change their world.
Senior improviser. Would that not be nice, on a business card.
Men and Women from endeavour, congratulations on your first anniversary.

Oswald Devisch
Associate professor
University of Hasselt

1. speech by prof. Oswald Devisch: translated from the original (Dutch)

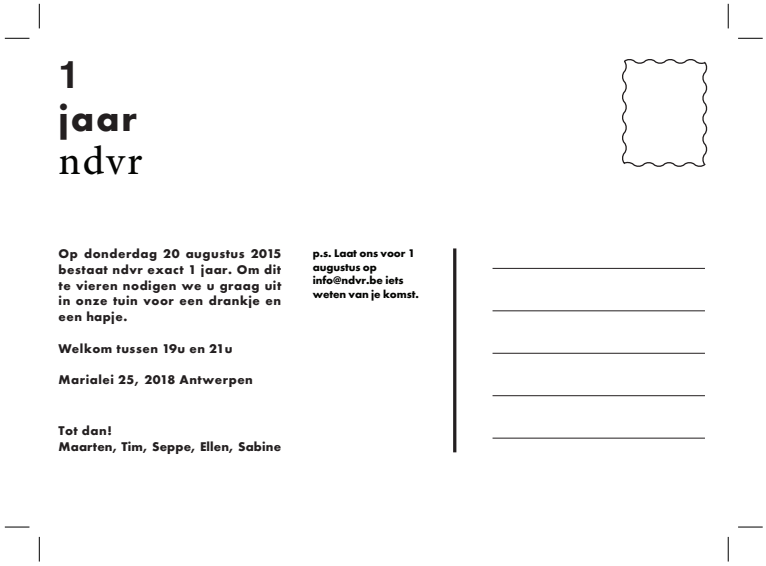

Figure 4: Invitation for one year *endeavour*

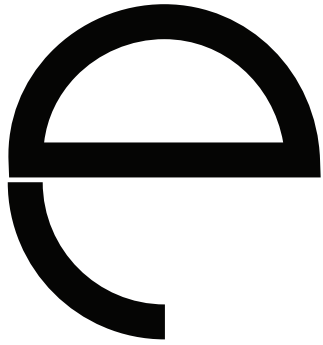

Figure 5: "e" according to *endeavour*

1. INTRODUCTION

So, the question for us is this: can planners evolve a value-based philosophy as a foundation for their own practices in the world? My personal view is that this is perhaps the major challenge before us in a world that, despite protestations to the contrary, is increasingly materialist, individualist, and largely indifferent to humans' impacts on the natural environment. In the absence of a human centred philosophy or some other defensible construct, we will merely drift with the mainstream, helping to build cities that are neither supportive of life nor ecologically sustainable.

(Friedmann, 2008, p. 249)

The planning process dwells in the sphere of the political and the police simultaneously (Rancière, 1999). It is exactly at this interface, at the juncture of this cruel transformation from the freedom of the Many to the totalitarianism of the One, that the planner must mobilise his or her position with the greatest skill, sensitivity, and care, where he or she needs to gather the courage of the intellect and a commitment to navigate this transformation in the interest of the many rather than the few.

(Swyngedouw, 2008, p. 135)

1.1. PREQUEL

With this metareflexive[2] action research I try to construct an in-depth understanding of the room for manoeuvre of spatial planning professionals[3] for transformative planning and action. By actively engaging in planning practice[4], planning education and the professional planning debate in Flanders, I combine theoretical reflection and practical experience to get a better grasp on the possibilities and understanding of a transformative planning practice. This epistemological exercise[5] starts from three concerns that define the need to rethink the transformative potential of planning practice: (1) post-politics[6] as a central condition for spatial planning and how it influences planning practice and more specifically collaborative planning, (2) the immanent confusion between means and ends in planning and how social innovation theory seems promising to overcome this dilemma[7] and (3) the need to give concrete meaning to ideas of agency, collective action and moments of opportunity as leading concepts for a transformative praxis-based epistemology.

Before I discuss each of these concerns (1.2), I elaborate on (1) the importance of a planning practice based epistemology and (2) how it has influenced the methodological framework of this research. A shared understanding of these two starting points is an important condition to further discuss and interpret the research trajectory of this thesis.

1.1.1. THE IMPORTANCE OF A PLANNING PRACTICE BASED EPISTEMOLOGY

Planning theory as the theorization of planning in an effort to understand planning and its role in society (Allmendinger, 2009; Friedmann, 2003; Olesen, 2018), is often a contested *Endeavour*. Its highly normative character and planning centred understanding of reality, makes planning theory vulnerable for critique (Allmendinger, 2009; Salet, 2017). The implicit or explicit political and analytical concerns behind specific planning theoretical approaches are often questioned. Moreover, the tendency of planning theory to translate empirical observations and theoretical understanding to directly applicable planning approaches and moral questions weakens its scientific status (Bengs, 2005).
Notwithstanding the legitimacy of these critical concerns, persistent engagement with planning theory as a way to critically engage with planning problems and its epistemological foundations (Forester, 2004) seems to be necessary because of the immanent societal and political nature of planning practice. *"If planning practice is […] both societal and political, and if we live, as we are obliged to, in an increasingly interconnected world, we have to think more and more deeply about the values [and knowledge] that should inform our practices, including how to move from values [and knowledge] to action (Friedmann, 2008, p. 249)"*.

Finding a way to understand the relevance of values and knowledge for transformative planning (an epistemology for transformative planning practice) is a precondition to avoid what Merton (1968) calls 'ritualistic behaviour', and the dominance of rules over values, or what Gunder and Hillier (2009) call the idea of avoiding avoidance as a basis for responsibility in transformative planning practice. *"With a theoretical foundation to draw on, the final judgement that the planner has to make may look less frightening, less impossible,*

closer to problems the planner has dealt with before, and therefore less paralyzing." (Sager, 2013, p. 272).

Transformative planning and action

My understanding of transformative planning and action changed throughout this PhD research.
The initial conceptualisation of transformative planning was based on the role of the planner as a change agent. Following a relational ontology, the transformative aspect of planning was conceptualized as a supportive role: an agent that opens the possibility for others to engage 'such that actors who are typically outside of the political system appear "on the stage of social design"' (Parker et al., 2017, p.451).

By situating this planning perspective within a post-political understanding of the planning condition this definition changed. Challenged by the need to engage with an agonistic notion of democracy and a way to relate both means and ends of planning, transformative planning was situated in a coproductive planning approach.
This coproductive planning is based on a direct collaboration between planning agents and collectives outside the institutional planning process by inclusive collective action. Strategic ambiguity would create the opportunity for planning agents to engage with both institutional processes and external processes of collective action and provide the room for manoeuvre to fundamentally rethink the role of planning in society and its underlying democratic notions.

Empirical and theoretical exploration of action research based on planning practice lead to a third redefinition of transformative planning, highly influenced by social innovation theory and its dialectical ontological and epistemological understanding of planning practice. Starting from four reflective responses that inspire a socially innovative planning practice, planning agency was further embedded in a reflexive-recursive dialectical field. The transformative capacity of planning is from this perspective fully defined by situating practices in direct relation to shared concerns and (future) actions of others. Those actors who through a Socially Innovative (SI) oriented analytical disposition manage to figure out the configuration of power differences and socio-spatial transformation through time, can use this knowledge to define opportunities for social action. Planning agency considers the ethical, organizational and socio-political consequences of its reflexive positionality but doesn't conceive its own actions as the spine for socio-spatial transformation.

This PhD research can be seen as my personal de- and reconstruction of a transformative planning epistemology. Ten years of planning practice in different positions (as a member of the city council of Antwerp (2006-2012[8]), an advisor for the minister of urban affairs (2011-2013[9]), a planning practitioner[10] (2013 - current) and activist[11] (2006-current)), nourished a specific (but often implicit) understanding of planning praxis based on experiences or normative frameworks, rather than one relying on planning theory or empirical validated observations. This PhD research gave me the opportunity to dig into (planning) theory and the different ambiguities and opportunities that struck me during those last ten years. I invested in this critical digging in order to strengthen my work as a planning practitioner and meanwhile concretizing the values and assumptions that seem to influence my understanding of reality in order to become a better researcher. As such, this research relates to the idea of Patsy Healey and Rose Gilroy (1990, p.26) that planners need to develop an *"epistemological consciousness"* and ask themselves *"what knowledge and what values does, and should a planner bring forward? What grounds for raising such knowledge and values does a planner have?"* (Hillier, 2015).

1.1.2. A METAREFLEXIVE ACTION RESEARCH

The way in which I constructed this research is based on a strong belief in the relation between personal experience and scientific understanding. Situated within a pragmatic research tradition, I start from the idea that *"scientists are embodied minds, i.e. people whose thoughts and interests are intertwined (constantly influencing and influenced by shaping and shaped, etc.) with their place of birth, what they've seen, touched, smelled, the people they've interacted with etc."* (Saija, 2017, p. 10-11). I start from experience as a source of knowing and understand action research as a way to develop *"a quality of mind that will help them [researchers] to use information and to develop reason in order to achieve lucid summations of what is going on in the world and of what may be happening within themselves. […] a quality of mind essential to grasp the interplay of man and society, of biography and history, of self and the world"* (Mills, 1959, p. 5-6).

Starting from personal experiences as a basis for scientific understanding influenced the research dynamic of this PhD trajectory by (1) integrating a reflexive attitude as an important methodological element in planning practice based research, (2) constructing the research process as a continuous line of exploration by gradually exploring new theoretical fields and iteratively reconstructing the epistemological framework and (3) selecting and constructing the case study as an autonomous planning practice created to explore and research the room for manoeuvre for spatial planning professionals to organise a transformative planning practice. Each of these elements will be introduced in chapter 3 on the methodology of this PhD research. I started the planning office called *endeavour*[12] in parallel with my PhD trajectory and in collaboration with two colleagues Maarten Desmet and Tim Devos[13]. *Endeavour* functioned as a collective experiment to critically understand the room for transformative planning practice under post-political planning conditions.

The choice to develop and select *endeavour* as a case for this metareflexive action research resulted in a multi-layered case study. The action research was influenced by a continuous interference of direct engagement in local planning trajectories, supervising a planning studio and internal debates on structuring and organizing the office as a vehicle for collective action. This combination of different situations of research gave me the opportunities to understand the room for manoeuvre of planning practitioners in rich, self-reflective and multiple ways. Based on the research hypothesis introduced in chapter 2, I'll describe how this multiplicity of research situations is a necessary condition to explore a new epistemological position. Over the last four years ndvr/*endeavour*[14] has participated in more than 50 projects, six of which are part of this PhD-research (for a more extended description on *endeavour* and the different projects that were part of this research; see chapter 4).

This research can thus be seen as a metareflexive action research since it combines a direct engagement in local planning trajectories with a reflexive exercise on how these concrete experiences change the way *Endeavour* positions itself and how an underlying epistemology is constantly de- and reconstructed. The PhD trajectory was a fundamental epistemological exercise that forced me to go back to the basis of planning and question what transformation in planning actually means and how it can be understood in practice. In section 1.2.1. I describe why I think the post-political condition of current planning practice forces us to raise these questions again. This way of working closely relates to the idea of the reflective practitioner as developed by Schön (1991) and his understanding of a continuous sequence of reflection-in-action and reflection-on action. Through reflection-in-action, a situational reinterpretation of theories and methods is developed through an iterative process of knowledge and actions, where reflection-on-action takes a step back and starts to uncover the ontological and epistemological ideas behind sequences of actions.

In my research I situate this idea of the reflective practitioner in its organisational context by not only trying to trace and situate the relevance of values, knowledge and action but also by focusing on and practically exploring: (1) how the contingencies of power and authority make alternative frames and knowledge claims by a critical planning office more or less plausible (Forester, 2012, Wagenaar, 2011) and (2) how one can organise a practice in relation to these contingencies? As such, the research forms what Miessen (2017, p.14) calls an integral component of an alternative (participatory) practice: *"the exchange between theoretical investigations and the production of ideas, while constantly testing those against (political) reality"*. I will further elaborate on this role of *endeavour* as a mode for metareflexive action research under section 3.2.1 and in chapter 4.

In the following sections I describe the main concerns that have led to the need to (re-) define my epistemological understanding of transformative planning practice and elaborate on the main research question of this thesis.

1.2. A PLANNER'S ROOM FOR MANOEUVRE

1.2.1. POST-POLITICS IN PLANNING

The need to (re-)define my epistemological understanding of transformative planning practice came from the observation that neoliberal and post-political mechanisms more and more define planning practice in Flanders (Belgium). In line with an international transition towards flexible, short- or middle-range planning (Tasan-Kok, 2008) and projects (Albrechts, 2004; Oosterlynck et al., 2011; Healey & Williams, 1993; Motte, 1994) real estate and spatial development are increasingly seen as assets for market-oriented economic growth (Sager, 2011). A mixture of state (local or regional) actors along with developers, chambers of commerce, local businesses, universities, banks, private consultancies and so forth form strong public-private coalitions around urban initiatives (Moulaert et al., 2007; Moulaert & Cabaret, 2006). This highly complex and interrelated governance context creates the perfect basis for a broader post-political agenda to normalize and internalize the dominant logic of the managerial state *"in the minds and bodies of citizens"* (Law-Yone, 2007, p. 3019). *"The blurring, if not erasure, of the lines of demarcation between state, civil society and market"* (Swyngedouw & Moulaert, 2010, p. 224) leads to an unclear definition of public values as a shared denominator for spatial transformation (Swyngedouw, Moulaert, & Rodriguez, 2002).

In Flanders this entrepreneurial governance perspective on planning and urban policy was institutionalized in the late 90's (Loopmans, 2007 ; De Decker, 2004), supported by specific European urban renewal funds, the continuous rise of extreme right in Flanders and a growing consensus that "a more healthy social mix[15]" in poor urban areas was a necessary strategy to revitalize and strengthen the reputation of Flemish cities (Boudry et al., 2003; Loopmans et al. 2010; Schuermans et al., 2015).
Urban governments increasingly focused on urban projects in and on the fringe of disadvantaged areas to attract the middle class by means of public-private partnerships and city marketing (Loopmans, 2008, De Decker et al., 2012), downplaying the strong historical social equality agenda of Flemish urban policy and local experience to develop socially innovative trajectories of urban renewal (Christiaens et al., 2007; De Decker et al., 2005). This tendency was further strengthened by new strategic urban planning visions that were defined for different cities in Flanders and focussed even more on identifying investment and renewal opportunities in multi-stakeholder constellations, leaving aside the fundamental debate on the future of the city and its potential for reducing social inequality (a.o. Van den Broeck et al., 2015; Van den Broeck, 2017).
This urban renewal agenda introduced a governance transition on both the regional and urban level that led to a loss of control of the state on the development of the real estate market. A greater focus on public-private investment agendas and strong semi-autonomous agencies, responsible for valorising the real-estate potential of a city and the qualitative and efficient realization of urban renewal projects, diminished the legislative power of the city council, in favour of stronger legislative and executive power for the board of aldermen of the city and the board of directors of the semi-autonomous governance agencies.

This entrepreneurial agenda of (local) spatial development strategies (a.o. Swyngedouw et al., 2002; Haughton et al, 2013; Metzger et al., 2014; Cerreta et al., 2010) fundamentally obscure the social and political nature of spatial change and the often historical role of social planning as an emancipatory, transformative and social innovative *Endeavour* (a.o. Christiaens et al., 2007; Tasan-Kok & Baeten, 2011) as well as the values of equity, social and environmental justice traditionally cherished by the planning community (Allmendinger, 2001; Forester, 1989, 1993; Healey, 1997; Sandercock, 1998). One of the mechanisms that is instrumental in this delusional role of planning practice under post-politics is the specific conception of democracy by both planning professionals and state institutions.
The post-political critique of planning practice (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2010, 2012, 2014; Metzger, 2011; Swyngedouw, 2009; Oosterlynck & Swyngedouw, 2010) describes how governance practices (as spatial planning) are increasingly embedded in a process of ideological closure because of their specific understanding of democracy as an aggregative-representative (based on a procedural approach of democracy premised on the political validity of technocratic choice) or participatory-deliberative model (based on processes of deliberation and the political validity of consensus-based negotiation) (Gualini, 2015). This closure described by Zizek as "a mental block that prevents us from imagining a fundamental social change, in the interests of an allegedly 'realistic' and 'mature' attitude (Zizek, 2000, p. 323-4) functions as the suppression of the inherent conflictual or political nature of social action" (Mitchell, 2013, p.1).

The current debate on the transformative capacity of collaborative planning approaches (e.g. Healey, 2003; Huxley & Yiftachel, 2000; Bengs, 2005; Benner & Pastor, 2015; Gunder, 2010; Hillier, 2003; Moulaert & Cabaret, 2006; Sager, 2005, 2013) clearly illustrates how planning practice under post-political governance plays an instrumental and even delusional role in its own decline in at least three ways.

1. There is a long-standing critique of the exclusive character of collaborative processes. Based on the idea that different dialogical, but often fuzzy, forms of consensus formation used by planners in the majority of neighbourhood planning processes such as hearings, charrettes, advisory groups, temporary interventions, … often exclude radical or minority voices (Brownill & Carpenter, 2007; Parker & Murray, 2012; Rydin, 2003; Eversole, 2010) while claiming to represent broad 'public interest' (Campbell & Marshall, 2002).

2. Many authors argue that this mechanism is further strengthened by the growing tendency to avoid conflict in planning processes that focus on technical and managerial mechanisms rather than on more fundamental socioeconomic questions that are inherently part of spatial transformations (Gualini, 2015; Parker & Street, 2015; Sager, 2011; Haughton et al, 2013; Hillier, 2003; Mouffe, 2000; Pløger, 2004; Purcell, 2009; Campbell et al., 2014). This simplification of the future creates a limitation of the degrees of freedom on which planning visions are based (Gunder & Hillier, 2009) and consequently often

relies on and strengthens the dominant ideology (De Vries, 2007; Stavrakakis, 2007; Žižek, 2006).

3. In actively combining these exclusive and confirmative mechanisms, planning practice, plays an instrumental and as such delusional role (a.o. Kaethler et al., 2017; Palmer & Von Busch, 2015) in legitimizing existing power structures. Collaborative approaches seem to jeopardise too often effective contestation of planning initiatives by focusing on consensus, without accepting agonism (see Mouffe 1999; 2005; 2013; Ploger, 2004; Hillier, 2002; Gualini, 2015, Swyngedouw, 2010) turning participants into 'collaborateurs' in collusion with the power and political agendas of the elites, thus betraying their initial interests and those of their peers.

If transformative planning approaches want to engage with this critique and redefine its epistemological basis they need to engage with and define their own democratic make-over (a.o. Olesen, 2014; Sager, 2013; Metzger et al., 2014). A post-political strategy can flourish thanks to a multiplicity of fuzzy coalitions and undefined political fora. Aiming for involvement without a redefinition of political structures keeps the framework within which the involvement operates (e.g. a neoliberalism political regime) uncontested (Rancière, 2004). Therefore, a democratic make-over in spatial planning not only requires new methods to open up public debate or tactics to capitalize on cracks (de Certeau, 1984; Andres, 2013) but also needs to focus on 'the political' and 'redefine the very identities and positions of actors by performing alternative ways of being and acting together' (Velicu & Kaika, 2015). In other words, planning practice seems to dwell *"in the sphere of the political and the police simultaneously (Rancière, 1999). It is exactly at this interface, at the juncture of this cruel transformation from the freedom of the Many to the totalitarianism of the One, that the planner must mobilise his or her position with the greatest skill, sensitivity, and care, where he or she needs to gather the courage of the intellect and a commitment to navigate this transformation in the interest of the many rather than the few'. (Swyngedouw, 2008, p. 135).*

Within the post-political debate different authors make a plea for a radical-agonistic model of democracy in line with what Metzger calls the need *"to experiment with new methods to accommodate fruitfully dissensus already at an early stage within the planning process*" (Metzger, 2011, p. 195) to strengthen this critical position. The radical-agonistic model of democracy *"assumes that the formation of political subjectivity is truly only possible in a struggle for diversity and inclusion and in a struggle over hegemony" (Gualini, 2015, 9)* radical-agonistic model of democracy fundamentally challenges both the aggregate-representative and participative-deliberative model in their notion of a shared and liberal understanding of the public. From a radical-agonistic point of view, politics is always based on disagreement and a constitutive outside[16] as a condition for political subjectivity. This radical interpretation of democracy completely changes the epistemological basis of planning practice since it radically rejects the idea of a stable notion of democracy and as such questions the possibility of planning to be democratic (Swyngedouw, 2011, 2014,

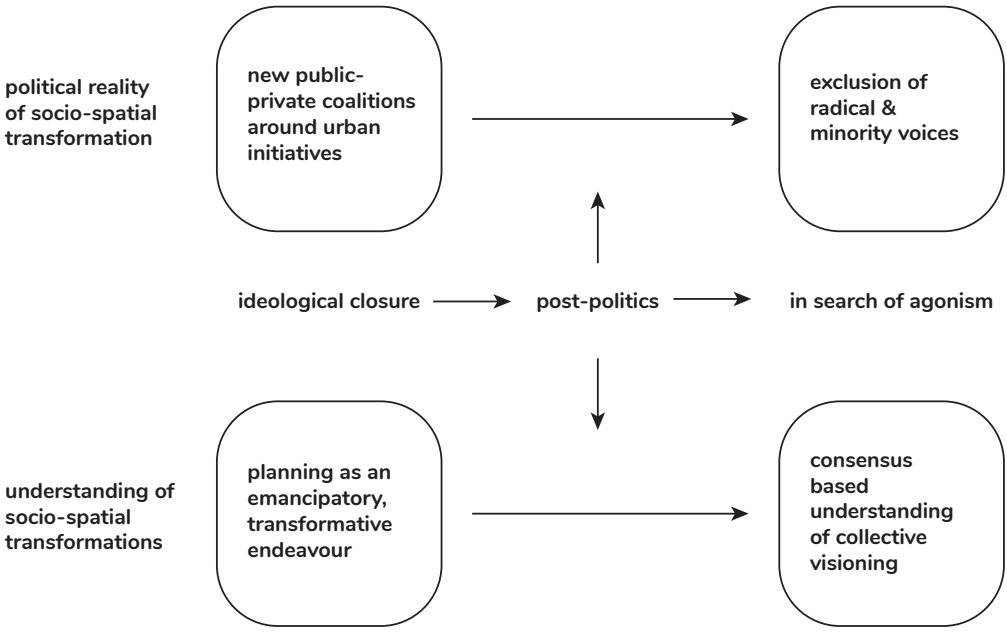

Figure 6: post-politics and the transformative capacity of planning practice

2017). This not only challenges the validity of the planning process but also the possibility of planning as progressive agency (Gualini, 2015) and its strategical interference in processes of institutionalization (Figure 6). I turn to the wider planning (theoretical) debate on the means and ends of planning and a pragmatic understanding of its room for manoeuvre to further understand how this impacts the epistemology of transformative planning.

1.2.2. SOCIAL INNOVATION, MEANS AND ENDS

Depoliticised planning

Within the slipstream of collaborative planning approaches, the means of planning gained in importance. Closely related to the instrumentalization of participation in planning (De Bie et al., 2012), the evaluation of a planning project got centred around the implementation of procedural steps or the successful (ultimately consensual) completion of negotiations between the multiplicity of actors involved, without questioning the actual outcome of the plan (Campbell, 2006; Fainstein, 2010).
In line with the post-political critique on planning, this narrow focus on the means of planning is problematic since it strengthens a narrow interpretation of planning as a model

of consensus or collaboration (Miessen, 2010). This depoliticized version of planning and how it influenced a subverted construction of participatory processes is described by different authors (e.g. Miessen, 2010; Sanders & Stappers, 2008; Von Busch, 2012; Palmäs & Von Busch, 2015) and challenges the idea of an uncertain, porous and open society (Mouffe, 2005; Jones, 2014) cherished by agonistic philosophy. In planning theory and practice, there is a long tradition to define alternatives for this procedural approach. Approaches such as advocacy planning (Davidoff, 1965), equity planning (Krumholz & Forester 1990), radical planning (Friedmann, 1987), social planning (Greed, 1999) or insurgent planning (Sandercock, 1998) all focus on more substantive arguments for planning evaluation, considering the reality of structural inequality and hierarchies of power (Fainstein, 2000; Yiftachel, 1999; Campbell, 2006). In chapter 2 I compare these different approaches with my first theoretical and as such hypothetic understanding of transformative planning under post-political conditions.
More recently, 'just' planning (see, e.g., Campbell 2006; Fainstein 2000, 2010; Marcuse et al. 2009), engaged with this stronger emphasis on material redistribution and substantive outcomes, over deliberation and inclusive participation (Fraser & Honneth, 2003). The Just City approach *"subsumes the communicative approach in that it is concerned with both processes and outcomes and recognizes the potential for contradiction between participation and just outcomes"* (Fainstein, 2016, p. 261). As such, *"the just city approach cannot be narrowed down to importing a universal principle of justice in the application of an act of final moral judgment' (Lake, 2016, p. 1210) but needs to be seen as 'the basis upon which another social practice – planning – is built"* (Lake, 2016, p. 1210).

Social Justice and Social Innovation

Social innovation as *"a practice (collective satisfaction of human needs) and a process (changes in social relations, empowering governance dynamics) in local development"* (Moulaert & Mehmood, 2018, p. 138) has a strong relation with the idea of social justice as the subject of planning. Socially Innovative (SI) action research starts from a clear ethical position, based on solidarity and reflexivity and a specific epistemology. A collectively built and hence shared meta (-theoretical) framework (Martinelli et al., 2013; Moulaert & Van Dyck, 2013; Moulaert & Mehmood, 2018; Moulaert and MacCallum, 2019) is used to understand in greater detail how a local constellation (taking into account its economic, political, socio-ecological, cultural, … dimensions) forms and is formed by socio-innovative practices and how shifting spatial arrangements create the condition for different types of social innovation to emerge (Novy et al. , 2009).

Building and rebuilding this framework is a key step in the transdisciplinary research process of joint problematization, analysis, collective action and reflection which SI researchers and actors share. As such, *"social innovation theory can help to define the types of collective action and social transformation which we believe are needed to respond in an appropriate way to situations of need … and connect path dependence and the shape of development to the role of*

agency and organization" (Moulaert et al., 2013, p. 18, 19; Moulaert & MacCallum, 2019). In response to the post-political critique, social innovation theory seems to open up the possibility for transformative practice by combining a need-based and agonistic understanding of the struggle over hegemony with a collaborative and practical understanding of local action and solidarity. This combination of process and outcome, means and ends, as an important basis to conceptualize justice, questions the dualist basis of the post-political critique and its understanding of 'police' (*"an order of the visible that sees that a particular activity is visible and another is not, that this speech is understood as discourse and another as noise"* (Rancière, 1999, p. 29)) versus 'politics' (*"that what comes into existence when the natural order of domination is interrupted by the institution of a part of those who have no part"* (Rancière, 1999, p. 11)) or "*democracy without agonism' (without agonistic pluralism or the possibility of a commonality that makes place for conflictual pluralism) versus 'antagonism' (the classic friend-enemy relation)* (Gualini 2015, p. 15).

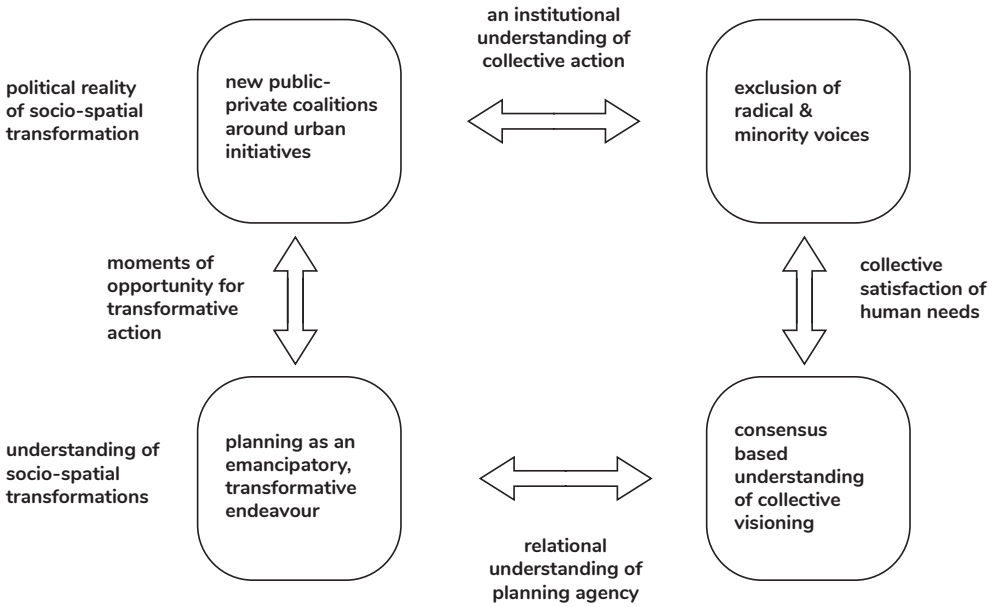

Figure 7: understanding the room for manoeuvre of socially innovative planning practice

If we acknowledge that working within a post-political condition urges us to rethink the democratic positioning of planning, then it becomes clear that we will need to find a balance between engaging with planning literature to understand the consequences of the post-political condition on planning practice and avoid a too much planner-oriented focus in order to fundamentally redefine what transformative planning actually means.
As described in the previous paragraphs, social innovation theory and its long tradition of combining an action-oriented and a social-sciences based understanding of urban transformation seems to be promising to find this balance. In the following paragraphs we propose to focus on a redescription of collective action, agency and moments of opportunity to rediscover the room for manoeuvre of transformative planning under post-political conditions (Figure 7). Throughout this PhD dissertation each of these concepts will be gradually redefined through our empirical work in planning practice and theoretical engagement with diverse epistemologies for socio-spatial transformation.

1.2.3. A PLANNER'S ROOM FOR MANOEUVRE

At the start of my PhD research planning agency was understood from a Lacanian perspective[17] and tried to define the planner (or any other agent that takes part in processes of spatial transformation) as a lacanian subject: *"The lacanian subject is a person who is situated in a network of complex relations of need and demand with many others"* (Gunder & Hillier, 2009, p. 48). The Lacanian subject always exists in relationship to the Other – *"we fundamentally want to be wanted by others, hence we strive to give the Other what we think, the Other wants"* (Gunder & Hillier, 2009, p. 172; Zizek, 1997).

This idea of personal and group identification accepts the fundamental impossibility of closure and coherence as the basis of the political since it is fundamentally impossible to really know what actually is and as such define the common subject. Dealing with the Other as a constitutive outside directly defines agency in a relational way and as such the possibility of strategic action as a contextual process (in relation to the Other). The actor specific tension between the desired and finally used planning perspective can be seen as an important nominator for underlying strategy and action (a.o. Hillier, 2003; Gunder and Hillier, 2009).

In this PhD research the relation between desired and finally used planning perspective as an important nominator for strategy and action was promptly replaced by an attempt to conceptualize a process oriented understanding of the room for manoeuvre for planning practice. Room for manoeuvre of planning practitioners is often based on the idea that policy practitioners can identify a certain 'margin of manoeuvre' (Callon, 1986), within which they actually *"have a real possibility to challenge established mechanisms and to tactically act in ways that facilitate the development of alternative types of planning methods and mechanisms"* (Metzger, 2011, p. 194). From this perspective *"big patterns and seemingly 'small' events are mutually formative and structuring forces"* (Healey, 2012a, p.197) which create

moments of opportunity' for local planning trajectories to shape a certain form of (local) politics.

This idea of moments of opportunity as a basis for transformative action is widely shared among planning theorists and directly relates to post-political theory where events are seen as possibilities for political action to emerge. Where in a radical-agonistic understanding of democracy only radical actions (that directly rethink the order of things) are seen as political actions (Deranty, 2016), there often is a less rigorous application of the political idea behind moments of opportunity in planning practice. Based on a micro-political understanding, planning practice often endorses the transformative potential of a broad set of collective deliberation, expression, or self-organisation, seen by post-political theorists as "*the negations of politics or the organization and reproduction of society in its 'parts'*" (Deranty, 2016, p. 68). Democracy becomes understood as 'a direction to be struggled for' rather than a truth to be asserted (Healey, 2012b, p. 35), with a *"continuously searching for what could be and never being satisfied with what is"*. In order to overcome a delusional interpretation of this room for manoeuvre we need to understand how spatial planning can *"look in the mouth of power"* and become active in *"areas that may affect the transformation of the deep structures of society"* Moulaert and Cabaret (2006, p.67), drawing on Zizek (2001).

This position leads to the following research question:

"How can we understand the room for manoeuvre of socially innovative planning practice under post-political planning conditions and how does this influence our understanding of planning agency, collective action and moments of opportunity for transformative action?"

This research elaborates on earlier attempts to (1) define the relations between different actors and agents involved in collective action from a socially innovative perspective (Moulaert & Mehmood, 2015; Segers et al., 2016; Goethals and Schreurs, 2011; Goethals et al., 2013) and their specific fields of action, (2) understand how they deal with local institutional and political constraints and opportunities in planning processes (Newman, 2008; Andres, 2013; Van den Broeck, 2010) and (3) analyse how this is related to a redefinition of planning practice as a transformative activity (a.o. Oosterlynck et al., 2011; Campbell et al., 2014; Vervloesem et al., 2012).

In the second chapter I describe how in the beginning of this research, I understood and theoretically embedded agency, collective action and moments of opportunity and how this made me reconceptualise a transformative praxis-based epistemology. In chapter 3 I introduce the methodological structure of my PhD research, elaborate on the specific configuration of my case study and introduce the different research chapters of this thesis. In Chapter 4 I introduce *Endeavour* as a case both on an organisational level and in relation to each of the planning projects that were part of this PhD research.

1.3. NOTES

2 Metareflexive (action research): In this research context I use reflexive instead of reflective practice, based on the idea that by integrating my own planning practice (endeavour) as a case study, I fundamentally question the position of planning practice and the planning practitioner. The research structure is based on the idea of critically constructing an epistemological framework through planning practice as will be elaborated under in chapter 3.

3 Spatial Planning Professional: Spatial Planning Professionals is a contested term. As will be discussed within this PhD thesis, spatial planning needs to be understood from a multi-actor perspective. Notwithstanding this critical position I decided to define the spatial planning professional as the subject of this research because of the prominent role of *endeavour* as the basis for reflexive action. It's from the position of *endeavour* that I try to understand the room for manoeuvre of transformative action. In more abstract terms you could say that I try to understand the room for manoeuvre for transformative practice for those who situate their professional role in the (broad) discipline of planning.

4 Planning practice: Planning practice is broadly defined in this PhD research, based on the different case studies described under 3.3.6. Based on the focus of this research on the spatial planning professional I define planning practice in relation to this professional role (only those practices in which professional spatial planners are involved based on their professional role).

5 Epistemology: I define epistemology in line with Jessop et al. (2014, p. 124) as built around three questions: What is knowledge? How should it be acquired? When do we know that what we learned is true? Based on the idea that if planning operates at the interface of knowledge and action a better and precise understanding of the epistemological framework of transformative planning is crucial.

6 The post-political condition of planning: The post-political condition of planning is defined as the state of governance under neoliberalism where new discursive practices, as participatory trajectories, collaborative planning processes, actively *"veil the possibility of a radically different society"* (Metzger, 2018, :p. 180). Consequently, this condition of planning practice leads to a further depolitization of planning and strengthens its democratic deficiencies.

7 Social innovation: In this PhD research I use social innovation research as a way to further understand the ontological and epistemological basis of transformative planning. More specifically I turn to the territorial development approach (Moulaert et al., 2000, Moulaert et al., 2017) in social innovation research based on its long research tradition to analyse and operationalize the local effects and transformative potential of strategic and regional planning practices.

8 Member of the city council in Antwerp: as a member of the city council of Antwerp I was part of the commission of Urban Development and Planning. During this period (2006-2012) urban development and planning was seen as a strategic domain for both social and spatial transformations in the city (a.o. Van den Broeck et al., 2015). Since my active political career ran parallel to my education as a sociologist and urban planner and first academic experiences as a scientific assistant at the Centre on Inequalities, Poverty, Social Exclusion and the City, they both influenced my ontological and epistemological

framework. Combining both perspectives lead to a troubled understanding of planning practice. I was aware of the critical frameworks that situated planning practice and urban governance in larger market-based institutional frame, but was meanwhile personally engaged in the construction of a discourse that further framed planning practice as the basis of an emancipatory, inclusive and competitive public policy strategy.

9 Advisor for the minister of urban affairs: Between 2011-2013 I was advisor for the Flemish minister of Urban affairs, Housing, Energy and Ssocial Eeconomy, Freya Van Den Bossche. I was responsible for amongst other things Urban Policy and the new regional planning framework.
During this period, I finalized my master thesis in urban planning. Both positions gave me the possibility to start to construct a personal understanding of the role of planning in urban governance and its relation to political discourses. Curious to explore different perspectives and based on these seven years of political involvement, I decided to change position and became actively engaged in planning practice. This choice to further understand and experience the role of the planner and his/her room for manoeuvre can be seen as an early prequel of this PhD research.

10 Planning practitioner: From 2013 until the start of *endeavour* (summer 2014) I worked for the planning office Stramien. This was my first encounter with actual planning practice. In Stramien I worked on different regional plans and further developed a process-oriented approach to planning in the office (How to deal with multiple stakeholders? How to diversify the output and instruments of a planning process? How to deal with complex socio-spatial research questions? How to integrate design and sociology in the planning profession?).

11 Activist: In parallel to my different engagements as a politician, advisor and planning practitioner, I was for a long time involved in environmental activism. Mostly as a member of JNM (Youth movement for Nature and Environment) and later (until today) as one of the founders of Ringland (a civil action group that successfully advocated for covering the Ring Road of Antwerp). This parallel engagement created a constant group of critical peers during both my education as a sociologist, my activities as a politician and urban planner. During my PhD research my engagement in activism was crucial to relate the work of *endeavour* and spatial planning professionals with civil society. Based on these encounters I started to understand the wide diversity of transformative planning practices and took, bit by bit, more distance from a planning centered position.

12 Endeavour: *Endeavour* as an office for socio-spatial research is structured as a cooperative and is currently a group of 7 people of different backgrounds. www.endeavours.eu

13 Maarten Desmet & Tim Devos: The action research needs to be seen as a shared endeavour with Tim Devos and Maarten Desmet. It's in constant interaction that we tried to understand the possibilities for transformative planning while developing *endeavour* as an office. Tim Devos wrote a PhD (2016) which was partly based on the work we did with *endeavour*. Research chapter 1 and two articles in annex are shared chapters in our PhD's.

14 Ndvr / endeavour: Throughout this PhD I'll mostly use *endeavour*. The name of the office changed throughout the PhD research. I kept the word ndvr when the text is originally written in the first three years of endeavour.

15 A more healthy social mix: Since more than 20 years the urban renewal debate in Flanders is dominated by the 'adagio' to attract middle-class families to the city. As a consequence of this strong discourse a healthier social mix is often interpreted as the need to build more middle-class housing in the city, with a stronger focus on spatial quality and (semi-)private green space than the cost of living.

16 Constitutive outside: a term introduced by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe to describe that in the absence of ontological grounding, identity constitution must take place against a 'radical outside, without a common measure with the inside' (Laclau, 1990, p. 18). This idea challenged me to redefine political agency and how it related to collaborative planning approaches.

17 Lacanian perspective: I stopped using Lacan as an active theoretical framework to structure and interpret my empirical findings since I missed a certain structural element that could relate actors to their social groups and related institutional frames.

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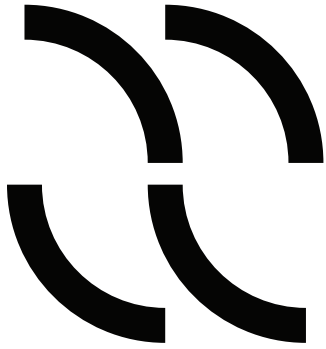

Figure 8: "r" according to *endeavour*

2. THEORETICAL EXPLORATION

I think we are sometimes still too pragmatic or even delusional. That is a bit of a struggle for Endeavour, because of the position we take. To change something from the inside, being part of the system – you need a critical mirror. After four years of Endeavour I think we need to evolve to be a professional designer and activist at the same time. This in order to be able to critically position ourselves, to free ourselves, to not be fully dependent on the rules, implications and limitations of our profession. This critical mirror is not just a collection of books and articles, but mostly a group of people like other activist groups or neighbourhood committees. You need that in order to really understand what the imbalance is today.

Interview with Seppe De Blust by Isabella Kramer for the website of endeavour

2.1. A FIRST (THEORETICAL) UNDERSTANDING

In the introduction of this thesis I wrote that my research was triggered by the need to redefine the epistemological basis of planning because of its challenging post-political context that urges for a democratic make-over and a thinking about planning as an arena of disruptive politics in the city (Barnett, 2005; Nicholls and Uitermark, 2017). A structural reconceptualization of the political fora of planning is needed to overcome a possible delusional position where planning aims for democratic involvement but in practice legitimises existing power structures.
I discussed that this engagement with a democratic make-over results in the search for a balance between on the one hand engaging with planning literature to understand the consequences of the post-political condition and on the other hand the efforts to avoid a too planner-oriented focus.
At the end of the introduction I suggested that this balance can best be researched by operationalizing the room for manoeuvre of transformative planning in relation to a redescription of collective action, agency and moments of opportunity.

Following a critical realist research structure (3.2.2), I started by providing a theoretical answer to the research question of this PhD based on earlier experiences, convictions and first encounters with critical planning literature. This first interpretation can be seen as a hypothetical answer to my research question and is consequently an important basis to interpret and understand the results of the action research as described in chapter 5-8 of this PhD thesis.

My first understanding of the room for manoeuvre of socially innovative planning under post-political planning conditions was composed of three theoretical dimensions (Figure 9):

(1) The **strategic use of ambiguity** to engage with a large diversity of actors. I started from the idea that the room for manoeuvre for transformative planning can first of all be rediscovered by the strong collaboration between planning agents and collectives outside the institutional planning process. Ambiguity would create the opportunity for planning agents to engage with both institutional processes and external processes of collective action and as such, results in a diverse field of action that allows for a more agonistic understanding of democracy.

(2) In order to situate this diversity of internal and external processes of collective action in relation to moments of opportunity I further elaborated on **social innovation theory**. Social innovation theory develops an institutional understanding of collective action and integrates a clear need-based approach. Socially innovative action results in new forms of solidarity and shifting socio-spatial relations.

(3) As a last theoretical concept, I used **coproduction** to situate a socially innovative understanding of collective action and moments of opportunity within a planning theoretical field. Coproduction strengthens the inclusive understanding of collective action as a space

of deliberative opportunities and highlights the political understanding of transformative planning as a means to redefine governance structures and the mission of the public sector.

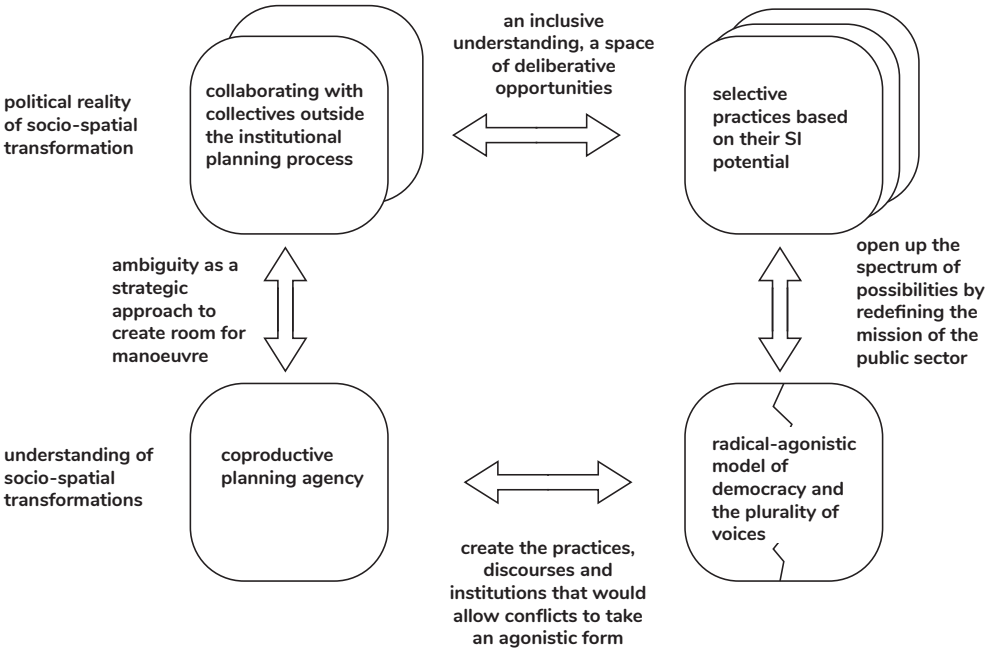

Figure 9: A first theoretical understanding of the room for manoeuvre of socially innovative planning practice

2.2. AMBIGUITY

Ambiguity is often considered as an important feature of policy trajectories. Several authors such as Eisenberg (1984) and Boswell (2016) describe how ambiguity can be understood as a means by which multiple divergences and communities can find points of unity, and therefore, when strategically applied, can support collective action or thinking despite the differences in interests, values, and ideas (Jarzabkowski, Sillince & Shaw, 2010). *"Ambiguity provides the wriggle room to experiment with different practices and approaches that best suit a particular spatial engagement"* (Eisenberg, 1984; Kaethler et al., 2017, p. 180) and *"enables effective governance of issues in the context of increasing complexity and amid the diversity of actors that need to work together to deliver policy and services; by supporting precisely the sort of contingent agreement that has long been the democratic norm."* (Boswell, 2016, p. 729).

However, ambiguity is a highly contested concept, firstly because of power issues where better-resourced actors (with greater material resources, hierarchical or professional status, and greater access to officials (Boswell, 2016, p.728)) often wriggle away from costly (socially just) actions by imposing their preferences, thus excluding any ambiguity. Secondly, because of the unclarity of the outcome, an ambiguous agreement can be useful in legitimizing a large diversity of policies. Both criticisms challenge the ethical solidity of ambiguity and, considering the depoliticizing context of post-political planning, may erode its political meaning.
In contrast to these reservations, I start from the idea that ambiguity creates possibilities for alternative political action. Ambiguity, when used in a strategic way, can be a potential resource for critical actors to retain actionable positions while preserving a broad spectrum of partnerships and stakeholders. (Strategic) ambiguity can provide the room to experiment with different practices and approaches by holding off hidebound institutional demands and expectations. This possibility to engage with collectives outside the institutional planning process creates a first room for manoeuvre to challenge dominant representational based notions of democracy.

In this research the role of ambiguity is understood as a means to rethink democratic practices and find room for new types of collaboration on the basis of which unheard voices can be strengthened. Ambiguity gives the possibility to navigate at the interface of the political and the policy (Rancière, 1999; Swyngedouw, 2008) and is instrumental to develop new alliances that can continuously support this transformative endeavour.
This understanding of ambiguity directly relates to the way *endeavour* positioned itself (chapter 4) as intermediate activist planners, in the sense of Sager (2016). Sager identifies an activist planner as *"someone deploying an activist style in the preparation and promotion of a specific plan"* (2016, p.1264). Someone who engages in direct action and takes part in specific processes of plan making[18]. Sager describes an emerging range of different modes of activist planning which take a stance against neoliberalism. His proposed categorisation criticises the way in which activist modes of planning have so far been addressed in planning literature, emphasising an apparent lack of clear subcategories and neglecting the possibility of modes of activism where planners operate from an 'intermediate position".

'Intermediate activist planners' are defined by Sager as planners that in the first place are committed to relational causes such as fair deliberation or the generative qualities of a democratic process. Sager's definition differentiates from advocacy planning (loyal to a particular group or community) and radical planning (committed to a delineated strategic cause) as will be described when we introduce coproduction as an integrating concept to operationalize this relational cause. Secondly, intermediate activist planning is positioned independently from the government (agencies) that goes along with for example a particular community organisation ('civil society planner').
From both perspectives ambiguity plays a central role in creating space for relational causes and room to critically position oneself in-between organisations and institutions as a civil society planner. Sager's classification gives more insight in types of activist planning modes that are 'only modestly antagonistic' and consequently, as he provocatively states, appear less *"boastful and dramatic, not aiming to assist poor and underprivileged people in heroic struggles, and not presupposing deep conflict"* (Sager, 2016, p. 1263).

Struggling with ambiguity

My interest in ambiguity probably started with my early engagement in politics and policy and the underlying confusion of combining different roles in order to balance the limits and political consequences of certain positions. Combining different roles became my way to deal with certain moral dillemas that were the result of working from within the system with a transformative agenda (am I legitimizing certain hidden agendas, are the changes that I'm advocating for structural enough, ...?). Ambiguity was in this sense almost a kind of reflex to construct a narrative that disguised all these different positions.
Combined with an in planning education based belief in the inclusive and transformative potential of shared narratives, often neglecting (from my side) a clear analysis of underlying realities, existing social networks, movements and different political positions; ambiguity became an almost natural way of dealing with complexity, a strategy to combine different positions and to get engaged with new networks and people.
With *endeavour* ambiguity automatically sneaked in. Started as a way to deal with our uncertainty of what we were actually doing and evolving towards an attempt to define a political strategy without getting exluded. During our work this partly changed when we started to understand how ambiguity directly relate to the post-political condition of democracy and how it impact the positioning of *endeavour*.

2.3. SOCIALLY INNOVATIVE ACTION

The claim that planning can be an active agent in rethinking democratic practices and finding room for new types of collaboration on the base of which unheard voices can be strengthened needs a clarification of the relation between collective action and moments of opportunity. In order to overcome a delusional position and avoid an underestimation of the socializing position of planning, it is important to situate both collective action and moments of opportunity in its institutional context.
Starting from social innovation studies, socially innovative action operationalizes the idea that *"governance is at the same time a framework and a field for social innovation"* (Pradel et al., 2013, p. 156). The development of socially innovative practices influences governance by creating new mechanisms and governance structures. The political significance of socially innovative initiatives is directly related to the socio-political system to which these initiatives are reacting (Moulaert, MacCallum & Hillier, 2013).
In relation to the room for manoeuvre socially innovative actions can be seen as 'risky experiments' (Healey 2007a, p.31): *"conscious interventions that shape urban dynamics and, by intersecting with fixes that develop as certain ways of thinking and doing, consolidate into accepted practices"* (Healey, 2007b, p. 15). These actions take place through windows of opportunity for social creativity on different institutional scales combining macro- and micro-political processes (Hillier, 2013). As such, collaboratively imagining, mapping, designing, constructing views of the future and elaborating strategies to achieve those views (Moulaert et al. 2013, p.18) are crucial assets of socially innovative action.
Socially innovative action operationalizes the room for manoeuvre of critical spatial planning and integrates a clear need-based approach. From a social innovation perspective collective action aims to create (new) bases for solidarity and influence shifting socio-spatial relations and empower formally excluded people with a specific focus on addressing social needs (a.o. Moulaert et al 2005; Moulaert & Sekia, 2003; Gonzalez & Healey, 2005). Socially innovative action is directly related with social justice (by its specific focus on social needs) and a pragmatic understanding of political action (joint development and shared understanding of action (Moulaert & MacCallum, 2019)). Consequently, a social innovation perspective seems promising to conceptualize and materialize a political apprehension of the large diversity of types of collaboration that can lie at the basis of new democratic practices. Social innovation research describes socially innovative action as a structural process of influencing and changing governance by revealing new underlying mechanisms (of democracy) and organizing new ways of working and living together. As such, a socially innovative understanding of transformative planning includes deep structural transformation and the possibility to rethink aggregative-representative or participatory-deliberative democratic practices.

Socially innovative action starts from a political understanding of learning as a crucial element of collective action. Collective learning is defined as *"a new form of social learning oriented to the production of knowledge as an 'intellectual common"* (Jessop et al., 2013, p. 119). Collective learning emphasizes the solidarity-based character of learning through processes of sharing and cooperation in order to increase the socio-political capability as

Getting interested in social innovation

As a planning practitioner SI theory has always been more of a critical framework to evaluate my actions than a clear methodology or set of guiding principles to develop a strategic planning approach. As a sociologist working on poverty and urban transformation, I was always interested in the emancipatory and transformational potential of socially innovative trajectories and strongly believed in defining local needs as a good starting point for analysis and action, but I found it difficult to integrate it in government-oriented planning perspective.
While writing my thesis in urban planning I started to deconstruct this government-oriented approach by applying a more relational understanding of institutionalization (inspired by the strategic relational approach of a.o. Jessop, 2002, 2007; Servillo & Van den Broeck, 2012) and got interested in the strong and long-lasting legacy of social planning and socially innovative initiatives in Antwerp (a.o. Moulaert et al., 2000; Christiaens et al., 2007; Loopmans 2007; Van den Broeck, 2010).
Although I failed to fully integrate these insights in my master thesis, still overestimating the role of the planning profession, I started to understand the complexity of knowledge construction and how certain analytical frameworks combined analytical and political perspectives as a fundamental basis of their epistemology.
It was only during the LSAS (Leuven Space and Society) workshops that I started to understand the deep implication of a SI perspective on planning practice. I realized how a transdisciplinary approach wasn't only defining collective action as field of study but also defined certain principles of research and action (as collective problematization) that could give a better insight in how processes of institutionalization impact the social reality of collective action and the possibilities for transformation (further elaborated in chapter 8 of this PhD thesis).
This insight not only redefined my understanding of reality (as a socially constructed and continuous processes of de- and reconstructing institutional frames) but also influenced my position as a planning practitioner (a stronger focus on situating planning projects in longer and more diverse processes of transformation).
Later, when writing this PhD thesis, the importance of solidarity, the political implications of SI theory and the instrumental character of social and collective learning to structure these processes further influenced my thinking.

well as access to resources of a large diversity of unheard actors (Moulaert et al., 2005). This specific political understanding of collaborative processes seems to be promising to integrate a more agonistic understanding of socially innovative action and the room for manoeuvre for critical spatial planning. By introducing coproduction as a third central theoretical concept of our hypothesis I elaborate on how this process of collective learning and the earlier described aim of deep structural transformation can be included in planning practice.

2.4. COPRODUCTION

Coproduction can be seen as one of the more important attempts of classical planning theory to challenge ongoing neoliberalization processes by placing the active mobilization of the collective power of citizens at the heart of the planning discourse (Albrechts, 2012, 2014).

"Coproduction, as a collective Endeavour, is conceived as a combination of a needs-based and rights-based approach; it is inclusionary (for those in and outside the system), intends to secure political influence and to change the status quo with specific projects, it combines local and scientific knowledge on an equal base, and it provides an interaction between the delivery of public goods (plans, policies, projects) and building strong, resilient, mutually supportive communities." (Albrechts 2012, p. 53).

Coproduction is within planning theory conceived as a conscious political strategy to develop concrete actions and tools to react to a 'status quo', by strengthening local active citizen initiatives to engage and negotiate with local policy. Within a coproductive process, citizens aim to be part of the action in co-constructing spatial ambitions, developing a counter-discourse and reshape power-structures in order to strengthen the socio-spatial character of strategic spatial planning processes and improve their inclusive quality. This approach builds on a conceptualisation of the coproduction of space as an explicit political strategy in which citizens both seek engagement with state actors while also developing forms of self-organization and –management in response to local needs (Ostrom 1996, Mitlin 2008, Devos, 2016).

The increasing interest of planning theory in the concept of coproduction holds particularly well against the backdrops I outlined above, emphasising the need to redirect attention from the difficulties of collaborative processes, what some authors called the 'post-collaborative phase' of planning debates (Brownill & Parker, 2010), to the possibility for new interfaces or productive relationships between planning and forms of resistance, creating space to directly respond to emerging opportunities. Coproduction draws attention to the potential of pro-active citizen initiatives, intentionally working outside the formalized procedures of governance, often in direct response to the fact that formal channels of engagement are inadequate or non-existent. Coproduction focuses on an incremental social learning approach, rather than a fundamentally radical approach, yet cooperating with proactive and counter-hegemonic citizen initiatives and often working outside instrumentalized procedures of governance (Watson, 2014). The room for manoeuvre for transformative planning is consequently defined by the short-term collaborative ambitions of (planning) actors (Newmann, 2008), and the 'borders' created by instrumentalized and 'depoliticised' (participatory) planning approaches and instruments, along which forms of antagonism can develop (Nicholls & Uitermark, 2017).
Coproduction provides for an interesting theoretical (and action research oriented) lens to inspire for local coalitions to go against local institutional and political constraints and explore opportunities for political change. A coproductive understanding of planning

First encounters with coproduction as a concept

The idea of coproduction to take collaborative planning to another level and integrate a political agenda in planning practice was crucial for first engagements with planning projects in the city of Antwerp.
Not only played coproduction an important role in my education as a planning practitioner, it was as well an important framework for some of the urban renewal projects in the city that highly influenced my view on planning as a city councilor.
With projects as the Quays and Park Groot Schijn the city of Antwerp in collaboration with Antwerpen aan't Woord (a civil society organization specialized in participatory processes and democratic debate) started to integrate a more structured and institutionalized approach to civil participation within the new urban renewal agenda of the city. The city of Antwerp already had a long history of participation within planning processes in the 80's and late 90's (a.o. De Blust, 2012) but seemed to rediscover and reintegrate its methods in a more entrepreneurial inspired urban renewal agenda that started to take shape in the slipstream of the new structure plan (2006). As a councilor this renewed interest in a strong collaboration with civil society and residents (by drafting participatory charters that acknowledged the role of citizens as coproducers of space) was an important topic that I tried to advocate.
Looking back to these initial engagements with coproduction, remembering the continuous struggles to justify the need for a more open, coproductive governance structure and especially considering the closure of possibilities when projects were strongly related with local or supralocal power coalitions, it becomes clear that a coproductive notion didn't automatically include a deep redefinition of the actual meaning of democracy.
Each of these first engagements with coproduction were attempts to integrate a more inclusive approach in the urban renewal agenda of the city without fundamentally questioning how this agenda limited the transformational capacity of projects.
Being aware of this uncomfortable situation of good intentions but disappointing results I couldn't find the answers on how to deal critically with a coproductive approach. Based on the definition of *endeavour* as an office for socio-spatial research: *"a coproductive research process that aims to combine spatial analysis with the mapping of local social knowledge and daily experiences, based on close collaboration between the researcher and local actors or organizations"* (Devos, 2016), I started to test the coproductive approach in an action research in the Dam neighbourhood and tried to get a better insight in how to critically apply this promising concept in planning practice (chapter 5 of this thesis).

can reveal the multiplicity and multivocality of local action and how new interfaces are created outside the formalized procedures of planning. A coproductive understanding of transformative planning practice stresses inclusive collective action and the possibility to fundamentally rethink the role of planning in society and its underlying democratic notions.

As described earlier, there is a long tradition in planning theory and practice to define planning approaches that specifically deal with more substantive arguments for planning, considering the reality of structural inequality and hierarchies of power. In Table 1 we conclude this introduction to coproduction as a planning approach by comparing it to the most frequented planning paradigms (Friedmann & Hudson, 1974; Albrechts, 2019) based on their specific understanding of planning agency, collective action, moments of opportunity and democracy.
In order to compare these different planning paradigms, it is important to know that in the planning literature on coproduction this critical planning approach is mostly related to an activist planning perspective: *"for planners working in the system (government planners), an equity type of planning (Krumholz & Forester, 1990) open to local knowledge and where citizens and the disadvantaged become an equal part of the action seems suited. For planners working outside the sys¬tem (NGOs, community organizations), only a radical type of planning (Sandercock, 1998, p. 97–104) makes it possible to work for structural transformation of systemic ine¬qualities and to use coproduction as a political strategy"*. (Albrechts, 2012, p.56). The large diversity of planning paradigms should not be understood as mutually exclusive, however it is helpful to sharpen the specificity of each of the approaches and understand how specific approaches can relate to different positions in planning practice.

In our action research a coproductive planning approach was used to develop *endeavour* as a critical spatial planning practice. We started to experiment with a coproductive approach as a critical position related to an intermediate activist planning perspective but unrestricted towards a specific method or planning output. We will evaluate this position by empirically considering how we applied a coproductive planning approach within a large diversity of projects (as described in chapter 4) and by reflecting on how the notion of coproduction as a transformative planning approach changed throughout the action research (in chapter 3 these different moments of research are situated in a larger methodological framework).

If we have a closer look at Table 1 it becomes clear that coproduction relates to a lot of other planning paradigms. A coproductive approach shares a process-oriented perspective on planning agency and clearly situates the planning actor as part of local coalitions of knowledge production and action. Taking into account how the coproductive approach engages with collective action, this process oriented approach is combined with a public orientation towards universal principles as equity and justice and the need to redefine planning and the public sector. From this perspective a coproductive planning approach tries to combine an agonistic understanding of democracy and underlying universal values with a strong focus on shared and process oriented trajectories of collective learning.

	PLANNING ACTOR	MOMENTS OF OPPORTUNITY	COLLECTIVE ACTION	CONCEPTUALIZATION OF DEMOCRACY
Rational comprehensive model (Lindblom, 1968)	The planner is seen as the technical professional who has professional expertise and acts in the interest of the public cause.	Moments of opportunity are created based on a rational understanding of public policy decision making.	Collective action is defined in relation to an ambitious comprehensive public policy model that is defined by collective rationality (integrating a diversity of positions).	Based on a representative model of democracy that acknowledges the political validity of technocratic choice.
Advocacy planning model (Davidoff, 1965)	Planning agents are urged to be part of the political arena by representing previously unheard voices.	Action is defined by distributional questions (a needs based approach)	Collective action is seen as a logic of representation. Those who had previously been unrepresented would now be represented by the technical expertise of advocacy planners.	Based on an aggregative-representative understanding of democracy where advocacy planning tries to integrate a more inclusive agenda through technical expertise.
Equity planning model (Krumholz & Forester, 1990)	Planning agents are playing the political game. This is not limited to technical skills but also to acting as communicators and propagandists for the good cause.	Urban inequalities and their relation with planning policies (to whose advantage?) as a start for action. Communicative rationality brings in the need to better understand institutional settings and power relations.	Collective action aims to shape public attention to issues based on the assessment of the planning agent.	Based on a participatory-deliberative model based on strengthening the position of neglected voices by adapting procedures and opening-up debate.
Social-learning and communicative action model (Healey, 1997)	The planning agent becomes part of social learning dynamics resulting in a transactive relationship between planner and community.	Procedural and institutional practices are crucial to understand in order to create conditions within planning processes where the better argument becomes decisive.	Collective action is seen as the shared process of social learning between experts and citizens. Collective action is a means for empowerment.	A participatory-deliberative model, based on processes of deliberation and the political validity of consensus-based negotiation.

The endeavour of coproduction to operationalize this balance between process and outcome can be related to the earlier attempts of strategic spatial planning to include a more political and strategic perspective in planning. Coproduction brings this to the next level by engaging with a broader group of people and seeing planning as a shared endeavour rather than solely a state-driven undertaking.
Coproduction describes and details the outline of ontological and epistemological principles (Albrechts et al., 2019) but leaves enough freedom to contextualize and situate a coproductive approach in a specific culture and context of planning.

Radical, insurgent planning model (Friedmann, 1987; Sandercock, 1998)	The planning agent is perceived as an important actor within the mobilized community and relates to the large variety of skills needed in direct action and campaigning.	A concrete problem is the starting point for understanding moments of opportunity. The mobilized local community is crucial in developing a strategy for action.	Collective action takes a clear position outside the institutional planning processes. Strategic action and contextual knowledge are key in developing a radical planning approach.	Starts from a radical-agonistic model of democracy that acknowledges the (ant)agonistic and dialectical relationship between the state and the mobilized community.
Coproduction – radical strategic planning (Albrechts, 2012, Albrechts et al., 2019)	The planner as a strategic actor who can create the practices, discourses and institutions that support agonistic forms in planning and a related fundamental shift in the balance of power.	Moments of opportunity are related to the ambition to redefine planning and public governance. New productive and informal interactions and collective processes of envisioning are defined as crucial to open up the spectrum of possibilities.	Collective action is seen as the creation of new political and inclusive fora in coproduction with citizens. Equal value to different kinds of knowledge and skills is seen as an essential condition.	The creation of new political fora inevitably works in a context of conflicts. It requires a need to recognize the deeply pluralistic character of communities. The notion of democracy is based on a radical-agonistic model, the struggle for diversity and inclusion in a struggle over hegemony

Table 1: Overview of different planning paradigms

2.5. SUBQUESTIONS

In research chapter 5-8 I will rethink, overthrow, situate or detail this first interpretation of the room for manoeuvre of socially innovative / transformative planning to get a better grip on a practical epistemology of transformative planning practice under post-political planning conditions. In order to do so, I conclude this theoretical reflection with a series of subquestions that relate to each of the different theoretical concepts (ambiguity, socially innovative action and coproduction) and that can be used to discuss the empirical findings of the action research. Each of the subquestions operationalizes the first theoretical interpretation and hypothetical answer to my research question and is consequently an important basis to interpret and understand the results of the action research as described in the four research chapters of this PhD thesis.

