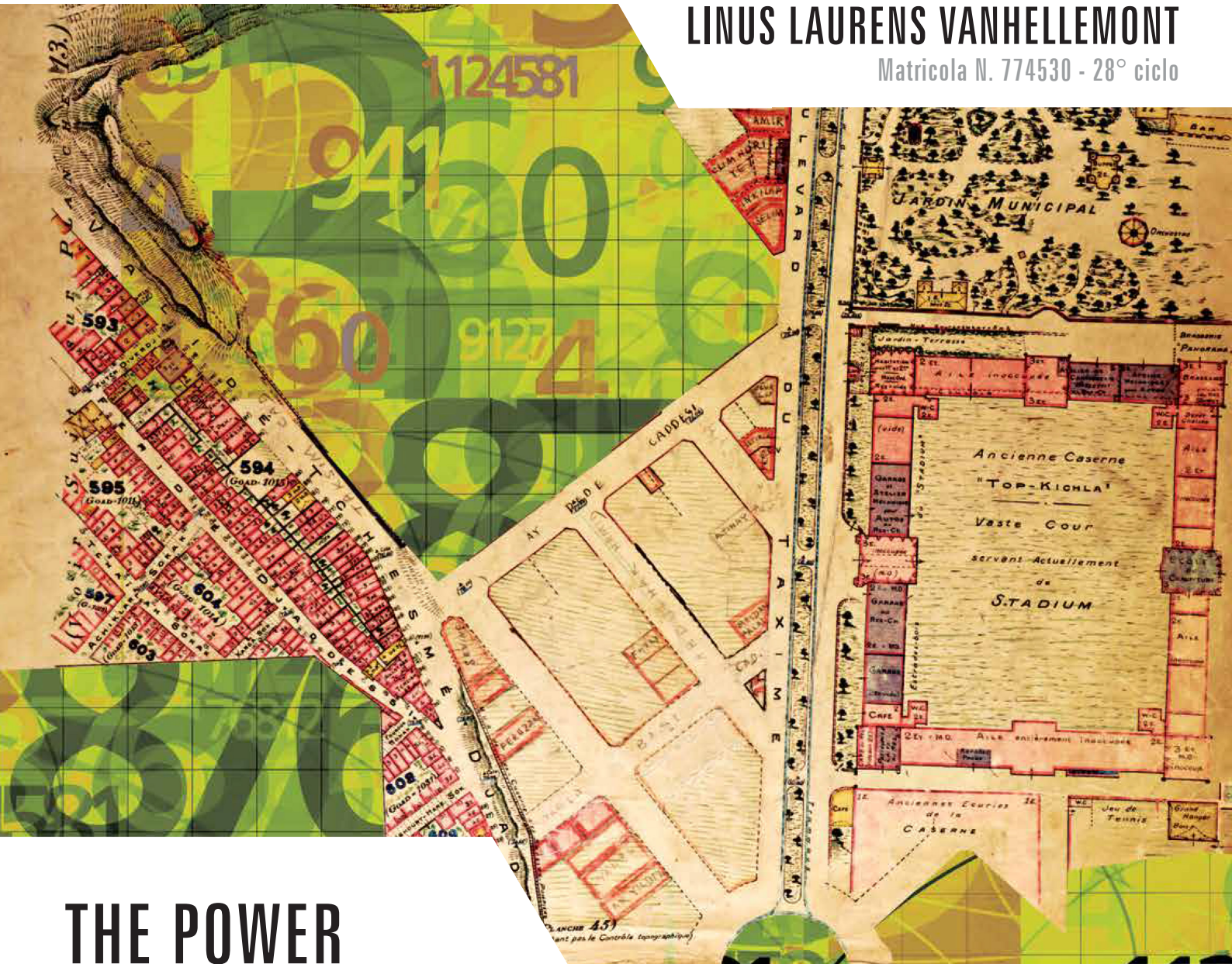


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THE POWER OF IMAGINARIES IN URBAN PLANNING PROCESSES

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The Power of Imaginaries in Urban Planning Processes

With studies of

Brussels - The Case of the Central Boulevards (Belgium)

Istanbul - The Taksim-Gezi Park Development (Turkey)

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2012 - 2016

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Chapter 1
Introduction

Summary

Seventeen years ago John Friedmann argued that the ambivalence about power is one of the biggest problems in theorizing and understanding urban planning processes. He contended that this ambivalence exists in all major schools of planning thought and encouraged planning researchers “to ponder the question of power with a point of departure in what is actually happening in city politics and planning, as opposed to what we normatively would like to see happen” (1998). More recently, Enrico Gualini echoed his statement arguing that the ambivalence about power still characterizes much of the planning literature today (Gualini, 2015). This PhD asks therefore once again how the power relations function in urban planning processes and it argues that one key element has remained absent or at least underdeveloped, namely the role of imaginaries in the planning process. Based on an elaborate review of the literature in urban planning, sociology and geography of the imaginary, as well as case studies in Brussels and Istanbul, it is argued that imaginaries have indeed a powerful role in the urban planning process and the book concludes by answering how they play their part.

Introduction

The title of this PhD should be interpreted as both a question and a potential answer, *'how do power relations function in urban planning processes?'*, while suggesting that at least a part of the response will be found by directing our gaze toward the role of *imaginaries*. The query is inspired by a statement of one of the leading scholars in urban planning theory, John Friedmann. Seventeen years ago he argued that the ambivalence about power is one of the biggest problems in theorizing and understanding urban planning processes. He contended that this ambivalence exists in all major schools of planning thought and encouraged planning researchers "to ponder the question of power with a point of departure in what is actually happening in city politics and planning, as opposed to what we normatively would like to see happen" (1998). By that he meant that scholars of urban planning theory had focused too much on developing prescriptions and recipes for good planning practice, while neglecting to develop theory that could also explain the planning process analytically, especially with regards to power.

As I will discuss in detail, the last decades saw different attempts to meet J. Friedmann's challenge. But as their predecessors they continued to prioritize the question of 'how to get things done' as a planner, rather than to focus on how planning actually works when it comes to the *power relations* between the different actors. Indeed, as Enrico Gualini of the TU Berlin argued more recently, the ambivalence about power still characterizes much of the planning literature today (Gualini, Mourato, & Allegra, 2013; Gualini, 2015). This PhD asks therefore again, *how do the power relations function in urban planning processes?*

To answer I will first demonstrate why the canon of urban planning theory tried to respond to that question in the first place and how they did so. I begin by explaining how Urban Planning's focus with the 'object of planning', the neighborhood, the city or city-region gradually shifted --throughout the 1960s and 70s-- to a preoccupation with the 'process of planning'. Instead of developing proposals of what the city should look like and how it should function; they started developing proposals of how the planning process should proceed democratically and how

planners could get their plans implemented in the face of budget restraints, and the requisite of engaging with the private sector. The theory's search and development of these proposals raised the question of how power relations work.

Throughout the 70s and 80s different schools of urban planning theory advanced answers in response, leading to a wide array of literature. Yet, it was not until the 1990s that new, more empirically-based and more analytical understandings were developed. Especially noteworthy advances were made by Patsy Healey's 'institutionalist collaborative approach', with regard to the role of structure and agency, inspired by Anthony Giddens' Structuration Theory; and by Bent Flyvbjerg's 'Foucauldian urban planning theory', on how power is produced by the planning institutions on a micro level. I will discuss them therefore more in detail in the state of the art of this PhD; and like Friedmann and Gualini, I will also criticize them. But, I argue that in studies on urban governance and environmental planning more in general, interesting advances were made as well that should not be neglected.

I especially point out Clarence Stone's 'Urban Regime Theory' for its interesting approach to power relations, how they are socially produced and the hard work it takes; and Maarten Hajer's Gramscian 'narrative approach' on how power relations are developed by, and between, 'discourse coalitions' that draw storylines and metaphors to impose or oppose a view and problematize the planning situation. But I also argue that even when taking these insights into account, there remain a vast lacunae for different reasons. Urban Regime Theory limits its focus to Public-Private coalitions developed by urban governments. It looks mainly at private 'interests' and 'stakes' and assumes the possibility of consensus. The narrative approach is more interesting in that sense as it analyses how different coalitions are likely to oppose each other, in an attempt to define, structure and institutionalize a dominant view, of the reasons for the planning process. Hajer's approach helps to explain why consensus cannot always be found as different groups may develop fundamentally different problem definitions, which in turn may lead to irreconcilable positions.

But at least one key element remains absent or underdeveloped, that is the role of the *imaginaries* in the planning process. The narrative approach remains very linguistic and focused on *representations* while neglecting what it is that they represent: the view and horizon with which the different involved actors approach the city and the planning process.¹ Their understanding of what the city is and what it should be, or what it should not be, and the logic & reasoning, emotion, desires and dreams that it entails for their positioning in the debate, for their actions and decisions throughout the planning process.

When I refer to the *imaginary*, however, I do not in the first place mean the actors' personal views or *imagination*, but the collective, social *imaginaries* upon which they draw. Think for example of two of the most famous examples, the 20th century *automotive city* and the *imaginary* of the *livable city* that developed from the 1970s onward. They represent two existing, opposing views of the world. For the person who shares for example the *imaginary of the automotive city*, it will organize his or her reasoning on what the city is, should be or shouldn't

1 i.e. planners, elected officials, public servants and governing coalitions, private enterprises, civil society organizations, citizens and protest coalitions

be 'logically'-speaking, and it will shape his or her desires, fantasies and dreams about what the city could be one day. It is that horizon, those views, which are represented and referenced in Maarten Hajer's narratives, storylines and metaphors and that underlie planning proposals. But even more importantly, theoretically it might explain why the debate in urban planning is often so contentious; why different positions are often voiced with such strong glee or visceral dismay and why consensus or 'win-win' solutions are unlikely at times. Put differently, these *imaginaries* may well be what drives a significant part of the dynamic in urban planning processes.

Of course, in practice no urban planner would ever deny the importance of *imaginaries* as it is one of the key elements upon which they draw to develop a narrative and future vision for an area, and as it is at the root of many conflicts they encounter with elected officials, private partners or involved citizens. But in urban planning theory they are absent from the scene or underdeveloped (Suitner 2013, Vermeulen 2015)² and it is precisely why the title of this PhD suggests we should direct our gaze to them and address the absence.

Sociology and geography did not apply their knowledge about the *imaginary* to urban planning in particular, but they scrutinized the topic extensively in general. That is why I look to them for advice and draw on them to see how their analysis could be applied to the phenomenon of urban planning. Not with the intent of developing a new urban planning theory, as that would largely bypass the scope of this research. But with the aim of proposing a practical conceptual framework that can allow me to respond to '*what role imaginaries play in the power relations that take place in urban planning*', through inductive research. Put differently, with the objective of finding pointers that can serve as a practical toolbox for empirical research on how to approach the case studies in an organized and focused way.

I will turn to sociology of the *imaginary* and especially Cornelius Castoriadis to explain how the *social imaginary* and the *individual imagination* relate to one another. How the *imaginary* structures and defines the *imagination* as people grow up and grow old. How it is passed on from generation to generation in social interaction and up kept and maintained through their multitude of *representations*; in the form of language, discourse, images, books, curricula and schools, national administrations and so forth, as well as in the form of monuments, iconic building, infrastructure, the urban fabric and its vernacular, put differently its representation in *place*. The argument that is made, is that the *social imaginary* is what 'stabilizes' societies. It fulfills therefore a powerful role. But because the *imaginary*, ultimately, needs to be *imagined* individually, there is always also a potential for change; whether it comes in the form of minor alterations, due to its continuous collective (unconscious) *imagination* in everyday life or in the form of larger shifts. Indeed, the approach can be interpreted as a structuration theory 'avant-la-lettre', of a permanent and continuous process between structure and agency (Cfr. Giddens, 1984).

From Bob Jessop's Gramscian approach we will learn that while there are dominant, *hegemonic imaginaries* of society and of parts of society (such as 'the economy' or 'the city'),

2 In fact even the '*ideals*' that planners adhere to for developing an area or the role of the '*agenda*' that is put forward by a development coalition or 'urban regime', are said to be neglected in urban planning theory. (Respectively: Fainstein's, 2012; Stone, 2001 & 2005)

there are also *counter-hegemonic imaginaries* that continue to exist in smaller communities and new *counter-hegemonic imaginaries* that may emerge. Similarly to Castoriadis he argues that there is a *social imaginary* that is *hegemonic*, but it is seen as permanently (and consciously) challenged. That does not mean that change to the dominant view comes easy or that it comes gradually. On the contrary, it is emphasized that when it does happen it is at particular moments, in moments of crisis's following *triggering events* that spur what is called 'cognitive disorientation' and 'intensified learning' among the population as well as the elites. But as Gramscian author Chantal Mouffe emphasizes, in these moments of change, it is not only the cognitive learning process that makes the difference. But also the passions, affects and emotions that are released, such as hope and indignation; while highlighting that *groups* are responsible for establishing power relations that can effectively challenge the *hegemonic imaginary*, not *individuals*.

Sociology emphasizes that these *imaginaries*, these powerful entities, are kept in place and maintained thanks to their 'institutionalization' in the form of immaterial or material *representations*. I summed some of them up just above, but one of them is of particular interest to the theory of urban planning, that is *place*. Castoriadis did not elaborate on how *place* fulfills its role as a *representation* and how it helps to stabilize society. But there are three other fields of research that do.

Human geography for starters developed a vast literature on 'the geography of place'. Not because of its physical qualities, but because it of the 'place identity' it produces. It argued that *place* plays a vital role in stabilizing the identity of people in two different ways. First, because *places* people use in their daily lives will start to function as 'home places' and 'spaces of daily routines'. In doing so they become part of the individual 'place identity' that gives comfort and cognitive constancy. Second because the *places* that are collectively known in the neighborhood, in the community, in the city or country will function as 'vectors of communion'; precisely because everybody knows them. And that goes for people who disagree with the *imaginary* they represent too. Think for example of a regionalist faction or person in Belgium, Turkey or Italy. In all cases the person might profoundly despise all national monuments or even the capital; yet the fact of knowing these *places* like all other country men, will binds him or her to them and it will be part of the person's 'place identity'.³

Critical geography, for her part, developed a 'geography of urban landscapes', arguing that the way those 'place identities' are stabilized is not neutral, but that in fact *places* and *landscapes* are *imaginary institutions*. Therefore, they are representations of a *hegemonic* or a *counter-hegemonic imaginary* and once *in place*, the literature argues, they are particularly powerful actors to sediment and structure society. The reason therefore is that they are real, physical entities. They do not come across as social constructs, but as what is natural and therefore normal. Put differently, in the arsenal of means to institutionalize an imaginary they are particularly effective because they tend to 'naturalize' the imaginary institution, while moreover indeed continuing to serve as home place, as space of daily routines and as vector of community for all who know or use the space; indeed, even those who disagree with the underlying imaginary.

3 If only because of the visceral contempt which he or she will not share with people from other nation-states.

The last body of literature, finally, lies in the same vein but develops around one *place* in particular, that is ‘capital cities’ and how they are used in nation state building projects as ‘vectors of communion’, to forge the nation by creating a ‘national place identity’.

I discuss the sociological and geographical literature in detail --in chapter two on the ‘State of the Art’-- to conclude subsequently in chapter three with some assumptions that help me construe the ‘practical toolbox for empirical research’ that I mentioned above. First, I assume that *place* is indeed an *imaginary institution* or ‘*representation of the imaginary*’ and that it has a particularly powerful role towards the community at large in maintaining and up keeping the *imaginary*; whether it represents a *hegemonic* or a *counter-hegemonic imaginary*. Second, if *place* is indeed an *imaginary institution* and if *place* is also the ‘object of planning’, then I can approach urban planning as *the government organized activity of the imaginary institution of place*. Third, if *place* has indeed such a powerful role in society, then it also follows that the stakes inside the planning process are likely to be particularly high when an alteration is proposed to the *imaginary institution of place*, while consensus will be unlikely. And fourth, if *place* has the function to stabilize identities, it also follows that the implementation of new plans that alter the *imaginary institution*, are likely to have a destabilizing effect. They may well function as triggering events that generate cognitive dissonance and intensified learning, opening the possibility of new *imaginaries* to emerge. I conclude the chapter, consequently, with a conceptual framework that brings the key concepts together in a heuristic model to help guide inductive research into the question on ‘*what the role now is, of the imaginary in the power relations in urban planning*’ and more specifically ‘*what the role is of place and imaginaries of the city in urban planning*’. At the end of this PhD I will answer those questions in detail, and I will argue that the findings can serve as an opening and a stepping stone toward a comprehensive theory of the imaginary in urban planning, but not before outlining the empirical analysis in great detail.

I chose to scrutinize two case studies that were bound to unveil the involved *imaginaries* more clearly than other cases as they both constitute some of the most important urban planning conflicts in recent years for their local and national contexts. Both planning proposals included iconic changes to the current *imaginary institution* of their capital inner cities⁴. My first case study takes place in Turkey where the national government proposed the redevelopment of Istanbul’s symbolic *Secular-Republican* Taksim Square and Gezi Park. The aim was to replace them by re-erecting the old Neo-Ottoman artillery barracks that were once there, while excavating tunnels to bring the existing roads under the square. My second case study takes place in Belgium where the local government decided to pedestrianize the Central Boulevards of Brussels’ historic inner city. The proposal put an end to one of the symbols of the automotive city as it developed in Brussels after the World Expo of 1958.

What is particular, furthermore, in both cases is the role played by citizens’ movements in establishing the power relations. In fact, the Istanbul case came to an impasse after the imposed plans were met with street protests. To the surprise of the government, it was not the ‘secular

4 Istanbul does not function formally as the Capital of the Turkish republic, indeed Ankara fulfills that role. But as former capital of the Ottoman Empire, it still functions today as the economic, demographic and cultural capital of the country.

elite' that came out in support of 'Taksim' and 'Taksim Gezi Park' (or at least not only). Nor did the protest coalition develop a discourse in defense of *Secular-Republican* heritage. Instead the movement set out to defend its park, 'Gezi Park', its '*green space*' and '*life place*' against what they considered to be another shopping mall imposed by the prime minister and his office. The *urban imaginary* that the 'Gezi Movement' evoked was very different from the national political cleavage and *national imaginary* referenced by the government. And it was particularly effective in drawing in urbanites of all walks of life, including those who do not necessarily oppose an *Islamic-Ottoman imaginary of the city*. In Brussels, conversely, the urban planning proposal was the result of a citizens' protest and occupation called 'picnic the Streets', they had demanded more and better public space and the local majority was found willing to accept the proposals. This grass roots 'origin' had the potential of granting the planning process broad public support, but the reality resulted to be much more complex. The contradictions inside the local governing majority led to a sinuous road of contradictory political decisions and they evoked opposing *imaginaries*. That led them to lose public support on all fronts and it contributed to a progressive loss of political support and even to political isolation of the mayor on the dossier in question.

I am well aware that the particularity of both cases risks biasing the answer to my research question on the role of the imaginary in urban planning processes, but they are most certainly very good examples to scrutinize the issue and as this PhD will demonstrate, they provide important insights and at least part of the answer to the question that is raised.

Aside from this introduction the book consist of 6 main parts. Each one of these chapters will be introduced separately, which is why I will use this space to give a broad outline and some bookmarkers about what can be expected. In the next chapter on the **State of the Art**, the reader will find a broad overview of the literature on the different schools in urban planning theory and how the canon of planning theory evolved over time. The second part of the chapter discusses approaches to *power* in urban sociology. In the third, fourth and fifth part I discuss the literature in sociology, human and critical geography of the imaginary. I conclude the state of the art in chapter 3 on the **Conceptual Framework**, where I elaborate how I will use the literature and how it fits in the heuristic model for inductive research that I am proposing. In Chapter 4 on **Methodology**, I discuss the operationalization of the research question, the conceptual framework and the approach to both case studies in particular. I also discuss some of the differences in research methods that were required, as well as some of the difficulties I encountered concerning access to the field and privacy issues.

Chapter 5 then discusses and analyses the **Taksim-Gezi Park Development** in Istanbul. It is based on 20 interviews with the key organizers of the different *protest coalitions*; a limited amount of government related interviews; and a snowball of semi-structured interviews with 35 'early arrival citizens' to get a grasp of the movement that followed after the 27th of May 2013 (the beginning of the Gezi Movement). Furthermore, it is based on a discourse analysis of the planning documents, the government decisions (on the different levels) and the interviews given by public officials on the issue in the press. Moreover it includes a discourse analysis of all communications by the different protest coalitions to the press and in the social media. Chapter 6, subsequently, gives a broad overview and analysis of **the case of the Central Boulevards** in Brussels. It is based on 41 in-depth interviews with the key actors. That includes both the government & the administration side (on the different levels) who were more easily accessible in this case; as on the side of civil society and the protest coalitions. Furthermore, the analysis is rooted in a

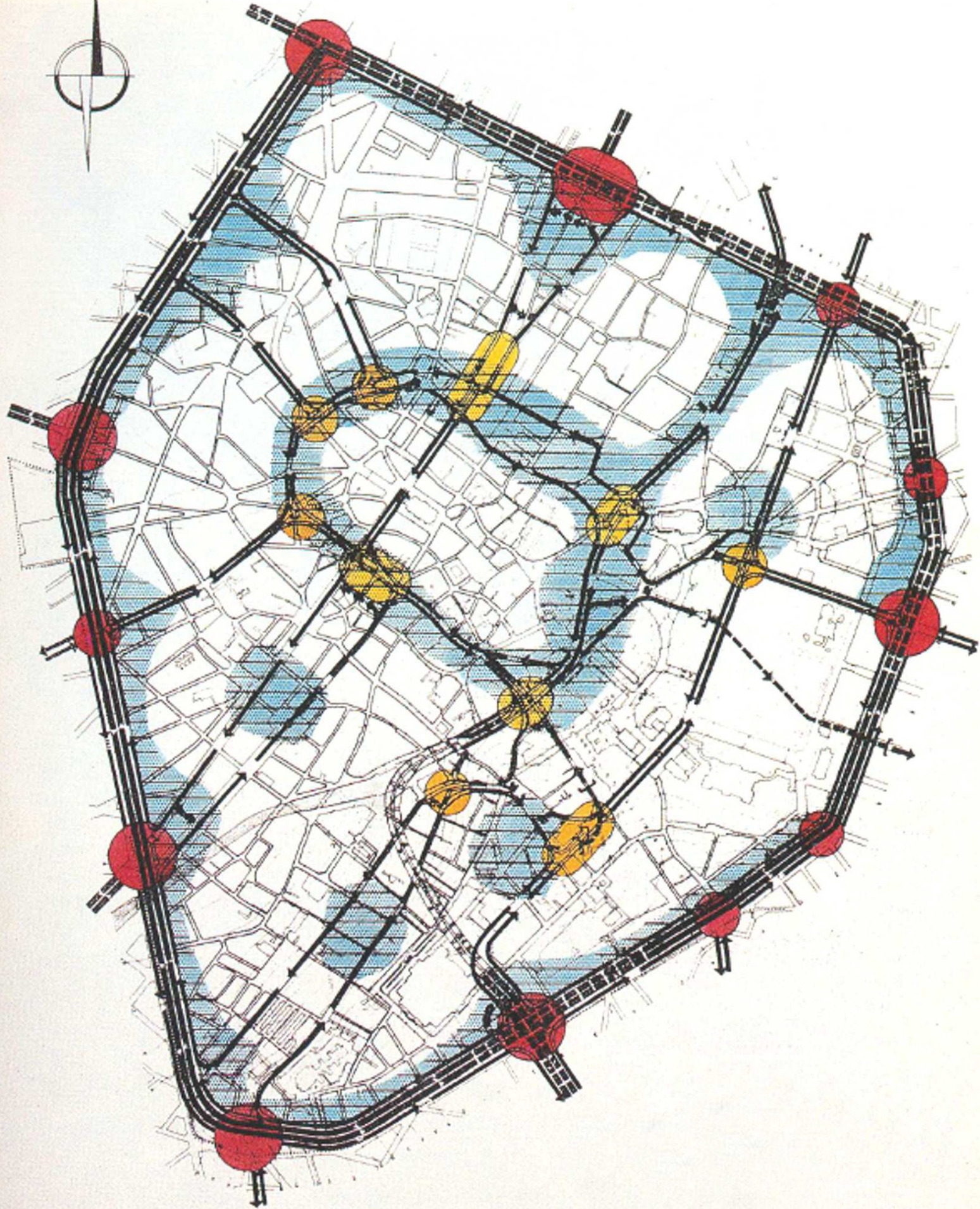
participating observation of different civil disobedient actions and of the participation process. Lastly, the discourse analysis also takes the different planning documents, political decisions and press releases into account by the government and the planners; as well as all communications of the different *protest coalitions* in the press and social media. In chapter 7, finally I conclude this PhD with answers to *the role of the imaginary in urban planning processes*.

As the reader will notice there is a difference between the amount of detail provided by the Brussels case with regards to the Istanbul case. The reason is specific to my encounter with the field. During my research period the urban planning conflict turned particularly contentious and it started to produce an unexpected amount of protest coalitions as well as changes within the opposition. Simultaneously, the amount of plans and planning alterations involved led civil society actors as well the political class to lose sight over what had actually happened and why it happened as it did. The Brussels Observatory of the City Center was tasked to bring clarity in what had turned out to be indeed the most important urban planning conflict in years. This consortia of 44 researchers was ready to get started but it had no data or primary analysis to start from. The only comprehensive data collection and highly detailed analysis available was the one provided in this PhD. I produced the chapter therefore in the first place to be used by other researchers (as well as civil society actors), to provide them with enough detail in the corroboration and analysis so to enable them to come to their own conclusions. Indeed, the chapter, the analysis and the data collection has been used, at least in part, for a set of publications in English, French and Dutch, that will soon be made available by the BSI-BCO. The consequence, however, is a very long chapter for those readers who have no intent to use it. I can suggest the reader who wants to pass more quickly through the chapter, however, to read for example the context chapter (6.2) in diagonal and to not stand still too long with the many quotes that corroborate the analysis in part 6.5.

Two last remarks, and a bookmark for the reader before starting, concern the concepts of urban planning and power relations. I use both generically, especially in the beginning, for them to be able to catch the wide variety of meanings they are attributed in the literature and in my case studies. Indeed, **power relations** are defined and redefined differently in the literature. The only minimal definition they share with certainty is that when mentioned, it implies that power is always necessarily relational and that it takes place between people or groups; whether a larger structure, institutions or economic framework is deemed responsible, social-interaction, or both. I will define the power relations more specifically myself but only in the conceptual framework in Chapter 3. By **urban planning**, on the other hand, I refer to the very broad definition of the government organized activity of urban design, zoning and regulation of urban space. In reality I do focus mainly on physical interventions and on mobility regulation. Yet at times it also refers to economic or social functions and activities. More specifically, in the Istanbul case, when I speak about 'urban planning' it refers to a new zoning plan for the district, a mobility plan for the Taksim area and an urban design plan for Taksim Square and Gezi Park. While in the Brussels case it refers to an urban design plan, a parking lot plan, a mobility plan and an economic development plan. Were relevant I always use the more specific denominations to take away all possible doubt. The bookmark for the reader, finally, involves the indication of the concepts in this book. I will refer to

other scholars' concepts with single 'apostrophes', while I will highlight those concepts that I will use myself for this research in *italics*.

This brings me to the beginning and the first question that need to be answered: how is it that power relations came to be the focus of attention in urban planning, and how were the conceptualized...



Chapter 2
State of The Art

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State of the Art

In the first part of this chapter (2.1) I will address why and how 'power' came to play a role in western urban planning theory from the 1950s and 1960s onward. I elaborate how the 'object of planning' moved to the background in planning theory and made way for a focus on how planning processes function and should function (2.2.1, 2.1.2 & 2.1.3). In section 2.1.4 I explain how different schools of urban planning thought emerged in the 1960 and '70s and how they argued that power and power relations should be central if one is to understand the functioning of urban planning processes. But I emphasize equally that their approaches remained very normative and that they were either analytically or empirically too little developed. Section 2.1.5 then, discusses how in the 1980s and '90s more empirically and analytically sound urban planning theories developed, leading at least to a partial response to Friedmann's challenge, such as Collaborative Urban Planning and Foucauldian Urban Planning.

In the second part of this chapter (2.2) it is argued that when the canon of urban planning theories provides partial, but insufficient answers, maybe approaches to power in urban sociology will provide more insight. It is in that context that I discuss Urban Growth Machines and Urban Regime Theory on the one hand (2.2.1) and Gramsci inspired urban theory on the other (2.2.2). The focus of this second section is Maarten Hajer's narrative theory about the power of discourse coalitions in urban and environmental policy making, as well as Sofie Vermeulen's conceptualization of Arenas. But within section (2.2.2) that focus is only the last of five parts that will be discussed. Indeed, first I briefly introduce Gramsci and the concept of hegemony to the reader. Subsequently, I discuss more recent approaches of scholars that were inspired by his work: Chantal Mouffe and Mihai Mihaela about the passions, affects and emotions that drive political strife and power relations; then, the more cognitive approach of Bob Jessop and Ngai-Ling Sum's. They introduce for the first time in this PhD the concept of the imaginary and propose a vocabulary of hegemonic, counter-hegemonic and emerging imaginaries that will be used in the conceptual framework of my research for this study. But their contribution is equally important for the elaboration of the vital role of triggering events (in the form of crisis's). They argue them to be responsible for

generating cognitive dissonance and destabilizing hegemonic imaginaries, which is why they spur learning processes and allow for new imaginaries to emerge and potentially become hegemonic. The fourth part then of section 2.2.2 is a small intermezzo that develops the concept of triggering events further with a historic reference to Niccolo Machiavelli's conceptualization of 'the river of time' and Clarence Stone's emphasize that smaller triggering events are just as important to grasp; if one is to understand the functioning of power on the scale of urban politics. Only then do we turn to the work of Hajer and Vermeulen.

In part 2.3, I argue that the insights of the narrative approach of Maarten Hajer and Sofie Vermeulen offer a leap forward into the analysis of power, as with respect to Urban Regime Theory. But I make the case that the approach stays to linguistic, despite the emphasize Hajer makes on the social practices of discourse coalitions. What about the passions that Chantal Mouffe put forward and what about the role of triggering events? And is the way people make sense of the world, of humanity, of the city --what drives them according to Hajer-- not in the first place spurred by imagination, images, desires, dreams and also representation as in language? In part 2.3 I argue that 'sociology of the imaginary' made a strong case in that sense. I first discuss one of the founding fathers in the field 'Gilbert Durand' and his work on Myths and proposals for a Mythodology (2.3.1). Next I briefly introduce Jean Paul Sartre's 'phenomenological psychology of the imagination' (2.3.2) as it inspired 'Cornelius Castoriadis' to put the 'radical imagination' and its relation to the 'social imaginary' front and center in understanding the institutionalization of society (2.3.3). Finally, I discuss the influential work of one of Durand's students, namely Michel Maffesoli who emphasized the importance of shared myths, images and symbols. But not because of the meaning they carry, but rather because of the feelings they generate and the function they have as vectors of communion (2.3.4).

In part 2.4, I discuss how the imaginary and the role of imagination in geography first developed as a preoccupation with 'place' as opposed to positivist geography whose primary focus was the more abstract and scientific 'space'. In the first section (2.4.1) I discuss how in human geography authors like Yi-Fu Tuan, Harold Prohansky's or Kevin Lynch developed key concept such as 'sense of place', 'place identity' and 'mental maps'; but also that these concepts were said to be flawed. John Dixon & Kevin Durrheim's argued indeed that human geography had too great a focus on the individual, while not accounting for the role of social interaction and social constructivism of 'place'. Therefore, alternatively, they proposed the concepts of place narrative and place discourse, drawing on linguistics. But the criticism came from elsewhere too. Geographers that came to be known as part of the school of 'critical geography' (2.4.2), argued both against human geography that the social and political was not properly taken into consideration; as well as against sociology of the imaginary, making the point that they had eclipsed the role of space altogether. They argued that space and places must be identified as social constructs, instituted with meaning and 'socially produced' (discussed in the part on Henri Lefebvre) and as products of 'place-creation' by those in power trying to shape the world to their own image. Indeed, authors such as James Duncan, David Harvey, Denis Crossgrove, W.J.T. Mitchell, Sharon Zukin and Gillian Rose (discussed thereafter) see urban places as instilled expressions of power struggles from the past in the urban fabric and they propose the concept of 'landscapes of power' to grasp how places naturalize and mystify the (hegemonic) meaning with which they have been instituted.

In the last part finally (2.5), the focus is turned to the role of the imaginary in nation-state building processes --ascribed to it by Benedict Anderson and historian Eric Hobsbaun-- as well as the particular and powerful role that is attributed to capital cities in that process; as developed by Paul Claval and Reinhoudt Magosse.

2.1 Recognizing Power as an Inherent Part of Urban Planning

2.1.1. Hegemony of Modern Urban Planning (1945-1960s)

Although historically planning and resultant urban interventions have been around since at least the last six hundred years (Mumford, 1989)¹ serving as an *apparatus* for *people in power* (Bauman, 1998; Berman, 1982; Giedion, 1982), the theory of urban planning processes has not always recognized the importance and presence of *power* and *power relations*. The liberal model of representative politics² and the actual change of the role of the state after WWII, with its vast steering capacity and social democratic or hegemonic 'Fordist compromise' (Harvey, 1989; Lipietz, 1992); led urban planners and urban planning theoreticians to believe there was a consensus in society over the social and moral values they were supposed to realize.

Within the political consensus, legitimated by the representative political process, the pursuit for welfare through urban planning seemed self-evident and logical. Since welfare was defined in terms of material needs it followed that a harmonious social environment could be molded through physical intervention in the city. Consequently the task facing urban planners appeared simply as a practical one. Planners had to find technical means to achieve given objectives. Debating these objectives was no part of the job description. Choices were not seen as a question that involved *power relations* and certainly not with non-governmental actors. Indeed, the task was essentially a technical one: the technocratic pursuit of the public interest. Whether all involved actors agreed on that or not, was less important. Indeed, conflicting views and conflicts were considered 'systemic noise', 'political aberrations', a 'side show' (Gualini, 2015). People that just did not understand (yet) what was in their best interest. The so-called experts were believed to be the best people for the job: architects, engineers and urban planners; especially given the reliance of planning theorists on 'institutional representation' for political decision-making, as well as their profound belief in the possibility of having an encompassing and comprehensive knowledge, being in full control of the city and the neutrality of their own expertise. Why pay attention to power relations with the private sector or civil society that could only disrupt and

1 Mumford, L. (1989). *The City in History*. New York: Harcourt. See pages: 172-173 & 477-47

2 Also referred to as the Aestonian model after American political scientist David Easton and his conceptualization of the state which was much used in Political Studies of the 1960 and 1970s. (Dikshit, 2006)

curtail the best possible solution? Theoretically, even political agreement about the plans followed as a formality at the end of the process. (Taylor, 1998; Secchi, 2005)

That so-called ‘modern’ or ‘physical design-based based view of urban planning’ was most famously promoted by Le Corbusier, Ebenezer Howard and Frank Lloyd Wright and was challenged at the end of the 1950s --by new schools of urban planning thought-- after fierce criticisms emerged from within the urban planning sector, as well as from users of the newly developed urban areas (Jacobs, 1961; Davidoff, 1964, 1965; Brooks & Stegman, 1968; Blecher, 1971). It was objected that planners were (i) insufficiently informed, (ii) that they lacked understanding of the *communities* they were trying to re-build, (iii) that they used fixed master plans or blueprints that factually denied the changing nature of the urban environment, and (iv) that planners denied the political dimension of their role in the urban planning process, the existing *power relations* and the inequalities between involved actors, especially with regards to non-governmental actors (Davidoff, 1965). In response new theoretic understandings of the city and the urban planning process started developing.

2.1.2 The Object of Urban Planning is redefined & the Planning Process takes Center Stage

The Systems View & Rational Process view of Planning

The first two theories to emerge in the 1960s were not always clearly distinguishable from each other and gave way to a whole new understanding of the object of planning, while developing a focus on the urban planning process itself. Even if they did not explicitly consider *power relations* in that process, they did pave the way for a wide array of schools of urban planning theory that would address the urban planning process and ‘power’ head-on.

The first of those two theories was the ‘systems view of planning’, which was essentially derived from a theory of the *object* that urban planning sought to plan, namely, towns, cities, regions. Urban areas became interpreted as complex and interrelated systems of activity. It was acknowledged that any intervention could have an effect on the local environment, as well as on places far beyond the actual site.³ Put differently, this theory understood the urban environment as dynamic and as such, the urban planning process itself had to be adapted as well, and become in the first place more flexible. The single blueprint-plan was replaced for multiple and flexible *trajectories*. Urban planning became an ‘ongoing process’ and the urban planner was trained in analyzing and understanding how cities functioned spatially, in economic and social terms. So not only became the urban area viewed in a fundamentally different way, the corrected insight broadened the

3 Any proposed new development thus had to be evaluated in terms of its probable effects.

scope to the 'planning process' and how urban planning should function as a discipline:⁴ that is, through rational scientific understanding, and a more process-oriented approach. (Taylor, 1998)

The second theory was the 'rational process view of planning', which went a step further as it was a theory entirely devoted to decision-making, with the 'planning process' being front and center for the first time.⁵ The scholars argued that five main stages should be distinguished throughout the planning process in order to rationalize decisions: a focus on defining the problem, looking at alternatives, evaluating all alternatives through cost-benefit analyses, looking at the feasibility of implementation of the propositions, and lastly a monitoring of the effects of the plan.⁶ According to this theory achieving the objectives fully is rare and even when they are met other problems or objectives could arise. That is why feedback loops were added as an integral part of the process.⁷ Meaning that actions may had to be reviewed, the problem definition may had to be rearticulated and analyzed alternatives may had to be revised at different steps in the process. See the annex for a good example (Annex X).

With the 'Systems View' and 'Rational Process View's attention for urban planning, as an ongoing process and their view of the city as a dynamic entity, they represented a significant break with the traditional 'physical design-based based view of urban planning' (Taylor, 1998). They rejected the most fundamental tool of urban planners in the post-war period, namely the blueprint-plan and introduced instead multiple and flexible trajectories, while the urban planning process' 'black box' was opened up.⁸ But despite this shift toward a scrutiny of the planning process (that will define all future schools of urban planning), the value-laden and political nature of the decisions stayed hidden behind a strong believe in science and rationality and within the horizon of modernity (Anderson & Freud, 1966; Featherstone, 1991). The 'artistic method' of previous architects was replaced by a more scientific approach, but both the planner of the post-war period and these planners, still shared a certain fundamental assumption of the world and consequently they came

4 However, at the level of 'local' planning, design and aesthetics continued to be regarded as central to them. Everyday local planners, often considered planning theory concerned with broader systemic considerations, irrelevant in those years. (Taylor N. , 1998)

5 For the first time a separate field of theory developed concerning de procedure of planning.

6 The first stage proposed defining the problem or goal which prompted the need of a plan. A thorough analysis would help guide any subsequent empirical investigation; help determine if the problem was really a problem; and it checked if the goals were not questionable. The second stage is to consider whether there are alternative ways of solving the problem, and if there are to clarify these. The third stage is to evaluate which of the feasible alternatives is most likely to achieve the desired end. This requires a systematic approach through cost-benefit-analysis of likely consequences of implementing different alternatives. The process of planning does not end when a decision has been made, for the chosen policy or plan then needs to be implemented, the fourth stage in the process. Lastly, the fifth stage involves monitoring the effect of the plan to see whether it achieves the desired ends. A rational process of planning is thus an ongoing and continuous one.

7 At any moment, it could be necessary to return to one of the other stages, and to start over from there again. See the drawing of 'the planning as a process of rational action' in the added documents.

8 Cfr. Latour (1987) Chapter 3, on machines

to a similar conclusion:⁹ in both periods, society was perceived as consisting of *autonomous, self-reflexive* and individuals that were largely similar, had mainly material needs and preferences and followed a logic of ‘utility-maximization’. And therefore, science and rationality were the only ones who could best fulfil their needs, and so they continued to try.¹⁰

Planning for the Actual Users and Unequal Power Relations: Advocacy Planning

The approach that went a step further in its criticism of the ‘physical design-based view of urban planning’ and the planning practice of the 1950s came from Paul Davidoff and his partner Linda Stone Davidoff under the name of *advocacy planning* (Davidoff, 1964). They too redirected planning theory toward a focus on the process, but as opposed to their contemporaries, they argued planning to be inherently political, normative and value-laden and the process to be intrinsically characterized by (unequal) power relations. Therefore, they argued for democratizing the process by prescribing a very different role to the urban planner: that of an ‘advocate’. The objective was to expand representation and participation of traditionally excluded groups in the urban planning decisions --i.e. the actual users of the planned space-- with the aim of improving their living conditions, while emphasizing the necessity of resources and opportunities for those lacking in both.

Paul Davidoff’s basic argument is that virtually all planners know they take ‘defacto advocacy positions’ (Davidoff, 1965), responding to some concerns but not others, involving some parties but not others, worrying about the voices of some, or the consequences upon some, but not others (Forester, 1994).

They argued for a planning process in which more diverse groups had to be represented and they aimed for a higher quality of public debate. To do so urban planners had to express their own values so as to engage openly in the political process and help different social groups to formulate their own plans and develop ‘capacity of action’ (Checkoway, 1994). Thereto, the classic planner-expert of the 1950s had to be traded in for planners with a different education: trained to engage as professional ‘advocates’ who are competent to express their social objectives, who have diplomatic skills of listening, acknowledging, negotiating, mediating, probing, inventing, reconciling, facilitating, organizing, and so on (Checkoway, 1994, Forester, 1994).

The importance of taking that stance against ‘modern urban planning’ can hardly be overestimated. It was the first theory to acknowledge urban planning as a process characterized by *power*

9 Ontologically and epistemologically, their understanding indeed still dated back to the Enlightenment of the 18th century.

10 Throughout human history, forces that seemed beyond human control had governed people’s lives. The growth of scientific understanding opened up the prospect of humanity gaining greater control over the forces of nature and using them to human advantage. A great optimism arose about the future. It was believed that human lives could be improved through rational understanding and action. The urban utopias of the first half of the century were as much an expression of this world view, as were the newly developed ideas of the city as a system and the rational view process of urban planning. Indeed, they may well represent, as Nigel Taylor argues, the high mark of modernist optimism in science and rationality.(Taylor, 1998)

relations between all involved actors. It sparked the debate on how to democratize urban planning and influenced several urban planning theoreticians to focus on *power relations* in later decades. But despite of paving the way, they focused primarily on the normative dimension of the theory, ‘how planning and planners should proceed’, while leaving the analytical dimension --concerning the actual functioning of those *power relations*-- underdeveloped.

The Modern Misconception of the City and its Users: Jane Jacobs

The same criticism can be applied to Jane Jacobs, but nobody made the case against “orthodox Modern Urban Planning” as effectively as she did with her bestselling book, ‘The Death and Life of the Great American Cities’ of 1961. (Jacobs, 1961) Whereas the Davidoff’s developed a school of planning thought and planning practice that empowered the actual users of the planned urban areas, Jacobs argued passionately against the ontological and epistemological approach of the 20th century so-called ‘great generation’.

With her book she dropped a bombshell, describing the ideas of Ebenezer Howard and his ‘Garden City’, Le Corbusier and his ‘Radiant City’ and Robert Moses’ automotive city proposal for New York as “disastrous” while denominating them as “errors of megalomaniac modernist thinking” (Jacobs, 1961).¹¹ She argued that their alleged ‘rational-functional’ approach could best be described as seeing the city as a gigantic mechanic toy and as a complete failure to understand that the dynamic of a thriving economic neighborhood or of a safe street hinges on its users.

11 The garden city and la ville radieuse are for Jane Jacobs part of the same idea. In her introduction she proposes to see ‘la ville radieuse’ as a ‘garden city’ on a bigger scale.

Jane Jacobs (1961) argues that **four conditions** need to be met for a neighborhood and its “street ballet” to function properly.

#. Firstly, there needs to be a mix of functions such as residential living, working, shopping and recreation. A mix of zoning ensures enough people use the streets during the course of any given day. Often, without being aware of it, passers-by ensure a certain form of social control; they are the eyes on the street that keep the neighborhood safe. The mono-functional zoning policy of modernist planning is therefore flawed according to Jacobs, since these neighborhoods have periods in the day without passers-by. Business districts become, for example, often dangerous places in the evening because they are empty. There are no eyes surveilling the streets.

#. For the same reasons, care must be taken to ensure that pedestrians are not discouraged to use the street. One of the causes for city dwellers to bypass a street or neighborhood is a long physical barrier. Big buildings, large city blocks, canals or railways are discouraging. Consequently the street will entail a feeling of insecurity. Furthermore, a lack of street activity will curtail the chances of retail shops, bars and restaurants to succeed. What is required is a dense street pattern of narrow streets, alleys and passageways that interconnect the larger veins of the city, and secondly, sidewalks to be strolled by pedestrians.

#. The third condition is a need for a variety in buildings of all ages. It brings along diversity in rent prices, which means a broader variety in social class and background of residents. Secondly, it implies economic opportunities for a broader variety of entrepreneurs. A diverse selection of retail, bars, restaurants and places of leisure make the neighborhood attractive for new tenants and visitors from other parts of the city. The diversity in residents and business entails again a more comprehensive coverage throughout the day in the use of the street.

#. The slow aging of different generations of buildings is necessary for the neighborhood to function properly. The last condition is a necessity of high density. A neighborhood needs enough people if it is to be economically viable. Low density implies the opposite; that there will not be enough pedestrians in the street to keep the area safe.

Her line of attack targeted especially the modern planners' objective to rid the city of its 'opaqueness' and 'messy character' at the hand of (i) mono-functional zoning, (ii) static-comprehensive blueprint planning and (iii) their clean slate or 'virgin site'-approach (i.e. of razing existing areas to the ground to start anew; Koolhaas, 1997).

And she argued, that if planners wanted to be 'functional', they first had to understand how cities are used by city dwellers and how neighborhoods function in an organic way, as a 'human ecosystem': a slowly evolving, complex, fragile and opaque whole, and a 'street ballet' upon which the area's safety and economic vibrancy depends. By 'ballet' she refers to the practice of everyday life in the public realm¹² that is enacted by its inhabitants, grocery shoppers, mom's bringing their children back from school and so forth. And how that 'ballet' is only possible when the necessary conditions of 'mixity' are fulfilled (See Jane Jacobs four conditions in the frame above); conditions that could not be more opposite to the approach of Modernist Urban Planning.

Ultimately, like the theoreticians of the Systems View & Rational Process View of Planning, she did propose a comprehensive and top down approach when she proposed her formula for successful urban planning (based on a quadruple mixity of functions, streets, buildings and people). But her message to take (i) the actual use and users into account and (ii) to be humble and respectful in the face of complexity and fragile human equilibria resonated loud and clear: 'come down from your mountain'. Explore the human dynamic of streets, squares and parks. Stop confusing abstract and logical understanding for social reality and come up with a plan that includes the human perspective.

In her 1961 book, Jacobs did not go as far as to propose 'advocacy planning' or 'participation'. Nor did she develop an analytical understanding of urban planning processes and 'power' therein. Indeed, her concern was with the object of planning, rather than with the planning process. But her passionate argument to understand the reasoning and logic of the actual use and users of urban space undermined urban planners' supposed 'scientific-ness and rationality'. Indeed it preeminently demonstrated them to be value-laden, inherently political and moreover, 'dumb' or at least blatantly erroneous, as opposed to neutral and 'self-evidently correct'.

Together, with the Davidoff's as well as a multitude of urban planning protests (against neighborhood demolitions and fast decaying high-rise estates¹³) they problematized the urban planning process. They demonstrated how it inherently consists of political choices and thus of *power relations* (in which city dwellers appeared to find themselves at the weaker end). And intended or not, they put the question that will dominate new urban planning schools from then onward, front and center: that is how those *power relations* function in urban planning and how they can be democratized.

12 Cfr. Lofland, 1998

13 This marked the end of the 1950s and 1960s all around Europe and the United States

2.1.3 Historic Societal Change (1960s)

The 'Systems View' and 'Rational Process view', 'Advocacy planning' and Jane Jacobs work challenged the ontological and epistemological 'horizon'¹⁴ of urban planning theory from within and in its wake, the canon of urban planning theory started to include new theories that would focus on the planning process, while approaching it as a value-laden and inherently political activity. These theories --that will be described hereafter-- did not come about only as a consequence of their fierce planning criticisms or of planning protests, but also due to larger societal changes; 'the renewal of democracy' as a political ideal and the increasingly important role of the private sector (Taylor, 1998).

In both the US and Europe there was a marked upswing from the 1960s onward in different kinds of citizen participation, whether in the form of marches, demonstrations, protest movements, cause organizations or 'public interest' lobbying groups. The concern for the rights for minorities and women to participate in the polity and economy increased and a growing part of the population (especially the so-called 'Baby Boom Generation') no longer felt the compulsion to obey those whom had previously been considered superior because of their 'age, rank, status or expertise'. Indeed, the existing systems of authority 'based on hierarchy, expertise and wealth' were challenged by 'the democratic and egalitarian temper of the times' (Crozier, Huntington, & Watanuki, 1975) and that was no less true for the vast authority planning gained in the aftermath of WWII.

Indeed, it is in that same wave of 'democratic renewal' that the authority of urban planners, and their power to decide over the future of entire parts of the city (and thus over the lives of the people inhabiting them), became increasingly contested. The urban planning process, it was argued, had a serious 'democratic deficit'; for only at the end of the line, political representatives became an actor in the decisions through their vote over the proposed plan. While the actual users of the planned area were in principle not heard at all.¹⁵

The complex interplay between 'globalization', technological evolutions, global financial policy, economic restructuring and the economic crisis of 1973 had brought the European and North-American system of Welfare to decay or at least diminish. I refer the reader to for example David Harvey's (1989) or Alain Lipietz's (1992) writings to what regards the main reasons and consequences of that evolution. But important to note is that this shift¹⁶, the diminishing Welfare state and the high flight of strengthened international contact had major consequences as well for North-American and European city governments and administrations, especially with regards to funding.

14 Cfr. Kuhn (1996)

15 It should be noted that in practice in some cases throughout the 1960s, urban planners were obliged to open up the power constellation and take the preferences into account of the inhabitants and users of the space, due to contestation. But at best this meant they were thoroughly questioned and mobilized as informants. (Taylor, 1998)

16 From the so-called 'Fordist compromise' that sustained the welfare state system to a 'flexible accumulation regime' and a profoundly changed role of the state that Harvey defines as a shift from 'Government' to 'Governance' (Harvey, 1989)

This change came on the one hand about as a consequence of the weakening of the national economic frame and the decline in revenues that entailed for cities. On the other hand 'globalization' impacted the functioning of cities from within as they went through a difficult process of de-industrialization (Sassen, 2006). Consequently, cities and urban regions had to increasingly compete for resources by drawing in tourists, organizing events, promoting cultural & creative industries, attracting the presence of headquarters of multinational organizations, enterprises and supranational organizations and so forth (Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Mommaas, 2004; Richards & Wilson, 2005). And with regards to planning it meant that the social welfare criteria¹⁷ were gradually replaced for targets in profitability. Returns and efficiency became key, as the implementation of urban planning became dependent on planners working with the market, on private capital and at times on compromising substantive planning ideals. It altered the role of the urban planner who had to learn to negotiate and strike bargains with a broader range of actors than was previously the case, including private sector developers and entrepreneurs (Taylor, 1998). 'To get things done', often informal coalitions had to be forged between public and private parties and as such, a fundamentally different kind of planning practice emerged in which the effective implementation could no longer be based on an assumed consensus over values and aims. The growing private sector involvement meant a less transparent process, a reduction of the impact of the professional planners, but also a less important role of the political representatives in the planning process. Thus, from the point of view of the affected population the democratic deficit grew even larger.

The 'renewal of the idea of democracy' in the 1960s on the one hand and the growing role of the private sector in urban planning in the 1970s on the other, made the value-laden character and the political dimension forcibly more visible.

2.1.4 Power Relations in Urban Planning take Center Stage

Both the societal change, planning critique and planning protests of the 1960s and '70s, reinforced the focus of planning theoreticians on the process as opposed to the planning object and on *power relations* between the involved actors; either 'to get things done' and implemented, either with the objective of democratizing the decision-making. From the 1970s onward, that focus translated in different schools of urban planning theory: the 'political economic view of urban planning', 'implementation theory' and 'communicative planning theory'.

That does not mean these schools replaced the others, or even that the traditional modern planning approach of the 1950s was gone, on the contrary. While new theories emerge and evolve others stay present and develop parallel with each other.¹⁸ But these theories would start dominating the theoretical debate (Taylor, 1998).

¹⁷ that were the cornerstone of urban policy since 1945 (Taylor, 1998)

¹⁸ Furthermore, many urban planners continue their work based on own practical knowledge and with little reference to the theoretical debate.

The Political-Economic View of Urban Planning

The first approach came from political economy. Up until the mid-1970s, it was generally assumed that urban planners were the key agents in the process of developing the city (Taylor, 1998). Planners and local authority officials were viewed as the main agents responsible for urban development. During the 1970s some political economists started arguing, however, that they were in fact less significant as agents of urban change than presumed¹⁹ They argued that their 'power' was in fact heavily circumscribed and constrained by the larger socio-economic context or 'structure' (Pacione, 2009). What theorists such as Peter Hall (Hall, Gracey, Drewett, & Thomas, 1973) or David Harvey (Harvey, 2009) proposed was to stop interpreting urban planning as an autonomous activity that operated separately from the rest of society. Planning activity was to be situated within the political economic context, as it significantly shapes and constrains the nature and effectiveness of planning. In this view the structure is seen as a determining force in which human actors have only little to say. Agency is limited to the borders of the structure they were working in and consequently, they interpreted urban planning as an instrument; a mere intermediary or a hand puppet of the larger economic and political structure.

Implementation theory

Another influential perspective that emerged was related to the 'implementation of planning'. It came to preoccupy a growing number of planning theorist from the late 1970s to today. Here too it was accepted that urban planning should be considered as part of the political economic context (Friedman, 1973). However, 'implementation theorists' emphasized the internal functioning of planning practice, rather than to focus on the environment in which it was embedded. They criticized 'the rational view process of planning' for not trying to understand the actual planning process. It was argued that this approach bypassed the step of understanding the process empirically by immediately proposing an ideal formula. Secondly, they stated that the 'rational view process' inevitably neglected its purpose, namely the 'implementation' of the made plan. If implementation is only considered when all policy decisions are taken, than one might well have been "*liable for making plans which cannot be implemented*" (Friedman, 1987). The question, implementation theorists argue, should thus not be whether or not planning is rational, but rather how planning will lead to effective action while staying rational (ibid.).

Where the 'political economic view' had dismissed the working of the *market* in relation to urban planning as regrettable, 'implementation theory' emphasized the necessity of better procedures for working within the political economic context (i.e. the 'private parties'). They argued that if urban planners wished to be effective, they had to let more *actors* into the decision-making process and open up the black box of urban planning. The planner's expert decisions and the *rational process* were identified as insufficient. Choices had to rise from consultation about the implementation of the plan; in the first place with respect to private urban developers and secondly, with regards to a broader range of stakeholders. As a consequence, in their view the planner was obliged to develop interpersonal skills of communication and negotiation. That is an

19 Franke & Hospers' criticism on Jane Jacobs (2009) in the Dutch translation at the end of the book: Nawoord

argument similar to the one made by 'Advocacy Planning' even if these skills do not (primarily) target the weakest actors in the equation, on the contrary (i.e. primarily private partners). But as we will see also marks 'urban regime theory' in the 1980s, as well as well 'communicative planning theory'; who try to provide responses to the challenges raised by 'implementation theory'.

Communicative Urban Planning Theory

Implementation or '*to get things done*' may have been the aim, but, some theorists – inspired by Davidoff and 'advocacy planning' - such as John Forester (1989, 1994) the leading pioneer in *communicative planning theory*, argued that urban planning should also aspire to the ideal of democratic decision-making about development proposals. *Communicative planning theory* argued that debate and decisions about the 'public realm' were a matter for all 'stakeholders', including the less powerful and marginalized groups. Following Jürgen Habermas (1979), they argued that communication was the precondition for democratizing *power relations* in urban planning. But that communication in itself was insufficient. They argued 'genuine communication' was necessary, meaning that a number of preconditions have to be fulfilled.

In short: the linguistic exchanges have to be 'comprehensible, true, sincere and legitimate'. Secondly, no form of reasoning could have priority over others.²⁰ Because, Forester argues, any knowledge is *socially constructed* and value-laden. Some may follow the rules of scientific inquiry and instrumental rationality, but that does not grant them 'objective' insight or knowledge about what people need. Scientists and experts too, have their horizon²¹ and look through glasses of a socially constructed paradigm²². As long as one stays within the same horizon (of science for example), objective criteria can 'perhaps be determined'. However, once one enters the public realm (where many people meet with varying cultural backgrounds, horizons and ways of reasoning) there is no further objective criterion to cut the knots. Only through debate and social interaction, with the right conditions for 'genuine communication', can claims be validated and decided upon. Consequently, 'Communicative Planning theorists' developed an ideal-formula to approximate the 'ideal-speech situation' in the urban planning process. (Healey, 2006)

What is notable here is a major shift in thinking. Based on Phenomenology and on the insights of Wittgenstein, 'Communicative Urban Planning' viewed planning processes in a new light. Their ontological and epistemological understanding of the world changed. All knowledge became seen as socially constructed, human-made and value-laden. Thus, the objective criteria of yesteryear were replaced with rules and conditions that had to enable the debate between people from those different cultural backgrounds and with different ways of reasoning.

But as they took on communication in a very general and normative way, they neglected to shed light on the actual functioning of communication and negotiation in the urban planning process. At least in the first stage 'Communicative Planning Theory' was more of a proposal about how urban planning should be organized, than an understanding of how the urban planning

20 Instrumental-technical reasoning, moral reasoning and emotive-aesthetic reasoning are allowed and respected all have to be accepted and respected

21 'Horizon'. Cfr. Anderson & Freud, 1966

22 'Paradigm'; Cfr. Kuhn, 1996

process functioned in practice. Nevertheless, according to Innes (1995) it kindled a whole new *paradigm* in planning theory that would become dominant in the 1990s and that would inspire Patsy Healy's 'Collaborative Urban Planning'.

2.1.5 A more Analytical & Empiric Scrutiny of Power Relations in Urban Planning ('90s-'00s)

From halfway the 1990s onward, there are two new approaches that arise who developed the analytical dimension of their theory more elaborately and who grounded their views more extensively in empirical research about the planning process than their predecessors (Taylor N., 1998). The first approach is 'Collaborative Urban Planning' (Healey, 2006) and is in line with Communicative Urban Planning, but taking it analytically a whole step further, inspired by Anthony Giddens 'Structuration' approach. The second planning theory then, comes in response and opposition to the Habermasian conception of communication²³ and the 'possibility' of overcoming *power relations* through genuine communication. It is called Foucauldian Urban Planning (Flyvbjerg & Richardson, 2002; Huxley, 1998; Huxley & Yiftachel, 1998)

Collaborative Urban Planning

Collaborative Urban Planning Theory goes back to the second part of the 1990s, when Patsy Healey introduced her proposal for *collaborative planning* based mainly on the insights of *institutionalism* and *structuration theory* (Healey, 2006; Giddens, 2009).²⁴ In its normative ideal or proposal, it is in line with advocacy planning and communicative planning theory (Taylor, 1998). It accepts that meaning emerges from 'social practice' and that understanding is always 'socially constructed'. At the same time, 'collaborative planning' is no misfit in the tradition of Implementation Theory. It focuses on actual situations and the involvement of all 'stakeholders', "to get things done", but with the aim of achieving this in a 'democratic way'. And in its attention for collecting empirical data and research of actual situations, and its relativation of Habermas' *ideal-speech-situation*, it does recognize and satisfy some of the criticisms that have been expressed with regards to Communicative Urban Planning.

The first important innovation concerns the functioning of urban planning process as a 'social process in line with 'structuration theory'. The second, regards the subsequently developed insight in the functioning of *power relations* in the actual process through the concepts of 'relational webs', 'arenas' and 'constitutional capacity' (based on 'institutionalism').

Inspired by the writings of Anthony Giddens (Giddens, 2009), and his proposal of social structuration, the structure of political economy is reintroduced. However, this time it is not approached as a

23 As used in Collaborative and Communicative Urban Planning Theory

24 Giddens, 2009:1-39, 281-354

space that delimits the field of action of individuals, groups or classes. Rather it is interpreted as a space that is, and has to be, constantly constructed, maintained by individuals, groups, classes and so on. If they do not, the structure transforms or disappears. Every structure is thus made at a certain time in history, within a specific geography and maintained in the everyday life. This goes for strong structuring imperatives such as the state organization, economic relations or tight-knit cultural communities as well. It is argued that the maintenance of them, or transformation for that matter, happen in social interaction and through social relations or 'relational webs' as they are called in collaborative planning theory. It implies that if individuals achieve mobilizing their relational webs, they may actually achieve structuring their own life world in a different way.

People structure their identities and develop common values, interests and visions in their relational web. Within the web, common culture and visions are continuously built through social interaction, and it is coined 'institutional capacity'. People today however, have all kinds of 'relational webs'. These can be local or on not spatially-bound, and maybe even global. In the past, the 'relational webs' were mostly local and commonly shared, but in today's fragmented societies and cities that is no longer the case. Indeed, generally speaking, in cities people with all kinds of 'relational webs' live together in the same geographical space. Which makes the task of urban planning, where a common vision needs to be construed (with the public), more difficult than before. But good planning practice, it is argued, can generate 'institutional capacity'.

Since relational webs construe a commonly shared culture, which in turn generates 'institutional capacity', collaborative urban planning argues that it is the planners challenge to build local relational webs and institutional capacity in the area's they are trying to plan: a neighborhood, a part of the city or even in the wider city region. They should do so, it is argued, at the hand of a planning process that involves 'all stakeholders' early on in the process. Indeed, the urban planning process (a typically place-based process) would then serve as the 'arena' where gatherings are held and institutional capacity is built at the hand of *genuine* debate and communication. That in turn allows consensus to be found and win-win solutions to be defined. In that sense the theory does accept many of the premises of Communicative Urban Planning, but it explains why theoretically-speaking support can be built among the stakeholders, how shared experience and a collective process can serve to produce a collective view. And the theory explains how the (necessary) genuine interaction is structured by the planning institutions' commonly held views, the 'normal' planning practice and the legal limitations; just as the planning process' social interactions 'structure' (upkeep and adapt) the 'institutions'.²⁵

Since its introduction in the second part of the 1990s collaborative planning has become a school in its own and it has been taken up by many theorists and practitioners (Healey, 2006).²⁶ What is remarkable about the approach is that it is not only theoretically, but at the same time also empirically strongly founded. But whereas it explains successful processes (or best practices) at

25 Furthermore The theory argues that collaborative planning can open up the possibility of renewed citizenship. Firstly, because in the 'relational webs' lies an opportunity for changing the structure people live in. Secondly, because the collaborative method includes all 'stakeholders'. Finally, also because the method is essentially one of debate and communication. (Healey, 2006:35-50, 55-65, 315-338)

26 (Healey, 2006:318-319)

the hand of participatory ‘collaborative’ methods that manage to construe ‘institutional capacity’ (by including the local population, civil society and the private sector), the question remains why it often doesn’t work even when the recipe is followed and participation is organized intensively.

I argue that this problem relates to Collaborative Urban Planning’s theoretical focus on stakeholders, stakes & interests and the theory’s conception of the possibility of consensus. The analytical advances toward a structuration theory of planning are a vast step forward, but it should take (i) more than ‘stakes’ or ‘interests’ of stakeholders into consideration, namely ‘views in the public interest’ and all ‘actors’²⁷; it should take furthermore (ii) the presence of profoundly different and potentially irreconcilable *imaginaries of what the city is and what it should be* into account among the actors in the process; As well as (iii) the potential impossibility of consensus, even when all prescribed premises for genuine communication and debate are fulfilled. That does not mean ‘institutional capacity’ cannot be built among a part or even a majority of the actors in the process, or that planning should not be seen as a ‘structuration process’, on the contrary. But it is to say that at least the power of ‘genuine communication’ may be wrongly understood: an argument that is made by the *Foucauldian School of Urban Planning*.

Foucauldian School of Urban Planning

The Foucauldian School of Urban Planning shares with Communicative Planning a view of the urban planning process as a procedure in which *power* is deployed between unequal stakeholders. But firstly, whereas the communicative approach argues that *power relations* can be diminished (through the approximation of an ideal-speech situation and genuine communication), those who draw on Foucault argue that communication is at all times already penetrated by *power*. ‘Validity’, so they say, is established ‘via eloquence, hidden control, rationalization, charisma, using dependency relations between participants’ and so on. (Flyvbjerg & Richardson, 2002) The urban planning process is a field of *power relations* and struggles between different interests, where knowledge and truth are contested, and rationalities are a source of conflict. Consequently, it is, they argue, naive and idealistic to operate with a concept of communication in which a power void would exist. Instead of side-stepping or idealistically seeking to remove the traces of power from planning, urban planning theory should accept it as unavoidable and focus on understanding the actual practice (Huxley, 1998) (Huxley & Yiftachel, 1998).

In explaining the ‘productive’ and ‘necessary local character of power coercion’, they argue, an opportunity of ‘real agency and change’ arises. Imposing a Habermasian ideal does the opposite: it obfuscates, instead of reveals, the working of *power*. When it becomes clear, that *power* is necessarily exercised locally, is found in micro-environments and is relational, then that local character of ‘power coercion’ can also become “*a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy*”.²⁸ Exposing the functioning of the ‘power coercion’, the Foucauldian School argues, renders power fragile and it enables agency for the less powerful. To them a place can simultaneously be a space of power coercion and a space of

27 Even if in Collaborative Urban Planning the concept of ‘stakeholders’ is not meant in a literal way and even if the intention is to include also those people who have no direct stake or interest in the process.

28 Quote van Foucault in (Flyvbjerg & Richardson, 2002)

resistance: a 'heterotopia' (Corijn, 2006). For these theoreticians the aim is not to get rid of *power* or *power relations* in the urban planning process, for indeed such is impossible. The purpose is to 'empower' weaker 'stakeholders' by explaining the working of those *power relations*.

Where Communicative and Collaborative Urban Planning Theory, unsurprisingly, tended to focus on the communicative elements of planning and on how to construe 'democratic support' by building 'relational webs' among local stakeholders (or building the so-called 'soft-infrastructure') at the hand of a well-designed participatory planning process; the Foucauldian School problematized and scrutinized the existing 'planning structure's hard infrastructure', as well as the different stakeholders characteristics (Healey, 2006; Huxley & Yiftachel, 1998). Subsequently, a large amount of empirical research was carried out (Arend, 2007; Brody, Godschalk, & Burby, 2003; Corijn, 2006; Irvin & Stansbury, 2004; Edelenbos, Domingo, Klok, & Tatenhove, 2006; Bengs, 2005; Bingham, Nabatashi, & O'Leary, 2005)

Characteristics of the different 'stakeholders' were sifted through. The importance of social, economic and cultural capital was looked at. The role and effect of a variety of means of power was researched (such as 'financial recourses', 'ownership', 'knowledge', 'skills', 'expertise'). Urban planning processes were mapped for their 'process architectures' and 'legal frame works' to get a view on the impact of 'framing procedures' on the power relations. The idea behind it is that the process architecture (i.e. the different formal steps taken: whether politically, administratively or with regards to consultative and participatory phases), and the legal framework (the roles that are legally appointed to the different actors in the process, as well as the formal decision procedures and possibilities to contest planning decisions by going to court) are a first important mediator of the power relations that will take place during the process.²⁹

Moreover, Foucauldian urban planning is particularly interesting because for the first time, urban planning theorists see the physical environment as an actor, as a discursive intermediary in space. It draws on Foucault's famous descriptions of the 'panopticon', as a physical space which, through its design, permits physical functions such as surveillance and control of prisoners, and in so doing makes possible the prevailing modern social discourses of punishment, reform, and education. (Foucault, 1995)³⁰ Foucauldian Urban planning theorists interpret interventions of urban planning in the city in a similar way. The panopticon becomes in their vision a physical tool that reinforces and intermediates the position and values of the powerful in a spatial way. The physical and spatial interventions of urban planning in the city are interpreted as a coercive act of those who make the decisions. Thus, theorists in this tradition stress the importance of understanding how decisions are actually made.

The Foucauldian approach focusses however too narrowly on the local situatedness of action. In doing they overlook the more generalized conditions and more structural issues, such as the 'institutions' as discussed by Collaborative Urban Planning. The second criticism comes from Urban Regime Theory, who argues that urban planning and urban development are not characterized by

29 Furthermore, a whole body of literature developed that closely related to Foucauldian Urban Planning, with regards to the legal decision-making power of citizens and civil society at the hand of increasingly complex typologies or 'ladders of participation'. For a good overview see (Cornwall, 2008)

30 Foucault, 1995, see pages 195-227

coercive power relations or ‘distributive power’ (‘the power over’) but rather one that is socially produced, collective power (‘the power to’). A third criticism, inspired by the Gramscian approach of Maarten Hajer, regards Foucauldian Planning Theory’s focus on the characteristics of the individual non-governmental actors and their interests or stakes, while leaving motivations in the general interest and (more importantly) the actual development of countervailing narratives --as opposed to state coercion-- underscrutinized.

Therefore the next part looks at approaches that were not developed for urban planning as such, but for urban development more in general, even if they often concern territorial related policies (such as infrastructure projects or environmental policies)

2.2 Approaches to Power in Urban Sociology: Urban Regimes & Discourse Coalitions

Aside from the above described literature, scholars of urban sociology have sought reliable and persuasive methodological tools to uncover the dynamics of similar processes. Even though the theories I will describe were less concerned with land use planning or urbanism alone, and more with urban development policies in general, their views are as applicable to planning. The first school of thought I will describe is called Urban Regime Theory. It dates back to the end of the 1980s and 1990s where it developed in response to the literature on ‘Urban Growth Machines’. The second school of thought that I will discuss comes from Maarten Hajer. It is considered ‘a Gramscian view’ of urban development (Yanarella & Lancaster, 2016) and uses a method of analyzing urban policy processes and *power relations* at the hand of discourse *coalitions* and *arenas*.

Both consider *power* to be a given that is not overcome by creating an ideal-speech situation of ‘genuine communication’, but as opposed to Foucauldian Urban Planning Theory they emphasize that *power relations* need to be produced at all times. To them *power relations* should not be perceived as static, nor should they be seen as functioning on the basis of coercion; at least not primarily. Indeed, they emphasize that *power* needs to be *socially produced* at all times. And that it functions on the basis of *producing* collaboration and consent, rather than employing use of force or coercion.

2.2.1 Urban Growth Machines & Urban Regimes

“The study of the city as growth machine’ was more-or-less inaugurated by Harvey Molotch (Molotch, 1976) in an attempt to connect traditional urban sociology’s interests in markets, land use and neighborhoods with the focus on power and hierarchy in the community power structure literature.” (Yanarella & Lancaster, 2016). They argued that land use was the central

focus of urban governance; that coalitions between government and the private sector were key in understanding urban politics. By that they meant a set of mostly local players who loosely coalesce around their interest in land development and allied players who support them: the development community³¹, local media, energy and service industries and other place-based agencies³² and interests. These individuals, institutions, and interests, it is argued, perceive land in terms of its exchange value³³. Opponents of the growth coalition³⁴, by contrast, are those who treat land in terms of its use value, or generally for its intrinsic value.³⁵

A key characteristic of growth coalition enthusiasts is their encouragement of what they believe and seek to convince wider segments of the local community to be value free development, against those who embrace the notion of certain edifices, quarters, meadows, or other undeveloped land within the city's confines. (Yanarella & Lancaster, 2016) In terms of use value, growth machine proponents defend the assertion that all land and land uses have their price. Likewise, despite the rent payments and revenues that they derive from treating land as a commodity whose value is determined on the open market, they endeavor to explain their development approach by arguing that it is about jobs and job creation, not profits.

But Growth Coalition Theory has been criticized on the one hand --from a political-economic perspective-- for being too localist in theorization. It is argued that it did not take the economic power of transnational capital sufficiently into account; when in fact local urban economics have become increasingly integrated into a global marketplace, while transnational capital players have become a part of urban growth coalitions.

Urban Regime Theory on the other hand argues that the Theory Of Growth Machines places disproportionate emphasis on a single facet of local economics and business concerns, namely land use and property development- while neglecting to include other facets of public policy making around which local power and politics can congeal. Stone (2006), furthermore, argues that its conception of *power* is too static and that it should focus more on how power is socially produced in coalition formation processes rather than by domination or coercion.

Indeed, Urban Regime theory (Stone, 1989), seeks to explain the functioning of planning in the context of 'entrepreneurial governance'³⁶ as well, but goes beyond land use planning or urbanism. It focuses, as mentioned above, on urban development more in general. Like the Growth Machine approach, fairly stable urban communities are assumed (Yanarella & Lancaster, 2016). These are governed by governance coalitions who --in order to have 'the capacity to act'-- engage in informal

31 Land developers; financiers; construction companies; and planning, architecture, and real estate professionals

32 colleges and universities, cultural institutions, professional sport clubs, labor unions, and self-employed and small retailers

33 i.e. Roughly-put: its cash value or its worth to others measured in monetary terms

34 Historic preservationists, local and regional environment groups, small farmers, sometimes horse farm owners, or other elements of a local or regional anti-growth movement

35 Given its emphases on land and locale, growth machine theorists and researchers often associate their studies with the search for a political economy of place.

36 Cfr. (Harvey, 1989)

partnerships with non-governmental actors. For indeed in liberal states, it is argued, *power* is not a given state of affairs inherent to governments. It has to be ‘assembled and socially produced’ through a ‘coalition building process’.

Clarence Stone coined these coalitions ‘Urban Regimes’ (Stone, 1989).³⁷ ‘Power’ than is not a matter of domination or coercion (‘distributive power’ or ‘power over’), but rather one of establishing and maintaining an informal network between government structures on the one hand and economic and social organization or enterprises on the other (‘collective power’ or ‘power to’).³⁸

‘Power over’, Clarence Stone argues, assumes that preferences are fixed; “the contest is about the extent to which A’s preference to impose a change on B will be accommodated, and the extent to which B’s preference to resist this change will prevail.” In this conception of *power*, that is dominant in Growth Machine Theory (Yanarella & Lancaster, 2016), actor-intention is a necessary component of power relationships, even if it takes the form of an implicit intention, as in an anticipated reaction.

‘Power to’ however works from a different premise. Though an actor may carry a set of strongly held preferences into the formation of a *coalition* (or into the joining of one), preferences should be seen, Stone argues, as work in progress. Intentions and preferences may be a matter of discovering tradeoffs. Latent preferences may be aroused, while old preferences may be discarded for newly discovered ones (Stone, 2006). This view is important because if preferences, and therefore intentions, are malleable, then intentions can no longer serve as a fixed point from which to assess a *power relation*. Indeed, it stresses that the connection to other actors is what shapes intentions in a continuous process. It emphasizes the learning process that takes place among the actors when coalitions are formed, the unexpected sacrifices that may be accepted despite ones preferences or intentions, in favor of achieving goals that were not achievable otherwise. Put differently, *power* in this view is not a matter of a dominant actor lessening resistance to domination by manipulating the consciousness of the subordinate actor. Powerful governance is produced when the right incentives are identified and put forward for the different non-governmental actors to take up responsibilities of their own and make (inevitable) sacrifices, in order to maintain the coalition over time and achieve commonly defined goals.³⁹

Many theorists have engaged in empirical research to identify the characteristics of ‘successful regimes’ (Stoker & Mossberger, 2001; Stone, 2008; Henry & Paramio-Salicines, 1999; Shaw, Bagwell, & Karmowska, 2004; Lauria & ed., 1996) In doing so, they identified different types that occur under different economic and social circumstances. Subsequently they have pinpointed several social, psychological, cultural and organizational features that match certain kinds of

37 He defines Regimes as informal arrangements by which public bodies and private interests function together in order to be able to make and carry out governing decisions.

38 Watch out, citizens play herein no part.

39 In addition, Urban Regime Theory does not assume that all partners in the *coalition* possess equal resources; instead it advances that coalition members with differential power are brought together in cooperation relationships for the pursuit of a common set of goals or purposes (Stone, 1993).

regimes. Special attention is given to the kind of incentives for the different stakeholders in the coalition; special interests and motivations that maintain the coalition; the importance of the long term agenda; and the impact of the broader cultural context.

Stone distinguishes for example between four kinds of regimes: (i) 'maintenance regimes' or 'caretaker regimes', which focus on routine service delivery and low taxes; (ii) 'developmental regimes' that are concerned with changing land use to promote growth; (iii) 'middle class progressive regimes', which include aims such as environmental protection, historical preservation, affordable housing, and linkage funds; (iv) and 'lower class opportunity expansion regimes' that emphasize human investment policy and widened access to employment and ownership. (Stone, 1989);

Stoker & Mossberger on the other hand propose a different typology with: (i) 'instrumental regimes' that seek to establish a specific tangible result and are found in cities that seek to develop economic based project and tangible results, resembling Stone's famous Atlanta example. (ii) 'Organic regimes', secondly, who are characteristic for cities with a tightly knit social fabric. They have a shared history and a sense of place, or a rather homogenous population that can be expected to have a high degree of consensus. And lastly (iii) 'Symbolic regimes' that occur in cities striving for a change of direction, in progressive cities concerned with changing the ideology of local governance (Stoker & Mossberger, 1993; Stoker & Mossberger, 2001)

Urban Regime Theory teaches us that maintaining a coalition with non-governmental actors is not only key to developing the power to implement urban policies, but also that it is hard work. It cannot be imposed from the top down. It needs to be produced and achieved at the hand of discussions, negotiations, finding trade-offs and by organizing a learning process inside the coalition among the actors (including on the side of government). It explains that the work is never done, that the coalition needs to be up kept or produced at all times. It argues that it is a constant process that involves great efforts of urban planners and/or government officials, as well as all other private agents in the coalition.

But, in an attempt to reproduce "what works" in other cities, they have focused too narrowly on empiric case study material of 'best practices'. They have theorized successful urban governance, but neglected to scrutinize what happens if it is not successful and why. They have focused solely on one kind of coalition that occurs in urban planning or development processes, that is the one between the government and non-government actors, while not taking parallel and opposing coalitions that do not include government actors into account.

A second criticism concerns Stone's distinction between 'power to' and 'power over'. It is argued that such a dichotomy between collective and distributive power is too formalistic and polarized. Despite the fact that Stone acknowledges that the two types of power are routinely intertwined (Stone, 2006)

The third criticism comes from Healey (Healey, 2006) who argues that Urban Regime Theory, focusses too much on the establishment of what she calls 'soft infrastructure' of informal relations, while the 'institutional frame' and 'hard infrastructure' is pushed to the background.

The fourth criticism, finally, relates to the overly rational approach to trade-offs and the too great an attention for 'preferences' as 'private interest'. This is likely due to the focus on two of the four regimes mentioned above, 'maintenance regimes' and 'developmental regimes'

that primarily involve the private sector. Indeed in practice, ‘middle class progressive regimes’ and ‘lower class opportunity expansion regimes’ --who involve groups that are less focused on economic or financial preferences-- are far less scrutinized. It may explain the focus on rational calculation when ‘learning processes’ inside the coalition are discussed; why the ‘agenda’ of the coalitions is the least developed theoretical element (Stone, 2008); or why the theory does not discuss encounters between profoundly different, and potentially incompatible views of what the city is and what it should be in the public interest or ideologically. That is where Gramscian Inspired literature brings advice.

2.2.2 Gramscian Theory & Maarten Hajer’s Discourse Coalitions

Gramsci’s Hegemony

In North-America, the study of ‘power’ in urban contexts by neo-Gramscian hegemonic theory is uncommon, US and Canadian scholars of Gramsci have tended instead to contextualize and apply his critical tools to study national politics and political economy, educational policy, and peace research. Meanwhile, European scholars like philosopher Chantal Mouffe, Political Economist Bob Jessop and Urban Planner Maarten Hajer have been among the European theorists who have sought to sustain the relevance of Gramsci’s Ideas and concepts to urban and local-global politics. It seems only fitting to briefly introduce Gramsci’s thinking first, before discussing the above mentioned authors. As I am no philosopher, I will quote from the introduction by Yanarella & Lancaster on power and politics (Yanarella & Lancaster, 2016) for I cannot explain it better myself.

“The Gramscian problematic of cultural or ideological hegemony owes its origins to the general condition of industrial capitalism in Western Europe after 1919, including the failure of the Second International and special circumstances of Italian society. Drawing upon his vast knowledge of economic base and ideological superstructure as these dimensions of the Italian national state historically crystalized, Antonio Gramsci came to recognize the inadequacies of any rigid separation of base and superstructure and the shortcomings of any assignment of an absolute or ultimate determining impact of the former upon the latter. With other European Marxists who recognized the failure of orthodox Marxism in the 20th century, Gramsci turned his attention to an issue that would become the central problem of his overall problematic: the nature of power in advanced capitalist societies. Through his comparative historical and philosophical investigations, Gramsci realized --in Giuseppe Fiori’s (Fiori, 1996) words-- that the system’s real strength does not lie in the violence of the ruling class (n)or the coercive power of its state apparatus, but in the acceptance by the ruled of a ‘conception of the world’ which belongs to the rulers. Thus, for Gramsci, the problem was to discover how the ruling class was able to exercise what he came to call its hegemony over the working class and then to fashion a strategy for undermining this everyday resource of the ruling class and establishing a new working class hegemony over society in the interests of all humanity. What must be underscored about the phenomenon of cultural hegemony permeating Western capitalist societies is how broadly and how deeply the hegemonic ideas had seeped

into all facets of society and how Gramsci's concern with uncovering the concealed power of the ruling class links up with the development of a critical concept of ideology. In an essay reflecting on the state of discussions of base and superstructure in contemporary Marxist circles, Raymond Williams brilliantly and succinctly expresses and underlines these important points. In his words: 'Hegemony' supposes the existence of something which is truly total, which is not merely secondary or superstructural, like the weak sense of ideology, but which is lived at such a depth, which saturates the society to such an extent, and which, as Gramsci put it, even constitutes the limit of common sense for most people under its sway, that it corresponds to the reality of social experience very much more clearly than any notions derived from the formula of base and superstructure (Williams, 1985). Seen in this way, Gramsci's notion of 'cultural hegemony' takes ideology out of the minds of individuals and into its total economic-political-cultural context, while redefining the nature of power of modern capitalist societies in such a way as to incorporate the whole matrix and various levels of institutions through which power relations are mediated in society." (Yanarella & Lancaster, 2016)⁴⁰ That is what ensures the political and cultural hegemony of one social group over the entire society.