Research question:

"How can we understand the room for manoeuvre of socially innovative planning practice under post-political planning conditions and how does this influence our understanding of planning agency, collective action and moments of opportunity for transformative action."

Subquestions

Related to the concept of *coproduction*:

- Under which conditions is coproduction a tool to strengthen, expand and solidify the room for manoeuvre of socially innovative planning practice?
- Does a more coproductive perspective on planning under the current post-political conditions overcome the critique of collaborative planning being delusional?
- How does a social innovation perspective on collective action relate to the attempt of coproductive planning to mobilize the collective power of citizens?

Related to the concept of *socially innovative action*:

- Can a socially innovative approach unfold the relation between collective action and moments of opportunity under post-political planning conditions?
- Does a social innovation perspective offer a concrete operational basis for collective action and planning? How does this basis relate to a coproductive planning approach?
- What is the relation of social innovation and moments of opportunity? How does a socially innovative approach reinterpret and strengthen a political understanding of moments of opportunity?
- How does the solidarity-based ethics of socially innovative action capacitate a more agonistic understanding of coproductive planning approaches?

Related to the concept of ambiguity:

- Is ambiguity a necessary condition for critical planning agency to define and react to moments of opportunity?
- How does ambiguity relate to the strategy of coproduction and the ethical principles of socially innovative action and is this relation affected by post-political planning conditions?
- Is it possible to overcome the ethical critique on ambiguity as a selective tool and can ambiguity be used in a strategic way?

2.6. NOTES

18 Activist planning: the different projects of *endeavour* that are introduced in chapter 4 can be considered to be part of an activist planning approach, except the educational projects of the planning studio and the participation labs

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Figure 10: "a" according to *endeavour*

3. RESEARCH TRAJECTORY METHOD, STRUCTURE

Faludi (1978) argued many years ago that the most essential ingredient of success in planning practice is reflectiveness. Reflectiveness allows one to see things in context, to step outside one's own situation and slip into the shoes of others, to think out possible implications of what one does, not only in a purely analytical sense but using one's imagination to supplement hard knowledge.

(Olesen, 2018, p. 181)

The gamut of activist planning modes is broader than often outlined in academic literature

(Sager, 2016, p.1275).

3.1. RESEARCH TRAJECTORY

I conducted my PhD research from 2014 onwards with some preparatory activities in 2013. The first year started at the LSAS (Leuven space and society) seminar in Leuven, June 2013, where I met Tim Devos and presented my work on art, planning and participation based on an art project in the modernist Modelwijk in Laken[19] (Brussels) in which I participated. In the same period, I met Maarten Desmet on the Plandag[20] in Antwerp (May 2013) where I presented my work on the role of professional planning in urban policy (De Blust, 2013). This work was based on my Master thesis in urban planning[21], that I had defended the year before at the University of Antwerp. Both encounters inspired Maarten, Tim and me to start our own planning office *endeavour* with the ambition of exploring the possibilities for alternative planning practices in the summer of 2013.
Accidently, both Tim and I were asked that summer to support the Damcomité in its struggle to become involved in the redevelopment of the slaughterhouse site (project 1 of this PhD research) and tutor the planning studio at the KUL (project 2 of this PhD research). By combining both projects, the main logic behind *endeavour* and this PhD research (combining research and action to strengthen the room for manoeuvre of critical spatial planning) was defined. At the end of that summer we were asked to present at the New Generation Festival in Milan[22] where we conceptualized and presented *endeavour* under the title: 'ndvr, taking on a new role'.
During these first engagements I was still working as a planning consultant at the Antwerp based planning office Stramien[23] where I focused a.o. on the idea of covering the ring road of Antwerp (project 6 of this PhD research). Inspired by this work and willing to structurally add a line of reflection I officially started my PhD research in 2014 as an associated member of the Planning & Development research unit (KU Leuven). In September 2014 *endeavour* had its first project assigned by the city of Antwerp. This project on the relation between the perception of safety and use and design of public space gave me the possibility to stop working at Stramien and take a start as a full-time member of *endeavour*. *endeavour* was registered as an enterprise in August 2014. In 2014 we tutored the planning studio for the second time, still working on the Dam case (project 1) and we further developed *Endeavour* by working on our mission statement and business model. This was supervised by I-propellor, a consultancy practice specialized in the development of not for profit enterprises.
At the end of 2014 we gave a second presentation at the New Generations Festival, this time in Firenze. The presentation was focussed on the business model behind *endeavour* (from mission to model). At the LSAS seminar in November 2014 and the PlanDag 2014 in Zaandam, I presented with Tim Devos a first reflection on our work in the Dam (De Blust & Devos, 2014).

The second year of my PhD, I focussed on analyzing and interpreting the fieldwork in the Dam and explored the main critiques in planning theory on the collaborative planning approach. I participated in the European Module of Spatial Development and Planning (EMSDP, March-May 2015) which gave me an overview of critical urban theory and social innovation research. During the EMSDP and at one of the Planning & Development seminars

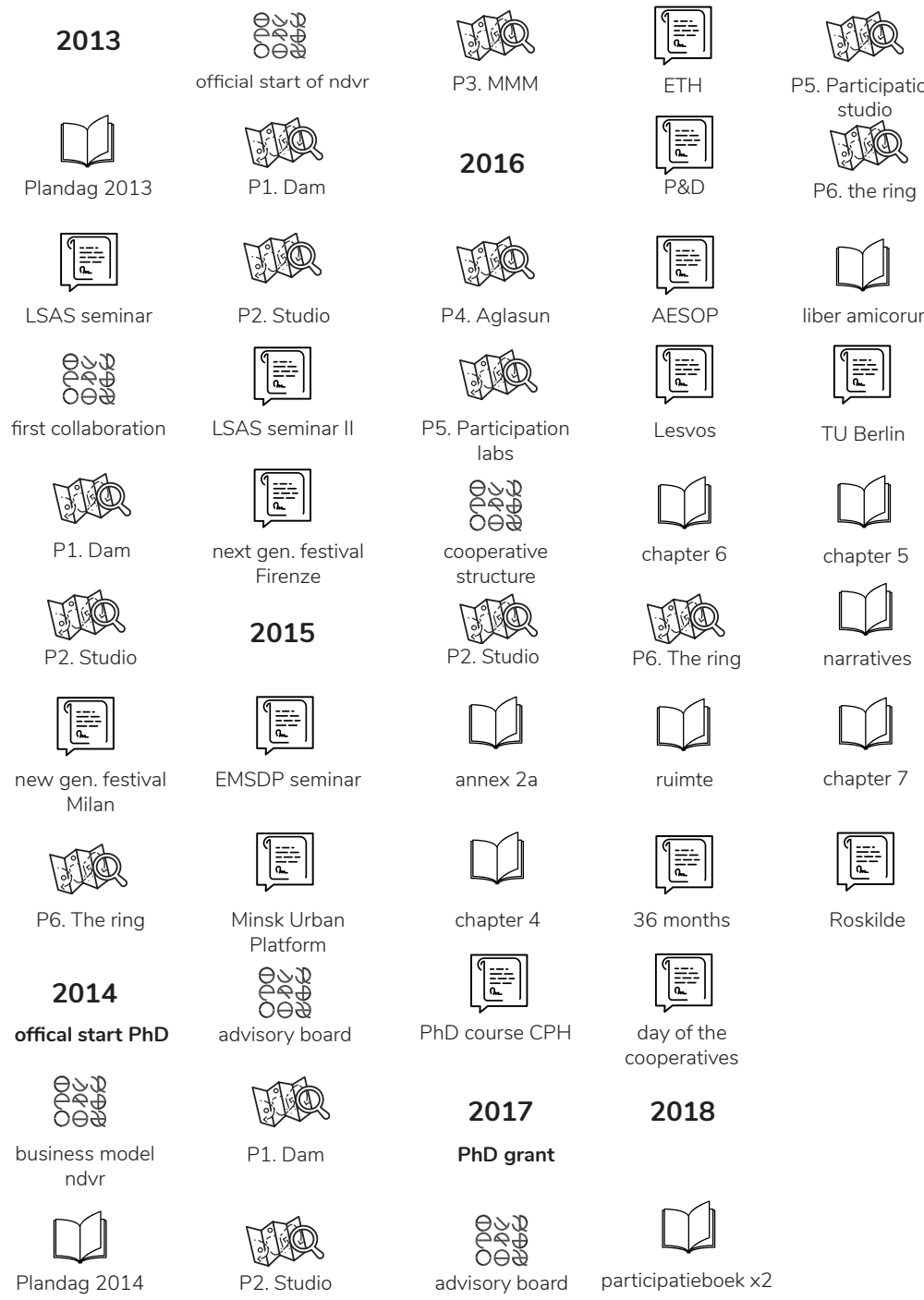

Figure 11: Research trajectory

(KU Leuven) I presented the results of my action research in the Dam neighbourhood in Antwerp. These presentations were a preparation for my 9-month presentation – a requisite in the PhD procedure - which strongly focussed on the relation between integrated area development (a.o. Moulaert, 2000; Martinelli et al., 2013) and poststructuralist theories (a.o. Gunder & Hillier, 2009) to conceptualize the room for manoeuvre of transformative planning practice.
Invited by the Minsk Urban Platform[14], I had the chance to develop and test my first ideas on transformative planning practice in a completely different institutional context. In the summer of 2015 *endeavour* celebrated its first anniversary and we organised a first advisory committee to which we invited academics and social entrepreneurs to further reflect on the position of *endeavour*, its organizational structure and mission. In 2015 my action research in Ghent on the neighbourhood Muide Meulestede (project 3) started in collaboration with Architecture Workroom Brussels.

In the third year (2016), I did a lot of fieldwork and focussed on a second round of internal reflection with *endeavour*. In March 2016 the fieldwork in Aglasun (project 4) was organized. From April onward, I organized different sessions of the participation lab and co-organized the Flemish World Day of Urbanisms which focussed on participation and the role of collective capabilities in planning processes (Elementary particles. Skills for successful participation, 17/11/2016) (project 5). These engagements resulted in co-editing a special issue of the journal '*Ruimte*' on participation (Devisch et al., 2017). From September until January I tutored the planning studio (project 2) for a third time in a row.
With *endeavour* we worked from April until December on our legal and financial structure supported by Coopburo, a consultancy office specialized in cooperative enterprises. This trajectory helped us to define the articles and organizational principles of *Endeavour* and strengthened our independent position as a critical planning office (described in Annex 1). At the end of 2016 I participated in a PhD course in Copenhagen (December 2016) on grassroots innovation. This intensive week helped me to define the added value of social innovation theory for my research.
In 2016 the first articles of this research were published. Chapter 5 of this PhD was published (Meeus et al., 2016) in 'The Commonalities of Global Crisis, Markets, Communities and Nostalgia' (Karner & Weicht, 2016), the PhD of Tim Devos was defended containing several co-written chapters on our work (Devos, 2016) and 'Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee: giving voice to planning practitioners' was published in October 2016 (Tasan-Kok et al., 2016). This interface of the Journal of Planning Theory and Practice edited by Tuna Tasan-Kok reflected on activist planning practices (a.o. *endeavour*, in annex).

In my fourth year (2017), I received a special PhD grant (FWO) from September 2017 – August 2018 which gave me the possibility to fully focus on my PhD research. A bit before I gave a P&D presentation (April 2017) in Leuven that tried to critically evaluate the socially innovative character of *endeavour*. The presentation was loosely based on a presentation I gave together with Maarten Desmet and Tim Devos at the ETH Zürich (March 2017). The

presentation 'Something old, Something new, Something borrowed, Something blue' reflected on what, how and why we do things as *endeavour* based on our experiences over the last three years. The presentation helped to define the epistemological framework of *endeavour* and was influenced by a second edition of our advisory committee. In the slipstream of our presentation in Zürich we stopped using ndvr as an abbreviation in order to communicate the ideas behind our organisation more clearly (discussed in chapter 4). In July 2017 I gave two presentations, one at the AESOP conference in Lisbon (chapter 6) and one at the ESDP network conference in Lesvos (chapter 7). In August chapter 7 was published in the Journal of CoDesign (Kaethler et al., 2017). I finished the year with my 36 months presentation and a presentation at the International Day of Cooperatives about the cooperative structure of *endeavour*. In this fourth year the last project (6) on the covering of the Antwerp Ring Road (October 2017 - …) started.

2018 and the first months of 2019 were mostly focussed on writing the introduction and conclusion of this PhD and finalizing different chapters. Two contributions to the book 'Participatiegolven' (Kuhk et al., 2019) were submitted, one on *endeavour* and ambiguity (De Blust et al., 2019b) and one on the history of participation in Flanders (Schreurs et al., 2019). I contributed to the Liber Amicorum of Frank Moulaert (De Blust & Van den Broeck, 2019) and finalized chapter 8 of this thesis (submitted to Planning Theory & Practice). Chapter 6 was published in a special issue of Urban Planning on social innovation and planning (De Blust et al., 2019a) and an earlier article on the role of narratives in planning got published as a chapter in Participatory Design Theory (Devos et al., 2018) (Annex). In this last year of my PhD research my fieldwork was limited to the organization of the participation studio as a follow-up to the participation labs (project 4) and I continued my engagement in project 6 (the covering of the Antwerp Ring Road). This project formed the topic of a last presentation at the TU Berlin (June 2018). In 2018 *endeavour* focussed on its branding and communication strategy and searched how it could become an independent and transferable institution based on the idea that we wanted to give others the chance to become *endeavour*s. At the end of 2018 I participated in a PhD conference in Roskilde on collective learning where I further developed a contextual understanding of collective learning trajectories.

3.2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.2.1. A specific research perspective

This PhD research is conceived as an action research trajectory within an embedded single-case study: *endeavour*. The idea to start from a single-case study (Yin, 2018) is based on the clear theoretical proposition defined in chapter 2 which can be summarized as follows: the room for transformative planning under post-political planning conditions can best be understood by starting from a coproductive planning approach that recognizes the institutional analysis of social innovation theory with the strategic possibilities of ambiguity to engage with collectives outside the institutional planning process. The aim of this research is to discover if this theoretical understanding of transformative planning and related concepts of collective action, planning agency and moments of opportunity changes when confronted with the reality of planning practice under post-political conditions or whether some alternative set of explanations might be more relevant.
The epistemological focus behind the research question can be best answered by selecting a planning office as a case study that applies the theoretical interpretation of transformative planning as described in chapter 2, brings it into planning practice and uses it as a basis to (re)describe its transformative planning position. By selecting a case study of this kind, it becomes possible to combine a reflection on:

1. how certain conceptions of transformative action influences actual planning projects,
2. how planning practice based experiences trigger to rethink a conceptual understanding of transformative planning and
3. how planning practice can be organized to deal with this changing understanding.

By organizing *endeavour* as a reflective planning office that was activist and sufficiently stable I created the freedom to fundamentally rethink epistemological frameworks throughout the action research and test their consequences for planning practice. As such, the office was adaptive, reflective and fully focused on developing new approaches for transformative action (in planning). These conditions for social creativity (Mumford et al., 2003; Fontan et al., 2013) could only be guaranteed by organizing an own planning office providing the necessary flexibility and reflectiveness to focus on searching and reconceptualising the room for manoeuvre for transformative planning in a continuous way throughout the five years of research.

The idea of using the single-case study as a way to understand the limits of transformative planning and at the same time challenge them (Klein & Harrisson 2007; Mulgan 2007) brings in an action research perspective as a preferred methodological framework for this PhD research. Action research as transdisciplinary reflexive research (Jessop et al., 2013) starts from the idea that knowledge is produced in a collective and transdisciplinary way through collective action and collective problematization (in a time-dynamic spiral of reflection, problem definition and application of solutions) (Nielsen & Svensson, 2006; Arthur, 2013). In the case of *endeavour* its members and more specifically the three founders of

endeavour, were the main participants in this process of collective problematization. Through external reflections and direct collaborations in planning projects the circle of collective problematization expanded during specific moments of the research. This created specific conditions and a division of labour that made optimal use of the multilayered nature of the action research. In 3.2.2. we explain how this combination of different moments of research can be understood as a research framework for this PhD research.

3.2.2. Research design & methods

In order to operationalize this specific single-case study perspective, I start from critical realism. Critical Realism as described by Bhaskar (1975) studies causation by searching for causal powers or mechanisms instead of identifying direct predictors and theoretical or transfactual rather than empirical generalisation (Moulaert & Van Dyck, 2013; Sayer, 1992). Critical realism *"is mostly used for exploratory research and tries to identify, discover, uncover (and in more engaged, participatory research, test the limit of and indeed unlock) structures, blocks and (generically) causes, and their particular sequences, combinations and articulations at work at specific times and places"* (Bhaskar, 2016, p. 79). Critical realism directly helped me to set up a reflexive research on transformative practice and how post-political planning conditions influence its conceptualisation based on the explanatory logic of critical realism as described by Danermark et al. (1997) after Bashkar's RRREIC model (1993).

The explanatory model of critical realism (Danermark et al., 1997, p. 109)

Description
An explanatory social science analysis usually starts in the concrete. The often complex and composite event or situation is described based on everyday concepts.

Analytical resolution
The described complex and composite event or situation is deconstructed building on its various components, aspects or dimensions.

Abduction/theoretical redescription
Starting from hypothetical conceptual frameworks and theories about structures and relations a selection of the different components is interpreted and redescribed. Several different theoretical interpretations and explanations can and should be presented, compared and possibly integrated with one another.

Retroduction
For each of the components it is important to understand which structures and relations are fundamentally constitutive? What are their conditions? Are there causal mechanisms that can be identified?

Comparison between different theories and abstractions
Based on the process of abduction and retroduction it is important to elaborate and estimates the relative explanatory power of the described mechanisms and structures. This process results in a selection or combination of theoretical frameworks.

Concretization and contextualization
In order to understand how the different mechanisms influence specific events and processes and are influenced by contextual factors it is important to examine how different structures and mechanisms manifest themselves in concrete situations.

The model provides guidelines for *"how to relate in research practice the concrete to the abstract and the abstract to the concrete"* (Danemark et al., 1997, p. 109). The model is based on six different research activities that do not need to follow each other in a strictly chronological order and can be combined in line with the specific design of the research trajectory (feedback loops, synchrony vs. anachrony). In this research trajectory the six different research activities are combined in four moments of research (Figure 12) to support the specific research perspective as described in 3.2.1. Each of these four moments of research is characterized by a specific research method that can be used to construct possible alternative frameworks and explanations to situate, reflect or respond to the first interpretation of transformative action. The combination and interrelation of four research moments to operationalize this metareflexive action strengthens both the internal and external validity of the research. It also presents multi-layered characteristics as an interesting research design for action research on cases of socially innovative action as discussed and evaluated in the conclusions of this thesis.

contextualization

theoretization

retroduction

description &
resolution

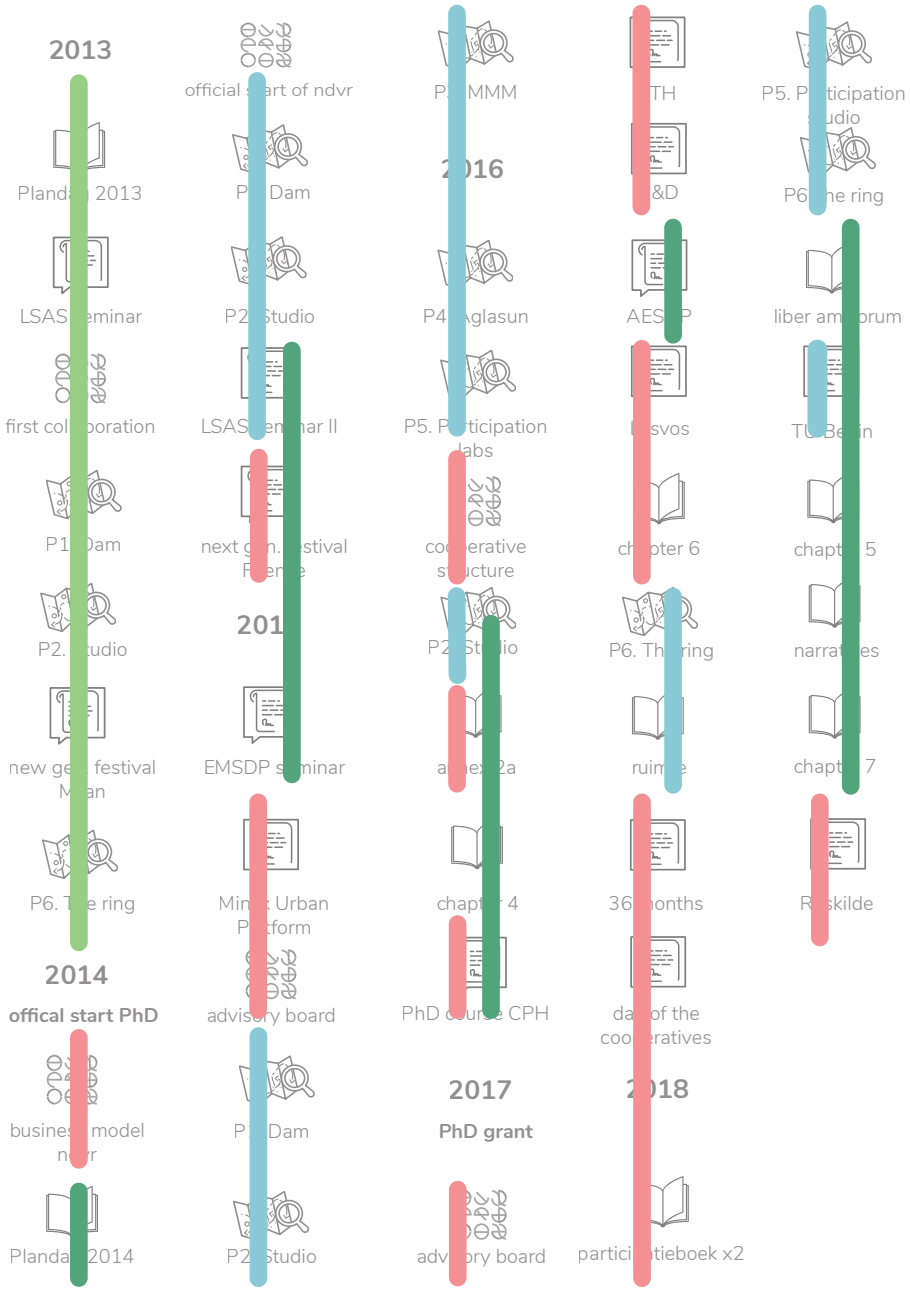

Figure 12: Four moments of research

Moment 1: description & analytical resolution based on theoretical exploration and earlier experience in planning practice

At the start of this research and triggered by the launch of *endeavour*, earlier experiences in planning practice formed the basis of a first interpretation of the room for manoeuvre for transformative planning practice under post-political conditions (description). This hypothetic framework consisted of three concepts:

1. *Strategic ambiguity* as a way to create the opportunity for planning agents to engage with both institutional processes and external processes of collective action;
2. *social innovation theory* to develop an institutional understanding of collective action and operationalize the relation between collective action and moments of opportunity;
3. *coproduction* to strengthen the inclusive understanding of collective action as a space of deliberative opportunities and to highlight the political understanding of transformative planning as a means to redefine governance structures and the mission of the public sector.

This first interpretation can be seen as a first set of concepts to understand the room for manoeuvre for transformative planning practice **(resolution)** and was used as a basis for the approaches that we developed as *endeavour* (mostly in the Dam project (4.3.1) and the Planning Studio (4.3.2)). By defining this framework and reflecting on it throughout the action research I tried to strengthen the external validity of the research, as a practice-based understanding of how theoretical concepts of transformative planning can be applied within a post-political planning context.

Moment 2: contextualization related to project-based engagement with planning practice

A second moment of research was applied in relation to six projects that structured the research. Each of the six projects functioned as a new context of ideas. Unlike the different concepts which were defined in the first moment of the research, they could be related to other mechanisms and contexts that directly impact the room for manoeuvre for transformative planning practice **(contextualization)**.
Based on empirical understanding (through mapping, observations, interviews, …) and transdisciplinary reflection (through workshops, collective writing, …), each project led to a more in-depth explanation of how different structures and mechanisms manifest themselves in concrete situations.
The six different projects that were part of the embedded case study (*endeavour*) in this PhD research were selected according to their methodological position (data collection and organizing a specific way of collective problematization). The six projects were commissioned to *endeavour*, except the project of Aglasun where I was part of a research team of the KU Leuven and the project of the Dam which was carried out by *endeavour* in collaboration with the P&D team of KU Leuven as a pro-active uncommissioned project.

In this PhD thesis I often refer to two other projects: 'We Kopen Samen Den Oudaan' and 'Spatial Safety'. Both projects were not part of the PhD project since they lack a clear reflective methodology. I introduce both projects in chapter 4 and use them to illustrate the possible applications of certain results of this PhD research in planning practice.
The different projects cannot be seen as multiple case studies since they were only analysed and operationalized in relation to the main case of *endeavour*. These processes of collective problematization were based on discussions with a large variety of stakeholders, and focussed on different ways of organizing the project, different understandings of what transformative planning should mean in that specific context and as such inspired and reshaped the different sets of discussions that were organized within *endeavour* as an organisation.
In chapter 4 (4.3) I describe for each project how transformative planning was initially understood in the project, what the role of *endeavour* was in relation to this understanding and how the process of collective problematization was organised.

Moment 3: theorization by means of project-based reflection through collective writing

The project-based experiences and collective reflexive exercises on an organisational level (moment 4) resulted in different articles that critically evaluate and further conceptualize and theorize the room for manoeuvre for transformative planning. The articles were co-written with project partners who took a similar action research position. Writing an article mostly started when a project was finished. It was an interesting way to critically evaluate the relative explanatory power of the mechanisms and structures that had been described during each of the projects and related to other conceptual and theoretical interpretations **(theorization)**. The articles are based on a combination of empirical reflection on the process of collective problematization in each of the projects and of a specific theoretical framework that was added to further challenge the theoretical exploration in chapter 2 and more specifically the different Subquestions that were presented. This way of working strengthened the explorative and cumulative nature of the action research and this PhD thesis (see 3.3). Four of the articles are included as chapters of this thesis (chapter 5-8), three other articles are included in annex (for an overview of articles see Table 3).

Moment 4: retroduction based on the co-construction of *endeavour* as an organisation

A last moment of research was based on the continuous reinterpretation of the underlying dimensions and mechanisms of transformative planning (moment 1). This moment of **retroduction** is only possible by combining the different empirical experiences of project-based planning practice (moment 2), with the different moments of analytical refining through collective writing (moment 3). The process of retroduction was operationalized by defining and redefining how *endeavour* worked. Because of a better understanding of *endeavour*'s room for manoeuvre it was possible to specify its legal, financial and organizational structure, its identity and the methodological structure of the transformative

planning projects. This reflexive line was organized as a sequence of different reflexive sessions with the members of *endeavour* often supervised by an external expert (Table 4). By these reflexive sessions *endeavour*'s conceptualisation of the room for manoeuvre of transformative planning got consistently sharpened throughout time.

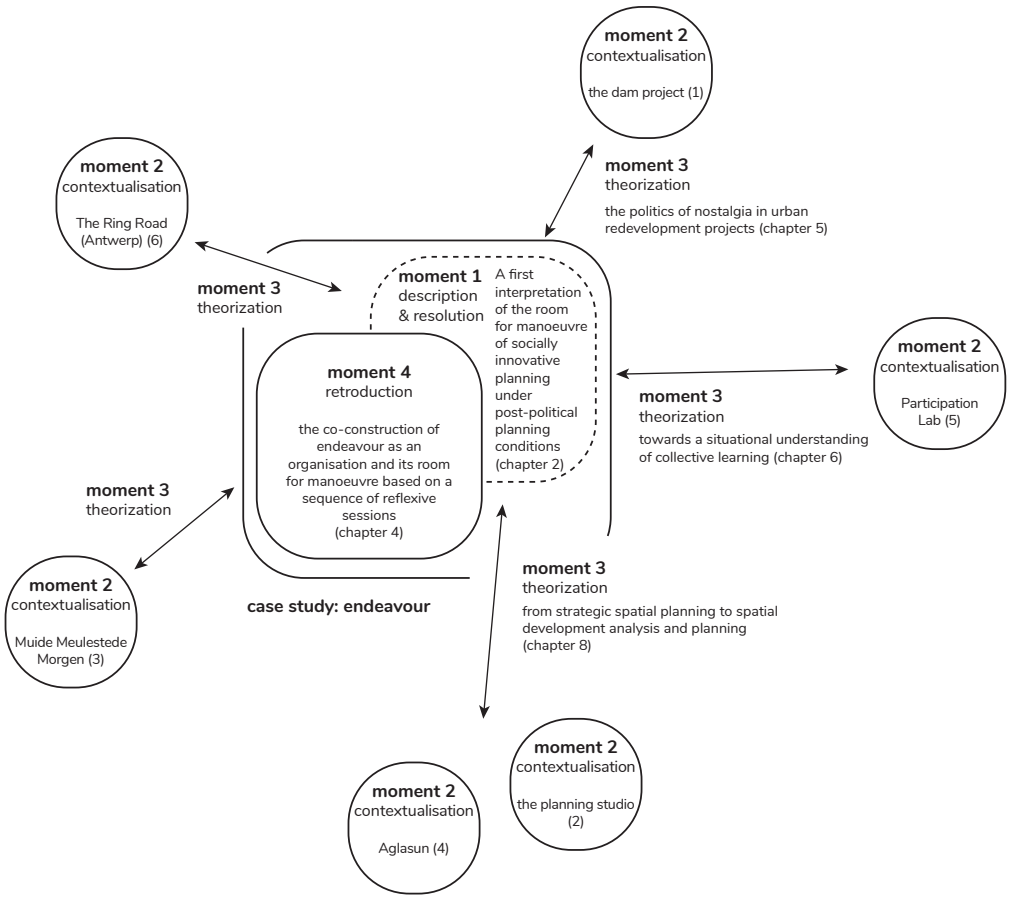

Figure 13: Methodological design

3.3. STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

The whole dissertation is structured as a cumulative understanding of the (building of) room for manoeuvre for transformative planning. By describing specific moments of research in the four research chapters, new approaches, theoretical frameworks or experiences are introduced that detail or rethink the room for manoeuvre for transformative planning. Each single chapter, each moment of research, becomes the occasion for a more in-depth theoretical exploration of the research question and the subquestions introduced in chapter 2.
This incremental-evolutive organization of the PhD thesis has a lot to do with the explorative and uncertain nature of its single-case study. The case of *endeavour* grew throughout the research trajectory, getting engaged in a large and more complex field of planning practice. Following this organizational evolution, new possibilities for action research, insights in the transformative capacity of planning and understanding the implications of the actions of *endeavour* popped-up.

Chapter 4 provides a first description of the case study and introduces the different projects that were part of this PhD research. In chapter 5-8 the research outputs of a selection of specific moments of research are presented in the format of (published) articles. Each chapter adds an interpretation to the initial theoretical framework of chapter 2, in line with the incremental-evolutive nature of this PhD-research. Each chapter ends with a section that describes how the specific project-based reflection through collective writing influenced and was influenced by different other moments of research both on a project- and organizational level and how the chapter can be used to reflect on a selection of the subquestions as presented in chapter 2.
The concluding chapter 9 elaborates on the findings of this PhD research. An annex presents four more articles that were published during my PhD research but do not belong to the corpus of the PhD thesis.

Each of these four articles in annex are a direct result of this PhD research since they illustrate specific steps in the research process. They are however less related to the overall, evolving research framework I explain in the introduction and conclusion of this thesis.
The first article '*From activists to social entrepreneurs, and back?*' Was published in Planning Theory & Practice as part of a special issue 'interface' on young critical planning practitioners (Tasan Kok et al., 2016) and constructs a narrative of *endeavour* as a transformational practice.
The second article '*Valuating narrative accounts in participatory planning processes, a case of co-creative storytelling in Antwerp, Belgium*' was published in the book Participatory Design Theory: Using Technology and Social Media to Foster Civic Engagement (Devisch et al., 2018). It further illustrates the strategic character of narratives in planning based on our work in the Dam case.
The third article '*Something old, something new something borrowed, something blue*' was written using a presentation *endeavour* gave at ETH Zürich. The text reflects on the work of *endeavour* and describes openness as a necessary condition for critical spatial practice.

The fourth article '*Seizing moments of opportunity for co-production: deconstructing an action research process in the Dam neighbourhood in Antwerp*' was published in the PhD thesis of Tim Devos (Devos, 2016). The article describes in more detail the planning process in the Dam neighbourhood in Antwerp and the involvement of *endeavour*.
The first three articles were written in collaboration with Tim Devos and Maarten Desmet, the last article was written in collaboration with Tim Devos.

3.4. ABSTRACTS OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 5
The politics of nostalgia in urban redevelopment projects: the case of Antwerp-Dam (Meeus, Devos & De Blust, 2016)

This chapter, published in *'The Commonalities of Global Crises, Markets, Communities and Nostalgia'* (Karner & Weicht, 2016), describes the Dam project and directly relates to the following reflective questions defined in chapter 2 and the underlying idea of coproduction as leverage for the room for manoeuvre for transformative spatial planning.

- Under which conditions is coproduction a tool to strengthen, expand and solidify the room for manoeuvre of socially innovative planning practice?
- Does a more coproductive perspective on planning under the current post-political conditions overcome the critique of collaborative planning being delusional?
- How does a social innovation perspective on collective action relate to the attempt of coproductive planning to mobilize the collective power of citizens?

The chapter examines the embedding of future investments in the neighbourhood of the Dam in Antwerp (Belgium) and relates it to local involvement in the actual decision-making processes. More specifically it elaborates on how nostalgia as an *"inevitable emotion in an era of rapid and enforced change"* (Bonnett, 2010, p. 2365) and a *"discursive power that has the potential to criticize particular forms of change and imagine different futures"* (Meeus et al., 2016, p. 251) is instrumental in organizing the local claim for involvement in the actual decision-making processes.
The chapter combines the empirical work of the Dam project (cfr. 4.3.1) with two new theoretical frameworks. The first one specifies the necessity of socially innovative practice within neighbourhood planning, inspired by the Polanyi-concept of an 'always embedded economy' (Block 2003; Fraser 2013). The second one furthers a more complex understanding of collective action and collaboration in relation to coproduction and starts from the idea that urban neighbourhoods do not consist of one community but instead of a diversity of trans-local and overlapping communities (Amin, 2005).

Chapter 6

Towards a situational understanding of collective learning: a reflective framework for spatial planning professionals (De Blust, Devisch & Schreurs, 2019)

Chapter 6, published in Urban Planning, is based on the participation lab (project 5) and combines a collective learning and social innovation perspective. It relates to the following reflective questions defined in chapter 2:

- How does a social innovation perspective on collective action relate to the attempt of coproductive planning to mobilize the collective power of citizens?

- Does a social innovation perspective offer a concrete operational basis for collective action and planning? How does this basis relate to a coproductive planning approach?
- How does the solidarity-based ethics of socially innovative action capacitate a more agonistic understanding of coproductive planning approaches?

The chapter elaborates on a more operational and detailed way of analysing processes of collective learning in order to help spatial planning professionals understanding these processes and take position. As a result of an in-depth study of two cases of socially innovative action, this chapter builds a reflexive framework that conceptualizes socially innovative processes as situated trajectories of collective learning based on three theories in the field of pedagogy and organisational studies. By combining these studies, it becomes possible to contextualise and operationalize the interrelation between internal processes of learning, supportive relationships between collective learning trajectories and external demands.
The chapter combines the empirical work of the Participation Studio (cfr. 5.3.5.) with new theoretical frameworks on collective learning (the work of Baser & Morgan, (2008) on capacity development, the work of Gert Biesta (2010) on the functions of education and learning, and the work of Bruno Latour (2004) on onto-political proceedings) and describes how planning practice can relate to processes of collective learning. The different frameworks operationalize the process of social learning and suggest certain reflective questions on consequences of this learning approach for planning agency.

Chapter 7

Ambiguity as agency: critical opportunists in the neoliberal city (Kaethler, De Blust & Devos, 2017).

Chapter 7, published in the Journal of CoDesign, elaborates on the reflexive trajectory of *endeavour* and the role of strategic ambiguity and relates to the following questions for reflection defined in chapter 2:

- Is ambiguity a necessary condition for critical planning agency to define and react to moments of opportunity?
- How does ambiguity relate to the strategy of coproduction and the ethical principles of socially innovative action and is this relation affected by post-political planning conditions?
- Is it possible to overcome the ethical critique on ambiguity as a selective tool and can ambiguity be used in a strategic way?

Participatory design and planning processes are subject to co-optation by neoliberal forces and post-political logics. This places participatory practitioners, such as co-designers or planners involved in coproduction, in a difficult position. Not taking a critical stance can

indeed lead to legitimising and normalising the dominant logic of the state or elites. Taking a clear critical stance however, can result in a loss of access and trust from stakeholders and ultimately result in being side-lined from influential design or planning processes. This chapter critically adapts Eric M. Eisenberg's theory of strategic ambiguity as a potential discursive resource for practitioners seeking to remain active within influential urban decision-making processes while sustaining a critical position and practice.
The chapter directly relates to the different reflexive sessions on *endeavour* as an organisation (cfr. 4.2.) and elaborates on ambiguity as a transformative practice based on the concepts of strategic ambiguity as defined by Eisenberg (1984).

Chapter 8

From strategic spatial planning to spatial development analysis and planning. Social innovation as an epistemological guide (De Blust, Van den Broeck & Moulaert, 2019)

Chapter 8 combines a coproductive understanding of (strategic spatial) planning with a more detailed elaboration on socially innovative epistemology and relates to the following questions for reflection defined in chapter 2:

- Can a socially innovative approach unfold the relation between collective action and moments of opportunity under post-political planning conditions?
- Does a social innovation perspective offer a concrete operational basis for collective action and planning? How does this basis relate to a coproductive planning approach?
- What is the relation of social innovation and moments of opportunity? How does a socially innovative approach reinterpret and strengthen a political understanding of moments of opportunity?
- How does the solidarity-based ethics of socially innovative action capacitate a more agonistic understanding of coproductive planning approaches?

The chapter aims to show how a critical social innovation approach can strengthen the theoretical foundations of strategic spatial planning by elaborating on the specific interrelation between social innovation theory, developed within the territorial development approach, and planning literature. Based on a social innovation ontology and its underlying dialectical relations, four reflective responses are defined and illustrated that seem to be crucial to develop a transformative and a socially and environmentally just planning practice. Chapter eight combines the empirical work on Aglasun (cfr. 4.3.) and the Strategic Spatial Planning studio (cfr. 4) with a more detailed description of the epistemological basis of the territorial approach in social innovation literature (a.o. MacCallum et al. 2009; Moulaert et al. 2010). As such the chapter describes four reflexive responses that operationalizes the added value of SI to understand transformative planning and critically reflects on a planning-oriented understanding of transformation.

3.5. OVERVIEW OF DATA (COLLECTION) RELATED TO THIS RESEARCH

This metareflexive action research uses a large diversity of data related to the different moments of research as introduced in 3.4. In Table 2 an overview is given of the planning projects that were part of this PhD research. In Table 3 the different moments of collective writing are introduced, where Table 4 describes the four reflexive sessions and periods that structured the evolution of *endeavour*.

Table 2: Overview of planning projects related to this PhD research

	PARTNER	TRANSFORMATIVE PLANNING AMBITION	COLLECTIVE ACTION	PLANNING AGENCY	MOMENTS OF OPPORTUNITY
Project 1: The Dam June 2013 - Jan 2016	Damcomité (local neighb. committee), AG Vespa, Land Invest, Druwel, …	The democratic integration of local neighbourhood representation in the decision-making process of the redevelopment of the Slaughterhouse site.	A search for the potential role of the Dam comité as neighbourhood representatives	Questioning the agency of private consultants (as *Endeavour*) and the role of public planning administrors.	The relation and interface between official procedural approaches and new interfaces for participation and coproduction
Project 2: The Planning Studio Sept 2013 – Jan 2017	Tutors of the planning studio, students, local neighb. actors (Dam, Oostende)	Research on the possibility to define a common transformative agenda and define possibilities for transformative action	Researching the role of the studio as temporary moments of collective action	Focussed on defining the relation between a transformative planning position and its instruments	Understanding the temporary condition of the planning studio and its potential for identifying moments of opportunity
Project 3: Muide Meulestede Morgen May 2015 - June 2016	Local Neighb. committee, Architecture Workroom Brussels, the city of Ghent, …	Creating a shared future vision on a neighbourhood scale focussed on the Integration of urban economy and local alternative for market-based real-estate development	Challenge to relate to existing coalitions of collective action and defining a shared governance structure	Similar to the Dam, questioning the agency of private consultants and planning administrors	How to relate to possible future changes and projects? Anticipating moments of opportunities

	PARTNER	TRANSFORMATIVE PLANNING AMBITION	COLLECTIVE ACTION	PLANNING AGENCY	MOMENTS OF OPPORTUNITY
Project 4: Aglasun March 2016	METU (Department of architecture), Planning & Development, representatives of Aglasun & Sagalassos, …	Sustainable development of land. The integration of cultural heritage protection and an ecological justice approach. Definition of local need-based development agenda.	Trying to support collective action without a precise question or mandate.	Reflecting on the role of planning agency in relation to other research profiles	Pro-active construction of possible moments of opportunity in an unknown institutional context
Project 5: Participation Lab March 2016 - Nov 2016	academics, VRP, planning professionals, civil organisations	Research on the possibility to define a shared understanding of participation as a key-element in transformative planning practice	Different forms of collective action with a focus on civil society initiatives	Reflecting on the role of the planning practitioner based on its professional status	Ex ante evaluation of the importance and interpretation of moments of opportunity for different cases
Project 6: Covering the Ring Road of Antwerp May 2017 - Ongoing	Team Intendant, 51n4e, HNS, Ringland, design community, the broad public, …	Attempt to construct and institutionalize a social justice approach in an agenda and project logic of large infrastructures	Trying to understand how to relate and strategically intervene in a complex field of existing trajectories of collective action	Clear search for positioning planning agency in relation to the complex field of collective actions	Mostly focused on a time dimension, creating the relation between future and existing moments of opportunity

Table 3: Collective writing

	YEAR	PROJECT	CO-AUTHORS	PUBLICATION
Planning op slot. Experimenteren met rollen en positie in de Damwijk in Antwerpen	2014	The Dam	Tim Devos	Published in Regie en loslaten: gebundelde papers en bijdragen aan de PlanDag 2014 (De Blust, Devos, 2014)
Seizing moments of opportunity for co-production: deconstructing an action research process in the Dam neighbourhood in Antwerp	2014-2017	The Dam	Tim Devos	Unpublished article. Earlier version In PhD thesis Tim Devos (Devos, 2016) (in annex)
The politics of nostalgia in urban redevelopment projects: the case of Antwerp-Dam	2015-2016	The Dam	Tim Devos, Bruno Meeus	Chapter 5, Published in the commonalities of global crisis (Meeus et al., 2016)
Valuating narrative accounts in participatory planning processes A case of co-creative storytelling in Antwerp, Belgium.	2015-2018	The Dam	Tim Devos & Maarten Desmet	Published in Participatory Design Theory (Devos et al., 2018) (in annex)
From activists to entrepreneurs, and back?	2016	*endeavour*	Tim Devos & Maarten Desmet	Published in Interface planning Theory & practice (Tasan-Kok et al., 2016) (in annex)
Geschiedenis en concepten van participatie bij ruimtelijke vraagstukken	2016-2018	The ring, participation labs	Jan Scheurs & Annette Kuhk	(Schreurs et al., 2019). Will be published in 'Participatiegolven' (Kuhk et al., 2019), excerpt published in Ruimte (Schreurs et al., 2016)
On the question: WHY	2017	*endeavour*	Tim Devos, Maarten De Smet	Published by *endeavour* (in Annex)

	YEAR	PROJECT	CO-AUTHORS	PUBLICATION
Ambiguity as agency: critical opportunists in the neoliberal city	2017	*endeavour*	*Endeavour* Michael Kaethler, Tim Devos	Chapter 7, Published in CoDesign (Kaethler et al., 2017), is accepted for publication (De Blust et al., 2019a) in 'Participatiegolven' (Kuhk et al., 2019)
Towards a situational understanding of collective learning: a reflexive framework	2018	Participation Lab	Jan Schreurs & Oswald Devisch	chapter 6, Published in Urban Planning (De Blust et al., 2019b)
From strategic spatial planning to spatial development analysis and planning. Social innovation as an epistemological guide	2018	Planning Studio, Aglasun	Pieter Van den Broeck & Frank Moulaert	Chapter 8, an excerpt is accepted for publication (De Blust & Van den Broeck, 2019) in 'thoughts for a Better World. Social innovation as Political Transformation' (Van den Broeck et al., 2019). Full article submitted to planning theory & practice

Table 4: Reflexive sessions

	PERIOD	SUPPORTED BY	PRESENTATIONS	MAIN FOCUS
The early stage	2013 - 2015	Advisory committee, i-propellor	Next generation festival (Milan & Turin)	Defining the (political) position of *endeavour* as an enterprise
A cooperative understanding of endeavour	2016	Coopburo	Minsk, coopdag	Rethinking the legal basis of *endeavour* as a cooperative
Rethinking the organization	2017	Advisory committee	ETH	Redefining the organizational structure with a stronger focus on proactive projects and defining our methodologies
Continuum	2018	Graphic design and communication agency (the brewery)	Make city festival	Communication, branding and internal structure of the organization. Defining our values

3.6. NOTES

10. All problems can never be solved: an artistic project by Jozef Wouters about a 'fictional architecture office in a modernist social housing complex in Brussels, where real architects and locals worked together to make scale models: a reflection on scale models as spaces of negotiation, on maquettes as places where the desire of the architect is visible without the compromises of reality.' (https://www.kvs.be/fr/focus/all-problems-can-never-be-solved)

20. PlanDag: the PlanDag is the yearly conference of Dutch and Flemish Professional planners and planning academics

21. Master thesis Urban Planning: Plannen voor't stad. Een historisch onderzoek naar mechanismen van ruimtelijke visievorming in de stad Antwerpen van 1970 tot nu vanuit een strategisch relationele benadering (De Blust, 2012). A first attempt to understand and analyse institutional change frome a strategic relational perspective

22. New generation festival: www.newgenerationsweb.com/

23. Stramien: www.stramien.be

24. Minsk Urban Platform: http://urbanist.by/

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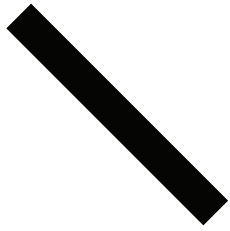


Figure 14: "n" according to *endeavour*

4. AN INTRODUCTION TO *ENDEAVOUR*

Mm, we were all young once.

(Inspector Morse)

In this chapter 4 I briefly introduce *endeavour* as a case study. I give an insight in how the organisation and its different ways of working evolved over the last 4-5 years.
In a first part some key facts & figures are presented. In a second part I elaborate on three narratives that describe the internal reflexive sessions of *endeavour* and I conclude by introducing the manifesto of *endeavour* as an illustration of the most recent positioning of the organization. In a third part the different projects of *endeavour* that are part of this PhD are introduced and described in relation to the theoretical and methodological framework of chapter 2 and 3.

4.1. FACTS & FIGURES

CONTRACTORS

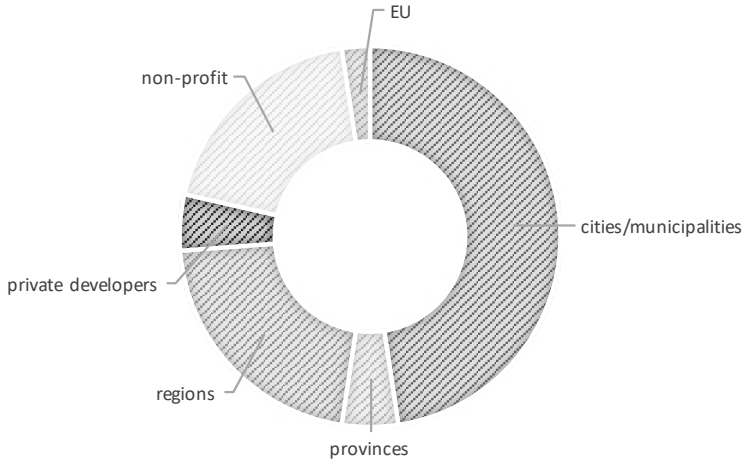


Figure 15: Overview of the different contractors of *endeavour*

PROJECTS

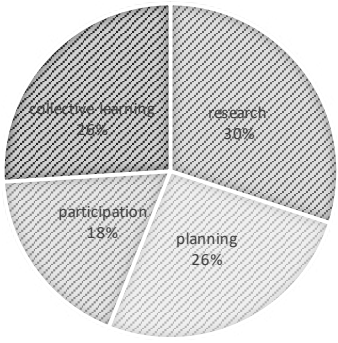
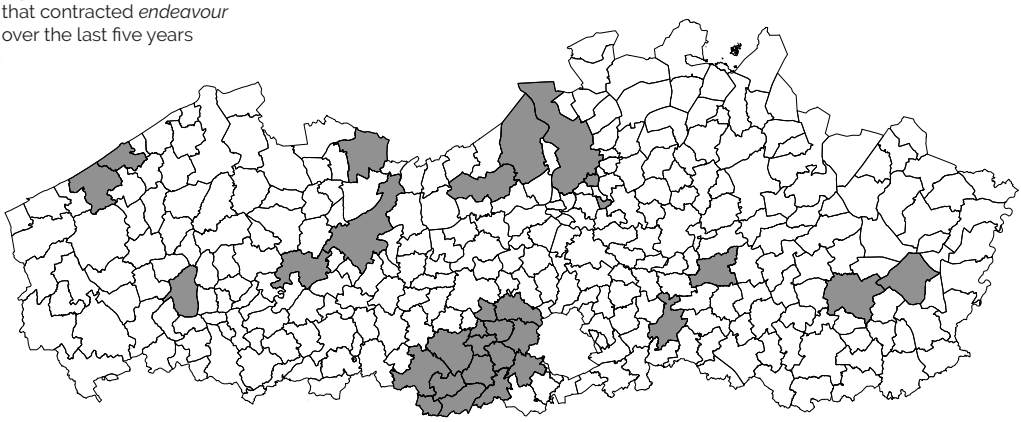


Figure 16: Overview of the typologies of projects over the last five year of *endeavour*

Figure 17: Municipalities that contracted *endeavour* over the last five years



BACKGROUND

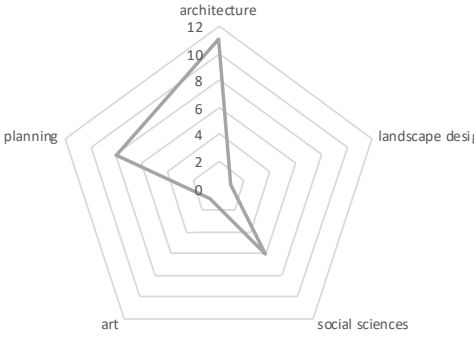


Figure 18: The spectrum of background of the collaborators in *Endeavour*

The last four years endeavour realized 52 projects

The avarage revenue of endeavour is between €300.000-400.000

The avarage team of endeavour consists of 4-8 people

Over the last four years, 18 people worked for endeavour of which 8 trainees

TOPICS

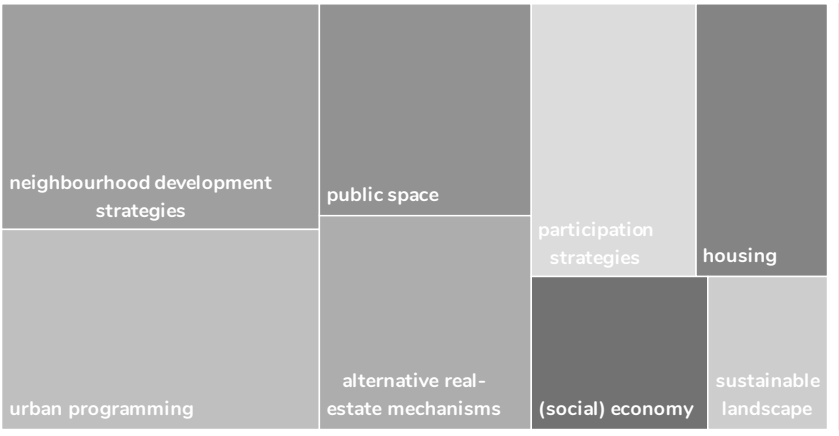


Figure 19: The topics of the research projects of *endeavour*

4.2. THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ORGANIZATION

Since its creation *endeavour* has developed itself as an office for socio-spatial research, a collaboration between urban planners, social scientists and architects who tried to narrow the gap between social sciences and urban planning and find ways to get actively engaged in socially innovative planning practice. In these four years *endeavour* constantly redefined its role and position in line with the epistemological research question that lies at the basis of this PhD trajectory. In the following paragraphs I briefly describe three narratives that were central in how *endeavour* positioned and described itself through those years. Each of these narratives were moulded by the articulation of the different moments and trajectories of collective reflexion described in 3.3.1.
The first narrative corresponds to the early years of *endeavour* (2013-2015) when we had different discussions with our advisory committee and i-propellor, a consultancy practice specialized in the development of not for profit enterprises that supported us with the development of our mission statement and business model. Mainly focussed on defining our role as intermediate activist planners applying a coproductive planning approach, we tried to understand the transformative capacity of *endeavour* and how it materialized in a specific organisational structure. The second narrative is based on different sessions we had with Coopburo in 2016. The narrative focusses on the implications of our transformative position and how we could better define our way of working in order to guarantee our room for manoeuvre under post-political planning conditions. The third narrative sprang in 2017 and directly reacts to the two previous narratives. After a fundamental rethinking of the transformative capacity of *endeavour* and our coproductive planning approach (by reflecting on different projects of *endeavour* and including new theoretical frameworks – chapter 5-8) we redesigned the organisational structure of *endeavour* to better support loose and pro-active collaborations not limited to the planning field.

4.2.1. NDVR, TAKING ON A NEW ROLE

Inspired by the collective reflection and business modelling coached by i-propellor and by the invitation we received from the New Generations Festival (*www.newgenerationsweb.com),* we started to define the position of *Endeavour* in the landscape of architecture practices and planning offices.

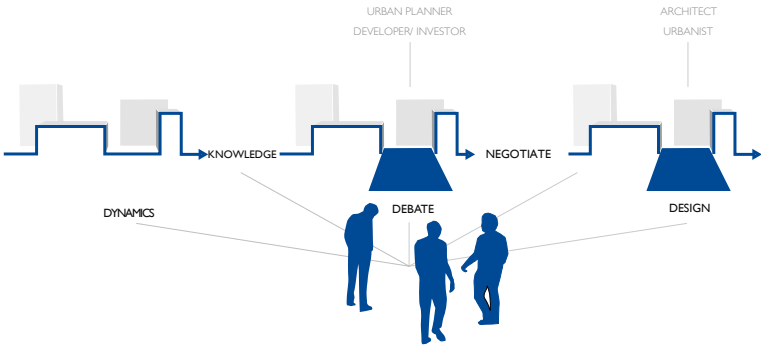


Figure 20: A first attempt to position *endeavour*

As a reaction to our previous experiences in architecture and planning, we saw *endeavour* as a means to experiment with the role of the professional and started to conceptualize how we could deal with the multiplicity of roles *endeavour* played (advocacy planning, direct action, centre for expertise, ...).
In this first year of *endeavour* we were mainly inspired by the social-spatial divide in cities and localities: the idea that designers and planners need fit tools and methods to involve social professionals and capture local knowledge and dynamics in order to better translate the implicit and experience-based knowledge of social professionals to spatial terms.

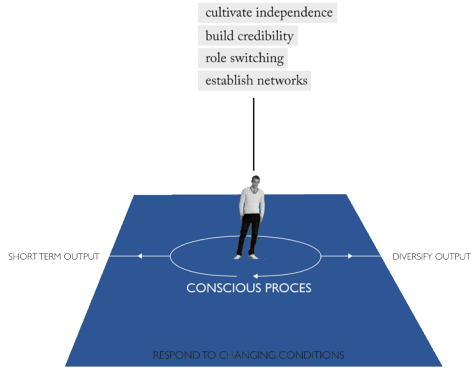


Figure 21: The role of the critical spatial planning practitioner

The answer of *endeavour* was, at that time, a clear subjective approach, highly influenced by the Dam project (4.3.1). We stated that spatial projects have the ability to increase the quality of urban areas and neighbourhoods and that as *endeavour* we focused on increasing the positive social impact of large-scale spatial projects in (transitional) neighbourhoods. We believed that this social impact could be pursued through a program based approach where we would start from existing needs and expertise in the neighbourhood to organize an inclusive participation process that could result in concrete projects and empower existing local networks.
This approach was highly influenced by the coproductive understanding of transformative planning as described in chapter 2 and the idea that planning practice can play a role in strengthening the socially innovative capacity of people by creating new political and inclusive fora (or spatial arena as illustrated in Figure 21) outside the institutional planning process that form the setting for new urban practices, discourses and institutions. As a result, agonistic forms in planning and a related fundamental shift in the balance of power are supported.

To achieve social impact *endeavour* believed that long-term involvement in (transitional) neighbourhoods and inclusive processes of socio-spatial translation were the fertile conjunctures for a coproductive planning approach. This can be seen as a reaction to the classical project- or short-term based participation processes and the gap between design-based and local-based knowledge. We started from the idea that *endeavour* could play a role in the different phases of neighbourhood redevelopment as intermediate activist planners and that this long-term engagement defines new possibilities for the spatial professional to create social impact and develop new business models (Figure 20).

4.2.2. THE ORGANIZATION AS A MEANS FOR ACTION

A second important narrative was the relation between a specific professional position and a distinct organizational model. In the first year(s) of *endeavour* this model was defined by the idea to combine the organisational structure of an ndvr office & ndvr fund to realize the possibility for long term engagement in different neighbourhoods. In a later phase this evolved towards the idea/image of *endeavour* as an open platform of socially inspired urban professionals. The idea of a platform can be seen as a continuation of the previous model, still based on creating an organization that has the flexibility to engage on the long term and in different roles and phases of urban redevelopment. It is however less restricted to a specific activity (e.g. supporting local coalitions in neighbourhood redevelopment) and more focussed on a shared mission and tools for transformative spatial practice, still based on a coproductive planning approach but less related to a specific position in planning practice.

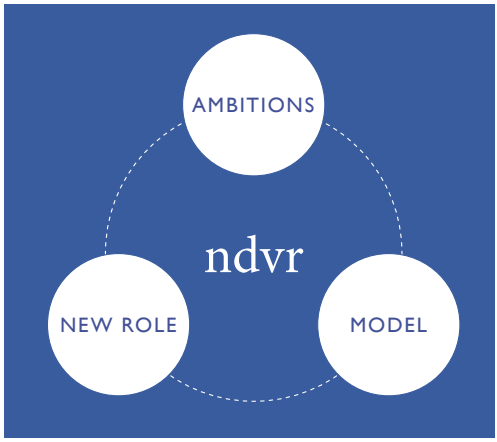


Figure 22: A first concept behin the position of *Endeavour*

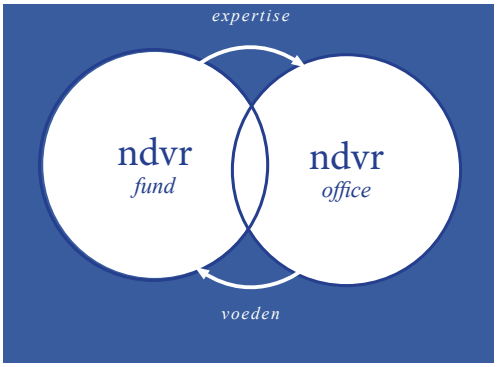


Figure 23: *Endeavour* office and fund

Ndvr office & fund

Ndvr office & fund started form the simple idea of a multi-local strategy. By being active in different neighbourhoods for a long-term, the knowledge, social impact, resources and experience of *endeavour* grew. The idea of the ndvr fund for socio-spatial impact was (1) to enable this long-term engagement and create a knowledge-sharing network and (2) to develop a neighbourhood scan to define the social potential of spatial projects and catalyse further engagements. In the meantime, the idea was that this multi-local activity would give *endeavour* a concurrent advantage as a socio-spatial consultancy office. The revenue of the office would flow back to this fund, which made it possible to invest again in long-term presence in different neighbourhoods.

Ndvr as a platform

Inspired by the project of the Dam (4.3.1) and the proactive project of the Oudaan (4.3.7) and experiencing the limitations of a consultancy office (need for flexible engagement) we changed the concept of organizing *endeavour* as an office & fund structure to the format of an open platform for cooperation. This idea of a platform was inspired by the reflective exercise we organized with Coopburo, where we developed the cooperative structure of *endeavour* based on a solidarity mechanism between consultants. The open platform started from the ambition to give others the possibility to become part of *endeavour* and engage in different ways in shared and new projects. This evolution in positioning *endeavour* as an organisation strengthened the need to better define a shared mission and to cluster activities in order to create more clear conditions for cooperation. This need for clarity was influenced by the critical discussion we had on the role of strategic ambiguity as discussed in chapter 7.

In line with this idea of *endeavour* as a platform we started a lecture series, created the possibility for two freelancers to become partner of *endeavour* and further engaged in proactive projects as the redevelopment of the Stuivenberg site and a new sustainable future for the airport of Antwerp. This all resulted in a specific organizational structure of *Endeavour* based on the idea of creating our own room for manoeuvre, based on four principles and three rules for internal solidarity. Four principles for a cooperative structure

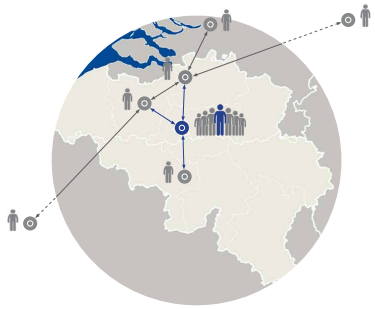


Figure 24; *Endeavour* as a collaboration between different local chapters

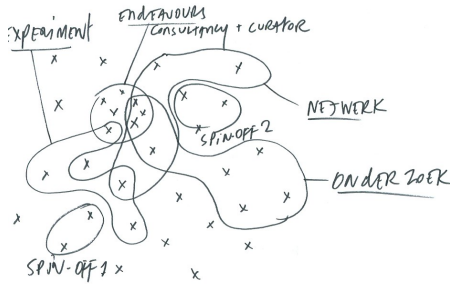


Figure 25; *Endeavour* as a platform

Endeavour is registered as a workers cooperative. This means that each of the shareholders of *endeavour* work at least part-time for the company. By organizing the work in a cooperative structure, *endeavour* wants to create the possibility for each of its workers to become engaged in transformative planning projects in a socially and economically sustainable way. We tried to limit the external and market-driven pressure of consultancy-based activities by developing four clear rules:

No accumulation of value

One of the most important agreements we made at the start of *endeavour* was that the company could never accumulate its value. The main idea was that we would never sell the company which made it easier for new workers to become shareholder of *endeavour* and excluded the possibility to engage with external investors as shareholders of the company. By limiting the possibilities of value accumulation, we made sure that we could always organize *endeavour* in a flexible way, supporting the direct needs of the current shareholders instead of the accumulated demands of the creditors of the past.

We don't count our hours

In a classic consultancy office it is normal to track hours for each assignment. With *endeavour* we decided not to do so in order to limit the economic logic of assignment-based working. We wanted to be sure that we would work on an assignment as much as was necessary to tackle a certain problem. This way of working had consequences for the size of the company and needed a continuous evaluation of the balance of total revenue and costs. By dealing with these issues on an organizational level we could focus on a good work life balance and limit the pressure of economical logics inherent for consultancy-based working.

We invest in pro-active projects

As discussed before *endeavour* invests a lot in pro-active / non-funded projects (The Dam (4.3.1.), we kopen samen den Oudaan (4.3.7.), Heim (on alternative housing for refugees), etc.). This way of working gives the possibility to constantly question and explore the social mission of *endeavour*. Because of the policy of not counting the hours and by only looking at the financial situation on an organizational level, we could engage with and invest in pro-active projects more freely. On average around 30% of the total working hours of *endeavour* is invested in pro-active projects.

We invest in research

For a long time, every shareholder of *endeavour* had the right to invest 25% of his/her time in research. This system was created at the start of the company to give the three original shareholders the possibility to work on their PhD in parallel with working for *endeavour*. At this moment the 25% rule is less strictly defined because not everyone is working on a PhD in parallel and is more and more engaged in pro-active projects. We increasingly try to combine research and our engagement in pro-active projects by investing in the academic research and debate, by writing conference contributions together or organizing lecture series and debates in strong cooperation with different universities in Flanders and the Netherlands.

Internal solidarity

Beside the different mechanisms to limit the impact of an economic logic through our consultancy-based work we also defined three rules that should strengthen the internal solidarity in *endeavour* in order to create a solid basis for the cooperative to function and protect *endeavour* for free-riders.