"While some commentators have pointed out the ambiguity and contradictoriness of Gramsci's various definitions of the state, it is clear in light of a subtle grasp of his idea of cultural hegemony that he was striving to broaden the notion of the state and the relationship of power and coercion. From this perspective, the capitalist state's instrumentalities of violence and coercion are seen as a necessary, though not controlling, aspect of state power; instead the hegemonic force of the ideas saturating the various private organizations of civil society (including religious institutions, unions, schools, cultural groups, etc.) is recognized as the daily bulwark of state rule and domination. "Given the reinforced armor of the state provided by the institutions of civil society, Gramsci then advocates as a tactical priority what he called the 'war of position', fought predominantly on the cultural front. Until the ideological supports to the authority of the ruling class, in all of their manifestations, are assaulted and undermined, the hegemonic force of the ruling class will prevail in any struggle, even during moments of catastrophic economic crises or of political or military fiascos. The need to demystify the ideological character of every 'natural or commonsensical aspect of social reality in every sphere of the totality, the need to make visible in every quarter of civil society the distance between the ideological principles of the ruling class and the deeper reality of social life, and the need to awaken the masses from their passivity and acquiescence to the ideological outlook of the ruling class; these are some of the major components of the 'war of position'." (Yanarella & Lancaster, 2016)⁴¹

"In fighting these wars, Gramsci highlights the role of intellectuals and counter-hegemonic⁴² institutions. In elaborating the intellectual's role in his problematic, Gramsci accentuates the intellectual component of all human beings claiming, in various places, that all men are intellectuals and that 'everyone is a philosopher'. On the other hand, skeptical of the general capacity of the masses to spontaneously develop a critical consciousness of their own situation under the prevailing

40 Long quote from (Yanarella & Lancaster, 2016) about Gramsci and the concept of 'hegemony' on pp 28-29

41 In this sense, one could say that the state = political society + civil society -- in other words hegemony protected by the armor of coercion. In (Yanarella & Lancaster, 2016) p.29

42 Ed. by my knowledge Gramsci does not however use the term 'counter-hegemonic' himself.

conditions of capitalist production, Gramsci ascribed to the intelligentsia the directing and organizing tasks of promoting and diffusing a revolutionary consciousness informed by an alternate worldview drawn from the contradictory consciousness of the working class. 'Organic intellectuals', his term for intellectuals, who are gifted with superior intellectual ability and organizational talent, are the thinking and organizing elements of a particular class in society, which develop within the ranks of that class and maintain organic ties to it. In this respect, Gramsci recognized that the institutions of civil society, too, have undergone the experience of industrialization and division of labor and, therefore, organic intellectuals of the masses will have to arise as well out of these conditions and undertake leading and organizing roles. Here, it is crucial to realize that, for Gramsci, the problem of political organization must be thought in unison with the problem of cultural hegemony, that is, with the problem of generating a critical consciousness to expose and combat the ideological hegemony of the ruling class. Ideally, it is the task of the new intellectuals to elaborate and make coherent the principles, problems, and needs raised by the classes in their practical, everyday activities. At the most basic level, the working class intellectual must work both with and against the common-sense thinking of the masses. That is, although bourgeois ideological hegemony has deeply penetrated and greatly informs the content of what is called common sense in society, Gramsci emphasizes that 'common sense is a collective noun, and that there is not just one common sense, for that too is a product of history and a part of the historical process'. So, even as he criticized the common sense view of social reality, the organic intellectual then must be willing to excavate the many levels of this body of common knowledge (maxims, folklore, music, etc.,) and uncover within common sense itself the nascent sources of a critical, emancipatory consciousness of economy, polity, and society excavated from working class culture and local knowledge. In addition to political parties, counter-hegemonic institutions for Gramsci serve as the repository of a counter-ideology and its attendant critical concepts emerging from the interplay between organic intellectuals and the working class. The need and importance of counter-hegemonic institutions was drawn by Gramsci out of his experience and reflections on the workers councils in Turin during the late 1910s. As he came to conceive them, these institutions were not simply instrumental vehicles for promoting the revolutionary overthrow of the state apparatus, but rather served to prefigure the institutions of future communist society embryonic in the prevailing social conditions of capitalist society. Furthermore, since bourgeois ideology in advanced capitalist society" now saturated all realms of the social totality, Gramsci felt the scope of the battlefield had to be extended into all facets of everyday life. Only a revolutionary strategy that took this into account and forged a network of counter-institutions and counterculture, which the working class could inhabit on a daily basis, could hope to negate the force of bourgeois ideological hegemony and undermine its latent source of power within the cultural realm." (Yanarella & Lancaster, 2016)⁴³

43 Quote from (Yanarella & Lancaster, 2016) pp 30-31

Chantal Mouffe & Mihai's 'Agonistic Emotions'

Chantal Mouffe re-interprets Antonio Gramsci's hegemonic theory throughout the 1980s-2000s in the light of changing historical conditions and philosophical developments, such as the work of Derrida or Lacan, emphasizing the importance of emotions to understand power relations; or as she will call it 'passions' and 'affects' that mark 'collective political identifications' and constitute important sources of motivation. (Mouffe & Laclau, 1985; Mouffe, 1993; Mouffe, 1999; Mouffe, 2005).

She explains that the hegemony in modern liberal states has become so dominant, especially after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, that we have entered a so-called 'post-political' situation. By that she means that the democratic representative institutions do not give space or recognition to views outside the liberal consensus. The political center, she argues, has proceeded to moralize other political discourse and has defined those who adhere to different views as 'backward', 'irrational' and 'evil'; this as opposed to their reasoned and rational view of politics. Society's problems, so it appears, are resolved by recourse to universal human values, human rights and the liberal consensus⁴⁴. But Liberal and deliberative democrats alike, trump themselves and are (among other things) wrong to assume the perfect transparency of the rational, atomistic ego and wrong to ignore, if not completely erase, the productive role of 'passions' from their gaze (Mihai, 2014). Not only, she argues, because this assumption about politics is wrong, but also because it is dangerous for the perseverance of democracy itself

By not recognizing and respecting the role of affective forces, that fuel and make collective identifications 'stick'; by not giving it a place inside the democratic framework, democracy loses its capacity to 'tame' the passions as well. Consensual liberal democracy faces (at least) two dangers, she argues. First, there is always the possibility that undemocratic parties hijack passions and play them against the democratic idea: such is the case of the extreme right whose rhetoric often resonates with the angry excluded. Secondly, unless democratic institutions supply venues for agonistic encounters, passions can erupt publicly in destructive ways, as was for example the case for the riots in the Parisian banlieues of 2005 or London's inner-city riots of 2011. (Mihai, 2014; Mouffe, 2005)

Mouffe argues this on the basis of her Lacanian understanding of the 'self as split', as lacking in 'Essence', and as irreducible to 'a conscious, rational ego'. Indeed, the 'self' is far from having a clear, stable identity that is permeable to reason. On the contrary, it is perpetually seeking an elusive identity in which to invest libidinally. Passionate attachment, therefore, to socially constructed 'collective identifications' is what keeps individuals motivated and enables 'political action'. Mouffe uses Derrida's idea of the 'constitutive outside' in order to argue that collective identifications presuppose a 'they', against whom the libidinal force of aggression is directed. The affective bonds is what ties groups together and the distinction between 'us' and 'them' is constitutive of group identity, making it such that conflict is an ineliminable dimension of politics (Mihai, 2014; Mouffe, 2005). Put differently, the 'we/they' distinction, the antagonism, plays a structuring function in politics and it can never be done away with.

44 Cfr. resonating Fukuyama's 'end of history' (Fukuyama, 1992)

This is why, according to Mouffe, the assumption of the rational self and the possibility of political consensus --presupposed by liberal and deliberative democrats-- is not only implausible, but dangerous. For, when failing to give conflicting parties proper venues for democratic engagement, it will reinforce and push them in undemocratic directions. Put differently, when hidden under the veil of liberal consensual democracy, these 'ineradicable' 'libidinally charged' conflicts will find another way out.

That is why, she argues, we should on the contrary reflect on the conditions under which the public sphere could flourish as a space where various collective identifications are permanently present and where the hegemonic view is contested. We should envisage, the way of giving the 'we'/'they' distinction a place inside the democratic framework and propose a way to transform conflictual antagonistic relations, that can degenerate into violence and negate the very principles on which democracy rests, into 'agonistic' relations. That is, relations that put limits on what political agents can do to each other, while preserving the reality of conflict. Or to put it in Mouffe's illustrative terms, 'enemies' must become 'adversaries,' and 'antagonism' will, when filtered through democratic values, turn into 'agonism' (Mihai, 2014; Mouffe, 2005).

How does this transformation from 'antagonism' to 'agonism' happen? What does it take for enemies to become adversaries? Conflict, Mouffe argues, in order to be accepted as legitimate, needs to take a form that does not destroy the political association. This means that some form of common bond must exist between the conflicting parties, so that they will not treat their opponents as enemies to be eradicated, seeing their demands as illegitimate, which is exactly what happens with the antagonistic friend/enemy relations. However, the opponents cannot be seen as simply competitors whose interests can be dealt with through mere negotiation, or reconciled through deliberation (Cfr. Urban Regime Theory or Collaborative Urban Planning). Because, she argues, in that case the antagonistic element would simply be eliminated. If we want to acknowledge on the one side the perpetuity of the antagonistic dimension of the conflict, while on the other side allowing for the possibility of its 'taming', we need to envisage a we/they relation where the conflicting parties --although acknowledging that there is no rational solution to their conflict-- nevertheless recognize the legitimacy of their opponents; making them from 'enemies' into 'adversaries' not. (Mihai, 2014; Mouffe, 2005).

Put differently, 'taming the enemy' and transforming her into an adversary requires respect for the 'other' as a source of legitimate claims, an 'other' that one may not eradicate. And it is the institutions' function to make sure that that agonism does not lapse into antagonism (Mihai, 2014). So democratic political institutions --properly conceived-- should be 'arenas' where the hegemonic is contested by identifiable groups, 'collective identities' or 'camps' that delineate friend from foe while respecting each other as adversaries; where political cleavages are drawn and where fundamentally different, countervailing views of the world (or the city for that matter), as well as alternative analysis' and counter-proposals are put forward, while still being considered legitimate (Corijn & Saey, 2014). Mouffe formulates her argument normatively, of what should happen, but from an analytical point of view it means that 'powerful politics' will be driven by these 'identifiable camps', whether they are given a place inside the political democratic system or not. And these, in turn, while driven by cognitive reasoning as well, are in the first place a matter of passionate adherence and affective identification (that includes also the actors in the

liberal center), making their functioning incompatible with other camps, their logic irreducible to ratio and their conflict irresolvable by consensus.

The key role of passions & affects in both antagonism on the one hand and agonistic democracy on the other, raises the interesting question of how Mouffe and other 'Agonistic scholars' conceive of them as socially constructed. For indeed, if we are "to follow Mouffe's plea to acknowledge the role that they play in identification and in democratic practices, we need to presuppose that it is at least partially permeable to persuasion, exhortation, and reflection". Given the fact that these emotions⁴⁵ can be redirected towards democratic aims, it is argued that a 'weak constructivist cognitivist account' is being used. To explain this more in detail I draw on and quote from Mihaela Mihai's theorization of agonistic emotions (Mihai, 2014).

'Cognitivists', Mihai argues, strongly disagree with those who portray emotions as irrational passions, forces of nature contaminating the higher parts of one's soul. They reject the naturalist thesis, according to which emotions are mere biological responses, and argue that it unnecessarily impoverishes our account of human experience. They do not accept a simplistic opposition between reason and emotion and argue that (some) emotions cannot be reduced to physiological reactions. In fact, they argue on the contrary, that people's life plans, their cultural and political identifications, their pursuit of a variety of goals and visions and their sense of 'self' are informed by emotions.

Therefore, they claim that there is an evaluative component to emotional states; that conceptualization, interpretation and evaluation, play an important role in (some) emotions and that they presuppose beliefs, judgements and desires that are socially constructed. Put differently, some human experiences only trigger emotions, when meaning is contributed to them socially, when they are culturally framed (Mihai, 2014). Put differently, the thesis here is that politically relevant emotions such as are significantly shaped --and can thus be reshaped-- by their 'socio-cultural environment'. Emotional socialization, she argues, can result in "the formation of context-appropriate emotions and their expression in contextually sensitive responses" (Mihai, 2014)

Morphologically, then, cognitivists believe the object of an emotion is made up of (i) an 'instigation' or an 'instigating event', (ii) a 'target' and (iii) an 'objective'. For Mouffe the two affects that are crucial for collective identification are 'hope' (positive) and 'indignation' (negative). So for example, in the case of indignation, the instigation (a) is the experience of a violation of socially construed and internalized social norms in a particular community, the target (b) is the actor who inflicted the violation; whether a person, a thing, a government,...; and the objective (c) is the correction of that violation; at the hand of a punishment, compensation, etcetera.

45 It is argued by Mihai (2014), that Mouffe seems unaware of the fact that the term 'passion' has been historically used to denigrate affect as irrational, disruptive and undesirable in the public sphere. The term, Mihai argues, "alludes to passivity and to a supposed force-of-nature character of affect." Furthermore, "an understanding of 'passions' as unruly lies at the basis of the liberal and deliberative democrats' reluctance to accept affect in the public sphere." Those who, like Mouffe, believe that affect is not opposed to reason and that it can be a productive force in social and political life usually employ the term 'emotion'.

Instigating events however, are according to Bob Jessop, not only the moments in which social norms are conceived as violated --as we will discuss in the next part-- they are also the moments in which groups or communities are most prone to socialization of different non-hegemonic views.

The Gramscian Approach, Chantal Mouffe and Mihaela Mihai agree, with other words, with Urban Regime Theory that power relations have to be socially produced, and that they do not in the first place depend on domination or coercion but on a combination of agreement and consent (albeit within an armor of coercion). But they would argue that a politics of consensus through discussion and negotiation, where trade-offs are made and win-win situations are found, is only possible when staying within the confines of the institutionalized hegemony of the liberal consensus. Indeed, in that light, it is no surprise that Urban Regime Theory has been criticized for developing those regimes that include the business community --Caretaker and developmental Regimes-- while paying mostly lip service to 'middle class progressive regimes' and 'lower class opportunity expansion regimes' that do so far less. (Yanarella & Lancaster, 2016) It also sheds interesting light on Urban Regime Theory's focus on the actors 'intentions' with regards to their 'preferences' and 'stakes'; that what involved actors have to win or lose in an economic, financial or material sense (such as a house, a playground, greenery in the street). Rather than in a more ideological sense: of what the different actors consider the city is and what they consider the city should be in the public interest following a hegemonic or counter-hegemonic views. Indeed, it is in the struggle over these fundamentally different views that political *power relations* manifest themselves primarily; as opposed to Urban Regime Theory's narrow focus on the level of negotiations that take place between actors who accept the hegemonic view. We learn moreover that the struggle over these differences will not --and is highly unlikely-- to be settled through so-called rational reasoning or debate. Because, counter-hegemonic views do not share the same assumptions of what is reasonable and desirable in the first place, and because these hegemonic and counter-hegemonic views are emotionally charged. They are irreducible to cognitively measured trade-offs or rationally negotiated consensuses, as they relate to the individual actors' relation with processes of collective identification, on a visceral level.

Put differently, to understand power in political processes, we have to be attentive for all power relations that may occur: the once that are fought out inside the political-institutional arenas, between political parties, in government majority negotiations, between government levels and with the private sector or inhabitants in the framework of an urban regime or a participation process. But we also need to identify if there are groups or 'camps' that coalesce around profoundly different views whether they may be hegemonic or counter-hegemonic and whether they are expressed within the foreseen political-institutional arenas or outside of them.

Secondly, we have to be attentive to the emotional-dimension that is the fundamental driving force in collective identification and the establishment of political power relations. We have to be attentive to those events that instigate emotions such as hope or indignation; but also why they do so. Why certain events are considered 'violations' for some and not for others and how those emotions have become socially constructed in certain communities and not in others.

Maarten Hajer, will argue ‘discourse coalitions’, their narratives and metaphors play an important role in socially construing alternative views as well as emotions, in framing or re-framing contexts and in allowing views through a wholly different specter. But I will first turn to Bob Jessop.

Bob Jessop, Ngai-Ling Sum’s Imaginaries & Learning in Times of Crisis

Whereas Chantal Mouffe teaches the importance of ‘groups’ or ‘camps’, collective identification and the driving force of emotions in challenging hegemony, Bob Jessop developed a detailed political-economic analysis of how hegemony --or what he will call hegemonic imaginaries—are challenged cognitively. It is not my intention here to give an overview of the ‘Cultural Political Economy’ (‘CPE’) he proposes. I only want to emphasize some of the dimensions in his work that will inform the conceptual framework of this PhD; particularly with regards to the function of crisis’s and how they trigger a learning processes that allows for hegemonic imaginaries to be challenged, at least within a limited timeframe, at the hand of semiotic and extra-semiotic processes of what he will call ‘variation, selection and retention’ or ‘semiosis’ on the one hand and ‘materialization’ or ‘sedimentation’ on the other. (Jessop, 2013)

Inspired by Gramsci’s work, Bob Jessop and Ngai-Ling Sum (Jessop & Sum, 2010; Jessop & Sum, Pre-disciplinary and Postdisciplinary Perspectives, 2001) have repeatedly stated that the defining feature of political economy should be to take “the cultural turn seriously”. By the cultural turn they mean the process of ‘semiosis’ or ‘meaning-making’. But, they argue, it is not simply about adding ‘symbolic elements’, ‘culture’ or ‘discourses’ to political economy. On the contrary, they emphasize the inherent ‘semiotic’ nature of social relations themselves, while stressing the importance of ‘extra-semiotic’ conditions that make ‘semiosis’ effective (“what makes it ‘stick’). By that they mean its ‘embedding in material practices’ and their relation to ‘natural and social constraints and affordances’. So they argue that ‘semiosis’ is central and constitutive to social life, while stressing at simultaneously that ‘semiosis’ co-evolves with ‘extra-semiotic’ processes of ‘sedimentation’. Indeed, the role of ‘semiosis’ is not the same at all times. In times of crisis, they argue, those ‘imaginaries’ that appear as natural or commonsense are problematized or ‘re-politicized’. The sedimented opens up for semiosis among both broader parts of the population as the ruling elites, allowing for it to be viewed, approached and acted upon differently. That is why they consider reality in itself less important than the way that reality is --and can be-- understood culturally; for it is in their view what drives change, what challenges existing hegemonic imaginaries and what can lead to countervailing imaginaries taking their place, once ‘materialized’ and ‘sedimented’.

Jessop & Sum’s Gramscian-inspired perspective starts from an ontological view that defines the social world as infinitely complex. Individuals are therefore faced to a multiplicity of phenomena, relations, determinations and activities that interrelate in various manners, providing an unstructured and meaningless landscape. (Staricco, 2016) The world is overwhelmingly complex to social actors. That makes impossible any kind of calculation, management, governance or guidance. Epistemologically-speaking, if the individual is to ‘go on in the world’, she or he needs to give meaning to, and structure, the meaningless and ‘unstructured sum of activities’. It is necessary to socially construct the world and parts of it --for example ‘the economy’-- as an

organized set of 'relations, institutions, activities and rules 'that offer the ground for agents to intervene'. Consequently, individuals are obliged to focus selectively on certain aspects of reality while ignoring others, while giving them concrete meaning and acting in relation to them. Put differently, this is a highly selective and strategic process, since the aspects on which actors focus are not objectively pre-given. They depend on the individual perception and the current system of meanings. This is not to say, however, that for Jessop 'the real world' does not pre-exist, but 'actors/observers' have no direct access to that world. Its meaning is socially constructed in concrete historical situations at the hand of complexity reduction. (Staricco, 2016)

Analytically, complexity reduction takes place in two different, but mutually related, ways. On the one hand (i) semiosis: individual and intersubjective processes of meaning-making work to reduce complexity and give meaning to the world. Jessop and Sum emphasize the capacity of actors to selectively construe reality as a pre-condition to intervene, but also the fact that it is only some of these construes that achieve a wider acceptance and thereby become social constructions. (Staricco, 2016)

On the other hand (ii) structuration: it reduces complexity by cementing emerging patterns of social interactions. It seeks to stabilize connections and sequences of social relations in order to provide some predictability to the otherwise chaotic nature of the actually existing economy. Put differently, reducing complexity involves structurally selective institutions and is a complex and conflictive process of struggle around their specific articulation. (Staricco, 2016)

The outcomes are contingent social structures or 'imaginaries' understood particular entry points into a complex reality. They are "semiotic ensembles (without tightly defined boundaries) that frame individual subjects' lived experience of an inordinately complex world and/or guides collective calculation about that world. There are many such imaginaries and they are involved in "complex and tangled relations at different sites and scales of action". "Without them, individuals cannot go on in the world and collective actors (such as organizations) could not relate to their environments, make decisions, or pursue more or less coherent strategies." (Jessop, 2013).⁴⁶

Only some of these imaginaries, however, will prove more powerful and convincing, acquiring hegemonic status. When such a situation is achieved, the imaginary is "operationalized and institutionalized". These discursively constituted imaginaries are materially reproduced in a variety of (interrelated) scales and different 'spatio-temporal contexts' and over 'various spatio-temporal horizons' and become part of the authoritative political-institutional and administrative frame. At the same time alternative, 'extant', imaginaries may persist in smaller communities or new ones may 'emerge' and challenge the 'hegemonic' status. (In the conceptual framework I

46 Example: An economic imaginary, as CPE scholar Staricco (Staricco, 2016) put it, "gives meaning and shape to the economy by creating subsets of economic relations that have been defined as appropriate targets for intervention. An economic imaginary beholds a particular conception of the economy and its extra-economic conditions of existence and derives from it coherent imperatives for action. Economic imaginaries are political by nature, as their plurality presupposes conflict between different groups clustering around them according to their specific interests: economic imaginaries 'emerge as economic, political and intellectual forces seek to (re)define specific subsets of economic activities as subjects, sites, and stakes of competition and/or as objects of regulation and to articulate strategies, projects and visions oriented to these imagined economies."

will speak of them as: i. hegemonic imaginaries; ii. extant counter-hegemonic imaginaries; and iii. emerging counter-hegemonic imaginaries.)

Indeed, for Jessop and Sum, ‘imaginaries’ compose “a conflictive field where the struggle for their imposition takes place” (Staricco, 2016). And the question for them, that needs to be asked and responded is how the movement takes place from ‘construal’ to ‘construction’, from discursive selection to hegemony.

To explain the semiotic processes through which imaginaries are constructed and compete with each other in order for them to achieve hegemony, but also to elaborate the co-evolution of semiotic and extra-semiotic elements, Jessop (Jessop, 2013) integrates the mechanisms of ‘variation, selection and retention’ in his analysis. These, it is argued, are three evolutionary mechanisms who shape the movement from ‘construal of the world’ (semiosis) to the ‘construction of social facts’ as external and constraining (sedimentation), and therefore from what he calls ‘politicized meaning’ and unstructured complexity to ‘sedimented meaning’ and ‘structured complexity’ (Jessop, 2013).

Semiosis and extra-semiotic mechanisms are always at work, they find themselves in a dialectical relation at all times. But in times of crisis, semiosis becomes more important as the taken-for-granted discourses are disrupted and unstructured complexity is generated, provoking profound cognitive, strategic, and practical disorientation.⁴⁷ The actors’ sedimented views of the world are disrupted, prevailing meta-narratives, theoretical frameworks, policy paradigms, and/or everyday life disturbed. It opens the space for proliferation of ‘multiple crisis interpretations’ (called ‘variation’) and triggers a learning process. Only some interpretations will get ‘selected’ as the basis for new or adapted imaginaries (or so-called ‘imagined recoveries’). These are then translated into strategies and policies; and of these, only some will prove --or will seem to prove-- effective and will be ‘retained’ to become hegemonic in the form of new, sedimented routines, organizations and institutions. It is in that ‘retention’-stadium that extra-semiotic mechanisms become more important again. Jessop translates this view than in his heuristic model (see Fig.1)

When an imaginary has consequently been operationalized and institutionalized, it transforms and ‘naturalizes’ the different elements. They become ‘commonsense’. The structuration sets limits to compossible combinations of social relations and contributes to the institution of specific political economies. But because there are always “interstitial, residual, marginal, irrelevant, recalcitrant and plain contradictory semiotic and extra-semiotic elements”; that escape any attempt to “identify, govern, and stabilize” a given economic arrangement or broader ‘economic order’; they can disrupt the smooth performance of instituted economies and provide a reservoir of semiotic and material resources to be mobilized in the face of instability or a next crisis. (Staricco, 2016)

47 Careful, Jessop and Sum’s ‘evolutionary approach does not postulate pre-determined stages to be followed between variation, selection and retention; they rather highlights the dialectic of path-dependency and path-shaping that emerges as a result of the contingent co-evolution of semiotic and extra-semiotic processes and how they make some attempts of complexity reduction more successful than others.

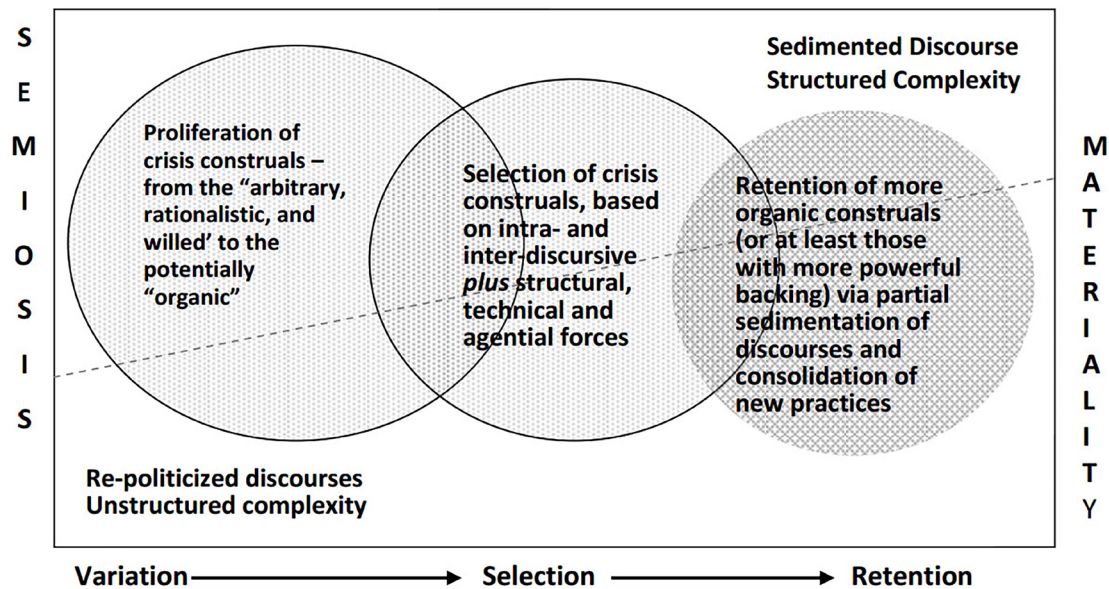


Fig.1. Bob Jessop (2013), Heuristic Variation, Selection, Retention Model

The question remains however what matters in the ‘selection’ out of the many and diverse ‘crisis interpretations’. (Jessop, 2013) Resonating Gramsci, Jessop emphasizes ‘learning’ and its critical role in proposing compelling interpretations. He points out that such is not a given, that crisis is no guarantee. He argues that cognitive capacities are essential, whereas they may just as well be lacking. He argues that the situation may be too unstructured (chaotic), while lessons learnt may be irrelevant because the situation is too turbulent to apply them (Jessop, 2013). Therefore, he emphasizes the need for actors to be able to read the crisis and respond to it (in the short term), echoing Gramsci ‘organic intellectuals’.

But even when they are present, Jessop argues, selection and retention is not reducible to narrative resonance, argumentative force, or scientific merit alone (although each has a role in certain contexts). It also depends on diverse extra-semiotic factors associated with structural, agential, and technological selectivities: “the organization and operation of the mass media, the role of intellectuals in public life, the structural biases and strategically selective operations of various public and private apparatuses of economic, political, and ideological domination”. Indeed, Jessop argues, “powerful narratives without powerful bases from which to implement them are less effective than more arbitrary, rationalistic and willed accounts that are pursued consistently by the powerful through the exercise of power”. That is why “some narratives (and their narrators) only need to convince a few key policy makers or strategists, while others are effective only through their capacity to mobilize” significant support from a broader range of social forces and through civil disobedient action, square occupations, general strikes or mass mobilization of people in the street (Jessop, 2013).⁴⁸

48 Indeed, as Jessop remarks, “periods of crisis illustrate forcefully that power also involves the capacity not to have to learn from one’s own mistakes”

Intermezzo: Triggering Events, Machiavelli & Clarence Stone

Whereas Jessop and Sum focused on the macro level of political-economy, economic imaginaries and *triggering events* in the form of economic or financial crisis's, there is a long history of scholars emphasizing the importance of *triggering events* and their impact on political processes, whether these events are perceived as self-inflicted phenomena or defined as outside forces of nature. As Van Middelaar argues (Van Middelaar & Waters, 2013), one of the most famous examples comes from Machiavelli's historic account in the 'The Prince' (1513), but scholars of history have pointed them out as well, while Clarence Stone (Stone, 2006) makes the argument that the emphasize on large-scale events should not make us forget the importance of smaller *triggering events* on the scale of the city or a neighborhood: the cognitive disorientating impact they can have as well, the preferences they may change as new things become feasible and the learning process they may provoke among policy makers, the population or civil society on a smaller urban scale as well.

As the concept of 'triggering event' plays an important role in the conceptual framework of this PhD, I will discuss it here as a small fitting intermezzo before turning to Maarten Hajer's Gramscian-inspired approach to urban planning theory.

Machiavelli, the River of Time and a Stream of Chance Events

Following Robert Orr's interpretation, Van Middelaar argues that Machiavelli sees "time governing our lives" and 'events' play the key role. By that he does not mean the eschatological time of theology or the regular time of physics, but time as a 'stream of chance events' (that he will also compare to a river).

As opposed to the common view of Medieval Christianity, Machiavelli and several of his contemporaries argued that history has no plan, no logic. There is only one relationship between things that happen: "before and after, antecedent and consequent". A single event, it is argued, can change all those before it "by placing them in a new light". The difficulty for both people and states, then, is that far from standing on the river bank, they are right out in the current, part of countless chains of events, while at the same time being called upon to direct them in one way or another (Van Middelaar & Waters, 2013). In a well-known passage Machiavelli therefore argues that the world is controlled neither by the vagaries of 'chance' ('fortune') alone nor by human free will, concluding instead that:

"fortune is the arbiter of one-half of our actions, but that she still leaves us to direct the other half, or perhaps a little less". He goes on: "I compare her to one of those raging rivers, which when in flood overflows the plains, sweeping away trees and buildings, bearing away the soil from place to place; everything flies before it, all yield to its violence, without being able in any way to withstand it; and yet, though its nature be such, it does not follow therefore that men, when the weather becomes fair, shall not make provision, both with defences and barriers, in such a manner that, rising again, the waters may pass away by canal, and their force be neither so unrestrained nor so dangerous." (Machiavelli, 1513 [1998])

Machiavelli, then, aims to discern how politicians, looking upstream, can anticipate imminent or impending 'events' (Van Middelaar & Waters, 2013) "As in medicine or law, this requires sound judgment, foresight and vigilance. Sometimes events come in constellations that reveal patterns, but there is never any certainty. Only in retrospect will you know whether you have done the right thing." To Machiavelli, Fortune, 'the stream of chance events', is thus not sent by God to try us. Instead "it should be treated either as an adversary or as a partner". She resembles a visitor whose arrival brings difficulties, but who also creates opportunities; especially when the 'Wheel of Fortune' starts turning more quickly, when there is a surge in the tide of events (Van Middelaar & Waters, 2013).

The capacity to deal with such 'a visitor' is something Machiavelli calls *virtù*. He writes of it as a purely political concept, a combination of intelligence and vigour, stripped of any moral or theological connotations. Van Middelaar argues, that he distinguishes consequently, between three phases in dealing with Fortune: (i) in advance of her coming, (ii) on her arrival and (iii) after her departure.

Phase one: preparation. "Since time flows like a river, you can build dykes and dams beforehand. Army commanders, for instance, need to ensure that their troops are disciplined and well organised. where good discipline prevails there good order will also prevail, and good fortune rarely fails to follow in their train. In affairs of state, it is important to have a sound constitution that can absorb future shocks. The good politician is capable of sacrificing short-term advantage to long-term planning. He must always be on the lookout, expecting a visit at any moment." (Van Middelaar & Waters, 2013)

Phase two: Fortune's arrival. "The best way to act depends on the situation, so flexibility undoubtedly helps. Essentially there are three options. (a) One is to lie down and do nothing, wait until the guest leaves and then get things under control again. In some cases this will prove a successful strategy, although it is risky to give Fortune free rein and no one will think you a hero. Alternatively, (b) you can try to profit from the situation, to grab events by the tail and turn them to your advantage. This demands a profound understanding of the overall situation, including things that may yet be in prospect. You will therefore do best to play for time, observe events from a distance and act later. The third option (c) is to try to steal a march on your visitor by going on the offensive, by attempting to get a grip on her before she can seize hold of you. It calls for speed, audacity, bravado – hazardous, certainly, but Fortune sometimes succumbs to *chutzpah*. What you must never do is ignore what is happening or try to swim against the current. The illusion of living outside time invites catastrophe." (Van Middelaar & Waters, 2013)

Phase three lastly: after Fortune's departure. "Here equanimity is the required trait, characteristic both of strong states and of outstanding personalities: A truly great man is ever the same under all circumstances; and if his fortune varies, exalting him at one moment and oppressing him at another, he himself never varies, but always preserves a firm courage, instead of becoming insolent or losing heart."

Machiavelli makes clear that to be a good human being or a good politician, accepts the contingency of 'events', steps into the river of time, and takes responsibility exactly because the future is open. But, it demands foresight, preparedness and an awareness that we can always be

surprised: “Events, dear boy, events”. In the river of time, the world as we now it may become viewed in a very different light, while the unthinkable may become the way forward.

Clarence Stone, Events & Times when Credible Choices Widen

In Clarence Stone’s elaboration on the working of collaborative power or ‘power to’ (Stone, 2006) as above described, he too argues that triggering events are important in provoking a ‘learning process’. Indeed, he argues that although an actor may carry a set of strongly held preferences into the formation of a community, association, urban regime or into the joining of one; which is why preferences are most appropriately seen as work in progress. And one important reason therefore is that positions of stakeholders are related to an enhanced sense of ‘feasibility’.

The fact of coalescing together opens up a set of possibilities that may for example not have been feasible before. But Stone argues, we should also focus on the specific ‘events’ in time and their role in provoking learning processes that may alter preferences and even intentions that were at the root of those preferences. Indeed, he continues, ‘events’ can themselves change the sense of ‘feasibility’. He uses the example of Harvard Professor and historian Robert Darnton about how certain specific ‘events’ generated indignation, but how they also released ‘utopian energy’ and fueled the French Revolution of 1789. How the ‘great revolution’ should in fact be interpreted as a succession of events in which there were “moments of madness, of suspended disbelief, when anything looked possible and the world appeared as a tabula rasa, wiped clean by a surge of popular emotion, ready to be redesigned”. And to denote a sense of boundless possibility, Darnton uses the term ‘possibilism’. Stone is intrigued by the concept and argues that indeed, what makes people change their minds, their preferences, is the sense of feasibility.

Subsequently, he argues that revolutionary moments are rare, but that times when credible choices ‘simply widen’ as a consequence of certain events, are far more common. They, he argues, can awaken inert preferences, arouse latent preferences or lead to the possibility of discarding old preferences in exchange for new ones. They can even lead to the discovery of an entirely new set of preferences and that may happen just as well on the scale of a city or a neighborhood, in the context of urban governance.

Both Jessop and Sum’s approach to crisis’s, Van Middelaars discussion of Machiavelli, and Stone’s (somewhat odd rational) interpretation of Darnton’s work about ‘possibilism’, focusses on a more cognitive emphasize when discussing the role of ‘triggering events’. They focus on how it provokes learning and how it obliges changes in position, view, preference or strategy. Or how it opens up windows of possibility for hegemonic views to be challenged; for leaders to stay in control and rule; and for urban regimes to take shape as preferences evolve and collaborative power is produced.

Surely, Chantal Mouffe would not disagree with the importance they lend to ‘events’ that are said to trigger disorientation and/or learning processes, that are said to drive people to see the world through another specter or lead policy makers to propose different analysis and different policy strategies. But, she would most probably emphasize that the driving force is not cognitive, but emotional: that what is triggered are in the first place passions and affects (such as for example

indignation and hope). She would argue that what gives small or large triggering events their productive force is the way in which they are experienced emotionally (libidinally). Important is how it will involve actors viscerally and lead to strong(er) involvement, in an urban regime, in a party, in a government, in a protest coalition or intellectual collective. She would likely argue that it is not in the first place the calculated or reasoned costs versus possibilities, but rather the triggered passions and affects who will lead actors to make the necessary sacrifices, bare the costs and put the time in making a coalition work, writing and proposing alternatives, debating and continuously negotiating a way forward, together.

Maarten Hajer does not include triggering events in his Gramscian-inspired approach to urban planning. But he does provide one of the most interesting and most useful approaches in urban planning theory as he approaches the process from the point of view of competing discourse coalitions.

Maarten Hajer's Discourse Coalitions and Sofie Vermeulen's Arenas

The renowned Dutch Planner and professor Maarten Hajer starts from the premise that all political problems are phenomena that are socially constructed. As described before, such a position had become commonplace in urban planning theory by the 1990s. But he argues, that it is a mistake to focus on 'strategic behavior' to understand power relations in an urban planning conflict (or political conflicts more in general); for they often transcend simple conflicts of interest. (Hajer, 1993). Indeed, he argues that planning is characterized by *power relations* that are structured and reproduced by the capacity of 'discourse coalitions', to define the 'narrative' with which public officials, planners, the public opinion, the local population or the business community will approach the case at hand. Assembling and drawing from a set of discourses, (scientific economical, engineering discourses, as well as political considerations) narratives are central to the analysis of power relations: they have the capacity to shift power-balances, while impacting policy-making and institutions. They define how people view a phenomenon, they can predetermine if it is perceived as a problem at all, if politics and policymaking can do something about it, and if so what the solution should achieve normatively. Put differently, they can render events harmless, but they can also create a 'political conflict'. (Hajer, 2006)

Narratives and discourse draw on language and Hajer considers language therefore quintessential for understanding power. But, he argues, it is not the words or the meaning of a sentence in the linguistic sense, or the images in the speaker's mind at the moment of utterance that matter most. What is of interest to him is the 'argumentative construction' and the 'argumentative context' in which it occurs.

He argues that to understand a political conflict one has to scrutinize the 'positions' that are being criticized or 'against which a justification is being mounted'; for without knowing the 'counter-positions', the 'argumentative meaning' cannot be understood. Indeed, he argues

the power relations in planning rely on the ‘discursive production of reality’ (the narratives) by opposing groups as well as on their ‘extra-discursive socio-political practices’.⁴⁹

The way an argumentative structure of a narrative is rendered effective is by the use of what Hajer calls ‘short hands’, i.e. storylines and metaphors that manage to bring various discourses together and combine them into a more or less coherent whole, while concealing the discursive complexity.

As they are key, a few of these notions need to be understood more in detail: i.e. ‘discourse’, ‘metaphors’ and ‘storylines’ with regards to discursive practice; and ‘discourse coalitions’ to what regards extra-discursive socio-political practices (within their specific social-historic condition); and thereafter --drawing on Hajer-inspired scholar Vermeulen-- ‘arenas’ will be discussed as well, as those spaces that structure the social interaction between the actors and the spaces in which discourse coalitions confront each other.

But before turning to these elements in detail, I will give two examples used by Hajer to make his case. He exemplifies his approach by referring to the urban planning process for Ground Zero, in New York, after the twin towers came down in 2001. He explains that the conflict was not only about money and interests, but also about the different meanings that people attached to the building site and the ways in which these related to their reflections on the state of society in general and that of politics in particular (Hajer, 2005). In the planning process, he argues, four underlying narratives could be made out. Each with a remarkably different perspective on what planning should aim to achieve. One denied any symbolic dimension to the issue and instead approached it solely in terms of financial, judicial and commercial feasibility; a *50-storey* building would be best for investments to return. A contrasting narrative emphasized that victims had died on Ground Zero and that the site should therefore be treated as a burial place, or at least as a memorial site. This narrative was later taken up by local residents, arguing against a cemetery or Necropolis and for rejuvenation of Manhattan — according to them; a livable new center of the city would be the best way to honor the victims. The fourth narrative called for a symbolic statement that would reflect the capacity to grow stronger, to ‘soar’; rebuilding the towers exactly as they had been would be a good option” (Hajer, 2006).

A more complex example comes from Hajer’s research on ‘the acid rain controversy’ (in the Netherlands) in the 1980s. The dying trees were real enough, he argues, but the dead trees as such were not a social construct. It is how they were ‘made sense’, and in that respect there were many possible (political) realities: “one may see dead trees as the product of ‘natural stress’ caused by drought, cold, or wind, or one may see them as ‘victims of pollution’. Pollution can then be seen as an ordering concept, a ‘way of seeing’, a way of interpreting a given phenomenon. ‘Acid rain’ might be constructed as an element of a narrative on industrial society and pollution, labelling the dead trees as ‘victims of pollution’. Consequently, the sight or report of ‘dead trees’ might get a

49 Cfr. The war of ‘positions’ in Gramsci’s work and Jessop’s emphasize on ‘semiosis’ and ‘extra-semiotic practices in structuring hegemonic imaginaries (Jessop, 2013)

different meaning. The dead trees have become 'victims', and where there are 'victims', there are 'perpetrators' that should be corrected." (Hajer, 2006)

What we see in both the WTC and the acid rain case, he argues, is how a narrative 'constructs' a particular problem. When the dead trees are no longer a 'natural' phenomenon, they potentially become a political problem. Framed according to the pollution narrative, dead trees are indeed no longer 'an incident' but signify a 'structural problem'. What is more, he argues "this new understanding is facilitated by the 'metaphor' of 'acid rain' (scientifically one would speak of 'acid precipitation'), implying that rain is no longer natural, that rain kills life instead of nourishing it." (Hajer, 2006) Put differently, the pollution narrative and the metaphor of 'acid rain' facilitated seeing dead trees as an indicator. They became a sign, a piece of evidence of a broader crisis of industrial society. And when all political actors started to talk about dead trees in these terms; a different set of questions opened up. For example, "are there no policies that are meant to avoid this sort of degradation? What kind of society tolerates dying forests? In the same vein, it makes a difference whether Ground Zero is approached as a building lot as usual, a cemetery, a neighborhood waiting for revitalization, or a place where America's phoenix should rise from the ashes" (Hajer, 2006).

The question that planners should raise is therefore what narratives are at play in a given planning process, which discourses they draw on, what metaphors and storylines are used, which discourse coalitions are formed and how they confront themselves and in what 'arenas'.

- (A.) 'Discourse', Hajer argues, should be understood as "an ensembles of ideas, concepts, and categories through which meaning is given to social and physical phenomena, and which is produced and reproduced through an identifiable set of practices" (Hajer, 2006). Illuminating discourse(s) allows therefore "a better understanding of political controversies, not in terms of rational-analytical argumentation, but in terms of the argumentative rationality that people bring to a discussion. Hence discourse should be distinguished analytically from 'discussion' so as to allow for the differentiation of plural discourses that individual actors and coalitions draw upon in the planning process.⁵⁰
- (B.) 'Metaphors', Hajer argues, bring out the "this-ness of a that or the that-ness of a this" (Burke in Hajer, 2006). "The essence of a metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" (Lakoff & Johnson in Hajer, 2006). In planning controversies, some metaphors will play a key role as they name a problem while referencing a wider narrative about a problematic and construing a specific phenomenon as a problem. They serve to construe the phenomenon as an 'emblematic issues' and facilitate policy change, while often also enabling a larger conceptual shift in policy narratives.

50 As discourses consist of structures embedded in language, they can be 'found' or traced by the analyst. Discourses, he argues, might not always be obvious to the people that utter them, but they should recognize a discourse when pointed out to them by the analyst.

Continuing the example, Hajer argues, that this is exactly what happened when the biological phenomenon of 'acid precipitation' got renamed (and reduced) to 'acid rain'. Policy makers and activist conceived of the problem of dying trees in terms of 'acid rain' and it played a very powerful role. Only years later the Dutch found out that the problem had not been caused by rain at all but by the ammonia gas emissions from nearby pig farms (Hajer, 2006). But the metaphor was important for another reason as well. The 'environmental crisis' was constantly experienced through the specter of the acid rain problem. "People would argue that the emergence of acid rain was indicative of how industrial society produced welfare at the cost of an environmental crisis" (ibid). Put differently, the acid rain controversy also fulfilled a central role in environmental politics more in general.

- (C.) Narratives, story lines and ambiguity. Hajer argues, that aside from using emblematic metaphors, the actors in an urban planning process and in a political controversy make sense of their world and confront each other by the use of 'narratives', causally linking events, surroundings, policies, decisions, people,... that draw from different discourses; and thus, produce a perceived truth. Indeed, the political arguments of actors typically rest on more than one discourse at a time. For instance, a persuasive argument or a viable solution for the 'acid rain' problem must combine elements of scientific discourse (What is acid rain?), economical discourse (What are the costs to society?), engineering discourse (What can be done about it?) as well as political considerations (Do we want to commit ourselves to a specific solution?). But the narrative allows for these various discourses to be combined into a more or less coherent whole, while concealing the discursive complexity in a causal narrative structure of 'beginning, middle and end.

Stories thus have an important organizational potential, keeping the 'discourse cluster' together and they do so, Hajer argues, through 'discursive affinity'. By that he means that arguments vary in origin, but still have a similar way of conceptualizing the world. An important example from pollution politics is the discursive affinity "among the moral argument that nature should be respected, the scientific argument that nature is to be seen as a complex ecosystem (which we will never fully understand), and the economic idea that pollution prevention is actually the most efficient mode of production (this is the core of the discourse of sustainable development)" (Hajer, 1993).

He then employs the concept of 'story line' to refer to a condensed statement summarizing complex narratives, used by people as 'short hand' in discussions. For instance, the process of rebuilding Ground Zero was often described as a way to show the world that America would not accept the terrorist attack on democracy: "we must rebuild as a democracy. It would be a travesty, if in the aftermath of an attack on our democracy, we circumvent our basic democratic procedures" (Hajer, 2006). What is interesting about this, is that people assume *the hearer will know what he/she means or refers to*. It is assumed that the more complex narrative is available in the minds of the receiver and that it can be activated with a cue ('you know what I mean'); while in reality receivers have their own variations of a particular story.

That is logical seen the complexity, the technical character and the multitude of involved actors in urban planning. But it is also where interesting social effects start to occur. As for metaphors, Hajer argues, the assumption of ‘mutual understanding’ is false. Discourse analysis brings out, time and again, that people talk at cross-purposes, that they do not really or do not fully understand each other. But that space for ambiguity can be very functional. Indeed, interestingly, it is useful for creating political discourse coalitions; likely to be essential in broadening them; and keeping them together in the face of changing circumstances. So while it is proven that people *do not to fully understand one another*, they nevertheless produce meaningful political interventions together. Indeed, the ambiguity of meaning and humans’ incapacity to fully understand one another, might just be that what makes discursive affinities and discourse coalitions possible (ibid).

- (D.) A discourse-coalition, Hajer argues, “refers to a group of actors that, in the context of an identifiable set of ‘practices’, shares the usage of a particular set of story lines over a particular period of time”(ibid).

That is why, he continues, it is important to take the particular situations into account in which story lines are uttered and discourses are drawn upon. The concept of ‘practices’ cannot be emphasized enough. By that he means: “embedded routines and mutually understood rules and norms that provide coherence to social life”(ibid). Linguistic utterances cannot usefully be understood outside of them; outside the practices in which they are uttered. Similarly, “discourse should always be conceived of in interrelation with the practices in which they are produced, reproduced and transformed” (socio historically; ibid).

So a discourse-coalition “is not so much connected to a particular person (as if such a person would have a coherent set of ideas of beliefs that is not specific to context), it is related to practices in the context of which actors employ narratives, story lines and metaphors, and (re)produce and transform particular discourses” (ibid).

To apply this whole vocabulary to politics and link narratives and discourse to power and dominance, Hajer argues that their influence depends on two processes:

- ‘Discourse structuration’ when a discourse starts to dominate the way a given social unit --a policy domain, a community,...-- conceptualizes the world; and
- ‘Discourse institutionalization’ when a discourse solidifies in particular institutional arrangements.

He argues, with other words, that power relations, dominance or influence can be identified by measuring how many people start using a given conceptualizing and if it solidifies into institutions and organizational practices. A particular narrative and/or discourse, then, has become dominant when the central actors are forced to accept its rhetorical power and when it is reflected in the institutional practices; meaning that the actual policy process is conducted according to the ideas of a given narrative and/or discourse (ibid).

To summarize, Hayers' discourse-coalition approach suggests that politics is a process in which different actors from various backgrounds form specific coalitions around specific narratives, story lines and metaphors. They are the medium through which actors try to impose their view of reality on others, suggest certain social positions and practices, and criticize alternative social arrangements (ibid).

But Hayer-inspired scholar Sofie Vermeulen argues that the struggle over the narrative (or over 'visions'⁵¹) does not happen in a void. Discursive structuration takes place as a social interaction, she argues, between the involved actors 'in arenas' and 'in-between arenas'. Indeed, ultimately it is the influence inside one arena & the influence of one arena's narrative or 'vision' on the narrative or vision of other arenas (i.e. when the story lines and metaphors uttered become common place in other arenas as well) which will determine successful discursive structuration and institutionalization (Vermeulen, 2015). Those arenas, she argues, and the regulated relation between the arenas will in turn structure the struggle over the narrative. Echoing Foucauldian Urban Planning, she argues, in favor of mapping how the arenas structure the social interactions in which the struggle takes place, as well as how the influence between the arenas is structured (ibid).

Inspired by the work of Cornips (2008) she consequently distinguishes three different types of arenas⁵², public arenas, political arenas and combined arenas. 'Public arenas' emerge by private initiative in (i) the 'public opinion' in regional, national or even international press, either in print, virtual or audio-visual: op-eds, columns, editorials, opinion pages, talk shows and so forth; (ii) On the internet --blogs, websites, YouTube,...-- and in the social media, peer to peer, web 2.0: Twitter, Facebook, Instagram,...; and (iii) in the form of demonstrations or civil disobedience: strikes, street protests, occupations, popular assemblies who will create a public arena with their action, locally, and in turn (potentially) influence the debate in other above mentioned public arenas (ibid).

'Political arenas' refer to the traditional policy arenas that exist in most western democracies: such as the municipal council or the parliament, where majority and minority confront each other and government negotiations or monthly cabinet meetings in case of majority coalitions with multiple political parties (ibid).

Finally there are also 'combined arenas', they are organized by public policy makers, but facilitate the participation of public officials, policy-makers, different administrative bodies and government levels with civil society, the business community, residents, etcetera. Depending on the arena the role of the latter will consultation, advisory influence, co-production or co-decision making (ibid).

As mentioned above, discourse structuration in these arenas depends on the confrontation between narratives ('visions') and discourse coalitions inside an arena and how the arena structures that interaction (through 'access' and 'rules'). On the other hand, structuration

51 Sofie Vermeulen will not focus on 'visions' as the key concept rather than 'narratives'

52 He starts from the notion of 'the action arena' as defined by Ostrom, Gardner & Walker (1994). The action arena includes an action situation and actors, whereas the action situation refers to the social space where actors exchange preferences, resources (knowledge, power, money, services, thoughts, etc.; Cornips, 2008).

ACCESS WHO IS ALLOWED TO PARTICIPATE?	INTERNAL DOMAIN-SPECIFIC RULES WHAT MAY BE DISCUSSED?	EXTERNAL DOMAIN-SPECIFIC RULES INFLUENCE
<i>Level of inclusion of citizens</i>	<i>Level of decision-making</i>	<i>Level of influence</i>
-- participation of political actors and public officials (no participation of citizens)	-- choosing between options (options and solutions are proposed and selected)	-- consultation
+ / - participation of associated citizens	+ / - generating implementation strategies (options are proposed, solutions are not selected)	+ / - advisory influence
+ / - participation of (a selected number of) citizens	+ generating solutions and alternatives (agenda has been set elsewhere)	+ co-production
++ open access (free participation for all)	++ agenda-setting	++ co-decision making

Fig.2. Cornips' levels of access, participation & influence of arenas (vermeulen, 2015)

is marked by the scope of influence of one arena on the other arenas, and that relation too, Vermeulen argues, is structured. There with other words three regulation mechanisms that should be taken into account (ibid). The kind of 'access' to the arena: the regulation of access to an arena is determined by those who initiate the arena and decide on who can advance which specific interests (see Fig.2). Here, different levels of inclusion may be distinguished. On the first level only policy-makers and public officials may participate ('professional participation'). On the second level, only organized citizens are allowed access (e.g. trade unions, residents' associations; 'associated participation'). On the third level, a selective sample of individual citizens is allowed to participate. On the fourth level, there is no limitation whatsoever; all those who are interested may participate ('open participation')

- The 'internal domain-specific rules', formal position, competences and code of conduct applicable to the arena of the different actors: the domain-specific rules determine what may be discussed in the arena and whether decisions can be made about a certain topics. Here again an arena may have a specific degree of freedom. On the first level, participants can only make decisions about different solutions that have been created in another arena. They may choose, but are not allowed to propose alternatives. On the second level, participants may select one of various proposals, but they may also decide how a specific solution will be implemented. On the third level, other people set the agenda (the problem at stake) and the preconditions for the discussion and decision-making, but the participants may create the solutions. On the fourth level, the problem is still to be redefined and thus offers a large degree of freedom about setting the agenda, and deciding upon the rules of the game

- And finally, the 'external domain-specific rules' who define the influence of a specific combined arena on the political arena. In other words, the external rules define to what extent it should take the decisions made by the combined arena into account. Cornips (2008) defines again four different levels on a continuum from a limited to a strong influence (consultation, advisory influence, co-production and co-decision. When these levels are combined together, a framework is created defining the inclusionary character of an arena, its substance (content) and procedural openness (rules of the game) and its influence.

In conclusion

Maarten Hajer's approach of urban planning processes offers a very thorough and more comprehensive approach than usual in urban planning theory. His focus on different competing discourse coalitions and his emphasize on the powerful role of narratives, gives it an edge with regards to Urban Regime Theory or Collaborative Urban Planning. I make this argument because the latter, both, assumed the possibility of consensus, win-win and interests on the one hand; and because they only brought one type of discourse coalition under consideration: between government and non-government actors. Indeed, as opposed to Hayer's approach, their theories are handbooks of sorts, elucidation how to re-produce 'good governmental and planning practices', rather than theorizations of how power relation function in urban planning. The consequence of this, as written above, is that it explains when 'things go well', but not when 'things go wrong' (from the point of view of the local government and planner that is). Of course it could be argued that Urban Regime Theory and Collaborative Urban Planning presume a negative definition; i.e. it goes wrong because the necessary steps weren't followed, because the local government did not attempt to construe the consensus or did not negotiate the interests properly. Because they did not find those win-win situations with the private sector or build that institutional capacity locally: with civil society or the inhabitants. But even then, Hajer would disagree and argue that it is at the least an incomplete argument, for indeed, when 'it goes wrong' it likely to be rather the consequence of the hard work of opposing groups to build a discourse coalition of their own and define the narrative. That does not mean that Hajer dismisses the importance of 'the failure' of a government and planners to construe support for their planning proposals. Indeed if the funding for an urban design project is private or depends on other government levels, the negotiations over 'interests' are quintessential (financial, economic, political visibility...). If local inhabitants and shopkeepers have legal claims on land that is to be re-zoned, then the search for a 'win-win' situation will be key. If the proposed change is large in scale, it will bring about a lot of practical problems that need to be identified and resolved; while the fears generated by the pending change will have to be countered by building 'institutional capacity'; and so forth. Hayer does not question this, but he does argue that in many cases it is not the lack of support (or the construal of support by the government) itself that leads to 'failure', but indeed the effort of opposing groups to problematize the planning proposals (or the planning process), their development of a discourse coalition --i.e. a neighborhood coalition, a shopkeepers coalition, an activist coalition, a civil society coalition...-- and their hard work of construing an alternative narrative. Put differently, in this view, the most important consequence of lack in narratively construed support (by the local government and the planner), is that it leaves more space for opposing groups to define the

narrative themselves, to denote the plans as a problem and construe the way people look at it and reason about it. Ultimately, it is the creative activity and work of those groups as well that is likely to make a difference, not only the failure to build an urban regime or construe institutional capacity and support itself.

I consider Maarten Hajer's approach therefore as more comprehensive than other theories in urban planning and as a leap forward toward understanding power relations in urban planning. What is more, his conceptualization offers an operationalized conceptual framework. Instead of proposing a normative way forward, a 'handbook' for urban planners, it offers a methodology to analyze what is going on in urban planning processes. In that sense it is a good complement to the work already done in Foucauldian urban planning theory. Indeed, I will myself draw from his approach for my own research in this PhD. But his view can be criticized as well.

Hayer seems to assume too much intentionality and control in producing narratives and establishing power relations. Indeed, there is a presumption that some groups are dominant and capable of 'defining' phenomena, give meaning too them, problematize them; while other people and groups are 'defined', accept the meaning of the dominant narrative and consent with it. As if non-dominant groups are agents in a structure that defines them, while the dominant groups are free of burden, capable of dictating at will, not defined by the structure of the society in which they live.

This view has its roots in Gramsci's class-based analysis and Marxism's concept of alienation more in general, by which the working class had been conceived off as being deprived of the right to conceive of themselves as the director of their own actions, to determine the character of said actions, to define relationships with other people; the idea that even though workers were autonomous, self-realized human beings as economic entities, they were directed to goals and diverted to activities dictated by the dominant class (i.e. bourgeoisie). The question this raises is not whether many groups are dominated or consent with narratives that are uttered by economic, political or intellectual elites. It rather raises the question about the underlying assumption: that is that it would be possible for some 'dominant groups' ('elites', 'bourgeoisie',...) to have those capacities; to be endowed with such autonomous capabilities of free will and the power to define narratives or discourse.

That is what brings us to the next chapter and 'sociology of the imaginary', where Cornelius Castoriadis will argue that "everybody is alienated" not only the "working classes" and that the power of society's institutions should in the first place be understood as a dialectic relation between the collective imaginary (as the institutionalized result of struggles from the past) structuring the individual imagination of the population (today), including that of the elites.

The second criticism, finally, is that even though extra-discursive practice is emphasized, in the end, controversies and political change or policy evolutions are brought back by Hayer, to linguistic confrontations: i.e. language, argumentative structures, narratives, positions. The irrational, fantasy, imagination and the role of emotions are if not absent, at least under emphasized, in favor of the linguistic and the cognitive. There too, sociology (2.4) and geography of the imaginary (2.5) bring advice.

2.3 The Imaginary institution of Society

The imaginary has for a long time been marginalized in the dominant Western philosophical tradition. It stood for the unknown, the inexistent, or worse the false and the irrational. But from the end of the 19th century it would slowly find its way to the social sciences under the influence of psychoanalysis and the development of anthropology as a science. Indeed, 19th century European colonialism was also paralleled by the study of hunter-gatherers communities in the colonies where new phenomena were (re-)discovered such as trance, rituals, visionary recitals,... while, Freud had brought the symbolic, the imaginary and the unconsciousness again in the center of attention. A great part of his work was based on the analysis of dreams serving as an entry to the unconscious and as a means to decipher underlying neuroses. But whereas Freud focused on the individual psyche, the emphasis of some of the theories of Jung, however regarded the 'collective unconsciousness'. Influenced by anthropology it led to the re-emergence of concepts such as archetype, myth, image..., which in turn influenced the debate on the imaginary in human and social sciences. That is clearly visible from the work of 'founding father' of 'sociology of the imaginary' Gilbert Durand, whose work from the 1960s onward underlined the importance of mythical and symbolical thinking in societies as a reaction against modernist thinking.⁵³ Cornelius Castoriadis' seminal work on the imaginary of the 1970s will draw less on anthropology, but is inspired heavily by the work in psychoanalysis of Jacques Lacan and the writings of philosopher and novelist Jean-Paul Sartre. Inspired by both, he puts the 'imaginary' right at the center of human existence. This brings him to see all societies as imaginary constructs structured by a dialectical relation between the individual facets of 'imagination' and its social facets, or 'imaginary'.⁵⁴ Michel Maffesoli, shortly discussed after both so-called founding fathers, then points out how shared imaginaries also function as vectors of communion and generate an emotional bond among communities.

To interpret and discuss the literature on the 'imaginary' in sociology but also for the next part on geography of the imaginary, I want to note that I am indebted to the work of Valentina Grassi (2005), Patrick Legros (2006) and Reinhoudt Magosse (2006) as they allowed me to make a selection --in the vast amount of literature-- of the authors discussed below, and as they inspired the leitmotif for this part of the state of the art. I will quote from them regularly in the discussions below.

2.3.1 Gilbert Durand, the Imaginary as Archetype

The anthropologist Durand is considered as one of the key theorists on the imaginary. Both Legros et al. (2006) and Grassi (2005) argue that he created the epistemological and theoretical context for all those who are today in a way or another working on the imaginary. In an approach that

53 Some of G. Durand's work : 'Les structures anthropologiques de l'imaginaire' 1960; 'L'imagination symbolique', 1964; 'Introduction à la mythologie, mythes et sociétés', 1996.

54 Some of C. Castoriadis' work : 'L'Institution imaginaire de la société 1975', 'Les Carrefours du labyrinthe', 1978

could be characterized as structuralist he disentangles the mechanisms of the 'imaginary' in a very detailed way (Magosse, 2006). Aside from being influenced by his tutor, Gaston Bachelard, his approach is beholden to Carl Jung's theoretization, hence, his attention for everything related to myths, symbols, religion,... that he considers to be 'cultural' or 'local'- expressions of universal archetypes.⁵⁵

Following Jung, Durand argues, that the 'imaginary' of men is rooted in the 'collective unconscious', an enormous collection of universal images or 'reservoir of archetypes' (e.g. God, mother, earth, fire, holy ground, etc.) that have existed since the beginning of times. This universe of archetypes forms "a great and ultimate configuration that determines all phenomena and their representations. That is true, he argues, for both symbolic forms of dreams, poetry or intuition as for scientific symbolic forms (Magosse, 2006). Put differently, the artistic, the irrational and the rational have their root in the reservoir of archetypes. The imaginary, he continues, is in fact always an active process of 'symbolic imagination' linking human beings 'psyche' to the 'archetypes' by the use of what he calls: 'archetypical images' or 'myths & symbols' that have the capacity to function as the bridge between both (Magosse, 2006). Symbols, constitute the cultural specifications of archetypes, while the construction of imaginaries is done through the construction of 'myths' (Legros et al., 2006). As a third way between Freud's psychoanalysis and Strauss structuralism, he argues however, that the 'imaginary' is also formed in interaction between (human) reflexes and the material and social milieu. He calls this interaction 'trajet anthropologique' (Durand, 1992; 1996).⁵⁶

That is why, Durand argues, social sciences need an approach --which he will call mythodology-- that can take both 'logos' and 'mythos' into account, the rational and the irrational. Mythodology would serve, then, as one of "the early attempt to come with an instrument to analyze the conceptualization of the world" (Magosse, 2006). He aimed to scrutinize and repertoriare the great world myths and of those who led to the formation of science itself.

I will myself not draw on Durand's work. But his contribution to the debate on the imaginary is important in many respects. In the first place because he opened the theoretical debate on the issue, and by doing so, Magosse argues, "he pulled the imaginary not only out of the conceptual morass, he also succeeded to reorient the discussion in a more comprehensive way, by opening up the narrow debate that existed in the classical approach centering on representations" (Magosse, 2006). Indeed, from the early stages, the approach of Durand could be viewed as an attempt to fight against the modern contempt for the irrational, by proposing the 'imaginary' and the 'myth' as serious heuristic tools, and mythodology as the way to integrate both rational as well as irrational elements in the analysis of society. Furthermore, his way of seeing society's myths as dynamic, and as a medium of constant change between the psyche

55 Both his (rather structuralist) approach as his interests in myths demonstrates the link with Lévi-Strauss. Durand (2003) nevertheless criticizes Lévi-Strauss for his social-determinism whereby the symbol and the myth is reduced to respectively a sign and a system of signs. (Magosse, 2006)

56 Inspired by the reflexological school of Leningrad Durand argues that the dominant expressions of an individual are "position, nutrition and copulation" (Magosse, 2006).

and the 'reservoir of archetypes' is interesting; it brings him to see cultural history as a constant interrelation between permanence and change (Magosse, 2006).

Durand's influence, lastly, became evident in the important work of his student, Maffesioli, who build further on his thinking and became an early frontrunner in what is sometimes called 'the emotional turn. But before turning to him, I will first discuss Cornelius Castoriadis --who developed his writings as young scholar around the same period as Durand-- and briefly the influence of Jean-Paul Sartre on his thinking,.

2.3.2 Jean Paul Sartre's Phenomenological Psychology of the Imagination

Indeed Castoriadis was influenced and inspired by the writings of Sartre's on the 'imaginary' and the way he took Husserl's phenomenology a step further with his book 'a phenomenological psychology of the imagination' (1940). He begins from the basic conception that human beings can imagine the world, or any part of it, being different from the way it is. Conversely, for human consciousness to be able to imagine, by its very nature, it has to be able to escape from the world, it must be able to stand back from the world by its own efforts, "it must be free" (Sartre, 1940). Sartre argues that the imagination can no longer be isolated as just an extra faculty independent of 'consciousness'; it is foundational to thinking and consciousness per se (De Cock, Rehn, & Berry, 2013); Or to Quote Sartre's epigraph to the book: "We may therefore conclude that imagination is not an empirical power added to consciousness, but is the whole of consciousness as it realizes its freedom; every concrete and real situation of consciousness in the world is pregnant with the imaginary in so far as it is always presented as a surpassing of the real" (Sartre, 1940).

He argues that 'perception' directs its intentions toward a given object on the one hand, while 'ideation' or 'the act of imagining' --involving an object that is 'being grasped as nothing' and 'being given-as-absent'-- embody the two main 'irreducible attitudes of consciousness'. Put differently, 'perception' grasps a given object, while the mental image links consciousness to an object that is not given and so has to be supplied. Image, he argues, always presents its object as "being given-as-absent" and it does so by drawing on memory, knowledge, and given information in order to fashion it. Only through the mediation of the act of imagining, through the imaginary, are people able to conceive of the real in the first place and "to make the elementary distinctions between form and content, object and image" (De Cock, Rehn, & Berry, 2013).

A key function of the imagination, Sartre argues, is thus its role of bringing the absent into presence and its capacity to produce the 'irreal'; which is where he makes the link with 'freedom', and the 'possibility of 'change', that will inspire Castoriadis three decades later. Indeed, he argues, the capacity at all times and at every moment to produce the 'irreal' is why the consciousness is 'free'. This as opposed to, 'unfreedom', which he equates with a consciousness "totally bogged down in the existent and without the possibility of grasping anything other than the existent" (Sartre, 1940).

"The very act of producing mental images (and the same could be said for the experience of being caught up in a piece of music) somehow lifts us out of the condition we were in before, as our immediate reality makes way for the irreal presence of the absent" (De Cock, Rehn, & Berry, 2013).

The ‘nothing’ inherent in the imaginary object becomes ‘creative’ as it can cause a total turnabout of our condition, and this turnabout may go so far as to make our present existence unreal. In other words, Sartre argues that in the process of ‘imagining’, something determinate is cancelled, pushed into latency, or derealized in order to release the possibilities inherent in the given (De Cock, Rehn, & Berry, 2013); and that opening is exactly what Cornelius Castoriadis will draw upon.

2.3.3 Cornelius Castoriadis & the Imaginary institution of Society

Inspired by the work of Sartre, who demonstrated how the imaginary is constitutive of human consciousness and ‘freedom’, Castoriadis argued that not only the subject but also society is ‘made’ into what it is by the ‘imaginary’ and therefore also society has the autonomous capacity to reinvent itself. In his view, any notion of creativity and imagination that would limit itself to the subject within a psychological horizon, is unequipped to understand its radical creative character (De Cock, Rehn, & Berry, 2013). Just as for Sartre, this imaginary “has no flesh of its own, it borrows its substance from something else”, and as opposed to Durand that something else cannot be traced back to a universal reservoir of pre-existing archetypes (Cfr. Durand).

The imaginary is a creational source in itself. It offers much more than just a repetition or a recombination of already existing elements. The power of the imagination is not (simply) to ‘represent’ or combine elements that are already given, it is the capacity to impose new forms on reality. Castoriadis explains this by distinguishing between ‘primary imaginary significations’ (*l’imaginaire première*) and ‘secondary imaginary significations’ (*l’imaginaire secondaire*).

‘Primary imaginary significations’ have on the one hand their individual and physical aspect, psyche/soma, of ‘radicale imagination’ and on the other hand the collective aspect of ‘instituting social imaginary significations’ (*l’imaginaire instituante*). ‘Secondary imaginary significations’ then, consists of nothing more than those representations, that are at the heart of the classical philosophical texts on the imaginary (Castoriadis, 1975). That is the capacity to represent to the mind what is not present (*l’imaginaire institué*). The ‘social imaginary’, then, that structures societies, is for Castoriadis made up of both aspects: *l’imaginaire instituant* or ‘the work of a human collectivity that is creating new meanings and that alters the existing historical forms’ and *l’imaginaire institué*, as the product of the former or the whole of institutions that institute them by materializing their meanings (which can be both done in a material or immaterial form; Castoriadis, 1975).

Radical imagination, Castoriadis continues, is the unfathomable precondition for the institutionalization of society. Society needs it in order to become institutionalized, while it needs society as a medium for its appearance. Indeed, he proposed a structuration theory⁵⁷ of sorts: with the creative capacity of the anonymous collective’s radical imagination (*l’imaginaire instituant*, the intentional flux, the affective, desires and the representative) creating the very form of the

57 Cfr. (Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, 1984)

institutions and instituting society's social imaginary (*l'imaginaire institué*); while those latter institutions allow for radical imagination to draw upon it, to deviate or distance from it, to oppose it,... but always in relation to it (i.e. 'instituting society').

For Castoriadis' imagination is thus not the simple imagination that is able to represent images that are not present to the senses, nor to juxtapose images in a novel way. It is an autonomous capacity of the soul to create images in thought and sensation so that the soul might, as it were, receive and give being to thought or sensed objects. Indeed, imagination not only precedes representation; it is what makes representation possible (Magosse, 2006). That is why he speaks of it as 'radical imagination' (*l'imagination radicale*) or expressed in French, "*L'imagination forme la condition transcendentale du pensable et du représentable: au fond sans cette représentation première (imaginaire radical) ou plus exactement sans cette création première, il n'y aurait rien pour l'homme, aucune image ou représentation des choses*" (Poirier, 2004).

What animates established social institutions then, Castoriadis argues, is that their 'significations' refer neither to reality nor to logic (De Cock, Rehn, & Berry, 2013). Examples thereof include the God of monotheistic religions, 'the State, or 'the commodity'. As he puts it: "No one has ever seen a commodity: one can see a car, a kilo of bananas, a meter of fabric. It is the social 'imaginary signification commodity' that makes these objects function as they function in a commercial society. The unperceived is immanent, since obviously for a philosopher, God is immanent to the society that believes in God, even if this society posits Him as transcendent". (Castoriadis as quoted in De Cock, Rehn, & Berry, 2013) Castoriadis outlines what this means in semiotic terms: the signifiers involved in the social imaginary have a constitutive signification for society (God, capitalism, the commodity,...); but the signified that is referred to by the signifier is of a special type, because an analogue cannot be formed in accordance with perception; because the signifier does not point to a given real object. It disperses what it is meant 'to figure', by constantly borrowing references from other significations. 'Social imaginary significations' are thus, those for which there is no specific 'code-governed signified', so that the signifier points to an empty space, allowing for a nonbeing to be posited as a signified (De Cock, Rehn, & Berry, 2013).

Language is one of the key institutions holding social imaginaries together and it forms a good example. Like all social institutions, it has what Castoriadis calls its 'ensemblist-identitary dimension', the equivalent of the 'structuralist code'. But institutions are more than their instituted code, for it could never capture the open, inventive, and unruly character of signifying practices. Thus alongside the institutions strictly logical 'ensemblist-identitary' dimension that forms the conditions for 'social representing/saying'; sits a properly imaginary dimension or 'teukhein' that forms the conditions for 'social doing' (Castoriadis, 1975).⁵⁸ Comparable to the distinction made between discursive and extra-discursive practice in Bob Jessop's or Maarten Hajer's work, both mutually imply one another, they intrinsically inhere in one another, and each is impossible without the other. 'Institutions' thus follow an 'ensemblist-identitary logic' and that includes

58 Comparable to the distinction made above between discursive and extra-discursive practice (Bob Jessop or Maarten Hajer).

operations of both 'legein' and 'teukhein'. Together, they establish the signs that posit imaginary significations (De Cock, Rehn, & Berry, 2013).

Does that then mean that the imaginary institution of society draws on nothing but human beings own (often unconscious) radical capacity of imagination; their desire from birth onward to regain (total) control over their own world as they did before being born? Is the coherence they seek and the forms they cast on the complexity of that outside world than found within the psyche/soma and social interaction with other human beings alone (as well as with the human beings that came before them)? Is the intentional flux that make sense of the world and of humanity, that brings order and is driven by affects, than not at all constraint by reality? Does the outside world really play no role? Is their nothing natural about or societies? Doesn't the world impose itself on us? Instead of the other way around? Castoriadis answer by pointing out that surely reality exists, and he emphasizes that it is more than a disordered chaos, but the question he poses is if it matters that much.

'What is', he argues "can be thought of neither as disordered chaos upon which theoretical consciousness --or culture in general or each culture in its own way-- imposes, and alone imposes, an order which translates simply its own legislation or its arbitrariness; nor as a set of clearly separated things, well-situated in a world which is perfectly organized in itself, or (what amounts to the same thing) as a system of essences, regardless of its complexity" (Castoriadis, 1975, MIT translation). "What is", he continues "is not and cannot be, absolutely disordered chaos --a term to which, moreover, no signification can be assigned: a random ensemble still represents as random a formidable organization" (ibid). Indeed, if there was only highly complex chaos, "it could not lend itself to any organization or it would lend itself to all; in both cases, all coherent discourse and all action would be impossible" (ibid). So indeed, he argues, there is an immense non-ensemblist diversity that surrounds us, that is part of us; and he calls it magma: "that from which one can extract (or in which one can construct) an indefinite number of ensemblist organizations, but which can never be reconstituted (ideally) by a (finite or infinite) ensemblist composition of these organizations" (ibid).

There are with other words external elements that impose themselves on human beings and humanity, especially, he argues, biology, 'the natural strata'. But as layer upon layer they are attributed with meaning and as many of the most powerful institutions have little referent or even none (God, capitalism, commodity...); it is how human beings contend with social-historical 'constraints' what matters. It is the reproductive inertia within the instituted society --the social imaginary that structure the imagination—and how the latter challenge the former what matters. Because, it explains how the non-identitary-ensemble (magma) is made sense of or shaped by a society's contingent identitary-ensemblist logic and it is with respect to that instituted imaginary that human beings will conceive of themselves and act. Only then can we understand the great cultural shifts throughout history and the freedom human beings have, and have had in the past, to shape their own worlds.

2.3.4 Michel Maffesoli's Emotional Turn

Like Castoriadis, Michel Maffesoli was one of the main critics of the classical focus on 'representations'. He claimed that they tend to marginalize the mental and imaginary dimensions, because they prefer to believe that the legitimation of human acts can only be rational (Legros et al., 2006). The approach of Maffesoli, however, makes the link between the imaginary and lived experience, and how collective mythologies also generate affective relations and feelings. "To that extent he might also be regarded as one of the forerunners of what we might call the emotional turn in theoretical approaches of the imaginary" (Magosse, 2006). Maffesoli argues that the logic of the imaginary operates at the level of the daily life: 'aesthetic feelings' are shared and they are linked to 'images and symbols' of the community that in turn recognizes itself in these symbols. As such, he scrutinizes how the daily life, rituals and actions are organized around images referring to 'an imagined world' (Maffesoli, 1990). For Maffesoli, the image together with emotions has an associating characteristic as it forms the basis of every community (Magosse, 2006). By devoting himself to the need to develop 'une éthique de l'esthétique', Maffesoli puts much emphasis on the role the imaginary plays in the construction of societies. His position completes the structuralist approach of the imaginary (of his tutor Durand) by adding the 'expérience vécue'. By so doing, he presents a kind of structuration-theory of the social imaginary as well, with myths and their expression in 'images and symbols' on the one hand and how they are lived or better, experienced emotionally, on the other. Indeed it is not the myths, symbols and signs that bind societies together, that structure them, or at least not alone. It is how they are lived, emotionally. For Maffesoli, the most fundamental characteristic of the image is thus not the message that it is supposed to transport, but the shared emotions they engender. It is not the content it bears or its meaning, but it is its potential to be a 'vector of communion' (Magosse, 2006).

Both Castoriadis and Maffesoli offer interesting insights in the power of the imaginary in society and how it relates to the population as a whole, including the elites. Even if they use a very different approach and use very different concepts, they both demonstrate how societies are structured and stabilized. But they provided us furthermore with clues to understand how change comes about in society, as ultimately the 'structure' (social imaginaries or structuring myths) needs to be imagined and needs to be lived in practice. Indeed it depends on the (radical) imagination or emotionally lived experience of the people themselves; and it is in that opening --in that possibility of creative individuals to take a step back and imagine the world, imagine humanity or imagine parts of it differently-- that lies the possibility for change. It is where the capacity lies to institute society with different meaning and different imaginaries. And seen the importance of 'myths', new 'images' and 'symbols', as Maffesoli points out, they are likely to play an important role in bringing about change as well. In that sense there is in fact some similarity with Hajer's idea about the role of narratives, metaphors and storylines. But the driving force behind change is not linguistic, not argumentative, nor the 'positions', or certainly not alone that. It is the imagination that underpins them, the intentional flux, the desires and affects as well as the representative (for Castoriadis) or the lived experience and how images and symbols function as vectors of communion (for Maffesoli).

Sociology of the imaginary is criticized on many fronts, but I will only emphasize one negligence here, as it is particularly important to understand the power of the imaginary in urban planning processes: namely the role of 'place'. Indeed, places too are instituted with meaning, with imaginary. They are one of the important instruments by which the radical imagination can be 'institutionalized'. Places, human geographers argue, serve as important material support; when it comes for example to consolidating one social-historical political view over another: capital cities, squares, monuments, and so forth. Certainly, Castoriadis did not deny the role of 'place' and he would agree on the important part it plays in the so-called 'imaginaire institué'. But he does not elaborate on its functioning. 'Geography of the imaginary', however, does exactly that, which is why I turn to it next.

2.4 The Imaginary institution of Place

Aside from disciplinary differences in the way of apprehending the issue and the time-gap, the role of the imaginary in geographical sciences draws clear parallels with conceptualizations on the issue in sociology. Both academic disciplines refer to one another and very often get intermingled. The idea to study geographical imaginaries is not new. Maybe even more so than in sociology, there is a vast amount of geographical contributions and publications that use the concepts of imaginaries, imaginations, images, and so forth. As Reinhoudt Magosse (2006) point out, the conceptual debate about it is less underpinned than in sociology. Indeed, the concept of imaginary is often confused with representation (*ibid.*). But as opposed to the work of Castoriadis or Maffesioli, human geography and critical geography put the role of space, or better 'place', front and center in their analysis of how societies are structured.

The concept of the imaginary and role of imagination in geography was first developed in response to positivist geography, whose primary focus was 'space'. Whereas 'space' was a universal, abstract phenomenon, subject to scientific, objective laws; they argued that more subjective aspects had to be taken into account. To distinguish their approach they shifted the focus to the concept of 'place' (2.4.1). It started with an enquiry into the question: why certain places hold special meaning to people. The relation under scrutiny was between 'place' and 'self'. Human geographers such as Yi-Fu Tuan & Harold Prohansky's developed the concept of 'Sense of Place', while Kevin Lynch proposed the method of 'mental mapping'. But they were criticized for focusing too much on how individuals relate to places and how they see images and representations as reflections of reality, as opposed to social constructs. It is in that framework that John Dixon & Kevin Durrheim propose a social constructivist interpretation using concepts such as 'Place narrative' & 'Place Discourse'.

But they were not the only ones to respond in kind. Geographers that came to be known as part of the school of 'critical geography' (2.4.2), argued both against human geography that the social and political was not properly taken into consideration; as against sociology of the imaginary, making the point that they had eclipsed the role of space altogether. They argued that space and places must be identified as social constructs, instituted with meaning and 'socially

produced' (Henri Lefebvre); as products of 'place-creation' by those in power trying to shape the world to their own image or seen as instilled expressions of power struggles of the past and what they call 'landscapes of power' (James Duncan, David Harvey, Denis Crossgrove, W.J.T. Mitchell & Sharon Zukin).

This part of the state of the art will therefore not only help to introducing the concept of 'imagination' and the 'imaginary' in the analysis of power relations, it will also allow us to understand why 'place matters' so much, and why changes to places can generate such tensions in society, often encountered in the daily practice of urban planning. Indeed, their contributions do shed light on why people are so passionate about the places they live in. Why changes or proposed changes (zoning changes, design plans,...) to livelihoods, to neighborhoods or central places (especially in capital cities) can trigger such high emotions and strong involvement, in favor or against. Indeed, geography of the imaginary, helps us understand why collaborative urban planning for example insists on building 'institutional capacity' or why it is so important to take away fears of the unknown by providing ample and clear information. Indeed, they make the case that place matters and in not to be underestimated ways.