Flexibility in engagement

At the beginning of each year we try to define the engagement of each of the shareholders of *endeavour*. By determining what everyone expects from *endeavour* on a monthly basis we can make a calculation on what we need to invoice that year. From that moment onwards, everyone engages him/herself to reach this common goal. This logic is further supported by working with an open bookkeeping which is accessible for all the shareholders of *endeavour*.

Solidarity on earnings

The shareholders of *endeavour* have a shared responsibility and commitment to reach the years goals. All shareholders have an equal wage, taking into account their work time. In principle all the activities of the shareholders that are in line with the vision and the mission of *endeavour* are invoiced by the company.
In order to operationalize this principle, we made a list of activities that we think are in line with the cooperative's ambition. If this can't be the case, because of legal or administrative issues, then the normal salary of *endeavour* for the given amount of work is deducted from the wage that was agreed upon at the beginning of the year. This rule avoids that certain positions, as being an expert in a jury or a lecturer, would create an income differentiation between shareholders based on common work.

Becoming a shareholder

The idea behind a worker's cooperative is that everybody becomes a shareholder when he / she works for *endeavour*. In practice this means that after working for two years for *endeavour* a final personal evaluation is made. Based on a positive outcome of this evaluation everyone has the possibility to become a shareholder without the need to buy himself into the company. Currently two former freelancers of *endeavour* are in the process of becoming a shareholder of the cooperative bringing its total number of shareholders to five.

4.2.3. FROM COPRODUCING TO HACKING THE CITY

The first two narratives were still close to the initial understanding of transformative planning practice as a coproductive *endeavour*, whereas the third period of reflection changed the epistemological conditions of *endeavour* as a socially innovative actor.
In line with the ambition to develop *endeavour* as a platform we started to better formulate certain key lessons as a reflection on our practice. A first set of key lessons were drafted for a lecture we had to give at the ETH Zürich: 'Something Old, something new, something borrowed, something blue'. These key lessons triggered a lot of questions and fundamentally repositioned the role of *endeavour* from a coproductive planning practice towards an office that situates itself in a large and diverse field of collective action and tries to define opportunities for social action through a clear analysis of configurations of power differences and socio-spatial transformation through-time. In chapter 8 and the conclusions of this thesis (Chapter 9) I describe in more detail how I started to reconstruct this understanding of the room for manoeuvre of transformative planning practice. Both the internal reflection with *endeavour*, the cases of Aglasun & Muide Meulestede, the participation Lab and an elaborated understanding of the critical epistemology of social innovation theory, were crucial elements in this respect.

In the following paragraphs the seven key lessons are summarized. The text that accompanied our presentation in Zürich (De Blust et aL, 2017) can be found in the annex of this thesis (10.3). Whereas the key lessons state several elements of a more complex position of *endeavour* as an organisation, the text in annex engages with the concept of openness as a critical element for a transformative planning practice from three perspectives:

1. Pursuing openness aimed at changing closed processes of knowledge creation to open processes of learning.
2. Openness towards the actions of others, taking a step back from the central role of the spatial planning professional: *"It is a huge misunderstanding in our spatial profession, and a strong sign of the ongoing instrumentalisation, that being skilful in a way of analysing space, producing convincing visions or running collaborative charrettes, is adequate or appropriate for every challenge."* (De Blust et al, 2017).
3. Openness on an organisational level. *"We feel the urge to share our vision and the way we organize ourselves and we constantly look into new cross-overs and explore unknown collaborations with different other actors like product designers, digital developers, academic researchers, civil society, movements, activists, and marketing agencies. It's by pushing ourselves to constantly rethink why and how we do things that we find new ways to sustain this productive, creative and fluid state of new endeavours".* (De Blust et al, 2017).

7 key lessons on transformative planning practice

#1 Design 'tools' to stimulate a socio-spatial reading
We have discovered that it is often more vital to design and think of the means to stimulate the exchange between social and locally embedded knowledge with spatial knowledge, than to draft generic solutions. At the same time it is important to design tools which provide enough concrete ways to get a grip on those social issues which often seem 'beyond our control'.
To deal with the seemingly ungraspable nature of complex socio-spatial issues such as the subjective perception of safety in public space, where the city sought a combination of implementable 'solutions', to avoid a seemingly open-ended research process, we started to develop logics which can be embedded in municipal urban planning and design procedures. We are often doing this in the form of manuals that make complex socio-spatial issues graspable, while introducing a clear social agenda to stimulate more exchange between social and spatial knowledge.
Each of these tools has the goal to stimulate interaction between different types of expertise and modes of thought without 'abstracting': tools as the combination of analysis (designing a way to map social phenomena in a streetscape) and a process-oriented way of thinking, carefully delineating who to consult in drafting such an analysis.

#2 Stimulate collective learning processes
Engaging in often experimental trajectories where the output is often not so clearly defined are the types of challenge we are most interested in. This has to do with the complexity of issues which combine a social and a spatial agenda, where often different types of knowledge are at play. Trying to reinvent the institutionalised ways of working requires an openness to do so
This requires a trust-relationship with the contractor and the room-to-manoeuvre to experiment with new things. Often, we try to actively rethink the assignment by searching for the underlying mechanisms that create a certain condition, which may result in working on the borderline between carrying out an assignment and 'coaching' a local administration. In this we do not try to reinvent existing instruments but rather co-develop a modes of operation

#3 Pro-actively identify challenges and opportunities
Our terrain of action is something we continuously need to rediscover and redefine to identify new opportunities and possibilities and to actually avoid 'specialisation'. Therefore, we discovered that initiating our own 'projects' to engage in, is the most successful way to broaden our field of action and further develop our set of skills and expertise in order to deal with different types of challenges. This pro-active way of working as developed in the Dam and We Kopen Samen den Oudaan introduced this new way of thinking and started defining other ways of engaging in projects and the possibility to develop spin-off products as a consultancy office.



Figure 26: Seven key lessons to describe the practice of *Endeavour*

#4 Deconstruct roles and positions in the process at stake
We have discovered through positive but mostly negative experiences that it is crucial to identify and most importantly make explicit the different positions which will be taken up throughout a process at stake. We learned to make agendas and interests explicit during the trajectory of a project. Carrying out an assignment never happens in a vacuum and if you pretend it does, you will sooner or later be confronted with the contrary. Although this seems logical this is rarely explicitly done. An insightful example is the neighbourhood redevelopment project of Muide Meulestede Morgen, where traditional governance mechanisms and a dominant logic of decision-making interfered with an experimental and collaborative process with neighbourhood associations to develop a cooperative understanding of neighbourhood planning.

#5 Use a spatial agenda to develop new types of coalitions
It is only in the course of the last year that we started working on the organisational models behind the redevelopment of certain spaces. This way of working was developed during a project on the Dry Docks of Antwerp where we started to work on the governance mechanisms behind a masterplan (the logic of programming, managing and contracting a site). It created another field of action to integrate a social agenda (in the case of the Dry Docks on social economy) and was further developed within the project of covering the Antwerp Ring Road.

#6 Exploit the ambiguity of the role of the expert
It is a long-standing myth that experts are supposed to be neutral, driving on knowledge and skills which are in a sense detached form values and the political. We strongly disagree with this perception and all the more discovered that we manipulate or even exploit the position we can claim as experts to strive for a certain agenda, which in our case is a more socially innovative way of organising spatial development and urban renewal. It has certainly become clear that design is never a neutral exercise, but neither is the role of the intermediary or the moderator. Being a facilitator or intermediary can be a powerful means to push for a certain agenda or pro-actively bring different partners around the table (further discussed in chapter 7).

#7 Use research as a dialogical medium
From the beginning we wanted to react to the idea of participation as a means to gather post-factum legitimacy for a ready-made plan. Research into the socio-spatial specificity of a neighbourhood can be a means to engage with local stakeholders. When we do research as *Endeavour* we always define it in a coproductive way: research through dialogue and organising dialogue through research. A main strategy was to develop a set of storylines which manage to capture research output while painting a narrative picture, stakeholders can inhabit. This way of working was mostly developed in the Dam project and is further elaborated in chapter 5 and in the chapter on Valuating narrative accounts in participatory planning processes (Devos et al., 2018) in Annex of this thesis.

4.2.4. AN ENDEAVOUR MANIFESTO

The three narratives described above and the seven lessons of *endeavour* resulted in a new website as a trace and illustration of the new political positioning of the organisation. The discussion in chapter 7 on the role of strategic ambiguity was instrumental in our understanding of what and how to communicate and for the idea that we need to be more or less clear in what we actually want to achieve. In the conclusions of this thesis the (limited) role of strategic ambiguity for transformative planning practice under post-political planning conditions is further discussed.

www.*endeavour*s.eu

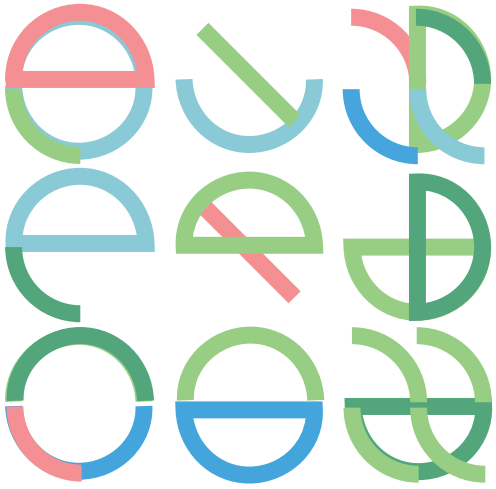


Figure 27: The new logo of *endeavour*



Figure 28 a new website for *endeavour*

Manifesto

We believe in inclusive, diverse, sustainable and just cities.

We believe space is key to a high quality of living.

We believe in the democratisation of the production of space.

We believe in extraordinary solutions and doing things differently.

We believe in hacking the linear way of thinking.

We believe co-creation leads to better solutions.

We believe in an open (source) exchange of knowledge and expertise.

Cities in transition

Increasingly complex demographic, ecological and social challenges are manifesting themselves as our cities are transforming and expanding. The spatial design, planning and (re-)development of our cities has to provide the right frameworks to deal with these challenges.

The existing methods, processes and systems to design, plan, program and manage urban environments are often not adapted to this changing context or fail to actively include citizens and local stakeholders. Endeavour therefore aims to radically rethink the way space is produced and organised.

"TO CLAIM THE RIGHT TO THE CITY (...) IS TO CLAIM SOME KIND OF SHAPING POWER OVER THE PROCESS OF URBANIZATION, OVER THE WAYS IN WHICH OUR CITIES ARE MADE AND REMADE, AND TO DO SO IN A FUNDAMENTAL AND RADICAL WAY."

— Harvey (2012)

Hack the city

While a solution to these problems requires a variety of measures, we see in our work that project-based, co-operative procedures and dialogues are the ideal way to generate and use local knowledge, which is inevitable for the research and design of the sustainable cities we want to live in. The philosophy of "hacking the city" acknowledges that creating a better world does not always require to reinvent the wheel, but to use existing tools in a different manner. In this manner, we relate also to the exploration of the role of the expert. Citizens themselves can become city makers and thus participate in procedures to create better, healthier, socially responsible and sustainable metropolitan zones; and we want to serve as the instrument for them to do so.

Figure 29: An *endeavour* manifesto

ENDEAVOUR MANIFESTO WORK WITH ENDEAVOUR EVENTS TEAM CONTACT

What can endeavour do for cities, governments, institutions and developers?

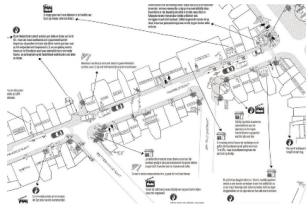
Given the increasing complexity of civic life, cities, municipalities, developers, politicians and other actors are looking for path-breaking expertise and innovative solutions to gain legitimacy through and with citizens. Endeavour tackles complex challenges and develops strategies to enlarge the socio-spatial impact of urban development processes.

We assemble know-how and provide consultancy in a diverse set of projects. Based on different services such as socio-spatial research and expertise, the design of new methods, strategies and tools, multi-stakeholder involvement and other types of support throughout the different stages of spatial development processes.



Muide Meulestede Gent

Through co-productive research we identified relevant socio-spatial narratives about the neighbourhood in order to strengthen the voice of local communities in urban redevelopment projects.



Spatial Safety

Through an interactive learning process, endeavour developed different methods and approaches to deal with the perception of unsafety in public space, in particular in relation to spatial design and redevelopment of public spaces.



Droogdokken Antwerpen

In collaboration with different experts and stakeholders we developed a shared spatial and organisational vision for the transformation of this area housing historical dry-docks into a mixed museal and manufacturing site.

Pro-active research and experiments

Endeavour does not only work on commissioned assignments, but we love to initiate pro-active experiments and actions. Our experience shows that there is no greater learning than in *learning by doing*. This is why we actively support utopian dreams, ideas, experiments and actions that contribute to the improvement of our cities; and we are open for suggestions and collaborations.

Endeavour elaborates solutions for urban topics that sometimes lead to the creation of products, prototypes, spin-outs, spin-offs or start-ups that develop their own life. We pursue engaging ideas for projects that ground on the transition towards more sustainable urban environments.

Developing a deeper understanding of "the just city" is considered the core task of endeavour. For this reason we are conducting research together with different academic partners, with the interplay of theory and practice as the pivotal point.



We Kopen Samen Den Oudaan

We joined forces with a variety of engaged professionals and set up a concept to collaboratively buy and develop the iconic Oudaan tower with the goal to break up conventional structures in the real estate development, and promote more democratic and transparent ways of city making.



Living in diversity - Heim

This initiative addresses socio-spatial research in relation to migration and the affordable housing crisis, addressing the lack of permanent structures of housing for temporary needs. Heim researches new living-environments which encourage interactions with refugees.

ECONOMY AND SKILLS
LONDON ANTWERP BARCELONA BERLIN

Euler Research

We are part of the European action research on identifying modes of learning outside formal settings to promote the benefits of citizen engagement in city making initiatives, whereby involved individual's access to the labour market and in democratic systems is improving. You can download the publication through this ***link***.

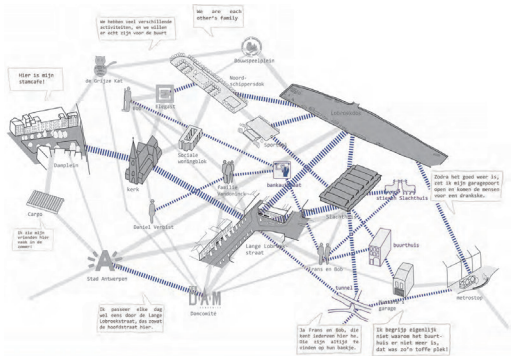
Figure 30: What has *endeavour* to offer?

4.3. 6 + 2 PROJECTS OF ENDEAVOUR

In the subsequent pages the six projects that gave me the opportunity to relate to other mechanisms and contexts that directly impact the room for manoeuvre for transformative planning practice (contextualization – research moment 2 in my methodological framework), are presented. Each project influenced the de- and reconstruction of my understanding of the room for manoeuvre for transformative planning practice under post-political conditions as will be described in detail and illustrated in the research chapters and conclusions of this thesis. In order to fully understand these reflections two other projects of *endeavour* are introduced in this section (We Kopen Samen den Oudaan / OPP (4.3.7) and Spatial Safety (4.3.8)). For each of these projects I describe how transformative planning was initially understood, what the role was of *endeavour* in relation to this understanding and how the process of collective problematization was organised

4.3.1. PROJECT 1. THE DAM PROJECT (ANTWERP) (CFR FULL TEXT IN ANNEX, 10.4)

The Dam, situated at the edge of Antwerp's 19th century belt, is part of the neighbourhood Antwerp North, known as one of the more socially deprived areas in the city. The neighbourhood, characterized by a rich history of industrial activities, intertwined with a densely populated working-class residential area, houses the site of the former municipal slaughterhouse which almost literally cuts the neighbourhood in two. Despite the construction of several new social housing projects and a temporary sports hall in the 1980's, the Dam largely stayed outside the city's renewal agenda in the late 90s and early 2000s and was to a lesser extent affected by gentrification. This is in comparison to other areas of Antwerp North, where the city was investing in a series of 'strategic projects' (a.o. Loopmans, 2008; Van den Broeck et al., 2015). More recently, the redevelopment of a former railway yard into a park, Spoor Noord, completed in 2009, reconnected the neighbourhood to the inner city. This strategic project resulted in a renewed popularity for the Dam, often referred to as 'a village in the city'. Nevertheless, several attempts over the last


Hier is mijn stamcafé!
De Grijze Kat
Noord-schippersdok
Dampleln
Cargo
Stad Antwerpen
Langerlostraat
Bouwmeesterslaan
Loodswoning
Sociale woningbouw
Bank
Bankgebouw
Fietsenstalling
Fietsenstalling
Daniël Vertdat
Langerlostraat
Kantoorgebouw
Kantoorgebouw
Bouwmeesterslaan
Bouwmeesterslaan
Zodra het goed weer is, zet ik mijn garagepoort open en komen de mensen voor een dronkske.
Bouwmeesterslaan
Bouwmeesterslaan
Bouwmeesterslaan

two decades to initiate a redevelopment of the former slaughterhouse site, located in the heart of the neighbourhood, did not materialise.

Following Antwerp's historic change of government in 2013 which brought the nationalist-conservative N-VA (New Flemish Alliance) to power after 80 years of social-democratic majority, the newly appointed vice-mayor for spatial planning initiated an ambitious public-private redevelopment project to transform the slaughterhouse site into a residential neighbourhood. From the start this redevelopment project showed some interesting characteristics. Firstly, the redevelopment of the slaughterhouse site can be seen as a classic example of public-private redevelopment where the majority of the land is owned by a private investor, pushing the city in a facilitating role. Secondly, the redevelopment started in a climate of uncertainty, since it was one of the first neighbourhood redevelopment projects under the new political majority and its reshuffled city administration. Thirdly, the planning process exemplifies how the acknowledged ambition of the new majority to strive for a further liberalization of spatial policy on all levels (Van de Velde, 2015) struggled to come to terms with a field of citizen involvement that is gaining power in Antwerp, reacting ever more explicitly to neoliberal urban policies (Loopmans & Dirckx, 2012). Fourthly, a recently established local community group, 'Damcomité' started to advocate for proactive citizen involvement at a very early stage in the process, which created an unknown setting for both Damcomité and the city.



Figure 33: Workshops on the project definition of the redevelopment of the slaughterhouse site

The action research in the Dam was based on a close collaboration between the Damcomité, *endeavour* and the planning studio of the Planning and Development unit at KU Leuven that together invested in an in-depth exploration of the relation between official procedural approaches and new interfaces for participation and coproduction and how this helped to strengthen the democratic character of redevelopment trajectories inspired by a need-based local agenda.
At the start of the trajectory the Damcomité and *endeavour* cooperated to map the neighbourhood, in order to have a stronger say in the next steps of the planning process. The mapping was meant to identify the locally embedded preconditions in the neighbourhood to feed the project definition, while using the research process as a lever to consult and involve a variety of local actors.
The research was strategically arranged through a loop of data-collection, reflection and deliberation in order to feed participatory dialogue and vice versa. The rather successful co-organization of several workshops and the quality of the co-produced research output gave *endeavour* the leverage to co-draft with Stedelijk Wijk Overleg, the municipal agency for neighbourhood consultation, and Vespa (the city of Antwerp's autonomous real-estate company) a formal policy agreement. This was used as an opportunity to formalize the statute of the collected research. This agreement stated that: firstly, the research output of the different workshops would be provided as a 'research-addition' to the project definition and the design brief, and Damcomité and *endeavour* would be given the opportunity to introduce it to the three applying design offices at the official competition briefing. Secondly, it was agreed upon that there would be a participatory moment, allowing the neighbourhood to give feedback to the submitted design proposals, before the official selection. Lastly, throughout the design phase workshops would be co-organized by the neighbourhood and the appointed office in collaboration with *endeavour*, allowing the neighbourhood to engage into direct dialogue with the designers.
When a draft of the project definition was finalized, a public moment was organized by the city of Antwerp with the possibility for the inhabitants of the Dam to formulate feedback. The project definition was less ambitious and clear than hoped for. In response, the Damcomité resorted once more to a pro-active strategy by drafting a 'recommendation' to make sure local demands could be voiced in a profound way. This recommendation was used as a vehicle to translate the inputs obtained from the participative moments and research results into 9 statements or claims, summarizing the main concerns of the neighbourhood. *Endeavour* supported the drafting of the recommendation and, in cooperation with Damcomité, a workshop and different local actions were organized to present the draft statements to the neighbourhood for feedback and ensure the representativeness of the finalized recommendation

In the further process *endeavour* and the Damcomité kept on cooperating to find and strategically use room for manoeuvre to influence the redevelopment trajectory of the Slaughterhouse site. Although several positive actions were taken by the different partners (thematic discussions with the designers and developer on the role of affordable housing



Figure 34: Student work on the redevelopment of the slaughterhouse site

in the Dam, the development of a new procedure that acknowledged the value of local knowledge in evaluating and selecting the first proposals of the design teams, and the integration of some, smaller, changes related to public space and mobility in the final masterplan based on the recommendations of the Damcomité) new interfaces for structural cooperation between the city, Damcomité and the developers could not be established until today. A market-based logic is still dominating the process (with a strong focus on feasibility), neglecting several local demands and needs (as affordable housing and a reduced mobility impact) that were raised in the first years of the action research.



Figure 35: Drafting an advice on the project definition of the slaughterhouse site

Figure 36: Press coverage neighbourhood involvement slaughterhouse site



Woensdag 19 juni 2013

GAZET VAN ANTWERPEN

Slachthuis

Het Damcomité wil een goed evenwicht tussen wonen, werken en winkelen op de Slachthuissite. FOTO GVA

Buurt wil inspraak over Slachthuissite

Damcomité zit graag vanaf begin mee aan tafel

De bewoners van de wijk Den Dam willen inspraak in de ontwikkeling van de Slachthuissite en dit al van in het begin. De stad start deze zomer met een projectdefinitie voor dit terrein.

Omdat de eigenaars van de Slachthuissite de vorige projectdefinitie hadden afgewezen, is de stad Antwerpen op zoek naar een nieuwe invulling. Die zal dan worden voorgelegd aan de eigenaars en daarna in een ruimtelijk uitvoeringsplan worden gegoten.

"Pas dan zullen de bewoners worden betrokken", zegt Simon-Peer De Landtsheer van het Damcomité. "Wij willen als bewoners nu al betrokken worden in het opstellen van de projectdefinitie. Voor ons hoort er een goed evenwicht te komen tussen wonen, werken en winkelen. Daarbij mag het specifieke karakter van deze wijk niet verloren gaan. Voor wie wil investeren in deze buurt, is het noodzakelijk dat er snel duidelijkheid komt hierover. We willen vragen en niet nadien klagen. Daarom gaan we in heel de buurt van huis tot huis, zo willen we met bewoners en handelaars samen dit project op een positieve manier een invulling geven."

Antwerps schepen van Stadsontwikkeling Rob Van de Velde (N-VA) liet het Damcomité al weten dat hij graag met hen rond de tafel wil zitten. Met de sluiting van het slachthuiszoekt de stad Antwerpen al lang naar een nieuwe bestemming. In 2004 was het idee om er een tweede topsporthal te bouwen met wonen, bedrijvigheid rond de vleeswerkende nijverheid en diensten. De Slachthuissite werd genoemd als mogelijke locatie voor een nieuw ziekenhuis. Toen er een andere plek werd gekozen, werd gedacht aan sociale koopwoningen, maar ook dat idee kwam niet van de grond.

SACHA VAN WIELE

Initial understanding of transformative planning

- The project of the Dam started from the clear ambition to create room for new coproductive relations between the Damcomité, the neighbourhood, the city and the developer of the site. Thus, it directly applied the understanding of the room for manoeuvre of transformative planning as introduced in chapter 2.
- The process of the Dam can be seen as a continuous experiment to understand and test modes of actions that could lead to these new coproductive relations. Based on identifying local needs and the everyday use of the Dam, understanding the underlying mechanisms of real-estate production, organizing exercises of collective visioning, supporting the Damcomité to strengthen their network, workshops were organized and a process of co-designing the participatory process started.

The role of *endeavour* in the project

- *Endeavour* took part in this process as a (beginning) planning office, in direct support of the Damcomité. *Endeavour* worked as a kind of advocacy planner that helped in emphasizing local needs and supporting the Damcomité in its claim for stronger involvement by informing them on procedures and the possible consequences of the development.
- This position evolved towards a more communicative planning approach with *endeavour* organizing hearings, workshops and a structural model for cooperation between the city, developer and the neighbourhood comité.

The used methodology and organisation of collective problematization

- The project made use of a combination of methodologies to understand the room for manoeuvre for transformative planning.
- In close collaboration, but organized as two parallel tracks, several introspective sessions were organized with both the Damcomité and the responsible administrators of the city on organizing the participatory trajectory, situating the participatory trajectory within the larger redevelopment program of the site and understanding the differences in the role of participation and coproduction in urban redevelopment. The work of the students of the spatial planning studio had an important role in this understanding of local needs.
- From a more substantial perspective different workshops were organized on affordable housing, density, local economy or programming the site that clearly created a shared understanding of the ambitions for the redevelopment (a.o. the workshop on the advice of the Damcomitè on the project definition as described in chapter 2). As elaborated in annex (10.4) this shared understanding didn't automatically result in a more inclusive project (which created a start to re-evaluate the transformative capacity of the coproductive approach and related position of *endeavour* as described in the conclusions of this thesis).

4.3.2. PROJECT 2. THE PLANNING STUDIO (KU LEUVEN)

Endeavour hosted four planning studios (2013-2017) of the post graduate master in human settlements and strategic spatial planning (KU Leuven). In these studios, the students were actively involved in one of the ongoing neighbourhood redevelopment projects of *endeavour*.
Each year the studio hosted a small group of students (10-15 people) with a wide variety of professional and cultural backgrounds and was organized as a one semester course (4 months, 2 days a week). In the first two months the students work in different small groups and study the case of that year's studio, whereas in the second period groups are reshuffled and work interactively towards one or a variety of socio-spatial strategies.
In line with the long tradition of studio-based learning in planning education (a.o. Sletto, 2010; Angotti et al., 2011; Bose et al, 2014; Rooij & Frank, 2016), the strategic spatial planning studio was based on a complex, reflexive and collaborative educational approach living up to the following five principles:

1. Each year the studio focussed on an existing process of urban restructuring (the implementation of a neighbourhood development plan, an ongoing debate on the future of a certain place, …). Students closely collaborated with the neighbourhood and municipal actors in a dynamic and often open-ended process. The interactions with this local affiliation structured the studio by collectively reflecting and interpreting the existing situation or future possibilities and guiding the studio in its strategic choices.
2. The studio was conceived as an open action-oriented trajectory without a clear expected output. Analysis, planning, design, co-decision and action reinforced each other in an iterative process of gradual reflection on solutions, projects and new ways of problematizing the existing situation. In the studio we tried to actively work on this process-oriented approach of planning strategy by organizing a mid-term review focussed on defining possibilities for action in collaboration with the local coalition of (planning) actors. Based on a first analysis of the institutional context and organized as a collective workshop, students could invite different actors to collectively reflect on their analysis and define and rethink possible strategic alliances. In the second part of the studio this understanding of the socio-political context of a case and the selection of certain strategic alliances directly influenced the different strategic actions, plans or advices that were developed by smaller groups of students.
3. The studio understood planning as a strategy to recognize collective local needs, research the transformative power of (new) social relations and support the possibility of institutionalizing emerging practices. During the planning studio this was operationalized by continuously co-constructing a reflective framework by mapping actors (including networks and communities of practice) and institutional frames based on key interviews and field work. The students were asked to start from defining key issues (what is the problem? What is at stake here?) and gradually unfold these processes of injustice by defining data, research strategies and actors to work with

(taking into account the who's who are not involved, …).

4. In the vein of socially innovative practice, the studio was conceived as a collective learning trajectory with a strong emphasis on a concrete understanding of the (collective) capabilities of the group, a clear way of democratically organizing activities and decision making and a recurrent evaluation of the norms leading cooperation. Questions as: What is our shared *endeavour*? Who are 'we'? What can we commit ourselves to considering our limited time? How can we be sure that we as a studio group are free to operate? and How do we deal with the constricted time of our involvement?, were constantly raised, both on the level of the group as on the individual level.
5. The studio had a strong focus on individual and collective reflection as a way to critically interrogate specific situations, collectively analyse future possibilities or invite other actors to question and evaluate the studio's work and progress. In this, the understanding of the positioning of the group (its temporality, ethics and values) within the specific context of the case-study, but also the commitment of the individual participants, played a determinate role. Every year one group of students didn't work on a specific strategy but had as the specific task to further organise collective reflection

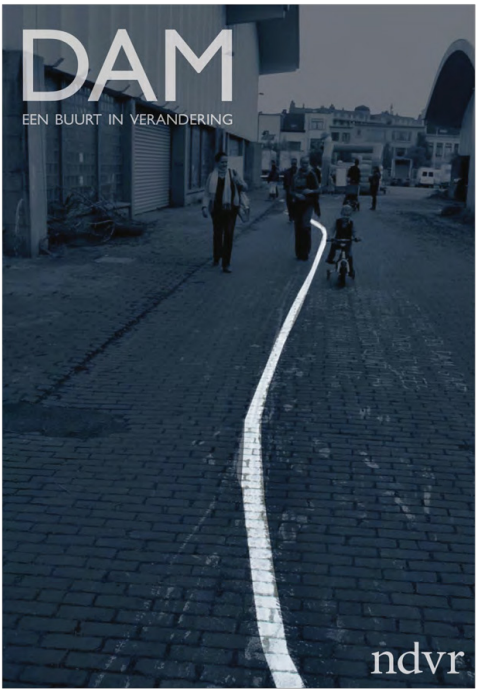


Figure 37: The results of the planning studio as an addendum to the project definition of the slaughterhouse site

Initial understanding of transformative planning

- The studio was based on a pedagogical approach that took exploration and improvisation as its starting point. The studio chose not to start from a clear description of output but saw the continuous exercise of positioning the studio within the existing institutional configuration based on a clear analysis of the existing situation as its central *endeavour*.
- This needs based approach, highly embedded in political reality but not limited to a specific planning paradigm can be seen as a first exercise to redefine transformative planning as a process not limited to the planning field as introduced in chapter 8.

The role of endeavour in the project

- *Endeavour* played a role in the studio as part of the group of tutors and as an active actor in the studio's cases (as the Dam project, where *endeavour* was already engaged in parallel to the studio). The studio as a parallel actor (related to but not coinciding with *endeavour*) created an extra possibility to develop processes of collective action and can as such be seen as a first experience with strategically relating a multiplicity of roles and collective learning trajectories as will be explained in chapter 6 and the conclusions of this thesis.
- In that sense several ambitions of a more coproductive planning approach as the creation of new bottom-linked approaches, the acceptance of agonistic differences and taking into account a need based and right based perspective were part of the studios ambition. While for *endeavour* this often automatically related to a certain planning position (advocacy, equity, ...) for the studio this was seen as part of a situational exercise and continuously changed during the course of the project. ,

The methodology used and organisation of collective problematization

- The different methods to deconstruct the room for manoeuvre for transformative planning within the case varied from year to year (sometimes the students focused more on individual interviews, collective events, actor-network analysis, ...). What stayed the same was the choice to focus on collective reflection both within the studio and with the local coalition that was supported by the studio. During the studio continuous reflexive exercises were organised together with a mid-review that was conceived as moment to collectively discuss next steps and reposition the collective action of the studio in relation to the case and ongoing activities.
- In relation to *endeavour* the reflection within the team of tutors played an important role to discuss the position of *endeavour* in the project, sustain the independent position of the studio and find pedagogical approaches that would learn the studio to deal with the uncertain and highly political exercise of positioning as a planning practitioner.

4.3.3. PROJECT 3. MUIDE MEULESTEDE MORGEN (GHENT)

Muide Meulestede is a neighbourhood in the city of Ghent, situated as an island in-between the harbour and the city centre. Due to economic shifts in the organisation of the harbour and a redevelopment agenda of the city focussed on a.o. water-related real estate, the neighbourhood has actively changed over the last ten years. The population of the neighbourhood becomes more and more diverse in both the economic and cultural sense, houses are refurbished and the economic activities in the neighbourhood are either expulsed from the urban fabric or have changed in character. These different changes created a lot of worry and the sense of an ungraspable future. Supported by the Flemish Government, a group of residents and the City of Ghent asked *endeavour* and Architecture Workroom to help them to develop a future vision for Muide Meulestede,

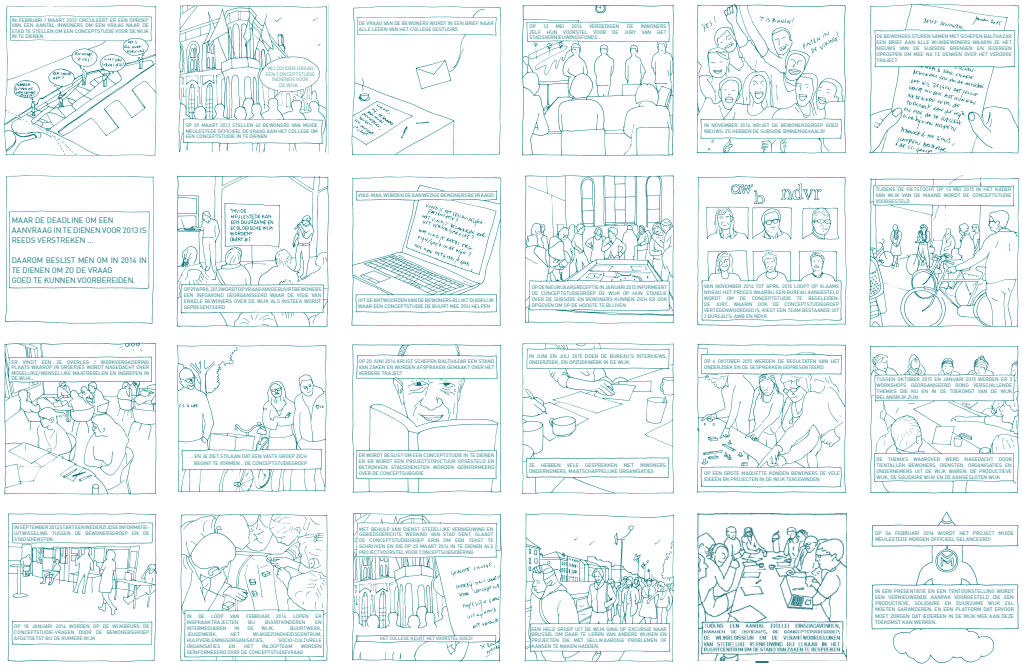


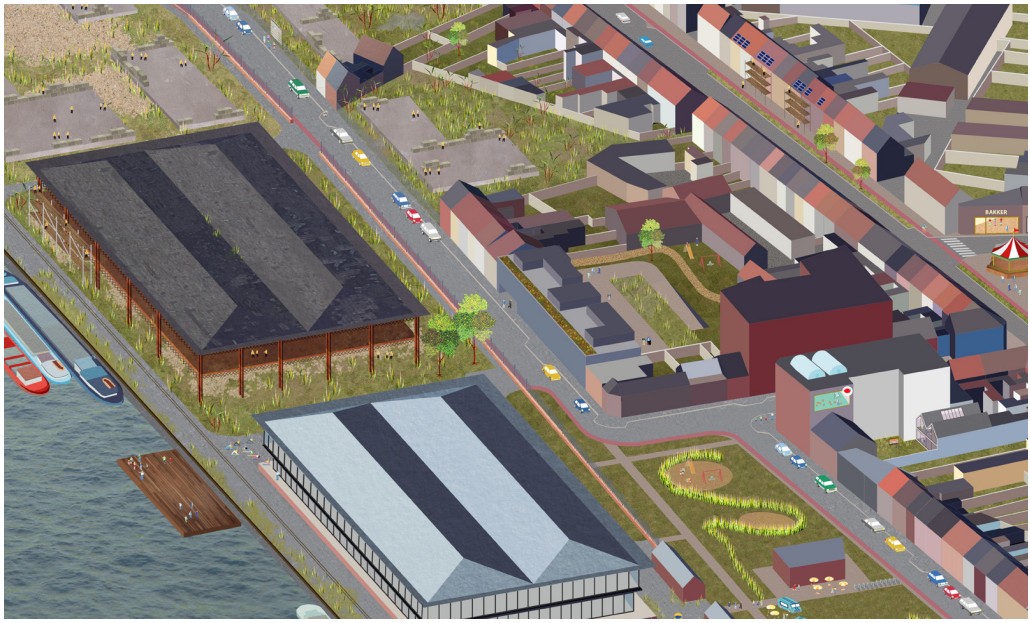
Figure 38: Communication on the pretrajectory of Muide Meulestede Morgen



Figure 39: Poster campaign on Muide Meulestede Morgen

The study started in the summer of 2015. *Endeavour* and Architecture Workroom started interviewing different persons in and around the neighbourhood and became acquainted with the many stories, experiences and concerns that lived in the neighbourhood. On 6 October 2015, the study was launched with a kick-off event for the general public. The results of the interviews were presented, and residents had the opportunity to give their feedback to us as a design team and in co-creation map some first ideas, projects and initiatives for the future of neighbourhood.
Based on all this information, *endeavour* and Architecture Workroom started to integrate the different projects and ideas into a more coherent story by organizing a series of workshops to challenge residents, entrepreneurs, civil society organizations, urban services and companies to collectively explore, draft and discuss possible future perspectives for Muide Meulestede based on what we called the social, spatial and investment capacity of the neighbourhood.

Figure 40: Poster on the current situation of Muide - Meulestede



On February 6, 2016, a first vision was presented at a well-attended neighbourhood moment under the name 'Muide Meulestede Morgen' (Muide Meulestede Tomorrow, MMM). A first synthesis of all the material was developed into an exhibition. Three zones, three development tracks and a mobility framework formed the stepping stones. In order to further concretize specific projects and get commitments from different parties, several feedback moments were organized with residents' groups, city services, the Aldermen in charge and the Harbour of Ghent. These different feedback moments resulted in tangible engagements by both the city of Ghent and different parties that were active in the neighbourhood to work together in the future in a more inclusive and social innovative way valorising the strengths, needs and social networks of the neighbourhood.



Figure 42: Mapping workshop in Muide Meulestede

Three booklets were drafted as a basis of future possible cooperation: (1) An agenda for 'Muide Meulestede Morgen'. An overview of the vision on the district's future, summarized in 12 points and structured under four topics: a solidary neighbourhood, a productive neighbourhood, a connected neighbourhood and a sustainable neighbourhood. (2) A program for 'Muide Meulestede Morgen': MMM as workshop space, a housing logic tailored to the

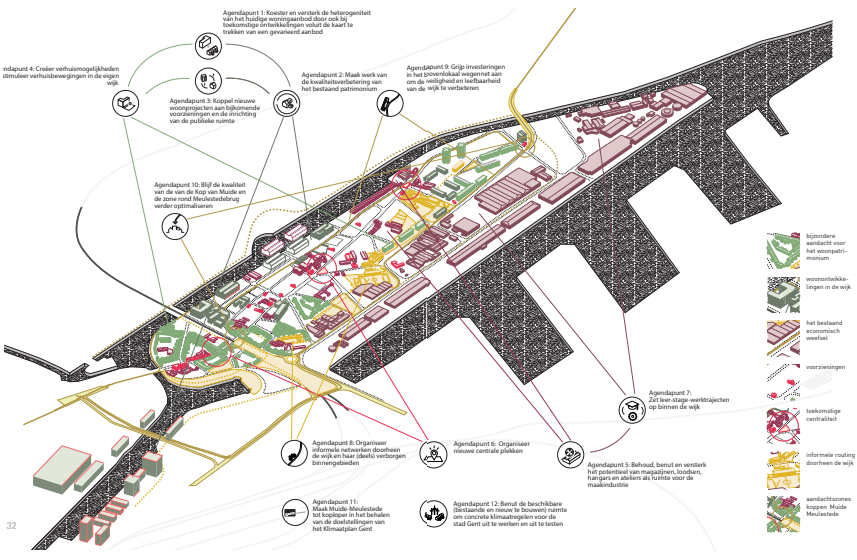


Figure 41: Intermediary exhibition on the results of Muide Meulestede Morgen

needs of the neighbourhood and investments in infrastructure as a driving force for urban regeneration. Each of these programs is based on the idea of cooperative urban development where the cooperation between different actors is needed for successful implementation of the projects. (3) 'Atelier Muide Meulestede Morgen': a cooperative model that could form the basis of an independent Atelier MMM, a development agency on the level of the neighbourhood supported and controlled by the different partners of MMM: the city of Ghent, the Harbour of Ghent and the inhabitants of Muide Meulestede.

Although the project was a difficult process of balancing local discussions with a strong pressure of the city towards a project-oriented redevelopment program, the study seemed to have its effect. The Atelier took a start and some first projects were initiated as a cooperation between the city of Ghent and the neighbourhood of Muide Meulestede. The high pressure on concrete realizations didn't always leave the necessary room to relate different projects and integrate them into new transformative and empowering programs as suggested in the study but in comparison to the beginning of MMM the debate intensified, and new groups of residents have organized themselves questioning the current and future development of the neighbourhood.

Figure 43: An agenda for Muide Meulestede Morgen



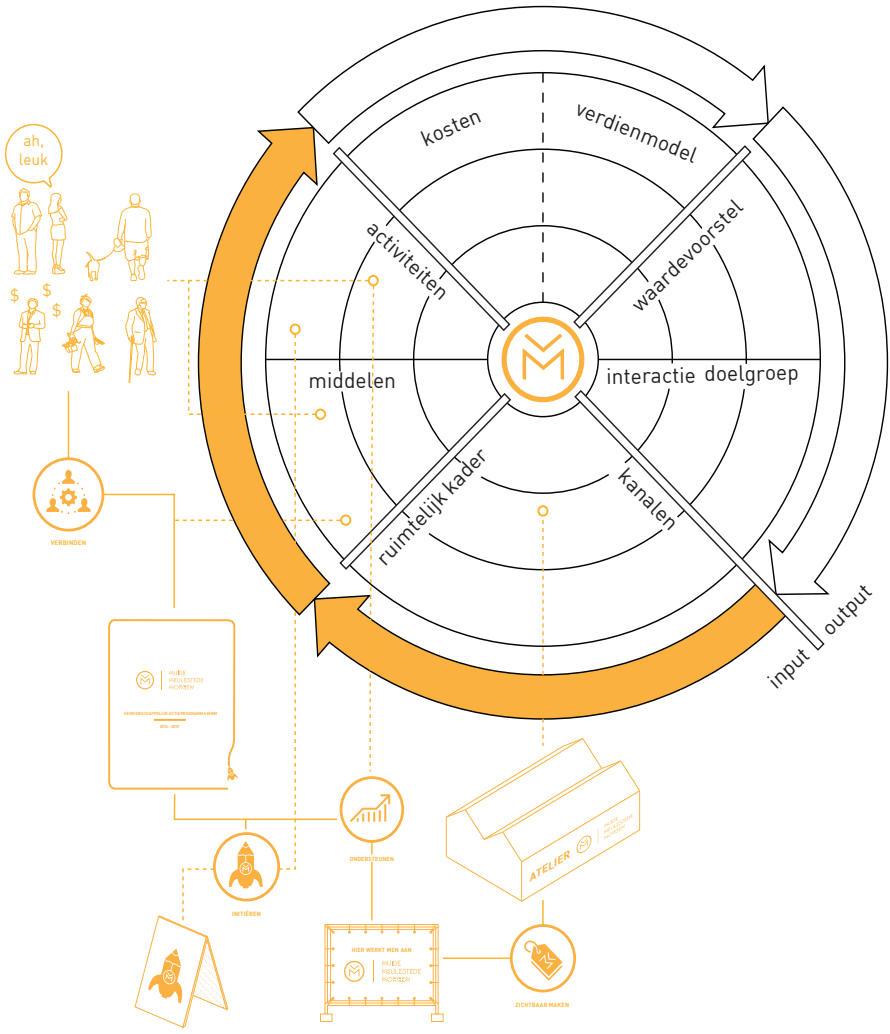


Figure 44: Model of an atelier Muide Meulstede Morgen

Initial understanding of transformative planning

- The project of Muide Meulestede dawned from a coproductive planning ambition that was shared by main actors within the city administration, the local neighbourhood committee and the research team.
- The planning approach was based on expanding the local network to better grasp the different local needs, include them in the transformative agenda of the redevelopment of MMM and develop new types of pilot projects that could operationalize parallel track of spatial production (developing an alternative housing model, the creation of a slow-path track throughout the neighbourhood, ...).

The role of *endeavour* in the project

- In line with this approach, *endeavour* initially took a social learning perspective and worked as a mediator between the local neighbourhood Comité, the residents of Muide Meuleustede, the city and the harbour. Most of the activities involved map-based inventarisation, translation of local knowledge, creating frameworks for negotiation, etc.
- During the process, based on the experience that the coproductive planning perspective was less shared than expected, the position of *endeavour* moved towards an equity planning perspective. We started to focus on developing a new and inclusive agenda for transformation and advocated for a specific governance structure that would support more inclusive mechanisms of transformation (mostly with a focus on preserving local economy).

The used methodology and organisation of collective problematization

- Collective problematization was mostly organized in close collaboration with the local neighbourhood association and the representatives of the city of Ghent. As soon as a more urban renewal driven agenda was presented these moments of collective problematization were reduced since the explorative nature of the project was replaced by a more instrumentalized way of planning.
- On the level of *endeavour* and the project team our earlier experiences with the Dam case were helpful to understand and deconstruct the process of urban transformation and define our initial understanding of collective action, agency and moments of opportunity.

4.3.4. PROJECT 4. AGLASUN (TURKEY)

The project of Aglasun can best be described a research trajectory of the KU Leuven (Archeology, P&D, Geography) in collaboration with METU on alternative development strategies for the little village Aglasun and its large historical heritage site of Sagalassos. The research had a clear socially innovative approach by focussing on a need-based agenda related to the availability of (local) resources, the identification of local networks of socially innovative action and the creation of a shared socially-ecological just strategic framework. The idea was to come to a local development plan based on the research of different teams on specific strategic ambitions that formed the basis for different development scenarios for Aglasun – Sagalassos.
During the research my team mostly focussed on alternative governance formations as a strategic leverage for Aglasun. Due to the completely different institutional context and the short-term time-span this research highly stressed the need of an explicit understanding of the underlying framework of transformative planning and its related political dimensions. While working together it became quickly clear that although all participants supported a socially innovative and transformative planning approach the specific ontological and epistemological understandings as well as professional agendas were highly different, leading to a lot of misunderstandings and conflict.



Figure 45: The village of Aglasun

Although the research results of the Aglasun - Sagalassos project were relatively poor, the experience of working together with a lot of different researchers in an unknown institutional context, trying to draft a common research and planning approach, revealed the need of a strong and applicable socially innovative epistemological framework which can be easily shared and operationalized by planning methods. This is especially so when it is the aim to relate social innovation research,

planning theory and practice and to overcome on the one hand the delusional application of socially innovative principles within collaborative planning approaches, neglecting the specific political ontology of social innovation research and on the other hand stressing the strategic nature of socially innovative research based on a socially constructed understanding of planning and processes of institutionalization (described in chapter 8 of this thesis).



Figure 46: Workshop impressions

Initial understanding of transformative planning

- The initial understanding of transformative planning was a rather bizarre combination of on the one hand a clear social innovation inspired planning position that focussed on identifying social need and understanding the institutional configuration of spatial production and on the other hand a process-oriented and even rational comprehensive planning position that focussed on the formulation of an agenda for a sustainable development approach for Aglasun.
- From the beginning a clear perspective on the sustainable development of land, the integration of cultural heritage protection and an ecological justice approach were part of the research proposal.

The role of *endeavour* in the project

- The position of the research team was not clearly defined and included a diversity of approaches. Our group took on an equity planning position and started to analyse existing governance mechanisms, processes of socio-environmental injustice, and practices of socially innovative action and tried to give them a place on the local political agenda.
- Since the research team worked from a large diversity of planning perspectives without really understanding each other's motivations, methodologies and political positions it was very difficult to steadily follow a certain planning approach and critically reflect on the implications of our actions.
- This unclear political positioning and unclear relation between the different research tracks lead to a decline of the transformational potentiality of the trajectory. Clear alternative frameworks or new socio-innovative coalitions couldn't be established because of a lack of a shared strategy behind the research and the absence of reflexive positionality.

The used methodology and organisation of collective problematization

- Collective problematization was organised on different levels
- First of all, through direct collaboration with the local community by organizing workshops and analysing the institutional context of Aglasun and excluding mechanisms.
- Within the research team the large set of internal debates (based on the different understandings of the role and position of planning practice) created a productive context to question and specify specific choices underlying the planning approach.
- This resulted in the need to create a customized conceptional framework that would illustrate the implications of our understanding of transformative planning as described in chapter 8 of this thesis.

4.3.5. PROJECT 5. THE PARTICIPATION LABS (FLANDERS)

The participation labs tried to identify a framework to understand collective learning over spatial issues and more precisely how this can be of use to 'the spatial planner' to apply and support collective capabilities within civil action initiatives. The Participation Labs were instrumental in defining the possible roles of the planning practitioner in transformative planning practice and how this related to a socially innovative understanding of planning. The research trajectory consisted of a series of workshops on participatory cases that *endeavour*, KU Leuven (Planning & Development) and UHasselt organized for the professional association of spatial planners in Flanders (VRP) with participating planning professionals from local and regional governments and private planning offices as a target group. Three sessions were organized with key stakeholders of different cases and a group of professional spatial planners that worked for different cities in Flanders, for the Flemish government or for private developers. In the first two sessions, key stakeholders presented six case studies of different collective learning trajectories that worked on social innovation and participation in planning on different scales. At the end of each presentation, the stakeholders and planning practitioners were asked to map the capabilities that the collectives needed to achieve their goals (based on the theoretical framework of Baser & Morgan, 2008). In the third session, the work of Biesta on the functions of education and learning (Biesta, 2010) and the work of Bruno Latour on onto-political proceedings (Latour, 2004) were introduced and a reflection on the changing position of spatial planning practitioners was presented. Based on the three theories and the collective mapping exercises of the first two sessions, a reflection was organized to gain a better understanding of the cases based on both the internal process of collective learning and its (un)supportive relationships with external agents as spatial planning practitioners. As a result of this reflection, reflexive questions for planning practitioners were discussed and presented.

The series of reflective sessions were structured by three central statements. A first statement is that a group needs collective capabilities at any time, in order to deal with the complex context of participation. As such, we assumed that a better understanding of collective capabilities, gives a better insight in how to support processes of collective learning. The second statement says that the goals of a participatory trajectory aren't fixed and can change over time. This recurrent dissensus about goals creates a difficult context for external experts to engage with ongoing participatory trajectories and often leads to misunderstandings. The last statement combines both ideas in a situational understanding of participation. The idea is that a specific situation in a participatory trajectory presupposes a specific understanding of both how and why a collective learning trajectory takes shape.

Currently the work of the Participation Labs is integrated in a participation studio I am organizing together with UHasselt, Humanarc, *endeavour* & tri.zone. Based on the developed theory of a situational understanding of collective learning we are training different municipalities in Flanders to critically reflect on their participatory trajectories, specific

approaches and used methods. The Participation Studio is commissioned by the VRP (the Flemish association of spatial planners) and the spatial planning department of the Flemish Region.

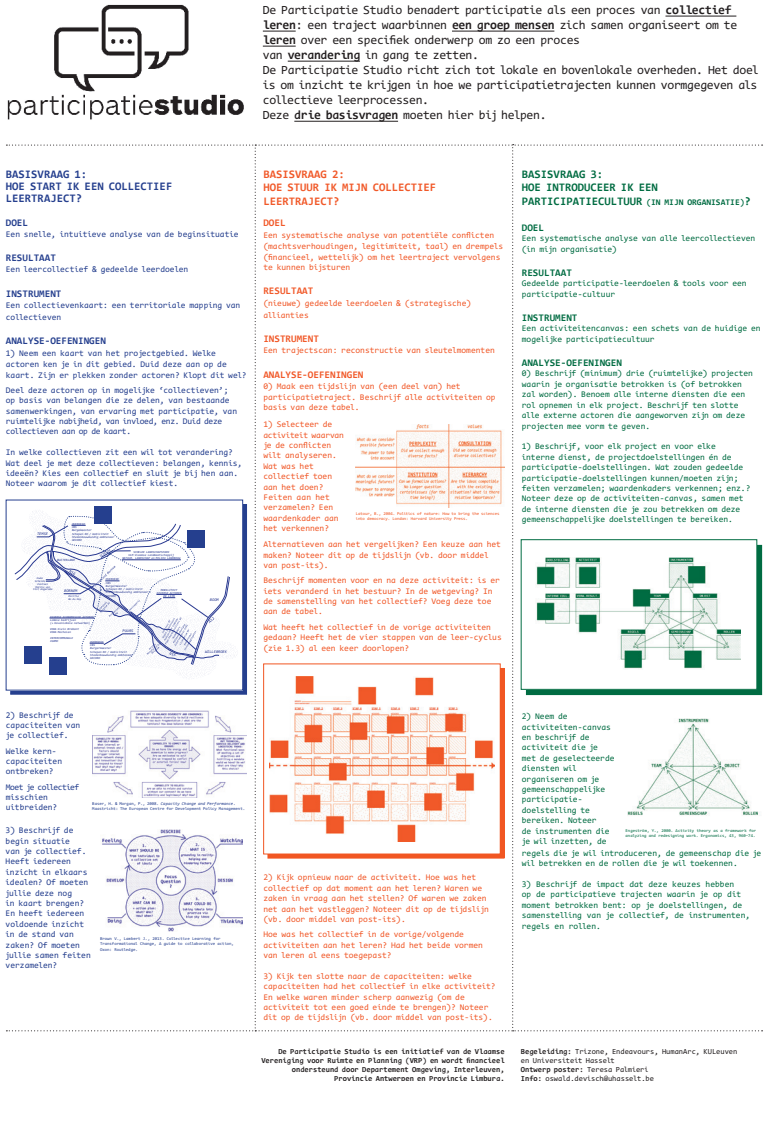


Figure 47: Draft workshop poster participation studio

Initial understanding of transformative planning

- The analytical framework used within the participation labs started from an actor-based understanding of processes of institutionalisation and clearly opened-up the possibility to integrate a more agonistic notion of democracy by describing how different, selective, trajectories of learning could strategically cooperate without the need to engage in a shared process of learning (described in chapter 6). The Participation Labs did not start from a specific understanding of transformative planning or certain planning positions. The different projects of the Lab were the start to explore the relation between planning and collective learning.

The used methodology and organisation of collective problematization

- The participation labs were organized as reflective sessions in which the different presentations were collectively analysed and interpreted.
- Based on the different sessions of the participation labs and the different theoretical frameworks that were presented a new framework of collective learning could be developed that operationalizes our understanding of transformative planning as described in chapter 6 and the conclusions of this thesis.
- In the participation studio the framework developed in the participation lab is used as a methodology to reflect on participatory trajectories and the role and position of local municipal administrators in relation to participatory (and in certain cases transformative) ambition.

4.3.6. PROJECT 6. COVERING THE RING ROAD OF ANTWERP

The Covering of Antwerp's Ring Road is the result of a long trajectory of civil action, backdoor politics, governance innovations, and creative imagination. Throughout twenty years of action, the trajectory was often described as both the tangible shortfall of traditional politics and the breeding ground of new forms of governance and cooperation between civil actors, urban and regional governments and private institutions. The real and structural influence of the trajectory on democratic innovation still needs to be seen but, what seems to be true, is that the project worked in one way or another as a catalyst for change. Because of the highly complex institutional context and the long history of conflict and collaboration, the covering of the Antwerp Ring Road proved to be interesting to further reflect on the possibility to integrate an agonistic understanding of democracy in coproductive planning trajectories.
In collaboration with the architectural firm 51N4E and H+N+S landscape architects, *endeavour* was part of a group of six teams that were commissioned to design the project of covering the Ring Road. A specific segment of the Ring Road was assigned to each team. Between the summer of 2017 and 2018 a masterplan needed to be made for each of these segments and first projects were selected to be implemented in the following years.

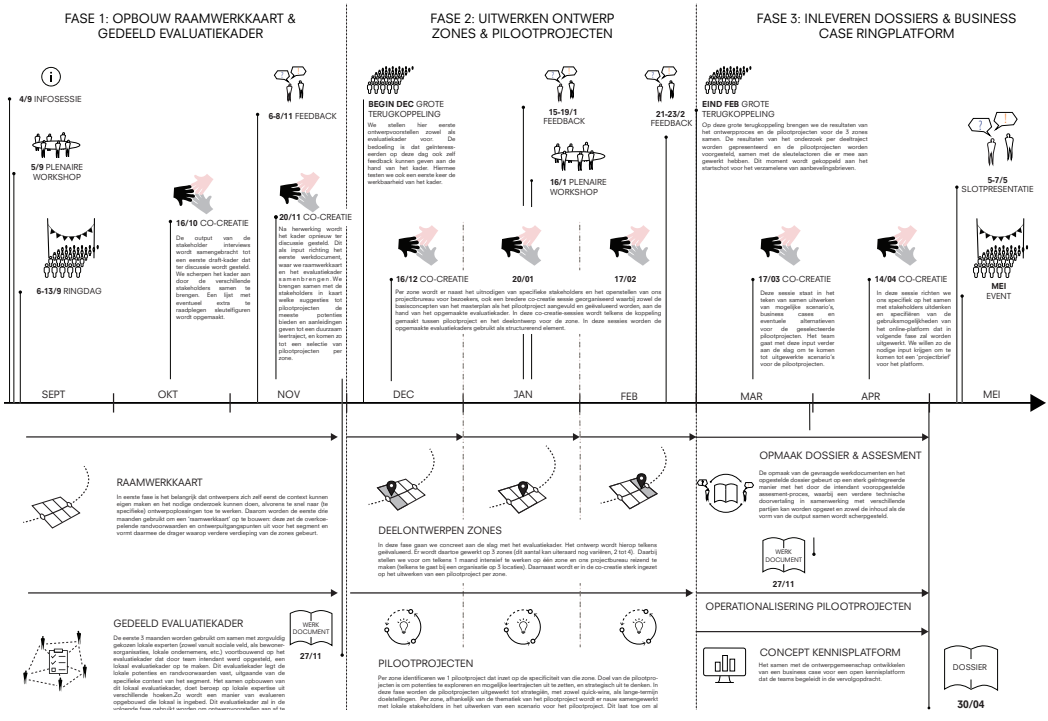


Figure 48: Process of the covering of the Ring Road project

The unseen scale and complexity of the project and its highly politicized nature meant an interesting challenge to develop the future masterplan. As a design team one of main strategies was to expand our team with a large group of critical and militant Antwerp residents and actively test the strengths and possibilities of collective problematization in large scale infrastructure programs. During our work on the covering of the Antwerp Ring Road we have been looking into how we could specifically shape the interchange between the design trajectory and citizen involvement and how we could gradually set up knowledge coalitions and communities of practice starting from a shared knowledge base.

A number of key elements that were successful during this learning trajectory were (1) a local steering committee of citizens, (2) shared knowledge building based on acknowledging individual expertise, (3) activating a local editorial team

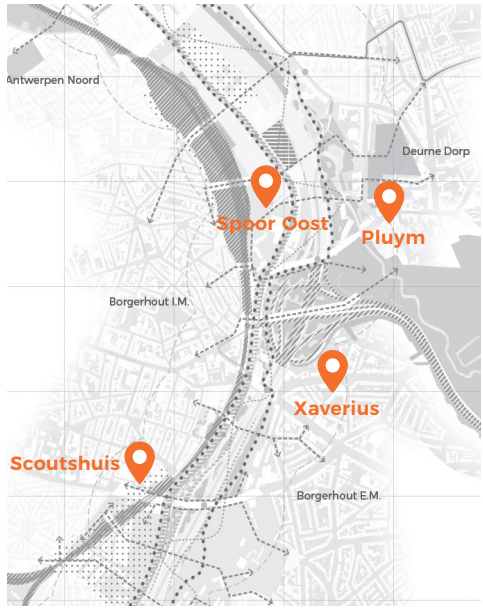
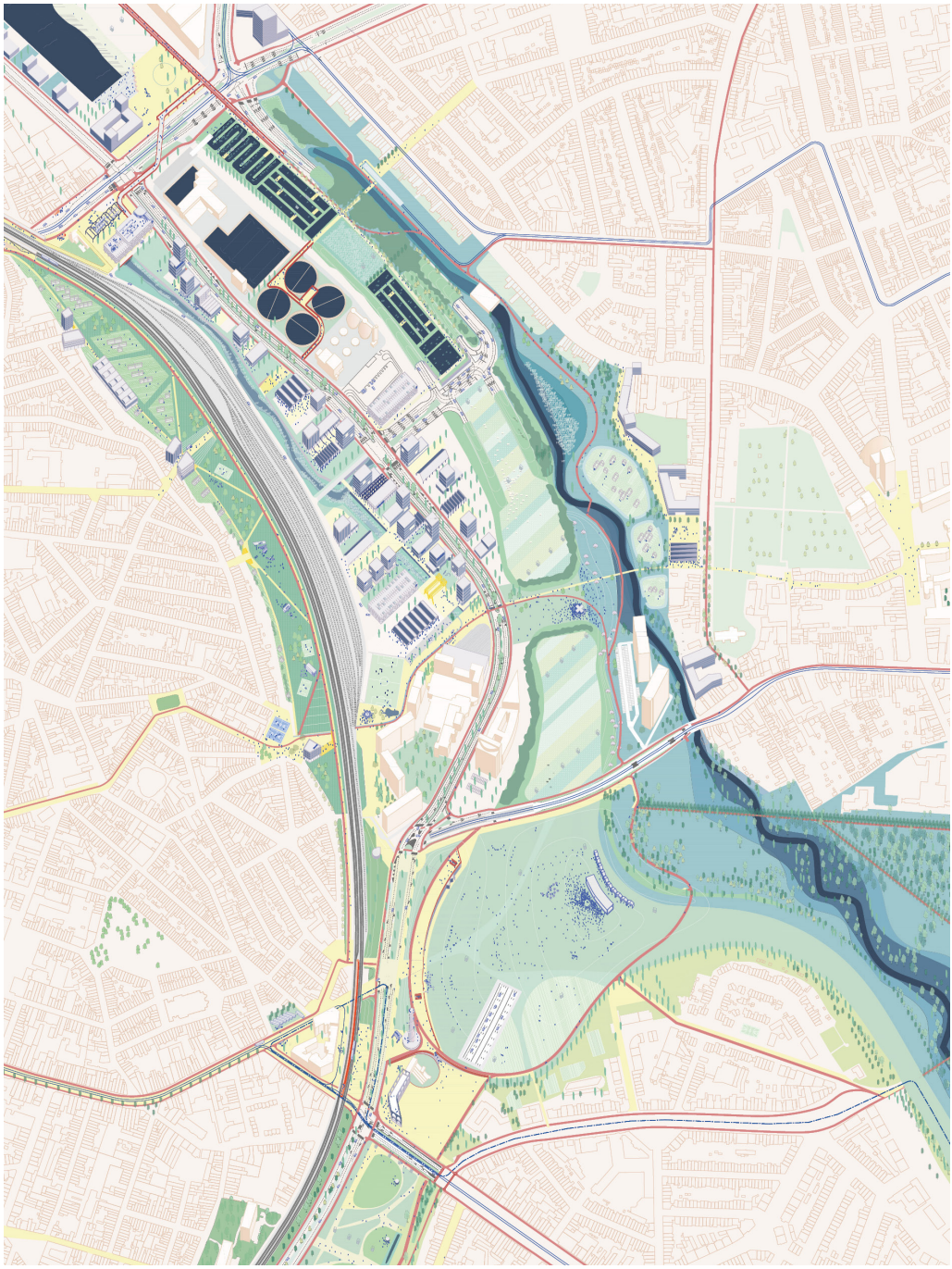


Figure 49: Locations of residence of the design team

Figure 50: Workshop impression



Figure 51: Design proposal team east over de ring



to write and validate the final report and masterplan and (4) structurally organize our local presence in the neighbourhood.
By organizing a steering committee, we not only made the design process negotiable and transparent, but also opened-up the process for negotiation, discussion and collaboration. During the steering committees the planned process was discussed and the various public moments were evaluated and prepared. Shared knowledge building was set up by co-constructing a local evaluation framework and involving many citizens in evaluating the final design supported by the local editorial team. A local workspace was opened to be easily accessible. In this workspace we were available every Friday for questions and organized our meetings and workshops with local stakeholders and citizens. In addition to these informal meetings, we worked together with various target groups by co-hosting different moments of introspection and dissemination in a large number of local organisations.