2.4.1 The Imaginary in Human Geography & the role of Place

As mentioned above, the use of the imaginary in human geography is most often tied to the concept of 'place'. 'Place', 'sense of place' (Tuan, 1977), 'place identity' (Prohansky et al., 1983) and 'mental maps' (Lynch, 1960) are some of the concepts that were developed by human geographers in the 1960s and 1970s to distinguish their approach from positivist geography and it is to them that I turn first in this part.

Yi-Fu Tuan & Harold Prohansky's Sense of Place

Yi-Fu Tuan's (1977) 'sense of place', for example, referred to the subjective interpretations of spaces and the 'meanings' & 'feelings' that people have towards them. Place, he argued, relates to the 'self' as an element of the subjects identity. It enables the classification of what is 'home' and what not, the 'here' and 'there', while feelings play a crucial role in the way spatial imaginaries are constructed. Human beings are thus portrayed as imaginative users of their environments and as agents able to appropriate physical contexts in order to create what he calls 'a space of attachment' and 'rooted-ness', or also 'spaces of being' (Magosse, 2006). A lot of attention goes therefore to (for example) home places and the 'spatial imaginaries' that are construed with respect to them in the subject. They play a vital role (ibid.) as they are organized and represented in ways that help individuals to maintain 'self-coherence', 'self-esteem' and as they help them to realize 'self-regulation principles' (ibid.). Home places, have with other words a stabilizing force on the 'self'. Homes, in the narrow sense (the house or apartment were one lives) would be less of interest to this PhD. But when understood in the more abstract sense, as those places where

people feel at home ('sense of home'), it can include a footpath in front of one's door, a street corner, a neighborhood or a park just as well.

Similarly, in environmental psychology, Harold Prohansky (1983) developed the notion of 'place identity' and refers to it as a 'predominantly cognitive structure' of individuals; that arises out of the human beings attempts to regulate their environments (Magosse, 2006). But like Tuan and despite his awareness of the role of social interactions, he sees it as largely constructed: as a property of the individual's mind, "a pot-pourri of memories, conceptions, interpretations, ideas and related feelings about specific physical settings as well as types of settings" (Prohansky et al., 1983).

Kevin Lynch & the Image of the City

Kevin Lynch can undoubtedly be seen as one of the key-theorists relating the 'imaginary' to 'place'. With his seminal paper 'The Image of the City' (Lynch, 1960) and his conceptualization of the 'mental map' he set out to answer the question of why people attribute meaning to places and how they form internal images of these places. His main focus was on the psychological representation of places, emphasizing the perceptual characteristics of the urban environment and highlighting the ways in which individuals mentally organize their own sensory experiences of cities. Lynch was in that sense one of the forerunners of the 'psychological turn' --and what came to be known as 'behavioral geography-- as he underlined the role of 'environmental perception' as a mediation between the 'environment' and 'human action'.

In 'the image of the city' (1960), Lynch developed a theory about what he called 'mental mapping'. It resulted from a comparative empirical study in Boston, Jersey City and Los Angeles on how people perceive and organize spatial information, when navigating through these cities. Through the instrument of 'mental maps' he was enabled to analyze 'mental configurations' of places and based on his findings he found out that people organize incoming information about spaces in a rather consistent and even predictable way.

Cognitive revolution in Psychology

Kevin Lynch's inspiration for his behavioralist approach came from psychology, where a 'cognitive revolution' was going ongoing:

- The concept 'cognitive' referred to the mental processes that select and gather information from their environment.
- Through life every human builds up an experiential and decision-making structure that is partly grounded in experiences and that is partly congenital. These decision-making structures are called 'schemes'.
- Human behavior is then described as the result of past experiences.
- While the human being (as the center of attention) became characterized as an 'information accumulating system'.

(Johnston et al., 2000)

The information, he argued, is structured around five elements, which together form a mental map:

- Paths: streets, sidewalks, other trails and tracks travelled by the user
- Edges: perceived boundaries such as canals, major axes, walls, etc.
- Districts: larger sections of a city showing some distinct character or identity
- Nodes: focal points, squares, intersections
- Landmarks: buildings, parks, monuments etc. which serve as reference points

(Lynch, 1960)

A first critic, which was often uttered on Lynch but also on Prohansky is the implicit opposition between real and perceived worlds: in which the perceived, the images, are seen as nothing more than pictorial representations or copies of the reality out there (i.e. representations that supposedly look like reality). This approach, it is argued, relies on the assumption of the existence of an actual space of the real world which can be fully analyzed scale by scale (Magosse 2006). That implies that the meaning of place would be internal to that place and that it is something to be unraveled, discovered and known. Put differently, in the view of these authors the representation of a 'place' will be the result of a personal cognitive and emotional experience of the essence of that place. Therefore it doesn't matter if you are a man or a woman, a native or newcomer, young or old, rich or poor, it is only a question of personal discovery. Which brings me to the second point of critique that sociologist of the imaginary would most certainly utter: the tendency to emphasize the individualistic dimensions of place identity and the imaginary processes that support it. It should be noted that scholars like Tuan and Prohansky or Lynch never really disaffirmed the social aspect that was involved in place making, but when conceptualizing the imaginary, images and representations they do mainly portray it as the result of individual mental processes.

The linguistic turn, however, allowed a re-balancing of the debate in human geography. Places, Dixon & Durheim and Ryden argued, do not exist until they are verbalized, first in thought and memory and then through the spoken or written word (Stokowsky, 2002); While critical geographers, meanwhile, pointed out that images and representations are fluid, changeable, dynamic contexts of social interaction and memory, and that they contain overt and covert social practices.

John Dixon & Kevin Durrheim's Place narrative' & 'Place Discourse'

It is in that vein, that John Dixon & Kevin Durrheim re-conceptualized the concept of 'place identity' and abuts sociology of the imaginary. They argue that place identity is always socially constructed through persuasive, rhetorical uses of language and stylistic devices or 'place symbols' such as icons, imagery, argumentation and metaphors (Dixon & Durrheim, 2000 in Magosse, 2006). These symbols, they argue, are formalized through their use into coherent language structures and appear to people as narratives: myths, fables and the like. One of the most common of these forms, then, is the 'place narrative' or 'place discourse' that links group identities to places (ibid.). 'Place identity' is thus seen as something that human beings create together by use of linguistic practices. They are social constructions that help them to make sense of their connectivity to

'place' and guide their actions, and projects, accordingly (ibid.). But not only do Dixon and Durrheim acknowledge the relevance of places to the collective senses of 'self', they also highlights the collective processes through which specific place identities are formed, reproduced and modified. They emphasize that places in that sense are also always 'in the process of being created' and thus capable of being discursively manipulated towards desired individual or collective ends (ibid.).

2.4.2 The Imaginary in Critical Geography & Landscapes of Power

As mentioned above, a second response opposing the behavioralists and early human geographers came from the school of 'critical geography'. The name captures a myriad of new movements such as 'post-structuralists', 'social constructionists', 'feminists' and 'post-colonialists'. But what they all have in common is that they approach representations and imaginaries as social constructs. They do not consider them mere expressions of reality (or of the factual city). Indeed, as in sociology of the imaginary, they argue that reality can never fully be grasped, since representations do not refer to an objective reality, but to an imagined reality. Here to that does not mean the authors argue that the real, or that real space, does not exist. But it needs to be mediated before it can be grasped. Put differently, 'place identity' for example can never be approached in terms of true or false, as it is not the expression of a knowable reality. Every interpretation of the real city is thus by definition, incomplete and subjective. Each version has its own internal logic and its own validity; and every place can therefore also have multiple identities, meanings and narratives of reality. In practice, furthermore, many critical geographers argue, this is indeed mostly the case. Moreover, some of them will be dominant, hegemonic and widely shared; while others will be common in smaller communities only, or new one may emerge. They view 'place', with other words, also as inherently political and as subject to a struggle over the production of the meaning of 'place'.

Henri Lefebvre's (1974) book on the social production of space certainly counts as one of the early important contributions to the field, so I briefly start with his approach. Consequently I shortly discuss the work about landscapes of power of Duncan, Mitchell and Sharon Zukin's. For the last two parts of the state of the art, I come back to the question of how places play a key role in forging communities, as described by authors such Crossgrove, Schneekloth, Shibley and Benedict Anderson and I end with a note on the particular role ascribed to capital cities' in forging national communities as both case studies in this PhD are indeed either the institutional, economic and cultural capital (Brussels), either the economic and cultural capital (Istanbul, with Ankara carrying most democratic and administrative institutions) of their states.

Henri Lefebvre & the Production of Space

In his seminal work, 'La production de l'espace', Henri Lefebvre (1974) reviews his former work on everyday life. In it he pays particular attention to the struggle of defining the meaning of space and how cultural significance is ascribed to spatial relations between territories and people (Warf, 2004). In doing so Lefebvre was among the early Marxist and critical geographers (avant-la-lettre)

to advance the debate about analyzing social space as more than a mere expression of reality or as a category of discourse (Vermeulen, 2015). He concludes that space is in fact the expression of different modes of social production and proposed a 'trialectics' (as opposed to a dialectics) of sorts (Soja, 1996). To support his view, Lefebvre introduced three concepts that explain what he understands by 'the social production of space': the 'conceived space' (l'espace conçu), the 'lived space' (l'espace vécu) and 'perceived space' (l'espace perçu). Fig.3 presents a diagram explaining the

The 'perceived space' (l'espace perçu) overlaps with what is usually called the built environment. It refers to the objects we observe and experience (physical touch and sensation) streets, buildings, housing, parks, open space, infrastructures and so on). It refers to all that is 'concrete';

a material result of the social actions taken in everyday life. Therefore, the perceived space is also sometimes named 'the material space' (Harvey, 2004), 'the physical space' (Elden, 2004) or 'the result of spatial practices' (Elden, 2004; Shields, 2006). These spaces, Lefebvre argues, also refer to the spatial dimensions of the processes of social production and reproduction, like the particular social geography of labour distribution (Lefebvre, 1974).

The 'conceived space' (cf. l'espace conçu) encompasses all 'representations of space' or 'the space as it is conceived and represented' (Harvey, 2004). They are the imagined spaces and mental constructs (Elden, 2004), or what Harvey (2004) and Merrifield (2006) call 'the conceptualized space', or the 'conceptualizations of space'. The conceived space refers to all the immaterial thoughts that constitute a discourse on (or about) space (Shields, 2004). This is the space, which includes the knowledge, signs and codes that are expressed via ideas. It refers to the discursive regimes of analysis, and shows how expert knowledge is produced in the 'spatially-oriented' professions of scientists, planners, urban designers and artists (Vermeulen, 2015). It conceptualizes the relations between modes of production, their power-relations and the hierarchical social order. Lefebvre sees this space as dominant in most societies as it reflects the (hegemonic) power-relations and ideologies of societies.

The 'lived space', finally, (cf. l'espace vécu or the spaces of representation) combines the previous spaces. In the lived space a multitude of representations occur (the spatial practices of the perceived space), but at the same time the lived space refers to all the symbols, signs, codes and artefacts that embody social life (the representations of the conceived space). Shields (2004) interprets this dimension of space as one that encompasses the discourses of space, the space as it might be. And it is also where, Lefebvre introduces the notion of the imaginary, which he adopts from Lacan and Castoriadis (Vermeulen, 2015). The lived space is the one that encompasses the social imaginary, the space that is continuously modified in everyday life (Elden, 2004), that

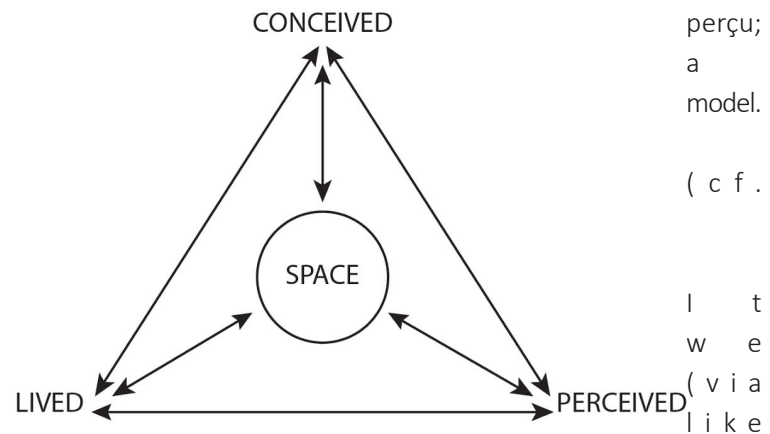


Fig.3. The social production of space according to H. Lefebvre (inspired by: lefebvre, 1974; 1991; warf, 2004 & elden, 2004)

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combines the real and imagined, things and thoughts on equal terms. Herein lie also the counter spaces, spaces of resistance, arising from their subordinate, peripheral or marginalized positioning (Soja, 1996). Indeed, Lefebvre considers it as the strategic location from which to encompass, understand and potentially transform all spaces simultaneously: it is the space of radical openness of social struggle (Soja, 1996).

Landscapes of Power

Even though it was Lefebvre's lived space that was novatrice at the time, it was his 'conceived space' (*l'espace conçu*) that would soon become the focal point of many contributions in critical geography (Magosse, 2006). 'Landscape' or what Lefebvre also called the 'spaces of power', became the main object of interest to study (*ibid.*). The authors wanted to de-construct the power relations embedded in space. Under the influence of semiologists like Barthes, Derrida and Baudrillard; geographers such as James Duncan (1990) started to apply the post-structural approach of discourse, text and inter-textuality to the concept of landscape. The idea was to literally read both the material (perceived) and the represented (conceived) landscape as a text in order to de-construct it and to unravel the complex contradictions (intertextuality) and power relations at work in the background. In 'The City as Text', Duncan (1990) shows how social relations in a Sri-Lankan city are inscribed in the landscape. The great interest of this approach is that it has helped to analyze the social and political meanings (ideologies, myths, etc.) embedded in spatial imaginaries (Magosse, 2006). But one of the early criticisms on the 'landscape approach' was exactly its linguistic approach. It was argued that places are more than texts and that textualism and formalism deny the concrete experiences and material reality of places (*ibid.*). Neo-Marxists that inscribed themselves in the so-called cultural turn (described below), post-colonialists and feminist took the criticism very serious and started elaborating the concept of landscapes differently with a focus on how hegemony is naturalized and materialized in the build environment and on how to deconstruct the reifications created through representations (*ibid.*).

A wonderful early example of this approach can be found in David Harvey's article 'Monument and Myth' on the story about the Basilique du Sacré in Paris (Harvey, 1979). The article demonstrated how the Basilique hides more history than is revealed in the landscapes, how the urban fabric was used to wipe out the struggles of the Paris Commune and the cultural wars that accompanied the construction of the landscape. Harvey articulates in his article how the Sacré Coeur is a powerful symbolic site today for both pilgrims and tourists --perhaps unaware of its bloody history-- as well as to radical protesters who know precisely what the basilica stands for (Harvey, 1979). The power of landscapes is, with other words, said to lie in their specific ability to naturalize and to disguise the social and cultural conceptions that are embedded in it. Indeed, it is argued that they are taken for granted precisely because they look real and are considered as material facts. This led Denis Crossgrove to redefine 'landscape' as a way of seeing the world and the city rather than as an object, a fact or a text. He argued that landscapes are ideological and that they represent the way a specific class represents itself. That they are translations of the way specific classes mold palpable landscapes and inscribe their views in them (Crossgrove 1989 in Magosse, 2006). William John Thomas Mitchell (2000) adds; "it are those in power who create places and

landscapes and by so doing, they try to select and represent the world as to give it a particular meaning. Spaces thus play an important role in constructing consent and identity in organizing a receptive audience- for the projects and desires of powerful social interests” (Mitchell in Magosse 2006). He contends that it is inconceivable that a hegemonic order can ever survive without continual consent and contest by those it seeks to dominate. Accordingly, the landscape needs to be regarded as the result of an ongoing struggle (ibid.). Of significance then, is the relative power that various competing groups are able to mobilize: the degree to which these “groups have the power to express their image in the stones, concrete, bricks and wood constituting the landscape. As such, each society’s moral order is reflected in its particular spatial order and in the language and imagery by which that spatial order is represented (ibid.).

This brings Sharon Zukin to re-define ‘landscape’ in her book ‘Landscapes of Power’ (Zukin, 1991): as a “contentious, compromised product of society formed through power, coercion, or collective resistance”. While she ascribes landscapes as having the key characteristic and capacity to “fully mystifies that contentiousness, creating instead a smooth surface, a mute representation, a clear view that is little clouded by considerations of equality, power, coercion, or resistance”. In that sense she defines landscapes as a produced space (perceived), a represented space (conceived) as well as a lived space.

Space, the Imaginary & Community Formation

A short note on the role of place in critical geography on community formation. By that I mean how they function as both a way to forge communities (in accordance to the ‘hegemonic’, the ‘capitalist’, ‘patriarchal’,... worldviews of society and cities) and as a way to keep them together. These authors ask the question about why and how places become important vectors of community or better, as Benedict Anderson put it, how they serve to build ‘imagined communities’. They too start from the assumption that speaking and writing are social constructions and they are not representative for objective reality and nor do they see ‘natural’ and ‘cultural’ landscapes as mirroring or representing an objective reality. Indeed as had become common in critical geography, communication was seen as an instrument actively employed to create place realities and create communities; while both concepts are in their views profoundly interlinked.

The notion of community-based identity was already developed by Edward Relph in 1976. According to him, “the relationship between community and place is indeed a very powerful one in which each reinforces the identity of the other and in which the landscape is very much an expression of communally held beliefs and values of interpersonal involvements. We just have to think of notions such as community, ethnicity or nation that indirectly but often directly relate to specific places. The social and cultural values of place, then, become sustained in the language, in culture, and in history, which is collectively experienced, imagined and remembered across groups and communities of people” (Relph, 1976 in Magosse, 2006). In that line Linda Schneekloth and Robert Shibley (1995) opened their book on ‘placemaking, the art and practice of building communities’ with the statement that the making of our homes, our neighborhoods, our places of work and play does not only changes and maintains the physical world of living; but that it is also a way we make our communities and connect with people. The ‘power of place’, they

argue, is its ability to connect people in society, encourage development of personal and social identities, and re-enforce socio-cultural meanings. These are, they continue, the fundamental qualities of community, which is why 'sense of place' and 'community' are inherently interlinked.

Gillian Rose (1996), on her part, shares the worry with David Harvey's account ascribe above about the kind of romantic but exclusive notions of place. Any space can be given many different meanings depending on the different types of people, engendering different places. Therefore, she claims that collective identities are typically fashioned through symbolic contrasts between our space and their space, expressed in paradigmatic oppositions such as marginal versus central, primitive versus civilized or First versus Third World (Rose in Magosse 2006). For Rose, "nationality is often represented, so as to disconnect certain groups from the national character, and that this process is mostly facilitated by images of place. In that sense she believes that place identity derives not only from individuals attachments to their immediate environments, but also from their des-identification with others spaces and from their relationship to dominant ideologies" (ibid.). And that raises the question of what spaces in particular, carry the 'dominant ideology' and 'national character'; which brings us to the next, and last part, of the state of the art: the role played by capital cities in creating that common bond.

2.5 National Imaginaries & the Role of the Capital City

Benedict Anderson's influential account on 'imagined communities' (Anderson, 1983) showed how the imaginary plays a crucial role in linking places to national communities and vice versa. He argued that the old kinship bonds have been replaced by imaginary communities that are much larger in scale, both to what regards population size as the territory it stretches. Therefore, national communities rely on imagination. The members of a nation-state, he continues, have a strong imaginative bond. This bond should be seen, both as a construct or vision of national or other elites and as real historical formations that embody a number of analytically separable processes over long time-spans. He demonstrated how technological revolutions such as the printed media and the economic shift to industrial capitalism enabled large scale national communities to emerge by using old instruments as language, stories, myths and rituals but then in a renewed context, while emphasizing that it is indeed the shared imaginary that keeps the community together (Anderson, 1983).

Inspired by Anderson's writings and the accounts of historian Eric Hobsbaum (1990) French geographer Paul Claval (1994) and Reinhoudt Magosse (2006), argued that stabile political regimes derive their power from acceptance by the population, that they rule by consent. Echoing Gramscian literature, he argued that the 'authority' of people in power needs to be accepted by the majority of counter-powers, since the enforcement of 'authority by force' is an inherently unstable and costly strategy. That is why political regimes seek 'authority by hegemony' and legitimacy for their long-term perpetuation (Claval, 1994; Magosse, 2006).

During the course of the last 200 years emerging nation-states have done so by forging a community, as a 'nation', among the state's population. But that was a historically new phenomenon (Hobsbawm, 1990). Until the enlightenment the legitimacy of most political projects and rulers had relied on charismatic and traditional forms of authority (Weber, 1959). The legitimacy of the Roi Soleil in France for example was still based on the belief that he was divinely ordained. But, towards the end of the 18th century, the source of political legitimacy shifted to more rational and legal forms of authority. Since that period, two perspectives can be identified that became used to legitimate the newly emerging states: the 'social contract' and the 'volksgeist'. In both cases the foundation of the state's legitimacy was based on the concept of the 'nation' as the source of all state power (Magosse, 2006).

The first perspective refers to the concept of the Social Contract ('Contrat Social') as developed by Jean-Jacques-Rousseau (1762). Thereby the state derives its legitimacy from its citizens and the degree to which the state represents the general will of those citizens. Everyone can become a member of the political community and such membership is based on a territorial principle ('le droit de sol'): the place where you are born, where you live, where you build a future is what allows you to take part in the community. Anyone joining that community implicitly accepts and contributes to the social contract. As such any person living on the territory is part of the 'nation' (Dethier, 2003; Bruter, 2004). The second perspective is based on the idea of the 'Volkgeist'. According to Herder (1744-1803), the idea of 'Volkgeist', refers to more 'objective' criteria such as a common language, culture, traditions, history, etcetera. In this perspective, the state derives its political legitimacy from its status as homeland of an ethnic group, the 'nation', and from its function to protect this group and facilitate its social and cultural development. Here the membership is exclusive in the sense that it is based on the 'droit de sang' linked to common descent (Bruter, 2004).

Put differently, there were two sources used to seek state legitimacy and both were characterized by an attempt to create a shared national identity among the population: by emphasizing one's common territory and social contract or by underlining a common culture and shared past. The first was a clear translation of the universal ideas of the enlightenment, whereas the second --with its emphasis on the cultural component-- still refers to more traditional (culture, language, traditions) and charismatic (hero's, myths, etc.) systems of authority (Magosse, 2006).

What both perspectives have in common, however, is that they serve to create an imagined community of the people (Anderson, 1983). Based on an invented sameness and invented traditions (Hobsbawm, 1990) a state-wide shared identity was created amongst the inhabitants, allowing the elites to rule in name of the people instead of the divine (ibid.). Indeed the creation of a nation had to produce a source of legitimacy in the here and now. And thereto it would employ various instruments: such as national education, standardized language and time, an invented past, myths anthems, flags, coins; national events and traditions; triumphalist monuments, squares, parks & boulevards; museums, railway stations, iconic government buildings & infrastructure; an ample administrative elite that could carry the political project. And by the use of national capital cities (ibid.; Hobsbawm, 1990; Hobsbawm & Ranger, 2012; Shore, 2000).

The capital, or for some states 'capitals', are those cities⁵⁹ where the political institutions and administration (or at least parts of it) are situated and where the work is done, in practice. They are the heart of the major political decisions and of the administrative work. They are also the place where one could see, hear and feel the nation-state 'at work' because of the vast amounts of civil servants; the people gravitating around the institutions, the institutions agglomeration economy, large numbers of subsidized cultural and political associations and their daily practices in the city (Favell, 2001). But the capital is thus also the place where its ideas, values and grandeur become materialized in the urban fabric or 'landscape' and where citizens can sense, and make sense of, the nation-state. Either by direct experience with the capital, either by its representations in the form of names, stories, movies, journals, postcards, ... - and mediated as such to the general population. In the classic typology, a 'capital' is therefore always both a functional entity and a symbolic entity in the construal of a 'nation', in the nation-state formation process (Magosse, 2006).

Intermezzo: Capitals and their Structure

Corresponding with roughly two visions of state-organization, Paris and The Hague developed as *archetypical capitals*: the centralized and often absolutist monarchy on the one hand, and the more decentralized republic or federation on the other.

The Parian-Model, the Heavy Centralized Capital

The absolutist monarchy was without doubt the most encountered state-structure in 19th century Europe and accordingly, the majority of European capitals would follow the 'Parisian-model', which had been conceived under Napoleon III in an attempt to restore the pre-revolutionary absolutist rule, and which clearly expressed the preference among important parts of the European elites for a centrally led and authoritarian state system. The Parisian model spread very soon across and beyond Europe and despite the local accents, a common model emerged and was applied on the large majority of *capitals* created before World War I (Magosse, 2006).

The *capitals* that followed the *Parisian-model* were located in already existing cities. They had to be *heavy* or *multifunctional capitals* in the sense that they constituted the top of the urban hierarchy in several spheres (Van der Wusten, 2001) Besides their role as primal political and administrative center from where the country, and by extension the whole (colonial) empire, was governed; they also had to rank at the top of the national urban order in economic, social, cultural and demographic spheres. Moreover, it was not exceptional that the whole economy of the country and trade-networks were further developed in function of the headquarter city. We just have to think of the many water-, rail- and paved roads that were constructed everywhere in Europe in the 19th century and that most often brought the *headquarter city* in the center of

59 Notable exceptions on the rule are Amsterdam or Istanbul which are not considered political, but cultural capitals of their states and who do not house the main chunk of administrative and democratic institutions (a task appointed to resp. The Hague and Ankara)

national transport and communication networks.⁶⁰ Generally speaking, the aim was that local or regional representatives would travel to the ‘capital’ to defend their region and interests. At the same time they also went back to their regions and provinces, where they brought the news and defended the interest of the state. In the ‘capital’ one would find national museums that collected symbolical and cultural artifacts from every region and province in an attempt to create a common national cultural heritage. National universities had to attract the best students and intellectuals from the country which were then educated to become the country’s leading elites. The national *capital* was furthermore a stand for many international organizations and individuals and it was often the country’s main interface with the rest of the world: the place where nationals could get in touch with the global community present in the capital; be it as visitors, temporary or more permanent residents. At the same time the city functioned as the main showcase for foreigners wanting to discover the country. Indeed quite often they served to impress both locals as well as visitors. Put differently, towards the outer world the capital needed to be the expression and emanation of the power and wealth of the country. Internally, the city had to symbolize the unity and strength of the nation. Some famous examples of such dominant, multifunctional capitals are Rome, London and Berlin, Brussels, of course Paris and Istanbul under the ottoman empire⁶¹. (Claval, 2000; Van der Wusten, 2001; Campbell, 2003; Magosse, 2006)

The ‘The Hague-Model’, the Light Capital and the Polycentric Capital City Structure

Another paradigm was set by the Dutch republic, the so-called ‘The Hague-model’, but it would remain marginal in 19th century Europe, and would only become widely diffused in other parts of the world during the 20th century via the United States of America and Washington D.C. The *The Hague archetype or model* set the trend for both mono-functional and poly-centric *capitals* distributed over more than one geographical location. This model would become typical for the federal and more decentralized states that emerged in the 20th century (Campbell, 2003; Magosse, 2006).

Although those capitals have a similar function with respect to binding the country and its citizens, they do so differently. One should remember that a federal state is by definition the result of an agreement between several federal entities to work together in different domains. The result is that the *capitals* of these states can’t permit themselves the same kind of homogenizing function as in the case of the ‘Parisian-model’. Here, the capital needs to be acceptable for all parties and therefore it needs to present itself in less obtrusive ways. Ideally, it expresses the complexity of the state organization and evokes the ideas of diversity and unity inherent to the federal principle. One possible choice to achieve that goal is to choose for ‘a light capital’; a headquarter city that does not rank at the top of the national urban order in the economic, social, cultural, demographic spheres, but that focusses on its political and administrative duties.

60 Despite the fact that multifunctional capitals are characteristic for strongly centralized and Unitarian states, they are also encountered in decentralized and federal states. Examples here are federal countries such as Austria (Vienna), Mexico (Mexico-city) and Belgium (Brussels), with multifunctional capitals ranking at the top of the urban hierarchy in all other domains. In most cases this situation is the relics of a former centralistic governance.

61 Today, functioning besides political capital Ankara, as a the cultural capital of Turkey.

As mentioned before this solution became dominant during the 20th century under the influence of the example of Washington D.C. Some other famous examples are Canberra, Brasilia or Ankara in Turkey. Another option sometimes applied in republics and federal states is the splitting of the capital over different geographical location or cities, making them defacto different light capitals. This strategy of a 'headquarter city structure' functions as a compromise between quarrelling regions and cities contending for the role of *primus inter pares*⁶²(Dreyfus, 1999). As mentioned the Dutch Republic set the model for this paradigm of both the choice for a light, mono-functional and polycentric capital city structure (Magosse, 2006).

In order not to further strengthen the power of Mercantile Amsterdam over the rest of the Dutch Republic, it was decided to put the political decision-making center in the small provincial The Hague, from where no significant power emanated. Amsterdam's *capital* role was consequently officially restricted to that of *symbolical capital*. (Wagenaar, 1998) A more recent example of the sort is South-Africa, where the three institutional powers of the country are distributed over three different locations to come to an agreement. Pretoria became the executive capital, Cape Town the legislative capital and Bloemfontein the jurisdictional capital.⁶³ Another, less well known example, is Germany's *capital city structure* which is distributed over three locations. Whereas the bulk of the state-institutions and administrations were relocated to Berlin after Germany's re-unification in 1991, the Conventional and Federal Courts which are the German higher courts - still have their seat in Karlsruhe, whereas many federal administrations (mainly cultural and scientific institutions) remained in Bonn, the former capital of the Bundes Republic Deutschland⁶⁴ (Campbell, 2003).

As capitals are directly affected by both the concurrence of local and national histories as well as by evolutions in the organization of the state, almost none of the *capitals* encountered today fully correspond to one of the models. It should be noted furthermore that, all considered, *poly-centric capital city structures* stay a rather marginal phenomenon (Magosse, 2006).

62 Given the close links between the political structure of the country and the type of capital that is chosen, light capitals will very often be mono-functional or political capitals: Canberra, Bern, Ottawa, etcetera. Nevertheless there are quite some examples of capitals that are light and multifunctional at the same time. We think here of capitals such as Vienna, Berlin and Mexico-City, which constitute the capitals of federal States and consequently are rather light capitals. Because of mainly historical reasons however, these are at the same time multifunctional capitals that take a leading role in the other domains. Examples of capitals that are at the same time heavy and mono-functional are much less frequently encountered. Den Haag and Ankara, which constitute the capitals of fairly centralized countries, are the quite notable exceptions here.

63 None of these has evolved into the leading city of the country, a role that is still fulfilled by Johannesburg.

64 Other illustrations can be found in Bolivia, where the capital function is divided between La Paz, which hosts the seat of government and parliament and Sucre which is the official capital and seat of the High Court; And Chile, where the government resides in Santiago and the parliament in Valparaiso. (Dreyfus, 1999)

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DÉRIVE APROFONDIE D'ÉTUDES URBANISTIQUES
DIEPGAANDE STUDIE NAAR URBANISTIEKE AFGELEIDEN



Chapter 3
Conceptual Framework

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Conceptual Framework

The title and first phrase of this PhD includes both a question and a potential answer, or at least part of the answer. How do power relations function in urban planning processes? The response should be found by directing our gaze toward the powerful role of *imaginaries*. I insist on the question of power, and this despite the great leaps forward in urban planning theory that have placed power at the center of attention in all major schools of planning since the 1970s. As demonstrated in the chapter above, planning theory did evolve from a preoccupation with the 'objects of planning': the neighborhood, the city or city-region, and how they should be transformed and molded to become more 'rational' and 'efficient', to a preoccupation with the 'process of planning'. How to make urban planning more democratic by involving city dwellers or how to make it effective and get 'things done' and 'implemented' by engaging with the private sector. But following Freedman (1998) and Gualini (2015), I argue that the current urban planning theories are still insufficient to fully grasp power relations and contend that the answers remain ambiguous and in need of further elaboration. When I make this criticism, it also includes the insights of Foucauldian Urban Planning Theory --and its scrutiny of the constant reproduction of power on the micro level-- as well as the elaboration by Maarten Hajer on discourse coalition and narratives (to what regards urban policies). As I argue in the previous chapter, both provide vital understandings that I will draw upon for my conceptual framework. But even if they describe a good part of how the planning process is structured (legal frameworks, process architecture, access and regulation of political & combined arenas...) and how certain dominant or hegemonic narratives become challenged by existing or emerging alternatives; what still seems to be missing is why the actors do what they do. What makes planning such a challenge even for the so-called 'elites in power'? What is it that drives politicians to risk their political careers over urban planning proposals? Why is it that consensus can sometimes not be reached, even when the best efforts are made to get there? What makes city dwellers spend months participating in a planning process? What motivates citizens to verbally oppose proposals in the press or organize civil disobedience actions, write press briefings, organize tediously long and animated weekly meetings and analyze

technical planning documents in their leisure time? What makes the interactions between the actors often so visceral?

The argument developed in the above literature review is that those questions cannot be responded by Collaborative Urban Planning and its focus on democratic practices, qualitative communication and the construal of institutional capacity. Nor can they be answered by Foucauldian Urban Planning and its meticulous description of how power relations are (re)produced on a micro level by and in the urban planning institutions; even if they provide elements that are indeed to be reckoned with. Consequently, I argued that the conceptualization of power in Urban Regime Theory and its typologization of governance coalitions was insufficient. Despite its insights about how maintaining a coalition with non-governmental actors is key to implement urban policies and that it demands hard work and negotiating skills. They focused too narrowly on one kind of coalition, i.e. between the government and non-government actors; while not taking parallel and opposing coalitions into account; and that they provided an overly rational approach to trade-offs, focusing too much on preferences as private interests.

Subsequently, I moved to Gramscian-inspired literature, especially to discuss the applied work of Maarten Hajer on urban and environmental policy making; who offered answers in that regard. Indeed, he argued that it was a mistake to focus on conflicts of interest and 'strategic behavior', claiming that planning is characterized by power relations that are structured and reproduced by the capacity of different 'discourse coalitions', to define the 'narrative' that will become dominant. But at the same time Hajer seemed too focused on language, argumentative structures, metaphors, storylines, put differently: on 'representations'. Indeed I argue in chapter 2, that this is both his biggest strength and his greatest weakness. Hajer's focus on representations allows him to understand a great part of political dynamics and power relations in urban planning processes, but at the same time it eclipses the role of the imagination and the imaginary that produce those representations. It obscures how the imagination and the imaginary structure the process and how they are much more than linguistic representations --also images, symbols and places-- and more than representations themselves, as they also include dreams and desires. What is also underemphasized in Hajer's account is that both cognitive and (visceral) passions are at play in construing those representations; as well as the role of crisis and triggering events and how they trigger intense moments of learning.

I argue, with other words, that the question raised by Freedman and Gualini about the insufficient understanding of power is indeed justified and I have tried to demonstrate why in the previous chapter. But aside from the strengths and weaknesses of urban planning theories, urban regime theory and the discourse coalition approach, I have also proposed a potential answer or at least part of it. I argued that the current ambiguity is due to the fact that the role of the imagination and the (social) imaginary have not --or not sufficiently-- been taken into account when it comes to analyzing power in urban planning processes. Simultaneously, I proposed to look at those fields in the literature where both are theorized and scrutinized extensively; i.e. in sociology of the imaginary, geography of place and critical geography. This literature has the disadvantage of not being applied to the field of urban planning processes; but, I argued that we can learn from it and draw from it to improve the apprehensions of power in the specific case of urban planning processes. The intention

of this chapter is not, however, to develop a theory on the imaginary in urban planning processes on the basis of the literature review; nor will I propose a comprehensive model that can be used for deductive research. It would demand a whole PhD in itself to bring together such a broad scope of literature --with their very different assumptions, concepts and encompassing elaborations-- and apply it to a novel field of study. The aim here, instead, is to complement elements provided by Foucauldian Urban Planning and the Discourse Coalition approach of Hajer and Vermeulen, with a set of concepts that can help to focus an inductive research about the role of imaginaries in urban planning processes. Moreover, every single concept in this chapter could include a discussion on its meaning by the different authors, a debate on how they intended them to be used and what would therefore be the most representative interpretation. Instead, due to time and space constraints I will only emphasize how I interpret the concepts here; where I place them in my conceptual framework and how I used them in my research. I start by an overview of how I understand the key concepts related to the *imaginary*. Thereafter I discuss the concepts related to the *imagination*, *discourse coalitions*, *place* and *triggering events*. Subsequently, I make a short note on what this might mean for planning and I end this chapter by pointing out a number of concepts and focal points emphasized by Foucauldian Urban planning and Vermeulen and conclude with a heuristic visualization of the framework that guided the empirical research these last three years.

Hegemonic and Counter-Hegemonic Imaginaries

When I use the word '*imaginaries*' I do so with reference to social imaginaries that are collectively shared and which structure the way human beings individually '*imagine*' the world, humanity and parts of it, such as for example with regards to 'the city'. *Imaginaries* consist of instituted representations in the form of language (discourses, narratives, storylines and metaphors); in the form of images (visual impressions); symbols (marks, characters or things as a conventional representation of an object, a function or a process) and signs (an object, quality, event or bodily motion whose presence or occurrence indicates the presence or occurrence of something else); and in the form of social practices (of the discourse coalitions) and places (as landscapes of power and place identities). These *instituted imaginaries* stabilize the 'world' and 'society' as human beings collectively draw on them to make sense of the world, to see it, feel it, reason and give meaning to it. But Castoriadis calls them *secondary* imaginary significations.

Some *imaginaries*, however, function as structuring principles for many others, they are the so called primary imaginary significations that have the capacity 'to continuously impose forms on reality'. Think of 'democracy', 'capitalism', 'God', 'patriarchy',... they are the work of human collectivities that are creating new meanings and that maintain and alter the existing historical form. They are *instituting imaginaries*, with secondary imaginary significations (*instituted imaginaries*) as their products. On another scale, in urban planning, planners come for example often across two primary imaginary significations: the *imaginary of the automotive city* and the *imaginary of the livable city* (see for ex. chapter 6). They cast their meaning and endow with reasoning and desires, fantasies and dreams, many other urban issues. Secondary imaginary significations on the other hand would regard the primary imaginary significations' materialization and their translation in infrastructure; plans and planning proposals, 3D images; demands of inhabitants or urban activists;

names, metaphors and storylines used to express the future of an area; symbolic places or activities on the development perimeter, and so forth. But while they are key to understand a part of the dynamic of urban planning processes, the primary underlying imaginaries that structure them are so even more.

The reason therefore is that primary imaginary significations are not about representation in the sense of ‘representing to the mind and the body what is not present’. They are about representation in the broad sense: of endowing the world, humanity, the city, parts of it... with meaning and reasoning and feelings of what something is or what something serves to, and what not; what is natural or not; what is just or unjust, logical and rational or absurd. It is a representational activity that defines *meanings*; construes *desires*, i.e. strongly wishing for something to come into being; as well as *fantasies & dreams*, imagining the impossible, the irrational and the improbable. Cognition plays an important role, but primary imaginary significations function on an emotional level. What is perceived as wrong or right, about a secondary imaginary signification, is therefore not only a cognitive awareness; it is also experienced with somatic markers or even visceral repugnance and glee; Exactly because primary imaginary significations function as a creational structuring source that gives them a place within a set of representations; that institutes them within a logic and form of reasoning, and that situates them with respect to the accompanying desires, fantasies and dreams of the primary imaginary signification.

In the rest of this PhD I will speak of primary imaginary signification, plainly as *imaginaries*, while I will speak of secondary imaginary significations as *representations* (or immediately with their specific quality as ‘*metaphor*’, ‘*storyline*’, ‘*image*’, ‘*symbol*’, ‘*place*’ and so forth).

Applied to the city, *imaginaries* structure how people understand the city or parts of it, make sense of it, reason about it, feel about it. They structure how places are perceived as natural and normal or as problematic and disturbing. They include assumptions about what the city is, what it serves to, whom it belongs to and whom it belongs to less. They make sense of phenomena like urban planning or planning proposals as logical, the way of the world or mistaken, wrong, dangerous even. They contain norms, desires and dreams as well, about what the city should be or not be; whom it should serve or not serve; how political decisions about the city should be made or not be made. I will call them in this research: **imaginaries of the city & imaginaries of decision-making about the city**. As will become evident in the case studies, I also include the concept of **national imaginaries about the city** in the research as both cases are concerned with nation-wide known places.

Put differently, while the focus on representations (or secondary imaginary significations) can explain a part of the story (i.e. ‘what they refer to’), their analysis, as such, doesn’t bear enough explanatory power. And this because they only make sense in the context of the underlying imaginaries that give them their meaning, that give them their logic & reasoning and their emotional, somatic and visceral character. Let me explain that with a classic example, the proposal to broaden a ring road in an urban area from 6 to 7 lanes. In itself it is a proposal that represents ‘road capacity enlargement’. The metaphors used will reference ‘car fluidity’ and ‘economic benefits’, while the storyline may emphasize that the area needs to reposition itself economically by improving accessibility to countervail an economic downturn. The story line will be supported by an economic discourse on the effects it will generate in GDP or foreign direct investment; in addition, an engineering discourse

may discuss the technical feasibility and the strengths of the project. But what mapping all those elements cannot explain, is the visceral way with which such projects are defended and opposed. Indeed, the strength of an argument or argumentative structure and the emotion it entails cannot be found in itself alone, it is not auto-referential. It lies in their reference to the *instituting imaginaries* of which they are a materialization. The broadening of the ring road can make sense only within the imaginary of the automotive city; about what the city is and what it should be. Its representations as an economic entity, its prioritization of commuters, its desire about individual freedom in the form of personal (motorized) mobility and its dreams and fantasies about being able to move and arrive anywhere by those means. Oppositely, it might be viscerally opposed, not because of the road capacity it will generate in itself, or the economic growth it will generate, but because it symbolizes the 'automotive city' and its assumptions. Because of its reference to an *imaginary* that prioritizes commuting employees over local inhabitant and shopkeepers, because of their insatiable desire to expand car infrastructure in urban areas on every boulevard and every square; turning them into urban highways or parking lots. The character of the opposition to the expansion of a ring road from 6 to 7 lanes is therefore too, only understandable with reference to the primary imaginary signification it reveals; on a representational and emotional level.