Figure 52: Local editorial team and report team east





Initial understanding of transformative planning

- As a team we started from a clear coproductive planning perspective. We were inspired by our position in-between the collaborative / rational-comprehensive approach of the organised design process and the long tradition of agonistic debate launched by the coalition of local action committees (a.o. Ringland).
- We tried to strengthen a need based local agenda through taking a multiplicity of roles starting from a clear analysis of the institutional framework and the large complexity of parallel trajectories of collective learning (cfr. chapter 7).

The role of *endeavour* in the project

- As *endeavour* we had the ambition to construct and institutionalize a social justice approach in an agenda and project logic of large infrastructures.
- The position of *Endeavour*, in-between the design team and local action committees (a.o. Ringland) created the possibility to take a position that connected multiple trajectories.
- By understanding these diverse trajectories as agonistic forces and by taking a position based on a local ambition framework drafted at the beginning of our assignment we could overcome a consensus-based collaborative reflex and open-up the room for manoeuvre for transformative planning practice.
- Our role as planners was closely related to an equity-based planning position since it was mainly inspired by creating the right conditions for open debate, by validating local coalitions, challenging existing perspectives by bringing in new possibilities for socio-spatial configurations, thinking about new coalitions that could actually produce the space that was designed etc.

The used methodology and organisation of collective problematization

- During the design process we tried to create an interesting framework to create agonistic debate. This was mainly organized supporting both neighbourhood networks, the action committees and the design team to clearly define and state their ambitions for the project. This helped to frame the discussion and could be used as critical for evaluating first proposals.
- Another important element was our continuous engagement to organize a process of collective problematization with the representatives of the local action committee.
- By organizing an editorial board in parallel with the different evaluation frameworks that were used by the government administrators to validate our proposal we included a multiplicity of voices in our work and constantly reinterpreted the effect of our design proposals and the institutional position of the whole trajectory.

4.3.7. WE KOPEN SAMEN DEN OUDAAN/OPP[25]

The Oudaan is an Antwerp city icon dividing opinions for decades. It was designed by the modernist architect Renaat Braem, one of Belgium's most influential architects in the latter half of the 20th century and student of the famous and notorious Le Corbusier. Braem had a revolutionary aim in mind when he planned the Administrative Centre including the Oudaan as the civic core, and thus transformed Antwerp's skyline: Next to the Kredietbank's Boerentoren (Farmer's Tower), representing the city's economic significance, and the Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekathedraal (Cathedral of Our Lady Mary), Antwerp's symbol of religious devotion, Braem envisioned the Oudaan as a sign for civic pride and a model of efficient serviceability, indicating the dawning of the modern era.
Although Braem's ambitions for the Administrative Centre were widely appreciated, the Oudaan was the only building of the civic centre de facto constructed, and its conversion into a police tower replaced the pioneer's vision of a publicly accessible building.

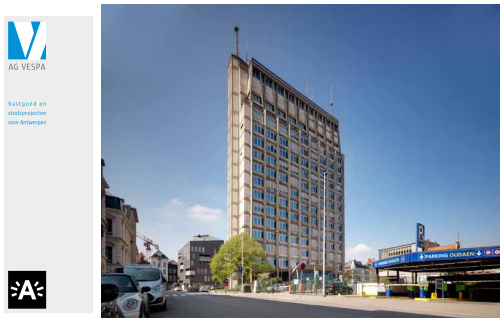


Figure 53: Announcement of AG Vespa that the Oudaan is for sale


Burgerinitiatief ijvert via Facebook om de zeventien verdiepingen tellende Oudaan te kopen

't Stad is van iedereen, en de politietoren ook

Een groep jonge Antwerpenaren wil de iconische politietoren in het centrum van de stad kopen en renoveren. Concreet zijn de plannen nog niet, de interesse des te meer. 'De Oudaan moet weer zijn plek krijgen.'

ANDRIES FLUIT

'We willen dat de Antwerpenaar de schoonheid van het gebouw weer ziet'

SIPPE DE BLUST
INITIATIEFNEMER FACEBOOK-GROEP

€ 10,5 miljoen

> Zwoel bedrag: de vraagprijs voor de Oudaan

Coöperatieve

Dief 'Rechtvaardige rechters' wordt niet langer vervolgd

'Deze zaak heeft een lange, uitzonderlijke geschiedenis. Is het nog wel opportuun om schuldigen aan te wijzen?'

GENTS PARKET

Figure 54: First media coverage on our action of collectively acquiring the Oudaan

On June 27, 2015, AG Vespa (The city of Antwerp's autonomous real-estate company) officially declared the tower for sale. The city's aim was to sell the object to the highest bidder. This is why on that same evening and along with equally enthused collaborators, we launched as *endeavour* the impulsive call 'We kopen samen den Oudaan' (Let's buy the Oudaan Together) via social media. Our enthusiasm did not only serve the purchase of the building but also the launch of a debate about real estate and urban development bearing in mind its social and sustainable significance (in collaboration with friends, Bagaar, R-est, PDG real estate, 51n4e).

Draw Attention/ Reach Out

The experimental undertaking to purchase the police tower started on the same day the building was offered for sale. We published our idea on Facebook, and within 24 hours a vast number of people reacted, which forged into an organic loop of media attention and advertisement. We invited everyone to contribute ideas and built a core group of experts. The first phase was determined by creating purpose for individuals who are concerned about the future of the Oudaan and its impact for the citizens of Antwerp. We created a virtual platform to share information for interested tenants and investors. The project provided interested parties with the chance to expand their role as active citizens.

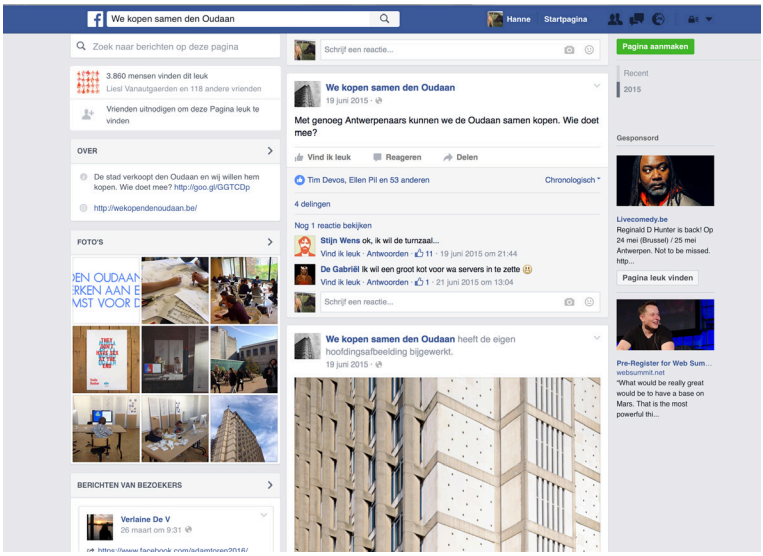


Figure 55: FB page 'we kopen samen den oudaan'

Assemblage/ Engage

The sealed bid approach the city was following in the sales procedure of the Oudaan is problematic in two ways: first, this approach implies an uncertain level of ambition in regard to the tower's development and hence uncertain outcomes. Second, the procedure leaves little to no space for the public to engage in the process. A look at classic forms of real estate developments and the constant pressure to achieve high returns indicates that owners are rarely transparent in their doing, often disregard essential space for innovation and research and thus turn to high-levelled capital generating uses of space.
From the start of the project, we realized that the knowledge we brought together in our core group would be insufficient to bring the project to a satisfactory and substantive conclusion. Additionally, we became aware that the ample and continuously increasing scope of incoming ideas would have to be collected, sorted and further processed.
We organized preliminary workshops and working groups, applied for the Flemish BWMSTR Label, spoke to a broad range of actors and refined our mission.
We were steering towards becoming a cooperative that combines different forms of management. This management type would entail three financial and legal advantages: we would be able to include a diversity of users and investors, follow a flexible and demand-driven infill and use of the tower, and fulfil the mission-driven character of the plan with limited returns in order to keep the building publicly accessible and its use affordable.

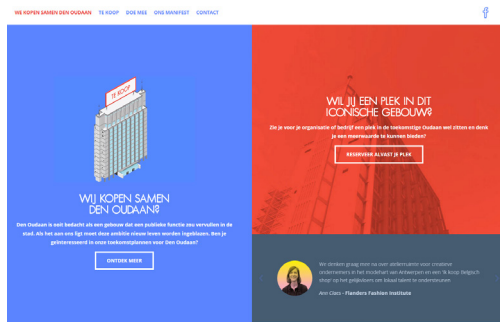


Figure 56: Website we kopen samen den oudaan



Figure 57: Interactive illustration of ou mission to open the Oudaan for the city of Antwerp as a civic core

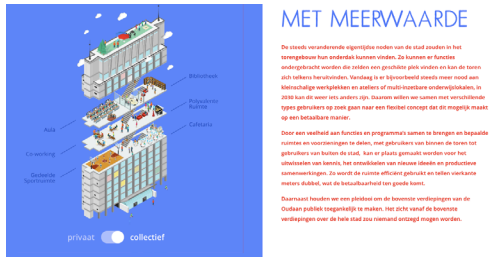


Figure 58: Impression on the impact of collectively redeveloping a building (in comparisson to a prive redevelopment)

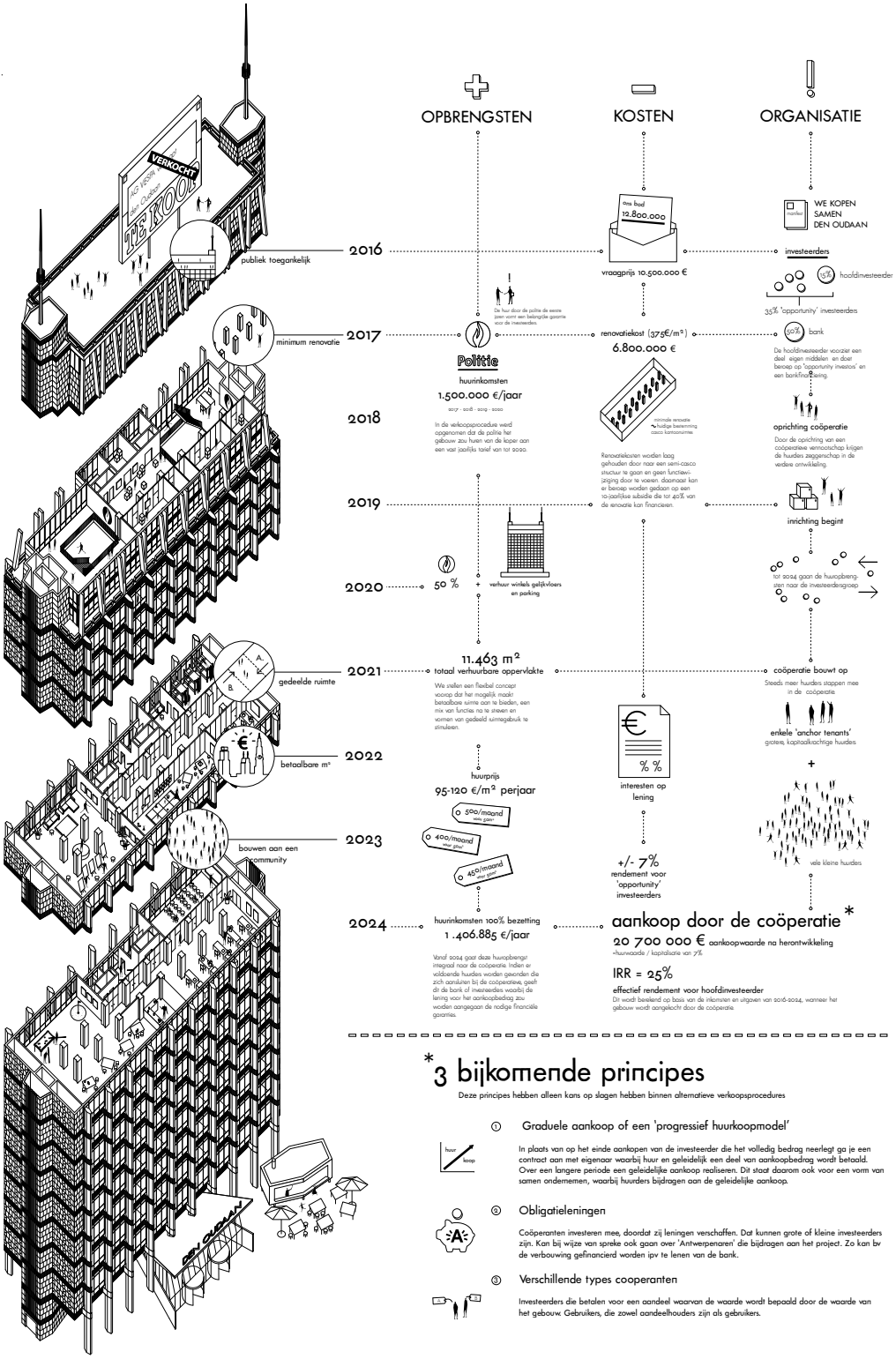


Figure 59: Business model of we kopen samen den oudaan

Campaign/ Action

After assembling all kinds of ideas and expertise, time had come to translate our intentions into practice and build partnerships with potential tenants and investors. We started to map possible uses and programs, always following the premises of efficiency, flexibility, affordability and consequently added social value as the core component of our plan. We worked out a clear model of how the tower could be developed cooperatively, determined a legal structure and elaborated a management model that is in line with our flexible parameters, and assess possible investment paradigms.

Since the tower was finally bought for 25,5 million euros in order to construct luxurious apartments or a hotel we started to think about a new approach of facilitating a more collective production of space. While more and more promising experiments with alternative real estate development are emerging, the big challenge is to reproduce such isolated initiatives and make them scalable. The experiences and expertise from 'We kopen samen den Oudaan' motivated us to devise a tool to facilitate and democratize cooperative redevelopment; the Open Promoter Platform. This platform aims to provide citizens, businesses and governments with insight into the steps that must be taken to achieve sustainable cooperative redevelopment, and to offer both online and offline support. In this way the platform stimulates new multidisciplinary forms of cooperation that offer opportunities for combinations of programs and interpretations, coupled with innovative business models, which often do not find a place on the regular property market. This in turn results in more resilient and more diverse cities. In this way, the OPP hopes to increase the chances of success of such initiatives and to stimulate knowledge exchange. Currently the Open Promotor Platform is developed as a pilot case for the International Architecture Biannual of Rotterdam with the support of Vlaanderen Circulair.



4 | GAZET VAN ANTWERPEN | WOENSDAG 14 SEPTEMBER 2016

Oudaan

Politietoren verkocht voor 2,5 keer de vraagprijs

Vastgoedinvesteerder Westerlund staat voor uitdagende renovatie van Antwerps monument

De stad Antwerpen heeft een koper gevonden voor de Politietoren op de Oudaan. Investeerder Tanguy Westerlund bracht een bod uit van 25,5 miljoen euro, ruim het dubbele van de minimumprijs van 10,5 miljoen euro die de stad voor het gelaisseerde gebouw wilde opstrijken.

Toen het Antwerpse stadsbestuur enkele jaren geleden bekend maakte dat het de Politietoren op de Oudaan voor verkopen aan een private investeerder, waren er critici die vreesden dat vastgoedontwikkelaars nauwelijks interesse zouden tonen in de monumentale toren van architect Renaat Braem. "Het gebouw verkeerd in een slechte staat. Een renovatie is behalve zeer duur, ook zeer delicaat omdat het om een geklasseerd monument gaat. Wie daarmee aan de slag wil gaan, staat op en gaat slapen met de ambtenaren van monumentenzorg", zegt een bron in de vastgoedsector.

Het stedelijke vastgoedvehikel AG Vespa bracht de Politietoren op de markt voor een minimumprijs van 10.500.000 euro. Een groep stadsbewoners lanceerde de campagne 'Wij kopen samen de Oudaan'. De actiegroep vilde het gebouw van Braem, dat in 1958 werd opgetrokken, uit handen houden van projectontwikkelaars. 'Wij kopen Samen de Oudaan' slaagde erin om meer dan drieduizend kleine investeerders te verzamelen, maar kon uiteindelijk niet opboksen tegen de biedingen van de grote vastgoedspelers die interesse toonden in het gebouw.

Luxeflats of hotel?

De periode dat er bod kon worden uitgebracht op politiehoofdkwartier, liep vorige week af. Het hoogste bod dat werd uitgebracht, was afkomstig van ondernemer Tanguy Westerlund, een telg van de bekende familie van marriteme ondernemers. Westerlund bood 25,5 miljoen euro voor de toren van Braem. "Klopt", zegt schepen van Stadsontwikkeling Rob Van de Velde. "De koop is juridisch nog niet rond. AG Vespa is bezig met de afhandeling van het dossier."

Tanguy Westerlund was gisteren niet bereikbaar voor commentaar. In de vastgoedsector verwacht men dat de ondernemer vooral luxueuze appartementen zal ontwikkelen, gezien het unieke uitzicht over de stad vanuit de toren. Het gebouw ligt bovendien centraal in de binnenstad, in de nabijheid van de Kammenstraat, de Wilde Zee en de modeboetiek in de Nationalestraat. "Ook een hotel behoort tot mogelijkheden", volgens een bron in de vastgoedsector.

Goed voor de begroting

Schepen Rob Van de Velde (N-VA) heeft geen zicht op de plannen van de toekomstige eigenaar. "Er zijn biedingen gebeurd onder gesloten omslag. Er is geen voorovereg geweest tussen de stad en de kandidaat-kopers."

Voor de Antwerpse stadskas is de spectaculaire verkoop van het politiegebouw een opsteker, omdat het 15 miljoen meer opbrengt dan was voorzien in de begroting. "Niet alleen de verkoop van de Oudaan is een groter succes dan verwacht", zegt schepen Van de Velde. "Ook de andere grote vastgoedoperaties, zoals de verkoop van het huidige hoofdkwartier, hebben meer opgebracht dan verwacht. Onze vastgoedoperaties hebben tot nu toe 41 miljoen euro meer opgebracht dan het bedrag waar we vooraf rekening mee hadden gehouden."

De opbrengst van de verkoop van de Politietoren zal onder meer worden gebruikt om het nieuwe maatschappelijke van de politie te financieren. Dat uitvoerdersorganisatiebedrijfskwartier zou 225 tot 275 miljoen euro gaan kosten.

De nieuwe eigenaar van de Politietoren staat voor de uitdaging om het oude, afgeleefde gebouw te renoveren tot een eigentijds gebouw. Dat zal bovendien moeten gebeuren met respect voor de als monument beschermde, unieke architectuur van Renaat Braem. Braem ontwierp het administratie centrum van de politie op vraag van de toenmalige Antwerpse burgemeester Lode Craeybeckx.

Renaat Braem, Jozef De Roover en Maxime Wynants begonnen in 1950 aan de uitwerking van de eerste plannen. Naast de hoge – veiltoode – toren was in de masterplannen ook sprake van lagere kantoorgebouwen, maar die plannen werden nooit gerealiseerd. De locatie waar de andere delen van het gebouw moesten verrijzen, bleef lang braak liggen, maar werd later opgevuld met het seinhalcentrum De Bijenkorf.

De bouw van de toren begon in 1958. Het ontwerp van Braem werd in 1963 bekroond met de SBUAM-architectuurprijs (Société Belge des Urbanistes et Architectes Modernistes). In 2002 werd het gebouw officieel beschermd als monument.

ROB VAN DE VELDE (N-VA)
Schepen van Stadsontwikkeling

"Onze vastgoedoperaties hebben tot nu toe 41 miljoen euro meer opgebracht dan het bedrag waar we vooraf rekening mee hadden gehouden."

JORIS VAN DER AA

De renovatie van het geklasseerde gebouw op de Oudaan zal volgens bronnen in de vastgoedsector nog heel wat voeten in de aarde hebben: "Wie hiermee aan de slag gaat, staat op en gaat slapen met de ambtenaren van monumentenzorg", klinkt het. FOTO'S WIM HENDRIX

Goedkope kredieten en "positieve vibe" doen Antwerpse vastgoedsector boomen

De spectaculaire prijzen die voor Antwerps vastgoed worden betaald, zijn voor een deel het gevolg van de lage interesten. "De situatie op de financiële markten zorgt ervoor dat beleggers hun geld in vastgoed stoppen, omdat andere beleggingen minder rendement opbrengen", zegt schepen van Stadsontwikkeling Rob Van de Velde. "Door de lage interesten is geld lenen ook goedkoper geworden. Maar de situatie op de financiële markten verklaart niet alles. Je kunt er niet omheen dat er een positieve 'vibe' hangt rond onze stad. Er wordt weer meer geïnvesteerd in het vastgoedprojecten. Dat merken we duidelijk aan het aantal bouwvergunningen dat we afleveren", zegt Van de Velde. De schepen van Stadsontwikkeling liet een analyse maken van de bouwdossiers. "Tussen 2008 en 2013 leverde de stad jaarlijks 3300 bouwvergunningen af. Na 2013 is dat aantal beginnen stijgen. Dit jaar zullen we op ongeveer 3800 bouwvergunningen uitkomen."

Van de Velde zegt dat de stad investeerders wil "helpen" bij hun projecten. "Maar voor men ons verwijt de vrienden van de bouwpromotoren te zijn: we hebben tot nu al voor 30 miljoen euro aan huisvatten opgelegd aan projectontwikkelaars. Zij zijn dus verplicht om meer te investeren in publieke voorzieningen, zoals scholen of crèches." (vdaa)

Verkoop vastgoed levert 41 miljoen extra op

1. Politietoren: de stad Antwerpen gavolle het administratief centrum van de politie op de markt voor 10,5 miljoen euro. Uiteindelijk bracht de verkoop 25,5 miljoen euro op.
2. Ravenhuis: Het gebouw op de Entrepotkaai werd voor ongeveer 10 miljoen op de markt gebracht, maar moderngraaf en vastgoedinvesteerder Xavier Paintblanc telde 26 miljoen neer voor het gebouw.
3. Ziegler-gebouw: De minimumprijs bedroeg 7,5 miljoen, maar het gebouw aan het Katendijkdok werd uiteindelijk verkocht voor 18 miljoen. (vdaa)

Figure 60: Press coverage on the sales of the Oudaan to a private investor for 2,5 times the bid price

AN INTRODUCTION TO *ENDEAVOUR*

6+2 PROJECTS

Crowdsourcing	Community building	Pitch	Assessment	Building the application	Evaluation	Funding
Action Citizens can pin buildings to a map, crowdsourcing info about empty spaces in their neighbourhood and sharing it with each other and COBE. **Services** COBE connects people with buildings, allows them to map possibilities and give visibility to those looking for partners in crime.	**Action** Citizens can organise themselves around a building of their choice and start dreaming of its possible futures by expressing their interest or commitment. **Services** Once a building comes in the application phase COBE offers a full blown management platform online with agenda, todo's, doc-sharing, chatbot, and all the information a group needs to succeed in developing a building.	**Action** When a community around a building is big and mature enough it will be asked to 'pitch' to Cobe how they would develop the building in a sustainable way. **Services** COBE gives tips'n tool for the pitch.	**Action** COBE will define the maturity of application based on the pitch and score it on: Campaign (communication & ideation)/Organisational structure/Financial model/Technical (building construction). **Services** COBE asses the pitch and maps the strengths and weaknesses.	**Action** The applicant will go through all the different levels of the application, guided by COBE with methods and tools and with a network of experts that they can consult. The platform is the digital meeting room where they can collaborate and co-create. **Services** The applicants will be guided by COBE both on- and offline to complete their application and maximising its success potential. Intense digital coaching.	**Action** The final evaluation of the application before it can move towards the funding stage. **Services** COBE will evaluate the feasibility of the application once it finished all the different levels online.	**Action** A fund will be consultable for those application who passed all the COBE quality-checks and used the expertise that was at hand to develop a sustainable business model for the building. **Services** COBE matches funding and applications.

Figure 61: Seven logical steps for a cooperative redevelopment model

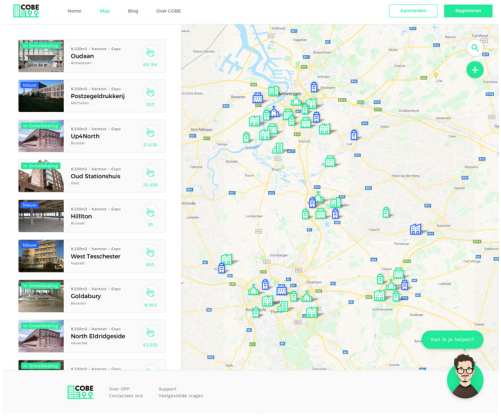
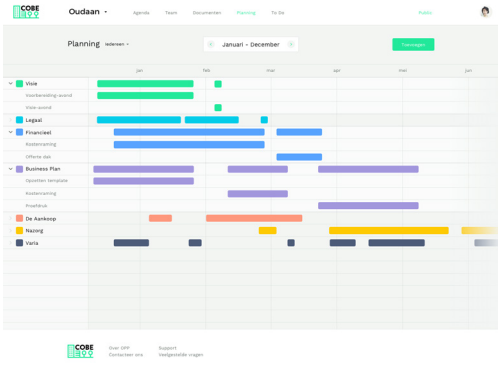
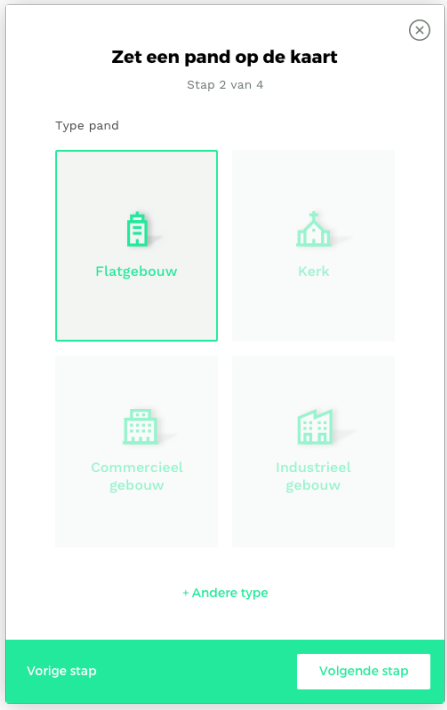


Figure 62: First wireframes on the new platform of the open promotor platform





Initial understanding of transformative planning

- 'We kopen Samen den Oudaan' was an initiative of *endeavour* and a group of friends and can be seen as one of the first experiments of *endeavour* with direct action.
- Instead of starting from a relational ontology, we tried to directly solve the problem by developing a business model and campaign through which we could buy the Oudaan together.
- The decision to start this campaign was based on a clear situational understanding of the case and our belief that there was no answer to be found in planning practice to react to the ambition of the City of Antwerp to sell its public heritage.

The role of *endeavour* in the project

- *Endeavour* took a radical planning position in this project based on a clear political agenda
- The project was an interesting experiment to understand how *endeavour* as a transformative planning office could combine a direct action and consultancy-based approach without the need of being ambiguous.

3.3.8. SPATIAL SAFETY[26]

The Spatial Safety study was, as was Muide Meulestede Morgen, a study subsidised by the Flemish Government and commissioned by the city of Antwerp. With this study the city wanted to take a first important step in exploring an integrated approach to deal with the complex theme of the perception of safety in the public space and how this can be translated into guidelines for the design and programming of the public domain. The study was conducted by *endeavour* in collaboration with the University of Hasselt.

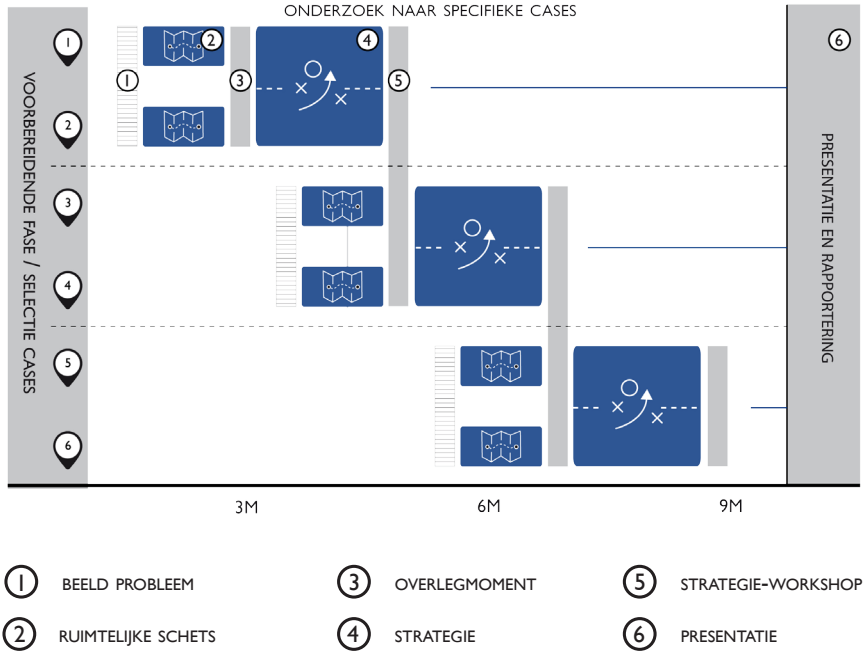


Figure 63: Research outline 'safety and public space'

In the city of Antwerp, the pressure on public space is growing because of further densification and more and more people visiting the city. This rising popularity challenges the city in its role of maintaining and 'controlling' public space. The city has become conscious that it is necessary to define and develop a diverse set of methods than can be used to guarantee a positive perception of safety in public space as one the most critical conditions for its productive use. Our study focussed on understanding the interplay between spatial factors, social behavioural patterns and the perception of safety.

In order to tackle this complex set of issues we chose to develop a collective learning method that acknowledges the knowledge in the field and the different roles of the city of Antwerp to guarantee a positive perception of safety in the public space. By activating dialogue, we avoided to end up with 'checklists' or ready-made design solutions. The starting point of this research was that there is already a lot of knowledge available in the city, but that it is fragmented across policy domains and that, in addition, social and spatial visions, expertise and measures are often insufficiently combined.

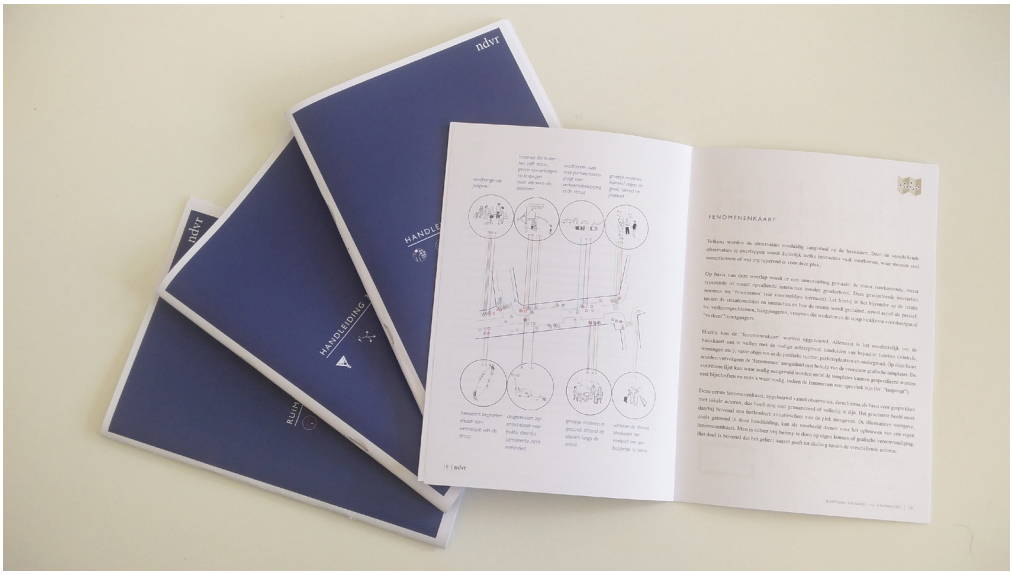


Figure 64: Ouput (4 booklets) of the research project safety and public space as 4 manuals for socio-spatial research

The study included six case studies that were selected from a long list drawn up by the city of Antwerp. It was iteratively elaborated by analysing the six cases in succession and in response to each other, with regular feedback from an extensive steering committee. The six cases were organized as duos, based on a first categorization of how spatial and social elements influenced the perception of public space. Each duo was analysed by using another method and perspective. Based on this analysis we tried to define certain strategies to cope with the described and analysed situation. By repeating this process for the successive cases, in a collaborative way the project lead to a step-by-step approach of collectively understanding the full complexity of the socio-spatial interrelations that affect the perception of safety in public space.

As a result, we developed four manuals explaining the specific approach of analysis that was used for each of the case studies. In this way we made sure that the study could inspire and strengthen the position of the department of public space. The following manuals were developed:

1. The Overview. This manual presented an approach to categorize the different types of public space and, for each type, its underlying socio-spatial configuration. Based on this analysis an advice can be formulated that leads to one of the three methods (or a combination of them) presented in manuals 2-4.

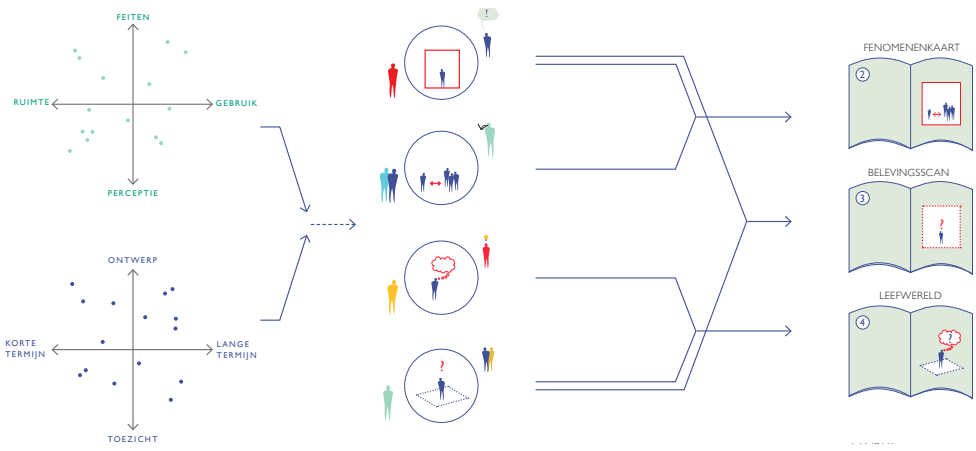


Figure 65: Scheme to have a first impression on the possible relation between safety and public space

2. The phenomena map. This manual described how usage patterns and interactions can be spatially mapped and form a basis to start a dialogue with local actors on how to better organize space, how to deal with certain uses of space, etc.

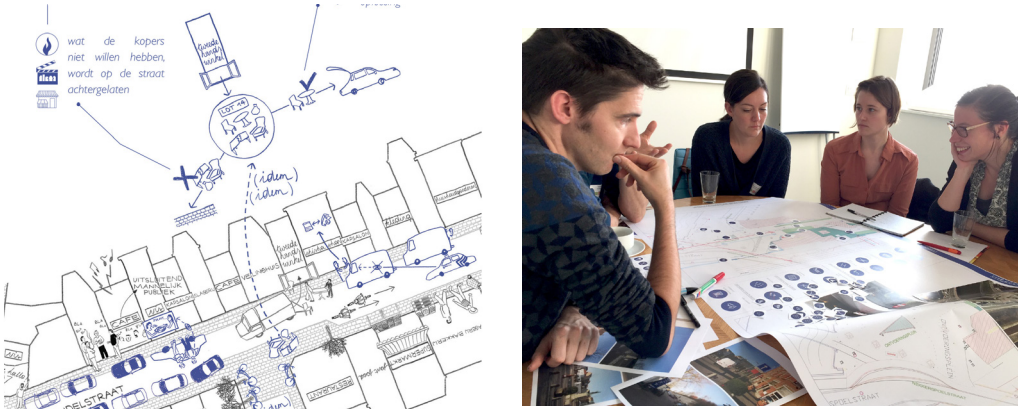


Figure 66: The phenomena map applied to the Handelsstraat

3. The experience scans. This manual was focussed on specific spatial configurations and helped to identify spatial elements that can influence the perception of safety by combining a categorization of spatial elements and the mobility patterns and points of attraction in public space.

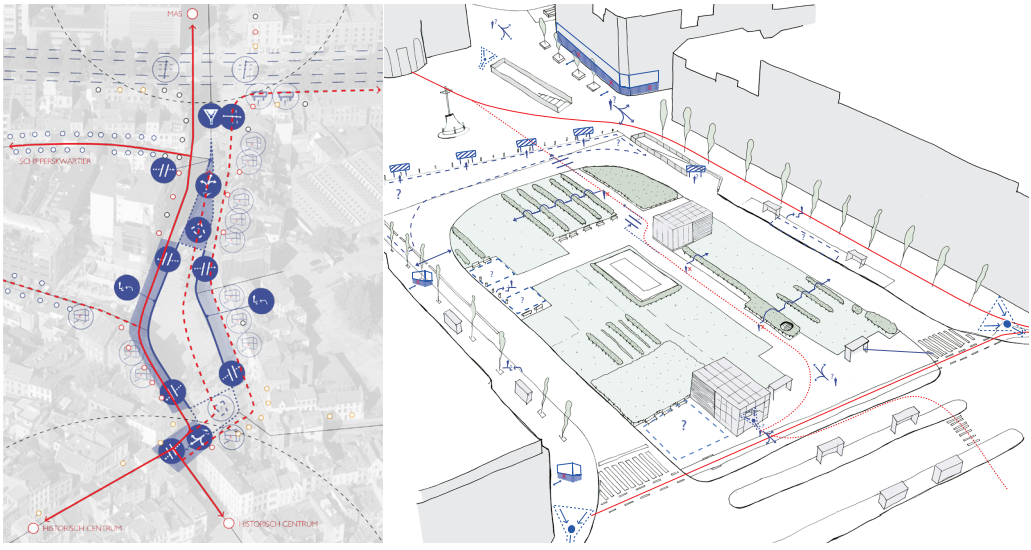


Figure 67: The experience scan applied to the Astridplein

4. Living worlds. This last manual tried to further analyse the relation between the functions of public space, its use and how ownership could be triggered or shared. The manual describes ways to map the daily life of residents and users and proposes strategies and procedures to include these lines of activities and the actual use of space in the design process of a square or a neighbourhood.

Based on this study *endeavour* organised in collaboration with the city of Antwerp and the Urban Policy Department of the Flemish Region a workshop to further disseminate these different tools to analyse socio-spatial configurations to other cities and municipalities in Flanders.

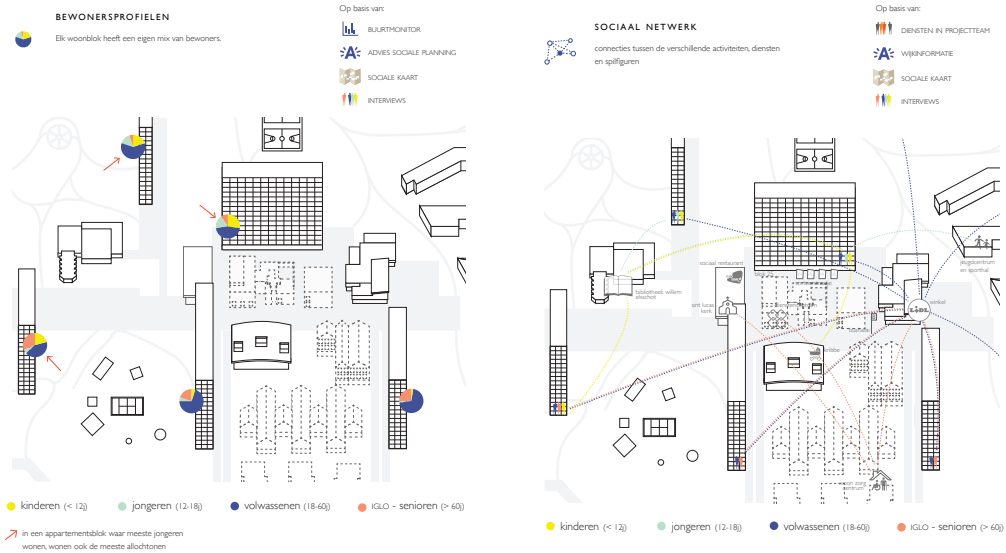


Figure 68: First analysis of the living worlds at IGLO Antwerp

Uit interviews met de bewoners en terreinwerkers worden de belangrijkste quotes gekozen

Deze kunnen vaak gelinkt worden aan een bepaalde plek in de ruimte

Op basis van:

WIJKINFORMATIE

VRAGENLIJST

INTERVIEWS

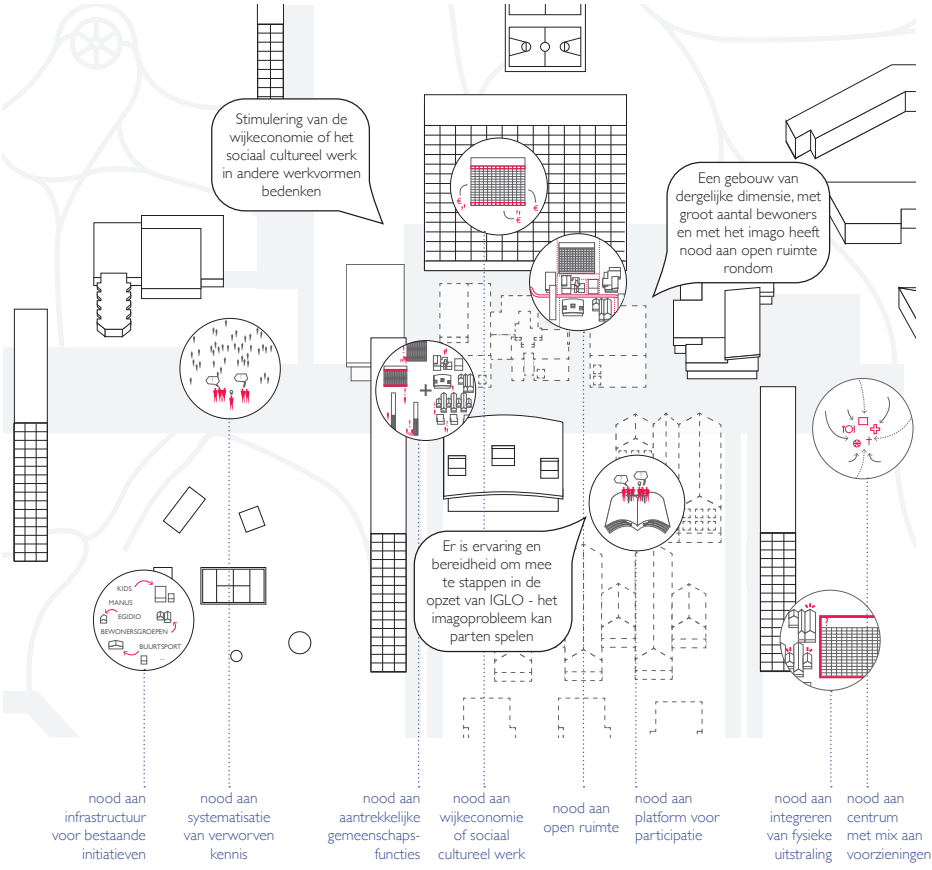


Figure 69: Overview of potentialities and need at IGLO Antwerp

Initial understanding of transformative planning

- In the project of spatial safety we started from a coproductive understanding of transformative planning.
- The study started from a clear political position trying to include a more fact-based inclusive approach to the safety discourse in Antwerp.
- We used collective learning as a way of co-producing knowledge to create new networks within and outside the city administration that could create an alternative to the dominant control-based policy on safety in the public space.

The role of *endeavour* in the project

- In this project *endeavour* adopted a consultancy and research position.
- This position was related to a social-learning and communicative action model.
- As *endeavour* we provided data and insights that could trigger new positions and critical reflection.
- The choice to provide manuals as an output of our study can be seen as a direct continuation of this social-learning perspective on planning.

4.4. NOTES

25 WKSDO: Text based on the final report of the EULER project (www.eulerproject.eu) of which 'We kopen samen den Oudaan' was a case.

26 Spatial safety: Text based on the final reports of Spatial Safety project

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Figure 70: "a" according to *endeavour*

5. THE POLITICS OF NOSTALGIA

THE POLITICS OF NOSTALGIA IN URBAN REDEVELOPMENT PROJECTS: THE CASE OF ANTWERP-DAM

Bruno Meeus, Tim Devos, Seppe De Blust

The chapter illustrates in detail how a local neighbourhood coalition represented by the Damcomité succeeded at becoming a preferred local partner in the context of a redevelop-ment process in the neighbourhood Dam in Antwerp.
It is traced how shared nostalgic narratives surrounding the neighbourhood facilitated a co-operation between new politically engaged middle class-inhabitants and working-class old-timers and endorsed the legitimacy of this local coalition.
In addition, the chapter illustrates the important discursive role of these narratives as a ve¬hicle to discuss the future of the neighbourhood and to put local values and needs on the agenda by responding to the rather 'hollow' ambitions for the site as presented by the city, without therefore directly opposing them.
In doing so, the chapter explores the importance of such localised discourses, and the dis-cursive power of nostalgic sentiments in particular, as a backdrop for urban planners to en¬gage with local stakeholders and to strategically put local values on the urban development agenda.

This chapter has been published as a book contribution in Karner,C. & Weicht, B. (Eds). Markets, commodification and nostalgia (2016), I contributed to both the theoretical framework and the case-analysis and case-description. The writing process was a joint effort with the co-authors.

5.1. INTRODUCTION

In academic writing, nostalgia, the sense of loss in the face of change and a related yearning for the past, has mostly been cast as regressive and generating conservative emotions instead of forward-looking solutions (Bonnett 2010). In the analysis of urban redevelopment programmes and the deep transformations they often intend in deindustrialized (or deindustrializing) and ethnically diverse urban areas, attention to proliferating nostalgic sentiments has mostly been blamed of further endorsing exclusionary urbanisms. Scholars for instance point out that nostalgic emotions support regressive ethnocentric and xenophobic political agendas. White working-class urban residents often express narratives of loss of local community, of neglect and of general neighbourhood decline (Blokland 2009; Schuermans et al. 2014). The exploitation of these nostalgic emotions by ethnocentric political fractions "trap people in the past" (Watson and Wells 2005). They offer them the false promise of a return to a mythical national and White past (Amin 2002; De Decker et al. 2005).

In addition, Third Way and similar urban policy programmes advocating "social cohesion" in socio-economically and ethnic-culturally diverse neighbourhoods have been criticized based on their naive "romance for local community". They neglect the broader processes that generate inequality and produce a new governmentality of "*eliminating bad community and replacing it with good community*" that will automatically regenerate itself (Amin 2005: 5). Local community is a nostalgic fiction, Amin argues: "*The distinctive feature of mixed neighbourhoods is that they are communities without community, each marked by multiple and hybrid affiliations of varying geographical reach and each intersecting momentarily (or not) with another for common local resources and amenities. They are not homogeneous or primarily place-based communities … Mixed neighbourhoods need to be accepted as the spatially open, culturally heterogeneous, and socially variegated spaces they are, not imagined as future cohesive or integrated communities.*" (Amin 2002: 16) Moreover, the nostalgic search for an "authentic local community" gives political leverage to particular resident groups who receive the status of a legitimate, authentic community. In that respect, Blokland (2009: 1608) has pointed out that the claims of these resident groups seen as authentic often undermine the material interests of many other residents who actually depend most on the neighbourhood.

Finally, along with the rise of middle-class subcultures of urban living, nostalgia for "urban authenticity" has been blamed for being one of the main cultural drivers of gentrification. For "Bohemians" and hipsters arriving in a little-known and "funky" area, colourful local characters, the cultural diversity in the area, the old-fashioned "watering hole" in a local pub can all be used as a badge to demonstrate the proletarian or multicultural authenticity of the area, and hence reinforce their bohemian credentials (Kasinitz and Hillyard 1995; May 1996; Douglas 2012). In a next step, the commodification of the "authentic urban neighbourhood"

offers a larger group of "*urban consumers a safe and comfortable place to 'perform' difference from mainstream norms. These spaces fabricate an aura of authenticity based on the history of the area or the back story of their products, and capitalize on the tastes of their young, alternative clientele*" (Zukin 2008: 724), leaving Bohemians nostalgic for the earlier times of urban grittiness (Ocejo 2011) and encouraging the hipsters to move the gentrification frontier further to unexplored and "authentic" terrain (Smith 1996; Douglas 2012).

However, for some years now nostalgia is undergoing a general reappraisal in academic literature, including this book. Different authors are developing more nuanced arguments around the general statement that nostalgia is not by definition a conservative and regressive tendency but instead an "*inevitable emotion in an era of rapid and enforced change*" (Bonnett 2010: 2365). Because of its discursive power, nostalgia also offers the potential to criticize particular forms of change and imagine different futures. As a result, some authors have started to discern between different political forms of nostalgia. Boym (2001), for instance, contrasts between more conservative "restorative" forms of nostalgia that attempt to reconstruct a lost home, and more progressive, "reflective" forms of nostalgia that are ironic, inclusive and fragmentary. Legg (2004), on the other hand, distinguishes between "rooted" nostalgia for a particular imagined home and "unrooted" nostalgia as a more free-floating sense of loss. However, according to Bonnett and Alexander (2013) categorising nostalgic emotions seems a hopeless *Endeavour* since in practice nostalgia generates complicated, varied and contradictory pasts, not one clear "Golden Age", nor one "Golden Future". The pasts invoked by everyday nostalgic narratives of their respondents "*interrupt each other, creating a dialogue of memories and attachments that is both 'simple' and 'reflexive', sentimental and personal, but also restless and forward-looking*" (Bonnett and Alexander 2013: 399). Moreover, "What is 'simple' or 'restorative' can inspire what is critical and reflective, and vice versa", therefore they claim that "*it may be more useful and accurate to acknowledge that these tendencies are woven together in the nostalgic imagination*" (Bonnett and Alexander 2013: 393-394).

We here elaborate on these insights to examine in more detail some of the other functions nostalgic narratives have in current urban redevelopment processes. We use the case of the inner-urban neighbourhood Dam in the Belgian city of Antwerp, a medium-sized port city with around 500 000 inhabitants, to document our argument. The Dam is one of Antwerp's poorest neighbourhoods and is currently more or less split in two parts because of a largely abandoned slaughterhouse site in the middle of the neighbourhood. While the neighbourhood transformed slowly but continuously throughout the past decades, Antwerp's government change in 2013, which brought the conservative N-VA (New Flemish Alliance) to power, and their announcement of a public-private redevelopment of the slaughterhouse site planned for the near future created a new context for nostalgic emotions to proliferate and play an important role in the politics of the redevelopment process.

5.2. THE CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

In contrast to other north-western European countries, where project-driven inner-city renewal has been high up on the urban policy agenda since the 1970s, it was not until the late 1990s that Flanders started adopting a similar entrepreneurial approach (Loopmans 2007). Faced with a weak fiscal base and backed by a broad consensus that generating "a healthier social mix" in poor urban areas would solve a range of problems (Loopmans et al 2010), urban governments in Flanders started to focus explicitly on urban projects in disadvantaged areas to attract the middle class by means of public-private partnerships and city marketing (De Decker et al. 2012). The city of Antwerp took the lead in Flanders and pursued an active urban renewal agenda in which strategic developments played a central role (Van den Broeck 2009).

During the past decade, this urban renewal agenda has come to define investments in the 19th century working class belt of Antwerp, triggering several large-scale urban redevelopment projects (such as the development of the Eilandje, the conversion of a former railway yard into the Park Spoor Noord and the implementation of several strategic projects in the deprived northern neighbourhood of Antwerp). However, due to its isolation from the rest of the city, surrounded by many large-scale infrastructures such as the ring road around the city and the railway line, the neighbourhood Dam remained to a large extent out of the reach of these developments and of large-scale gentrification. Arguably, its "grey" (post)industrial character contributed to this effect: "*Dammers don't have to be scared of social displacement. … Because there will always be a slaughterhouse with all the buzz and industries related to it"*, such was the argument of a project developer in an Antwerp newspaper at the end of the 1990s, just before the new owner of the slaughterhouse went bankrupt (Gazet van Antwerpen, n.d.).

Today the neighbourhood finds itself at the start of fundamental changes. The impact of the redevelopment of the slaughterhouse site on the small neighbourhood will be enormous, roughly doubling it in size and population. The neighbourhood has therefore reached an important tipping point, as the redevelopment can, generally speaking, unfold in two possible scenarios. In the first scenario a middle-class agenda will be superimposed. This could then result in a commodification of the history of the neighbourhood and the consumption of its working-class identity by new affluent groups (Jarviss and Bonnett 2013). This would result in a reorientation of the neighbourhood infrastructure to these groups' needs (Barnes et al. 2006). In another scenario, the redevelopment of the neighbourhood and its increasing number of inhabitants could create a critical mass of less affluent residents needed to sustain a more socially just infrastructure of basic services and affordable housing (Amin 2013; Blommaert 2014), one which can be consumed by both Flemish "old-timers", the newly arriving middle classes and the current and future "superdiverse" population (Vertovec 2007) of the neighbourhood in its entirety.

The Damcomité, a local residents' organisation of which one of the authors is a member, asked *Endeavour* in July 2013 to assist, advise and support them in trying to have an impact on the redevelopment, getting a variety of local organizations involved and organize an inclusive participatory process regarding the development of a masterplan. *Endeavour* is an enterprise working in the field of socio-spatial research and participatory process guidance, co-founded by two of the three authors of this chapter. Throughout this process *endeavour* assumed an independent and exploratory role, while also working in close cooperation with the city administration on the one hand, and with neighbourhood organizations on the other. As such, it gradually profiled itself as a third-party actor. *Endeavour* executed this work Pro Bono and as a part of two of the authors' doctoral research.

The process took over two years of action-oriented research. The executed fieldwork throughout this research relied mainly on mapping local social-spatial realities, organizing participatory workshops, and continuously negotiating the expanding participation process and cooperation between the different parties. This approach started from the ambition to survey and map the use of space, the daily experiences and characteristic phenomena of the neighbourhood and to translate these findings into "spatial terms", which could be useful for the masterplanning competition without reducing the complexity of the local needs and context. Moreover, *endeavour* aimed to use this input as a means to trigger a productive dialogue about the future of the neighbourhood, which was shaped by a number of participatory workshops.

5.3. NOSTALGIA AND AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY

> *[N]ostalgia can provide the grounds for fatalism, [but] it can also become a resource with which actors claim authenticity and the right to define "the community" in the fu ture. (Kasinitz and Hillyard: 1995: 162)*

All over the world, local governments struggle with the demand of residents to be involved in urban redevelopment processes. Residents typically demand from the local government to be involved from the start and to go beyond standardized procedures of participation stagnated practices as referred to by De Bie et al. (2012) which often do not go beyond "informing" (see Arnstein 1969). In Antwerp, many of these residents form neighbourhood organizations which are increasingly professionalizing: they propose their own spatial imaginaries, support them with examples from cities elsewhere, have access to the local press and do not hesitate to raise their voice against particular urban developments. In our case study, the neighbourhood organisation "Damcomité" succeeded in becoming a partner in the redevelopment process of the slaughterhouse site from early on in the process. In this section, we investigate the role of nostalgic narratives in the establishment of this partnership against the background of a shift in political regime, as the local Antwerp coalition that reigned for decades changed in 2013.

Important for our case study, Purdue (2001) argues that "community leaders", acting as key points of contact, derive legitimacy to conduct their intermediary role from two forms of what Purdue calls "perceived social capital", i.e. the social networks they are perceived to have access to. In order to gain legitimacy, a community leader should be perceived by governmental actors to have access to the relevant resident groups in the neighbourhood. At the same time, the leader should be perceived by neighbourhood residents to have access to the relevant governmental actors. The question hence becomes to what extent the Damcomité succeeds in accumulating these two forms of "perceived social capital". In at least two ways, nostalgic narratives appear to have played an important role in the creation of perceived social capital: (1) shared nostalgic narratives were the basis for two resident groups in the neighbourhood to form the Damcomité and (2) shared nostalgic narratives endorsed the legitimacy of the Damcomité to act as an intermediary in the neighbourhood.

5.4. CONSTRUCTING A SENSE OF LOCAL COMMUNITY

The construction of the local "old-timer" identity in the Dam is interlaced with nostalgic narratives and particular meaningful socio-spatial practices. "Real people from the Dam" are White and working class, they visit particular pubs and those who moved away get together at the yearly "reunion of the Dam". Old-timers frame the redevelopment of the nearby Park Spoor Noord as not for them and are eager to share the rich history of the neighbourhood with anyone showing interest: the tight social networks (one big family), the Dam as a "village" in the city, and the slow decay of parochial life and the social networks in the neighbourhood over the past decades. The old-timers hence create a closed imagined community. The analysis of Red Hook old-timers by Kasinitz and Hillyard (1995) two decades ago shows profound parallels: "To be considered a real old-timer, one generally has had to have also experienced the old days – roughly the middle decades of the twentieth century when waterfront jobs were plentiful, and Whites were the majority in the neighbourhood. To some extent, however, old-timer status is inheritable: the children of old-timers who grew up in the neighbourhood are more or less considered to be part of the group, as are those who have moved out of the area but who have stayed in close contact with local networks and social groups … [To be an old-timer means to be White and working class." (Kasinitz and Hillyard 1995, p.146) Just like in the case of Red Hook and other communities (May 1996), the old-timers' voice in the Dam is a voice of frustration, of staying behind in a quickly diversifying and marginalizing neighbourhood. What remains is the identity of "being the authentic neighbourhood resident". In the open meetings of the Damcomité, old-timers repeatedly ask who really is "from the Dam". During these meetings, the old-timers however recognize and appeal to the organizational resources provided by the middle-class newcomers.

The new middle-class residents that have entered the neighbourhood in the past decade, mainly as a result of the relative ease to buy houses in the neighbourhood, have shown to

be sensitive to the nostalgic narratives of the "old-timers". Arriving in a neighbourhood with a bad reputation (or no reputation at all as the neighbourhood is mostly unknown to other people in Antwerp, besides for its meat restaurants), the old-timers' stories of the "good old days" help the middle-class newcomers to identify with the narrative of an authentic (but White) lively neighbourhood, projecting the hopeful image that the neighbourhood could be full of bustle again. The social networks connecting middle-class newcomers and working-class old-timers are the result of particular "go-betweens" in the neighbourhood: middle-class newcomers whose grandparents are "old-timers" from the Dam, pedigree old-timers with middle-class life styles, and so on.

Through the go-betweens, the middle-class newcomers have adopted the narrative of a village in the city and the idea of a big family. While most of the neighbourhood shops have disappeared over the years, together with most of the slaughter and meat industry activities, the former slaughter halls are in the middle of the neighbourhood and the streets around the slaughterhouse still host a few renowned meat restaurants as well as some small meat-oriented enterprises. It comes as no surprise then that a new "mnemonic community", an imagined community based on nostalgic narratives and practices (Zerubavel 1996), has been constructed around the living memory of the meat industry to which both the old-timers and the newcomers seem to relate. In 2012 one of the middle-class newcomers painted a public utility box in the neighbourhood in the squared pattern of the wrapping paper often used by Belgian butchers, together with a cow saying "welcome". When the petition for participation was presented to the press in June 2013, middle-class newcomers and old-timers posed together in front of this new artefact that illustrated the newly developing mnemonic community.

5.5. CONSTRUCTING THE DAMCOMITÉ AS A LEGITIMATE INTERMEDIARY

While a number of neighbourhood organisations have succeeded in building up perceived social capital in the former social-democratic government coalitions in Antwerp, the current conservative local government has proven to be critical of these residents and their organisations (Nieuwsblad 2013), claiming they represent a "cultural left-wing" support base of the former government. In other words, they are perceived to represent the "wrong" social capital. In 2010 already, the current mayor of Antwerp (and chairman of the Flemish conservative party N-VA) launched the pejorative concept of "bakfietsvlaming", referring to Flemish urbanites who use a carrier cycle or "bakfiets", to describe the cultural urban middle classes who support the former socialist mayor and "talk progressive but act regressive in their everyday life" and use the carrier cycle as a cultural marker (De Standaard 2010). The concept of "bakfietsvlaming" was widely taken up in press, became the symbol of an imaginary "social group" (De Standaard 2011) and was nominated as word of the year in 2011 (Het Laatste Nieuws 2011). The essentially derogatory concept proved extremely efficient in

undermining the voice of those who could be identified in some way or another as belonging to the "cultural left wing" (Blommaert 2011). Different action committees, resident groups and other political activists have as a result lost their legitimate voice or potential to become partners from the start, as they could easily be framed as inauthentic "bakfietsvlamingen". It is all the more remarkable then, that the Damcomité, in which White "cultural" middle-class residents undeniably play an important role, has somehow avoided being classified under this "cultural left-wing" connotation. A crucial aspect here is that the Damcomité's perceived social capital extends to the old-timers of the neighbourhood. The main perception problem of the "cultural" middle class who are seen as only recent urban residents (and gentrifiers) is their perceived inauthenticity as compared to the older Flemish working-class urban residents. While not a deliberate political strategy, the Damcomité has succeeded to be perceived as at least partly representing the "authentic residents" of the neighbourhood Dam.
Already at the first meeting with the alderman, in the period when a petition for participation first gained traction, it turned out the alderman himself made use of the nostalgic narrative "the meat must stay". During these and subsequent meetings, the alderman stated that the soul of the Dam has to be maintained. Besides "the meat must stay", the alderman used the expression "the Dam has a 'dikke ziel' or 'thick soul'", an important play on words since "dikke ziel" refers to a particular kind of rump steak served in some local meat restaurants. Hence, for the alderman the authenticity of the neighbourhood can be found in the history of meat. The new mnemonic community in the neighbourhood was constructed around the history of meat. Allying working-class old-timers and middle-class newcomers could then easily present themselves as authentic representatives based on this shared narrative. As a result, and again in the words of Kasinitz and Hillyard, the old-timers give the middle-class newcomers an effective political tool: "*With their superior organizational resources and their willingness to minimize the most blatantly racist aspects of the old-timers' narratives, these Johnny-come-latelies make better use of the good old days than the old-timers ever could*" (Kasinitz and Hillyard 1995: 162). In other words, it is as a result of the support of the "authentic" old-timers that the Damcomité could increase its perceived social capital and its legitimacy to act as "community leader".

5.6. INSPIRING NOSTALGIA

In the previous section we argued that nostalgic narratives about the authentic community of the Dam played an important role in the creation of a legitimate intermediary in the neighbourhood Dam. However, the fact that only one group of residents the new mnemonic community in the Dam – is seen as the legitimate partner for the redevelopment projects allows for potential exclusionary claims against the stakes of the other residents in the neighbourhood (Brown-Saracino 2007). Moreover, as mentioned in the introduction, nostalgic narratives about "authentic urban villages" in urban planning have often acted, alongside neo-traditional new urbanism ideas, as a vehicle to facilitate the gentrification of poorer neighbourhoods in different cities throughout the world (and hence to "solve" the

social problems in these areas by displacing the poor). This process has been documented for instance by Barnes et al. (2006), Zukin (2010) and Jarvis and Bonnett (2013). Wealthier newcomers, out of a sense of nostalgia for authentic urban places and authentic urban experiences, consume the commodified and kitsch authenticity of a neighbourhood (Atkinson 2007). In this section, we demonstrate how the Damcomité made use of its budding legitimacy as an intermediary to formulate a preferred redevelopment scenario that could potentially block the further gentrification of the neighbourhood and the crucial role of nostalgic narratives in the construction of this advice, a role that was twofold. We noticed that nostalgic narratives, and particularly the living memory of the meat history, were crucial (1) in opening up the deeply institutionalized planning process in which participation would effectively be limited to communication and information, and (2) in offering a meaningful narrative through which substantive arguments about the needs of various groups in the neighbourhood could be related to the proposals of the urban department without directly challenging them.

5.7. THE URBAN PLANNING REPERTOIRE VS THE NOSTALGIC REPERTOIRE

In response to repeated queries by the Damcomité and *Endeavour* for more information about the status of the project definition, the urban planning department organised an informative meeting in the local parish hall (an important old-timers' place) on the 4th of June 2014, in which the key ambitions in the project definition were briefly explained and debates with residents were facilitated.

Before the presentation, the alderman gave a short speech in which he repeated the importance of maintaining the "thick soul" of the neighbourhood Dam. The presentation made clear that the planning department had not constructed a singular "selling image". Rather, the PowerPoint slides used listed, besides statements about the general port identity, eight ambitions:

1. re-establishing the historical connection with the water of the nearby "Lobroekdock" and the potential of the quay for the development of a high-quality public space;
2. a new "qualitative front" at "Lobroekdock" to establish the identity of the neighbourhood in that direction;
3. strengthening open and green space (5000m^2)
4. a new central and lively square in the Dam to connect old and new;
5. housing as main allocation: a balanced mix of housing including young and old, small and large, different types, complementary to the existing stock; affordable, innovative housing forms, subsidized ownership (social housing);
6. extending the "supply" of public services: schools, child care, youth clubs, a small sport hall;
7. room for a mix of economy and housing: no "annoying activities", searching for an interweaving of activities, promoting the creative economy, strengthening local retail, room for entrepreneurs and local initiatives; continuing the historical presence of meat-

processing businesses;
8. mobility: enabling infrastructural access but awareness of the perils of trans-local traffic, "secret routes" and parking problems.