Some of these *imaginaries* will prove more powerful and convincing and will acquire or have acquired *hegemonic* status in a state or city. Their instituting character produces consent, as they structure and institutionalize what is collectively considered natural and normal, as they endow the world and parts of it with a shared way of giving meaning to it, reasoning about it and feeling about it. These *imaginaries* are materially reproduced in a variety of instituted *representations*, at different (interrelated) scales and spatio-temporal contexts and they will have become part of the authoritative political-institutional and administrative frame. Indeed, *hegemonic imaginaries* institutionalization includes the 'armor of state coercion'. But at the same time alternative, existing counter-imaginaries persist in smaller communities while new ones may 'emerge' and challenge the 'hegemonic' status. I distinguish therefore, **hegemonic imaginaries**, **extant counter-hegemonic imaginaries** and **emerging counter-hegemonic imaginaries**. This also implies that *imaginaries* are always formed at a certain moment, that they are produced in a **socio-historic process** and that they are the result **of past struggles** in relation to one another or previous *imaginaries* and their *representations*.

Imagination & Discourse Coalitions

Imaginaries are with other words a powerful stabilizing source, but at the same time they are dynamic, they alter and can potentially disappear, even hegemonic ones. The reason therefore is that collectively shared *imaginaries* ultimately depend on the **imagination** of **creative individuals**. However strong an *imaginary* may be instituted in society, however deep it may be engrained in the collective consciousness of a population, it has to be *imagined* for it to exist and continue to persist. It is in that space, between what is collectively handed to us growing up and further in life --and how we *imagine* it-- that lies a space of freedom and autonomy. Because we need to *imagine* those collective *imaginaries* for them to persevere, a space for potential change is always existent. In fact, *imaginaries* modify and vary continuously in the practice of everyday life, as there

is a dialectic relation between the collectively shared *imaginaries* and the collective individual *imagination*. But they can also change and even disappear, despite their instituted support in vast amounts of representations and authoritative backing. And when they alter or fade it happens because they are challenged by the creative *imagination* of individuals.

The change however, does not occur because of the *imagination* of *creative individuals* in itself. It is the hard work of those people, to get organized, to group themselves, to construe a **discourse coalition**, to imagining (represent, desire, fantasies, dream) the world or parts of it differently, cast another or a new form; build social practices and alternative endowed with meaning, reasoning and feeling; because of their reference to the alternative *imaginaries*.

Triggering Events, Learning & Place

From the literature, furthermore, we know that the struggle over the *imaginary* and change with regards to *hegemonic imaginaries* is not likely to follow a gradual process. The structuration and institution of new *imaginaries* is by principle a matter of **learning**. But the process of learning is not a steady process; it is one that is triggered. Indeed, there are moments in which the *learning process* intensifies strongly; i.e. at moments of small or large **triggering events**. On the one hand, they are responsible for generating cognitive dissonance at different scales (a neighborhood, a city, a state, worldwide), they can destabilize the hegemonic imaginary institution of something, someone, some process, and they can create an opening for the structuration and potential institutionalization of alternative *imaginaries*. On the other hand triggering events generate passions and affects or **emotions** (such as indignation and hope) that will aid the collective political identifications, it will function as an important sources of motivation for the formation of *discourse coalitions*; aids the participants in the coalition to make compromises or find agreements they would not otherwise make, but also to see things in another light (the **internal learning process**). *Triggering events* motivate the participants in the coalition to do the hard work of producing alternative *representations* (metaphors, names, storylines, images,...) and social practice; which in turn provide tools for the wider population to make sense of phenomena, a place, an event, a proposal or a new situation,... (the **external learning process**). Put differently, triggering events are both key to understanding the formation of the *group* who will develop new imaginaries and representations, as to understand the cognitive dissonance and *learning process* among the wider population.

Why now is this so important for urban planning in particular? Because we know from the literature in human geography and in critical geography that changes to **places** are likely to function as *triggering events*, and this for two reasons: first of all, because *places* play a particular role in the stabilization of the identity of people. Home places generate a *sense of belonging*. They include the places we live in in the broad sense; as the house, streets, park or shop we are accustomed too and the routines with which we use them. They are an important part of our *place identity*, but they are not the only ones. There are other places that we may not use at all --it is possible we haven't been there once--but that function as part of our place identity nonetheless. They are those places that function as *vectors of communion* because we share an imaginary about them. Capital cities, central squares, iconic buildings, monuments, are among the best known examples.

Secondly, because the way these places stabilize our identity is not neutral. Critical geography teaches us that urban *places* are always instituted with a particular *imaginary* and often with the *hegemonic imaginary*; especially when it regards those places that are ‘vectors of communion’.

Every proposed change (or **plan**), every change (or **implementation of the plan**) in an urban planning process, to the so-called urban landscape or *place* is therefore a potential *triggering event* as it may dislocate the sense of belonging, interrupt routines, or destabilize an institutionalized vector of communion: triggering a potential political confrontation between *imaginaries* of what the *place* is and what it should be.

Arena’s, Process Architecture, Legal Framework

Following Foucauldian Urban Planning Theory and Sofie Vermeulen’s work on arenas (see Chapter 2), the confrontation between *discourse coalitions*, **imaginaries** and their **representations** --or better, the power relation that is established-- does not take place in void. When it comes to urban planning processes, they are (at least also) mediated by:

- (i) the **process architecture**, i.e. rhythms of political decision-making and of different administrative procedures specific too urban planning and the formal required proceedings (i.e. the different formal steps that need to be taken: whether politically, administratively, planning-wise or with regards to consultative and participatory phases); and
- (ii) the foreseen **legal framework** (that is the formal decision procedures and the possibilities to contest planning decisions by going to court).
- (iii) Urban planning processed will also be mediated by the broader **political-institutional context and history** (such as the rhythm of local, regional and national elections, compromises and conflicts in other dossiers,...)
- (iv) by the broader **planning context and history** (previously developed zoning plans, design plans, mobility plans, possibly under different political majorities... and so forth);
- (v) as well as by the **social-historical context** (organized civil society on planning issues, pre-existing urban regimes, previous planning contestations,...).

A part of the *process architecture* and *legal framework* concerns the *arenas* in which the debates, and possibly the decisions, take place. The access, regulations and regulated influence of **the arenas** on each other are part of what mediates the confrontation as well. I follow Vermeulen’s conceptualization of different types, that is *political arenas*, *combined arenas* and *public arenas*. As they are discussed in detail in chapter 2, I will not present them here again.

Lastly, two notes on the conceptual framework:

Firstly, I draw from Hajer to include the concept of **discourse coalitions**, but I introduce the concept of **subgroups**. The assumption here is that a discourse coalition will not always include people who share the same imaginaries. The aim is to be able to describe the internal confrontation and learning processes between individuals who come with potentially very different backgrounds and ways of seeing the world. A discourse coalition might for example be built around an *imaginary* and *narrative* they all share, such as ‘the imaginary of the livable city’. But they might for example disagree fundamentally over what that means socially and economically (ex. the imaginary of a vibrant ‘city of commerce’ on the one hand or the imaginary of the ‘just city’ on the other). What is more, over time --within the coalition-- it is likely that learning processes occur to that regard. By introducing the tool of *subgroups*, it will become easier to put words to that dynamic.

The second note concerns two of the most commonly used elements in urban planning theory, that is the matter of ‘**means**’ (financial means, intellectual means, personal network, experience and skills) and the matter of ‘**interests**’, as discussed in the literature review (see Chapter 2). They fall outside the scope of this PhD and they are no part of the conceptual framework. As will become clear, they are not neglected empirically and they are mentioned were necessary; but the empirical findings concerning ‘interests’ will not be elaborated or discussed in the conclusions

Heuristic Visualization of the Imaginary Institution of Place (Urban Planning)

The heuristic visualization of the conceptual toolbox with which I approach the fieldwork has the **urban planning processes** above, on a timeline (see Fig.4). Urban planning in this framework is seen as a government organized activity of altering the existing *imaginary* of a *place* and/or its *representation*, and instituting them with other *imaginaries* and/or *representations*. When the change concerns the *institution of a place* with another *imaginary*, and not only a similar or different *representation*; it is likely to be an arduous task and involve struggle, as it implies challenging what is considered natural and normal and what stabilizes identities in the form of home places and vectors of communion at different scales. The change of a dominant *imaginary* of a *place* (especially when it is *hegemonic*) will furthermore, often, involve *discourse coalition formation* (as described in urban regime theory and collaborative urban planning) and/or a struggle between *discourse coalitions* (as described by Hajer).

The struggle over the imaginary institution in urban planning is in this view settled in the form of *planning narratives*, *planning decisions*, *plans and the implementation of plans*. They allow to identify *structuration* and *institutionalization* of the imaginary as they are construed (and altered) over time. It is there that the established *power relations* become tangible and in that sense, indeed they are ‘independent variables’ of sorts. But at the same time, as emphasized above, I consider them (potentially) as some of the most powerful ‘dependent variables’, as they are likely to function as *triggering events* as well.

That brings me to the bottom of the model. The time line indicates in the first place the dynamic character of urban planning, i.e. that it takes place over time. Secondly, it indicates the social-

historic character of the situation in which the urban planning process takes place. That includes (i) the struggle over past institutionalization of *imaginaries of the city* and *place*; (ii) the political-institutional history in general and with regards to planning in the city; (iii) the particular planning history of the city; (iv) as well as the history of civil society, the business community and activist involvement in decisions concerning planning. They shape the social, political and planning context in which the urban planning process takes place. Moreover, thirdly, the timeline indicates the triggering events as moments in which internal and external learning processes are intensified.

The imaginary institution of place then follows a triangular model with the instituted and the instituting *imaginaries* of the city and of *place* at the top; the *creative individuals* and their *imagination* at the left hand corner and the *discourse coalitions* and subgroups at the right hand corner.

The confrontation, lastly, between the discourse coalitions happens in the different *arenas*, with their access constraints and internal domain-specific rules and external domain-specific rules (See chapter 2) in the square at the heart of the triangle. They mediate the confrontation, together with the legal framework, the process architecture and the socio-historical context (i.e. here aimed to indicate the political-institutional context, the planning context & the context to what regards civil society, the business community and activist involvement in planning).

In the next chapter on methodology I will discuss the operationalization of this conceptual frame as an inductive research, the choice of the cases, the data collection and analysis and some of the difficulties I encountered.



Fig.4. Heuristic Conceptual Framework on the Imaginary Institution of Place in Urban Planning



Chapter 4 Methodology

Methodology

The conceptual framework now allows us to operationalize the main research question by defining a set of sub-questions, which in turn helped me to focus the inductive research and helped to determine the set of research methods and instruments needed to approach the fieldwork. In the second part then of this chapter I discuss the reasons for the selection of the case studies, as well as some of the particular challenges and difficulties I encountered in the fieldwork. I end this chapter with a note on privacy issues and on the coproduction of knowledge in collaboration with civil society that I established in Brussels throughout the fieldwork and its aftermath.

Research Question & Sub-Questions

The main research question of this PhD is:

- What is the role of imaginaries in the power relations in urban planning processes?

The aim, then, is to work towards a ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 1994) of each case and its evolution over time with regards to all the elements in the heuristic model: both in relation to one another as within each element. But to aid the effort of collecting the data and analyzing them for the construal of that description, I subdivide the research question into a series of sub-questions.

What are the imaginaries of the city that can be identified in the urban planning process and are they hegemonic, extant counter-hegemonic or emerging counter-hegemonic imaginaries?

- Are their specific urban and/or national imaginaries that can be identified?
- What is the dominant imaginary with which the place or planning perimeter is instituted in the past?

- What is the proposed imaginary institution for the place or planning perimeter and how does it relate to its previous imaginary institution?
- What are the different plans and what is the imaginary they reveal and the narrative they represent?
- What are the different planning decisions that have been taken and by whom (a government contractor, local, regional or federal public officials, the government or their administration)?
- At what moments were the plans implemented, or if they are not implemented yet than what is the current status of the plans and the foreseen time of implementation?
- What are the different discourse coalitions and their subgroups that can be identified?
- What are the imaginaries that the different discourse coalitions and/or their subgroups draw upon (and reproduce)?
- Which narratives, storylines, metaphors and social practices do the different discourse coalitions and subgroups deploy?
- What are the political arenas of importance to the case study?
- What are public arenas of importance to the case study?
- Is there a combined arena that has been set up (information process, consultation process, participation process, co-production process)?
- How are the arenas regulated internally (access, decision power,...)?
- How is the relation between the arenas regulated?
- Can we identify the influence of one arena, on one or more other arenas (i.e. structuration, meaning they start replicating the storylines and metaphors)?
- What are the different triggering events?
- Which discourse coalition are spurred by the triggering events in question?
- Which discourse coalition are altered by the triggering event in question?
- Are the triggering events related to place or not (meaning planning proposals, plans or actual implementation of plans? And if so, do they have particular consequences?
- Can we identify moment of intense learning following the triggering events?
- If so, do they manifest themselves in the form of an internal learning process and an external learning process?
- Who are the creative individuals that make up the discourse coalitions and generate a potentially new and different imagination?
- What is the social-historic context in which the case study takes place?

- Are their past struggles over the place?
- What is the planning context and history?
- What is the political-institutional context and history?
- What is the legal framework in which the planning process takes place?

I would remind the reader that every question also has a time dimension that is not specifically mentioned. Indeed, every time the question should add 'and what are their changes over time' (i.e. what the timeline refers to in the model).

The sub questions identify 'what' to look at and ask about in detail. The question however is 'how' the answer to those questions can be found. Put differently how the data can be collected and analysed.

Data Collection & Analysis

For the data collection I followed in large part the example of Maarten Hajer (2005) on discourse analysis in urban planning processes. It was developed to capture the different discourse coalitions, the narratives, storylines, metaphors and their social practices. But with some adaptations it proved a practical tool to find the answers to my other questions as well.

I followed 7 steps for the data collection:

1. Desk research: general survey of all the readily available planning and policy documents and positions in the field; newspaper analysis and analysis of news sections in relevant journals (if present) and analysis of the key platforms in the social media.¹ The aim is to make a chronology and come up with a first reading of the planning process' and the *imaginaries* present.

There to I developed an excel time line, which in both cases indicates all important decisions and plan releases, all press communiqués and social media messages or interviews given in the media, on the issue. On the left of the time line we find all government related events or communications, on the right we find all non-government related events or communications (activists, civil society or the private sector). When they interrelate and both 'government' and 'non-government' are directly involved, than the same event is described from both perspectives. Every event or communication is furthermore coded with the keywords and metaphors (and imaginaries, when clearly distinguishable).

1 As I do not speak Turkish for the Istanbul case that meant a translation by a translator (Sehergul Calis) of hundreds of documents, dozens of press briefings, more than 3000 social media messages, many interviews and newspaper articles, Youtube videos and so forth.

Later in the process the time line is continuously updated throughout the fieldwork as new information comes in about the planning process in particular, as well as all elements that are mentioned in the in depth interviews as context related (social, political, historic, past struggles and so forth). Elements that are never mentioned as influential, by any of the interviewees or in any document or communication, are not mentioned in the time line. That means that I choose to focus here on how the actors explain the case themselves, subjectively.

This tool has proven quintessential as it served to bring together all collected data and their coding in one framework.

2. Visits to the area, a basic mapping of the development zone's physical space and its direct surroundings. I made an overview of the economic, cultural, educational organizations and associations for making a (at least a minimal) socio-geographic profile of the area and its direct surrounding. Later I also verified and added some existing statistics.
 3. Consequently I started with 'Helicopter interviews': interviews with three actors ('helicopters') that I chose because they could provide me with (i) an overview over what is happening in the urban planning process from different positions; and (ii) because they could indicate some of the key elements of material support of the different imaginaries, names, metaphors, visualizations, key policy document,... which allowed me to have a special focus on them and their influence; because they could also provide me with some historic context; as well as with lists of the key actors to talk to.
 4. Consequently I identified the key material supports for the *imaginary* with NVIVO: (i) how do they serve as points of orientation to head for; (ii) as impulses for agency, catalysts that bring together different stakeholders. (iii) As tools that operate both on the concrete and the metaphorical level; (iv) As ways to reframe problems and put in motion learning processes; And (v) as tools to create support and find legitimacy. Think of images, maps, 3D presentation, documents, the employment of story lines, concepts, ideas, metaphors with respect to the *imaginaries*. This analysis was done on the basis of textual and visual analysis. Moreover they were analyzed as part of the time line and related to possible triggering events (that were identified later). To understand the role of the creative individuals and to understand changes over time in this 'material support' I employed indepth interviews with the key actors who produced the documents.²
 5. I then mapped how these material supports spread to -or influenced- the debate in other discourse coalitions. How they occur in reports, communiqués, pamphlets, social media messages of other coalitions, and how. And when they used them, is it then as a response to them or do they use them with the same meaning and accept them.
- 2 Only in the case of Istanbul, I was not able to access the field properly on the side of the government at the different government levels. I have tried to compensate this absence by use of expert interviews and a detailed analysis of all the interviews given in the press by the key actors (the heads of the preservation council, the district mayor, the municipal mayor, the president and the prime minister).

6. Consequently I did interviews with the key players in the urban planning process, with the policymakers, planners, government contractors, civil society actors, activists and so forth, to further determine (a) more classic characteristics of the urban planning process such as the process architecture, the arena's, the legal framework, the proceedings; (b) to generate more information on causal chains of event ('which led to what'). And (c) to define the internal struggle and the different underlying imaginaries within the different coalitions (whether within the government coalition or the protest coalitions).
7. Identification of triggering events and key incidents, these were as much as possible transcribed and described in detail, allowing for more insights in the dynamics between the coalitions, the internal and external learning processes with regards to the *imaginary*.

Taken together these steps helped to do two different things. The analysis of the material support helped to identify the storylines and metaphors; and they deviled (or at least pointed toward) the *imaginaries* they represent. In my interviews then I discussed those material representations with a large set of involved actors to pinpoint the involved *imaginaries*. By principle the imaginary itself cannot be grasped comprehensively, as the only way to approach them implies using representations of them. Often they are, furthermore, not cognitively explicit to the person who draw on them. But, the rule of thumb, here, is that when the imaginary is described to them in the interview, the actors need to recognize themselves in it. That is why I also chose to always use names that are preferred by the actors themselves (as you will see later in the case studies, I will describe for example the more negative name 'top down city' also with the more positively connoted name of the 'representative city')

For the Brussels case these seven steps included 41 expert interview with all political responsible actors or their cabinet support on all political levels (Brussels-City, Brussels Capital Region, Federal) as well as the key persons in their respective administrations. It also included interviews with all the key organizers of the different protest coalitions. Lastly it included a small set of academic actors who were closely involved with the case study these last few decades.

In the Istanbul case the objective was the same. However I encountered difficulties on the side of the government. I could only interview one of the persons who approved the plans in the administration and one national minister. Despite numerous attempts I was not able to have interviews with politicians or people from the administration on the district level, the municipal level or the Prime Minister's office. I stopped my efforts in September 2015 and decided to compensate this lacunae by providing a rigorous analysis of all public statements of the responsible political actors regarding the case (especially the head of the preservation council, the mayor of the Beyoğlu District, the mayor of the Istanbul municipality, the president and the prime minister) as well as an in detail analysis of all political and planning decisions, all publically available maps and how they developed and altered over time. The lack of in-depth interviews however continues to reflect in the case study as I can only describe with certainty what changed. But the question of 'why' changes in the government narrative and imaginary occurred, remains at several points much less clear.

On the activist and civil society side there was no problem for having access to the field. Indeed I was able to interview 20 of the key persons in the different protest coalitions. But I encountered another difficulty that was specific to the case. It were not civil disobedient actions, lobbying, press briefings or social media campaigns (or at least not alone them), but the mass of people in the streets that established the power relation that brought the development to a halt. Put differently the pressure of the 'Gezi Movement' on the government was vital and it is key for understanding the case. But that raises the question what drove the large majority of the 'Gezi movement' to take the streets, what were the evoked *imaginaries* and *narratives* and where did it come from. Which protest coalition would have been able to generate such an unseen diversity of protestors, unseen in the history of Turkey? And what was it in this planning conflict that could have triggered a learning process on the scale of Turkey and 80 of its 81 cities? To answer those questions the only solution was to set up a 'snowball research' of semi structured interviews among the protesters and continue until saturation occurred (Strauss, 1987). The existing data on the movement allowed limiting the profile for the research. Indeed, the majority of protesters had a mean age of 28 years old, while the vast majority had no political affiliation and had never taken part in any protest before. Furthermore men and women participated equally, while the protestors came from varying backgrounds, including from secular-republican and Islamic-ottoman families. Therefore I decided to construe the snowball limiting the interviewees to this profile:

- relatively young (18-40 years old)
- no prior political affiliations or experience with protests
- coming from diverging backgrounds and both sexes

I started the snowball at three different points of departure to guarantee the necessary diversity in back ground. I did myself 1/3th of the interviews in English and I worked with two Turkish interviewers to make sure that 2/3th of the interviews were done among interviewees who did not speak English or French. The snowball contained 35 interviews in total.

A last element finally, to note concerns privacy issues. To guarantee the anonymity all names have been replaces by two or three initials. They do not refer to the first letters of their names, but are a code that links back to their interview in the database.

The first case study that will be discussed in great detail is the Taksim-Gezi Park case, thereafter I discuss the case of the pedestrianization of the Brussels' Central boulevards.



Chapter 5
Istanbul
The Taksim-Gezi Park Development (Turkey)

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Istanbul, the Taksim-Gezi Park Development (Turkey)

On May 31st, 2013 I received an email of D.C under the title: “Urgent call for solidarity from urban movements Istanbul”. The mail was forwarded to me by E.S., professor at Manchester University, who in turn received it from political economist and independent researcher C.B. The hastily written mail stated “friends, comrades, *can you forward this widely?* things are getting serious over here. over 100 injured.”

Cihan Baysal’s mail called for international attention and solidarity with the Istanbulites after police forces cracked down violently on peaceful protesters. They, he stated, “*were occupying Gezi Park to prevent the cutting of decades old trees and to oppose the erection of a big shopping mall, in the form and shape of the Ottoman artillery barracks*” that were once there. He denounced the unproportioned response of the police and Turkey’s government’s violation of human rights, as hundreds of people were wounded, and at least one person was killed in the crossfire of tear gas and pepper bombs. He called for resistance in search for democracy, in the struggle “against a government determined to crush each and every opposition”, and against a government that cannot tolerate “even a peaceful opposition for saving trees.”

In the wake of 2 years of occupations of public squares and parks around the globe,¹ his call and the call of many others was shared broadly and spread like wildfire throughout the social media (Twitter, Foursquare, Facebook and Youtube), throughout pro-government and opposing national press, as well as the international media.² From the 31st of May 2013 onward the protest culminated

1 Such as during the Arab Spring in Lybia, Egypt, Syria or with the ‘indignados’ protests in Greece, Spain and Israel or the Occupy movement in the USA and the UK. (Castells, 2015) (Mason, 2013) (Mason, 2015)

2 with for example BBC international and Le Monde posting their first articles on the subject that same 31st of May

into mass contestation and what is called the “Gezi movement”,³ while being denominated as “Çapulcu” by Prime Minister Erdoğan and his close allies (i.e.: ‘rioting and loathing scum’⁴).

Within days the protests turned national, with demonstrations and occupations in 80 out of 81 Turkish cities. According to state sources more than 3 million people participated (Konda, 2014). In Istanbul alone, more than 500 thousand people took to the streets occupying not only Taksim Square and Gezi Park but also other parts of the Beyoğlu area and parts of the Şişli, Kadıköy and Beşiktaş district.

That is how a tunnel excavation of Taksim Square and the plan to re-erect a replica of the 19th century-Ottoman artillery barracks (‘Topçu Kışlası’) at the adjacent Taksim-Gezi Park turned into the most important urban planning conflict in Turkey in recent years (and probably in Europe).⁵ And it is how the Istanbulites established a ‘power relation’ through mass mobilization which led to the “putting on hold” of those plans on the 3th of July. A lot has been written about the weeks that followed. The extraordinary uprising, occupations and diversity of participants it entailed.⁶ Yet, my research ends where most articles begin, that is at the start of “Gezi” as a movement on the 31st of May 2013.

Indeed, this chapter scrutinizes the four years of urban planning conflict that preceded it.⁷ My research maps the governments’ planning announcements, the decisions, changes and concessions that were made since. It indicates how those choices were rooted in the Prime Minister’s and the *AKP’s imaginary of the (Neo-) Ottoman City*. How they triggered foreseeable *protest coalitions*

3 by the people in my interviews, in publications by activists as well as by most media

4 or in French ‘maraudeurs’, ‘vandales’, ‘racailles’, ‘vermine’

5 Istanbul has known several other important planning conflicts in recent years (2003-2013) among whom the most notorious concerned: the struggle over the construction of the Yavuz Sultan Selim Köprüsü (“Third Bridge over the Bosphorus”); the “İstanbul Canal” (connecting the Black Sea to the Sea of Marmara); the reconversion of the “İstanbul Haydarpaşa railway terminal” (in to a hotel); The establishment of “İstanbul Yeni Havalimanı” (“third airport” and biggest international airport in the world”); Numerous protests against greenfield developments of parks into shopping malls (AVM’s) or to a lesser extend parking lots as well as the 2009 proposal to establish a mosque at Taksim (in the heritage land use plan). In Turkey more in general there were at least three other important planning conflicts concerning (i) the establishment of a series of hydroelectric power plants (HES) in the Black Sea province, (ii) the creation of a Nuclear Central and (iii) the demolition of the protected ‘Atatürk Forest Farm’ to construct the new presidential palace in Beştepe neighborhood of Ankara. In Europe the most contested planning conflicts are concerned with the Lyon-Turin High Speed Train connection (France-Italy), the Notre-Dame-Des-Landes Airport (France), the parking plan in Burgos (Spain) or the Oosterweel connection or bridge project to close the ring around Antwerp (Belgium). There are certainly many more cases, yet as far as I can identify no conflict was as important as the Taksim-Gezi redevelopment. Not because of the size of the perimeter or the height of the budget, but because the unseen mass mobilisation.

6 See for example in English, the extensive set of bundled articles in ‘Everywhere Taksim’ (David & Toktamis, 2015)

7 With regards to: 1) ‘The traffic circulation and pedestrianization plan; 2) ‘The conservation land use plan’ and its ‘implementation plan’ for the entire Beyoğlu District; 3) and ‘The urban design project’ for the Taksim area that included Topçu Kışlası.

in defense of their neighborhoods or to preserve the ‘republican heritage’, in demand of better planning practices or to protect their ‘life place’ [yaşam Alanı].⁸ I study how the discourse and network of these coalitions laid the groundwork for the ‘Gezi movement’ that would ultimately halt the Prime Minister’s project. And I identify in this chapter the different underlying ‘*imaginaries*’ and ‘*imaginaries of political decision making*’ that were voiced throughout the process. For both those on the side of the ones opposing the government, as on the side of the planning process’ opponents,⁹ I inquire on what their role was in the dynamics of the urban planning process.

Yet I start my analysis with the *imaginary element* that was repeated most in my interviews, newspaper articles and scientific papers, namely (what I call) the *founding myth* or *imagined start* of the Gezi movement which you shall recognize from Cihan Baysal’s email. That is:

That “[...]it all began on the 27th of May 2013 with a handful of peaceful protesters which were trying to save the trees from demolition. When the police cracked down at daybreak the next morning, they did so brutally. The news spread in no time across the social media and thousands started flocking in. Within days hundreds of thousands occupied the Park and Square and what started as an environmental protest turned into a movement against Prime Minister Erdoğan and his way of making decisions over their lives. They started demanding civil liberties, real democracy and an end to police violence...”

This quote is a good synopsis of the narrative that I identified over and over again and in fact it is not very erroneous. Yet by pointing to the triggering event of the police violence “as the start”, it forgets a 4 year-history of preceding activism, arduous discourse development and laborious coalition formation. It is as if tens of thousands of signatures weren’t gathered in Gezi Park throughout 2012. As if half of the tunnel excavations weren’t cancelled under public pressure half a year earlier. Or as if the Minister of Culture and Tourism, Ertuğrul Gunay, didn’t step down over Topçu Kışlası in February 2013. Analytically, it makes it impossible to understand how by the end of the week hundreds of thousands showed up in support of the protests. But as a social phenomenon -and to great frustration of government officials- this foundational myth -and collective amnesia- had a powerful impact on the process. It contributed to the mass mobilization -and the imperative *power relation*- that ultimately halted the urban design project.

To understand how the urban design project came to this point, how the urban planning process’ dynamic was impacted so strongly, we have to comprehend the four years of planning conflict that preceded. We have to identify the different plans that were proposed and the reactions to them. We have to study why the protest coalitions that originally referenced ‘Taksim’ (ex.: ‘Taksim Platform’ & ‘Taksim Solidarity’) turned into a mass movement referencing ‘Gezi’. We have to understand how an urban planning conflict centered on the ‘classic Turkish cleavage:

8 Such as: 1) ‘Beyoğlu Associations Platform’ in 2009; 2) ‘Taksim Platform’ in 2011; 3) ‘Taksim Solidarity’ in 2012; and lastly 4) ‘Taksim Gezi Park association’ in 2013.

9 the imaginary of (1) the Republican City; (2) the Neo-Ottoman City; (3) the City of Services [‘Hizmet’]; (4) the City of Shopping Malls [‘AVM’]; (5) the City of Life Place [Yaşam Alanı]; (6) the Just City; (7) the Professional and Participatory City; And (8) the Representative Top down State.

Ottoman versus Republican heritage’ on the one hand and ‘top down versus bottom up’ planning on the other, shifted toward a new paradigm of ‘Yaşam Alanı’ and personal freedom versus the patronizing and authoritarian rule of Prime Minister Erdoğan’. A political cleavage that was able –as we will see- to unite a much broader protest coalition, including people from all walks of life. That is what this chapter scrutinizes in detail, the origins of the “Gezi” protest between 2009 and the 31st of May 2013.

The first part of this chapter, 6.1, gives a short presentation of the case and a summary of the events. In part 6.2, I discuss the context, plans and historic elements that are put forward by my interviewee’s as explanatory factors to take into account; as well as the formal process architecture through which the case evolved. In Part 6.3 I discuss the triggering events that led to changed positions of *the AKP coalition*, to the emergence of protest coalitions and to changes in the discourse of the different coalitions. In 6.4 I analyse the occurrence and role of the different *discourse coalitions*, *subgroups* and the *imaginaries* they reference (see Fig.11 for a general overview of the imaginaries that will play a key role in this case study)

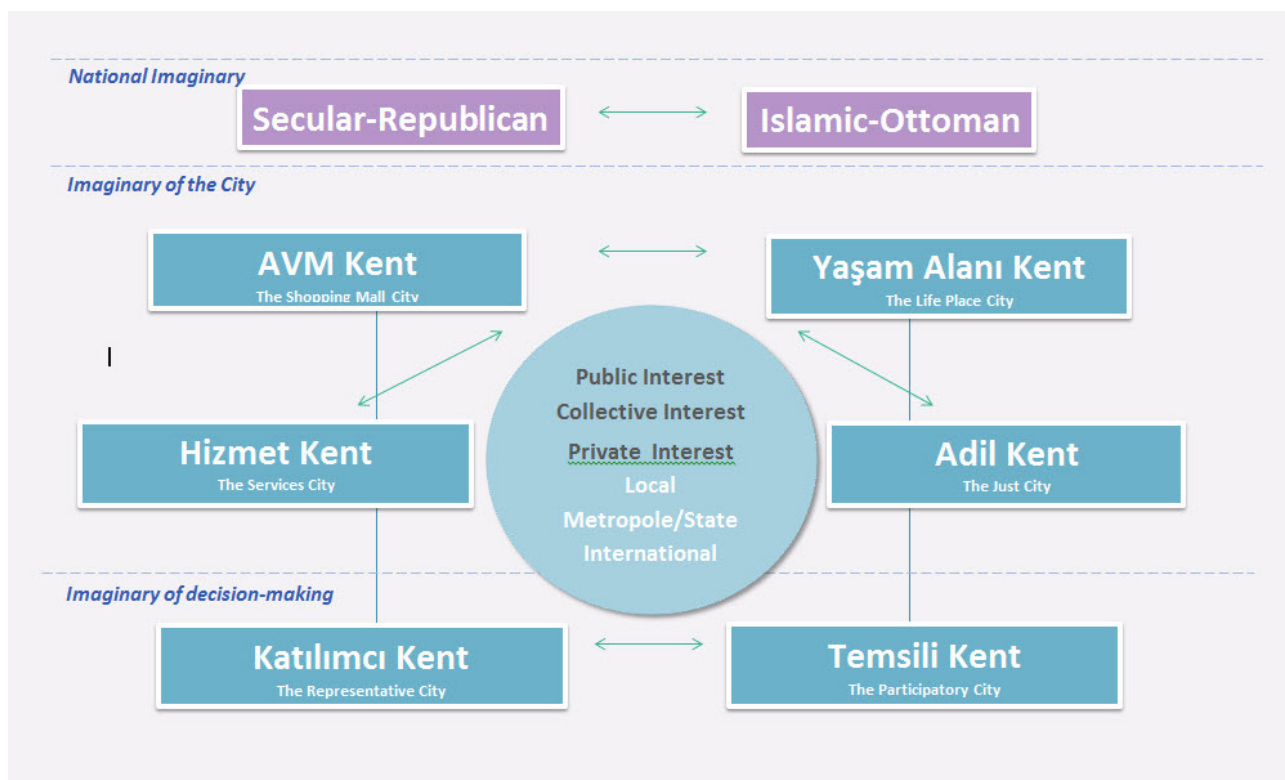


Fig.15. Imaginaries of the city in the Istanbul case

5.1 Presentation of the Case

The contestation of the 27th of May 2013 and the first days of the *Gezi Movement* were related to the ‘urban design project’ for Taksim Square and Gezi Park which included the construction of ‘Topçu Kışlası’. But the struggle over the ‘Taksim’ area began years before, in the wake of the political consolidation of the social Islamic movement in Turkey (“Belediyeler dönemi”) when Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Necmettin Erbakan of the Welfare Party (Rafah Partisi) became respectively mayor of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (1994) and Prime Minister of Turkey (1996). It was the early beginning of their cultural hegemony and the idea of ‘*Hizmet*’ (‘services’) –i.e. the construction of large scale infrastructure projects such as highways, tunnels, bridges, shopping malls...- would become the way to provide evidence of their capacity to govern and the medium to make their worldview more visible. It is with this approach that Mayor R.T. Erdoğan set up and oversaw a local commission in charge of tunneling the automobile traffic and constructing three mosques in the iconic heart of the Turkish republic and the center of Istanbul, Taksim Square.

When the news leaked, the proposals led to outcry among the secular opposition and public opinion and the project was shelved.¹⁰ Not long after R.T. Erdoğan was pushed out of power and his Welfare Party was forbidden.¹¹ But when he returned to power (now as Prime Minister for the ‘AK Party’¹²) in 2003 and his colleague Kadir Topbaş took control over the Istanbul Metropolitan Council, they put the plans back on the table.

After R.T. Erdoğan’s landslide victory of 2007 he became Prime Minister for the second time and the traffic circulation project for the Taksim area was made public (again) and a ‘Preservation Land Use Plan’ was drawn up for the whole Beyoğlu District¹³ which included the indication of the ‘Halil Pasha Topçu Kışlası’. No mosques this time, but the Ottoman ‘Artillery Barracks’¹⁴ that were demolished in 1940 to make place for Taksim-Gezi Park: a park which became part of an ensemble symbolizing the Turkish Republic, including Taksim Square, the Republic monument, the Republican Boulevard and (later) the Atatürk Cultural Center.¹⁵

At that time (2009) the proposed ‘Land Use Plan’ for the district was accepted. But the proposal for Topçu Kışlası was refused by the Regional Preservation Council and it stayed under

10 Under growing pressure and after the ‘soft coup’ of the military which forced Prime Minister N. Erbakan out of power in February 1997, subsequently, the Preservation Council of the City disapproved both the tunnels and the mosques.

11 And sentenced to prison (for 10 months).

12 Justice and Development party or ‘Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi’

13 K. Topbaş started working on (the same) ‘traffic circulation project’ of 1997 to excavate all automobile traffic under Taksim Square while proposing a ‘Preservation Land Use Plan’ for the whole Beyoğlu District. The area was formally indicated as a ‘preservation zone’ by the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality in 1993, yet until 2009 no Preservation Land Use Plan had been drawn up. The District had been ruled by ad hoc decision by exception until that time.

14 A large square-shaped military barracks complex with in the middle an extensive open, drill-ground. The building was constructed in 1806. In 1921 the barracks were transformed into a football stadium with the internal courtyard serving as football field. They were demolished between 1939 and 1940 as part of Henri Prost’s plans to build Taksim-Gezi Park.

15 Resp.: ‘Taksim Meydanı’, ‘Cumhuriyet anıtı’, ‘Cumhuriyet Caddesi’, ‘Atatürk Kültür Merkezi (AKM)’

the radar until the Prime Minister announced it as part of his national election campaign in 2011 in what he denominated a 'Crazy Project'.

The planning decisions and announcements triggered several protest *coalitions* over time. But the first one to be assembled was the so-called '*Neighborhoods Associations Platform*' in 2009, in response to the 'Preservation Land Use Plan'. It was a coalition of pre-existing neighborhood committees¹⁶ that had taken a detailed look at the new plan and that had identified "blancs" -or undefined zones- exempted from regular preservation regulations. Seen the AK Party's 10-year history of modernist blueprint planning and "building rage" including the demolition of entire city blocks, they were worried that the same was about to happen again. Yet in the end, at that time, the Taksim Area was not indicated as an exempted zone so the fears that were formulated by local inhabitants opposed the 'Preservation Land Use Plan' more in general. That changed when Topçu Kısılası was announced by R.T. Erdoğan on the 2nd of June 2011.

The response that same year was foreseeable, the coalition of experts and intellectuals ('Taksim Platform') that had prepared the opposition to the tunnel excavation and mosques 15 years earlier, reemerged and they grouped themselves with the neighborhood committees.¹⁷ Although they did mention the danger of destroying the 'cultural heritage', they did not indicate it by its *Republican* name. Instead, they focused on the urban planning process on the one hand and the excavations on the other. They argued that the works were not only lacking a participatory approach and a decent planning, but that the excavation plans "for the most important square of Turkey" were also technically flawed.¹⁸ They claimed that instead of 'pedestrianizing' the square the works would rather keep pedestrians from entering it, due to tunnel mouths acting as barriers at practically every large adjacent street. Yet, despite their criticism, they believed in a strategy of constructive opposition. Already throughout the second half of 2011 several of its members had been involved in discussions, debates and attempts to lobby the municipality. And they continued that strategic line, albeit without success.

When in January 2012 the revision of the 'Preservation Land Use Plan' (including Topçu Kısılası) and the excavation plan¹⁹ were officially approved, it triggered a new and much broader protest *coalition*. This time the initiative came from the Chamber of Architects and of Urban Planners who launched a call to protect 'Taksim Square' and 'Gezi Park' from demolition²⁰ and to form Taksim Solidarity. They assembled a very diverse coalition of almost 70 organizations, including

16 The five neighborhood committees in question were: (i) Asmalımesit Derneği, (ii) Ayaspaşa Derneği, (iii) Bedrettin Derneği, (iv) Cihangir Güzelleştirme Derneği and (v) the Galata Derneği

17 While staying in close contact with the Neighborhoods Associations Platform. Taksim Platform consisted furthermore of 18 organizations, most of whom were neighborhood committees, but it also includes: 1 women's association, 1 architects association, a few cultural heritage organizations, a syndicate, the chamber of urban planners and a number of renowned Turkish intellectuals. The Platform was also in close contact with the Neighborhoods Associations Platform.

18 By excavation plan, I refer to what is formally called: the 'Pedestrianization and Circulation Project'.

19 the 'Pedestrianization and Circulation Project'

20 This is the moment in which 'Gezi Park' became part of the discourse.

the former protest coalitions, but also the chamber of engineers, different unions, most national opposition parties,²¹ environmentalist organizations, numerous neighborhood associations, retirees and elderly movements, graduates of Itü University, activist groups from the Black Sea region, theater groups and even the dentists' association. Where Taksim Platformu had remained vaguer on the issue of protecting their 'Republican heritage', Taksim Solidarity put its defense and the refusal of Topçu Kışlası front and center.²²

Due to their influence on the debate in the public opinion,²³ on government officials and thanks to the awareness raising of several other *direct action groups*,²⁴ they managed to get a large part of the excavation and tunnel plan cancelled by November that same year.²⁵ But while from the outside the adaptation of the excavation plan to one tunnel only could have been interpreted as a victory; for the protest *coalitions* and action groups it was a defeat. Not only did they have the feeling of having lost the square, but around the same time the Prime Minister announced in the press that Topçu Kışlası would harbor a mosque within its walls (in contradiction with the Secular Republican tradition). And, more importantly, it was also at that moment that the urban design project was leaked.

The leak revealed the complete demolition of the park. Topçu Kışlası was supposed to surround the park, as it was a rectangular building with an extensive open zone in the middle. Yet the project included a vast 'ice ring' covering the old drilling grounds. What it did not include were the existing trees.

That marked the beginning of a new phase of protests. The shift meant (i) a change in focus among all protest coalitions from Taksim toward 'Gezi Park', (ii) the establishment of a shop owners' 'NGO' against the plans and (iii) a new protest coalition, parallel to the existing ones, called the 'Taksim Gezi Park Association'.²⁶

The start of the tunnel excavation had indeed drawn in a new set of people in the process. A sense of urgency emerged among activists, while insecurity, doubts and anger galvanized among locals and shopkeepers. All this explains how the very influential 'Taksim Gezi Park Association' came into effect. A number of anti-capitalist activists (living in the neighborhood), the Beyoğlu neighborhoods association, shop owners (working on the development perimeter) and artists, started the laborious work of developing a discourse, supporting and organizing patrols, gathering signatures, setting up activities in the park, etcetera.

As opposed to Taksim Platform and Taksim Solidarity, they organized themselves more horizontally, without a formal 'secretariat' or leaders. They did not frame it as a technical planning conflict or

21 CHP, BDP/HDP, the Labor Party, the Greens, etc. (with the exception of MHP)

22 as well as the defense of the left wing heritage with which the area is imbued

23 Among other reasons due to the petition they launched which gathered more than 50.000 signatures by the end of 2012

24 Such as 'Guerrilla Tree Knitting', 'Architecture For All', 'Carton Space Action',...

25 Only the tunnel that connect Cumhuriyet and Tarlabası Avenues was kept.

26 Taksim Gezi Parkı Koruma ve Güzelleştirme Derneği

as a national conflict between Ottoman and Republican cultural representation in the hearth of Istanbul (and by extension, Turkey). They did not focus on ‘Taksim’.

Instead, they focused on ‘Gezi’. And they proposed a more urban narrative. They argued that the Prime Minister had singlehandedly [in an authoritarian patronizing way] decided to demolish one of the last ‘green spots’ and ‘life places’ [Yaşam Alanı] in ‘the center of the city’. Its breathing space and monumental old trees were to be exchanged for a gigantic shopping mall [AVM] and concrete surface [betonlaştırma].

In doing so they connected both with a broader group of people that weren’t necessarily comfortable with a strong republican discourse, as with the local population and the actual users of the park.

The actions of the Prime Minister were about to confirm the authoritarian character of decision-making. By January 2013, the Preservation Council had come back on its decision to approve Topçu Kışlası. Indeed under public pressure, the newly appointed head of the council, disapproved the green light of his predecessor. And the national minister of culture and tourism, Ertuğrul Günay, gave his blessing. Yet the Prime Minister established an ad hoc ‘National Preservation Council’ with the ability to overrule the decision of the ‘Regional Preservation Council’²⁷ and the minister in question, was removed from office a month later.

Whereas Taksim Platform and Taksim Solidarity had been effective in setting the tone in the public opinion, organizing press conferences, developing technical analysis, supporting direct actions and going to court, they had not been very successful in mobilizing people. This changed with the arrival of the Taksim-Gezi Association. Not only did they have a less divisive discourse, they were younger, had more experience with social media and had a much broader network in the autonomous movements, environmentalist-, and anti-capitalist action groups. They had the experience of the ‘European Capital of Culture protests’, the ‘Tekel’ occupation in Ankara, the ‘hydraulic electric plant protests’ in the Black Sea Region and the protests against the 2009 IMF Summit in Istanbul.

After the Prime Minister’s move they formalized the association and set up a professional social media campaign, including more than a dozen Youtube videos of famous movie actors speaking out and asking people to “Stand Up for Gezi!” and to “save the park together”. They repeated unanimously the narrative of the association and institutionalized its framing, while simultaneously announcing a ‘festival’ to show the park’s *raison d’être*: ‘Life Place’ [Yaşam Alanı]. In April, one month later, more than 10 thousand people showed up for the “Taksim Gezi Park Fest” further raising awareness.²⁸

That doesn’t mean that the ‘Beyoğlu Associations Platform’, ‘Taksim Platform’ and ‘Taksim Solidarity’ did not mention ‘Life Place’, the monumental old trees, breathing space or Taksim-Gezi Park in their pamphlets or press releases. But these elements had never been the core of the argument. They were rather part of the laundry list that complemented and strengthened the key

27 The former ordered the so-called “denial” of the latter. Which brought Erdoğan to speak about “his denial of the denial”, and the protest coalitions of their “demial of the denial of the denial”.

28 40.000 according to the organizers, 10.000 according to local authorities.

argument. Yet, under the influence of the perception of “having lost the square”, and of a failure of the more constructive lobbying and legal strategies, they too shifted their discourse toward the framing proposed by the new protest coalition. And ultimately on the 31st of May 2013, it is this framing that prevails among friend and foe in the national media. To great frustration of the government, who continued to argue that the protesters were in fact, in reality, ‘Republican nationalists’ trying to stop them from restoring important Ottoman heritage, once destroyed by Mustafa Ismet İnönü (the second president of the Turkish Republic).

So we have seen how the discourse shift from “Taksim” to “Gezi” explains, the possibility of a broadened coalition, both on the side of the organizers as on the side of participants to the actions and protests. The broadened network and social media reach helps to understand how communications could reach many more people outside of the normal scope of urban planning protests. Yet, both elements can still not explain the power relation that was established between the 27th of May and the 1st of June 2013 leading to the “putting on hold” of urban design project and Topçu Kışlası (a month later). Namely, the hundreds of thousands of people occupying Taksim Square and Gezi Park, while millions took to the streets nationwide.

Indeed, only by identifying a number of related and unrelated events in the weeks leading up to the 31st and by understanding how “Gezi” became a metaphor -for a generalized feeling of ‘life place’ [yaşam Alanı] being taken away- does it become possible to understand what happened. I mean that both literally -as a physical ‘life place’ being demolished- and metaphorically, as a reduction of that ‘personal space’ in which you speak your mind and decide how you want to live your life.

In my snowball of interviews with participants and protest organizers, April and May were described as a period of highly controversial national & local government decisions and statements that triggered their resentment, frustration and in some cases protest.²⁹

Firstly, the formal announcement by R.T. Erdoğan that Topçu Kışlası would indeed house a shopping mall; a fact everybody assumed but that had been denied with the utmost fervor by Mayor Topbaş just two months before. Second, the government ban on alcohol on terraces in the Beyoğlu Area along with the national ban on selling alcohol after 11 PM. Third, the ban on protesting at Taksim Square on the first of May (Labor day). Fourth, the AKP’s rebuke and

29 I name only the most important one’s according to my interviewees.

admonishment of kissing in public after a couple was stabbed for it in an Ankara metro station.³⁰ Fifth, the highly contested completion of the Third Bridge over the Bosphorus.

And sixth, most importantly, the proposed destruction of Turkey's oldest movie theatre: 'Emek Cinema', an Istanbul landmark near Taksim Square dating back to the early days of Atatürk's rule. For indeed, like Gezi Park it had to make way for an Ottoman-style construction that would house... a shopping mall. The police clashes that followed lasted for weeks and were described as a very tense period in which "you could smell the pepper spray everyday" in the Taksim area.

The consequences were fourfold and it laid, I argue, the groundwork for mass mobilization. On the protest organizers-side the network broadened. The controversial government decisions (i) brought in new people and a young generation that organized protests and demonstrations in the Beyoğlu area (using social media) in unrelated or only partially-related conflicts, (ii) made the 'usual suspects', such as the unions and the Commons Network, become more actively involved with the Taksim-Gezi Park struggle itself, and (iii) allowed for forging links between the first group, the second and people in the existing protest *coalitions*. Lastly, on the side of the population who would later support and/or participate in the early Gezi protests,³¹ (iv) the governments announcements and decisions generated frustration, indignation and anger. Both in Istanbul as across Turkey more in general: i.e. either with regards to the AKP's so called 'building rage', either with regards to the reduction in civil liberties or Islamic inspired laws, either with regards to the way R.T. Erdoğan made his top down decisions in an authoritarian and patronizing way.

It is in that tense context, on a Monday evening late in May, that a man decided to risk his life to halt a caterpillar, in an attempt to stop it from beginning the unauthorized demolition of Gezi Park on his way back from a 'Taksim Gezi Park Association'-meeting. That night, a call went out across the social media demanding immediate support. By the early morning they had gathered 50 of the protest coalitions' leading figures and a number of politicians who, despite police abuse, held their ground. They managed to postpone the works on the basis of a legal argument. That only granted them half a day but it was enough to spread the call and grow their numbers. By 7 PM that day, an estimated 700 people gathered in response, among whom a young woman: "the woman in red". When the local government and police turned to excessive use of force and pepper spray they thought they were coming down hard on the opponent they had fought all

30 Hürriyet Daily News (25/05/2013): "The protest had been scheduled late last week in response to a public announcement last week in the city's Kurtuluş subway station that called on passengers to "behave in accordance with moral codes." The call targeted young couples, who were "acting inappropriately" according to subway XXX, causing a strong public reaction and prompting the unusual protest. People were invited to gather at the Kurtuluş station and kiss in public [...] The group however faced strong police mobilization as officers tried to block the gates of the station to prevent protesters from going in. The couples kissed outside the station for some time, but eventually several of them managed to pass the police wall and take their protest to the scheduled location. A conservative group appeared at the protest and tried to break apart the demonstration, chanting religious slogans. Police forces had to intervene to prevent further clashes. Several demonstrators were attacked by opposing group members as they headed home following the protests, according to Doğan News Agency." The AKP government and local authorities refused to denounce the incident.

31 See my snowball among the 'Gezi participants' in the so-called early days 27th of May to the 1 of June 2013



their lives: Republicans opposing the restoration of Ottoman culture and heritage. Yet, what they hit metaphorically was the “the woman in red”: a young self-confident looking woman in a short dress taken on picture as she was brutally pepper sprayed by a fully armed police man.³²

It epitomized the feeling of both physical and personal ‘life place’ [Yaşam Alanı] being taken away by state force, in an authoritarian way and by a man. A “perfect” metaphor for what had happened to the first of May protest a small month before, to Emek Cinema weeks before and the “kissing in public” rebuke, a few days earlier.

That is how “Gezi” and the “woman in red” came to symbolize the feeling of physical and personal ‘life place’ [Yaşam Alanı] being taken away by R.T Erdoğan.³³ How Gezi -as a central location in Istanbul that everybody knows- became a metaphor for the demolition of forests, neighborhoods and entire city blocks being torn down all across the country. (*“if they can do it there, they can do it everywhere!”*). And how “Gezi” and the “woman in red” started to embody the feeling of ever-shrinking personal-‘life place’ [Yaşam Alanı]: that space in which they choose to be who they want to be, say what is on their mind and make decide over their own bodies and lives, without an authoritarian father-like Prime Minister telling them what to do.

The next day, 25 thousand people responded and flocked in to “#standup for Gezi Park” (#ayağa kalk). That night, of the 29th to the 30th of May, the police violence was unseeingly hard and it was caught on smartphones. Images of police violence against peaceful protesters flooded the social media, as a clout of pepper spray covered the park, youngsters were hit and tents were burned.

As the events happened in “Taksim”, the news of “Gezi” spread around the country and abroad. The discourse among friend and foe, even in pro-government media, was not one of republican nationalists opposing the reconstruction of Ottoman heritage as the AKP government and R.T Erdoğan had tried to frame it. But it was one of a struggle “that began on the 27th of May 2013 with a handful of people, environmentalist, trying to defend one of the last life places in the center of Istanbul; in order to prevent it from being demolished and reconstructed as a shopping mall”.

32 A similar image was produced when police came down hard on the young people that had “started reading books in the park” on the 28th/29th and the police burning tents on the morning of the 29th. I will discuss this more in detail in point 5.4.5

33 At least to the participants in the Gezi protests. See my participant snowball interviews. And seen the scale of the protests a few days later, probably all around the country

From the 31st of May onward the protest started culminating into a mass movement, called the ‘Gezi movement’ by the ones and ‘Çapulcu’ by R.T Erdoğan (which means: ‘rioting or loathing scum’).³⁴ On the first of June 2013 the movement had spread nationwide, with indeed more than three million -generally young people (average age 28 years old)- protesting and occupying squares and parks in 80 of 81 Turkish cities. As the movement got more and more international support, the name shifted toward #OccupyGezi.

More than 79% of all participants had no prior political affiliations with any party, formation, association, foundation or platform (Konda, 2014).³⁵ The protests did include republican nationalists and ‘usual suspects’, yet the remaining 20 percent was characterized in the first place by its unseen diversity of political groupings standing side by side, including Islamic organizations, MHP members (of the Sunni conservative ultranationalist party) and a lot of youngsters born in AKP affiliated families.³⁶

As “Gezi” became the symbol of a nationwide movement, and due to the established power relation of the ‘Gezi movement’ with regards to the AKP government and R.T. Erdoğan, it became impossible to redevelop the park without the thread of vast public unrest and potential political fallout. That is how, the “crazy” urban design project, which had been put on hold on the 3th of July 2013, stayed on hold till the day of writing (in September 2016).

5.2 Context

This part describes those elements that form the context in which the above described process could evolve as it did, by highlighting on the one hand the social Islamic movement’s rise to power in the 1990s and 2000s, the AK Party’s Hizmet and neoliberal development strategy and Prime Minister R.T. Erdoğan ‘authoritarian turn’ in 2010. On the other hand, it highlights that although the AKP government had a growing democratic mandate and support of a vast and diverse part

34 The mayor of Istanbul metropolitan region Topbaş -also AKP- took a softer stance, both before the large scale protests started as well as after. He avoided the name ‘Çapulcu’ and showed to a certain extent comprehension for the worries and demands of the protesters, emphasizing his own wish for a “life space” [Yaşam alanı] in the area.

35 Konda research company conducted its study among protesters occupying Gezi Park on June 6-7, 2013, when the events were at their peak. The Gezi Report was released on 5 June 2014.

36 included Socialists, Communists, Anarchists, Social Democrats, Kemalist groupings, Nationalists, Libertarians, UltrAslan, Çarşı and Vamos Bien; HDP and CHP; The Feminist and LGBTQ movement, the Kurdish movement and the Anti-capitalist Muslims. It comprised of “June United”, Beşiktaş, Fenerbahçe and Galatasaray supporter clubs; It included The 3H Movement, the Confederation of Public Workers’ Unions, the Confederation of Revolutionary Trade Unions of Turkey, the Education and Science Workers’ Union, the Turkish Journalists’ Association, the Turkish Writers’ Union, the Istanbul Bar Association, Turkish Medical Association.

of the population, there policies and political statements also generated a lot of frustration. And it could be perceived in the form of emerging contestation across the country, in Istanbul as well as in the Beyoğlu area among (i) Republican secular elites; (ii) anti-capitalists; (iii) workers, victims of privatization; (iv) people whose village, shanti town, neighborhood or city block was demolished, to be replaced by large-scale road & transport infrastructure, high-rise blueprint planning or shopping malls. But it also included (v) younger generations of all walks of life, who had not consciously lived the authoritarian 1980s or the 1990s, who grew up in a horizontal online culture, and who found themselves confronted with the top down patriarchal approach of their Prime Minister, from 2010 onward.

In the second part I situate the Beyoğlu 'Preservation Land Use Plan' and the Taksim-Gezi Park urban design project spatially. I describe how the general situation also translated into plans for those areas (both in the 1990s and in the 2000s), and which process architecture those different plans and procedures followed.

6.2.1 Political, Economic and Social Context

The 1990s were a remarkable period for Turkey on the political level, as they meant both the rise of the Islamic movement to power and the end of a long history of Military tutelage. The struggle of Islamism, to regain its role in the political and social life of the country, dates back to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, with the emergence of the 'Kemalist state'. From the 1920s onward, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and his successors established an Occidental-style, Turkish Republic, and launched a vast campaign against the Islamic institutional and cultural basis of Ottoman society. (Kreiser, 2008) This struggle developed throughout the 20th century in parallel and fueled by the 'modernization' of Turkey. (Kentel, 2016)

In line with the ideas of Herder,³⁷ they construed a secular state that did not derive its political legitimacy from a divine power, but from the Nation. The carefully planned reforms brought about fundamental institutional changes, putting an end to the Ottoman Caliphate and the 'Millet' system, by introducing a European type jurisdictional system and a secular administration. (Landau, 1984) But the state impositions went beyond institutional changes and a new dress code, forbidding religious clothing and headgear was imposed; as well as the use of official hereditary

37 As discussed in the literature review (2.5) Herder (1744-1803) refers to the idea of the 'Volksgeist', as more 'objective' criteria: such as a common language, culture, traditions, history, etcetera to construe a nation state upon. In this perspective, the state derives its political legitimacy from its status as homeland of an ethnic group, the nation, and from its function to protect this group and facilitate its social and cultural development. Here the membership is exclusive in the sense that it is based on the 'droit de sang' linked to common descent. It emphasizes the cultural component and refers to more traditional (culture, language, traditions) and charismatic (hero's, myths, etc.) systems of authority. That in turn serves to create an imagined community of the people. Based on (invented) sameness and (invented) traditions and creates a state-wide shared identity shared by all inhabitants, a nation, which allows the elites to rule in name of the people (instead of the divine) and which produces a source of legitimacy in the here and now. (Hobsbawn, 1990)

surnames.³⁸ The Perso-Arabic script was replaced by the Latin alphabet (Zürcher, 2004) and the educational system was unified and put under strict control of the state while one state religion was imposed and numerous religious practices became outlawed.³⁹ (Kucukcan, 2003) In order to forge the Turkish nation they went as far as to organize a ‘population exchange’ in which more than 1.3 million Anatolian Greeks were obliged to leave the country. (Aktar, 2003)

In line with the 19th and early 20th century model of nation state formation, they re-shaped Istanbul and Ankara physically as well to represent the ‘modern Turkish nation’ and to make the republican political project tangible based on modern urban planning. (Claval, 1994) They swept away much of the traditional nineteenth century street patterns with city blocks.⁴⁰ They introduced postwar modernist architecture, iconic Republican buildings and monuments.⁴¹ They carved out boulevards in Haussmannian fashion and put in place new transportation systems (such as railroads, boulevards and bridges) while introducing or reorganizing numerous open spaces for the public: two of them being Taksim Square and Gezi Park.⁴² And as was the case for the latter, for many of these interventions existing Ottoman-style buildings had to be demolished in order to redevelop the area.⁴³ (Gül, 2012)

Most European countries, however, shifted toward modernity and modern nation state formation through both a long process and a difficult struggle against the ‘Ancien Regime’. Turkey, though, did not experience such a process. (Kentel, 2016) Many of the most substantial changes were imposed from the top down, by the hand of the state’s political elites and within a limited timeframe (in the first years of the Republic). As they had little support from the public, it resulted in a harsh struggle and a polarized society. Islamism resisted and subverted the state’s founding philosophy, ‘Kemalism’; while the defenders of a modern secular Republic kept them in line, both by economic exclusion, through cultural isolation and by military intervention.⁴⁴

38 The clothing that identified a person with their own particular religious grouping and accompanied headgear such as turbans, fezes and bonnets.

39 The state abolished for example the office of Seyhülislam, the Ministry of Religious Affairs and transformed the Ümmet (or Umma, the “Community of Believers”) into a secular national entity in order to eradicate religion as a common bond of solidarity. At the same time, for example Sufi movements (Tarikatlar/Tasavvufi hareketler) and their activities were outlawed (1925).

40 According to Gül (2012) the French planner Henri Prost, who developed the master plan for Istanbul (and followed up the planning proceedings between 1933 and 1950) and Prime Minister Menderes, who complemented and completed Prost’s work (between 1950 and 1960) with the aid of Marshall money; were the most influential figures in the transformation of Istanbul to a modern city.

41 And even a first industrial area along the Golden Horn

42 But also for example, the Üsküdar and Eminönü squares

43 See for example the overview of several of these ‘Ghost Buildings’ in (Kozar, 2011) book on Istanbul’s ‘History of Destruction’.

44 1960 Turkish coup d’état, 1971 Turkish coup d’état by military memorandum; 1980 Turkish coup d’état; 1997 so-called post-modern or soft coup (Edel, 2012); and most recently (yet failed) Turkish coup d’état attempt in July 2016

Yet, after the coup of 1980, with anti-capitalist and workers movements on the back of their heels, new political activism arose⁴⁵ and Islamism translated into a widespread and well organized social movement. It was fueled by millions of young and unemployed people, who were pushed to the large cities⁴⁶ as a consequence of Turkey's move toward an export-oriented liberal economy; rapid growth of the population;⁴⁷ and insufficient job opportunities. It was in the second place supported by a rising religious entrepreneurial class in the Anatolian heartland, which came about as a consequence of Turgut Özal's liberalization policies (1983-1989); such as the emergence of Islamic banks and so-called 'green capital'.⁴⁸ (Karatepe, 2013) It also had backing in a large part of the Kurdish population, sticking to their reference of the brotherhood of Islamic "ummah" vis à vis the supremacy of Turkishness. (Kentel, 2016). Lastly, the movement was at least indirectly strengthened by the reintroduction of Islam as part of Turkey's official ideology, in an attempt to dismiss more violent leftist movements of the 1970s. Religious press and publications were allowed, as well as radio and TV channels. 'mam Hatip Liseleri' (schools training personnel for religious services) were increased. Quranic courses became more wide-spread than before while mosque-building activities amplified steadily. (Şimşek, 2004)

It nourished and gave life to a political force, the Welfare Party (Refah Partisi), which brought the Islamic movement to power on a very ambitious Islamic agenda ('of a just order'). 1994 represents the first political consolidation ('Belediyeler dönemi') with Recep Tayyip Erdoğan taking control of the mayoralty of Istanbul --with 25% of votes and thanks to a plurality of the popular vote-- and Necmettin Erbakan becoming Prime Minister of Turkey in 1996. The Welfare Party became in this way the biggest political fraction nationally, with 24% of the vote and after establishing a governing coalition with Tansu Çiller's center right True Path Party (Doğru Yol Partisi).⁴⁹

Many feared that Erdoğan would impose an Islamic agenda, yet his line was in the first place a pragmatic one. The 'Hizmet' approach [literally 'services'] became the way to provide evidence of their capacity to govern. He aimed to promote economic growth, repay the city's public debt and improve service provision to the population, by for instance tackling problems with regards to water shortage, pollution, waste management and congestion. To do so, he initiated large scale infrastructure projects including new highways, tunnels, bridges, water-pipelines, shopping

45 such as Kurdish ethnic nationalism, feminism, the Alevi cultural movement, environmentalism and human rights activism

46 The urban population growth is +15 percentage point between 1980 and 1990 (Worldbank-Data, 2016) from about 44 million to 59 million urbanites.

47 The Turkish population grew with an estimated 10 million people between 1980 and 1990 (Worldbank-Data, 2016)

48 According to (Hoşgör, 2011) two channels allowed for the economic take-off of the so-called "SMEs" in this 1980s period of economic liberalization. (i) Firstly, the Islamic banks (or other institutions providing bank-like services); i.e. the interest-free banks that emerged in Turkey's financial system. (ii) Secondly, lax regulations that prompted the Anatolian bourgeoisie to channel remittances towards companies across Anatolia.

49 Tansu Çiller served as the Prime Minister of Turkey, between 1993 and 1996. She was Turkey's first and only female Prime Minister (to date). Under N. Erbakan she served as Deputy Prime Minister and as Minister of Foreign Affairs (1996 and 1997).

malls. An international jury even unanimously conferred R.T Erdoğan the UN-HABITAT award. At the same time, big infrastructure works also started to serve as a medium to make their Islamic worldview more visible, to inscribe it in the urban fabric as Republican secular elites had done for more than half a century.

It is with this approach that Mayor R.T. Erdoğan set up and oversaw a local commission in charge of Taksim Square, the iconic heart of the Turkish republic. The aim was to excavate and tunnel the automobile traffic, pedestrianize the area and construct three mosques. But this provoked a predictable outcry among secular opposition groups and public opinion makers. This initial phase is particularly important for the case study as it announces the political cleavage and contending national imaginaries, which will characterize the first contestation against Topçu Kışlası and the Taksim redevelopment in 2011. That is the longtime divide over what I will call a 'Secular-Republican' -, and an 'Islamic-Ottoman'-imaginary, and the struggle over their respective representation in Istanbul's urban fabric and its historic heritage sites.

Erdoğan and N. Erbakan were pushed out of power in the wake of the 28th of February military memorandum or so-called "Post Modern coup" (1997).⁵⁰ The 'Welfare Party' was forbidden, R.T. Erdoğan was (shortly) imprisoned: officially over the recitation of a violence-inciting poem, allegedly over the Mosques-proposal at Taksim.⁵¹ But the Islamic movement had grown too big to be put down. They rose again to power with a landslide victory in 2002.

That period, between 1998 and 2002, represent a cultural revolution for Turkey. They symbolize both the end of the Kemalist military and authoritarian rule as the turn towards a novel discourse that would become hegemonic. (Kentel, 2016)

The coup impacted the Islamic movement, its intellectuals, leaders and politicians, or at least an important part of it. They engaged in a process of rethinking their discourse, no longer positioning themselves as challengers of the westernization and of modernity, of modern political values and its institutions. Instead, they started arguing that the problem of Turkey was precisely that it was (regrettably) not a 'western style' democracy, and that what was thus needed was a genuine liberal democratic regime; therefore confirming their compromise with human rights, the rule of law and the respect of cultural diversity. (Dagi, 2004)

50 Famously named as such by Turkish admiral Salim Dervişoğlu

51 Erdoğan recited a poem in December 1997 from a pan-Turkish activist of the early 20th century. Under Turkish penal code his recitation was regarded as an incitement to violence and religious or racial hatred. He was given sentenced to ten-months in prison, of which he served four: from 24 March 1999 to 27 July 1999. Due to his conviction, Erdoğan was forced to give up his mayoral position. The conviction also stipulated a political ban, which prevented him from participating in parliamentary elections. It took a special vote in parliament, with the support of CHP in 2002, to lift the ban. Yet allegedly the real reason for the imprisonment was not the poem but his proposal to build three mosques in Taksim Square, the symbolic place par excellence of the modern secular Republic. (the claim comes from members of Taksim Platformü who made the Mosques proposal public and who followed the case closely)

The new elections came in the wake of the Earthquake crisis of 1999, the financial crisis of 2000 & 2001 with a hyperinflation of more than 100 percent, and the three IMF bailouts. (Akyüz, 2003) But the results were striking nonetheless. The newly founded Justice and Development Party (AK Party) of R.T. Erdoğan and Abdullah Gül -who had embraced the new discourse- won an outright majority of 34 percent in the national popular vote and 363/550 seats in Parliament; while its candidate for Istanbul mayoralty, Kadir Topbaş, got 46 percent of the votes. But even more remarkable was the heavy election defeat of N. Erbakan's newly created Felicity Party, the 'Saadet Partisi', which had contrarily remained stuck to the old line of the Islamic movement, and faced a 2 percent result in the popular vote.

In the following years the ruling AK Party brought about many changes that radically disrupted the existing cultural and economic hegemony of the secular elites and that profoundly eroded the Kemalist military tutelage. But it also promoted popular reforms such as: (i) the distribution of free course books to primary students, (ii) significant improvements in health care, (iii) municipal social assistance in the fast-growing shanti towns, (iv) restoring the reputation of imam hatip schools, (v) the abolition of the secular nationalist pledge of allegiance, which was compulsory in all primary schools or (vi) the headscarf ban removal. This shift also reached minorities' groups as they (vii) lifted the ban on Kurdish language use, although it did not extend to formal public education, or (viii) sent a message of condolence to the Armenians over the 1915 "crime against humanity".

Throughout the 2000s, the AK Party placed Turkey on a path to more democracy, more personal freedom and more civil rights. The brightest and most tangible achievement of which was the Constitutional referendum eight years later, on the 12th of September 2010, proposing a reform package comprising some major amendments to the military coup Constitution of 1982. (Kentel, 2016) The referendum proposal won with 58% of the popular vote in favor, and demonstrated the vast coalition of support the AK Party had managed to assemble over the years. For indeed -to garner such a win- they needed more than the support of their base alone;⁵² which was reinforced with the support of liberal groups, socialist groups and Kurds. Even if many among the latter did not support Erdoğan or his party fully.

Yet, despite the growing democratic support election after election, the AK Party's policies spurred a lot of frustration as well, especially with regards to *hizmet*, urban development and privatization; and this time not among the secular 'usual suspects'. In line with the *hizmet* agenda of 1994-1997, the 2001 IMF bailouts conditionalities and in name of macro-economic indicators, the party turned Turkey in a gigantic construction site. The discourse that supported this policy was one of "highest level efficiency", "speed", "quality of service" and of "necessary urban transformation" to bring hygiene and safety to derelict neighborhoods and dangerous shantytowns. They started vast road infrastructure works establishing new highways as well as high-speed rail, mass housing projects and vast amounts of modern high-rise buildings.⁵³ The shopping mall became the essential unit of every city and neighborhood while the rising energy demand was dealt with by the construction

52 In Turkey's vast shanti towns and the Anatolian heartland: resp. the urban poor and the new religious entrepreneurial classes.

53 See for example Imre Azem's documentary 'Ekümenopolis: City Without Limits' (2013)

of hydro-electric dams (HES), by private companies, in waterways and rivers. (Civelekoglu, 2015)⁵⁴ Yet to make those immense construction sites happen, the government often wiped ‘the slate’ clean so as to start from a white sheet of paper. They devastated natural environments in the direct surroundings of villages, especially on the North-East Coast of Turkey where most hydro-electric projects were being construed. (Cfr. Nigel, 1998) They used textbook blueprint planning, green field development and slum-clearance; destroying entire shanty towns, neighborhoods and city blocks such as Küçükbakkalköy, Ayazma or Fikirtepe. They applied so-called ‘cultural urban renewal’ or ‘place branding’ strategies with a focus on ‘capital projects’ (Landry & et.al., 1996), using gentrification techniques, ‘questionable’ reconversion strategies (ex. Haydarpaşa Railway Station⁵⁵) as well as outright forced displacement from entire inner city neighborhoods (Inceoglu & Yürekli, 2011); this was especially visible in the framework of Istanbul’s status as ‘Cultural Capital of Europe 2010 (CCoE)’.⁵⁶ The historic neighborhoods of Tarlabaşı (in the Beyoğlu district) and Sulukele (in the Fatih district) were for example torn down in order to ‘protect’ their deteriorated historic heritage through ‘renewal’.⁵⁷

All this resulted in a vast number of construction sites which was enabled by at least three key measures. (Kentel, 2016) The first was related to a general planning law which facilitated ‘urban transformation’ by maximizing the margins of flexibility for companies, government and municipalities. The second was the ‘Greater-City-Municipalities Law’, land rezoning of more than 16.000 villages from ‘rural’ to ‘urban’; so as to prolong the urban transformation and absorb their capital surplus. And the third were legal amendments to strengthen the Housing Development Administration ‘TOKİ’. When it was established in 1984 its main objective was to build social housing. However, from 2002 onward it gradually started to act as a real-estate company with private partnerships and land investments. Supporting legislation endowed it with a monopoly position over urban transformation and over growing means. Or as urban sociologist Ferhat Kentel put it “*TOKİ acted as the battering ram of urban transformation*”. They started building hundreds of thousands of houses across the country, targeting primarily middle and higher-middle-class income groups.

And not only did those measures have far-reaching consequences for the Turkish population, its cities, villages and the environment. In the name of “sole true rationality” a zero tolerance policy

54 See for example Erkal Tulek documentary, ‘Sudaki Suretler’ (2011)

55 Which led to the establishment of Haydarpaşa Solidarity that in turn served as example for the establishment of Taksim Solidarity in 2012.

56 In the run up to the CCoE K. Topbaş’ Metropolitan government also set up a commission for the Taksim area with the aim of planning its ‘regeneration’, including: a proposal to pedestrianize the square (by tunneling the automobile traffic), make the dilapidated Gezi Park “more livable” and “demolish and restore” the Atatürk Cultural Center (AKM). Even Topçu Kışlası was proposed, but the idea was rejected (by the preservation council) and stayed under the radar.

57 The entire local Romani and/or Kurdish populations that used to live in those neighborhoods were displaced. The development was contested locally by many as well as globally by UNESCO who did threaten to transfer the Historic Peninsula World Heritage Site to the List of World Heritage in Danger in 2008 and 2010 over the issue; but they didn’t manage to stop the process.

was put in place against communities or individuals that contested the governments' construction plans. These plans were implemented harshly, using coercion, police violence and framing the opponents as 'anti-national'. (Kentel, 2016)

The consequence, however, was that the AK Party started to reproduce the modern capitalist, authoritarian and centralist attitude of the Kemalist state. Even more so as the Prime Minister T.R. Erdoğan --responsible for TOKI-- developed an (unofficial) decisive role with regards to sold lands, expropriated properties and permitted high-price rises. Indeed, in contradiction to AK Party's discourse of Islamic modesty and conservatism, he became the unofficial authority promoting countrywide urban policies aimed at exploding macro-economic indicators, transport infrastructure-figures and housing and shopping mall [AVM] projects' size. Turkey's biggest city and old Ottoman Capital, Istanbul, was turned into a malleable instrument for the sake of economic growth. Even the Ottoman minarets found themselves --literally and metaphorically-- overtowered by skyscrapers. (Kentel, 2016)

This is how the 'urban transformation' agenda generated frustration and consequent local struggles all around the country; among action groups opposing both rural and urban dossiers and coalitions against for example the 'Hydro-electric plant'-program and 'the capital city of Europe'-initiative. In many cases, the protests included portions of the population that could otherwise be considered part of the AK Party's electoral target group. And communities that otherwise did not have a long history of contestation. So new people were drawn in a political struggle (over their houses and livelihoods and over urban & environmental issues), who in most cases did not employ classic leftist or anti-capitalist discourses, but rather one with a less divisive environmental narrative of "Yaşam Alanı" or "Life Place" (Interview with M.C. Arslan).

"Urban transformation" was however certainly not the only agenda that generated an important level of frustration. The privatization measures and the 2003 Labor Law were also key sources of discontent. In line with IMF requirements for the bailouts of 2000-2001 AK Party pushed an agenda for 'a stable macroeconomic environment', through 'fiscal discipline' and increased competitiveness. The Labour Law promoted increased 'flexibility' for the largest employer in Turkey: small and medium size enterprises (SMEs i.e. enterprises of less than 30 employees). (Civelekoglu, 2015) The Law reduced job security, unionization and allowed for more temporary and part time employment. At the same time the government proposed a privatization agenda with regards to state companies and services. The pretended outcomes of the measures were astonishing. GDP growth rates rose to an average of 7.3 percent in the AK Party's first six years in power. The inflation rate that was at 54% stabilized at around 8 to 10 percent. Yet on the flip side, the economic growth did not translate in more employment, with unemployment figures stagnating around 9 to 10 percent. The weakening of the unions on the other hand allowed for resisting wage increase demands and the wages of many public workers actually went down as a consequence of privatization-policies.

The most known example is the one of Tekel, when it was sold to British American Tobacco in December 2009. Following the privatization, the Turkish government announced that 12 Tekel factories would be shut down and that the 10,000 workers would be reemployed in other public

sector jobs, but on 11-month temporary contracts, with pay-cuts of up to 40 percent and reduced labour rights. (Yıldırım, 2013) This sparked an action of an estimated number of 12,000 workers --from across the country-- who set up camp and occupied a central park in Ankara for over 78 days.

As was the case for the opposition to the 'urban transformation' agenda, the response of the government and of the Prime Minister here also, was one of zero tolerance. The occupation was literally beaten down by riot police, teargas and pepper spray. And similarly than in the case of the first agenda which triggered new opposition groups (that didn't use to protest), the workers resistance spurred something new as well. A tent resistance --a park occupation-- in 2009, two year before the start of the Arab Spring and with remarkable perseverance in the middle of the winter. But it was even more unique because of the *protest coalition* it assembled. (Özugurlu, 2011) They sought and found a common cultural ground in their resistance to workers' rights retrenchment, their opposition to privatization, and to Prime Minister R.T. Erdoğan. The Kurdish could freely express their language, the Alevi workers their sect beliefs and the workers from Izmir their love for Atatürk. As sociologist Metin Özugurlu described it, "while the laborers from the Black Sea region played their traditional folkloric dances, the Kurdish accompanied them and the other way around". This emerging cultural acceptance was in line with the openness spearheaded by the AK Party's government in the beginning of the 2000s. Yet, it was by no means an evident occurrence and rather a unique phenomenon for Turkey at that time (maybe only preceded by the 'Hrant Dink Mourners March' 2 years earlier).

Less discussed furthermore, at least in the academic literature, is that the frustrations with regards to the 2009 IMF Summit organized in Istanbul also resulted in a week of altermondialist actions and clashes with the police. The anti-IMF protest, also called "Resistanbul", can be considered the last action of a global movement that grabbed the attention of the world's media 10 years before in the anti-globalisation protests in Seattle. (Klein, 2010) As it had been the case since 1999 elsewhere, the protest coalition did not bring in trade unions or the classic worker movements, but rather an unusual and broad coalition of anti-capitalist communist, anarchists, environmentalists, feminist, LGBTQ groupings, urban activists and NGO's. Indeed, a number of new social movements that had been blossoming since the AK Party entered offices and in a context of gained political freedom. They used creative and artistic means ("Artivism") to pass their messages and operated horizontally, without formal leaders and via the internet and social media.

The newly involved rural and urban communities and action groups (such as the HES groups, Sulukele protesters or Haydarpaşa Solidarity), the tactics of 'Tekel' and 'Resistanbul' and the diverse coalitions they brought together are elements that will characterize the 'Gezi protests' 4 years later. Indeed, all of them were explicitly mentioned in my expert interviews as places they were in, struggles they had followed or supported and as sources of inspiration.

Yet, it only describes an emerging context in which the 'Taksim-Gezi development protests' (2011-2013) and the 'Gezi movement' (May-August 2013) became more graspable. By that I mean both the specific urban struggle between 2009 and 2013, as the horizontal 'Gezi protest coalition' that will emerge in May that year, between secular Republicans, islamists, Kurdish & Alevi; anti-capitalists and urban activists; environmentalists, LGBTQ activists, feminists, but also

football supporter clubs. But the events would never have occurred without Prime Minister R.T. Erdoğan's 'authoritarian turn' in the aftermath of the constitutional referendum of 2010 and his epitomization of Hizmet in the form of the so-called "Crazy Projects".

Unrestrained, by the then dim prospect of EU membership, and confronted with real and perceived challenges from the military⁵⁸ and from the judiciary⁵⁹ the Prime Minister started pursuing a political strategy to alter the power relations for good. He managed to trigger a referendum on the question of reviewing the '1980 coup constitution' and united unseen democratic support for the 'yes-vote' (58 percent). Yet afterward, he did not find the needed 'two-third majority' in parliament to push some of the key articles through. In the wake of that defeat and allegedly because of a conflict with part of the Islamic movement, including within his own electoral base (Fethullah Güllen in particular) the strategy shifted toward an increased polarization in a move to consolidate the power.

The increasingly harsh rhetoric of Prime Minister Erdoğan and AKP rallied their core base in strong support, but the broad base, diverse support narrowed and the 'in-between groups' disappeared (Kentel, 2016). Although the 'turn' is a thorny issue to untangle —with regard to its precise causes, pinpointing its timing is not. Indeed, aside from being referred to in the written media, the emerging feeling of frustration was expressed multiple times in my interviews and usually it was articulated as "*when he started shouting*".

According to sociologist F. Kentel the 'authoritarian turn' is essential to understand the emergence of the 'Gezi movement', or at least to comprehend the size, diversity and mass of young and previously not-politicized participants in it.⁶⁰ He argues that the majority of demonstrators grew up under AK Party rule. That they learned about politics in a period when the military, authoritarian and tutelary system was weakened. And that unlike previous generations, they had only known the "*taste of freedom*". Moreover, he argues, many of them did not even encounter the strong polarization between secularism and Islamism. And I would add, the vast majority of them grew

58 The Gülen movement is an Islamic transnational religious and social movement led by Turkish preacher Fethullah Gülen (who now lives in the United States). F. Gülen, T.R. Erdoğan and AK Party were originally allies. But the former's movement was accused of being a terrorist organization trying to infiltrate the Turkish state and overthrow the government. According to the Turkish government his movement was involved in the alleged Ergenekon conspiracy to overthrow the government as well as in the 'July 2016'-coup attempt.

59 Less than a year after the alleged Ergenekon conspiracy was brought to light which supposedly tried to prevent a Gul presidency, Turkey's chief prosecutor brought a case to the country's Constitutional Court in March 2008. He alleged that the AKP had become a center of anti-secular activity and proposed to forbid the party. When the verdict was rendered, the high court found evidence supporting the charge, but fell just one vote short needed to close the party. Instead, AK Party was forced to pay a fine of \$20 million Turkish Lira.