Clearly, the information offered to the audience was extremely concise. Moreover, what we see here is not a readymade blueprint one can for instance find in the "authentic urban village" promo-talk described by Barnes et al (2006) but rather a "makeshift" planning proposal, an assemblage of at least three different "repertoires": (1) vague urban planning concepts such as the "creative economy", "a balanced mix", and an "interweaving [of] activities", "establishing an identity" and even "affordable housing"; (2) concrete proposals such as "at least 5000 m^2 of open green space"; and (3) nostalgic narratives such as references to "the historical presence of meat processing" and to "back to the water". We focus in what follows in particular on the different political effects of the "urban planning repertoire" compared to the nostalgic repertoire.

Many of the hollow concepts we find in the list of ambitions can be seen as part of a policy in which gentrification is if not facilitated, at least not blocked. One of the most recent, vague planning concepts that have appeared in Flemish urban planning literature, the creative economy can be seen as part of a globally circulating gentrification-facilitation discourse in which the creative class is brought into poorer neighbourhoods (Novy and Colomb 2013). When asked about the meaning of this creative economy, the presenter referred to attracting cultural entrepreneurs working in architecture, arts, etc. whose arrival will give the neighbourhood "a boost", thereby clearly referring to the creative class narrative. Challenging this discourse, even in the participatory setting on offer, appeared difficult, since most residents were not aware of the particular policy strategies underpinning these vague concepts. As a result, during the debates that followed the presentations, many of these formal urban planning concepts were neglected. Ideas such as "attracting the creative economy" or "the need for a balanced mix of housing" were never explicitly challenged. During the discussions, the need for work opportunities for local people, however, turned out to be very important. Even more overwhelming was the support for local shops and services (ATMs, post offices, supermarkets, etc.) often accompanied by nostalgic narratives about the number of shops that used to be in the neighbourhood (see also Kasinitz and Hilyard [1996] for a similar situation). Similarly, the vague idea of a "balanced mix of housing" was not challenged, but at the same time many residents worried about rising house prices in the neighbourhood and criticized the increasing number of student-oriented new constructions.

In short, most of the debates did not engage directly with the repertoire of formal planning concepts – most of them being too vague to be challenged or even to be understood. As a result, the potential gentrification scenario that resides in the vague concepts remained unchallenged although various issues of direct relevance for the audience present, and often incompatible with a gentrification scenario, were discussed in a more substantive

language.
The nostalgic repertoire, by contrast, had very different effects. An important starting point is that the nostalgic narrative in the presentation did not construct a clearly delineated and singular past. Instead, the port and meat history were both taken into account. So far there is no singular identity, no pastiche, no kitsch involved. There is, however, a choice to not include a myriad of other histories such as for instance the history of the Dam having been a fiscal island outside the city-walls, the history of social innovation in the neighbourhood, the history of very different social housing developments, the history of an isolated urban village, the histories of Moroccan, African and Asian immigration in the neighbourhood, and the more recent diversification and gentrification of the neighbourhood, to name but a few.
In the presentation, however, the nostalgic narratives interacted with particular planning concepts and not with others. The narrative of "back to the water" was articulated with reference to the potential of the quay for the development of a high-quality public space; the narrative of meat-processing with the still existing bustle of small meat-processing companies, restaurants and pubs around the former slaughterhouse site. They were not, however, connected to the need for an identity, to the balanced mix of housing, or the proposal for 5000m^2 open and green space.

It comes as no surprise that the nostalgic narratives in the planning departments' presentation were not contested by the audience. The audience itself consisted mainly of a combination of old-timers and middle-class newcomers who had been constructing a mnemonic community based on, among other things, the area's meat-history, as we explained earlier. The crucial role of the nostalgic narratives in the presentation was that they communicated the particularity and the authenticity of the neighbourhood to the audience. Through the use of particular nostalgic narratives, the planning department showed that it had the ambition to deviate from homogenizing and standardized planning practices. It showed that the local identity and the local histories of the neighbourhood somehow mattered to them. At the very least, it created a sense of involvement. Not surprisingly, then, the nostalgic repertoire resonated much more with the audience than the formal planning repertoire.

5.8. CHALLENGING GENTRIFICATION THROUGH A NOSTALGIC DETOUR

In August 2014, as a result of further delay in compiling the "project definition" by the urban planning department, disappointment about the lack of real debate and a general lack of clarity about the possibilities for further participation, the Damcomité decided to write a document detailing the neighbourhood residents' view of the future of the slaughterhouse site and of the neighbourhood at large. The general feeling among the members was that there had been enough "generic participation" moments and that enough material had been collected by the Damcomité and by *endeavour*; at its 4th of June meeting it was decided

that a document containing the most important substantial demands that had been uttered during the preceding years would be prepared.
In compiling this document, the Damcomité chose to remain as close as possible to the ambitions put forward by the urban planning department. Yet, while the UPD mainly proposed hollow concepts – concepts that could fit a gentrification scenario – the Damcomité started to fill these "hollow concepts" with substantial suggestions. Of crucial importance was the discursive merging of "rational" substantive arguments and "nostalgic" sentiments in filling hollow concepts. Table 5 summarizes the discourse of both repertoires in four of the ambitions. Unrooted, rooted, restorative and reflexive nostalgia all turned out to articulate with particular substantive arguments. What becomes clear is that the Damcomité strategically amplified the nostalgic narratives that were introduced by the alderman, in the presentation of the UPD and by its members (i.e. *the meat must stay, the "thick soul" of the Dam). Legitimacy*, to speak in the name of an (imaginary) authentic community, was then used to argue against potential gentrification with a nostalgic discourse, without directly challenging vague concepts. As a result, no clear "counter-image" was produced that could be challenged by the UPD or the alderman.

PLANNING CONCEPTS PROPOSED BY PLANNING DEPARTMENT	GENTRIFICATION THREAT	SUBSTANTIVE ARGUMENTS OF DAMCOMITÉ	NOSTALGIC SENTIMENTS PUT FORWARD BY DAMCOMITÉ
High quality public space	Development of high quality public space to attract higher income households	Current residents do not have private gardens and need local and safe public spaces, so invest in small local public places and more housing without private gardens instead of in houses with private gardens	Living memory of street conviviality meets free-floating nostalgia for neighbourhood life and social cohesion
Affordable housing	Discourse of affordable housing limited to subsidized home-ownership	Most of the current residents pay rents of more than a third of their income, only in-vesting in long-term affordable housing can benefit them	To keep the authentic "thick soul" of the Dam, the poorer old-timers and their children should have the option to stay in the neighbourhood
Creative economy & interweaving different functions	Prioritizing commercial space for a particular "creative class"	Unemployment is high, cheap spaces for local talents are needed most	Craftsmanship and com-bination of commercial and residential activities is part of the history of the neighbourhood and inscribed in the architec-ture of the Dam
Basic services	Pre-dominantly middle-class orient-ed services such as higher-end super-markets	Only when the critical mass of local oriented consumers with limited budgets increases, local services accessible to everyone can survive	Old-timers remember the range of services and local shops that disap-peared over the years

Table 5: The articulation of substantive arguments with nostalgic sentiments in the advice of the Damcomité to counter the gentrification threat

5.9. CONCLUSIONS

This chapter and its examination of the politics of redevelopment in a disenfranchised urban area resonate with the Polanyi-inspired concept of an 'always embedded economy' (Block 2003; Fraser 2013). The question which manifests as part of this framework is how exactly new capital injections become embedded in particular neighbourhoods. At first sight, this question boils down to the degree in which existing neighbourhood residents are allowed to participate in the actual decision-making processes. Indeed, if various local needs and existing embedded economies are not taken into account, a "new" economy risks being embedded solely in the lifestyles, moral frameworks and production and consumption patterns of a future affluent group of residents, favoured by the "facilitation of gentrification"-scenario that urban governments in different parts of the world have been applying for some time now. However, all over the world urban governments are confronted with the demand of increasingly professionalizing neighbourhood associations to have a say in the decisions surrounding these capital injections, recognizing that early participation of local partners is important if only to avoid later resistance. Their often-competing claims raise the question as to which voices in a neighbourhood will be heard, which resident groups eventually become partners in the redevelopment process and what potentially emancipatory moments this new capital investment produces for some and not for others. When we endorse Amin's (2005) claim that urban neighbourhoods do not consist of one community but instead of a diversity of trans-local and overlapping communities, questions about the local "embeddedness" of the economy indeed immediately become very complicated to resolve.

In line with a main theme of this book, this chapter focused specifically on the role of nostalgia in this complex process. In urban studies literature, the legitimation of local nostalgic voices by urban governments has often been criticized for resulting in the amplification of the ethnocentric or nationalist feelings of disenfranchised White communities, in supporting naive social cohesion policies and in enabling the commodification and gentrification of former working-class neighbourhoods. However, through our work in the neighbourhood Dam, we realized the need to analyse in more detail some of the other work nostalgia does.
Our analysis of the case Dam in the Belgian city of Antwerp suggests that nostalgia has played a role in at least the following politics of embedding future investments in the neighbourhood: (1) nostalgia has triggered the development of a light and unstable sense of community (Blommaert & Varis 2015) in the neighbourhood, of which the organisation Damcomité did become a representative. More particularly, shared nostalgic narratives about the living memory of the meat industry and its embeddedness in the neighbourhood infrastructure have related working-class old-timers and middle-class newcomers in a local coalition. (2) While the new conservative Antwerp government discursively constructs more established neighbourhood organizations and action committees in the city as

supporters of the former social-democratic government, a strategy which undermines their role as intermediaries in urban redevelopment processes, the government appears to be sensitive to the nostalgic narratives mobilized by this local neighbourhood coalition. This has helped the Damcomité to gain legitimacy in representing the neighbourhood. (3) Nostalgic narratives about, among other things, the meat history of the neighbourhood have found to the formal list of ambitions presented by the urban planning department. The presence of this "nostalgic repertoire" effectively generated a sense of involvement for (a particular group of) neighbourhood residents and legitimated the use of nostalgia as a strategic discourse in discussions about the future of the neighbourhood. (4) When the Damcomité advised to invest in the neighbourhood infrastructure that would support a future socio-economically and ethnic-culturally diverse population, nostalgic narratives – reproducing the living memory of the meat industry – acted as strategic discourses to defend these claims.
Our case study shows that the different tendencies in the nostalgic imagination (Bonnet & Alexander, 2013) indeed continuously fuelled and inspired political debate and that they did not necessarily generate regressive and exclusionary suggestions. The concrete or vague sense of loss appears to be a powerful sentiment, urban planners should reckon with, particularly in the case of disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods. Nostalgic discourses can form a backdrop for urban planners to engage with local stakeholders and can in turn be mobilized by local coalitions as a means to put local values on the urban redevelopment agenda.

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5.11. REFLECTIONS

The paper of the Dam was one of my and my co-authors' first attempts to better understand the relation between planning agents (*endeavour* and the city's planning department), collective action (the actions and underlying collective learning trajectory of the neighbourhood association to get involved in the planning process) and the instrumental role of discursive practices to create possible interfaces for coproduction.
Interesting about this paper is its co-authorship with a local member (and academic) of the Damcomité. As such the process of writing and the de- and reconstruction of the opportunities and mechanisms behind neighbourhood involvement, could overcome a too narrow or stylized planning perspective and gives the opportunity to approach the problem from different angles.

By using a very concrete and specific example to illustrate and analyse new interfaces for cooperation (the advice of the Damcomité and the ambition framework of the planning department) and defining nostalgia as a specific discursive practice that can overcome internal differences, the paper presented some clear mechanisms eligible for reflection by applying them to other cases (Muide-Meulestede and Aglasun). It also created the opportunity to critically reflect on some of the subquestions that were introduced in chapter 2.

The role of Nostalgia

During my PhD research two projects showed a constellation similar to the Dam case: the case of Muide-Meulestede and the case of Aglasun.
Although dealing with completely different issues, both cases examined how a strong existing but diverse network of local actors could work together with independent planning practitioners, aiming to develop a future vision for the neighbourhood or village. These were not independent or academic exercises but experiments in a strained relationship with larger policy frameworks (i.e. economic development programs and strong hierarchic governance structures in the case of Aglasun and a strongly institutionalized urban renewal policy in the case of Muide Meulestede).

Both cases show similar patterns in the instrumental role of a nostalgic narrative by trying to develop a light and unstable sense of community. In both cases the image of the village, the reaction brought about by the loss of cultural or social infrastructure (the central hammam and neighbourhood or odas in the case of Aglasun, closed bars and old workshops in the case of Muide Meulestede) and the revitalization and reintegration of traditional crafts (from tapestry to ship repair) take central positions in defining a shared sensitivity and defend specific local claims (the need for local economy, the revitalization of networks of solidarity, ...).

On the other hand none of these narratives proved to be sufficiently strong to resist other, often government steered, frameworks for (re)development. In the Dam the deep local claims for e.g. affordable housing are not taken into account in the final masterplan. Shared narratives formed a basis for discussion but did not prove to be strong enough to create a shared value framework that could resist or transform other institutionalized practices (e.g. a middle-class oriented development approach of public private partnerships).
In Muide Meulestede Morgen the nostalgic narrative of revitalizing the local economy gave legitimacy to launch the project as an urban renewal project, creating a fruitful basis for the city to support a strong real-estate driven redevelopment agenda.

Seen from this perspective the idea that "*Nostalgic discourses can form a backdrop for urban planners to engage with local stakeholders and can in turn be mobilized by local coalitions as a means to put local values on the urban redevelopment agenda"* (Meeus et al., 2016: 265) seems to be questionable. While nostalgia seems to trigger setting-up local learning trajectories and finding common ground to develop a local value framework, it is less sure how nostalgic narratives can form the basis of new interfaces between local coalitions and those in power, whether or not supported by planning practitioners.

A reflection on three subquestions related to the concepts of socially innovative action, coproduction & ambiguity

Under which conditions is coproduction a tool to strengthen, expand and solidify the room for manoeuvre of socially innovative planning practice?

The case of the Dam clearly describes how neighbourhoods cannot be seen as homogenous communities but need to be addressed and understood in their full diversity, taking into account a large diversity of needs. Considering the local embedment of economy, planning mechanisms need to take this diversity into account.
The case description shows how discursive mechanisms such as nostalgia, can be used to trigger and install these diversity-sensitive processes. Both by constructing a narrative that attracts and includes a large diversity of voices as well as by creating a legitimate basis to associate and organize coalitions within new discursive fora that can trigger cooperation between a multiplicity of stakeholders (a.o. planning authorities, local communities, ...). In the case of the Dam, a growing disappointment about the lack of real debate and a general lack of clarity about the possibilities for further participation, lead to writing a document detailing the neighbourhood residents' view of the future of the slaughterhouse site and of the neighbourhood at large. This document became a new platform text to question and discuss the ambitions of the urban planning department's "hollow concepts" by merging "rational" substantive arguments and "nostalgic" sentiments and as such strategically challenged and questioned the existing collaborative planning trajectory.
On the other hand the example of the advice of the Damcomité and the diversity of underlying positions trigger a less optimistic understanding of these discursive tools and

show how vulnerable or light (post-political?) a cooperation based on 'discursive unity' can be.

Does a more coproductive perspective on planning under the current post-political conditions respond convincingly to the critique of collaborative planning being delusional?

The case of the Dam shows how difficult it is to guarantee the political power of coproductive interfaces. This is the case, even when there is a shared ambition to create a coproductive planning framework and when first successes to rethink certain mechanisms and frameworks of public policy are cherished. In both the cases of the Dam and Muide-Meulestede promising *Endeavour*s of coproduction were eventually overruled by stronger power coalitions and, in that way, followed the logic of post-political planning described in the introduction of this thesis.

There obviously is a need for a more continuous reflection on the possibility of coproductive relations, taking the whole institutional complexity and the role of planning frameworks and related instruments into account. The discussion on the ambition framework of the city administration and related advices of the Damcomité laid an interesting basis to start a negotiation and shared process of collective visioning. Eventually this socially innovative alliance proved to be less solid than expected especially given the pressure of investment logics and a weak political (public policy based) counterweight (discussed in the extensive description of the Dam case in annex). In Muide Meulestede our attempt to work on an Atelier Muide Meulestede as new interface for cooperation between the neighbourhood and the city administration resulted in the similar need to structurally relate these types of interfaces to existing policy frameworks and underlying networks in order to avoid being overruled by parallel decision-making processes.

In order to understand how parallel processes influence changing constellations of cooperation and possibly coproduction, continuous reflection on current and future positions of the actors that take part in coproductive processes seems important. This is not only necessary to reveal delusional discursive practice but also to better understand the limits of planning practice to support socially innovative action.

How does a social innovation perspective on collective action relate to the attempt of coproductive planning to mobilize the collective power of citizens?

The case of the Dam is a first attempt of *endeavour* to engage in socially innovative action. This resulted in: 1) a clear analysis of local needs as a start to challenge and redirect the existing planning agenda; and 2) a close collaboration between *endeavour* and the Damcomité to continuously rediscover opportunities to break into the planning process, and create new opportunities for a more coproductive planning approach in a process of joint problematization. This approach of defining local needs and engaging in trajectories

of collective problematization were key elements in different projects of *endeavour* that reached beyond this PhD research. In the project on the perception of safety in the public space (4.3.8.) the output of the planning trajectory was defined in such a way that it valorised the socially innovative potential of the process. Working with research as a way to define local needs, supporting new configurations of social relations through trajectories of collective learning and publishing manuals as an outcome of (planning) projects aimed at further advancing the processes of collective learning beyond the duration of the project. This continuous trajectory of creating a shared understanding of both the political-institutional situation and the local mechanisms of exclusion seemed to be important not only to continuously open up for new perspectives, but also to cherish the earlier described diversity in local communities and take a critical stance towards existing institutionalised practices, less influenced by the professional bias of planning practice.
In the project of covering the Ring Road of Antwerp for instance, working together with a local coalition of citizens on a structured basis helped us to constantly question the impact of our design proposals and actions and gave us the possibility to engage in many parallel trajectories (as the cooperation with other design teams, the negotiations on implementing project proposals with the city and the Flemish region) without losing track. Direct engagement with civil society diversified the possibilities for collective action (from advising city administration, proposing new ways to include a larger diversity of people to direct support of supressed agendas by visualizing the effects of certain planning instruments, helping to build-up networks and knowledge around a cause, …) and strengthened the political positioning of *endeavour* on different environmental justice related topics. Through these, often self-funded, projects (the Dam, Heim, We kopen samen den Oudaan) we could create space to analyse new configurations of social-spatial exclusion and experiment with new potential interfaces for coproduction under post-political planning conditions.



Figure 71: "l" according to *endeavour*

6. SITUATIONAL LEARNING

TOWARDS A SITUATIONAL UNDERSTANDING OF COLLECTIVE LEARNING: A REFLEXIVE FRAMEWORK

Seppe De Blust, Oswald Devisch, Jan Schreurs

Based on an in-depth study of how socially innovative processes are collectively reinforced within two cases, this chapter builds a reflexive framework that conceptualizes socially innovative processes as situated trajectories of collective learning. The framework starts from three theories in the field of pedagogy and organisational studies that try to contextualise and operationalize how internal processes of learning, supportive relationships and external demands interrelate within processes of collective learning. In line with the reflexive character of social innovation research, the chapter presents the framework as a means to give concrete answer on how socially innovative processes can be supported and how the dynamic character of their collective learning trajectories can be managed. The conclusion of this chapter further reflects on the importance of a situational and multi-layered understanding of collective learning for creating institutional support for socially innovative processes in planning and presents reflexive questions that can help external actors as planning practitioners to position themselves within this often messy and complex reality.

This chapter has been published as an article in Urban Planning (special issue on planning and social innovation). I contributed to both the theoretical framework and the case-analysis and case-description. The writing process was a joint effort with the co-authors.

6.1. SOCIAL INNOVATION & COLLECTIVE LEARNING

Planning practice could play a crucial role in creating institutional support for socially innovative action (Moulaert & Cabaret, 2006, McCallum et al., 2009, Van Dyck & Van den Broeck, 2013). The transformative aims of planning (Albrechts, 2015, Friedmann, 2011) and its often-immanent position in between government and civil society (Albrechts, 2012) creates the opportunity for planning practice to influence and support the processes of learning, decision-making, collective action and institutionalization that are crucial for socially innovative action (Novy et al., 2009, Oosterlynck et al., 2011 Jessop et al., 2013). Notwithstanding this promising basis, the socializing nature of a lot of planning initiatives (a.o. Swyngedouw, 2008) and the underlying variety of conflicting interests, often result in exactly the opposite. Well-intended actions as participatory decision-making, co-productive visioning or a need-based understanding of local dynamics often fail to fully understand and support the open, multiple, and critical nature of a lot of socially innovative initiatives in their search for alternative development strategies (Moulaert et al., 2013a) and end up in strengthening the co-optation of alternative practices by classic government systems (a.o. Palmas & von Busch, 2015, Kaethler et al., 2017). In this chapter we argue that a better understanding of the underlying process of collective learning is primordial in order for planning practice to play a role in supporting social innovation. More specifically we plea to conceptualize these trajectories of collective learning as situated and multi-layered trajectories that sometimes support, and other times obstruct one another and that are embedded in larger institutional fields.

Collective learning can best be described as a concept that gives insight in how a diverse group of individuals work on processes of shared problematization and a shared sense of meaning (De Laat & Simons, 2002, Schreurs & Kuhk, 2017; Wildemeersch, 2007). Theories of collective learning concretizes how these processes are structured and how they deal with internal complexity and external demands by analysing how a collective emerges, learns and transforms (Whatmore, 2009). In social innovation studies collective learning is seen as a core element for collective transformative action (a.o. Chambon et al., 1982, Jessop et al., 2013). Collective learning creates the possibility to collectively appropriate, deconstruct and reconstruct information and knowledge, taking into account a diverse set of life-worlds and value alternatives for existing dominant positions. Social innovation theory starts from the idea that collective learning based on a shared social innovative agenda is crucial in order to recreate existing institutions and structures and provide them with new meanings (Cassinari & Moulaert, 2014; Moulaert and Nussbaumer, 2005; Jessop et al., 2013).
The social learning tradition of planning theory and practice (e.g. Friedmann, 1987; Healey, 2009; Kuhk et al., 2015; Vandenabeele et al., 2011) share this understanding of learning as a crucial element for transformative action. Social learning values the social processes of knowledge-creation and the construction of goals as the result of a *"socially situated activity in probing inquiry, collective sense-making and the testing out of ideas to see if they 'work' and*

mobilise attention" (Healey & Hillier, 2008; Healey, 2013). Where both planning and social innovation studies share the idea of appropriate qualities for learning, a process of learning should be inclusive, reflective, subjectifying, has a transformative potential and starts from an interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary and iterative endeavour (e.g. Brown & Lambert, 2013; Kuhk et al., 2015; Moulaert et al., 2013b; Servillo & Schreurs, 2013), the specific application remains rather diverse. In planning there is a focus on the shared endeavour of dealing with irreducible uncertainty (Bertolini, 2010; Schreurs & Kuhk, 2017), where the social innovation approach has a much more political understanding of learning. Social innovation theory defines collective learning as 'a new form of social learning oriented to the production of knowledge as an "*intellectual common*" (Jessop et al., 2013, p. 119). Collective learning emphasizes on the solidarity-based character of learning through processes of sharing and cooperation in order to organize the satisfaction of human needs and changes in social relations and increasing the socio-political capability as well as access to resources of a large diversity of unheard actors (Moulaert et al., 2005). The transdisciplinary character of collective learning becomes an important asset to relate the revalorization of a large diversity of social use values with -much needed- institutional support (Jessop et al., 2013).

In order to avoid that these different interpretations of learning create confusion and consequently an unpredictable basis for supporting socially innovative initiatives and lead to their (un)intentional co-optation and de-politicization in planning processes, we propose to focus on a more operational and situated understanding of collective learning (later defined as a reflexive framework). This understanding goes beyond the qualities of learning and engages with a more in-depth understanding of how processes of collective learning are managed, how internal processes of learning and external demands interrelate and how external actors as planning practitioners can play a role in creating the institutional support for collective learning processes. We define this perspective as an actor-oriented approach to collective learning as it focuses on the dynamic collection of actors (that can change in composition), and how they are part of multiple collectives and have to deal with contradictions, own agenda's, or parallel trajectories. Based on this understanding we try to define certain reflexive questions that can help external agents as spatial planning practitioners to better define their role and added value in collective learning trajectories in order to strengthen their resistance to (un)intentional co-optation and de-politicization in planning processes.
In the following paragraphs we give an overview of the different methodological steps that were applied while constructing the framework, conducting case-based research and defining the final reflexive questions. Following this overview, we introduce the reflexive framework that was drafted during this research and describe shortly its separate underlying theories. In the third part of this chapter we describe the situated trajectories of collective learning of two cases: the living Streets in Ghent and the Eastern Rail Park (PSO) in Antwerp, Belgium. Both cases can be described as civil society led processes and have socially innovative potential. Where in the case of the Living Streets, an example of temporary use of public space, this potentiality evolved towards a culture of cooperation between different

organizations and a further institutionalization of socially innovative practices, conflictual tensions remained the institutional basis for collective learning in the case of PSO, an example of local advocacy planning. In the conclusions of this chapter we further illustrate the added value of our reflexive framework and introduce how the analysis of both cases lead to a multi-layered understanding of collective learning for planning practitioners in supporting local socially innovative initiatives.
The research trajectory consisted of a series of workshops on participatory cases that

6.2. METHODOLOGY

we organized for the professional association of spatial planners in Flanders (VRP). Three sessions were organized with key stakeholders of different cases and a group of professional spatial planners that worked for different cities in Flanders, for the Flemish government or for private developers. In the first two sessions, key stakeholders presented six case studies of different collective learning trajectories that worked on social innovation and participation in planning on different scales. At the end of each presentation, the stakeholders and planning practitioners were asked to map the capabilities that the collectives needed to achieve their goals (based on the theoretical framework of Baser & Morgan as will be later described).
In the third session, the work of Biesta on the functions of education and learning (Biesta, 2010) and the work of Bruno Latour on onto-political proceedings (Latour, 2004) were introduced (after Baser & Morgan the two other theories behind our reflexive framework) and a reflection on the changing position of spatial planning practitioners was presented. Based on the three theories and the collective mapping exercises of the first two sessions, a reflection was organized to gain a better understanding of the cases based on both the internal process of collective learning and its (un)supportive relationships with external agents as spatial planning practitioners. As a result of this reflection, first drafts of the reflexive framework were developed and reflexive questions for planning practitioners were discussed and presented.
In a second part of the research, the three authors of the chapter further developed the reflexive framework by researching two case studies more in-depth. Both case studies were selected because of their socially innovative potential (combining local action with processes of institutionalisation) but different outcome (a culture of cooperation vs. conflictual tension). Based on the presentations of both case studies during the first sessions of our research and the initial mapping of collective capabilities, follow-up interviews were organized with the main key stakeholders of the cases. These follow-up interviews were structured based on the same questions and theories that arose in the three sessions. Firstly, we critically evaluated and validated the mapping of collective capabilities of the cases. Based on this mapping we further reflected on the trajectory of collective learning and the relationship with planning practitioners following the theoretical frameworks presented in the following paragraphs and their related questions. The semi-structured interviews were compared and analysed in such way that they could further specify and critically evaluate the interrelation between the different theories of the framework and its relationship with

social innovation. In order to relate the results of this research to planning practice, we tried, inspired by the reflexive exercise in the last session of the participation lab, to rephrase the results and observations to clear reflexive questions that could help spatial planning practitioners to position themselves in relation to collective learning trajectories and their socially innovative potential.

6.3. TOWARDS A FRAMEWORK

The reflexive framework is based on a selection of three theories that, in our understanding, can help to operationalize our understanding of collective learning. These theories are situated in the field of pedagogy or organizational studies and, consequently, are not directly developed with the aim to support social innovation in the context of spatial planning projects. The three theories that we discussed are the work of Baser & Morgan on capacity development (Baser & Morgan, 2008), the work of Gert Biesta on the functions of education and learning (Biesta, 2010) and the work of Bruno Latour on onto-political proceedings (Latour, 2004). Each of the theories shed light on a specific element of an operational and situational understanding of collective learning.

The work of Baser & Morgan and their study on capacity building (Baser & Morgan, 2008) can be used to understand how processes of collective learning are managed, by describing five core collective capabilities that define the ability of a group to organize themselves. In this respect these capabilities should allow to learn how the organization can adapt to conflicting goals and an evolving situation. Baser & Morgan describe five core collective capabilities that can, to a greater or lesser extent, be found in all organizations and systems (Baser & Morgan, 2008, p. 33): *capabilities (i) to commit and engage, (ii) to carry out functions or tasks, (iii) to relate and attract resources and support, (iv) to adapt and self-renew, and (v) to balance coherence and diversity*. Each of these collective capabilities enables an organization to create public value and can be seen as both a condition and a result of internal processes of learning. The status of each of these collective capabilities reveals the overall capacity of a group to engage in processes of learning and therefore helps (external) agents to specify and strategically select their possible supportive role.

The work of Gert Biesta (2010, 2011) places this development of collective capabilities in a broader framework of learning. Biesta's work focuses on different modes of education and learning as well as the function of learning in society and can give us insight in the finality of learning. Biesta makes a distinction between three modes of learning. A first mode of learning is the ever-present idea of qualification: learning as a means to provide someone or a group with the knowledge and skills to do something. This quality of learning forms the basis for the mainstream idea of organized education and is, in our analysis, situated in line with the idea of strengthening the collective capabilities of a group as defined by Baser

& Morgan. A second mode of learning can be defined as socialization. In this approach a set of structure and rules and the adaptation to existing processes and dominant ideas are crucial. Socialization can be seen as a mode of learning that contributes to the reproduction of existing socio-political order (Biesta, 2010) and its related norms and values. Within collective learning processes this kind of learning usually prioritizes the goal to get decisions approved and obtain public support for a particular way of working. The third mode of civic learning can be defined as subjectification. Subjectification entails modes of learning that focus on the emergence of political agency and as such subjectivity (Biesta, 2010). This kind of learning focuses on independency and the importance of reflexivity as the continuous emergence of alternative collective imaginaries and engagement. Biesta further specifies this last mode of learning based on the idea of a pedagogy of interruption. Subjectification is not only about demanding a certain reflexive mode of learning but also about securing the opportunities for new forms of political subjectivity to emerge (Biesta, 2010, 2012). In relation to socially innovative practices this subjectifying mode of learning is crucial to develop a political and transformative potential through collective learning. The different modes of learning often co-exist in processes of collective learning. Their internal balance highly depends on certain requirements of learning that are defined through time.

These different requirements for learning are further theorized by Bruno Latour, who introduces a situational understanding of learning and its related time dimension. Originally, Latour describes four requirements for learning to get a better grip on the value of science, knowledge and democracy in our society and how this directly relates to the internal and external dynamics of a group. In 'Politics of nature' Latour (2004) starts from the idea that facts and values can't be defined as exclusive nominators for action. Latour sees both as interrelated concepts that, during a process of learning, lead to a shared reality and definition of the group. Latour distinguishes four requirements that define specific situations of learning. The first two requirements are related to the idea of a group. Or as Vandenabeele and Goorden (2007, p. 206) translate: "*which options do the involved actors take into account?"* To answer this question, a group needs to go through a process of 'perplexity' (holding on to a broad horizon) and 'consultation' (excluding nobody arbitrarily). The two other requirements relate to strategy, selectivity and the power to arrange in rank and order. Vandenabeele and Goorden (2007) translate this as: *"which options do the actors experience as being useful?"* This question can be answered by processes of 'hierarchy' (trying to understand the relationship between new values and what is currently prevailing) and 'institutionalisation' (closing the debate for the time being). A group or collective continuously engage with each of these four requirements. By adding this situational understanding to our theoretical framework, different moments of inclusion and possibilities for engagement get defined and create a basis for further analysis.

By combining the three theories within one theoretical framework (Figure 72), we can develop a situated understanding of collective learning and have a better insight in how the capabilities of a group and the way collective learning is organized changes over time

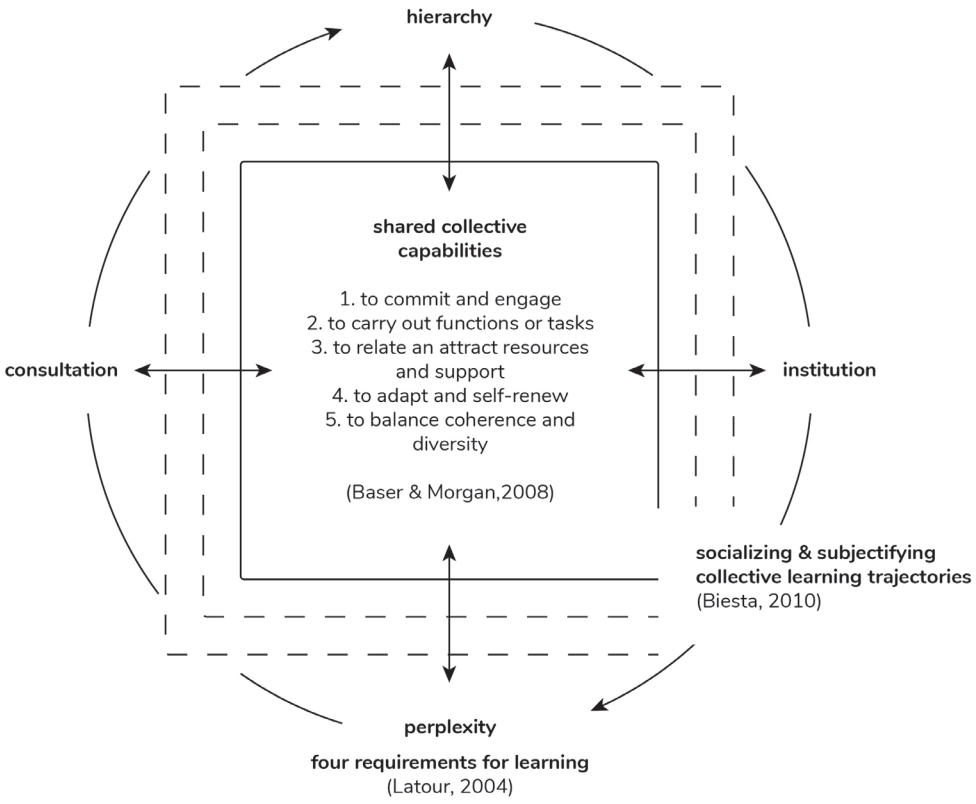

Figure 72: A conceptual Framework for a situated understanding of collective learning

based on to what extent the collective and its supportive relations are constantly (re-) defined by what Latour calls, the *'scenarization of the totality',* the continuous process of defining the provisional and ever-changing border between inside and outside (Latour, 2004, p. 248). The shared collective capabilities of a group create a clear idea on the possibilities to start and sustain a collective learning trajectory, where the understanding of collective learning as balancing socializing and subjectifying modes of learning tells us something about the quality and finality of learning (and as such about its socially innovative potential) and acknowledges this as a changing and balancing *endeavour*. Lastly, the different requirements for learning can help to understand how a group changes throughout a process of collective learning and opens or closes itself to external support.

The framework shows how this definition of a group, the possibilities for external support, the collective capabilities to organize a collective learning trajectory and the finalities of the applied modes of learning are all interrelated. By integrating these different dimensions, we can structurally analyse how a collective learning trajectory and its socially innovative ambitions is organized and changes through time, taking into account the political and institutional context. The trajectory of collective learning is, in both our cases and in line with our framework, defined as the recurrent process during which a (changing) group of people actively and collectively try to (re)define and test how, why, what and in relation to who they are organizing themselves. With regard to external support the framework provokes to define this support in different ways: by enhancing the collective capacities of a group (*Can I help a group with one of their five core collective capabilities?*), by understanding processes of learning and its socializing and subjectifying dimension (*How can I support a subjectifying mode of learning? Can my organization or can I as e.g. an administrator gives other groups the possibility to set up a subjectifying learning trajectory?*), as well as fuelling processes of perplexity, consultation, hierarchy and institutionalisation (*Are there propositions neglected in a group discussion? Can I add propositions based on my expertise, network? How have the participants been selected? Can I avoid arbitrarily-short-circuiting?*). In order to analyse the two cases based on this theoretical framework three questions were defined that directly relate to the three theories of the framework and their relation with collective learning and social innovation. The following questions have as a goal not to evaluate the cases but to highlight and understand their underlying mechanisms and how these mechanisms can further clarify a situated understanding of collective learning:

What are the collective capabilities of a group and how are they developed throughout a process of collective learning?

How does the configuration of socializing and subjectifying modes of learning contribute to the socially innovative potential of a trajectory?

How did a group deal with the different requirements for learning and how does this influence the socially innovative potential of a trajectory?

6.4. LEARNING FROM THE CASES

6.4.1. LIVING STREETS IN GHENT

The Living Streets project can roughly be described as a civil society campaign focused on creating support for a modal shift in the city through concrete temporary interventions and experiments. Yearly, different streets in Ghent are made car-free for two months and transformed into places for experimenting with alternative mobility strategies (bicycle sharing, collective parking, alternative routing, …) and the use of public space (creating a greener public space, redefining the space for cars etc.). In each street, inhabitants are the core of these initiatives. A small group of initiators try to convince neighbours to engage in the experiment and co-create the activities and specific interventions they want to see implemented. Since the initial idea of the Living Streets project originated at a transition lab of the City of Ghent on future mobility, the different local initiatives have a strong, but often implicit, interrelation with the city-wide debate on new forms of mobility. From the start of the Living Streets project in 2013, it has been "Lab van Troje" (the Trojan Lab), the organizer of the project, firm ambition to organize 'a creative laboratory that offers solutions to speed up the process of turning the Ghent area into a sustainable, liveable and climate-neutral region' (www.labvantroje.be/en/).
The Trojan Lab combines different roles. During the Living Streets campaign, the Trojan Lab provides logistical support for each of the local experiments. On the level of the city the Trojan Lab evaluate the effects of the Living Streets project on changing patterns of mobility and actively investigate and debate the role of temporary use and experiments for local governance systems. Currently, the Trojan Lab is trying to structurally embed this new culture of experimentation in the administrative structures of the City of Ghent. During our research we chose to focus on one of the local collective learning trajectories and selected the case study of the Wasstraat, a street that participated twice, in 2014 and 2015).

The collective learning trajectory in the Wasstraat was mainly centred around the idea of organizing an inclusive trajectory. The initiators wanted to organize an open trajectory that both accepts and provokes unplanned happenings. In order to be as open as possible and true to the experimental nature of Living Streets, the local learning trajectory mainly focused on including the large diversity of inhabitants in the experiment and creating room for changing engagements. In second order, some of the participants of the Living Street Wasstraat were also involved in the coordinating (collective learning) trajectory that would place the different local trajectories in a larger institutional debate hosted by the Trojan Lab. This engagement in a diversity of learning trajectories is mirrored in the organizational structure of the Living Street Wasstraat which is based on a dual structure of on the one hand a small core group of initiators (who worked together with the Trojan Lab and other Living Streets) and on the other hand a large group of neighbours who took part in the local experiment. The local learning trajectory strongly focused on an inclusive approach, i.e.



Figure 73: The Living streets as local experiments for car free environments

learning by consulting every family in the street and inviting them to participate and by only applying socializing modes of learning as a way to create the right conditions for collective experimentation. During the trajectory basic rules on the use of space, such as timeframes and maintenance logics were defined, and the threshold of participation was lowered by guaranteeing the temporary character of the interventions. This approach hardly changed in their participation in 2015.

What are the collective capabilities of the Living Street Wasstraat and how are they developed throughout their process of collective learning?

The capability to balance coherence and diversity was from the beginning of the collective learning trajectory an important aspiration of the organization in order to involve as many neighbours as possible in their temporary experiment. Throughout the trajectory the other capabilities of Baser & Morgan were developed. Most of the collective capabilities were managed in the core group of the initiative. The initiators of the Wasstraat learned to deal with the passivity of certain groups, creating momentum by programming activities and accepting experiments with uncertain outcomes. Throughout the experiment other collective capabilities such as the capability to commit and engage, carry out functions or tasks and attract resources were more and more shared by the bigger group of participating neighbours. Since the Living Street Wasstraat was part of a larger yearly campaign, there was more or less a format on how to organize a local collective learning trajectory and how other external actors and organizations like the Trojan Lab could support this *Endeavour*. The lab created, for instance, a manual on how to start a Living Street. This manual gives the necessary structure for local initiators to start and explore how they can create an own collective trajectory. The lab also supported every living street on a logistical level by negotiating permits with the city, providing contact with supportive enterprises to co-develop experiments, etc. Because of this format the local organization of the Living Street Wasstraat was almost automatically embedded in a larger multi-layered organizational structure. This semi-institutional structure created a direct potential for social innovation by combining a strong local collective learning trajectory that engaged a large diversity of actors with a supra-local collective learning trajectory that tried to influence further processes of institutionalization. In order to better understand this potentiality, we must look at the other dimensions of our framework of collective learning.

How does the configuration of socializing and subjectifying modes of learning contribute to the socially innovative potential of the Living Street Wasstraat?

The cooperation between different learning trajectories and their underlying organization created an interesting condition to balance socializing and subjectifying modes of learning. The case of the Wasstraat clearly shows that sustaining the necessary balance between accepting and provoking unplanned happenings could only be achieved thanks to a strategic interchange between street-level and city-level learning trajectories. The

organizational structure of different collective learning trajectories made it possible that the Wasstraat, on street-level, decided to create a very open, experimental and subjectifying trajectory, where on city-level, the Lab van Troje chose to run for a more political, governance-oriented and as such socializing trajectory. The balance between both trajectories could be secured because of a strategic interchange that respected the specific definition of each of the collective learning trajectories and the differential importance of socializing and subjectifying modes of learning. The importance of this mutual understanding becomes clear in the following example: right after the second edition of the Living Street Wasstraat, the planning department of the City of Ghent used the wide public support for the Living Streets experiment as an opportunity and legitimation to plan and design some structural changes in the composition of the public space. However, by neglecting the experimental and subjectifying character of the Wasstraat and introducing a more socializing planning mode of learning (designing a plan, finding support, …), they failed to set up a common trajectory.

In relation to the social innovative potential of the Living Streets this differentiation in organizational structures, not only based on supporting collective capabilities but also on the importance of balancing subjectifying and socializing modes of learning, seems to be promising. An organizational structure based on different trajectories of collective learning gives the possibility to limit the inherent socializing pressure of processes of institutionalisation on local trajectories of collective learning. Meanwhile a more structural embedment of local learning trajectories in a city-wide discussion gives the possibility to directly influence existing governance structures, bringing a large diversity of social values to the front of the debate. In order to strengthen this relation between local learning trajectories and governance discussions the Trojan Lab organized intermediate sessions where representatives of the local Living Street experiments met and collectively reflected on their local cases as well as the trajectory as a whole. Based on this introduction of an intermediate structure we need to question whether these different layers of the collective learning trajectory really belong to the same learning trajectory or are to be seen as strategic alliances (that strengthen the collective capabilities of different groups and create space for balancing socializing and subjectifying modes of learning).

How did the Living Street Wasstraat deal with the different requirements for learning and how did this influence the socially innovative potential of the trajectory?

On a local level the changes in the group and its collective learning trajectory were limited. Starting from an open and inclusive perspective on membership and experimentation, the Living Street Wasstraat was primarily focused on a continuous engagement with the requirements of perplexity and consultation, trying to gather a diverse group of neighbours and creating the ideal conditions for interchange and open reflection. The requirements of hierarchy and institution and their related discussions mainly centred on implementing

temporary interventions. The rules that were defined and the choices made during the collective learning trajectory related to creating the conditions of learning rather than to proposing new solutions or perspectives based on what was learned (this wasn't the case for all the local Living Street trajectories; some initiatives dealt with subsequent reflection on the results of their local experiments).
This limited engagement with the requirements of hierarchy and institution somewhat questions our idea of the socially innovative potential of the local trajectory and its differentiated organizational structure. The local and diverse processes of learning that worked on street-level wasn't reflected in the discussion and process of learning on the level of the city. Although the different results and evaluations of all the local Living Streets experiments were used as an inspiration to challenge and change the mobility policy in the city, local and supra-local trajectories weren't part of the same collective learning trajectory, they didn't share processes of learning; this was illustrated by a limited focus on feedback relations, the inexistence of an agenda shared by all the initiatives and participants and, probably, a different interpretation of what to take into account or what to define as useful.

6.4.2. THE "EASTERN RAIL PARK" (PSO) IN ANTWERP

PSO is a completely different story. The case is centred around a partly abandoned railway yard in the north of Antwerp. Although the City of Antwerp decided to develop the site as a parking lot and a zone for events in 2015, different neighbourhood organizations had pleaded for a more public and green use. Throughout the development of the site, a close collaboration between opposing organizations (the city administration of Antwerp and the local neighbourhood associations) and their respective storylines, could never be established, contrary to the Living Streets project in Ghent. Despite this apparent failure, the case shows an interesting learning trajectory as it illustrates how certain events limit the socially innovative potential of collective learning processes and situate it in a larger field of social action.
The collective learning trajectory of PSO was a rather fluctuating process. As an action group PSO highly depended on changing contextual conditions such as the existence of an official vision on the Eastern Rail Park, legal procedures etc. A first reorganization of the group and its learning trajectory was carried out after difficult negotiations with the City on the future of the abandoned railway yard. PSO, at that moment a local neighbourhood committee working on a shared formulation of a vision together with a large diversity of neighbours, decided to create two types of organizations: PSO and Oostnatie. PSO operated as a civil action committee that would challenge the plans of the City in court, while Oostnatie adopted a more cultural profile and claimed and programmed the area in order to show its relevance for neighbourhood-related activities and preserve the socially innovative potential of the process. This reorganization gave PSO the possibility to further concentrate on its political and activist role and start a legal procedure against the plans of the City. Creating expertise and involvement to gain wide public support for their cause were their main objectives. This specific definition of the group changed again when the planning

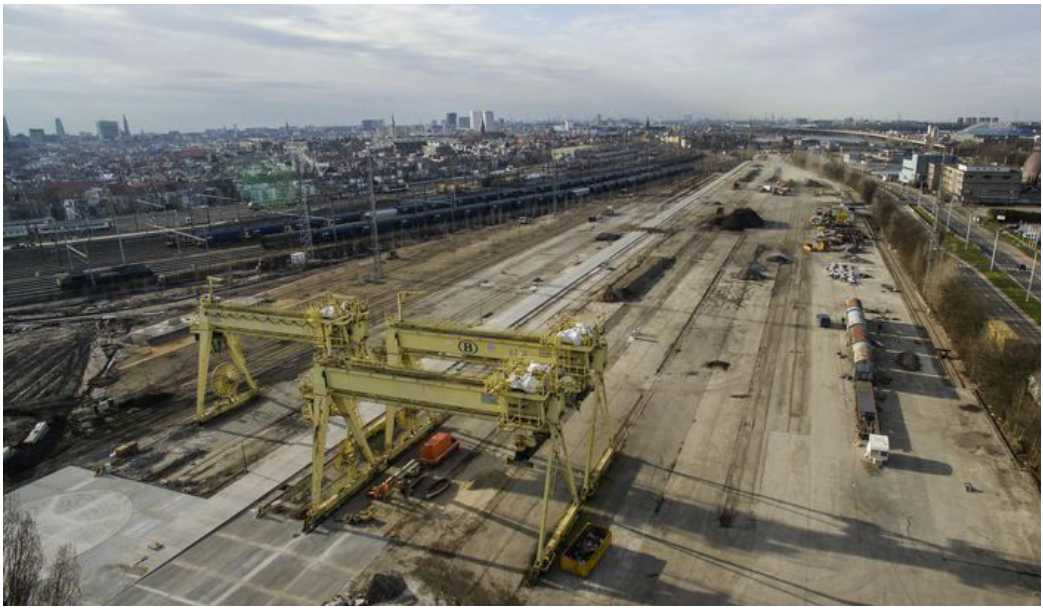

Figure 74: The Eastern Rail Park: an abandoned railway yard in the north of Antwerp

conditions of the Eastern Rail Park changed. Indeed, the City of Antwerp had started an exercise on covering the nearby ring road what would change the whole configuration of the site. In order to influence this broader trajectory, PSO and other affected neighbourhood organizations started the "Schijnverbond", an umbrella organization that pleaded for a full covering of the ring road. This manoeuvre reopened the debates on membership and hierarchy and consequently redefined the new trajectory of collective learning again aiming to open up the process and give room for shared visioning.

What are the collective capabilities of PSO and how are they developed throughout their process of collective learning?

Throughout the trajectory PSO, its goals and organizational structure were constantly reinterpreted. This clearly influenced the collective capabilities of PSO, with a strong focus on adaptation and self-renewal. The committee can be described as a small activist group embedded in a larger network of experts focused on communication, legal and technical expertise. Their capacity to effectively organize actions is mostly based on the direct and close ties between the core members and their ability to show flexibility in changing conditions. This central position for the capability to adapt and self-renew had a direct effect on the collective learning trajectory of PSO. Even when the group wanted to reach a broader and more diverse group of people, as was the case when different groups joined forces in the Schijnverbond, the actual trajectory of collective learning and the development of further capabilities was not open to members outside the core group of the organization. And so, the socially innovative potential of PSO seems to be rather low when taking into account the way the organization is structured. In order to further understand this limitation, we need to look at the other dimensions of our reflexive framework.

How does the configuration of socializing and subjectifying modes of learning contribute to the socially innovative potential of PSO?

Contrary to the Living Streets the context of learning of PSO isn't primarily defined by an over-arching design process of learning, but directly relates to events and positions that are defined in spite of what is happening on a local scale. Collective learning is in the case of PSO not instrumental for processes of institutionalization but directly organizes processes of collective action. This constantly changing context influences the role of learning. Whereas in the case of the Living streets, clearly defined expectations of learning were instrumental in balancing the multiplicity of learning trajectories, the case of PSO shows a clear engagement with mostly subjectifying modes of learning. In the different constellations during its collective learning trajectory, PSO searched for alternatives for ways of working as defined by the government. From the moment more socializing modes of learning were expected, the group changed and re-organized itself, as was the case when a parallel trajectory with Oostnatie was created (an organization that partly works within the borders of the existing institutional order).

This subjectifying way of working can be seen as the result of a more hostile institutional context, but also influences how external actors as planning practitioners can support their collective learning trajectory since the finality of their organization (advocating for an alternative development strategy) isn't widely acknowledged and neither is part of a broader campaign or cooperative system, as was the case for the Living Streets. An engagement with these kinds of initiatives asks for a clearer positioning of external actors, the acknowledgement of the strategic choices behind a certain initiative and relating these choices to the position of their own organization and institutional structures.

How did PSO deal with the different requirements for learning and how did this influence the socially innovative potential of the trajectory?

In the PSO-case, the different requirements for learning are directly related to the strategic choices of the group in reaction to changing conditions of the planning process. The role of perplexity and consultation for instance changed throughout the trajectory. At the start of their existence PSO had a much more inclusive ambition by reaching out to a large diversity of neighbours. From the moment this representative position of PSO was neglected by the City and seen as less relevant in the debate, PSO changed its focus to a more adaptive structure concentrating on technical expertise that would help them to advocate for an alternative future of the site.

Since a cooperation with PSO directly involves the acknowledgement of how they strategically deal with the different requirements for learning (and hence, how they position themselves, what is taken into account, etc.) the different collaborations of PSO with other organizations like Oostnatie and het Schijnverbond were always embedded in a trajectory of collectively defining the structure of learning (taking into account the four requirements for learning). The strategic cooperation with Oostnatie for instance was a clear result of a tactical exercise of organizing a more cooperative and activist trajectory based on a shared understanding of the finality of their actions. In the case of the Living Streets this exercise was already drafted at the beginning of the campaign by the Trojan Lab as the external partner of the local collective learning trajectories. This resulted in a stable environment for learning which diminished the need for strategic action and as such the need to redefine relationships between organizations in a common trajectory of learning. The lack of this stable environment in the case of PSO also limited its potential to organize a more open and diverse collective learning trajectory and consequently influenced the socially innovative capacity of the initiative.

6.5. CONCLUSIONS

Both cases showed clear differences in how collective learning and social innovation can interrelate and how each of the dimensions of our reflexive framework directly influences the socially innovative potential of a local learning trajectory. The collective capabilities of a group may be too weak or restricted to actually organize a collective learning trajectory, the context for learning may be too hostile or undefined which leaves no room for balancing socializing and subjectifying modes of learning, or the way a group deals with its requirements for learning is not acknowledged or not actively taken into account in the further process of institutionalization. In order to understand how these different situations can be avoided the case study research presents a situated and multi-layered understanding of collective learning trajectories. Both cases showed how trajectories of collective learning need to be understood in relation to other collective learning trajectories. In the case of the Living Street Wasstraat, the Trojan Lab directly supported the collective capabilities of the group and influenced the way the Wasstraat balanced socializing and subjectifying modes of learning and how it dealt with the different requirements of learning. In the case of PSO, the creation of new and parallel learning trajectories as Oostnatie and the Schijnverbond were a direct reaction to the unsupportive relation with the dominant learning trajectory of the City. This multi-layered understanding of collective learning is to be seen as an additional element to our reflexive framework that concretizes the institutional embeddedness of collective learning trajectories and the possible supportive role of external actors.

The institutional embeddedness of collective learning trajectories directly relates with whether or not the different dimensions of a collective learning trajectory are acknowledged by existing instruments, procedures and external actors. The following reflexive questions, based on the different dimensions of our framework, can help to assess this institutional position. With regard to the collective capabilities of a group, it can be questioned '*if planning procedures create room for collectives to organize themselves in order to become active partners or if there are specific instruments to strengthen the collective capabilities of a local learning trajectory*'. Balancing socializing and subjectifying modes of learning are based on the reflection '*if the methods used are only applicable for a subjectifying or socializing mode of learning? When are which kind of methods normally used? Do other actors agree with this? Is there the possibility to have an open debate about it?*', whereas engaging with the different requirements of learning starts from the question '*if the requirements of learning for a certain group can be acknowledged. And which underlying facts and values are determined in the underlying differences with other trajectories of learning?*'

The supportive role of external actors seems to enlarge in a multi-layered understanding of collective learning by taking into account the possibility to relate different learning trajectories to one another. Besides taking part in a (pre-existing) collective learning

trajectory, a multi-layered understanding creates the possibility to engage in strategic alliances that can strengthen the collective capabilities of a group and form a coherent basis for balancing socializing and subjectifying ways of learning. This possibility to create a supportive context for collective learning introduces new reflexive questions that can help external agents to better define their role and added value in collective learning trajectories. '*Is there a possibility to set up a certain parallel trajectory to support a group on one of their collective capabilities without the need to get involved in a common learning trajectory? Do I have instruments / procedures that can help me with this? Can I guarantee that the outcome of a collective learning trajectory will be respected? How can I limit the influence of existing institutional frameworks in order to create enough room for manoeuvre for local collective learning trajectories to define their own interpretation of hierarchy and institutionalization?*'

Based on these reflexive questions, that can be seen as new research agendas for researchers and practitioners, it becomes clear how theories from the field of pedagogy and organizational studies can form an interesting perspective for planning practice and research to understand how collective learning trajectories and social innovation interrelate. Although none of the theories directly related to social innovation studies, their situational and multi-layered understanding of collective learning showed how actors can interrelate with trajectories of collective learning, not only through direct involvement but also through creating a supportive context for socially innovative practices. The reflexive framework can give insight in the underlying mechanisms of collective learning and so reduce the imminent threat to misinterpret and co-opt collective learning trajectories and their socially innovative potential. Moreover, a multi-layered understanding of learning and the possibility to relate different learning trajectories to one another based on a clear analysis of their internal requirements for learning and collective capabilities is an interesting tool for engaged actors to enlarge their freedom to act and widen the institutional support for social innovation in planning practice.

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6.7. REFLECTIONS

My work on collective learning was mainly developed in the Participation Lab. At several seminars different theoretical frameworks were introduced, collectively analysed and operationalized as a support for spatial planning practitioners to develop a better understanding of their participatory activities and trajectories. These operationalisations laid the basis of a new initiative, the Participation Studio. These four days learning trajectory for municipalities in Flanders on participation and collective learning is structured around three central questions.

A first question deals with the definition of a group. How and with whom does one start a participatory process? We learn the group to draw a collective territorial mapping and identify collectives that have something in common (a set of shared values, a common interest, a shared field of action). Based on this first configuration we try to assess the capabilities of these collectives and better understand the possible support role of planning practices.

The second question is focussed on how to sustain participatory processes. We try to figure out why a certain conflict arose on a specific moment in time in such a participatory trajectory, or why the output of a participatory moment differs from the expected results. We use the framework presented in this chapter to deconstruct the participatory process, to understand if we can identify collective learning trajectories and to analyse how these trajectories and their possible interrelations influence the participatory capacity of a trajectory.

In a last question we focus on how to start a culture of learning. Based on the two previous questions we learn the participants of the Participation Studio to quickly understand the differences between collective learning trajectories and possible strategic alliances. We try to operationalize the possibilities of transformational cooperation by e.g. understanding if values and facts are shared, if a culture of subjectifying modes of learning already exists and how this influences the possibility to extend existing learning trajectories or combine different parallel learning trajectories based on strategic cooperation.
Starting from a collective learning perspective seems to offer possibilities to introduce a more agonistic perspective towards participatory trajectories, acknowledging differences, the specificity and exclusive character of collective learning trajectories and the limited character of representation.

A reflection on three subquestions related to the concepts of socially innovative action, coproduction & ambiguity

How does a social innovation perspective on collective action relate to the attempt of coproductive planning to mobilize the collective power of citizens?

By focussing on collective learning we dealt with the process of learning and group formation. Collective learning shows how this process is a non-linear, reflective activity that continuously combines moments of action, knowledge creation and decision making.
By adding a situational perspective the paper describes how different learning trajectories can relate to each other as specific, moment-related strategic coalitions and how this influences the organization of the learning trajectory and its conception of inclusion (who belongs to the group, the learning community?).
This situational perspective results in a much more scattered and detailed understanding of 'the collective power of citizens' and urges to take a more reflexive position and attitude in coproductive planning approaches in order to deal with the ever-changing and strategically inspired nature of collective learning, consequently social innovation.
The covering of the ring project can be seen as an interesting example from this perspective. The collective learning trajectory of the action committees was validated by us as a design team by directly involving them in our editorial board and by collectively writing the report that articulated the final output of our research. The interface both strengthened our design proposals and further legitimated the work of the action committees as a structural partner in the design process of covering the ring road of Antwerp. The exclusive nature of this editorial board was legitimized based on its strategic position to strengthen the position of Ringland in the whole research trajectory. This strategic understanding was value based and selective but recognized as being crucial to break the existing configurations of power.
In other projects, as 'We kopen samen den Oudaan' (4.4.7) a more open approach was seen as most strategic. By answering to a public bid through organizing a public campaign, open-source our business model, and fully engage in the public debate, *endeavour* could develop alternative networks of cooperation with a large and diverse group of people and partly trespass the official cooperative structures by challenging the city of Antwerp and inviting them to coproduce alternatives for their closed bidding procedures. We could take this position because we strongly believed that the expert position of *endeavour* was already acknowledged by those in power. This avoided that the initiative was too easily earmarked and pushed aside as an activist initiative and created the possibility to include a much larger audience in the public real-estate debate in Antwerp.

Does a social innovation perspective offer a concrete operational basis for collective action and planning? How does this basis relate to a coproductive planning approach?

By combining different theories the framework for a situational understanding of collective learning defines steps to organize collective learning and, consequently, collective action.

By describing different reflective questions in the conclusion of the chapter we tried to operationalize this approach for planning practitioners who want to engage in a direct or indirect way with collective learning trajectories. These questions clearly highlight the importance to situate processes of learning, and consequently of coproduction within existing learning trajectories in order to highlight the selective nature of existing institutional frameworks.
In the Participation Labs we continued to work on this framework and added other theoretical approaches such as activity theory (Engeström, 2009) to operationalize this reflective way of working and describe in a step-by-step approach which consequences need to be taken into account, which methods can be used to address certain questions within a group, etc.
Especially the idea to start thinking from the perspective of coalitions (as selective trajectories of learning that are defined by the inclusive and exclusive mechanism at play) seems to bring in several new ideas and critical reflections for local administrators to think about more inclusive participatory processes. Taking the idea of clearly defined groups as a condition for learning and action urges for a clear political positioning and triggers a more detailed described understanding of why and with whom a participatory trajectory needs to take place and what kind of consequences this has for other actors.
Although the framework defined in this chapter integrates a political sensitivity to processes of selection and the possibility to strategically cope with these mechanisms, a more structural reflection on the institutional role of planning practice is missing. In chapter 8 I try to develop this further.

How does the solidarity-based ethics of socially innovative action capacitate a more agonistic understanding of coproductive planning approaches?

A crucial element in how I understood collective learning within processes of social innovation is its selective and strategic nature. Based on this understanding I claim that a specific combination of collective learning trajectories creates a certain agonistic field of productive strategic relationships.
When one analyses these existing trajectories it becomes more easy to situate new processes in relation to this existing complexity. In chapter 8 I will discuss how this process of strategic orientation relates to a social justice inspired position as a central element of socially innovative planning practice.

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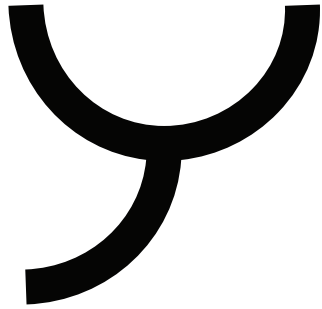

Figure 75: "y" according to *endeavour*

7. AMBIGUITY AS AGENCY

AMBIGUITY AS AGENCY:
CRITICAL OPPORTUNISTS IN THE NEOLIBERAL CITY

Michael Kaethler, Seppe De Blust, Tim Devos

Participatory design and planning processes are subject to co-option by neoliberal forces and post-political logics. This places participatory practitioners, such as co-designers or planners involved in coproduction in a difficult position, whereby not taking a critical stance can lead to legitimising and normalising the dominant logic of the state or elite. However, taking a clear critical stance can result in a loss of access and trust from stakeholders and ultimately result in being side-lined from influential design or planning processes. This article critically adapts Eric M. Eisenberg's theory of strategic ambiguity for the post-political context as a potential discursive resource for practitioners seeking to remain active within influential urban decision-making processes while sustaining a critical position and practice. It opens a discussion with the participatory practitioners *endeavour* on their use of ambiguity and how it negotiates a balance between access, trust and criticality.

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7.1. INTRODUCTION

Employing participation as a strategy for change in the public realm is fraught with constraints and challenges such as ideological hegemonies, fractious political environments, shifting coalitions of power, the pragmatics of time and stakeholder interest or availability Urban space is increasingly contested as it is at the epicentre of the neoliberal project (Brenner and Theodore 2005) where multiple actors and positions clash. How space is produced and designed remains a key battleground for ideological forces which, under neoliberal and post-Fordist conditions, has rendered a convoluted context lacking clear demarcations between previously more clearly defined socio-political pillars of state, civil society and market (Swyngedouw and Moulaert 2010). It follows that working on multi-stakeholder participatory processes is complex and risky to navigate (Huybrechts et al. 2014). Indeed, it is not uncommon to come across the sentiment that urban space is too important to be left to democracy or too urgent (or valuable) to wait for participation.

Despite this contentious context, participatory activities such as Co-Design and co-production (planning) have been increasingly embraced by cities as a purported democratic and bottom-up medium for policy, planning and design (Miessen 2010; Sanders and Stappers, 2008). This raises questions about conceivable risks of such a process under ideological pressures, such as facilitating processes of legitimisation and coercion (Miessen 2010), weakening ideological divides through fragmenting political organisation (von Busch 2012) and providing a false sense of agency (Palmås and von Busch 2015). It is suggested that a critical position towards the use of participatory processes and the wider socio-political environment is imperative to avoid such instrumentalisation (Palmås and von Busch 2015). However, to take such a stance raises its own concerns, where making explicit one's ideological positions, particularly activist or critical ones, can result in a dissolution of trust by stakeholders and a loss of access to decisive socio-spatial processes (Thörn 2008). How can those involved in pursuing participatory planning in the neo-liberal city employ a critical stance while retaining influential strategic relationships and access to shaping policy?

Taking this dilemma as a starting point, this paper critically adapts Eric M. Eisenberg's (1984) concept of strategic ambiguity as a potential discursive resource for those involved in ideologically charged environments—particularly practitioners, such as designers and planners engaging in urban projects. Applying strategic ambiguity has shown a potential to promote unified diversity and an acceptance of multiple divergent perspectives, crucial to participatory processes. The intentional application of ambiguity offers a unique way of discursive positioning. It can cloak certain critical dispositions, in order to retain strategic relationships. However, on the contrary, it can act as a tool for neoliberal opportunism.

This article explores the practices of *endeavour*, a small enterprise of 'spatial professionals' who use a range of participatory methods in urban sites across Flanders for social change.

Endeavour exemplifies the complex dynamics of participatory activities in contested neoliberal contexts and opens up discussions on the role of ambiguity as a potential resource for critical action. To do so, the article applies a co-exploratory dialogical approach between an external researcher and the two founders of *endeavour* who as academic researchers/practitioners are conducting participatory action research from within *endeavour*. The dialogue is captured in three central motifs related to *endeavour*'s practice and discussed through the paper's theoretical frameworks and Eisenberg's principles. The text guides the reader first through the context of the neoliberal city and the challenges for participation followed by an introduction to Eisenberg's Strategic Ambiguity. This is followed by an explanation of the case study and methodology, which leads into a conversation between the external researcher and the action researchers from *endeavour*. The paper concludes with a discussion on the relevance of ambiguity as a strategy for participatory- engaged urban practitioners.

7.2. LITERATURE REVIEW

7.2.1. THE URBAN CONTEXT AND PARTICIPATORY DESIGN IN NEOLIBERALISM

Neoliberalism is often presented as an embodiment of the contemporary urban condition (Brenner and Theodore 2005). The increased mobilisation of capital under global economic flows has triggered cities to pursue local growth models that pivot on local and regional competition (Hall and Hubbard 1996). As a result urban space is mobilised as an asset and arena for market-oriented growth (Sager 2011), including the commodification of social life and the deployment of speculative instruments determined to open up new modes for capitalist profit-expansion (a.o. Brenner, Peck, and Theodore 2010).
Clear divisions between public and private, state and society, are increasingly difficult to determine, characterised by what some claim as features of Post-Fordism (Amin 1994) where shifts in the organisation of production have been followed by corresponding shifts in the organisation of society. The ensuing transformations in the market between state, market economy and civil society has resulted in new relationships, hybrids, coalitions and associations that direct the design, governance and the usage of space (Swyngedouw and Moulaert 2010). Urban initiatives resulting from these coalitions are rarely ever only public or private but constituted of a complex and diverse set of sources, bringing with them a series of incentives, interests and accountabilities (Moulaert et al. 2007). This reconfiguration of spatial forces is driven by flexible, investment-oriented and negotiable (often participatory) planning and design processes (Fainstein 1994), relinquishing design control to end-users (Sanders and Stappers 2008), and increasingly compromised in the hegemonic logic of capitalism (Moulaert, Rodriguez, and Swyngedouw 2003).

New forms of neoliberal governance embrace participatory approaches with the pretext that it 'deepens democracy' (Swyngedouw 2010b) and bequeaths the power to stakeholders,

through provisioning a direct say in decision-making (Sanders and Stappers 2008). However, critical perspectives stress that this expanded engagement with civil society is not fomenting radical change; on the contrary it can be seen as a new form of subordination to management decision-making processes (Tomaney 1994) as part of a broader post-political agenda, whereby critical debate between elite stakeholders, often representing only a small section of the constituency (Segers, Van den Broeck, and Khan 2013), is replaced by a consensually established frame (Swyngedouw 2010a) thereby annulling democracy and evacuating the political (Swyngedouw 2010b). Zizek (2000), along with Rancière (1998) and Mouffe (2005), has been at the fore in enunciating the post-political condition, stressing a predominant form of 'ideological closure' which *'takes the precise form of mental block that prevents us from imagining a fundamental social change, in the interests of an allegedly "realistic" and "mature" attitude'* (323–4, emphasis from the original). It is a foreclosing of the political moment, replaced by social administration.
Participation plays a key role in the post-political agenda. Governmentality, argues Swyngedouw (2010a), is 'structured around dialogical forms of consensus formation, technocratic management and problem-focused governance, sustained by populist discursive regimes.' Palmås and von Busch (2015) warn that codesign can easily be co-opted by post-political governance with participants acting as collaborateurs in collusion with the power and political agendas of the elites thus betraying their initial interests and those of their peers.

Despite assertions that participatory design initiatives challenge power structures and hierarchies' (Sanders and Stappers 2008) reinvigorating and addressing democratic deficiencies (Björgvinsson, Ehn, and Hillgren 2010) through the relinquishing of control to stakeholders and end-users, Co-Design processes and practitioners can unintentionally and unwittingly facilitate processes of legitimisation and coercion (Miessen 2010; Palmås and von Busch 2015). The post-political embraces participation as an administrative tool as opposed to an emancipatory one where alternatives are governed by the implicit acceptance of a post-ideological market driven world (Palmås and von Busch 2015). Palmås and Busch make a strong case when discussing the 'tyrannical' potential inherent in contemporary practices of collaboration. The risk, they claim, is that '*designers run the errands of power, where the participatory design process is used to create coercion and sugar-coat autocratic processes with a shimmer of 'collaboration'*" (p. 237).

Working with such a broad range of interests and stakeholders places co-designers in an uncomfortable position whereby not taking an ideological position may result in furthering the system of domination but on the other hand making ideological assertions (particularly activist-leaning ones) or exploring alternative participatory approaches (such as critical or adversarial design) are unwelcome. This can lead to negative reactions or withdrawal from the process and ultimately result in being sidelined from further participatory initiatives.

7.2.2. STRATEGIC AMBIGUITY AND URBAN PARTICIPATORY PRACTITIONERS

Ambiguity, as the Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy (Spring 2016 Edition) points out, is appropriately ambiguous by definition, composed of two types of meaning: 1) uncertainty or dubiousness, and 2) a sign bearing multiple meanings. Ambiguity, it relates, was avoided by philosophers but embraced as a 'powerful tool' by creative producers such as authors, poets, lyricists and artists. In organisational discourse, it tends to reflect an uncertainty about objectives and goals, it is considered an 'ugly' quality (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003), understood to be a barrier to pursuing collective action (Jarzabkowsi, Sillince & Shaw, 2010) and something to be eschewed in the short deadlines of market-oriented initiatives. Nevertheless, various forms of ambiguity, vagueness, or fuzziness are found across policymaking and it is, out of necessity (to get things done), 'tolerated' (Davenport & Leitch, 2005). In this sense, ambiguity can be understood as 'ugly' but practical.

Many urban participatory practices seek to express the qualities of transparency with the belief that it instils trust and is generally considered a positive value for democratic decision making. Indeed, theories concerned with transparency in communication such as Habermas' communicative rationality (1984) have shaped many approaches to dialogue and inter-personal exchanges in participatory planning processes (Tewdwr-Jones & Allmendinger, 1998). However, applying ambiguity within a process, such as with goals, tools, or partnerships may be another means through which to include otherwise omitted or neglected ideas, individuals or practices. Moreover, there is considerable scope to challenge the assumption that clarity is necessary for collective action. Our focus here is not an attack on clarity but an exploration of the potentiality of ambiguity as outlined by the influential work of Eric M. Eisenberg. Applying ambiguity as a strategy to accomplish goals was a breakthrough idea in the 1980s, challenging transparency and managerialism. Clarity can only be considered a communicative competence when that goal is to be clear. He pulled out four attributes of strategic ambiguity:

I. Promotes Unified Diversity

Eisenberg (1984) contends that '*the problem of divergent goals is not always best resolved through consensus (through socialization or accommodation) but instead through the development of strategies which preserve and manage these differences'*. One way to accomplish this is through a creative use of symbols such as myths, metaphors or stories, which express values but enable multiple interpretations while simultaneously establishing a sense of unity (Eisenberg 1984). This can be found in the creation of vision statements or the development of central metaphors to represent an organisation's activities, which when co-constructed and representing the voice of many, tend to appeal to what Eisenberg (1984) calls, '*a repertoire of increasingly ambiguous legitimations*'. The opposite can also be true, whereby actors might agree on the actions to take in a certain context without sharing similar goals or objectives. In this sense ambiguity can be understood as means through

which multiple divergences and communities can find points of unity and therefore when strategically applied it can mobilise collective action or thinking despite constituents holding different interests, values, and ideas (Jarzabkowsi, Sillince & Shaw, 2010).

II. Preserves Privileged Positions

Ambiguity and vagueness are often used as rhetorical devices to obstruct clear communication with the intention of retaining or preserving power. Eisenberg (1984) looks to Orwell's notion that the power differential in society is maintained through the use of language by elites. This component of Strategic ambiguity has been the subject of much discussion, particularly in relation to the ethics of ambiguity.

Organisation, managerial and macro processes of institutionalisation rely heavily on rhetorical techniques to develop relationships and credibility (Jarzabkowsi, Sillince and Shaw 2010). Building and retaining partnerships and trust requires a careful curation of how one's organisation is perceived within the shifting coalitions of power. Eisenberg's assertions acknowledge the prowess of ambiguity for the preservation of credibility; however, his focus on its service for managerial and organisational contexts neglects to identify it as a strategy for working amidst power structures and challenging them. Strategic ambiguity can be a potential resource for actors with critical approaches to retain actionable positions while preserving a broad spectrum of partnerships and stakeholders.

III. Provides Built-in Deniability

The question of accountability that is often associated with transparency (Kosack and Fung 2014) raises concerns for applying ambiguity in a politically charged context; ambiguity enables deniability. In other words, it can preserve privilege by shielding an elite from accountability. Nevertheless, the contrary is also true, where ambiguity can be used as a cloak for concealing unpopular or stigmatised ideas, opinions and values. This latter interpretation is wholly under-examined in the literature on strategic ambiguity. Strategic ambiguity thus offers a means through which critical (counter hegemonic) ideas can discretely exist within coalitions of power. A lack of clarity on one's position is an enabler for access.
The deniability aspect raises questions on accountability and ultimately ethics. A lack of clarity of one's intention and objectives runs contrary to many assumptions on the ethics of communication, which elevates transparency as the ethical standard. However, Paul and Strbiak interpersonal model (1997) argues that ethical problems arise only when communicative behaviours are incongruent with the communicator's espoused-ethics. Strategic ambiguity provides a strategy that is deniable without dishonesty.

IV. Supports Shifting Interpretations of Goals.

Central or defining metaphors are fundamental in the ways we structure and think about our lives. So too for organisations, argues Eisenberg, where a central metaphor has widespread implications for how it responds to the external environment. This, he stresses, is important for organisations in turbulent environments, where such ambiguity 'can preserve a sense of continuity while allowing for the gradual change in interpretations of time'(233). Ambiguity here can act as a retaining wall against institutional demands and expectations, providing the room to manoeuvre-to experiment with different practices and approaches that best suit a particular spatial engagement.

7.3. CASE STUDY AND METHODOLOGY

7.3.1. CASE STUDY

The case study through which strategic ambiguity is being explored is *endeavour* (which stands for exploring, discovering, undertaking…), a social enterprise involved in participatory urban engagements, based in Antwerp, Belgium. The external researcher, already familiar with the concept of strategic ambiguity, identified a number of these traits when working alongside *endeavour* professionals during a three-month Planning Studio at KU Leuven in 2013. Following their work over the subsequent 3 years, the external researcher approached them with the concept of the article—to explore the strategic use of ambiguity and its potential in *endeavour*'s work. *Endeavour* developed out of a shared interest in the 'social aspects' of urban planning and design. In particular, as a response to the conviction that many forms of participatory engagement have taken on a consensual post-political form, heavily influenced by the communicative planning tradition, reflected in pro-forma and often an instrumentalised form of citizen involvement in plan-making. *Endeavour* has since garnered a considerable reputation and variety of projects across Belgium. *Endeavour* frames its focus and field of action as such on their website:

'Endeavour combines social and spatial expertise to increase the social value of spatial projects. Endeavour firmly believes in a co-productive way of working, engaging in a close dialogue with local stakeholders to develop inclusive spatial strategies, explore future programs for urban (re)development projects, and identify or enlarge opportunities for socio-spatial innovations. Endeavour adopts a research-based approach to develop specific input for design processes, spatial visioning, and supports and develops tailor-made processes which create clarity in complex spatial projects and issues.'

Throughout its four years, *endeavour*'s work has involved supporting small scale initiatives, such as providing conceptual tools to local neighbourhood groups for engaging in large scale urban renewal processes; conducting socio-spatial research projects on 'spatial safety'

commissioned by the city of Antwerp; and recently, leading a movement for collaborative real estate development ('we kopen samen den Oudaan') of historical landmarks. What is particularly unique about *endeavour* is the access it is afforded across a broad spectrum of institutions and coalitions. Through different types of commissioned and pro-active assignments, *endeavour* developed a reputation for their research, which enabled them to obtain a perceived independent position in many of these trajectories. As 'experts' they were afforded 'room to manoeuvre', which they used to search for opportunities to induce change, construct new coalitions, and strategically react to changing conditions in order to integrate social innovative modes of spatial production. This has implied an institutional agility along with a perceived competence and trust from a wide spectrum of actors.

7.3.2. METHODOLOGY

As Bakhtin states, 'All else is means; dialogue is the end. A single voice ends nothing and resolves nothing'. This prompted a pursuit of understanding through dialogue as an exchange where we viewed the other and ourselves as constantly in a state of becoming through (dia) communicative transactions. Discussions on the topic of ambiguity in *endeavour* operations have gone back 4 years and will surely continue for years to come. Bakhtin's dialogical approach, as a methodology, emphasises an exchange as not something outside of the participant's life but as an important moment of engagement—with the power to not only offer new insight but also to change behaviour (interactive and reactive) (Frank 2005).
The multiple dialogues that formed the research for this article, both formal and informal, resulted in considerable doubt, debate, confrontations and change on an individual and collective level. With each new round of dialogue, new insight was gained but not necessarily new cohesion or alignment of perspectives or positions. The writing of the article became an anchor point, a place for these to come together and be negotiated. As such, it is polyphonic, holding multiple voices together although with some discernable differences. To represent these dialogues as a monologue would be to claim a last word on our positions and ideas. As such the discussion chapter represents summaries of several motifs that emerged in the dialogues and the conclusion recognises that instead of concluding it is merely reflecting on the process and its manifestations. This article is a snapshot of a moment of dialogue, a bringing together of three different voices, in what Wertsch (1998), referring to the dialogic describes as, the inherent tension between intersubjectivity and alterity.

7.4. DISCUSSION

The dialogical process pivoted on three returning motifs that emphasised a changing engagement of *endeavour* with Eisenberg's four attributes of strategic ambiguity. They cover considerable amount of discussion and debate and are summarised here by the three authors. A first motif describes the shift from tactical to strategic ambiguity in relation to the politicisation of *endeavour*'s role. A second motif elaborates on strategic ambiguity as a modus operandi and how this influenced *endeavour*'s use of different roles and identities. The third motif relates these elements to post-politics and questions the delusional, opportunistic or activist nature of *endeavour*.

7.4.1. FROM TACTICAL TO STRATEGIC AMBIGUITY

Endeavour's application of ambiguity parallels the politicisation of their objectives. From its inception *endeavour* remained shrouded in ambiguity; the generalities associated with the name *endeavour* along with its mission statement (in the case study above) is a case in point—broad, vague and open to all sorts of interpretations.

Initially, *endeavour*'s field of action was defined as developing an experimental collaboration to explore the possibility of setting-up a practice, which would focus on the 'participatory dimension' of urban planning by taking on a role as an intermediary. *Endeavour* was conceived to create the necessary space to experiment and explore areas of interest of its founders while situating it in the real world to best understand the constraints. There was no concrete direction or particular problematic that *endeavour* wanted to respond to aside from a nebulous notion of 'adding power to local forms of knowledge in the spatial debate'. Ambiguity was used unintentionally at first, as the founders struggled to define an 'agenda' and field of action. Nevertheless, the way in which the founders diverted from defining and prescribing
endeavour's modus operandi before it could be understood and defined, bears a close resemblance to Eisenberg's fourth attribute allowing for a 'shifting interpretation of goals'. In its first major project, *endeavour* was approached by a neighbourhood organisation to assist in developing a stronger negotiating position with formal municipal actors in the light of a large-scale urban redevelopment including a slaughterhouse, dock and quay (77,000 sq metres). *Endeavour* viewed its role as a translator of technical jargon between the city and local community groups, using its knowledge of both sides to bring a common understanding. This was initially perceived as providing tools in a neutral manner to benefit all parties. However, as this developed *endeavour* quickly realised that they were playing a role considerably more significant than translating technical jargon—they had become mediators actively engaging with socio-spatial objectives between groups with disparate agendas and values. *Endeavour* could no longer ignore this politicisation of their role. Subsequently, the role of ambiguity, at first limited to tactically create room to experiment

with participatory tools, gradually transformed into a strategic device. For example, *endeavour* used its ambiguous identity to develop close relationships between antagonistic actors. In its ambiguity it was able to conduct social and spatial mapping exercises with these actors, bringing them togethe
to create shared storylines for the neighbourhood. This 'unified diversity', as outlined in Eisenberg's first attribute enabled new shared narratives and created a discursive legitimisation to re-negotiate the terms, conditions and structures which would accommodate further productive cooperation between the municipality and local groups.

7.4.2. DIFFERENT ROLES, DIFFERENT IDENTITIES

A second motif emphasises that the need to be clear and transparent about objectives can be circumvented through the use of different roles and identities. In a sense, this marks a turning point where ambiguity becomes more than a mere rhetorical device, to frame and reframe one's position (Eisenberg's second attribute), but can be operationalised into the organisation's DNA. *Endeavour* shifts between three identities: 1) researcher/expert on socio spatial phenomena, 2) innovator of approaches and tools for local planning process, and 3) social entrepreneurs developing new products (e.g. a digital platform to support cooperative modes of development) that transcend the one-on-one relationships of a consultancy based practice. These three identities come with their own set of instruments, approaches, roles and types of coalitions and relationships with actors.

On one hand this appears to be a cunning business model of a new start up keen on netting as many contracts as possible by adopting to the fluid needs of the market. On the other, it is justified as a means of employing whatever guise necessary to access critical coalitions to effect change. Both of these different versions mobilise ambiguity in delineating the identity of *endeavour*, as a means to create access to urban planning processes and create different coalitions with involved stakeholders. Strategic ambiguity becomes more than a means to create room for experiments or mobilise collective action through discursive tools.
This motif draws on a more purposeful adaptation of Eisenberg's second and third attribute: legitimising tactical collaborations for critical engagement, whilst maintaining broad coalitions. A strong example being the simultaneous development of a broad coalition of concerned citizens to collectively purchase and co-develop a modernist high-rise, in direct response to the closed bidding procedure by Ag Vespa (the city's real-estate development company), for which *endeavour* was simultaneously conducting commissioned work. Aside from involving citizens and local experts, *endeavour* sought the expertise of speculative real-estate
development actors in developing a business model and establishing the necessary coalitions to prepare a collective bid.
With a multitude of operational identities it became difficult to categorise *endeavour*'s work, to assume their agenda and values; obfuscation through diversification. Ambiguity, in this sense, is a useful tool for *endeavour* to develop a reputation that denies easy classification

such as linking political values to one practice (built-in deniability). However, at the same time, the discussions questioned to which extent the 'slipperiness' of such an approach mirrors managerial approaches where conflicts and political complexity are circumvented. Clearly, this introduces vital ethical dillemas.

7.4.3. DELUSION, OPPORTUNITY OR ACTION?

The third motif is the most problematic. It questions whether *endeavour*'s strategic ambiguity (simultaneously applying Eisenberg's four attributes) is just another version of consensual managerialism and hollowed-out political thinking or if they are attempting to foment genuine contestation and change. Throughout the dialogue, the authors debated the extent to which *endeavour* is an instrument for change or being instrumentalised by, for example, staged 'participatory processes' which conceal neoliberal development agendas. We developed three different characteristics that *endeavour* adopted at different times, the practitioner who is: 1) delusional 2) an opportunist, and 3) an activist. These three, we observed, are not exclusive to *endeavour* but can be identified in a range of practitioners engaged in participatory processes in the urban context.

The first, delusional, is exemplified by the practitioner who is aware of the power structures and ideological constraints but believes that their practices and the employment of participation as a method of engagement are immune to these. The second, opportunist, is aware of the effects of the system they are working within and tries to work with these using them to their advantage. Third is the activist, which openly confronts the system of power. The contestation was centred on where each of us would situate *endeavour*. The *endeavour* founders saw themselves as either split evenly between opportunist and activist or as mainly opportunist with some elements of activism. The external researcher perceived *endeavour* as opportunists who are potentially quite delusional about their opportunism. This remained disputed.

It brought up questions in relation to the reach of prevailing hegemonies and one's agency to change systems of power from within. As practitioners, the founders of *endeavour* remain positive that there are always cracks in systems that allow glimpses of the other side, cracks that are big enough to be exploited and enlarged in order to generate new possibilities for change. In contrast, the external researcher repeatedly questioned whether *endeavour*'s ambiguity is a strategy for resistance or a means to play the spatial professional game while keeping a clear conscience.

Relating this motif back to Eisenberg's four attributes of strategic ambiguity, it seems that the application of the second and third attribute in particular, preserving privileged positions and providing built-in deniability, specifically blurred *endeavour*'s underlying values even for its founders. It was not always clear what was the underlying objective of the different roles, activities and actions of *endeavour*.

This motif reveals an interesting contradiction where the politisation of *endeavour* created the need to engage with strategic ambiguity as part of the organisation's DNA. Nevertheless, this same ambigiuous positioning raises questions about the underlying political and critical nature of this organisation.

7.5. CONCLUSION

A first realisation is that ambiguity is not only difficult to define but also difficult to identify as applied in one's practice. The dialogical method at the centre of this paper pushed the authors to look long and hard at their own values, intentions and practices, in trying to come to terms with the role of ambiguity in *endeavour's* practice. The discussions demonstrated that although ambiguity is applied in multiple ways—developing an identity, negotiating access, or building relationships—it is rarely part of a conscious decision-making process of, 'shall we be more ambiguous?' Instead, it appears to be an unrecognised, yet strategic (or tactical at times) means through which to attain certain objectives. It is applied unevenly and without much intentional thought but nevertheless prevalent across *endeavour's* activities.

Secondly, ambiguity appears to offer two apparatus as a strategy for resistance. First, it is used as a self-protection mechanism to avoid ideologically unwelcome disclosures that can result in a loss of trust with stakeholders and coalitions along with access to influential urban processes. Secondly, it is deployed as a tool to bring previously antagonistic stakeholders together and begin a process of meaningful dialogue by appealing to their broad shared interests. The first position is what provides access for tactical collaboration and the second is a means to challenge existing power structures. *Endeavour* has crafted a variety of techniques related to access and relationships to shroud their ideological intentions, which often run counter to that of commissioning parties. Techniques include the application of a loose central metaphor of 'endeavour', multiple identities vis-à-vis their multiple registers (research, action, ideation) and relying on generic identities, such as expert or researcher. In order to challenge power structures, *endeavour* was able to access key coalitions to challenge prevailing discourses and re-introduce critical perspectives, under the guise of being a 'neutral' researcher/expert, exciting innovator or social entrepreneur. As such, it was stressed by *endeavour* that using ambiguity strategically is important in their practice to retain criticality in the face of market forces and the post-political agenda.

Third, following from the second conclusion, applying ambiguity to the post-political city is an easy fit, perhaps too easy. Despite Eisenberg's strategic ambiguity emerging from 1980s organisation studies and management discourses, it provides a unique lens through which to view practices in today's urban context, in particular regarding socio-spatial participatory engagement. After all, as Swyngedouw (2007) points out, politics in the age of consensus is a form of managerialism, administering pre-ordained outcomes with decision-makers knowing well what should be included and excluded in advance. It follows that applying strategic ambiguity as a tool for countering the post-political, requires turning managerialism's own tools and rhetorical devices—such as strategic ambiguity—on itself, which is either Machievellian or naive.

Indeed, studying the practice of *endeavour* demonstrates that using strategic ambiguity

as a tool for challenging post-political spatial processes walks a fine line between being instrumentalised (delusional), mesmerised by the promises of an inclusive agenda, or being an instrument for change (activist), through direct and confrontational strategies of engagement.

Endeavour attempts to walk that line (how successfully is still up for debate) by becoming a 'critical opportunist', what they see as a middle way, encompassing parts of both delusion and activism. This position recognises their role within an encompassing system but seeks to change it from within, such as a collaborateur, as Palmås and von Busch (2015) describe— acting in collusion with the agendas of the elites. It remains vital to question the degree to which a critical position can effectively challenge power in the light of the risk of being an unwilling accomplice in promoting neoliberal agendas and obscuring autocratic processes. On the contrary, given many of the failures of participatory design initiatives to address democratic deficiencies (Björgvinsson, Ehn, and Hillgren 2010), such an approach, as instrumentaliseable as it may be, could provide new forms of critical action at a strategic institutional level. In this sense, such opportunism is parasitic—feeding off as well as infecting its host, and perhaps provides an alternative strategy for change.

Ultimately, the article challenges participatory urban practitioners to think about the values of clarity, transparency and the use of rhetorical and strategic devices to gain and maintain access to key actors and coalitions. It brings to the fore that the ideological implications of communicative approaches should be critically examined and stresses the predicaments associated with critical urban practices. Given the risk of participatory planners and co-designers in legitimising and normalising systems of domination, it is crucial to further reflect on the means through which to develop mechanisms for resistance and critical engagement. Ambiguity, strategically applied, does appear to offer a potential means to challenge systems of power. However, it comes with considerable risk of instrumentalisation. This begs to question what other strategies are left under-explored to better equip critical practitioners working in such a perilous public realm?

7.6. REFERENCES

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7.7. REFLECTIONS

The writing of this paper and the long discussions with each of the co-authors, had a strong impact on the way I understood the work of *endeavour* and how we at *endeavour* have ositioned ourselves as a practice.
For *endeavour* the discussion on ambiguity coincided with a long trajectory of internal brainstorms on changing our business model, being aware that short running consultancy assignments created a very dependent relationship with contractors and internalized an ambiguous position as a way to keep our options open. As a reaction we started to invest more in research and pro-active projects (as We Kopen Samen den Oudaan[27], Heim[28], Euler[29]), cooperation with civil movements (as het Vliegerplein[30], Vluchtelingenwerk[31] Vlaanderen, Maak de stad[32]) and tried to develop a platform structure that would offer other actors opportunities to start their own *endeavour* (chapter 4). In the slipstream of these discussions we rebranded the organization. We wanted to be clearer and more open to others to join our cause and show what we stand for (Annex 10.4 on the importance of openness). We started to define our way of working (4.2), redrafted our manifesto (4.2) and changed our name from ndvr to *endeavour*.
For me the intensive discussion on the strategic character of ambiguity led to a more conscious understanding of what the restrictions are of being involved in a certain project. No longer convinced of the transformative potential of ambiguity, I started to be more selective and only engaged in projects with an inherent transformative potential (e.g. the receptiveness of a collective of people to learn). This position led to a stronger inclination towards academia and more direct collaborations with civil society or transformational processes within (municipal) administrations[33].

A reflection on three subquestions related to the concepts of socially innovative action, coproduction & ambiguity

Is ambiguity a necessary condition for critical planning agency to define and react to moments of opportunity?

Without doubt ambiguity helps to wriggle away from possible political closure or find new opportunities for action but whether it is transformational in its own sense is doubtful. From this perspective it seems very questionable to understand ambiguity as a necessary condition for critical planning agency under post-politics, on the contrary.
In the conclusion of this PhD thesis we elaborate on the discursive potentiality of ambiguity and propose to replace its transformative potential by a situational understanding of collective learning and the possibility to simultaneously engage in multiple learning trajectories without the need of being ambiguous about one's position.

How does ambiguity relate to the strategy of coproduction and the ethical principles of socially innovative action and is this relation affected by post-political planning conditions?

It could be questioned whether the ethical principles of socially innovative action and its focus on mechanisms of solidarity have been applied in all the projects of *endeavour*. If they were, it would probably be difficult to state that ambiguity is a strategic means to create room for manoeuvre for transformative practice. The process of solidarity and collective problematization requires a certain openness, as materialised in the transformation of *endeavour* into a more open platform as described in chapter 4. As such ambiguity can even be a thread to a more strategic or selective understanding of collective learning as described in our situational understanding of planning practice. A direct application of strategic ambiguity as a transformative tool could impede collective learning trajectories from integrating a political perspective under post-political planning conditions. I will discuss this in the conclusions of this thesis.

Is it possible to overcome the ethical critique on ambiguity as a selective tool and can ambiguity be used in a strategic way?

In the discussion it becomes clear that it is questionable if selectivity is the actual problem of ambiguity. As described in the reflection on chapter 6, selectivity is a necessary condition for collective learning which creates the possibility to clearly relate different learning trajectories and situate socially innovative action within the continuous changing configuration of social groups and governance structures (cfr. Chapter 8).
In this chapter 7 it was mostly the delusional application of ambiguity that formed the core of the discussion. Is *endeavour* aware of the consequences of starting from an ambiguous position? Is it still a conscious decision to be ambiguous? Is there a clear position behind it? Or, does the situation within which *endeavour* is operating actually determine the actions of *endeavour* and does ambiguity then become the ideal unclear and delusional discursive setting for post-political ideological closure? Where one can talk about transformation but changing its underlying mechanisms is not seen as part of the discussion.

7.8. NOTES

27. We kopen samen den oudaan: www.wekopendenoudaan.be

28. Heim: https://www.facebook.com/heimcollectief/

29. Euler: https://projecteuler.net/

30. Het vliegerplein: www.vliegerplein.be

31. Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen: www.vluchtelingenwerk.be

32. Maak de Stad: https://www.facebook.com/maakdestadlezingen/

33. Municipal administrations: We started collective learning trajectories with the city of Mortsel on their densification strategy, with the Flemish Government on sustainable neighbourhoods, with OVAM on brownfield redevelopment, ...

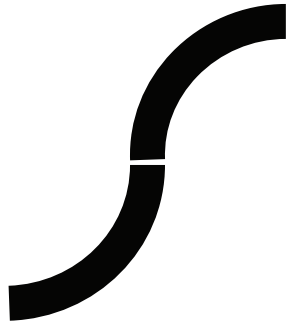

Figure 76: "s" according to *endeavour*

8. SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT ANALYSIS AND PLANNING

FROM STRATEGIC SPATIAL PLANNING TO SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT ANALYSIS AND PLANNING
SOCIAL INNOVATION AS AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL GUIDE.

Seppe De Blust, Pieter Van den Broek & Frank Moulaert

Although strategic spatial planning claims to be transformative, the literature shows that, under post-political conditions, it fails to empower minority voices and contributes to legitimizing existing power coalitions and their territorial practices. The risk of becoming a delusional practice threatens strategic spatial planning in its most fundamental aims, i.e., to facilitate spatial equity. This paper shows how a critical social innovation approach can enrich and transform the theoretical foundations of strategic spatial planning by elaborating on the specific interrelations between social innovation theory, as developed within the territorial development approach, and planning literature. Based on social innovation ontology and its underlying epistemological consequences, the paper explores the institutional embeddedness of planning practice, the dialectic relation between knowledge and action, the inclusion of a radical multi-actor interpretation of planning and the incorporation of socio-environmental justice as four inspirations for such an *Endeavour*. It then defines four reflective responses to guide spatial development analysis and planning as a renewed and social innovation inspired strategic spatial planning practice. The paper concludes with a reflection on how spatial development analysis and planning can keep off the risk of delusional practice under the contemporary post-political conditions.

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8.1. THE DELUSIONS OF STRATEGIC SPATIAL PLANNING

The literature on strategic spatial planning (SSP) occupies a central position in the current planning debate. The idea that strategic agency and collective imagination have the puissance to master the fluid complexity of socio-spatial systems is shared among many different planning authors (a.o. Albrechts & Balducci, 2013; Bertolini, 2010; Friedmann et al., 2004; Healey, 2007, 2009a; Kunzmann, 2013, Albrechts, et al. 2017, Albrechts 2018). According to Albrechts & Balducci (2013 p. 18) for example, SSP can be defined as "*a transformative and integrative public sector-led co-productive socio-spatial process through which visions or frames of reference, justification for coherent actions, and means for implementation are produced that shape, frame and reframe what a place is and what it might become*". Healey (2009a) describes how SSP can be seen as a transformative *Endeavour* of imagination, action and institutionalization and stresses the importance of (collective) agency and its complex institutional embeddedness. "*Spatial strategy making can make a material contribution to the social and environmental well-being of many in an urban area, if approached with a political, economic and cultural imagination that can grasp the relation between people and the governance of place, and understand the formation of publics and the qualities of a polity*" (Healey 2009a, p. 453)

Considering the central position of SSP in planning literature, various authors stress the need for a more grounded and critical understanding of the role and implications of SSP practice under current post-political conditions and question its transformative potential. Some argue that planning practice as a flexible, private investment oriented and negotiable procedure tends to conceive the governance of spatial change and growth as technical management rather than a socio-political challenge (a.o. Swyngedouw et al., 2002; Haughton et al, 2013, Metzger et al., 2014; Gunder, 2010, Van den Broeck, 2008). Others claim that the consensus-based approach of SSP and its tendency to neglect radical or minority voices that contest predominant power relations, directly affects SSP's progressive planning aims (Olesen, 2014; Cerreta et al., 2010; Ploger, 2004; Gualini, 2015; Hillier, 2003). Furthermore, from the perspective of a critical understanding of post-political conditions, planning can even be seen as a possible delusional practice (Mouffe 1999; 2005, Swyngedouw, 2014; Bradley, 2015; Metzger et al., 2014), aware of the power structures and ideological constraints but with the strong belief that its practices are immune to these. This ambiguity urges the planning community to work toward a clearer understanding of the socio-political meaning of SSP (Sager 2013) or what Albrechts (2012, 2014) calls for as a more radical style of SSP, taking into account a clear insight in how SSP integrates and affects specific social groups. Despite different attempts in SSP and institutionalist planning theory (a.o. Albrechts 2018; Albrechts & Balducci, 2013, Healey, 2013, Sorensen, 2018) to engage with a more complex understanding of the dynamics of planning practice and focus attention on the institutional and micropolitical reality of planning processes, a perspective allowing for a deeper reflection on the socio-political position of SSP is still at loss.

In this paper we turn to social innovation (SI) theory and more specifically the territorial development approach (a.o. MacCallum et al. 2009; Moulaert, 2000; Moulaert and Nussbaumer 2005, Moulaert et al. 2010) to scrutinize and renew the transformative potential of SSP (Monno, 2010; Albrechts, 2011; Healey, 2009a; Friedmann, 2011) and its underlying ontological and epistemological principles. From the long experience of the territorial development approach in analyzing and operationalizing the local effects and transformative potential of strategic and regional planning practices, we especially recognise (1) the institutional embeddedness of planning practice, (2) the dialectic relation between knowledge and action, (3) the inclusion of a radical multi-actor interpretation of planning and (4) socio-environmental justice as the subject of strategic spatial planning, as key inputs for the renewal of SSP practice. These are indeed essential to explicate the socio-political character of the ontology underlying SSP and its subsequent epistemological principles for both research and planning practice. In the second section of this paper we develop in more detail the four reflective responses which together provide an answer to the epistemological question 'who is taken into account?' in both the theory, methodology and ethics of a more transformative, socio-environmentally just planning practice. We conclude this paper with some prospective thoughts on how spatial development analysis and planning can overcome the risk of becoming a delusional practice under current post-political conditions.

8.2. INSPIRATIONS FROM SOCIAL INNOVATION LITERATURE FOR SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT ANALYSIS AND PLANNING

SI research has a long tradition in deconstructing local development and community planning practices as trajectories of socio-spatial transformation. More specifically the territorial development approach (a.o. MacCallum et al. 2009; Moulaert, 2000; Moulaert & Nussbaumer 2005, Moulaert et al. 2010), situated in the Euro-Canadian social innovation literature (Moulaert et al., 2017; Moulaert & MacCallum, 2019) directly relates to questioning and redefining the transformative nature of SSP. This approach conceptualizes SI practice as a way to "o*ffer the means not only for meeting needs, but also for political mobilization among vulnerable and marginalized communities. It has an explicit analytical focus on multi-level governance and institutional dynamics, as well as on the strategies and knowledge mobilized by SI actors in particular contexts*" (Moulaert et al., 2017, p. 26). The territorial development approach with its long tradition of critically evaluating SSP and socio-spatial transformation processes has developed on two tracks, a research and an educational track, with significant synergies between both. The "*local development through SI research"* network developed over the last 20 years (Moulaert & Mehmood, 2019; *https://esdp-network.net/*), has shed a new light on SSP in at least four ways: (1) SI research gives a better insight in the institutional embeddedness of SSP, (2) The transdisciplinary background of SI research redefines the relation between knowledge and action as a multifarious dialectical process, (3) The multi-actor approach of SI research reconceptualizes planning as a transformative practice not

restricted to a professional field and (4) SI research manages to overcome the structural tension between a process-oriented and substantial interpretation of socio-environmental justice by approaching it as a subject rather than an object of planning.

8.2.1. THE INSTITUTIONAL EMBEDDEDNESS OF SSP

SI research conceptualizes structural change as part of the dialectics of collective action and changing institutional configurations. "*SI processes are an outcome not only of collective rationality but of institutionalization processes as well*" (Moulaert, 2011, p. 83). The position of (collective) agency and the position of planning professionals both structure, and are structured by, institutional change. This perspective, grounded in a social science-based understanding of reality, broadens the analysis of spatial transformations and consequently the role of planning. SI research deconstructs the socio-political configuration of planning practice in a relational way (Gualini, 2001; Healey, 1999; Moulaert et al., 2016) and takes into account the large diversity of interrelations between planning practice and processes of institutionalization (including its cognitive, social, political, economic, ecological, discursive and symbolic dimensions (Van den Broeck, 2011)).

Planning systems, their instruments and rules are socially constructed (Van den Broeck, 2011; Servillo & Van den Broeck, 2012; Van den Broeck et al., 2013; Van den Broeck & Verachtert, 2016). Planning can be seen as either the replication of a broader hegemonic socio-cultural and technical imaginary (Servillo, 2017; Moulaert et al., 2007) or as supportive to counterhegemonic movements; therefore it is always socio-political in its nature (Sandercock 2003; Friedmann, 1992; Swyngedouw, 2008; Marcuse et al., 2009).
This interpretation of planning practice as socially constructed, combines a sociological institutionalist understanding of institutionalization (Healey, 2006; Sorensen, 2018) with its socio-political implications.
SI research sees planning practice as an inherently institutionalized practice. Planning instruments and visions are defined and constructed by their relevant social groups (transformative or conservative communities of practice, epistemic communities) and as such form specific institutionalized socio-technical ensembles. This process is subject to continuous changes. Actors create, transform and/or reproduce instruments and institutional frames and imbue their interests and values in these instruments and frames (structurally oriented strategic calculation). Institutional frames are selectively open to the actors' strategies and tactics, depending on the specific interests and values inscribed in their social practices (structurally inscribed strategic selection) (Jessop, 2001; Jessop, 2008), but also on the level of structural determination to which actors are subject (Moulaert, Jessop & Mehmood 2016). The creativity and room for manoeuvre of planning practitioners are directly related to this reflexive-recursive dialectical institutional dynamic of strategic selection and calculation within the existing institutional fields. Closely related to, among others, strategic navigation as conceived by Hillier (2011) and the "*unique situatedness of particular instances of practice*" (Healey, 2009a, p. 444), SI research provides the elements to

redefine strategic action as an embedded endeavour; it focusses on institutional difference and selectivity to determine critical room for manoeuvre (Moulaert and Mehmood 2010; Moulaert, 2005). Those actors who through a SI oriented analytical disposition manage to figure out the configuration of power differences and socio-spatial transformation through time, can use this knowledge to define opportunities for social action.

8.2.2. THE DIALECTICS OF KNOWLEDGE AND ACTION

In the few texts where SI scholarship directly positions itself vis-a-vis the theory and practice of SSP it defines the pitfalls of taking "*a too sequential view of the relationships between visioning, action, structure, institutions and discourse*" (Moulaert, 2011, p.102; Moulaert et al. 2016). SI research contrasts this voluntaristic and sequential reading of spatial transformation to a dialectical view on collective action and processes of institutionalization as intrinsically socio-political processes of institutional differentiation and agential selectivity. Through a deep analysis of how a certain initiative or strategy reveals and challenges the opportunities and constraints for a more equitable spatial transformation, one can understand the path dependency of the resources for (institutional) transformation and actively challenge them (Moulaert et al., 2007).

This dialectical approach to knowledge and action needs to be understood within a sociology of knowledge logic (Moulaert & Van Dyck, 2013) and a pragmatist and holist epistemology (Moulaert & Mehmood, 2014). Pragmatism, as a shared epistemological framework for many planning scholars (Healey, 2009b), stresses the need to acknowledge the ontologically close relationship between transformative action and a deeper understanding of possibilities for socio-spatial transformation and operationalizes this relationship with ethical and methodological principles (as a process-oriented understanding of reality, the integration of feedback relationships, a specific focus on mechanisms of micro-politics etc.). Holism (as opposed to a positivist approach to planning) further engages with this multi-layered approach by fully integrating the diversity of social relations while showing their common features and, by highlighting the relevance of outlier conditions and behaviour, creates space for a more bottom-linked approach to SI and planning (a.o. Miciukiewicz et al., 2012). Holism closely relates to a specific view on planning as an action-oriented *Endeavour*, with an explicit normative focus and the recognition that systematically produced knowledge considering the political-institutional context, has value in shaping and evaluating interventions in the practical world (Moulaert & Mehmood, 2014).

Different methodological operationalizations of this holist/pragmatist epistemological framework have been explored in SI literature. One of its most important attempts is the radical engagement of SI research with collective learning. Following a pragmatist vision of the interaction of research and action in which analysis, planning, design and (social) action find each other, collective learning adds an ethically grounded and empowering

perspective to the holist ambition (Moulaert et al., 2013). Collective learning can be seen as a transdisciplinary endeavour where, by looking collectively to causal powers and mechanisms, a diversity of life-worlds and scientific perceptions of problems can be considered (Cassinari & Moulaert, 2014; Moulaert & Nussbaumer, 2005; De Blust et al., 2019). Where SSP and SI share the idea of collective learning, their pedagogical focus remains rather diverse. In SSP there is a focus on the shared endeavour of dealing with irreducible uncertainty (Bertolini, 2010; Schreurs & Kuhk, 2017), whereas the SI approach rests on a more socio-political understanding of (co)learning. SI theory defines collective learning as "*a new form of social learning oriented to the production of knowledge as an 'intellectual common*" (Jessop et al., 2013, p. 119). Collective learning in SI emphasizes the solidarity-based character of learning through processes of sharing and cooperation i to organize the satisfaction of human needs, pursue changes in social relations and increase socio-political capability of a large diversity of often 'voiceless' actors (Moulaert et al., 2005).

In order to structurally ingrain collective learning, planning practice could make use of collective problematization which, in SI studies, is presented as a clear methodological tool to guarantee the inclusive and transdisciplinary character of collective learning processes. Collective problematization requires a specific configuration where all involved actors try to jointly define the research questions, a meta-analytical framework and the action research methods used in the socio-spatial research trajectory as part of an encompassing planning process (Novy, 2012; Miciukiewicz et al, 2012; Khan et al, 2016). The meta-analytical framework or meta-theoretical framework (Moulaert & Mehmood, 2019) portrays the complex world of strategic agents, structures as well institutionalization processes in which planning occurs. When applied in SSP, collective problematization can bridge the theory-practice gap by providing a clear methodological and ethical support to the transformative but institutionally embedded position of planning practitioners (Segers et al., 2016). Collective problematization needs to be seen as a way to trace the transformative potential of a process and to (de)construct (new) socio-technical ensembles, (un)capable of achieving transformation. Rooted in a SI based epistemology, collective problematization acknowledges the direct involvement of a local needs agenda and the possibility for collective empowerment by changing existing social relations.

8.2.3. EMBEDDED IN A RADICAL MULTI-ACTOR APPROACH

Taking SI analysis as a guide to define the room for manoeuvre for a more equitable urban development, implies the recognition of a diverse set of spaces of opportunity to positively reconfigure the underlying development dynamics for the better. SI research rejects the exclusive character of strategy, creativity and action and fully integrates the idea of differential agency by acknowledging multiple ways of knowing (closely related to Sandercock's (2003) epistemology of multiplicity) and imbuing a transdisciplinary approach in its central mechanism of collective problematization and action. The recognition of the power of SI practices must first-of-all be understood as the privileging of mobilization of

selective strategies by all actors, and not only by professional planners (Van den Broeck, 2011).

By approaching planning practice and theory from a SI perspective, transformative action is seen as more than a discursive practice or a technical-rational deployment of instruments. Considering the complex ensemble of actors and instruments and their related reflexive-recursive dialectical institutional dynamics, SI research situates SSP in a much larger field of social action, considering a large variety of intertwined agencies and their value systems, materialities, spatialities and temporalities. As such, a narrow understanding of SSP guided by existing professional code books becomes irrelevant from a SI perspective.

A SI approach on SSP opens up "*potentialities for people-to-come*" (Hillier, 2007, p. 232). A multi-actor approach is not only based on "*the capacity of human beings to create, improve and reshape their places with the aid of knowledge (scientific as well as local), innovation and transformative practices that work with history and overcome history*" (Albrechts, 2011:20) but also integrates the possible multiplicity of engagement and the disruptive and agonistic nature of transformative practice, not excluding struggle when conservative forces rule out progress. A SI approach goes beyond the planning professional ideal of collectively building a shared ontology and fully integrates institutional selectivity, collective action and its interpersonal solidarity and strategic collaboration, as key elements to understand the possibilities for action.

8.2.4. SOCIO-ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AS THE SUBJECT OF PLANNING

Critical literature questions the transformative character of SSP's communicative and collaborative normative aspirations (the inclusiveness of the processes of deliberation) under post-political conditions (a.o. Hillier, 2003; Purcell, 2009; Sager 2013) and makes a plea for considering the distributive outcomes of planning policies. The idea of the Just City (Amin, et al., 2000; Campbell, 2006, 2012; Campbell et al., 2016; Fainstein, 2010; 2016; Massey, 2008) strengthens this argument by emphasizing material redistribution and substantive outcomes (socio-environmental justice) and challenges SSP to better define its socio-political position. Radical SSP tries to incorporate this discussion in its dialogical style by supporting the idea that "*apart from legitimacy stemming from a representative mandate, in radical SSP legitimacy might come from its performance as a creative and innovative force and its capacity to deliver positive outcomes and actually gain benefits. The idea of equity, fairness, social justice has legitimating value because it is universal (see Lyotard, 1992, p.509)*" (Albrechts, 2018, p.36)

In line with Lake (2016), from a SI perspective socio-environmental justice in planning can be understood, as the subject rather than the object of planning. "*The planner placing justice at the center of planning practice in this way participates in a process of situated moral inquiry aimed at formulating a principle of justice to guide a solution rather than importing a universal principle of justice to apply in an act of final moral judgment*" (Lake, 2016, p.1210).

Understanding justice as the subject of planning is in line with the critical pragmatist and holist epistemology of a SI that focusses on the social construction of planning as an institutionally embedded practice and supersedes the process-outcome debate in planning research mentioned earlier (a.o. Healey, 1997; Innes, 1995; Forester, 1999; Amin, 2011; Fainstein, 2016). A SI perspective on planning starts from the idea that understanding the selectivity of institutional mechanisms and as such the definition of socio-environmental justice in a specific context is part and parcel of the actual transformative action that lies at the basis of planning. The questions "*what are we doing?' and 'is it just for us to do so?*" (Lake, 2016, p.1208) cannot be placed in a linear order as they are interrelated, in line with the dialectical approach to knowledge and action of SI research. Through collective learning and more specifically collective problematization, the integration of both process-oriented and substantial (local) conditions of justice in the goals, means and outcomes of planning practice is constantly revisited.

	A STRATEGIC SPATIAL PLANNING PERSPECTIVE	A SOCIAL INNOVATION PERSPECTIVE
Processes of institutionalization	Processes of institutionalization are seen as a potential for transformative change. Institutions are mostly defined by the (shared) complex of values, norms and conceptions that shape meaning and action of a.o. planning practice	Focused on the political implications of processes of institutionalization based on the idea of a socially constructed understanding of planning practice, considering institutional difference and selectivity as a way to define critical room for manoeuvre
Knowledge and action	In SSP theory a pragmatist epistemology plays an important role and introduces collective learning as a way to question and imagine new forms of collective action and shared strategic frameworks. In practice SSP often introduces a sequential view to knowledge and action.	Inspired by holism collective learning has an important political meaning as it emphasizes on the solidarity-based character of learning and directly relates it to increasing the socio-political capability as well as access to resources of a large diversity of unheard actors. Knowledge and action are seen as interdependent and directly related.
Agency and collective action	Based on an inclusive, and as such diverse, understanding of collective action. The collaborative approach of building a shared ontology takes a central position in defining the basis for collective action.	A radical engagement with the diversity of actions based on the mobilization of selective strategies by all. Focussed on the possibility of strategic collaboration between different (groups of) actors as a basis for collective action.
Social justice and planning	A strong focus on democracy and inclusive collaboration as fundamental principles for social justice in planning. In radical SSP a process oriented and substantial understanding of justice are combined as the object of planning (universal principles).	The combination of a substantive and process oriented understanding of social justice through structurally integrating a situational understanding of social justice through processes of collective problematization. Socio-environmental justice as the subject of planning

Table 6: Social innovation & strategic spatial planning: knowledge, agency, socio-environmental justice and institutionalization interconnected (source: authors)

8.3. PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT ANALYSIS AND PLANNING

Each of the four SI inspirations for transformative planning share a dialectical ontological and epistemological understanding of planning practice. We continue our discussion by concentrating on these dialectics to prepare a framework for Spatial Development Analysis and Planning. Figure 77 summarises the different dialectic relations that were highlighted in a SI perspective to strategic spatial planning: (A) the institutional field of planning can only be understood "consisting both of actors and institutions expressed and examined in terms of each other, institutions in terms of action and action in terms of institutions" (Van den Broeck, 2011, p.54), (B) the field of action of future planning activities is defined by the restructured or reproduced dialectical relationships in this same institutional field, (C) through the reflexive, recursive dialectical interaction of actors and institutions, institutional fields are reshaped over time and (D) socio-environmental justice as a subject for planning only has its relevance in relation to this reflexive, recursive dialectical field.

A SI understanding of strategic spatial planning constantly recombines collective imaginaries, scales, time-frames and trajectories of collective action thus covering a wide range of complex dynamics of socially innovative action and how they are, but also could become, institutionally embedded and ethically justified. To overcome delusional practice this dialectical understanding of transformation needs to integrate continuous critical evaluation and consecutive revision of the socially constructed moments of apprehension of reality.

Based on this multifarious dialectical ontological understanding of planning practice, we now introduce Spatial Development Analysis and Planning as rooted in a transdisciplinary and reflexive epistemology, that directly responds to the different relations behind a SI perspective to SSP. Spatial Development Analysis and Planning tries to operationalize transformative planning by defining specific reflective responses (Figure 78) to each of the dialectic relations that challenge planning practice. Each of these reflective responses supports planning practices in their processes of decision and strategy making and to safeguard their transformative character. The four reflective responses that operationalize the dialectical relations behind planning practice include: (A') defining power differences through tracing the socio-technical ensembles at play, (B') defining strategic alliances as a constitutive element for action and plan-making, (C') combining collective problematization and strategic action as parallel lines of action and (D') understanding the ethical, organizational and socio-political consequences of a reflexive positionality.

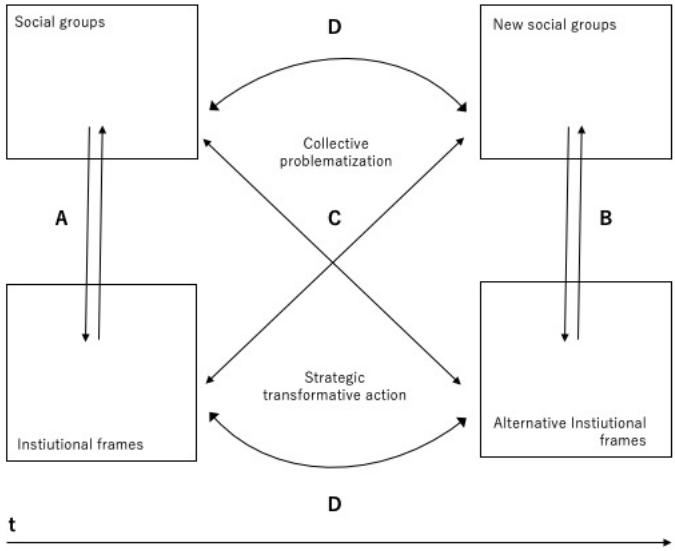

Figure 77: Four dialectic relations in a social innovation based strategic spatial planning approach (source: authors' further elaboration of Van den Broeck 2011)

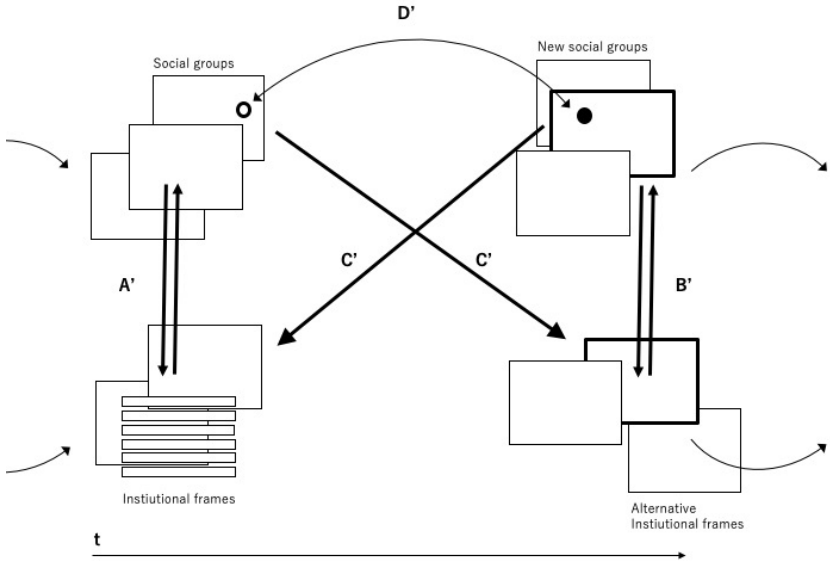

Figure 78: The four critical responses of Spatial Development Analysis and Planning (source: authors' further elaboration of Van den Broeck 2011)

8.3.1. A': DEFINING POWER DIFFERENCES THROUGH TRACING THE SOCIO-TECHNICAL ENSEMBLES AT PLAY

Earlier experiences, existing expectations, social networks and the affinity with certain planning instruments set the tone for a specific reading of reality (influenced by the documents one reads, the data one uses for research, the project definition or invitation which triggered one's engagement, etc.). Consequently, each moment of engagement in a planning process is a moment of orientation which, when not lived in a consequent and critical way, holds the risk of being lost in the complexity of institutional frames and might bring about future delusional practice.

Spatial Development Analysis and Planning tries to materialise these critical moments by (co)constructing a structural and institutional understanding based on specific key-issues with possible conflicts over land and its uses and highlight the socio-environmental questions that are at stake in a specific place on a specific moment in time (*Who's gaining and losing from the development of land? Which dimensions of land are crucial in these conflicts over socio-environmental justice? What instruments and institutional mechanisms are key in sustaining these situations of inequality, …?*). Using socio-environmental justice as a first ethical perspective to problematize the socio-political understanding of reality, keeps planning actors away from a voluntarist position that would take certain configurations too easily for granted, thus overlooking the questions and actors that are usually neglected in mainstream SSP procedures. Taking processes of institutionalization directly into account in collective problematization, protects actors from the "*strong confidence (of the planning discipline) in visioning and the analysis of the conditions under which visions would materialize*" (Moulaert, 2011, p.83) with the risk of neglecting the influence of path dependency and the institutional unwillingness to change.

By conducting interviews, mapping actors (including networks and communities of practice), analyzing institutional frames and their spatial structures, taking into account path dependency and opportunities for path paving and the dialectically local and global nature of practices of justice, processes of injustice and opportunities for greater spatial equity are gradually revealed. When new actors become engaged in a planning process or when first elements of institutionalization emerge (a collective imagination, an agreement, a change in the legal framework, the seeds of new partnerships) new mechanisms of social injustice can emerge can rise and will need to be analysed.

8.3.2. B': DEFINING STRATEGIC ALLIANCES AS A CONSTITUTIVE ELEMENT FOR ACTION AND PLAN-MAKING

Spatial Development Analysis and Planning work through a process-oriented approach based on the idea of a multiplicity of strategic relations and socio-institutional processes that influence institutional changes. Consequently, strategy-making engages with multiple and unexpected ways of transformation and cannot be narrowed down to making strategic plans per se (Healey, 2013). The expected outcomes of Spatial Development Analysis and Planning are pursued through the mediation of institutional changes and the strategic practices of other actors; they "d*o not constitute definitive conclusions but, reflecting their contingent, provisional and experimental character, establish new conditions for ongoing action guided by a reflexively evolving conception of justice tested through continuous experimentation"* (Joas, 1993; Lake, 2006; Lake, 2016, p. 1213).

The selection of strategies at the light of institutional insights revolutionises the concept of strategy and goes beyond the often-aimed idea of collective visioning, both present in SSP and SI studies. The planners are neither the key actors, nor the driving force of strategic thinking but are part of a larger gradually evolving strategic alliance and therefore supportive or in lack of support to the collective effort of others. Defining strategies from this perspective becomes first of all a matter of situating practices in direct relation to shared concerns and (future) actions of others. Moments of collective reflection or the presentation of new socio-spatial imaginations and visions are integral parts of the Spatial Development Analysis and Planning endeavour. Its value depends on its ability to reveal new institutional mechanisms or support strategic alliances in their transformative ambition. This socially innovative understanding of the institutionalization of strategic action strengthens the position taken in the first reflective response of 'defining power differences through tracing the socio-technical ensembles at play' as it urges to take position and acknowledges the importance of changing institutional frames and social relations to increase the socially innovative potential of a strategy.

8.3.3. C': COMBINING COLLECTIVE PROBLEMATIZATION AND STRATEGIC ACTION

The idea that analysis, planning, design, co-decision, action and re-institutionalization reinforce each other in an iterative process of gradually reflecting on solutions, projects and new ways of problematizing the existing situation, implies the use and development of specific methods and tools. Based in a socially constructive understanding of reality, new possibilities for collective and transformative action come to be defined through processes of collective leaning, questioning facts and values and co-constructing an institutional understanding of socio-environmental justice (Moulaert & MacCallum, 2019, Chapter 6). To fully acknowledge this socially constructed understanding of action and plan-making, the field of action of Spatial Development Analysis and Planning cannot be reduced to either processes of collective problematization (aiming for inclusion, stimulating solidarity, assessing assets and needs, etc.) or the initiation of strategic action (building power, appropriating resources, changing legislative frameworks etc.) by professional practice. It is the combination of both lines of action by a more inclusive partnership of agents that will successfully transfer the complexity of the process-oriented approach developed in the previous steps.

The gradual collective understanding of assets and needs by evolving strategic coalitions also unravels the mechanisms of inequality that can be at work in a specific institutional field. Through continuous shared reflection, critical moments and cracks in planning processes may reveal opportunities for strategic coalitions to navigate the complex reality of socio-spatial transformation. Institutional processes of plan-making as a way to contain power structures and the design of planning instruments and transformative action valorise the position of the planning practitioner as a creative actor. Combining both lines of action multiplies the strategic possibilities for Spatial Development Analysis and Planning and creates a productive and operational field of tension (between creative freedom and continuous and shared reflection) that can keep planning from becoming a delusional practice. By valorising individual creativity in alliances, an in depth and practical understanding of reality can strengthen the socio-political positioning of planning practice (Campbell, 2006).

8.3.4. D': UNDERSTANDING THE ETHICAL, ORGANIZATIONAL AND SOCIO-POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES OF A REFLEXIVE POSITIONALITY

Combining different roles raises strong ethical dilemmas. By engaging with multiple collective learning trajectories (De Blust et al., 2019) reflexive positionality ameliorates it potential to deal with the possible contradictions between learning trajectories, the manoeuvring space of critical planning practice and how these are related to the (collective) capacities, values and skills of (a group of) critical planning practitioners. The operationalization of this reflexive positionality in both its ethical, organizational and socio-

political dimensions, is a fourth reflective response of Spatial Development Analysis and Planning. Three of its dimensions should be stressed.

Firstly, the ethical dimension of a reflexive positionality in planning can be based on social innovation ethics and the idea that planning is a trans- and interdisciplinary *Endeavour* in need for clear rules to deal with diversified social complexity. In SI studies solidarity, mutual respect, democratic communication, collective self-evaluation and co-production in agency, institution building, and governance practice are key (Moulaert & Mehmood, 2018; Moulaert & MacCallum, 2019) and directly relate to the critical response of combining collective problematization and strategic action.
Secondly, the organizational dimension of positionality is based on the idea that the iterative process of gradually building ideas for developing more concrete solutions, projects and new ways of problematizing the existing situation, requires a wide freedom to act. This freedom is not without obligation but comes with the planner's engagement in multiple collective learning trajectories. Often planners are, beside their engagement with local coalitions, also part of specific organizational structures (a planning administration, a private planning office, an educational or research context, …). Each of these structures has distinct decision-making mechanisms, specific (collective) capabilities, organizational identities and a specific institutional position. In order to preserve or widen the space for manoeuvre of Spatial Development Analysis and Planning it is important that also these organizational elements are taken into account when engaging in trajectories of collective learning.
Thirdly, reflexive positionality has a socio-political dimension. Planning practitioners dedicated to setting out trajectories for spatial transformation need to constantly question whose needs, assets, interests and associations, spatialities, temporalities, projects, plans etc. are included, excluded, privileged or undermined. This process relates to the previously described reflective response of Spatial Development Analysis and Planning to 'define power differences through tracing the socio-technical ensembles at play'. Permanent monitoring and evaluation, through e.g. processes of collective problematization, create the possibility to clearly understand the socio-political consequences of planning and define these as non-negligible. This process relates to the previously described reflective response of 'defining strategic alliances as a constitutive element for action and plan-making'.

8.4. CONCLUSION

In this paper we revisited the theoretical foundations of strategic spatial planning by elaborating on the specific interrelations between the territorial development approach in social innovation theory and planning literature. Based on a social innovation ontology and its underlying dialectical relations, the paper explores the institutional embeddedness of planning practice, the dialectic relation between knowledge and action, the inclusion of a radical multi-actor interpretation of planning and the incorporation of socio-environmental justice as four inspirations for such an endeavour. We conclude that SI theory has a lot to offer in developing Spatial Development Analysis and Planning as a more socio-politically inspired and reflexive strategic spatial planning.
The four reflective responses that were proposed, responding to these four inspirations, substantiate the necessary structural transformation that defines Spatial Development Analysis and Planning. Both on an ontological (the immanence of equality and justice and the social construction of, among others, planning instruments within a complex world and its institutions) and an epistemological level (the institutional embeddedness of spatial planning, a redefined relation between knowledge and action as a dialectical process and a radical multi-actor perspective on planning and its enlarged field of action), Spatial Development Analysis and Planning challenges SSP and introduces some new conditions for transformative planning.

With respect to socio-environmental justice, the four reflective responses of Spatial Development Analysis and Planning integrate justice as a subject rather than an object of planning and use collective problematization as a way to structurally embed this process-oriented approach. This holistic and pragmatic understanding of Spatial Development Analysis and Planning enables to integrate a more agonistic socio-political positioning in planning practice by combining a collaborative interpretation of justice (coproductive participation) with a substantial interpretation that focusses on the material redistribution of outcomes as an important denominator for the strategic understanding of planning practice. The proposed framework clearly questions a voluntaristic, planning centred reading of socio-spatial transformation. The integration of collective problematization as a separate yet connected track is a clear answer to the possibility of delusional planning practice under post-political conditions, without neglecting the creative and transformative potential of planning practice. In order to combine both lines of action and be critically engaged with a process-oriented reading of institutionalization as a basis for transformative action, a clear understanding of a reflexive positionality (and its ethical, organizational and socio-political dimensions) is necessary. This active interpretation of positionality as a critical element of SI based planning and research brings in new challenges for both private and public planning practices and imbues a socio-political reading of reality in planning practice.

In order to advance Spatial Development Analysis and Planning as an alternative framework it would be helpful to test and critically evaluate its underlying assumptions. By defining four reflective responses to each of the dialectic relations that challenge planning practice (defining power differences, defining strategic alliances, combining collective problematization and strategic action and understanding the ethical, organizational and socio-political consequences of a reflexive positionality) we tried to propose some clear and specific points of departure for this collective endeavour. The proposed combination of four reflective responses can initiate a pedagogical framework for spatial planning education and studio work or a starting point for positioning and evaluating the underlying principles of planning practice.

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8.6. REFLECTIONS

This last research paper was written as a reflection on the planning process in Aglasun and the planning studio. In the first project the need to define and describe a customized epistemology found its origin in experiencing the implications of collaborating within a group of planning practitioners without being able to share ontological and epistemological presumptions. Teaching the planning studio for a couple of years made me aware how certain methods and questions when structured in a clear way highly influenced the way I practiced planning and could be inspiring to others.
By describing my own epistemological framework, I expected to better define my own interpretation of certain concepts that are shared in planning practice but not always understood in a similar way (as collective imagination or transdisciplinary research, ...). In the case of Aglasun for instance it became clear how defining the type of output of the project or how organizing collective learning trajectories was not always based on a clear epistemological position, what might possibly lead to situations of misinterpretation or neglection of certain consequences of research decisions.

The different elements of, and critical responses to the Spatial Development Analysis and Planning framework strengthened the work of *endeavour* by supporting our efforts to organize us as a flexible and responsive collective (based on certain rules and organisational structures as described in chapter 4, 4.2) and taught us how to better integrate processes of collective problematization in our work as consultants.
In both our work on the co-creative process related to covering the Ring Road and on alternative development mechanisms such as Heim we established long lasting relationships with civil action committees (Ringland), knowledge networks (UGent, KULeuven) or created new organizational structures (the collective behind 'We kopen samen den Oudaan', the foundation behind Heim) that made it possible to continuously and critically reflect on our work as consultants and better understand the possibilities and effects for strategic action.

A reflection on four subquestions related to the concepts of socially innovative action, coproduction & ambiguity

Can a socially innovative approach unfold the relation between collective action and moments of opportunity under post-political planning conditions?

It becomes clear that understanding collective action and moments of opportunity as mutually related concepts must be situated in a dialectic understanding of reality. A Socially Innovative approach shows how through action, moments of opportunity can be identified. Understanding the possibility of collective action under post-politics starts from taking position in relation to existing exclusion mechanisms and the social groups they involve.

Collective action must be situated in relation to the reflexive, recursive dialectical interaction of actors and institutions that can be defined and understood through a continuous process of collective problematization.
A SI approach forces one to work through action to obtain a detailed understanding of reality, not limited to a specific professional position. This specific approach requires the attitude to deal with reflexive processes, elaborated earlier as the four reflective responses of transformative planning (see4.3).

Does a social innovation perspective offer a concrete operational basis for collective action and planning? How does this basis relate to a coproductive planning approach?

Chapter 8 adds a critical framework to the different operational steps of collective learning as described in chapter 6. This framework is operationalized in four reflective responses that integrate an institutional and political awareness in planning practice.
Starting from these reflective responses the meaning of coproduction will change since it is not limited anymore to the professional field of planning but highlights the importance of understanding the own organizational structure as an important denominator to be part of socially innovative action to, for example create strategic alliances.

In projects as the Dam and Muide Meulestede these limits became real. In both neighbourhood redevelopment processes the transformative capacity of *endeavour* and more specifically the transformative capacity of planning instruments (e.g. spatial analysis, debate, future visions) was limited. Not because of the absence of a local coalition or a limited understanding of institutionalised power coalitions but because of the instrumental role of these planning instruments in the hegemonic position of neoliberal neighbourhood redevelopment mechanisms reinforced by a local government that holds a very ambiguous position vis à vis sustainable spatial planning. In both the Dam and Muide Meulestede the planning debate got easily held hostage by institutionalized practices of structuring a planning process from a market-based perspective (a structured understanding of participatory moments, an evaluation of output based on predictability and investment opportunities, a pressure for actions rather than reflection, working towards a consensus-based planning framework, …). This forced to alternatively work with direct collective action as a way to advocate for a more just planning practice.
Endeavour tried to support these collective actions (legal protest, the launch of alternative plans…) in helping the inhabitants and neighbourhood associations with critical analysis, strengthening their networks or further developing their communicative tools. Based on this understanding it can be questioned if (1) working within the institutional field of planning (in direct cooperation with the planning department and the responsible alderman) was the most effective way to support critical contestation in neighbourhood redevelopment, or even worse, if (2) working from a planning perspective worked contradictory by further supporting a specific way of thinking, a specific definition of democracy, governance and as such a specific position of certain institutional framework. In these cases, it might have been

better to stick to a public pedagogical understanding, or in the words of Biesta (2012, p. 695) to: *"prepare the terrain for political action by opening up interpretations of and connections to places that would otherwise be missed, or, in other words, by preparing and reshuffling the embodied intersubjectivities that are the starting point of Mouffean politics"*.

What is the relation of social innovation and moments of opportunity? How does a socially innovative approach reinterpret and strengthen a political understanding of moments of opportunity?

A reflexive- recursive dialectical understanding of processes of institutionalisation must be understood in relation to social groups and (planning) instruments. The understanding of these different configurations and their relation to actual conditions of action makes clear which kind of transformations can be expected or which instruments and actions support or limit specific coalitions.
As such, a political understanding starts from taking a position based on a first interpretation of the concerned institutional configuration. Then re-evaluation of socio-spatial configurations can take place later on within a process of collective problematization. Understanding this field of action automatically defines a certain moment of opportunity and a related room for manoeuvre. Without taking position this room for manoeuvre becomes impossible to define.

By working closely together with civil action committees we further developed a culture of positioning ourselves in a reflexive way (as defining one's position and related organisational structure in interrelation with a reflective process of critically understanding whose needs, assets, spatialities, temporalities, projects, plans etc. are included, excluded, privileged, undermined, or involved in transformative actions). We tried to understand how we could organize our office in such a way that our political position was less confined by the room for manoeuvre foreseen in commissioned projects. In chapter 6-8 I define different ways to develop this reflexive positionality as a critical spatial (planning) actor to create room for manoeuvre for social innovation-based planning and research, e.g. by staging reflexive questions, by structurally integrating collective problematization in the definition of positionality, by critically reflecting on the role of ambiguity in planning practice.
A reflexive positionality further helps to articulate the organizational, ethical and political implications of planning. As such it embeds the rather loose ethical principles in planning as e.g. being prepared to stand up for values they care about, acting with honesty and integrity (Healey, 2010) and the importance of distributional fairness, recognition of and respect for others (Healey, 2012) in a more structural ontological and epistemological framework.

How does the solidarity-based ethics of socially innovative action capacitate a more agonistic understanding of coproductive planning approaches?

A more agonistic understanding of coproduction becomes possible when there is a clear

relation between rethinking politics and changing configurations of collaboration. A dialectic understanding of institutionalisation confirms this interrelation.
The organisation of solidarity-based relations through a process of collective learning is a direct consequence of contextual configurations. Collective action based on solidarity, reacts to other configurations of power and in the meantime also changes and reinterprets them. This situational and multiple understanding of collective learning trajectories can be seen as a basis to create temporary moments of agonistic debate. Different strategic alliances can agree on a temporary basis to acknowledge certain facts and values as shared and on this basis successfully rethink existing mechanisms of exclusion.
In order to acknowledge this important agonistic mechanism of social innovation, coproductive approaches need to clearly understand how specific processes of collaboration relate to other processes of collective action. That means recognizing how other processes create or reduce possibilities for change, and knowing which specific interrelations need to be rethought in order to strengthen the possibilities for strategic alliances based on shared or supportive trajectories of collective learning.

8.7. REFERENCES

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Figure 79: "e" according to *endeavour*

9. CONCLUSIONS

In fact, being fundamentally political, planning is one of the three professions that Freud characterised as impossible. That is, professions in which you can be sure to achieve unsatisfactory results (the other two being education and psycho-analysis).

(Westlin, 2014, p. 139)

In the varied topography of professional practice, there is a high, hard ground where practitioners can make effective use of research-based theory and technique, and there is a swampy lowland where situations are confusing "messes" incapable of technical solution. The difficulty is that the problems of the high ground, however great their technical interest, are often relatively unimportant to clients or to the larger society, while in the swamp are the problems of greatest concern.

(Schön, 1991, p. 42)

9.1. AN OVERVIEW

In this study metareflexive action research is used as a main strategy to construct an in-depth understanding of the room for manoeuvre of spatial planning professionals for transformative action. The research, collaboration and planning activities of a new planning office *endeavour* provided the environment for action research. A strategy of active engagement in planning practice, education and the professional planning debate in Flanders and a continuous attempt to organise *endeavour* in the best possible way to react to the post-political condition of planning practice and to cope with the risk of a delusional planning practice unaware of ideological closure, was very valuable in this respect.
The research is an epistemological exercise that tries to combine (planning) theoretical constructions and practical experiences. Gradually, this has led to a redefinition of transformative planning, both in the work of *endeavour* and in how I epistemologically defined planning practice.
In four research chapters I described how five years of metareflexive action research reformed my understanding of the room for manoeuvre of socially innovative planning practice under post-political planning conditions. Different theoretical frameworks that were introduced and/or conceptualized changed my first theoretical interpretation of transformative planning (see chapter 2). Also the methodology of metareflexive action research evolved throughout the research. It became clear that metareflexive action research can be an interesting model for socially innovative research as well as for planning practice. A reformulation of transformative planning, based on empirical data, sheds a new light on the room for manoeuvre for transformative planning under post-political conditions.

9.2. A THEORETICAL REFLECTION ON THE ROOM FOR MANOEUVRE FOR TRANSFORMATIVE PLANNING PRACTICE

9.2.1. CHANGING THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Three dimensions initially played a key role in understanding the room for manoeuvre for transformative planning practice under post-political planning conditions (Figure 80).
A first dimension - the strategic possibility of ambiguity- starts from the idea that ambiguity creates the opportunity for planning agents to engage with collectives outside the institutional planning process. The opportunity to engage with both institutional and external processes of collective action, results in a diverse field of action that allows for a more agonistic understanding of democracy. A second dimension is social innovation theory. Social innovation theory clarifies an institutional understanding of transformative planning and operationalizes the idea of moments of opportunity as a key concept for the room for manoeuvre for transformative planning. The last dimension is coproduction. Coproduction strengthens the inclusive understanding of collective action as a space of deliberative opportunities and highlights the political understanding of transformative planning as a means to redefine governance structures and the mission of the public sector. By engaging with the concept of coproduction, transformative planning can be understood in a longer planning theoretical tradition providing room for a more political collaborative planning approach under post-political conditions.

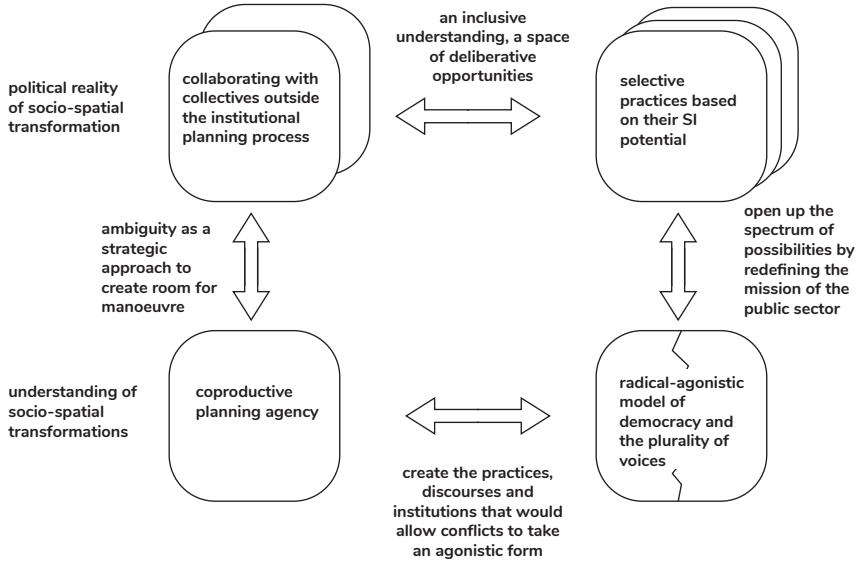

Figure 80: An initial understanding of transformative planning

Based on action research the initial theoretical framework changed (Figure 81). The four reflective responses (see chapter 8) form the core of a reflexive understanding of transformative planning practice. Their interrelation is crucial to avoid delusional planning practice.
The agonistic understanding of democracy as a trigger to redefine transformative planning is preserved, but the ambiguous relation between planning agency and collective action is replaced by the strategic selection of multiple, interrelated trajectories of collective learning. The selection is based on a critical analysis of power differences of the socio-technical ensembles at play. Transformative planning can be seen as the strategic approach deployed by these specific combinations of collective learning trajectories. In order to deal with the socially constructed but selective nature of processes of institutionalization, collective problematization and strategic action are, on the level of collective action, parallel lines of action. On the level of the planning agent, an engagement in different trajectories of collective learning implies a clear understanding of the ethical, organizational and socio-political consequences of a reflexive positionality.
This redefined theoretical framework is based on a reinterpretation of three underlying dimensions of transformative planning: social innovation theory, coproduction and ambiguity. In Table 7, the rationale of these dimensions is given for the 'initial theoretical understanding' and the 'new theoretical framework' for transformative planning.

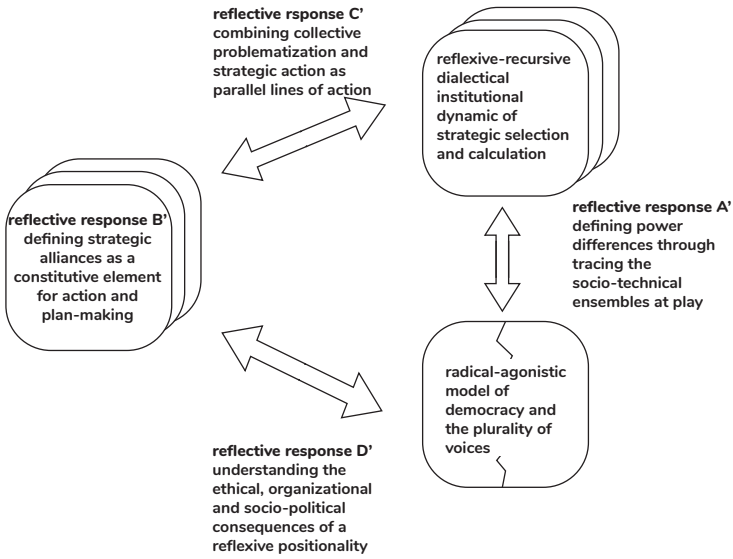

Figure 81: A new framework for transformative planning practice

	INITIAL THEORETICAL UNDER-STANDING	NEW THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR TRANSFORMATIVE PLANNING
Social Innovation theory	In the beginning of my research, social Innovation theory was used as a social science based understanding of processes of institutionalization that create a framework to operationalize moments of opportunity emerging from clearly identified needs.	A deeper understanding of the consequences of Social Innovation theory implies a dialectic and multiplicity approach to processes of social transformation and institutionalisation. Within such a framework planning loses its privileged position.
Coproduction	Coproduction was seen as a planning theoretical concept that integrates the needs- and solidarity-based approach of social innovation theory with a clear political understanding of planning as an agonistic *Endeavour*.	In order to go beyond a planning centred approach and fully relate with the dialectic ontology of Social Innovation theory I described four reflective responses that would give a planning practitioner the tools to avoid a planning centred, and possible delusional, position and help to identify the possibilities for action.
Ambiguity	From the beginning of my research trajectory ambiguity was seen as a way to create the wriggle room for transformative planning practice to be part of a multiplicity of social groups and their related (policy) trajectories	When we acknowledge that defining possibilities for action needs to be based on a solidarity-based process of collective problematization, then ambiguity can only have discursive potential (as a way to engage with diversity).

Table 7: New theoretical framework for transformative planning

9.2.2. A SOCIAL INNOVATION BASED UNDERSTANDING

Socially innovative research not only helps to better situate transformative practice in its institutional fields, it completely revisits the meaning of transformative planning as well. Social innovation research starts from a dialectic understanding of planning. Moments of opportunity are always related to a collective reflexive process of understanding the opportunities and consequences of institutional activities. As a consequence, collective action must be understood in terms of moments of opportunity and vice versa.
In order to operationalize this dialectic process and the close relation between knowledge & action, planning trajectories must be understood as situational and multi-layered constellations of collective learning. A collective learning trajectory is *"the recurrent process during which a (changing) group of people actively and collectively try to (re)define and test how, why, what and in relation to whom they are organizing themselves"* (De Blust et al., 2019, p. 22). Trajectories of collective learning and their institutional embeddedness must be understood in relation to other collective learning trajectories, *"whether or not the different dimensions of a collective learning trajectory are acknowledged by existing instruments,*

procedures or external actors" (De Blust et al., 2019, p. 26). The strong dialectic and contextual ontological basis of planning implies that planning cannot be understood as a distinct field of action. The transformative capacity of planning however is fully defined by situating practices in direct relation to shared concerns and (future) actions of others and is not limited by activities of planning per se. This relational and multi-layered understanding of planning changes its definition of strategy; defining strategies becomes first of all a matter of situating practices in direct relation to shared concerns and (future) actions of others (De Blust, Van den Broeck & Moulaert, 2019).
Political and institutional thinking are embedded in planning practice. When the configuration of power differences and socio-spatial transformation through time are understood well, and the interdependencies between different actors and the multiple ways to intervene are identified, possibilities for social action can be identified. A specific planning approach is not per se the starting point for socio-spatial transformation, it is one of the possible strategic reactions following a precise understanding of mechanisms of inequality associated with a specific combination of social groups and institutional practices, i.e., the institutional ensembles.

9.2.3. REDESCRIBING COPRODUCTION

The fundamental shift in thinking about planning as a possible strategic tool based on collective learning instead of a clear professional approach to reconfigure and rethink socio-spatial relations, changes the perspective on coproduction as a possible integrating concept for a more radical planning approach (Table 8).

Table 8 suggests that the concepts of planning agency or democracy are not necessarily understood in a fundamentally different way. Both coproduction and social innovation theory acknowledge the relational position of planning practice and the need for a more agonistic understanding of democracy. But SI theory puts a slightly stronger focus on institutional selectivity and, consequently, the possible mobilization of selective strategies. Although this can be seen as a minor difference it has strong consequences for planning practice as planning loses its privileged position as an integrating approach to collective action. Planning instruments and practice become a possible strategic tool in a messy and complex process of urban transformation. Creating room for manoeuvre for transformative planning then becomes more a matter of critically navigating between the strategic and selective actions of others, tracing mechanisms of exclusion while collectively constructing possibilities for action. Theoretically defining clear principles for a professionally limited planning position, even if it radically engages with a political understanding of reality, is less of an issue.

This understanding closely relates to a specific post-structuralist approach that defines planning not as a process of closure but as something that *"produces new uncertainties that continue to haunt social reality"* (Gunder & Hillier, 2009, p.74) because of *"networks and*

assemblages (that) are open and contingent, events (that) are unpredictable and (the existence of) unknown unknowns" (Hillier, 2017). To avoid more delusional practices, it is necessary to engage with in a social justice based institutional analysis and to emphasize selectivity of institutionalization, together with a clear and collective understanding of how different social groups and related instruments deal with these specific dialectics.
A detailed understanding of the possibilities for planning practice to influence processes of institutionalization also means that the limits of planning practice must be acknowledged. This holds for the situational understanding of collective learning and the existence of multiple trajectories of collective learning beyond planning, as well as for the observation that the post-political condition and the impossibility to raise an agonistic debate are in some practices of urban transformation more extant than in others. 'New' issues such as the housing crisis for refugees, the cooperative development of neighbourhood services or the accessibility of public space are illustrative in this respect.

	PLANNING AGENCY	MOMENTS OF OPPORTUNITY	COLLECTIVE ACTION	CONCEPTUALIZATION OF DEMOCRACY
Coproduction (Albrechts, 2012 ; Albrechts et al., 2019)	Damcomité (local neighb. committee), AG Vespa, Land Invest, Druwel, …	The democratic integration of local neighbourhood representation in the decision-making process of the redevelopment of the Slaughterhouse site.	A search for the potential role of the Dam comité as neighbourhood representatives	Questioning the agency of private consultants (as *endeavour*) and the role of public planning administrors.
A SI understanding of planning practice (De Blust & Van den Broeck, 2019)	The planner as a strategic actor who can create the practices, discourses and institutions that support agonistic forms in planning and a related fundamental shift in the balance of power based on understanding institutionalized practice.	Focus on the socio-political implications of processes of institutionalization based on the idea of a socially constructed understanding of planning practice, considering institutional difference and selectivity as a way to define critical room for manoeuvre through a process of collective problematization.	Researching the role of the studio as temporary moments of collective action	Focused on defining the relation between a transformative planning position and its instruments

Table 8: Redescribing coproduction

9.2.4. THE DELUSION OF AMBIGUITY

The relational and dialectic understanding of planning based on a collective reinterpretation of reality clearly conflicts with the idea of strategic ambiguity as a transformative practice. Eisenberg (1984) describes that ambiguity can play a role in bringing 'previously antagonistic stakeholders together and begin a process of meaningful dialogue' (Kaethler et al., 2017, p. 184) but is never transformational in its own right. This clear position derives from the insight that the transformative potential of planning is highly dependent on the explicit collective effort to construct a shared understanding of reality. These moments of de- and reconstruction can only be based on a shared ethical approach of openness and solidarity (Jessop et al., 2013). A strategic application of ambiguity contradicts this conscious and precise way of working and disguises possible institutional mechanisms of selectivity towards actions by which different agonistic trajectories of mutual learning can be understood.

9.3. THE ROLE OF METAREFLEXIVE ACTION RESEARCH

9.3.1. A SPECIFIC APPROACH

Metareflexive action research can be carried out by way of an embedded single case study. In this respect *endeavour* was organized as a reflective planning office honouring the fundamental freedom to rethink epistemological frameworks through its action research in six different planning projects. A sufficiently large variety of research subjects for action research has been achieved by direct engagement in local planning trajectories, by supervising a planning studio and by internal debates on structuring and organizing an office as a vehicle for collective action.
A framework is needed to relate these different situations of research and develop a multi-layered understanding of planning practice. In this PhD thesis four 'moments of research' are defined. Each of these moments is characterized by a specific research method that enables a critical reflection on the room for transformative action under post-political planning conditions. The first research moment, *description & analytical resolution* is based on the theoretical exploration and earlier experience in planning practice. This moment results in a theoretical understanding of the research question. The second research moment, *contextualization*, starts from a direct project-based engagement in planning practice. Participation in different planning projects facilitates to understand how the hypothetic theoretical construction can be used as a guideline for transformative planning. The third moment of research, *theoretization*, a result of the participation, is a collective writing process of several papers. In these publications the collected data of the second research moment are reinterpreted with different theoretical frameworks. The fourth moment of research*, retroducting*, builds on the former ones and involves a process of reflection and action. The goal is to become aware of the evolving understanding of transformative planning and the way practitioners or researchers, in this case *endeavour*, can organise themselves in order to operationalize this understanding in planning practice.

9.3.2. A CHALLENGING PRACTICE

Action research is a challenging research context. The combination of action and research puts a lot of pressure on the timing of the research or limits its capacity for critical inquiry. In the action research for this thesis, this was not any different. Using time in the most optimal and efficient way is a constant challenge, often frustrated by the need to re-evaluate or redo initial analyses of case studies because of an initial bias caused by the activist position of *endeavour* or the use of an inappropriate methodology to analyze and report on endless reflective sessions of the exploratory inquiry.
In our case, the difficult context of action research was even more challenged because of the choice to develop an own case study that simultaneously serves as the object of research and as an economic means to create opportunities for research and experiments with different transformative planning approaches. In such a setting, defining a detailed methodological framework during the initial stages when a lot of elements such as the evolution of *endeavour* as an office or the amount of time for research are unclear, proved to

be difficult. Moreover, the idea to develop an office as a means to experiment with different transformative planning approaches was a central but not exclusionary ambition. For some of the members *endeavour* was a vehicle to transform and challenge architectural practice, for others it was a social enterprise with a focus on defining new business models for socio-spatial practices. This combination of different expectations created a rich but challenging environment especially when more and more people joined *endeavour*. To coop with such a complex but challenging research environment three elements are clearly of help:

1. The methodological framework based on a combination of different moments of research is flexible and critical enough to organize a holistic and exploratory *endeavour*. Each of these moments of research is is a micro-study that can be designed by taking into account a large variety and often changing set of research conditions. Based on different research formats they facilitate to take a step back, theorize what is actually going on and create rival explanations and approaches for the initial understanding of the room for manoeuvre of transformative planning practice. Rival inductive frameworks, alternative explanations through involvement in different planning projects, (public) reflections with *endeavour*, joined writing of papers and challenging alternative theoretical frameworks presented by inviting co-authors are very valuable to reflect on an embedded case study such as this PhD research. The combination of a large set of micro-studies that results in a continuous mode of triangulation is an important basis for holistic and pragmatic research approaches.

2. Notwithstanding the differences in the initial ambition of organizing *endeavour*, the office is clearly structured as a critical and reflective working environment. It is used as a means to understand and explore interesting ways to challenge existing market-oriented approaches in urban transformation. Creating a room for manoeuvre in an own organization is not evident. Critical is the development of different financial and organizational tools that avoid a strong instrumentalization of the organization. The model of a workers' cooperative is a promising one to develop this reflective environment. The model legally and financially translates the explorative philosophy and gives the freedom to experiment with approaches. It allows a constant rethinking of the organization, its philosophical frameworks and the resulting role taken in processes of urban transformation. The freedom created by operating in an independent office yields multiple possibilities to change and explore different types of coalitions. This is not only of interest to strengthen the diversity of research approaches and the possibility for internal and external validation by frequent modes of triangulation, but also increases the impact of the projects.

3. A last element that is crucial to deal with the ever-changing research environment is the exploratory nature of the research question. A consultancy-based office, such as *endeavour* which evolved towards a platform for socio-spatial research and action, is often confronted with projects that do not acknowledge a critical position. A rather

delusional instrumentalization of the planning approach such as the co-optation of first attempts to organize alternative modes of spatial production by more mainstream and dominant urban redevelopment trajectories, is often the result. An exploratory nature of research questions however keeps 'failures' from constraining the research trajectory. On the contrary, failures can be used as moments of reflection and often serves the purpose to rethink a specific approach or to redefine the criteria and modes of operating within projects. The choice to immediately take an active position in the field of interest that is related to the research question is risky but rewarding as well. An embedded position provides the possibility to engage with a large diversity of underlying mechanisms, crucial for a critical realist research approach.

Based on the three elements that structured the research approach and aware of different shortcomings of the research trajectory that is presented, I am confident that the specific research design of metareflexive action research is a valuable tool for socially innovative action research that seeks to engage with understanding the possibilities and constraints of transformative action in diverse fields of interest.

9.3.3. A SOCIALLY INNOVATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH

The three crucial elements for metareflexive action research described in 9.3.2 and the idea to develop a means for action research through which one can engage with a large variety of socially innovative actions and rethink underlying configurations from a holistic perspective, closely relates to the ambitions of social innovation research.
Social innovation is above all a process in which a set of actors collaborate to develop practices for solving specific types of problems (Klein & Harrisson, 2007; Mulgan, 2007). These activities are situated in concrete projects and disseminated within an organization or a territory, resulting in a continuous iterative research cycle (Fontan et al., 2005; MacCallum et al., 2009).
In the case of *endeavour* the idea of defining the planner as a strategic actor that can create the practices, discourses and institutions that support agonistic forms in planning and the related fundamental shift in the balance of power based on collective problematization, comes close to the idea of the action researcher who joins socially innovative practice.
By situating this engaged form of research in an organizational and metareflexive approach, it becomes possible to combine a large variety of research contexts. This raises the chances to (1) develop a multi-layered understanding of joint problematization (Miciuciewicz et al., 2012) that results in a more holistic approach of the possiblities for transformative action and (2) strengthen social capital with the goal of finding original solutions to complex problems (Moulaert & Nussbaumer, 2008).
A metareflexive action research perspective focusses on a networked understanding of socially innovative practice as a means for research and adds an operational component to the meta-theoretical framework that structures social innovation research. In parallel with

the collectively determined vision on the reality in which the social question occurs and how that reality can and should be changed, a collectively defined means for transformation is organized.

Based on these reflections the methodological framework of metareflexive action research can be redrawn by taking into account the four reflective responses that operationalize the understanding of a reflexive planning practice (figure 82).
At the start is the idea that a multiplicity of understandings of the room for manoeuvre for socially innovative action can be analyzed by organizing a case study as a medium for metareflexive action research. A strong engagement with this case study can create an interesting condition to relate and engage with a multiplicity of moments of socially innovative action. By organizing processes of collective problematization and action in relation to each of these moments and by relating reflections to a single case study that engages in all of these moments, it becomes possible to develop a multi-layered and very diverse understanding of the possibilities for social innovation in a specific field of inquiry.

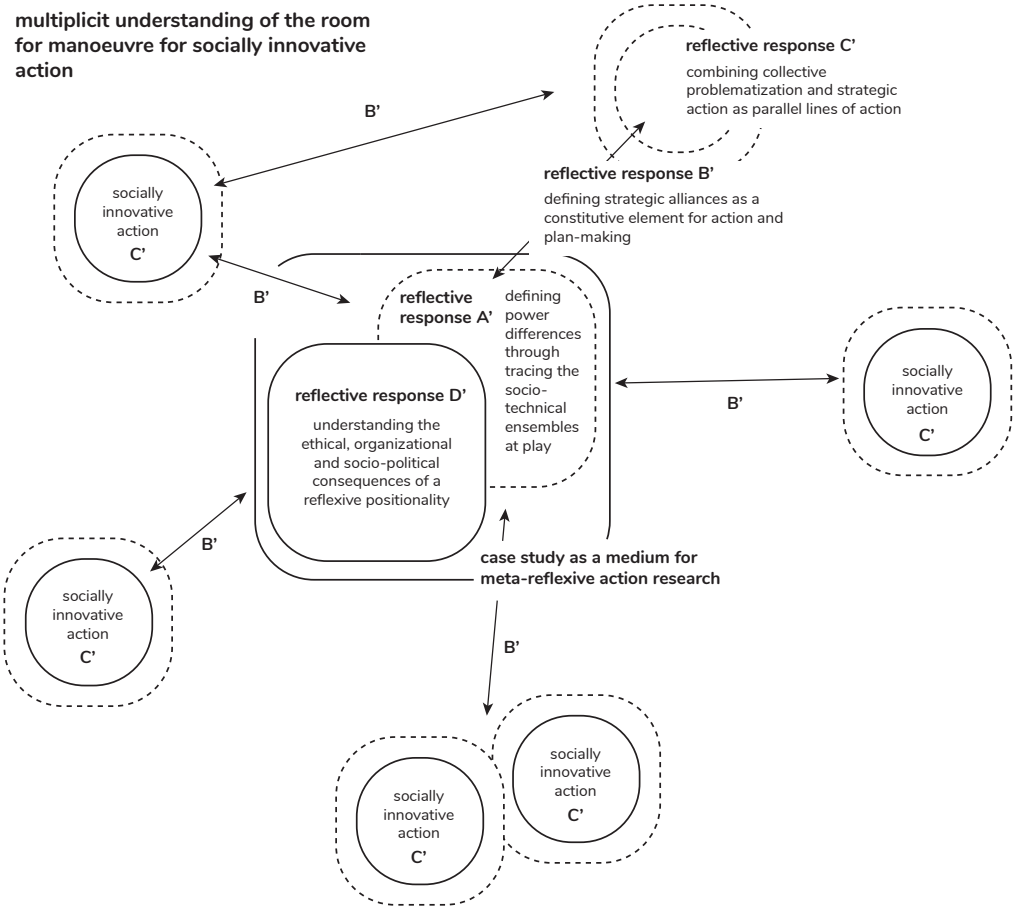

Figure 82: A metareflexive research framework for socially innovative action

9.4. THE ROOM FOR MANOEUVRE OF SOCIALLY INNOVATIVE PLANNING PRACTICE UNDER POST-POLITICAL PLANNING CONDITIONS RECONSIDERED

Through this research the room for manoeuvre of socially innovative planning practice under post-political conditions has been redefined by

1. composing a theoretical framework that strengthens a reflexive understanding of transformative planning as critically navigating between the strategic and selective actions of others, tracing mechanisms of exclusion while collectively constructing possibilities for action, and
2. a methodological approach that is based on organizing an embedded case study research that results in a more holistic identification of the possiblities for transformative action and a stronger solidarity based cooperation between different socially innovative initiatives.

The work of *endeavour* essentially shows how this reflexive planning practice can be organized through different collaborative actions, often beyond the planning field. The work stresses the need to develop a specific organisational structure that makes it possible to work pro-actively, not limited to an institutionalized demand, and to integrate a process of strategic and precise navigation in order to collectively understand the limits of planning and the specific possibilities to define or support transformative action.

In the conclusions of this research it became clear how this reflexive framework and its specific approach to analyze and challenge the room for manoeuvre for transformative practice, can be of interest for domains other than planning. In the following paragraphs I introduce three fields of research that can further operationalize these promising new endeavours.

9.4.1. METAREFLEXIVE ACTION RESEARCH AS A FRAMEWORK FOR BOTTOM-LINKED SOCIALLY INNOVATIVE ACTION

The proposed metareflexive framework becomes specifically interesting when applied to complex and multi-layered processes of institutionalisation. These often messy processes of urban transformation not only engage over a longer timeframe and with a large variety of actors but also combine, by definition, different norm systems around which processes of collective learning are organized. Combining different norm systems (more or less abstract needs for cooperation) is a challenging practice since some norm systems are *"more resistant in time and more extended in space than others, and within a particular social order, some norms may change, and others may not"* (Savini, 2018, p. 5).

Understanding processes of institutionalisation consequently requires interpreting how different trajectories of collective learning relate to each other and can influence each other over time. How can strategic alliances be formed which not only deal with the operational or collective level of institutionalization but also with the constitutional level of social (in)justice?

How does a learning trajectory which focusses on defining operational norm systems interact with a more on a constitutional level engaged collective learning trajectory?

The model for metareflexive action research proposed in this PhD thesis seems to be specifically promising to research these kinds of messy processes since it is designed to engage in a multiplicity of collective learning trajectories over a longer time span. In research fields as bottom-linked governance this multi-layered and enduring research can have an important added value. Such research needs to combine multiple collective learning trajectories on different governance levels that strategically relate operational and constitutional discussions. Within a classic case study approach these kinds of new dynamics are difficult to operationalize and would often be limited by the organizational structure or limited field of action of a bottom-linked practice.

9.4.2. TRACING PROCESSES OF LOCALIZATION

In order to better understand the potentiality for new configurations of agonistic debate and cooperation it would be interesting to relate the multiplicity of institutionalization and collective learning to the post-political debate and more specific the discussion on the potentiality of practices of particularization and localization (Oosterlynck & Swyngedouw, 2010). Can we see emerge under post-political conditions a disarticulation between local issues and universal demands (Baeten, 2009)? And do local concerns become precluded from functioning as a starting point for a more general critique of the current governance order and political priorities (Metzger, 2018, p.185)?
Would it be possible, for instance, to better understand the margin for processes to move from a collective to a more constitutional level? How can we analyse where strategic relations between different collective learning trajectories can help to bridge the gap between norm systems without neglecting the inclusive and diverse nature a collective learning process?
Would such a more detailed understanding make it possible to overcome the idea that certain planning fields as neighbourhood planning are too institutionalized and part of a post political regime, for planning to play a transformative role?

9.4.3. A PEDAGOGICAL OPERATIONALIZATION OF METAREFLEXIVE ACTION RESEARCH

The framework for planning and action research that was proposed in this PhD research is capable of orchestrating complex processes of socio-spatial transformation. Arranging it for a large diversity of (critical) planning practitioners or potential researchers however, is not evident. Not only is creating an own organisation for action research or redefining existing organisational structures (in order to create the necessary room for manoeuvre) a strong and challenging investment, the underlying process of taking position and select collective

learning trajectories is highly political as well.
In order to disseminate the approach to a larger group of people it will be extremely important to create several pedagogic approaches that can introduce the different steps and reflective responses of a metareflexive action research perspective in an accessible and pragmatic way.
In the participation studio and the Gobelin research[34] I am currently experimenting with several learning approaches. From these initial experiences I learn that future research will need to:

1. Apply a step by step approach to transfer the iterative process of learning related to the four reflective responses as defined in this thesis and the different cycles of collective learning.
2. Develop different tools that create the basis for experiencing the added value of each of elements of a metareflexive action research / transformative planning approach. The complexity of the frameworks needs to be understood through practising.
3. Create a clear and accessible toolbox which gives actors the possibility to pass on the knowledge and interpretations of transformative planning practice to their peers (often necessary to convince their peers to engage in an organisation-wide transformation).
4. Collect examples of how to structure the possibility to engage in multiple collective learning trajectories. These examples can definitely help to inspire young spatial practitioners (!) and all actors involved in processes of social-spatial transformation to better define their possibilities for strategic alliances and action.

The question **'How do I organize myself to have enough room for manoeuvre to engage in transformative planning practice?'** must take a new central role in planning. A very conscious understanding of modes of organization can be seen as a first step for a more critical planning practice. Without this first step avoiding delusion in practice does not stand a chance.

9.5. NOTES

34 Gobelin: research: on blue and green networks in Flanders in collaboration with INBO, UAntwerpen and UHasselt. A situated understanding of collective learning trajectories is used to operationalize possible transformation strategies and underlying coalitions.

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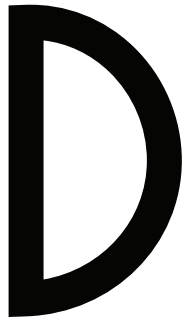

Figure 83: "d" according to *endeavour*

10. ANNEX: EARLIER ARTICLES

FROM ACTIVISTS TO SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS, AND BACK?

Maarten Desmet, Seppe De Blust, Tim Devos

This chapter has been published as a constribution to the interface: Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee, sting like a bee: giving voice to planning practitioners (Tasan-Kok et al., 2016) of planning Theory and Practice. The writing process was a joint effort with the co-authors.

VALUATING NARRATIVE ACCOUNTS IN PARTICIPATORY PLANNING PROCESSES

Tim Devos, Seppe De Blust, Maarten Desmet

This chapter has been published as a book chapter in the book: Participatory Design Theory (Devisch et al., 2018). The writing process was a joint effort with the co-authors.

SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW SOMETHING BORROWED, SOMETHING BLUE

Maarten Desmet, Seppe De Blust, Tim Devos

This text was part of a presentation we gave at ETH Zürich in 2016 on the role and methods of *Endeavour*

SEIZING MOMENTS OF OPPORTUNITY FOR CO-PRODUCTION: DECONSTRUCTING AN ACTION RESEARCH PROCESS IN THE DAM NEIGHBOURHOOD IN ANTWERP

Seppe De Blust, Tim Devos

A version of this chapter has been published in the PhD dissertation of Tim Devos (2016)

10.1. FROM ACTIVISTS TO SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS, AND BACK?

We (M.D., S. De B. and T.D.) have established an enterprise called Ndvr (short form of *Endeavour*), reflecting our endeavour to practice social planning right after completing our studies. We are an Antwerp (Belgium) based office specialising in what we have termed "socio-spatial research", as a means to pursue our mission of "increasing the social value of spatial projects". We have developed the company over the last three years out of a shared interest in the social dimension of spatial planning and the increasing focus on co-productive approaches to address the gap between spatial planning or design practice on the one hand and socially innovative neighbourhood development on the other.

M.D., educated as an architect, developed an interest in the social sustainability aspects of urban design and planning during his thesis research in Bhutan on the development philosophy of "gross national happiness". S. De B. on the other hand is trained as a sociologist and, after having worked in local politics, developed an interest in spatial issues and subsequently completed a master's degree in urban planning. T.D. studied architecture and urban design and was half way through his PhD in social geography (on participation in urban projects) when he met S. De B. and M.D. By starting up Ndvr, we have been exploring the viability of a practice specialising in the participatory aspects of urban planning and spatial transformation processes.

Over time the way we (Ndvr) frame participatory planning practice has changed significantly, along with the roles we adopt and the methods we deploy in our daily work. Specific local contexts, shifting coalitions and different types of assignments constantly challenge us to search for innovative approaches and rethink the professional role we want to pursue. In addition, as we remain involved in academia our research interests, teaching and writing feed into our practice and vice versa. Therefore, we conduct a continuous co-productive and reflexive action research, exploring concrete opportunities to induce change. Reflecting on this, we will sketch out some of the most influential challenges which have defined our professional work over the last three years.
Assignments specifically focusing on the participatory and social dimensions of spatial development are strikingly scarce in Flanders. Rather, architecture or urban planning offices are increasingly expected to simply incorporate "participation" as part of their tasks in drafting plans or proposals, often with a very limited budget. Therefore, citizen involvement, seen as a tedious waste of time and resource, often becomes reduced to a pro forma, mere communicational efforts, conducted by architects or planners who are not equipped or prepared to do so, or glossy communication experts. Therefore, responding to an urgent need to innovate in this area, we decided early on to consider Ndvr as an impact-driven social enterprise rather than a classical urban planning office. Instead of haphazardly applying to tender, we started out by engaging in several business-modelling exercises, seeking professional coaching to explore the different possible ways to run our

business and delineate specific services. Based on these exercises we have created a way of working which considers assignments as shared learning processes: knowledge creation occurs in coalition with local actors and the input and direct involvement of the client is seen as essential. Moreover, we aim to view every new assignment as a means to create new products and innovations. Academic work plays an important role in building and maintaining credibility. In line with our scientific interests and backgrounds and a process-oriented research agenda, we therefore work on a consultancy-based model and have established ourselves as a cooperative enterprise.

Let us illustrate this with some examples. After setting up our company, we quickly and pro-actively engaged in a complex and multi-layered project, namely the planning process of a former slaughterhouse site in the neighbourhood of Dam, Antwerp. We were approached by a local neighbourhood committee who wanted us to support them in their ambition to be more directly involved in the early stages of the planning process. This pro bono project provided the necessary freedom and opportunities to explore what kind of role our practice could play in relationally complex neighbourhood development projects. We worked in close cooperation with both the city and local neighbourhood actors, exploring the potential of playing an in-between role. We consider "Den Dam" as a "playground" to invent and test strategies and instruments for socio-spatial research in a hands-on way, building up a reputation as an office and creating a portfolio from scratch.
With the Dam as a reference, and much to our surprise, we quite rapidly managed to win our first tenders. We conducted a research project for the city of Antwerp where we developed a new way of approaching issues of safety in public space by developing a set of very concrete tools and manuals. Directly involving different types of municipal actors in a learning process, ranging from police officers to social workers and designers, we expanded the way "safety" was perceived in this assignment, avoiding a simplistic focus on nuisance to a more interpretive focus on the subjective impact of specific design decisions or social interactions in public space. In a neighbourhood development project in Ghent (Muide-Meulestede), the assignment to construct a vision for the neighbourhood was used as a lever to co-productively develop three alternative planning instruments, each suggesting an alternative organisational model in relation to the way city and neighbourhoods could organise themselves in response to future challenges. In a third project in Genk we were asked to revitalise the realisation of a masterplan for the Sledderlo neighbourhood, strategically putting to use a trajectory of process-guidance as a means to create time and space for experimentation.

In each assignment we aim to identify "room to manoeuvre" in order to stimulate innovation and look for opportunities to induce change. We believe mobilising different forms of collective learning can enlarge this "room". Through these different projects we discovered that a knowledge–research driven way of working works to our advantage to claim a relatively independent position, construct new coalitions, and strategically react to changing conditions. Instead of drafting masterplans, facilitating hearings or writing

up recommendations based on participatory workshops, we seek to use our position as planners to support collective neighbourhood mobilisations, introduce platforms for discussion, bridging administrative borders or developing tools to use local knowledge.

Our way of working is very much influenced by our personal engagement in several civil urban movements, where we have developed an attitude of tactically responding to cracks in decision making processes or countering official discourses. Therefore, we consider our work as fundamentally political, which does not have to be considered as inherently incompatible with running a successful professional practice. While walking a fine line between planning and politics is certainly not a new dilemma within planning theory, we believe there is a need to establish new types of practices, which put this balancing act at the very centre of their professional mission. As an independent researcher-entrepreneur one can actually claim a surprising amount of professional freedom.

Pursuing change requires taking a proactive stance outside of commissioned assignments. This is necessary in order to safeguard the necessary space for experimentation to constantly adapt new skills and ways of working to deal with specific power structures or institutional contexts. Therefore, we allocate part of our revenue from commissioned assignments towards non-profit, self-initiated projects. For instance, when the news was announced that a modernist high-rise building in the centre of Antwerp, currently the local police headquarters, was up for sale to the highest bidder, we responded instantly.

We formed a coalition with other engaged citizens, local organisations, project developers, lawyers and architects to explore the possibility of collectively buying and co-developing this iconic building in order to provide affordable space in a prime location, enabling a dynamic diversity of users, with a focus on those organisations such as local cultural organisations or education facilities who often struggle to find suitable space in the regular real-estate market. We see such endeavours as an integral part of our DNA, allowing us to continuously question or reinvent our role within spatial processes. The dynamic combination of the three perspectives addressed above – adapting a social-enterprise approach, mobilising coproduction and constantly looking for new ways to maximise our social impact – is how we aim to set our work apart from more mainstream practices. Ndvr is simultaneously a goal and a medium, shaping and engaging in co-productive action research and looking for opportunities to induce change in direct response to contemporary challenges in planning practice.

From our point of view – and our short working experience – we feel that contemporary planning education should more explicitly challenge students to “take a stance” and critically reflect on the variety of roles they can take up in society. Planners are equipped with the tools to shape our built environment and by doing so directly influence the well-being of future generations. Planning education has a responsibility to challenge students to think about the impact they would like to have during their professional careers: will they be

profit-driven and make compromises for profit, or will they choose to be impact- and value-driven and always give priority to this impact which they aim to realise?

Moreover, in the twenty-first century planning context, students should be trained or at least prepared to engage in dialogue with local actors, stakeholders and ever more vocal civil society initiatives and mobilise local knowledge for the benefit of more than just planning outcomes. Developing dynamic and multi-layered coalitions, often mediating between formal actors and professionalising neighbourhood actors, is the crux in a co-productive era of city making. Lastly, we strongly feel that planning educators should not shy away from stimulating the entrepreneurial spirit, which does not necessarily contradict a social agenda. Neither does being an impact-driven professional practice or enterprise imply that you are not economically profitable. On the contrary, an impact-driven business model is more sustainable in the long term.

10.2. VALUATING NARRATIVE ACCOUNTS IN PARTICIPATORY PLANNING PROCESSES

10.2.1. INTRODUCTION

All the more in the theoretical debate as well as in planning practice we see a plea for an increased citizen-involvement in planning processes (Albrechts, 2008, 2002; Van Herzele, 2004). Civic engagement in planning practice is seen as a powerful formula to head towards a "deeper concept of democratic values": bringing politics closer to the people and transforming planning approaches and institutions in such a way that it will lead to the creation of more sustainable and qualitative urban spaces as well as to an enhanced quality of urban political life (Booher, 2008, p. 383). A*n introduction of "creativity from below" or the "wisdom of crowds" is seen as a vital key to begin to understand the full complexity of stakeholders, opinions and intertwined webs of relations relevant to spatial planning* (Albrechts, 2008, p. 412).

A shift towards participatory approaches in planning has to be accompanied by the recognition that the planners who organize deliberative processes and set the agendas consequently possess the power to include and exclude different publics, opinions and values (Bond and Thompson-Fawcett, 2007). As Hillier argues (1999, p. 184) it is precisely in the way values are "*defined, concealed or confused*" that power is most often exercised in planning. Introducing these increasingly 'fashionable' participatory processes doesn't necessarily imply the actual planning to be effectively inclusive. Often certain groups are still marginalized or disempowered within the process. In participatory planning literature this issue has been widely discussed: different authors have stressed the need to take power relationships into account (Bond and Thompson-Fawcett 2007) and the difficulties faced in creating a situation in which different social groups have equal access to take part in participatory debate (Innes and Booher, 2004). Some claim the need to create a communicative space or arena which allows for the vast plurality of voices to be heard and taken into account. However establishing this arena of interaction is an extremely difficult issue since a neutral, apolitical space of communication is essentially an impossible construct, for all interaction is textured by a complex "*myriad of power relations*" (Bond and Thompson-Fawcett, 2007, p. 451).

In this regard this paper argues that the valuation of narrative modes of thought and communication can be crucial within participatory planning processes to capture the full complexity of an urban location and benefit from the richness of plurality. Facilitating the co-construction of meaningful real-life stories, which relate to actual experiences and living conditions, while directly confronting these with existing power relations and planning instruments provides a meaningful approach to bridge the gap between local knowledge and the discourse of spatial planners and designers.

This paper will first theoretically explore the narrative mode of reasoning and its potential as a meaningful tool for participatory approaches to planning. This is followed by a case-study exploring how certain core-storylines were co-constructed throughout a participatory

planning process in Antwerp Belgium. By describing these core-storylines the case-study seeks to explore the different ways they provided a means to stimulate an inclusive process, aiming to influence the development of a masterplan for a redevelopment project.

10.2.2. STORYTELLING AND THE NARRATIVE MODE OF REASONING

"a man is always a teller of stories, he lives surrounded by his own stories and those of other people, he sees everything that happens to him in terms of these stories and he tries to live his life as if he were recounting it." (Sartre ,1964, p. 56)

Jerome Bruner describes how we interpret the world around us in two fundamentally different ways: using either the paradigmatic mode or the narrative mode of reasoning, argument or story. Whereas the paradigmatic or scientific mode is concerned with categorization and conceptualization, the narrative mode is concerned with attaching meaning to our daily experiences through the construction of stories. Although these two modes are complementary they are not reducible to one another and cannot be evaluated based on the same criteria (Bruner, 1987). Moreover the continuous construction of stories or "world-making", can even be considered as the "principal function of mind"; *a means to structure our real-life experiences, organize our memory and attach meaning to events and observations in a continuous narrative effort* (Bruner, 2004, p. 691). Therefore man is "*essentially a story telling animal" engaging in "enacted narratives*" and framing both our own and other peoples actions in a narrative (MacIntyre, 1984). *Constructing these stories or recounting relevant episodes in our lives is essentially a narrative achievement, never an undiluted, direct reflection of what really happened* (Bruner 2004, 693). A story is therefore always a particular interpretation, reinterpretation or structuring of experience itself; one of the infinite number of hypotheses, versions and expected scenarios and never a neutral, innocent account.

Stories and the conception of narratives are not only the principal way in which we shape and structure our experiences but also the way in which we communicate them to others. Therefore we can distinguish between the interpretive and interpersonal motives that shape stories: stories are deployed to make sense of our own experience but can also be aimed at achieving an effect on other people (Baumeister and Newman, 1994). Stories thus often express more than a mere stitching together of events: *they are constructed around a certain problem and the very "point" of the story is an elaboration of how this problem is to be resolved according to the narrator, thus containing a strongly formulated vision or persuasive statemen*t (Ryfe, 2006, p. 74). In other words the construction of stories is a narrative attempt to control or shape the past as well as the future; "*a pattern of a desired world*" (Mandelbaum, 1991, p. 210). The way in which we communicate this personal, genuine vision of what ought to have happened or should happen in the future, actively invites others to share this vision, to inhabit our stories. This is exactly where the relevance of stories in a deliberative context comes into play: by explaining how things 'really are' from our

perspective we explicitly encourage others to share their personal view, their take on the story. We provoke them to agree or disagree, we invite others to "*deliberate on this authentic account of what is*" (Vandenabeele et al., 2011, p. 183). In dealing with competing stories, humans have the capacity to evaluate the legitimacy of a story by using what Fisher has described as "narrative rationality" (Fisher, 1989). In this way it makes us capable to deal with the continuous flow of competing and often contradicting stories. People in being natural storytellers have the capacity to evaluate the coherence and fidelity of stories.

10.2.3. VALUATING THE NARRATIVE MODE TO CAPTURE COMPLEXITY IN PLANNING

The planning context in practice as well as in academic circles often expresses a clear preference towards a rational form of argumentation, expecting "*neat singular constructions*" (Van Herzele, 2004, p. 200). Arguably, *the complex web of pluralistic statements as it can be expressed through stories is therefore often decomposed into elements that can be analysed, calibrated and mapped, providing a sort of "relief" from the complexities of a holistic world which often seems beyond our control* (Mandelbaum, 1991, p. 210). This makes for an argumentative space in which the narrative form is not valued to the fullest or even systematically ignored unless logical arguments are abstracted from it (Mandelbaum, 1991). Rational values try to impose a sort of *"artificial order" on the uncontrollable flow of values and opinions planners have to deal with in order to be able to manage competing opinions* (Hillier, 1999, p. 179). As a consequence, participatory planning processes often fail to fully value genuine accounts starting from the social specificity or the practical day to day usage of a particular site or neighbourhood.

It is only through valuating and listening to the myriad of competing stories that we can grasp the complexity and nuance, which is often impossible to capture by abstract propositions and other rationalizing tools prevailing in formal debate (Vandenabeele et al 2011, 183). While abstract conclusions remove ambiguities, narrow the interpretative field, the narrative mode helps us to think about situations that involve conflict without ignoring contradictions (Baumeister and Newman, 1994). Storytelling has the power to make progress between conflicting parties, to get past "my needs versus yours" by "taking a step to the side to allow three steps forward"; personal accounts can open up unexpected connections between these parties by considering issues from a new angle (Forester, 2000). The narrative mode of thought can provide us with what Latour (Latour, 2009, p. 102) calls "*the power to take into account*": encouraging and appreciating narrative accounts can both promote plurality and overcome thresholds which non-professionals face when engaging in deliberation on complex spatial issues (Ryfe, 2006).

Van Hulst (Van Hulst, 2012) identifies two strands in which storytelling is approached in planning research: firstly as a model 'of' the way planning is done and secondly as a model 'for' the way planning could be done. The first strand emphasizes that planning itself can be

likened to storytelling: "*we can think of planning as an enacted and future oriented narrative in which the participants are both characters and joint-authors*" (Throgmorton, 1996, p. 47). Planners are storytellers, authors of persuasive and future-oriented texts that reflect opposing views and that can be read in diverse and conflicting ways (Throgmorton, 1996). The second strand argues that storytelling is an important model "for" the way planning can be practiced. Focusing on how the craft of storytelling can improve practice to be more inclusive if storytelling is valued and cultivated within the planning process. As Van Hulst (Van Hulst, 2012) briefly touches upon storytelling 'for' is however not merely about reconstruction stories, or investigating a community or neighbourhoods narrative, but rather about how co-constructing stories is a way to develop an inclusive process and stimulate neighbourhood engagement.

Despite the apparent value of narratives within a participatory planning setting, there are however still few practitioners or academics who creatively or consciously shape processes where the ability to tell stories is nurtured or a space is created for stories to be heard (Sandercock, 2003). In addition, despite the increasing belief that it is important for everybody to have their stories heard, it remains often unclear how collective stories will be put to use or incorporated in the actual planning process (Sandercock, 2010). The importance of story has rarely been understood, nor validated (Sandercock, 2003). The following case-study description therefore explicitly focuses on developing an outline of an approach to operationalize co-productive storytelling within a participatory planning process, which seeks confrontation with existing power relations and formalized planning instruments.

10.2.4. A PARTICIPATORY PLANNING TRAJECTORY IN ANTWERP, DAM

In 2012 the city of Antwerp announced the ambition to develop a masterplan to redevelop the site of the former municipal slaughterhouse, into a qualitative neighbourhood with housing as its main function. Following this ambition note a cooperation agreement was signed between three private owners and the city to facilitate the redevelopment of the site in a public-private partnership. The redevelopment of this site, including apart from the slaughterhouse the quays of a nearby dock and a neighbourhood park, would roughly double the small neighbourhood Dam, in which it is located, in size and population. This triggered a recently established neighbourhood association (Damcomité) to start up a petition, demanding the city to involve them in the planning process from the very beginning. The committee appealed to *endeavour*, a young office for social spatial research and (participatory) process guidance co-founded by the authors, to assist them in developing an inclusive participatory process in relation to the masterplanning process. This marked the start of an on-going intensive process of action research. *Endeavour* executed this work Pro bono and as a part of the authors doctoral research. Postgraduate students of the Master of Human Settlements and the Master of Urbanism and Strategic Planning at KU Leuven assisted *endeavour* in this research, taking part in a first semester studio (2013 and

2014) on Strategic Spatial Planning, taught by the authors.

In this research *endeavour* assumed an independent role, however working in close cooperation with the city administration on the one hand and neighbourhood organizations on the other. Throughout this process the participative construction of storylines was put to use as a collaborative approach to bridge the gap between the opposing discourses of future oriented development plans and local needs. Rather than on a delineated set of methods, this approach was based on three iterative and interrelated steps: identifying community-narratives, co-constructing storylines and strategic implementations. In the following pages this approach is described by combining each of these three steps with the storylines that proved to be most central throughout the process.

Identifying community-narratives

At the start of the process there was a clear choice to take up an investigative, exploratory role and thoroughly study the neighbourhood in order to 'get a grip' on actual conditions. This was done in order to identify the possible added value of the project and search for locally embedded preconditions in reaction to the common concern that no local input, needs and opportunities would feed the designs. Firstly, dominant community-narratives concerning the neighbourhood were identified, based on interviews with local social organizations and key actors as well as several community workshops. They helped to define resident's perceptions to future changes and spatial transitions in particular. These meta-stories often distinguish between past and present and frame certain transitions in a historical narrative, in which a sense of nostalgia plays an important role. They provided leads to frame further research and dialogue, while grasping the impact and opportunities of the project at stake and highlighting possible contradictions.

Storyline 1: A neighbourhood in transition

"*The redevelopment of the slaughterhouse site is a great opportunity for the neighbourhood to come together and discuss our common future.*"

In the case of the slaughterhouse site it has shown of great importance to frame the participatory process within a wider narrative of a 'folksy' neighbourhood that finds itself at the start of big changes, after being marked by disinvestment, a feeling of neglect. Throughout the last decades the Dam has been confronted with several big scale plans, which triggered a rich history of participation and neighbourhood involvement, activating the rich social network in the neighbourhood. In the 70's the neighbourhood was used as test case for the structure plan of the inner city, one of the first experiments with structural planning in Flanders. The planning process was characterized by an intensive participatory approach, involving over 400 inhabitants. In addition, during the 90's, Dam 2008, an active neighbourhood association, played an active role in the discussions regarding the

redevelopment of an old railway yard into a park (Park Spoor Noord) and the arrival of a high-speed railway.

For two decades the neighbourhood has been confronted with unclarity about the future of the largely abandoned slaughterhouse site: plans were drafted to modernize the slaughterhouse and redevelop the site into a wholesale market and 'culinary agora', while other possibilities were being explored such as the construction of a regional sports centre (2003-2004) and a hospital (2008). This triggers a lot of residents to feel as if Dam is neglected and further isolated from the city and is to some extent left on its own. This also has to do with the fact that a lot of plans have been projected on the Dam throughout the years, although they have never been realized, therefore creating a feeling of suspicion regarding new developments. Today the neighbourhood finally finds itself at the start of big changes. The alderman of city development publicly communicated the ambition to revitalize the 'dead-end' project in the media. This triggered a recently established neighbourhood association (Damcomité) to start up a petition, demanding the city to involve them in the process from the very beginning, before the completion of the project definition and hence the start of a masterplanning phase. The neighbourhood actors emphasize that the redevelopment of the slaughterhouse can be seen as a lever for a qualitative upgrade of the entire neighbourhood, holding the potential to provide much needed new services and public spaces, and strengthen the existing social networks.

Throughout the process it has shown important to frame this new 'wave' of citizen involvement within the historical context of this neighbourhood in transition, while also manifesting its capability to respond in a positive way to new developments. The dynamic committee embodies the changing demographics and renewed attractiveness of the neighbourhood, bringing along a new inflow of politically involved active citizens, while embedding itself within a long-standing tradition of active citizenship and community engagement. At the same time, it makes a clear statement calling for clarity and open communication, emphasizing the danger of weariness and scepticism of local residents against yet another set of plans being imposed on the neighbourhood.

Co-constructing storylines

To rephrase these 'community-narratives' towards strategic and inclusive future scenarios a participatory research process was organized, which sought to support or question these narratives based on concrete socio-spatial data. This was done in a co-constructive way by combining fieldwork, mapping and visualizations with a process of deliberative moments and workshops involving local actors as well as city representatives. In doing so a continuous loop of data-collection and deliberation, input and output, was aimed at collecting and translating local knowledge, while at the same time activating the social network in the neighbourhood. By surveying and mapping the use of space, daily experiences and characteristic phenomena of the neighbourhood and using these findings

as input for several community workshops, we gradually identified the spatial components or implications of certain stories and familiarized the participants with its spatial implications. In this way constructing these stories and making them explicit, acted as a common framework to talk about future developments. Local knowledge, spatial conditions and personal experiences were intertwined to feed a dialogue and shape debate on the future and narratives of the whole neighbourhood based on the real-life social and spatial conditions of the Dam.

Storyline 2: A village in the city

"The popular character is part of the identity of the neighbourhood and it would be a shame if that disappears all together."

One of the most dominant narratives which was elaborated throughout this process was the idea of the Dam being 'a village in the city', as an entity on its own. This storyline proved particularly relevant to frame spatial conditions such as boundaries, as well as lay bare connections with the importance of the local social network and the nostalgia for a (slowly eroding) community life. In several workshops this narrative became particularly dominant and capable of integrating a wide variety of different findings while remaining relatively open-ended. Like no other neighbourhood in Antwerp, Dam is surrounded by many large-scale infrastructures, such as the ring road around the city and the railway line. In addition, an enormous railway yard shaped the south-west border of the neighbourhood, separating it from the rest of the city, which was only recently developed into a park (Spoor Noord). Due to these strong boundaries, with a limited amount of 'crossing points', the Dam is considered an isolated part of the city. The neighbourhood is often described as an 'outsider' to the city of Antwerp. Although this 'isolation' evidently has some negative effects, it has triggered the neighbourhood to develop a very strong local identity, known for its many bars and folksy atmosphere and relatively dense social networks, often referred to as a 'village in the city'.

This sense of local identity is to this day very present in the perception of local residents, which might not be apparent at first glance. To some extent inhabitants seem to appreciate the enclosed character, which makes that the Dam is an 'entity' on its own. On the other hand, however, despite the fact that the neighbourhood is so small and enclosed, it clearly has several delineated sub-neighbourhoods, which each have their own specific identity as well as spatial characteristics. This has a lot to do with the double identity of the neighbourhood, both defined by its relation to the port as to the municipal slaughterhouse. Neighbourhood oriented functions play a very important role: despite its small size, the Dam has a large variety of organizations, the diversity of which reflects the diversity of this neighbourhood. Nevertheless, places of encounter are largely situated at the edges of the neighbourhood, which to a large extent function on a larger urban scale, highlighting a clear lack of meeting places within the neighbourhood itself.

The social network, although extremely cherished and still existent, is slowly eroding, with voids developing themselves throughout the network. Creating the feeling that the glory days of the dam are far behind and a strong sense of nostalgia amongst some. There is a need for shared spaces, used by different organizations to strengthen the local network and through time a lot of the daily used services disappeared, such as a postal office, grocery stores but even the bus services and there is no ATM in the entire neighbourhood. A new place in this network could re-join the different areas of the neighbourhood and the redevelopment of the slaughterhouse could be an important lever. Part of the program of the slaughterhouse site could be organized based on the skills of the different actors in the neighbourhood, both organizations and local entrepreneurs. A new tissue of public space, housing and functions has the potential to transform this enormous 'blindspot' in the middle of the neighbourhood into a hub.

This storyline showed particularly useful to frame and discuss both the analysis of the local social network, the important spatial hubs in the neighbourhood as well as its relation to physical boundaries and local needs. On the other hand, it showed useful to frame the impact and potential value of the ongoing transitions and the redevelopment of the site. In particular since the site encompasses the only 'neighbourhood-scale' green space, an intensively used sports hall as well as one of the strongest boundaries in the neighbourhood, a 4-lane road disconnecting it from the quays of the nearby dock. By co-constructing this storyline some conditions could be defined based on an inclusive view on the neighbourhood.

Strategic implementations

Throughout the process, we aimed to strategically put to use these storylines and operationalize them in different forms. By adapting the storylines to existing planning instruments and delineated procedures, such as a project definition or providing input for a design competition, we aimed to strategically embed the community-stories within the formal planning trajectory. In doing so we aimed to prevent the participative process from becoming a parallel trajectory, but instead actively interrelate community involvement, research and planning procedures. Starting from this perspective we confronted the co-constructed story lines with possible alternative design proposals. More specifically this was done by inviting responses to different spatial scenarios, discussing their impact on the neighbourhood to ensure that residents understand implications of design decisions. The previous constructed story lines could, because of their data driven nature, be used to evaluate the alternatives. Meanwhile this evaluation and the underlying discussions strengthened the storylines by creating a larger involvement of local actors and strengthening its basis for argumentation.

Further on in the process the storylines were used as a reaction to specific planning instruments. In response to the project definition the Damcomité constructed a

recommendation, which can be seen as a culminated output of the variety of participative moments, organized throughout the process. This recommendation took the form of a series of 9 statements or claims summarizing the main concerns of the neighbourhood for which the earlier constructed story lines formed an interesting basis of legitimization and contextualization. Finally, the storylines and the recommendation of the Damcomité were formally added as an attachment to the project definition.

Storyline 3: Living and working as the DNA of the real Dammer

"It would benefit the Dam to maintain the productive economic activities, but then on a smaller scale."

The idea of the Dam as a working-class neighbourhood which has been able to withstand gentrification processes precisely due to its productive character, proved to be an important narrative widely supported by different social groups and is one of the main underlying statements in the finalized advice. The neighbourhood Dam is situated at the edge of the 19th century belt of Antwerp and due to its strategic location close to the port and important access roads, it has always been an appealing place for logistic companies and manufacturing industries. The Dam therefore historically developed out of a combination of working and living. Inland navigation and docks and meat-related activities were integrated in a densely populated residential neighbourhood. With the arrival of a new big scale activity such as the slaughterhouse a new part of the neighbourhood was built, creating different cycles of dynamics and developments. As a consequence, the Dam is to this day characterized by a dual identity: on the one hand strongly related to the port and on the other hand to the municipal slaughterhouse, and their rich variety of related activities. This heavily defined the tissue and building typologies as well as the day-to-day life, dynamics and identity of the neighbourhood and its inhabitants. Although it is no longer the big economical hub it used to be, the density of economic activities is still surprisingly high.

The insecurities arising from the unclarity about a possible renovation of the slaughterhouse in the 90's, triggered a lot of meat-related activities to leave the neighbourhood. In addition, several local bars whose clientele worked predominantly in the meat-industry are slowly disappearing together with these activities. On the other hand, the neighbourhood now has a hub of restaurants, capitalizing upon the identity of the Dam as a place to get quality meat, and its proximity to a nearby event hall.

In a sense the neighbourhood has been out of the pressure of gentrification and the renewal agenda of the city, not only because of its isolation, but because of its industrial and working-class character. Now the neighbourhood is however rapidly changing. Nevertheless, it became clear that the residents are still surprisingly positive and attached to the working-living character of the neighbourhood. There is a strong belief that an interweaving of living and working can make the Dam an attractive neighbourhood in the

future, restoring the equilibrium, whereas today a lot of connections have been lost. The project is therefore seen as an opportunity to explore how residential activities and small-scale productive or economic activities can co-exist.

This storyline represents a call for the project to facilitate the development of small-scale economic activity tailored to the neighbourhood, to support local potential and responds to the relatively high unemployment rate, a call for a visible, lively economy. It can also be read as a response to the 'creative city' discourse as put forward by the city in its ambitions for the site and an opportunity to investigate how to integrate productive activities within a qualitative living environment.

10.2.5. THE CONSTRUCTING OF SHARED NARRATIVES AS A DRIVING FORCE THROUGHOUT THE PROCESS

Throughout the process these 'underlying' storylines as presented, proved to be a means to attach meaning to research output, stimulate a productive dialogue and react to changing power relations throughout the process. Connecting local concerns to a future-oriented planning discourse, they were often used as a point of reference to trigger debates and continuously used and referred back to on several participatory workshops. Hence, although not always used explicitly, they provided a platform to bridge the gap between experiences participants brought to the table and the analysis we had carried out. The conscious development and operationalization of underlying storylines therefore seemed to offer the capacity to bridge the gap between experiences and a more urban planning-oriented discourse. They were used throughout the process in numerous ways, implicitly or explicitly: using them as a thematic basis for workshop design, referring to them in conversations and interviews, as a basis to frame graphical representations, as a means to interconnect and frame research output, etc. In addition, they are strongly embedded in the finalized output which was communicated in the form of a booklet (*endeavour*) and a community advice (Damcomité) to the design teams taking part in a masterplanning competition.

The gradual co-production of storylines proved to be a meaningful approach to stimulate an input-output cycle between research and participatory events and dialogue and deconstruct classical planning concepts starting from day to day experiences. As the description aimed to show the storylines help to connect the current situation and daily realities of the neighbourhood to a future-oriented perspective without losing the layered complexity and allowing for contradictions. Their inherent openness helps grasp the scale, impact and opportunities of the project at stake and make sense of ongoing transitions.

This case sought to demonstrate in which way co-constructing storylines has the capacity to connect local experiences and stories to the spatial dimension by embedding research findings within an understandable frame, which people can relate to and attach personal meanings to. In that sense narratives can be a powerful tool to bridge the gap between

social and spatial research and local knowledge. They can combine local experiences and perceptions with urban planning 'discourse' and concepts into an intermediate language, leaving space to be adopted and adapted by local actors, and adding in new interpretations throughout the process. To deploy this potential the power stories has to be embedded in a process of participatory analysis, instead of having local actors respond to pre-constructed concepts.
The intensive process of co-production and dialogue aimed to ensure that these storylines are well embedded in the community, as a response to the often overly conceptual and merely future-oriented ambitions as put forward by spatial planners in communicating the ambitions of future projects. As in this case these stories in a sense can be interpreted a response to the future-oriented and heavily conceptual ambitions as put forward by the city in their ambition note and project definition. As it became apparent that the neighbourhood wanted to develop their own alternative, fearing that no effort would be made to thoughtfully map the existing situation in order to feed the design. Nevertheless, these narratives do respond to and even interrelate with these formalized ambitions by seeking to contextualize them, based on both dialogue and collected research of real issues and socio-spatial realities. In contrast to the official ambitions it is through building up these narratives in a co-productive process that meaning is attached to them. Co-constructing storylines can therefore provide a crucial means to frame participation processes and create productive engagement.

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10.3. SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW SOMETHING BORROWED, SOMETHING BLUE

URBAN MUTATIONS ON THE EDGE

COMMONING

Lecture Series FS2017 / Prof. Dr. Marc Angélil
ONA Focushalle / D-ARCH ETH Zürich

27.03.2017, 16:00

NDVR [ENDEAVOUR]

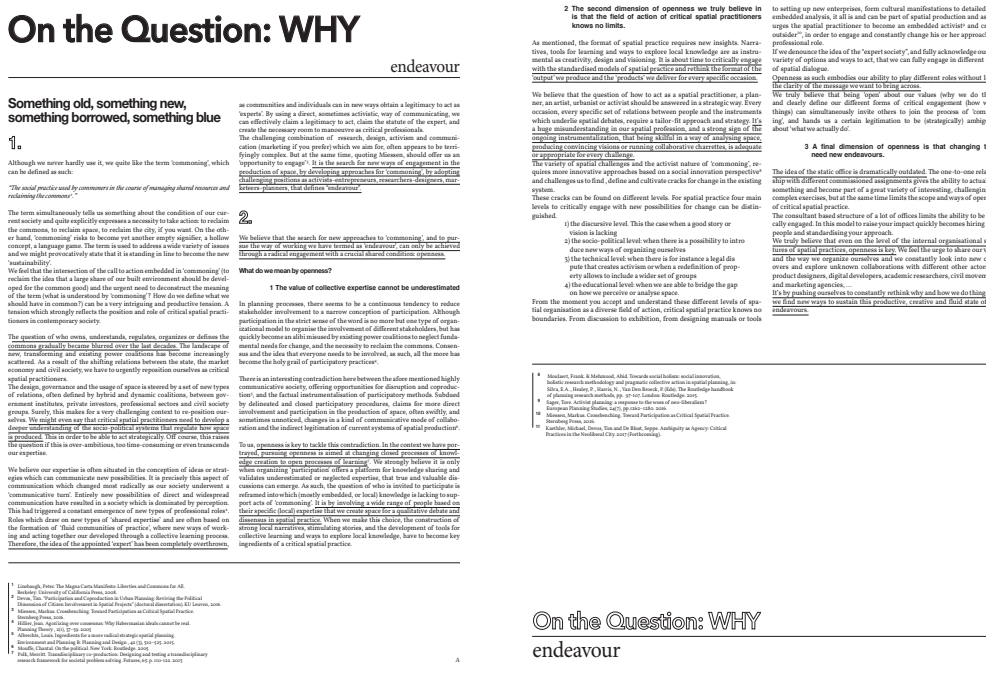
SEPPE DE BLUST, MAARTEN DESMET & TIM DEVOS, ANTWERP

SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW, SOMETHING BORROWED, SOMETHING BLUE



Image: ndvr, 2015

The Antwerp based team Endeavour perceives (urban) space as a cornerstone and crucial platform for different forms of collective action in our society. They strongly believe alternative ways of producing space can open up opportunities for forms of 'commoning' under the constraints of contemporary neoliberal conditions. They aim to actively explore these opportunities through their practice. In this lecture Endeavour will elaborate on three vital dimensions which have proven to be both instrumental and challenging in the process of setting-up a critical professional practice: the role of expertise, rules and organisational structures and the crucial shared condition for these dimensions to contribute to the process of commoning in our society: openness. Endeavour will share insights in their vision, projects and ambitions and invite the students to actively react and reflect on their 'endeavours'.



On the Question: WHY

endeavour

Something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue

1.

Although we never hardly use it, we quite like the term 'commoning', which can be defined as such:

"The social practice used by commoners in the course of managing shared resources and reclaiming the commons". [1]

The term simultaneously tells us something about the condition of our current society and quite explicitly expresses a necessity to take action: to reclaim the commons, to reclaim space, to reclaim the city, if you want. On the other hand, 'commoning' risks to become yet another empty signifier, a hollow concept, a language game. The term is used to address a wide variety of issues and we might provocatively state that it is standing in line to become the new 'sustainability'.
We feel that the intersection of the call to action embedded in 'commoning' (to reclaim the idea that a large share of our built environment should be developed for the common good) and the urgent need to deconstruct the meaning of the term (what is understood by 'commoning'? How do we define what we should have in common?) can be a very intriguing and productive tension. A tension which strongly reflects the position and role of critical spatial practitioners in contemporary society.

The question of who owns, understands, regulates, organizes or defines the commons gradually became blurred over the last decades. The landscape of new, transforming and existing power coalitions has become increasingly scattered. As a result of the shifting relations between the state, the market economy and civil society, we have to urgently reposition ourselves as critical spatial practitioners.
The design, governance and the usage of space is steered by a set of new types of relations, often defined by hybrid and dynamic coalitions, between government institutes, private investors, professional sectors and civil society groups. Surely, this makes for a very challenging context to re-position ourselves. We might even say that critical spatial practitioners need to develop a deeper understanding of the socio-political systems that regulate how space is produced. This in order to be able to act strategically. Off course, this raises the question if this is over-ambitious, too time-consuming or even transcends our expertise.

We believe our expertise is often situated in the conception of ideas or strategies which can communicate new possibilities. It is precisely this aspect of communication which changed most radically as our society underwent a 'communicative turn'. Entirely new possibilities of direct and widespread communication have resulted in a society which is dominated by perception. This had triggered a constant emergence of new types of professional roles[2]. Roles which draw on new types of 'shared expertise' and are often based on the formation of 'fluid communities of practice', where new ways of working and acting together our developed through a collective learning process. Therefore, the idea of the appointed 'expert' has been completely overthrown, as communities and individuals can in new ways obtain a legitimacy to act as 'experts'. By using a direct, sometimes activistic, way of communicating, we can effectively claim a legitimacy to act, claim the statute of the expert, and create the necessary room to manoeuvre as critical professionals.
The challenging combination of research, design, activism and communication (marketing if you prefer) which we aim for, often appears to be terrifyingly complex. But at the same time, quoting Mänsen, should offer us an 'opportunity to engage'[3]. It is the search for new ways of engagement in the production of space, by developing approaches for 'commoning', by adopting challenging positions as activists-entrepreneurs, researchers-designers, marketeers-planners, that defines "endeavour".

2.

We believe that the search for new approaches to 'commoning', and to pursue the way of working we have termed as 'endeavour', can only be achieved through a radical engagement with a crucial shared condition: openness.

What do we mean by openness?

1 The value of collective expertise cannot be underestimated

In planning processes, there seems to be a continuous tendency to reduce stakeholder involvement to a narrow conception of participation. Although participation in the strict sense of the word is no more but one type of organizational model to organise the involvement of different stakeholders, but has quickly become an alibi misused by existing power coalitions to neglect fundamental needs for change, and the necessity to reclaim the commons. Consensus and the idea that everyone needs to be involved, as such, all the more has become the holy grail of 'participatory practices'[4].

There is an interesting contradiction here between the afore mentioned highly communicative society, offering opportunities for disruption and coproduction[5], and the factual instrumentalisation of participatory methods. Subdued by delineated and closed participatory procedures, claims for more direct involvement and participation in the production of space, often swiftly, and sometimes unnoticed, changes in a kind of communicative mode of collaboration and the indirect legitimation of current systems of spatial production[6].

To us, openness is key to tackle this contradiction. In the context we have portrayed, pursuing openness is aimed at changing closed processes of knowledge creation to open processes of learning[7]. We strongly believe it is only when organizing 'participation' offers a platform for knowledge sharing and validates underestimated or neglected expertise, that true and valuable discussions can emerge. As such, the question of who is invited to participate is reframed into which (mostly embedded, or local) knowledge is lacking to support acts of 'commoning'. It is by involving a wide range of people based on their specific (local) expertise that we create space for a qualitative debate and dissensus in spatial practice. When we make this choice, the construction of strong local narratives, stimulating stories, and the development of tools for collective learning and ways to explore local knowledge, have to become key ingredients of a critical spatial practice.

1 Linebaugh, Peter. The Magna Carta Manifesto: Liberties and Commons for All. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008.
2 Devos, Tim. "Participation and Coproduction in Urban Planning: Reviving the Political Dimension of Citizen Involvement in Spatial Projects" (doctoral dissertation), KU Leuven, 2016.
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A

2 The second dimension of openness we truly believe in is that the field of action of critical spatial practitioners knows no limits.

As mentioned, the format of spatial practice requires new insights. Narratives, tools for learning and ways to explore local knowledge are as instrumental as creativity, design and visioning. It is about time to critically engage with the standardised models of spatial practice and rethink the format of the 'output' we produce and the 'products' we deliver for every specific occasion.

We believe that the question of how to act as a spatial practitioner, a planner, an artist, urbanist or activist should be answered in a strategic way. Every occasion, every specific set of relations between people and the instruments which underlie spatial debates, require a tailor-fit approach and strategy. It's a huge misunderstanding in our spatial profession, and a strong sign of The ongoing instrumentalization, that being skilful in a way of analysing space, producing convincing visions or running collaborative charrettes, is adequate or appropriate for every challenge.
The variety of spatial challenges and the activist nature of 'commoning', requires more innovative approaches based on a social innovation perspective[8] and challenges us to find , define and cultivate cracks for change in the existing system.
These cracks can be found on different levels. For spatial practice four main levels to critically engage with new possibilities for change can be distinguished.

1) the discursive level. This the case when a good story or vision is lacking
2) the socio-political level: when there is a possibility to introduce new ways of organizing ourselves
3) the technical level: when there is for instance a legal dispute that creates activism or when a redefinition of property allows to include a wider set of groups
4) the educational level: when we are able to bridge the gap on how we perceive or analyse space.

From the moment you accept and understand these different levels of spatial organisation as a diverse field of action, critical spatial practice known no boundaries. From discussion to exhibition, from designing manuals or tools to setting up new enterprises, form cultural manifestations to detailed local embedded analysis, it all is and can be part of spatial production and as such urges the spatial practitioner to become an embedded activist[9] and critical outsider[10], in order to engage and constantly change his or her approach and professional role.
If we denounce the idea of the "expert society", and fully acknowledge our own variety of options and ways to act, that we can fully engage in different fields of spatial dialogue.
Openness as such embodies our ability to play different roles without losing the clarity of the message we want to bring across.
We truly believe that being 'open' about our values (why we do things) and clearly define our different forms of critical engagement (how we do things) can simultaneously invite others to join the process of 'commoning', and hands us a certain legitimation to be (strategically) ambiguous[11] about 'what we actually do'.

3 A final dimension of openness is that changing times need new endeavours.

The idea of the static office is dramatically outdated. The one-to-one relationship with different commissioned assignments gives the ability to actually do something and become part of a great variety of interesting, challenging and complex exercises, but at the same time limits the scope and ways of operating of critical spatial practice.
The consultant based structure of a lot of offices limits the ability to be critically engaged. In this model to raise your impact quickly becomes hiring more people and standardising your approach.
We truly believe that even on the level of the internal organisational structures of spatial practices, openness is key. We feel the urge to share our vision and the way we organize ourselves and we constantly look into new crossovers and explore unknown collaborations with different other actors like product designers, digital developers, academic researchers, civil movements, and marketing agencies, ...
It's by pushing ourselves to constantly rethink why and how we do things that we find new ways to sustain this productive, creative and fluid state of new endeavours.

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On the Question: WHY

endeavour

B

Figure 84: poster and text of the presentation of *Endeavour* at ETH Zürich 27.02.2017

On the Question: WHY
Something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue

10.3.1. COMMONING

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It's by pushing ourselves to constantly rethink why and how we do things that we find new ways to sustain this productive, creative and fluid state of new endeavours.

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10.4. SEIZING MOMENTS OF OPPORTUNITY FOR COPRODUCTION: DECONSTRUCTING AN ACTION RESEARCH PROCESS IN THE DAM NEIGHBOURHOOD IN ANTWERP

10.4.1. INTRODUCTION

The Dam (Figure 85), situated at the edge of Antwerp's 19th century belt, is part of the neighbourhood Antwerp North, known as one of the more socially deprived areas in the city. The neighbourhood, characterized by a rich history of industrial activities, intertwined with a densely populated working-class residential area, houses the site of the former municipal slaughterhouse which almost literally cuts the neighbourhood in two. Despite the construction of several new social housing projects and a temporary sports hall in the 1980's, the Dam seemed to remain to a large extent outside of the city's renewal agenda in the late 90s and early 2000s and was to a lesser extent affected by gentrification. This in comparison to other areas of Antwerp North, where the city was investing in a series of 'strategic projects' (a.o. Loopmans, 2008; Van den Broeck et al., 2015). More recently, the redevelopment of a former railway yard into a park, Spoor Noord, completed in 2009, reconnected the neighbourhood to the inner city and made the neighbourhood develop a renewed popularity. Nevertheless, several attempts over the last two decades to initiate a redevelopment of the former slaughterhouse site, located in the heart of the neighbourhood, had come to nothing.

Following Antwerp's historic change of government in 2013 which brought the nationalist-conservative N-VA (New Flemish Alliance) to power, after 80 years of social-democratic majority, the newly appointed vice-mayor for spatial planning initiated an ambitious public-private redevelopment project to transform the slaughterhouse site into a residential neighbourhood. From the start this redevelopment project showed some interesting characteristics. Firstly, the redevelopment of the slaughterhouse site is a classic example of public-private redevelopment where the majority of the land is owned by a private investor. This predominantly puts the city, although overseeing the draft of a new land-use plan and owning a smaller share of the land, in a facilitation role. Secondly, the redevelopment started in a climate of uncertainty, since it was one of the first neighbourhood redevelopment projects under the new political majority and its reshuffled city administration. Thirdly, the planning process exemplifies how the acknowledged ambition of the new majority to strive for a further liberalization of spatial policy on all levels (Van de Velde, 2015) is struggling to come to terms with a strengthened field of citizen involvement in Antwerp, reacting ever more explicitly to neoliberal urban policies (Loopmans & Dirckx, 2012). Fourthly, a recently established local community group, 'Damcomité', initiated proactive citizen involvement in the neighbourhood redevelopment, taking shape at a very early stage in the process, which created an unknown setting for both Damcomité and the city. Lastly, throughout the planning process several uncertainties have come to the fore, due to institutional delays and the changing ownership of the site.

The combination of these characteristics makes the early stages of the redevelopment process of the slaughterhouse site an interesting case-study to develop insights into the

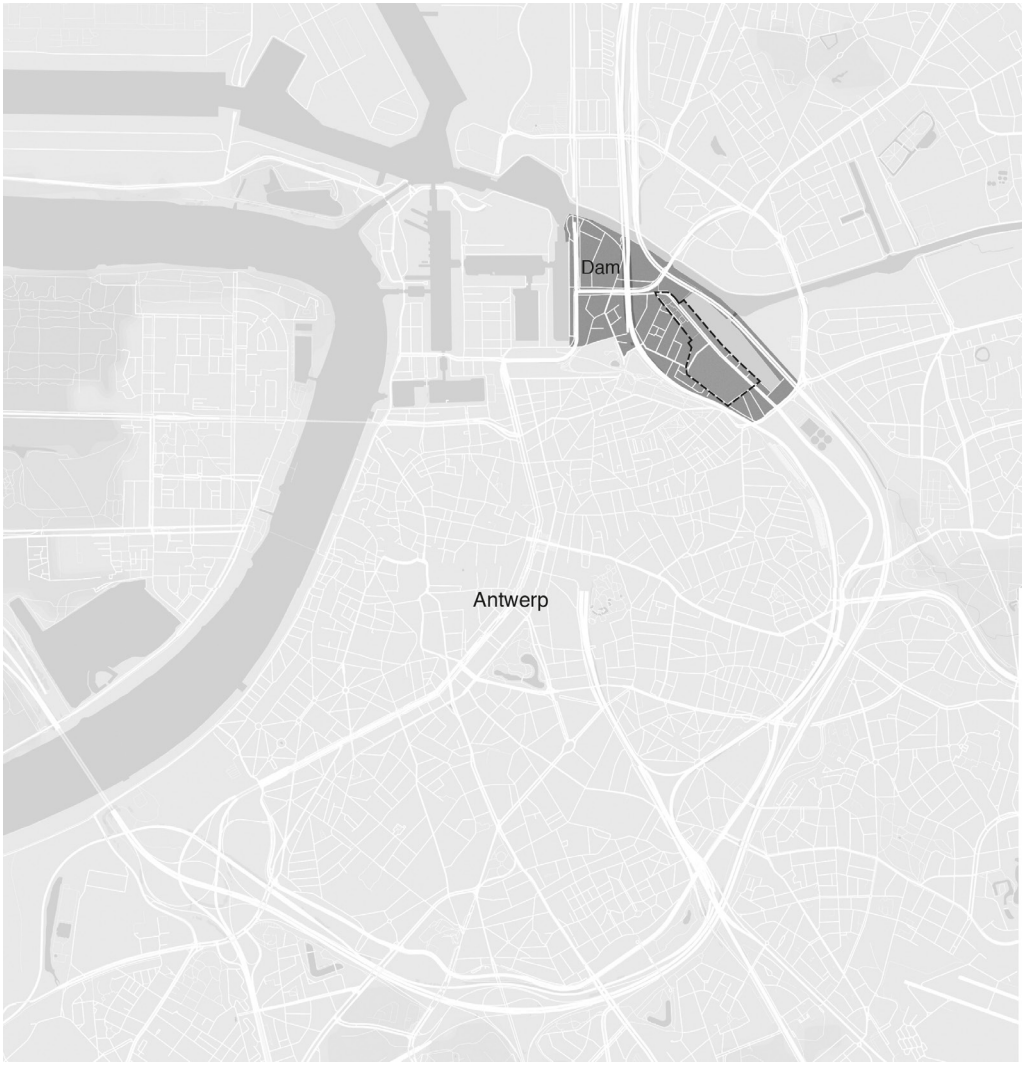


Figure 85: Location of the Dam neighbourhood in the city of Antwerp

complex confrontation of what can be described as a heavily project-driven redevelopment logic, arguably reflecting a wider neoliberal development agenda, and a strong local call for what we will further identify as a 'co-productive' process. The case study allows us to deconstruct in great detail how a 'local coalition' dealt with several thresholds in their efforts to get local stakeholders involved in a redevelopment project which shows strong neoliberal mechanisms. By doing so, this paper aims to respond to a recent call in planning literature and practice to experiment with new methods to accommodate forms of dissensus in planning processes (a.o. Metzger, 2011), and tries to understand how moments of opportunity can effectively be 'enlarged' to develop transformative strategies and strengthen local coalitions (Albrechts, 2015b).

In the first three subsequent sections of this paper we construct a theoretical framework. Firstly, drawing from relevant contemporary debates in planning literature, we argue why planning is in need of a radical make-over in response to the pressure of neoliberal agendas and how this creates the urge to redirect our attention to an in depth analysis of actual, real-life planning processes and the opportunities and constraints it creates for local involvement. Secondly, we elaborate on coproduction as a challenging perspective to make sense of local coalitions and analyse underlying tactics and collaborative ambitions. Thirdly, we build on literature on action research and critical planning practice to define our research perspective. These theoretical sections are followed by a brief methodological description of the case study research, and an in-depth elaboration of the action research process. This analysis focuses on how shifting opportunity structures constantly challenge the formation of a local coalition and influence the collaborative ambitions of different stakeholder over time. We conclude this article with a reflection on the relevance of action oriented research as a means to unravel the 'room to manoeuvre' for co-productive planning processes within contemporary neoliberal development trajectories.

10.4.2. Seizing moments of opportunity

The current socio-political context in which planning is implemented is often characterized by neoliberal political agendas (Olesen 2014) where real estate and spatial development are increasingly mobilized as "*an arena for market-oriented economic growth*" (Sager, 2011, p. 149). In accordance with this, planning is becoming more and more flexible, investment oriented and negotiable (Fainstein, 1994) and is often situated within a changing framework and relationship between state, market economy and civil society. Several authors have emphasized how this has resulted in the integration of an entrepreneurial agenda within local neighbourhood redevelopment policies (a.o. Swyngedouw et al., 2002; Haughton et al, 2013) and an often uneasy coexistence of planning and neoliberalism (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2012; Olesen, 2014; Purcell, 2009; Sager, 2013; Tasan-Kok & Baeten, 2011).

A strand of agonistic planning theory is currently gaining momentum, highlighting a 'deadlock' where planning has increasingly become occupied with managing spatial change and growth as a 'technical rather than political exercise', therefore aligning itself with neoliberal forms of democracy (Metzger et al., 2014; Gunder, 2010; Cerreta et al., 2010). As Metzger (2011) argues, spatial planning is in need of a radical democratic(izing) make-over to challenge these conditions. Radical planning has to "*experiment with new methods to accommodate fruitfully dissensus already at an early stage within the planning process*" (Metzger 2011,p.195) and 'identify a certain 'margins of manoeuvre' for policy practitioners (Callon, 1986), "*within which they actually have a real possibility to challenge established mechanisms and to tactically act in ways that facilitate the development of alternative types of planning methods and mechanisms"* (Metzger, 2011,p. 194). Arguably, this stance requires a framework in which neoliberalism is not conceived as a directive project but instead as an uneven, contradictory, on-going and contextual process which is produced and reproduced

through institutional forms and political action (Peck et al., 2009; Olesen, 2014; Peck & Tickell, 2002).

As such, there is a need for research which analyses in-depth how different actors deal with local institutional and political constraints and opportunities in planning processes, and deconstructs the different ways to strategically respond to institutional 'moments of opportunity', by focusing on the 'ordinary politics' of planning which arise by capitalising upon 'cracks in the existing governance landscape' (Newman, 2008, p. 1373). Moreover, this requires the acknowledgement of possibilities for '*positive political action that does not conform to a romanticised picture of rebellion, contestation, or protest against domination*' (Barnett, 2005, p. 11). Similarly, Nicholls & Uitermark (2017) stress that while planning can indeed be mobilised as a technical tool to mute conflict and establish neoliberal order, it thus simultaneously creates resistances and conflict thus functioning as a 'generative source of disruptive politics in the city', a role which remains underexplored both empirically and theoretically.

Coproduction to change the status quo

Albrechts (2012, 2015a) suggests that a more 'radical' approach to strategic planning is required in order to enlarge moments of opportunity and challenge ongoing neoliberalization processes. To do so, this approach aims to actively mobilize the collective power of citizens, hence placing 'coproduction' at the heart of its discourse:

"Coproduction, as a collective Endeavour, is conceived here as a combination of a needs-based and rights-based approach; it is inclusionary (for those in and outside the system), intends to secure political influence and to change the status quo with specific projects, it combines local and scientific knowledge on an equal base, and it provides an interaction between the delivery of public goods (plans, policies, projects) and building strong, resilient, mutually supportive communities." (Albrechts 2012, p.53).

Within this perspective co-production is thus conceived as a conscious political strategy to develop concrete actions and tools to react to a 'status quo', by strengthening local active citizen initiatives to engage and negotiate with local policy. Within a co-productive process citizens aim to be part of the action, in co-constructing spatial ambitions, developing a counter-discourse and reshape power-structures in order to strengthen the socio-spatial character of strategic spatial planning processes and improve their inclusive quality. This approach builds on a conceptualisation of co-production as an explicit political strategy in which citizens both seek engagement with state actors while also developing forms of self-organization and –management in response to local needs (Ostrom 1996, Mitlin 2008).

The increasing interest in planning theory for the concept of coproduction holds particularly well against the backdrops we have outlined above, emphasising the need to redirect

attention from the difficulties of collaborative processes, what some authors have termed as the 'post-collaborative phase' of planning debates (Brownill & Parker, 2010), to the possibility for new interfaces or productive relationships between planning and forms of resistance, creating space to directly respond to conditions of possibility. Coproduction therefore draws attention to the potential of pro-active citizen initiatives, intentionally working outside of the formalized procedures of governance, often in direct response to the fact that formal channels of engagement are inadequate or non-existent (Watson, 2014). It urges us to redirect our attention to the short-term collaborative ambitions of (planning) actors (Newmann, 2008), and the 'borders' created by instrumentalized and 'depoliticised' (participatory) planning approaches and instruments, along which forms of antagonism can develop themselves (Nicholls & Uitermark, 2017). As such, the concept of coproduction provides for an interesting theoretical lens, to offset local coalitions and their underlying tactics and collaborative ambitions against local institutional and political constraints and opportunities in planning processes.

10.4.3. Activist planning research

While researching these local coalitions and moments of opportunity, the literature on co-productive planning sees strategic planners taking up an active role in this collective *Endeavour* (Albrechts, 2012) of neighbourhood involvement and inclusive development. Coproduction, as a conscious political strategy, requires an 'activist mode of planning' (Albrechts, 2015b) and, as such, pleas for action-oriented forms of activist planning research, engaging in in-depth explorations of how and to which extent coproduction can be mobilized to create room for manoeuvre in facing the thresholds of neoliberal agendas in project-oriented planning. Action research, much like radical spatial planning, focuses on opportunities to induce change in the unequal distribution of resources and power, which translates into an epistemology of learning by doing (Herr & Anderson, 2005).

In a recent article Sager (2016) identifies an emerging range of different modes of activist planning which take a stance against neoliberalism. Sager's proposed categorisation criticises the way in which activist modes of planning have so far been addressed in planning literature, emphasising an apparent lack of clear subcategories, while often leaving out the possibility of modes of activism where planners operate from an 'intermediate position'. 'Intermediate activist planners' are defined by Sager as in the first place committed to relational causes, therefore differentiating itself from advocacy planning (loyal to a particular group or community) and radical planning (committed to a delineated strategic cause). Sager's classification gives more insight in types of activist planning modes that are 'only modestly antagonistic' and consequently, as he provocatively states, appear less 'boastful and dramatic, not aiming to assist poor and underprivileged people in heroic struggles, and not presupposing deep conflict'. This aligns itself with the view on coproduction as outlined above which focuses on an incremental social learning approach, rather than a fundamentally radical approach, yet cooperating with proactive and counter-

hegemonic citizen initiatives and often working outside of instrumentalized procedures of governance (Watson, 2014). Moreover, Sager emphasizes that academics can make use of their 'academic freedom' to take up such positions as activists, drawing on the grey zones between activist planning and action research.

The analysis presented in this paper seeks to combine a theoretical framework that focuses on the interaction between 'moments of opportunity' and local coalitions and tactics, with an action research perspective based on an intermediate activist stance, in order to deconstruct in great detail how specific opportunities for collaborative ambitions were enlarged and how specific thresholds were dealt with, within a project-driven urban renewal process. In the following section, we describe the methodological framework which was deployed to set-up this action research in the Dam neighbourhood in Antwerp and how this has shaped the way the case study is further described.

10.4.4. A Methodological framework

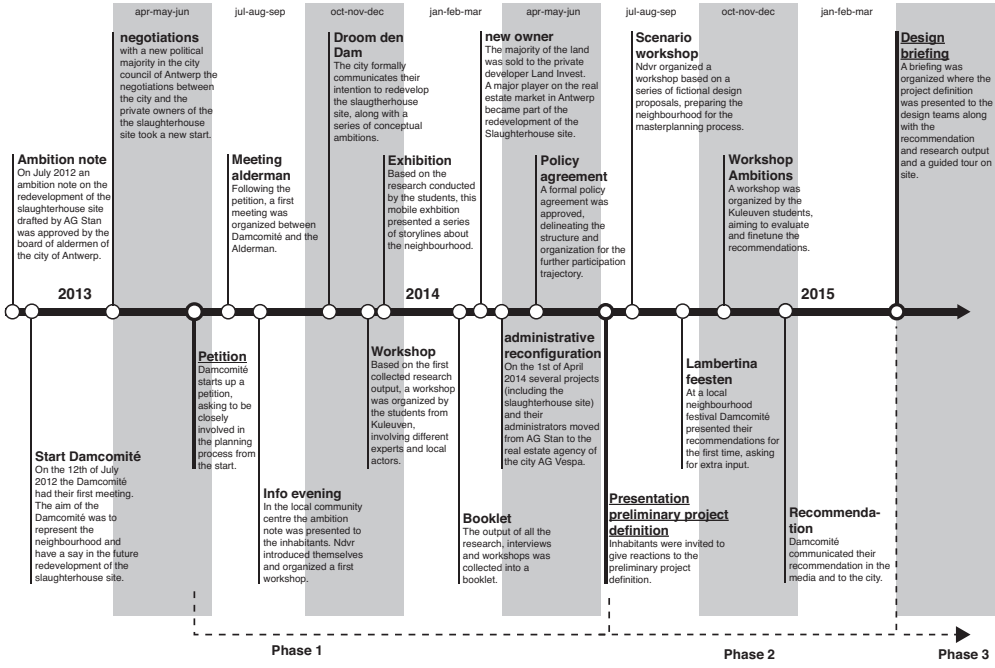
Throughout the action research both authors took up a dual role in order to develop an 'intermediate activist planning' position within the large scale redevelopment process of the Dam neighbourhood. On the one hand, they were involved through the form of ndvr, a local office for socio-spatial research founded by the authors, in response to an informal, direct call by Damcomité to support (Pro Bono) their claim for more direct involvement. On the other hand, both authors executed the action research as a part of their doctoral research. Under the tutelage of the authors, postgraduate students of the Master of Human Settlements and the Master of Urbanism and Strategic Planning at KU Leuven contributed to this research in the form of a first semester studio (2013, 2014 and 2016) on Strategic Spatial Planning. The combination of academic and pro-bono, activist professional involvement arguably enlarged our room to manoeuvre (Kaethler et al., 2016) and created a critical framework to actively reflect on our work and the changing co-productive ambitions within the local coalition.

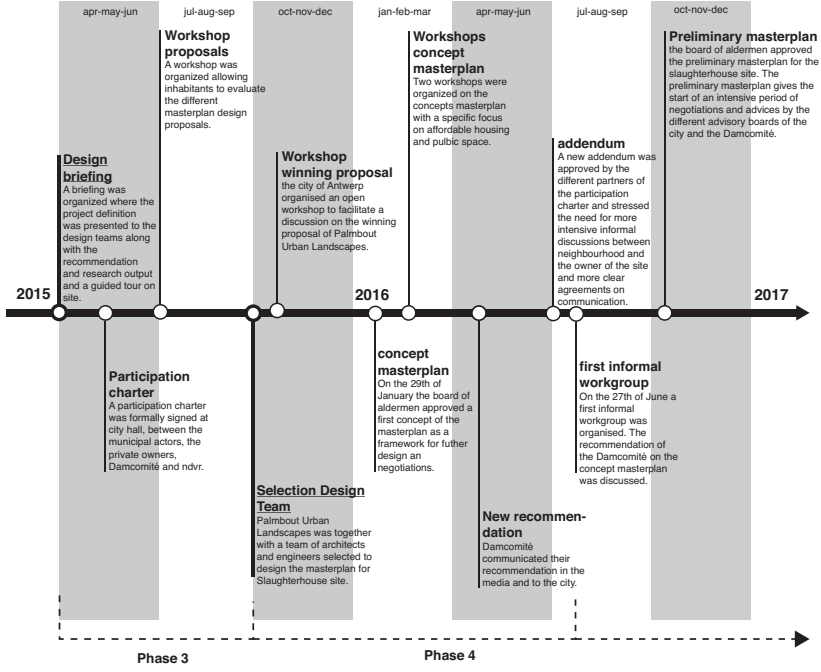
The action research, consisted of a process of co-production of local knowledge (surveying and mapping the use of space, validating daily experiences), deliberative moments and workshops (mainly focused on local involvement) and facilitating continuous negotiations between local and municipal actors. Each of these acts was defined and constructed through a close collaboration between ndvr and the Damcomité. Based on a mutual trust-relationship (Nielsen & Svensson, 2006) we actively tried to identify changing constellations of opportunities for neighbourhood involvement, come up with tactics that would enlarge our room for manoeuvre taking into account the complex and multi-layered process driven by a neoliberal agenda and find ways to support and trigger the collaborative ambitions of the rich variety of actors related to the redevelopment of the Slaughterhouse site (a.o. the city and the owner of the site). Although this research was based on a dynamic process of 'learning-by-doing' in line with the characteristics of a coproductive approach (Watson,

2014), the long-term collaboration between the Damcomité and ndvr and our presence on site allowed to develop reflective insights into '*the relationships between the different actors and agents involved in the redevelopment of the slaughterhouse site and their goals, and objectives*' (Moulaert & Mehmood, 2015, p. 105). Arguably, the research process therefore draws on the essential characteristics of participatory action research (Reason & Bradbury, 2001, p.2): engaging in real-life, dynamic and evolutionary processes in coalition with different actors, combining action and reflection in order to explore new ways to construct practical or 'living' knowledge, whilst aiming to mobilise collective action.

The following analysis focuses on the time-period spanning the initial announcement of the municipal intentions for the redevelopment of the slaughterhouse site, up until the presentation of a preliminary masterplan proposal. Within this period both local engagement and the formal planning procedure took shape which makes it an interesting moment in time to research specific opportunities for co-productive ambitions within a neoliberal urban renewal process. The timeline (Figure 86 and Figure 87) presents an overview of the key moments which took place throughout the action research. To deconstruct the action research process, we differentiate our analysis in 'phases of coproduction': each marked by a specific opportunity structure, triggering in turn a set of corresponding tactics to strategically seize opportunities or adapt to constraints and revealing a diversity of collaborative ambitions. The constellations of opportunities, tactics and collaborative ambitions continuously changed throughout the process (Table 9). For each phase the description is structured by three paragraphs. A first paragraph describes the opportunity structure for that particular moment in time. It gives a better understanding of policy ambitions, changing coalitions or the implementation of certain instruments and how these challenged the ongoing process in the Dam. A second paragraph describes how a local coalitions interrelated with these opportunities and how it shaped their tactics to seize the moment of opportunity for bigger resident involvement within the masterplanning process. In a third paragraph we try to elaborate on the kind of collaborative ambitions that are underlying these tactics and how they relate to both process and content related discussions within a neoliberal project based planning approach.

Figure 86 & 87: Chronological overview and description of key moments and milestones





10.4.5. Case Dam

Since the late 1990s several studies investigating scenarios to redevelop the former slaughterhouse site had been conducted, but never resulted into the actual implementation of a redevelopment. Most importantly plans were drafted to accommodate a wholesale market and a 'culinary agora' establishing one of the first experiments with public private partnerships in Antwerp. After the development of Park Spoor Noord (finished in 2009), transforming a former railway yard which shaped the southwest border of the neighbourhood into a park, a high school campus and new real-estate cluster in Antwerp, the neighbourhood has found a renewed popularity attracting ever more private investments. This creates an ideal context for the new local political coalition to 'set a new example': the newly appointed vice-mayor of spatial planning publicly communicated the ambition to revitalize what he had termed a 'dead-end project' which could be exemplary in setting the agenda of the new spatial planning policy of 'getting things done' (through private investment) (Verbruggen, 2013, February 22). The case can be considered as exemplary for a new approach which arguably seeks to put forward a more facilitating stance, easing procedures to create opportunities for private real-estate investments (Cochez & Timmerman, 2014, October 29). At the same time the start of this planning process coincides with a redesign of the city administration. The formerly strongly established semi-autonomous strategic planning agency of the city (AG Stan) was abolished and its main redevelopment projects were, together with their administrators, transferred to the semi-autonomous property management company AG Vespa.

The momentum created by the announcement in the media to revitalize the redevelopment of the slaughterhouse site, in combination with an apparent destabilized situation caused by the reshuffle of the cities political majority and administration, prompted a recently established local neighbourhood committee (Damcomité) to take the lead in building a local coalition. Damcomité to a large extent succeeded in joining forces between young middle-class inhabitants and 'old-timers', as well as developing strong connections with local welfare work and the parish (Meeus et al., 2016). In part in response to this project, supported by the knowhow of some politically engaged participants, the committee got professionalized. On the one hand appealing to a long history of community engagement in Antwerp's planning history (Van den Broeck et al., 2015), especially in relation to the neighbourhood's active role in initiating the development of Spoor Noord (Van Herzele, 2004). On the other hand, often referring to a previous emblematic case in Antwerp, the development of Park Groot Schijn, where local community, supported by Antwerpen aan 't Woord (a local coalitions of participation professionals), set an example for a new participatory approach, based on a charter between the city and involved actors (Claes, 2015).

An experimental cooperation (June 2013 - June 2014)

In order to kick-start the redevelopment, the drafting of a new project definition for a masterplan design tender was initiated. AG Stan and later AG Vespa, owning some smaller but strategic parts of the site, took the lead in drafting this project definition. In parallel negotiations between AG Vespa and the different private owners of the site took a start in order to achieve a mutual agreement. These negotiations behind closed doors lasted for more than a year, due to one of the private owners selling part of the site to a large real-estate development group (Land Invest). Arguably, procedure under pressure, with the vice-mayor being on a strict timing to initiate the project within his term of office, did not include a clear strategy on how the local community would be involved; and the planning vision had so far been limited to a couple of broadly formulated ambitions.

As a reaction to these unclear conditions Damcomité started a petition to become closely involved throughout the process, and have an impact on the project definition. At the same time there was a weariness that due to the time pressure to deliver a project definition as soon as possible, city planning would run the risk to not 'do its homework': in the sense of collecting local input and studying the current day-to-day reality of the neighbourhood as an input for the project definition. In response, Damcomité reached out to ndvr to cooperate in mapping the neighbourhood, in order to have a stronger say in the process to follow.
In this first stage Damcomité and ndvr cooperated closely in an investigative process to study the neighbourhood in search of locally embedded preconditions to feed the project definition, while using the research process as a lever to consult and involve a variety of local actors. This was done by describing and mapping local social and spatial dynamics, in order to get a clear idea of the functioning and identity of the neighbourhood and by consulting a variety of local actors by means of several deliberative moments and workshops (Devos et al., 2015). The research was strategically put to use to feed participatory dialogue and vice versa in a loop of data-collection and deliberation. The rather successful co-organization of several workshops and the quality of the co-produced research output gave ndvr the leverage to co-draft with SWO, the municipal agency for neighbourhood consultation, and Vespa a formal policy agreement. This was used as an opportunity to formalize the statute of the collected research. In this agreement it was stated that: firstly, the research output of the different workshops would be provided as a 'research-addition' to the project definition and the design brief, and Damcomité and ndvr would be given the opportunity to introduce it to the three applying design offices on the official competition briefing. Secondly, it was agreed upon that there would be a participatory moment, allowing for the neighbourhood to give feedback to the submitted design proposals, before the official selection. Lastly, throughout the design phase workshops would be co-organized by the neighbourhood and the appointed office in collaboration with ndvr, allowing the neighbourhood to engage into direct dialogue with the designers. Furthermore, the agreement solidified the organizatory basis of the long awaited participation charter.
In this first phase the collaborative ambitions took different forms. On the one hand, the

different involved actors (local actors, city administration, ndvr, private owners) collaborated in conducting research on the local needs of the neighbourhood and the existing social and spatial dynamics. On the other hand, the lack of a delineated, formal start of the impending masterplanning process, due to postponing of the approval of a project definition, resulted in a tangible struggle of the city administration, and AG Vespa in particular, in dealing with pro-active local involvement, whilst facilitating negotiations between private investors. This in turn lead to a main focus of the different actors to engage in procedural negotiations, and the mutual understanding that there was a need to delineate the workings of the formal participation process to be implemented during the masterplanning phase, following the approval of the project definition.

Drafting a recommendation (June 2014 - April 2015)

With the finalization of the project definition in sight, a public moment (4/6/14) was organized by the city where the 'preliminary project definition' would be presented with the possibility to formulate feedback. However, the city presented more or less the same ambitions as presented on the very first public hearing a year before, under the pretext that these ambitions constitute the main framework of the project definition. This setting strengthened the general concern of Damcomité that despite the effort invested in elaborate research and deliberative moments, the ambitions had not been amended nor 'locally enriched' but remained no more than ready-made blueprints. Furthermore, Damcomité drew the conclusion that they would not have any access to the actual contents of the project definition prior to its formal completion and approval, despite this being from the outset the main demand voiced in the petition. As a consequence, there was a fear that the 'research-addition' would remain non-binding, and that despite the productive co-productive process so far, the city still had cold feet to stage a truly open process.

In response, Damcomité resorted once more to a pro-active strategy by drafting a 'recommendation' to make sure local demands could be voiced in a profound way. This recommendation was used as a vehicle to translate the inputs obtained from the participative moments and research into 9 statements or claims, summarizing the main concerns of the neighbourhood (statement 1: at least 1/3th of the project should consist of green public space; statement 2: the masterplan needs to give the warranty of real affordable housing on a long term base; statement 3: the quays are a qualitative part of the Dam; statement 4: there is a need for a varied space for sport, play, leisure and meeting; statement 5: the Dam needs a larger range of public services; statement 6: small scale economic activities in line with the neighbourhood; statement 7: the Dam has to be a traffic-calmed area; statement 8: less future Less disruption of supra-local traffic; statement 9: a better access of the Dam by public transport). The statements strategically remained quite close to the ambitions put forward by the urban planning department, yet contextualizing them and filling the hollow concepts with substantial suggestions. Ndvr supported the drafting of the recommendation and, in cooperation with Damcomité, a workshop and

different local actions were organized to present the draft statements to the neighbourhood for feedback and ensure the representability of the finalized recommendation. In December 2014, Damcomité communicated its recommendation to the city administration, and the media. The recommendation was approved and seen as an official reaction to the project definition. As such Damcomité could present its advice to the design teams that took part in the upcoming design competition.

In contrast to the first phase, the launch of the project definition placed value-driven discussions over the future ambitions for the neighbourhood in the centre of local collaboration. The recommendation of Damcomité on the project definition took a clear position on the future development of the neighbourhood. Most of the arguments that support the recommendation are clearly stated to counter a possible gentrification threat. Damcomité had the feeling that the hollow concepts of the project definition possibly facilitate, at least not block, gentrification. Their arguments tried to directly relate with this fear by articulating substantive arguments to the concepts of the project definition. The idea of high quality public space for instance was rephrased as the need for small local public places that related to the majority of houses without private gardens in the Dam. This as a direct reaction to the idea of high quality public space as a way to attract higher income households. By creating a new instrument (their recommendation) Damcomité reacted to the earlier experience of a limitative planning framework and the lack of a clear position by the city. The recommendation was drafted in such way that it seized upon a shared nostalgic sentiment by both the city, private developers and the neighbourhood (Meeus et al., 2016). This gave AG Vespa and SWO the possibility to integrate the recommendation as a document of reference for future procedural steps.

The competition phase (April 2015 - October 2015)

Following the official approval of the project definition, a tender briefing session was organized, marking the formal starting point of the design competition and with that the masterplanning phase. As agreed between Damcomité, ndvr, the owner of the site, AG Vespa and SWO, the introduction to the design brief by AG Vespa, was followed by a presentation of the research-output and recommendations, by ndvr and Damcomité respectively, and an elaborate site visit. Furthermore, with the participation charter finally signed, the organisational structure of the further process was put in place: regular steering committee meetings bringing the involved municipal and neighbourhood actors as well as the private investors actors around the table, and furthermore a series of workshops that would take place throughout the design process, once a design-team was selected. However, there remained imminent unclarity about the actual selection procedure in appointing a design-team and its criteria, and for that matter how and to which extent the local input would be taken into account or inform the external jury's decision.

While ndvr and Damcomité explicitly pleaded in favour of a more open and transparent

selection procedure, the city remained reserved arguing that the public tender procedure normally doesn't allow for any direct feedback or dialogue. As a compromise, AG Vespa and SWO suggested to organize a 'small-scale' event where the designs would be exhibited in the form of presentation panels for each of the three designs, however with no accompanying explanation by the designers nor AG Vespa. Furthermore, the possibility for feedback was to be based on a standard form which could be completed at the presentation itself and would include 3 open questions (likes, dislikes and suggestions). It comes as no surprise that this triggered the general worry amongst the neighbourhood actors that the panels wouldn't be self-explanatory, and couldn't possibly represent the entire design or rather the mind-set behind the proposals. More importantly, it was argued that the feedback would consist of no more than general, uninformed and ad-hoc comments, which seemed completely contradictory to the co-productive process which had been developing thus far and to all the rich local content and 'criteria' which had been produced. This catalysed a call for a greater advisory role for ndvr and Damcomité towards the jury, despite not having an actual vote in the selection, where an evaluation of the proposals could be communicated based on the contents of the recommendation. Finally, after several discussions, the event took the form of a workshop where the participants could discuss the designs in small groups and Damcomité could formulate a written feedback report, based on the output of these discussions and structured around the statements of the advice, which was communicated to all the design-teams and the jury.

In this phase a first interesting attempt to combine both procedural steps and content related collaboration took shape. The earlier experiences on collaboration between the different involved actors and the clear vision of Damcomité on the future of the neighbourhood resulted in a confirmed position of the committee as local experts. The advisory role Damcomité was given in the selection procedure of the masterplan shows this important step forward in the way the city dealt with local collaboration and neighbourhood involvement. At the same time the unclarity on how the neighbourhood recommendations were taken into account shows how procedural steps and power conflicts related to the redevelopment of the site continued to have influence. This contradiction, mainly materialized in the position of AG Vespa, between the willingness to collaborate and a strict interpretation of procedural rules showed the continuous struggle for a more collaborative ambition and even more collaborative behaviour of the different actors involved.

(Co-) constructing a Masterplan (October 2015 - September 2016)

Following the selection of the team of Palmbout Urban Landscapes as the main designer of the masterplan several workshops were organised. These workshops were initiated by the coalition that endorsed the participation charter and related highly with the topics raised by the recommendation of Damcomité: affordable housing and locally embedded public space. Regardless the importance of the will to cooperate around topics for the future neighbourhood, the workshops lead to first signs of frustration of Damcomité. SWO, the

municipal agency for neighbourhood consultation, was the main organizer of the workshops. In comparison to earlier workshops hosted by ndvr, SWO had a rather classical approach. The workshops were mainly conceptualised as hearings where first drafts of the masterplan could be presented. This was in line with the format SWO applied all over the city on different other projects but underestimated the accumulated capacities of local actors to understand and discuss design proposals and the embedded definition of participation as a co-productive *Endeavour*. At the same time (29/1/2016) a concept masterplan was approved by the city of Antwerp. This concept masterplan drafted the first outlines of the future redevelopment of the site and forms the basis of environmental assessments, financial modelling and future negotiations with the neighbourhood and other involved actors (the workshops).

Damcomité had the feeling that, although the different involved actors agreed upon a participation charter, their position as local experts and directly impacted citizens wasn't taken seriously. The concept masterplan didn't directly address the recommendations of the committee and the different workshops missed a real collaborative approach. To strengthen their position, Damcomité decided to write a new recommendation. This recommendation followed the ten statements of the previous version and described in great detail the points of difference between the concept masterplan and the local needs of the neighbourhood. The way the concept masterplan dealt with public space was, e.g., heavily contested. Different functions as sport facilities, playgrounds and schools were scattered over the neighbourhood, poorly connected to the current centre of the Dam. This gave the feeling that a very narrow, real-estate oriented approach to public space was applied. The proposed squares and parks missed the idea of clustering different activities and facilitate encounter and mixed use. To support their local claims, Damcomité organised a press action on the 10th of April to present their newly drafted recommendation.

During the first design stage of the masterplan coproduction had a fluctuating meaning. On the one hand every step was the direct application of the participation charter and a clear recognition of Damcomité as local representatives of the neighbourhood, on the other hand parallel procedures bypassed and undermined the collaborative efforts and directly followed a classical closed group approach of a planning process. This two-folded interpretation lead to a quiet conflicting stage in the whole process. The vice mayor reacted very agitated to the press conference of Damcomité. Claiming that the press conference was a violation of trust of the long cooperation between the city and the neighbourhood. Damcomité at their side claimed that the different attempts to start a productive dialogue and integrate local knowledge lead to nothing if a parallel way of working continued to dominate the process. After months of discussion the city and Damcomité agreed that a more detailed description of communication, roles and ways of coproduction had to be added to the participation charter. At the 24th of June an addendum of the participation charter was presented. Besides a detailed division of tasks, the addendum launched a new way of cooperation and a clear agreement on further communication. A workgroup on the

Table 9: Overview of how constellations of opportunities, tactics and collaborative ambitions continuously changed over the subsequent 'coproductive phases'

	OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURE	LOCAL COALITIONS AND TACTICS	COLLABORATIVE AMBITIONS
Phase 1: an experimental cooperation	• Public communication of renewed ambition to revitalize the site. • Unclarities in planning procedure (pre project-definition). • Unclarities in shifting roles of city administration. • Lack of predefined strategy to involve local stakeholders. • Generic ambitions, leaving space for local narratives.	• Petition demanding for local input in the formulation of the project definition and a 'professionalizing' Damcomité. • Coalition between Damcomité and ndvr to cooperate in researching socio-spatial dynamics in search of local preconditions. • Deliberative workshops to involve other local actors and enrich research. • Support by the city in preparing public consultations and on-site activities. • Co-drafting a policy agreement on the participatory aspects of the masterplanning process.	• Clear support and collaboration of the different involved actors to conduct reseacht on the local needs of the neighbourhood. • A limited actual engagement of the different stakeholders to renegotiate how input would be provided to the content and ambitions of the masterplan, instead discussion focused on procedural aspects and delineating the roles of the different partners.
Phase 2: drafting a recommen-dation	• Presentation of preliminary project definition. • Based on the same initial ambitions: ready-made blueprints instead of refined or enriched by the local input. • The formal policy agreement creating leverage to include local demands.	• Damcomité pro-actively drafting a recommendation. • Ndvr supporting this process. • Setting apart booklet and advice. But making both mutually supportive. • The city accepts this local activist agenda by including the research booklet and the related advice as an attachment to the approved project definition.	• A clear change of style putting forward substantive arguments as a platform for discussion and collaboration. • A supportive stance of both owner and city because of the preliminary state of the development process.

	OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURE	LOCAL COALITIONS AND TACTICS	COLLABORATIVE AMBITIONS
Phase 3: the competition phase	• Organizatory structure in place and charter signed. • Agreement on possibility to give feedback to design proposals during the competition phase. • Unclarity about selection procedure and criteria. • Public tender generally does not allow for direct input.	• Ndvr and Damcomité arguing for more transparent procedure. Striving for an advisory role towards the jury. • Negotiating with the city administration to open up the closed procedure and the decision-making process. • Organizing a feedback moment in cooperation with SWO and Vespa. • Damcomité formulating feedback to the proposals based on the recommendations formulated in the previous phase.	• A first interesting attempt to interrelate content and procedural strategies. • Enforced recognition of the Dacmomité as a local expert. • Unclarity on real impact of advices and how local reccommendations were taken into account. AG Vespa acting as a gatekeeper using formal planning procedures. • A final agreement on a participation charter for the redevelopment process describing in detail the collaborative responsabilities of the different stakeholders.
Phase 4: drafting a masterplan	• Selection of design team. • Presentation of a first concept of the masterplan that drafts the outlines of the future redevelopment of the site and mainly fucntions as a basis for futher negotiations between the city and the private developer, neglecting the involvement of the Damcomité.	• Organization of different workshops on the concept- masterplan. • The Damcomité drafted a new recommendation and organized a local action that clearly stated their discontentment with the followed procedure.	• Fluctuating collaborative ambitions with a discrepancy between formal and informal cooperations. • An attempt to open-up the formal cooperative procedures. • After a long round of negotiations the local coalition strengthened their cooperation in a new addendum to the participation charter that stressed an improved informal cooperation on the content of the masterplan.

actual content of the masterplan was added to the participatory structure of the process. The workgroup had to become an arena for discussion where in an informal and discrete environment new design proposals and local suggestions could be evaluated and improved.

10.4.6. Conclusions

Through an elaborated case study this paper has sought to deconstruct the complex interplay between opportunities and thresholds that presented themselves over the course of a 4 year-long process of involvement in the Dam neighbourhood in Antwerp. The analysis has shown that valuable insights can be developed by deconstructing 'moments of opportunity', where 'collaborative ambitions', often translated into pro-actively initiated alternative ways of working, intersect with the instrumentalized approaches to 'resident participation', to which they often directly respond. In doing so, we have aimed to demonstrate that insights can be developed on how the key concepts underlying coproduction, as described in section 3, can be actively mobilised from an activist-research position.

Firstly, the case-study has sought to demonstrate how combining the mobilisation of local knowledge and scientific research in an experimental collaboration, has effectively strengthened the local coalition, providing room for negotiation in the further process. Secondly, the analysis has highlighted the challenging yet often productive dialectic between the initiation of pro-active collaborative strategies and the continuous renegotiation of formalised planning instruments and procedures. On several occasions developing tensions have culminated in direct conflicts, generating in turn new 'ways of working' or a re-working of pre-existing modes of cooperation. Doing so, the analysis has aimed to demonstrate how coproduction emphasises the possibility of citizen initiatives working outside of formalised procedures, without necessarily excluding an incremental process of collaboration with municipal actors. Thirdly, this analysis has aimed to highlight the merits of an activist mode of planning research in order to develop insights into the relational complexity of coproduction. An 'intermediate activist' positioning or research perspective can thereby be seen as a valuable framework, which however undeniably poses methodological challenges. In particular, focusing on 'relational causes', in aiming to cooperate with a local coalition as well as the municipal actors proved to be particularly challenging in having to continuously justify and enforce an 'intermediate' position whilst avoiding direct denomination as a 'spokesperson' for local actors, which can actually undermine a co-productive approach. Moreover, as coproduction embodies a stronger emphasis on a dynamic process of learning-by-doing, rather than an exclusive focus on staging 'productive' debates, this requires types of research which not only delve into methodological explorations of participatory interactions (Devos et al., 2015), deconstruct discursive constructions of a local agenda (Meeus et al., 2016), as well as analysis of complex processes (this article).
As we have aimed to emphasise through the case-study analysis, the pressure of a heavily

market-oriented redevelopment agenda often resulted in heavily proceduralised ways of planning, despite the at times productive collaboration, drastically limiting the inclusivity of the process. In particular, this tension is tangible in the deontological difficulties posed by the facilitating role of AG Vespa. Whereas the co-productive way of working initiated in the earlier stages, with the Damcomité gaining recognition as a strong local representative, at times heavily collided with the rather 'classical' way of working the city implemented during the masterplanning phase. This was exemplified in many ways by the conflict between the collaborative ambitions of Damcomité with the delineated way of working imposed by SWO, heavily determined by instrumentalized approaches to participation, and adapted to the project-oriented logic. Therefore, the case has showed how instrumentalized participation processes often run parallel to the actual decision-making processes, hence legitimating the status-quo instead of using the moment of spatial visioning to organize an inclusive co-productive process that puts forward a need-based agenda and situates decision-making back in the hearth of the process. Therefore, the action research has shown the importance of combining a process-oriented approach, continuously renegotiating formalised procedures and instrumentalized discussion platforms, with the continuous discursive construction of a local agenda, supported by research as well as different forms of participatory engagements. Arguably, in order to respond to the possible foreclosure of democratic involvement under neoliberal agendas which become apparent in such processes, it is therefore required for coproduction to respond to the multi-layered aspects of the planning process. From the case-study analysed in this paper, valuable lessons were therefore learned, where emphasis in the early-stages lied predominantly on the idea of collecting 'input', more terrain could have been won by playing more strongly and strategically on this multi-layerdness, responding more directly to certain thresholds (as the socio political functioning of certain instruments and procedures) which developed themselves during the masterplanning phase.

This paper has sought to show the merits of studying the tangible effects of predominantly project-driven urban development approaches on the inclusivity of a planning process, on a micro-scale, by engaging in an experimental collaborative process. Arguably, it is only by positioning ourselves as actors in the midst of a co-production process, that planning academics and practitioners can begin to understand if and to which extent co-productive approaches can effectively challenge the democratic deficit of neo-liberal urban development processes. There is thus a need for action-oriented research exploring how neoliberal mechanisms impact such development processes. Therefore, we have emphasised the need of an analytical scope which allows for an investigation of how different local and governmental agendas surface, transform, interrelate and often collide. The role of the researcher as an 'intermediate activist position', provides possibility to study these effects, without residing to a purely methodological focus, and allows to explore the implications for the role of the collaborative planner when directly engaging with citizen-initiatives, in facing neoliberal mechanisms.

10.4.7. REFERENCES

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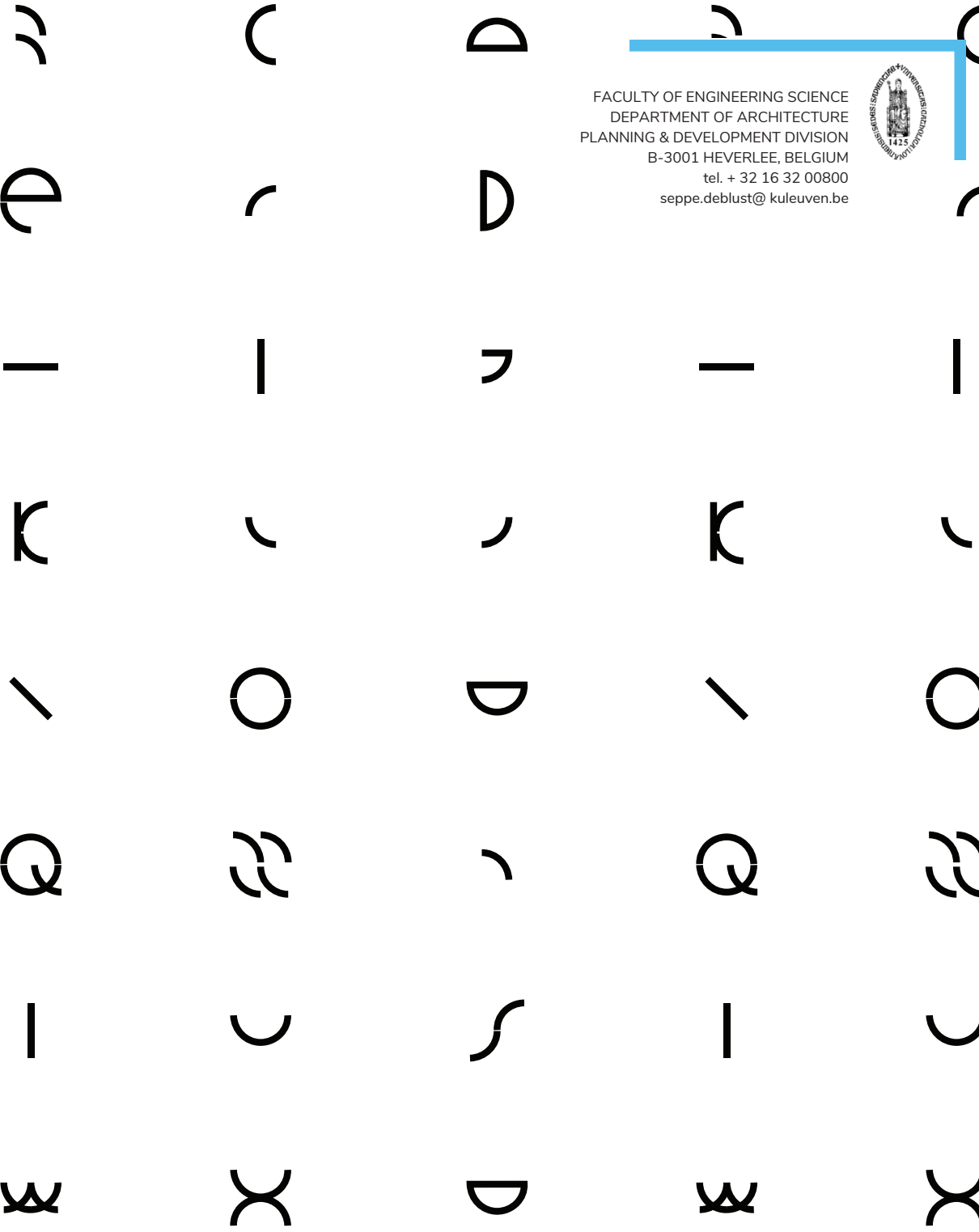

FACULTY OF ENGINEERING SCIENCE
DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE
PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT DIVISION
B-3001 HEVERLEE, BELGIUM
tel. + 32 16 32 00800
seppe.deblust@ kuleuven.be