60 Indeed a Konda survey (2014) showed that the average age of protesters was 28 years old, while 93 percent of them had joined as plain citizens (not upon the call of an organization). 79 percent was unaffiliated. 44 percent had never participated in a protest.

up in a time of internet, social media, freedom of speech and organization in a horizontal online culture (Cfr. Castells, 2015; Mason, 2013). Indeed, it is not a coincidence that 69 percent of all protesters learned about the “Gezi” protests on Facebook or Twitter (Konda, 2014).

Put differently, the experience with the Prime Minister ‘authoritarian turn’ came as a blow to a whole generation as it was increasingly confronted with a vertical top down attitude and as they saw their horizontal online culture and views of freedom curtailed.⁶¹ According to F. Kentel this frustration is what explains the vast outburst of many and diverse young people across Turkey, in June 2013; and my interviews among ‘Secular Turks’, ‘Kurdish’ as ‘Islamic’ participants support that thesis.

Apart from the ‘authoritarian turn’ --in the run up to the elections of June 2011-- AK Party pushed further its ‘urban transformation’ and ‘Hizmet’ agenda to the extreme under the form of what they themselves called “Crazy Projects” (*Çılgın Projeler*). They proposed major urban overhauls for Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir and Diyarbakir, including (i) the third bridge over the Bosphorus (Yavuz Sultan Selim Köprüsü), (ii) the third airport (“İstanbul Yeni Havalimanı, biggest in the world), (iii) three new subway lines (iv) a complex of new suburban rail links, (v) an improved road network system, (vi) three new highway sections (Samsun-Ankara, Ankara and Ankara-Izmir-Nilde), (vii) a high-speed rail system, (viii) the building of a new stadium with a capacity of 45.000 spectators and (ix) the largest zoo in the Middle East. Meanwhile he announced that (x) Yassiada and Sivirada --the “islands of the princes” in front of Istanbul-- will house museums, libraries, convention centers and hotels, (xi) ancient Smyrna will see the Gulf of Izmir divided with a 4.5 kilometer viaduct and a four-kilometer underwater tunnel and (xii) a new city south of Ankara would be built hosting 500 thousand people. As a particularly “Crazy” project, they started planning (xiii) the ‘İstanbul Canal’ (connecting the Black Sea to the Sea of Marmara) on the western outskirts of the city --parallel to the Bosphorus--, connecting the Black Sea to the Marmara, across a 40 kilometers long distance, 500 meters wide and 25 meters deep.

As the scope of the project got bigger, so did the frustration, anger and mobilization around these ‘transformations’. Yet, the ‘Crazy Project’ that triggered the ‘Gezi Movement’ is not even mentioned yet, namely the replica proposal of ‘Topçu Kışlası’, the old Ottoman artillery barracks-- and the tunnels under Taksim Square.

How the proposal prompted two years of sustained actions, petitions, court cases and opinion writing by diverse protest coalitions, and how it ultimately triggered the ‘Gezi movement’ has been the focus of my research. And it will be discussed in the main analytical part of this chapter. But I will first situate the case spatially and discuss more technically the different plans before turning to part 6.4.

61 58 percent of all protesters stated that they were there because of the “restrictions on freedoms” while 30 percent were there out of sheer indignation with Erdoğan’s statements and attitude (Konda, 2014)

6.2.2 Spatial Situation, Plans and Procedures

For the ease of naming the urban planning conflict, I often refer to the ‘Taksim-Gezi Park development’. In reality however, Prime Minister Erdoğan’s announcement for the area relates to different plans and planning procedures, of which the ‘Crazy Project’ is only the most obvious part.

To frame these different processes, it is important to first understand the distribution of competences. In principle, the municipalities and districts are the ones responsible for both (i) generating legally binding ‘Land Use Plans’ (of 1:5.000 scale) and more detailed ‘Land Use Implementation Plans’ (of 1:1.000 scale), as for (ii) providing for their infrastructures. However, it is not unusual in Turkey that the Prime Minister announces and sets out short and long term planning goals. First, as he presides over the state’s Planning Office, which is responsible for setting out economic, social, spatial and environmental planning policies, even if they are (at least on paper) framed within the limits set by the Ministry of Environment (ultimately responsible for the 1:100.000 and 1:25.000 scale environmental plans).⁶² Secondly, more informally as leader of the AKP party, which controls the vast majority of municipalities in the country. To this distribution of competences, we need to add that municipal ‘Land Use Plans’ can include exempted zones, namely those which fall under the Prime Minister Office’s responsibility and those identified as ‘tourist development regions’ which fall under the auspices of the Ministry of Tourism. (Esbah, 2013)

For the Taksim area, the situation is more complex, as the Beyoğlu District in which it is located, was attributed the status of ‘historic preservation area’ in 1993. Consequently, the Metropolitan Municipality and the District were obliged to develop, as indicated, respective ‘Preservation Land Use’ and the ‘Preservation Land Use For Implementation’ plans, which had to be approved by Istanbul’s ‘Preservation Council for Cultural Heritage and Natural Assets’.⁶³

To situate the area, Fig.12, Fig.13, Fig.14 indicate respectively the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, the high densely populated Beyoğlu District, the Taksim Area and the development perimeter (a circa 12ha zone).

So, when I use the term ‘Taksim-Gezi development’ I refer in fact to an ensemble of plans and procedures. These are:

- a. The “Crazy Projects” where the ideas are launched by the Prime Minister’s office and pushed through, from the top down, in those municipalities and districts where AK Party has the governing majority. Even if, formally speaking, the project falls under the responsibility of K. Topbaş’ Metropolitan Municipality Government and the Beyoğlu District.

62 Even if in reality they heavily favor urbanization and industrialization

63 In this case: ‘the Istanbul No.2 Preservation Council’ (which falls under the responsibility of the Minister of Tourism and Culture, in this case Erteğrul Günay.

- b. The Beyoğlu 'Preservation Land Use Plan' and its Proceedings and alteration (1:5.000), under the auspices of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality. From now on **PLUP**
- c. The Beyoğlu 'Preservation Land Use Plan for Implementation' and its proceedings (1:1.000), under the responsibility of the Beyoğlu District. From now on **PLUP-I**
- d. The Taksim 'Traffic Circulation & pedestrianization Project', also under the Municipality, including especially the tunnels. From now on **TCPP**
- e. And finally, the Taksim 'Urban Design Project', designed by the Municipality, for the square and Topçu Kışlası. From now on **UDP**

Put differently, five different procedures are in play for the Taksim-Gezi development, of whom four formal (b, c, d, e) and one informal, coming from the highest level in the land (a). Generally speaking, every one of those formal plans, first needs to be approved by the 'Regional Preservation Council'.⁶⁴ Consequently the plans go to the responsible government council (either the Municipality, either the District) to be approved. After which, they are made public for a period of two months, which allows the public and the professional chambers to comment the plan. (Remark that any comprehensive consultation or participation is absent). Subsequently the plans are altered or approved, and in case of the latter there still is the possibility of fighting the decision in court. In the case of PLUP and PLUP-I the approval by the council means they become legally binding and enforceable by law. For the TCPP and UDP it means the municipality becomes responsible for organizing the tender to attract a firm to design, technically develop and implement the proposals. How the different planning procedures evolved in detail, over the years, will become clear in part 6.4. But before looking more closely to the timeline and analysis of the Taksim-Gezi development, I will give an overview of the key events that triggered the different *discourse coalitions* and which were at the origin of vital developments in the planning process.

64 And in the case of the Urban Design Project also the National Commission of Preservation of Cultural Heritage and Natural Assets



Fig.16. Beyoglu District in Istanbul in Yellow, the Taksim-Gezi development perimeter in red



Fig.17. In yellow the map of Turkey, In red Istanbul



Fig.18. In Brown Istanbul, in red Beyoglu

KEY FACTS – TAKSIM-GEZI DEVELOPMENT ZONE

Start and completion

PLUP, 'Beyoğlu Preservation Land Use Plan' 1/5000: Ready (1993-2004-2009)

PLUP-I, 'Beyoğlu Preservation Land Use Plan for Implementation' 1/1000: Ready (2009-Jan.2012)

TCCP, 'Taksim Traffic Circulation & Pedestrianization Project': Ready (2007-Nov.2012)

UDP, 'Taksim Square & Gezi Park's Urban Design project', incl. Topçu Kışlası (June2012- On hold, 3th of July 2013)

Surface

Urban Design Project perimeter ca. 12ha

Status in July 2016

The funding for the Urban Design Project's Topçu Kışlası is reapproved yet no works have started.

Main Involved Government Administrations

- National Prime Minister's Office
- National Department for Culture & Tourism
- Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality
- Beyoğlu District
- İstanbul No.2 Regional Council of Preservation of Cultural Heritage and Natural Assets.
- National Commission of Preservation of Cultural and Natural Assets

Government contractors (Studies and implementation)

- Urban Design Project: Kalyon Construction (tender acceptance August2013)

Population Beyoğlu District*

- Area: 8.66 km²
- Population: 246.152 (2012)
- Density: 28.000 inh/km²

5.3 Triggering events

- 2009 ‘Blanks’ in the Preservation Land Use Plan (phase 1)
 - Beyoğlu neighborhoods association platform is triggered
- 06/2011 ‘Topçu Kışlası’ announced by Prime Minister R.T. Erdoğan (phase 2)
 - Taksim Platform is triggered
- 01/2012 Approval of the Preservation Land Use Plan Alteration (phase 3)
 - Taksim Solidarity is triggered
- 10/2012 Start of the tunnel excavation, Ice rink announced (phase 4)
- 12/2012 Monumental trees cut in the republican boulevard
 - Taksim Gezi Park Association is triggered
- 01/2013 Denial of the Denial, the UDP is approved
 - Taksim Gezi Park Association is formalized
- 04/2013 Announcement Shopping Mall (Intermezzo)
- 05/2013 1st of May
- 05/2013 Emek Cinema destroyed
- 05/2013 Alcohol Ban

- 27/05/2013 Caterpillar (Phase 5)
- 28/05/2013 Woman in red
- 29/05/2013 burned tents
- 30/05/2013 “They were just reading books there”
 - – Gezi Movement

5.4 Timeline, Analysis and Corroboration

The Taksim-Gezi development plans come to a halt with the emergence of the ‘Gezi Movement’ and the power relation they establish by taking to the streets, at the end of May 2013. As I described above, such a mobilization is only graspable in the context of a local and national buildup of enormous frustration on the one hand, and new ‘*protest coalition*’-formations on the other, including people from all walks of life. Yet surprisingly it took for this particular case --in the center of Istanbul and the heart of the Republic-- to bring those struggles together in a way that bypassed the Secular-Republican and Islamic-Ottoman political cleavage. The story that is usually told comes close that of a foundational myth in which: “*it all began on the 27 of May 2013*”. Yet, the events of the 27th and 28th were just the latest triggering events in a six year history of conflictive urban planning decisions and subsequent *protest coalition formation*. I subdivide those years in five periods as they coincide with the emergence of new *protest coalitions*, beginning with the resounding victory⁶⁵ of the incumbent Justice and Development Party in 2007 until the peak of the AK Party’s national campaign for the next election cycle (July 2007-June 2011).

It is this period (phase 1) in which the Municipal Metropolitan Government prepared the Land Use Plan for the Beyoğlu District and the renewal of the Taksim Area, which triggered the first protest coalition, the Beyoğlu Neighborhoods Association Platform. The second period (phase 2) starts on the 1st of June 2011 with R.T Erdoğan’s campaign announcement of Topçu Kışlası, which prompted the involvement of ‘Taksim Platform’, a secular-intellectual discourse coalition on the side of the opponents. The third period (phase 3) starts eight months later, on the 17th of January 2012, with the alteration of the ‘PLUP-I’ by the Beyoğlu District, including the formal approval of the Prime Minister’s ‘Crazy Project’ in the planning notes. The decision spurred the Taksim Solidarity coalition led by the professional Chambers of Architects and Urban Planners. The fourth period (phase 4) starts on the 31st of October 2012 with the beginning excavation works triggering the shift in focus to ‘Gezi’ as well as the arrival of the ‘Taksim Gezi Park Association’. The fifth period then finally (phase 5) starts on the 27th/28th of May 2013 with the Caterpillar incident and the Woman in Red triggering the Gezi Movement. This chapter discusses in detail those five periods one by one, looking both to what happened more precisely as well as analyzing the role of the coalitions, of the different discourses and of the imaginaries that underlie throughout the different urban planning proceedings.

This part is organized in relation to the emergence of the different *protest coalitions* on the side of the opponents. That does not mean however, that there was no evolution or (some) disaccord in the discourse on the side of government. In fact the analyses could just as well have been divided in three parts, with a focus on (i) Mayor K. Topbaş discourse for the Taksim area as a “Yaşam Alanı” or Life Place between 2004 and R.T Erdoğan’s 1st of June announcement in 2011, (ii) the “Topçu Kışlası” period between 2011 and May 2013, and (iii) the “Çapulcu” period from the 1st of June 2013 onward. But although I was able to translate and map the views of the government’s

65 which won 46.6% of the popular vote and 341 seats out of 550 in the July 2007 national elections

key players from interviews in the media (PM R.T. Erdoğan, Mayor K. Topbaş, District Mayor A.M. Demircan, Architect Halil Onur and so forth), I was not able to speak to them or their spokespersons personally. With the exception of a written dialogue with the (ex-) national minister for culture and tourism Erteğrul Günay and one in-depth interview with the (ex-) head of the Regional Preservation Council, Mete Tapan, I have no direct source to complement, corroborate or even simply understand some of the decisions and shifts in the plans or in the discourse. Despite having given ample opportunity to the involved key persons from AK Party, as well as the planner and architect, to highlight their views on the process. Yet, they denied all requests both per email and phone.⁶⁶ Hence, the choice for building up the analysis, following the emergence of the different *protests coalitions*.

6.4.1 The emerging Beyoğlu Neighborhoods Association Platform (Phase 1: 2007)

In the wake of the 2004 municipal victory and the 2007 national landslide, Mayor K. Topbaş and District Mayor A.M. Demircan set up a commission to prepare a 'Preservation Land Use Plan' (PLUP) for the Beyoğlu District. They created for this an urban development commission for the Taksim area (w.r.t. TTCP and the UDP) and a commission for the 'urban implementation' of all projects related to 'Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture' (IECC). The latter dealt with the case of the Atatürk Cultural Center located at Taksim Square. Each one of the plans proposed by those commissions had consequences for the next phases in this case study, but it is the PLUP that triggered the first *protest coalition*.

The PLUP had to put an end to 10-15 years in which the Beyoğlu District had been ruled by ad hoc decision making, without an actual Preservation Land Use Plan in place.⁶⁷ The proposal to finally move forward was welcomed by the professional chambers⁶⁸ and by the academic community. Yet, when it was made public in 2009 some of the key historic sites (like Galata or the Karaköy neighborhood) were indicated as 'exempted zones' (See Fig.3). Their future use was not allotted and they would not fall under the auspices of the Metropolitan Municipality, but under the authority of the Ministry of Tourism (as 'tourist development region') or under the Prime Minister's 'State Planning Office' (*interview: B.C.B of the Chamber of Urban Planners, 16/10/2015*).

Seen the invasive national government's 'urban transformation agenda', this spurred a lot of fears among inhabitants afraid of losing their house, apartment or business as had happened

66 Only when Mayor A.M. Demircan demanded all transcripts of my interviews with Taksim Solidarity, in return for an interview, did I stop all communication with them. But I am confident that the hundreds of translated and analyzed policy and civil society documents and 22 expert & 35 activist-participant interviews, serve as a sufficient basis for this research. For more details about the method I refer the reader to the methodological chapter, whereas the timeline, analysis and corroboration are next.

67 The decision to make the Beyoğlu District into a preservation area had been made in 1993 under Mayor N. Sözen (Social Democratic People's Party, 'SHP'), but a Preservation Land Use Plan (PLUP) had never been drawn up.

68 Of Urban Planners & Architects

in other places of the city. That is why the different committees of the Asmalımescit, Ayaspaşa, Bedrettin, Cihangir, Güzelleştirme and Galata neighborhoods formed the ‘Beyoğlu Neighbourhoods Association Platform’ in an attempt to oppose the plan’s so-called “blanks” (or exempted zones, see Map X).

D.S.: (...)Beyoğlu area was a culture conservation area. And according to out, constitutional law, and some international agreements, when government declares some area as conservation area, central or local government should prepare a ‘land use plan’ considering this conservation rules [...]. So in 2011 they prepare the land use plan... this conservation plan, but when we checked this conservation plan, there were some.... how can I say, like... oil drops on water.

I: Some spot circles?

D.S.: yes some spot circles in that area, and they declared some of these places exceptional areas [...]. Where are those exceptional places? Golden Horn Coast and Bosforous Coast, Beyoglu and Taksim Square, and Galata Tower area, Tarlabası. [...] The most essential cultural heritage areas [...] are out of this conservation plan.

(D.S. Person from the Beyoğlu neighborhoods associations platform, 12.10.2015)

And it is how the first protest coalition emerged around a *collective interest’s* discourse (“our street, our neighborhood, our shops”) and an *imaginary* in which the *inhabitants* have the right over their houses and livelihood. In that sense, their discourse related to a conflict between scales as well, over the question of who has the right over the city: locals or commuters who live in the sprawling suburbs and would benefit from new road infrastructure; current inhabitants or wealthier newcomers who would occupy the “renovated housing” and buy in the newly erected shopping malls [AVM]; present users or potential users such as tourists and so forth.

The *protest coalition* got the support of the Chamber of architects which went to court against the plan in its generality and of the Chamber of Urban Planners, which went to court against the exemptions included in the plan. Yet, despite their efforts, the 1:5.000 PLUP was approved in November 2010, followed by the 1:1.000 ‘preservation land Use Plan for Implementation’ (PLUP-I) which was made public in the beginning of 2011.

Taksim Square and Taksim-Gezi Park were not among the “blanks”. In that sense, the coalition was in its origin not specifically related to the main focus of this case study. However, already in the 2011 announcement of the Traffic Circulation & Pedestrianization Project’ (TCPP) and Topçu Kışlası (UDP) meant that even zones not inscribed as “blanks”, were potentially up for full scale redevelopment; also, when those redevelopments were in full contradiction with the PLUP (See Fig.3. Consequently, the coalition would become a key actor in all the following *protest coalitions*.

This first phase was also defined by the consequences of the ‘urban development commission’ for the Taksim area. Set up after the 2004 elections with an eye on the ‘European Capital of Culture’ and after the AK Party’s national landslide victory (in 2007), the Istanbul Metropolitan

Municipality made the first part of the commission's proposals public August 2007: namely the 'Taksim Square Pedestrianization and Traffic Circulation Project' (TTCP).

The project had to: "Integrate Taksim Square with Gezi Park." [...] be a solution for traffic jams in Taksim" [...] "one of the most important places in Istanbul" [...] "pedestrianize the square" [...] "make Taksim Gezi Park a liveable place [yashanabilir bir mekan]".

(Newspaper interview with Mayor K. Topbaş, 2007)

The proposal intended to tunnel the traffic by excavating the square and streets (in the direct vicinity) with the objective of optimizing the efficiency and **expediting** car traffic flows. This would in turn allow for the pedestrianization of the surface and the establishment of a *livable place* [Yaşam Alanı] linking Taksim Square and Gezi Park as a coherent integrated space.

As my interviews with the chamber of planners and architects indicated (B.C.B., 16/10/2015 & U.L., 9/10/2015 of the former chamber; N.Z., 2015.10.06 of the latter) the proposals were nonetheless very basic as well as barely documented with very limited images indicating the position of the tunnels, and tunnel mouths (resembling the 1997 tunnel plans). Yet, the municipal government finally didn't move forward on the TTCP and consequently it did not become an issue in the public opinion until it was brought up again in 2011.



Fig.19. The proposed tunnel excavation for the Taksim area in 2007

The second part of the commission's proposals regarded the Taksim Urban Design Project (UDP), which included the reconstruction of a replica of 'Topçu Kışlası'. This re-erected artillery barracks would house an art center or museum, but as a precondition the building had to be recognized as having historic 'preservation value'. In 2009, Istanbul's Preservation Council (headed by: Mete Tapan) judged this not to be the case.⁶⁹ Consequently, the proposal was not integrated in the final Preservation Land Use Plan and this did not become a public issue then.

'Taksim Kışlası' önerisini koruma kurulu reddetti

İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi, 1939'da yıkılarak yerine Taksim Gezi Parkı yapılan Taksim Kışlası'nı sosyal ve kültürel amaçlı kullanılmak üzere yeniden yapılmasını önerdi. Öneriyi Koruma Kurulu reddetti. Büyükşehir Belediyesi'nin hazırladığı ve Meclis tarafından onaylanan Beyoğlu İlçesi Kentsel Sit Alanı 1/5000 ölçekli Koruma Amaçlı Nazım İmar Planı'nda Taksim Kışlası'nın Taksim Gezi Parkı'nda yeniden inşası önerildi. Planı inceleyen İstanbul 2 Numaralı Kültür ve Tabiat Varlıkları Koruma Kurulu, öneriyi reddetti. Büyükşehir Belediye Başkanı Kadir Topbaş, "Orada bir kültürel değer varsa bir bölümünü kültür sanat galerisi veya bir müze haline getirmek üzere bir teklif olabilir, kurul da reddeder. Belediyemiz bunda ısrarlı olmaz" dedi. Koruma Kurulu Başkanı Prof. Dr. Mete Tapan ise, "Taksim Kışlanın rekonstrüksiyonu yapılacaksa meydanın büyük bir kısım kalmaz" diye konuştu.

Tarih: 10 Ağustos 2009 **Kaynak:** Sabah **Yazan:** Hasan Ay

The first phase, lastly, was also defined by the consequences of the so-called AKM Case and the breach in the relation of trust between Prime Minister Erdoğan and the IECC-urban implementation commission⁷⁰.

AKM is the abbreviation for the Atatürk Cultural Center or 'Atatürk Kültür Merkezi', an iconic building and focal point of Taksim Square --exemplary of Turkish 1960s architecture-- and a symbol of the Turkish secular republic. It served as a multi-purpose cultural center and opera house since its completion in 1969.⁷¹ When it was in need of renovation, halfway the 2000s, the Prime Minister proposed to 'close, demolish and renew'; whereas the members of the commission pled for a renovation of the edifice. Ultimately, after long negotiations, the choice was made to renovate and therefore AKM was closed in 2008. (to see the proposals: Fig.2). Yet the secular elite in parliament didn't follow and they blocked the found agreement. Prime Minister Erdoğan and (especially) his advisors, who had compromised on their own proposal, saw the gridlock as an affront and a humiliation. And it broke the relation of trust that had been constituted in the negotiations over AKM and over the Yeni Kapı project. Or as one interviewee described it:

69 Istanbul's n°2 Regional Preservation Council

70 The established commission included secular Turkish elites (allegedly out of fear for the military) and was headed by Korhan Gümüş, who had stopped the 1997 tunnel and mosque project with Taksim Platformü.

71 AKM was originally designed by H. Tabanlıoğlu in 1956–57. It was opened in 1969 as the fourth largest cultural center in the world at that time: with its 52 thousand square meter in surface and its 17 thousand square meter in landscaped area. The edifice was construed in a 18 month period. In 1971 the building suffered a fire and had to be closed for renovation. In 1978 it was opened again to the public.

L.H.: there was a team that went to see Erdoğan in a visit. In that time we believed it very hard, because we had changed the project 'Yeni Kapı'. [...] They told me several times « we will demolish it and we will do as you wish. You want to do an architectural competition, right? So we will let you do it, but first we must demolish it. Erdoğan requests it». I said, «tell Erdoğan that to demolish it first we need to discuss» (laughs) «Even to demolish... You cannot first hang by the neck and then make the judgement, we must first judge and then if we want to demolish, then yes. «I'm not against the demolition, if there is a need», but I counted with all the possibilities because I had previously organized myself [...] we organized international teams of statics, acoustics, electro-mechanicals and so forth. It was a great restoration project, as the 'Centre Pompidou' (laughs). And Erdoğan, when he saw the project he could not resist. [...] Perhaps this is the best restoration project in Turkey. [...] We deconstructed it for Erdoğan because he thought that opera was for the rich [...] and that Taksim is a memory space. For him the opera was obviously a representation of these elites who want to impose their culture to our nation. So he saw it like that. But when he saw the energy of the team, he changed his mind and, unwillingly, he had to accept. He even allocated TL 80 million for the restoration. And what did the Left do afterwards, [...] they answered to Erdoğan as Erdoğan. They said «no it's a temple for us, you cannot touch it. » And they stopped the project.

Interviewer: It is the Left that stopped the project?

L.H.: The Left, but ... it is not the Left, it is the elites.

Interviewer: So he had accepted, and in fact these elites ...

L.H.: So Erdoğan expected this and so he did it like this "very good, if they do not want it, we finish with it." It was amazing. There was a third way and we made an opening, a public 'rupture' like after the earthquake where we did the same thing. After Habitat 2 we did the same thing. And then, again, we made an ideological 'rupture'. There was a space where everyone could accept and [...] the opposition forced Erdoğan to be Erdoğan.

(Interview L.H., member of the 'European Capital of Culture'-commission, 22/09/2015)

The consequence was that the climate in which those negotiations and compromises were possible disappeared. And some of the members of the commission were about to find that out, as will be explained in the second phase of this case study, when they go on to create 'Taksim Platformu'.



Fig.5. Figure X AKM, 2008 Renovation Proposal

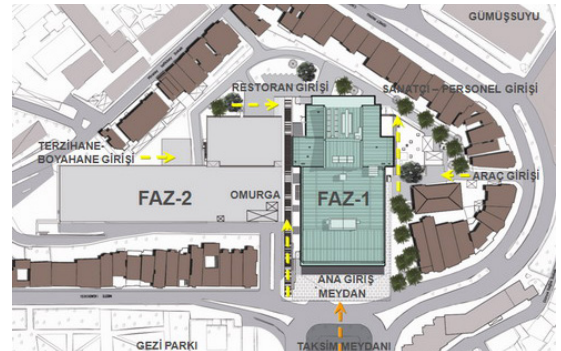
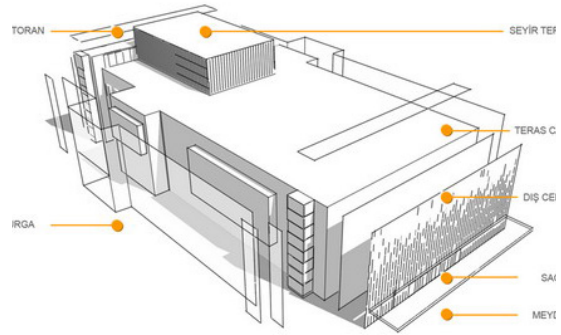


Fig.6. Taksim Square, in red Atatürk Cultural Center (AKM)

Harita 3 - 48 Beyoğlu İlçesi Kentsel Sit Alanı Arazi Kullanımı Analizi

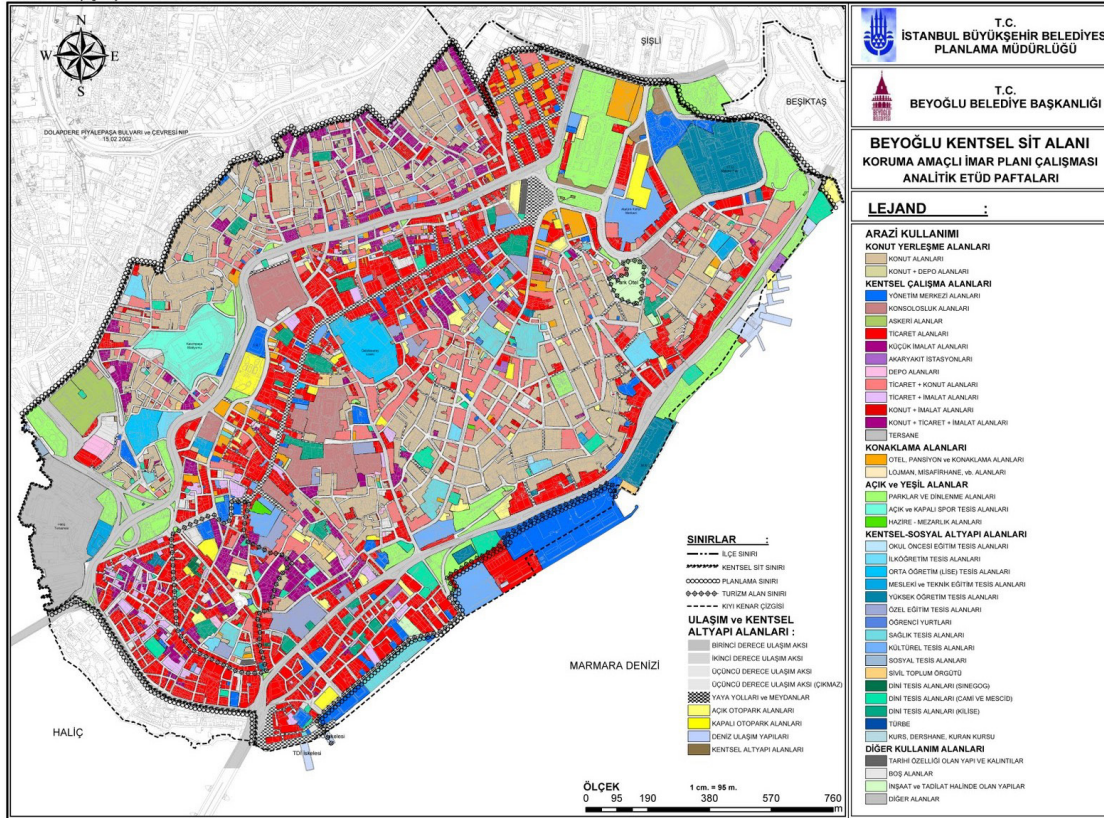


Fig.7. Preservation Land Use Plan 2008-2009; so-called “blanks” are indicated with a line of little bubbles

6.4.2 The emerging Taksim Platform (Phase 2: 1st of June 2011)

The second phase starts on the 1st of June 2011, in the run up to the national elections which R.T. Erdoğan would win with another landslide victory.⁷² In line with the above described authoritarian turn, AK Party's electoral campaign strategy intentionally polarized on the Secular-Republican / Islamic-Ottoman divide. One of the ways in which they did so, was through the Prime Minister's announcement of Topçu Kışlası as a 'Crazy Project' to be reconstructed in 'Taksim'. He proposed with other words, the establishment of an Ottoman-style edifice right in the middle of the one of the most iconic, secular-republican places known to the nation. The building would not only make Taksim Gezi Park invisible, it would be located right there, on Henri Prost's⁷³ Taksim Square [Taksim Meydanı], in between the 'Republican Boulevard' [Cumhuriyet Caddesi], the Republican Monument ['Cumhuriyet anıtı'] and the Atatürk Cultural Center [Atatürk Kültür Merkezi]. The Square's outlook would completely change, as the traffic would be taken underground and the ancient trees in the Republican Boulevard would be replaced by a pedestrianised, betonised, surface. But aside from announcing the Crazy Project, R.T. Erdoğan went on to attack CHP's 'one party regime' (i.e. between 1923-1945) arguing that Taksim Square, "Taksim Park" and more generally the CHP "Republican urban design" should never have imposed over existing "Ottoman architectural value".

"We have a lot of dreams for Turkey and Istanbul. Our vision of civilization [medeniyet tasavvuru⁷⁴] has its roots in the past while its branches rise to the future⁷⁵ [...] Istanbul is the most exquisite element in our vision of civilization⁷⁶ [...] the place that is sold to us as Taksim Park was actually Topçu Kışlası in the past. We are going to rebuild it, including a number of different services [hizmet] The Topçu Kışlası will be an architectural beauty after their reconstitution. It was the CHP mentality to demolish this historical building, but we are not going to betray history." (Speech: R.T. Erdoğan, 1st of June 2011)

A few months earlier, the Prime Minister's team had put Topçu Kışlası again before the Preservation Council that had conclusively ruled out the (declaration of the) building's historical value less than two years earlier. But this time surprisingly they concluded differently. In my interview with Mete Tapan (21/10/2015), the head of the preservation council at that time, I pressed him to develop the reasons for coming to a diametrically opposed decision, yet none were given. Nor does it seem more documentation was brought to bear in support. But it meant that the first step to move forward was taken. It allowed to announce Topçu kışlası as a Crazy Project and to move

72 That is, with 49.8 percent of the popular vote and 327/550 MP's. This represents an increase of 3.2 percent since the 2007 general election.

73 The French planner Henri Prost, who developed the master plan for Istanbul and who followed up the planning proceedings between 1933 and 1950. (Gül, 2012)

74 Medeniyet: i.e. an Ottoman and implicitly religious word for 'civilization'

75 R.T. Erdoğan uses a poem from Yahya Kemal, the teacher of Necip Fazıl (communist) and Nazım Hikmet (nationalist) about religion and the Turkish nation.

76 Because it was the capital of the Ottoman empire

forward on the question of if that historically valuable building should also be re-erected and inscribed in the preservation land use plan (PLUP).⁷⁷ But that decision would only come in 2012.⁷⁸

The announcement functioned as a triggering event that spurred controversy in the public opinion and that, in due course, led to the formation of what I call the ‘second protest coalition’, Taksim Platform [Taksim Platformu].

Directly after the summer the Municipal government launched the first planning procedure with regards to the excavation of Taksim Square (TCPP),⁷⁹ adding formal weight to the Prime Minister’s announcement. In the months that followed, several debates were set up by civil society and academia on the issue, such as for example the 22nd urban design meeting in Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University (13/10/2011)⁸⁰ or the architect’s & urban planners meeting in the French Institute of Anatolian Research (29/11/2011).⁸¹ By the end of the year several of the experts and (secular) intellectuals that took part in those debates and of whom several had been part of the IECC-urban implementation commission a few years earlier, decided to form Taksim Platformu⁸² as an opposition to the ‘Crazy Project’. Despite continuing with their protest coalition, the Neighborhoods Associations Platform joined in as well, as did a women rights association, a

77 In February 2011, that same month the Beyoğlu Municipality drew up a “Preservation Land Use Plan Report” setting out its vision on what it would imply if they wanted to effectively re-erect the building. They stated the following: “Taksim Gezi Park is now protected as a cultural asset. The application of that decision --of the Regional no2 Council of Preservation of Cultural Heritage on 9.02.2011-- is only possible if the monumental trees in the park are protected”. [...] “Thus, while making decisions on Taksim Kislasi, this green area should be taken into consideration.”[...]“It is possible to reconstruct the Barracks in their original place. But only through the use of its walls, that would than surround the park.”[...] “These walls could include social and cultural facilities.”[...] “The details will be determined through the Urban Design Project for Taksim Square and its inner circle.”

78 The importance of this episode in February that year lies however also in the fact that it was the first in a series of similar events. Indeed in my case study alone I observed at least two other diametrical reversals with respect to the preservation council’s decisions. Seen the trend towards increasingly stringent top down decision making (described in the context chapter) and the nature of the reversals --in line with either the Prime Minister or the Minister of Culture’s agenda-- it made me conclude on a pattern of governmental influence over this institution.

79 Including the obligatory public debate at the Beyoğlu Municipality with the metropolitan municipal administrations of rail infrastructure, transportation, public transportation and the Chamber of Urban Planners, Ayaspaşa Association, The Beyoğlu Beautification and Preservation Association.

80 22nd Urban Design Meeting carried as title “Taksim Square and Gezi Park, discussions about the intervention in Public Space” with architect Boysan, head of the preservation council Mete Tapan, architect and cartoonist Oral, sociologist Firat, Architect Dinçer, Architect Bilsel and the head of the Chamber of Urban Planners Kahraman. Mete Tapan who had granted Topçu Kislasi preserevation value just half a year before is quoted saying: “about the reconstruction of Topçu Kislasi, no project was presented to us, but I did hear some rumours”.(13/10/2011)

81 under the title “What should be done in Taksim”, with speakers including Korhan Gümüş, Güzin Kaya and Tan Oral who became key actors in Taksim Platformu (29/11/2011)

82 with reference to ‘Taksim Platformu’ that several of them had been a part of in the 1990s and with which they had stopped the excavation and mosques plan in 1997.

cultural heritage association, a trade union and the chamber of urban planners (For the full list of the members see Annex X)

In choosing to defend Taksim's Republican heritage and by emphasizing Taksim's centrality --in Istanbul and Turkey-- they accepted R.T. Erdoğan's framing of the planning conflict, yet as several of them had done in the AKM case, they strategically approached the issue from a more academic and less ideological perspective by opposing (i) the "tunnels" and the "betonisation" [betonlaştırma]; (ii) the "unacceptable destruction of monumental trees" [anıt ağaçlar]; (iii) the potential arrival of a shopping mall [AVM]; (iv) the government's top down way [üsttenci tavı/ tepeden inme kararlar] of making decisions by [fait accompli]; and by demanding (v) participation [katılım] and good planning practice. In their first public call they did not even explicitly mention Topçu Kışlası. (See annex Y) Indeed, the aim of the coalition was to find a compromise with the government through discussions using a petition to trigger negotiations [uzlaşma].

CU: Taksim Platform became one of the members of Taksim Solidarity (...) but we said right away that since we are the founding... thing, we will keep our fluidity, we have another attitude, we will not... we want dialogue, the dialogue possibility was not that closed at that time and they were more like... we cannot do anything with this AKP. We were more like... we wanted..., maybe with the time they were right in the sense that we couldn't do anything, but I think that our diff...our ... nuanced approach was more euhh...productful in getting public support.

(C.U. Spokesperson from Taksim Platformü, 16.09.2015)

Mete Tapan took even part in some of the first platform meetings in December 2011 were he, allegedly argued Topçu Kışlası would not be inscribed in the Preservation Land Use Plan. Or as two interviewees put it

Quote 1:

K.H.: «He obviously came because he is our friend since the old Taksim projects, he participated several times [...] I organized the meetings of Taksim platform in '97. And Mete Tapan also participated. He became the president of the Protection Council, so he knew well the issue and wanted to participate in the meetings. He attended meetings of Taksim Platform (December 2011), and he was like us, talked like us, but he was obviously doubled-played at the time. »

(K.H., 9/22/2015)

Quote 2:

C.U. Mete Tapan don't tell me about him... we call him Mete 'Tatan', 'Tatan' means 'sold'. The first Taksim Platform meeting, Mete Tapan was invited he was the president of the Commission, and he saw out meeting, he said, I just got the file don't worry. There is still 6 months, ok?, that was the 27th of December 2011, on the 4th of January, at the first meeting, on Friday, at the first meeting after ours, of the Council he signed it to...to...to...

I: to get rid of it

C.U.: to get rid of it. And he'd told us, we have 6 months don't worry, and whe...when he was talking I understood he was going to... be a real betrayer because... and he is a euhhh... he is a euhh, well... academician credited person and he said to me and all the audience, he said, well you know? tunnels...I don't know about emission gaz (...) good damm it, urban planning!, you don't need to know about emission gaz to know what the tunnels will do to Taksim. I don't know about emission gaz, there are some thecnical. There's nothing technical, ok?... so it's all bullshit.

(C.U. Spokesperson from Taksim Platformü, 16.09.2015)

The first forms of action they used, to be heard by the government, were (i) a general petition against the Taksim Gezi Development process (in general) which they launched on the 21st of January 2012, (ii) a speakers corner under the title 'Speak up for your right to the city'⁸³ on the 29th of January (at the moment the monumental threes were indicated to be cut), (iii) a signed report by 156 academicians & experts stating that Taksim Gezi Park should be registered as a 'cultural asset for preservation', which they submitted to the Preservation Council on the 4th of February and (iv) a series of press briefings.

6.4.3 Assembling Taksim Solidarity (Phase 3: 14th of February 2012)

Despite the common language⁸⁴, the head of the Preservation Council finally approved the TCPPP and thus the tunnels on the 4th of January 2012, while the Metropolitan Municipal Council approved a planning note that altered the PLUP on the 17th of January.⁸⁵

"Plan Note on the Plan Alteration:

1. The area that will be affected by this plan approval includes [...] Taksim Square and Taksim Gezi Park and its inner circle [...].

2. The Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality will be responsible for the implementation of the Preservation Land Use Plan through the use of an Urban Design Project (UDP). This urban design project is expected and has to be approved by the national Commission of Preservation of Cultural and Natural Assets. (ed. With regards to the issue of the threes)

3. The Taksim Barracks which were registered as a 'protection required cultural asset' by the Istanbul No.2 Regional Council of Preservation of Cultural and Natural Assets on 9.02.2011 (decision number 4225) will be integrated in the Urban Design Project.

83 With speakers such as: Ömer Kiriş, Yves Cabannes, Erdoğan Yıldız-Guldām, Çiğdem Şahin

84 "il parlait comme nous"

85 Hence, also the subsequent actions I described above of Taksim Platform in the following days.

4. During the implementation of the project, the Regional Council of Preservation of Cultural Assets and related public institutions are going to be consulted and their opinions are going to be followed.

5. Reports of geological and geotechnical surveys will be followed. (ed. earthquake risk assesment)

6. In case of issues that are not explained in this report, the current Preservation Land Use Plan is valid.”

Status: DISCUSSED & APPROVED

(My translation. Source: Beyoğlu Municipality e-Landscape Application.)”

And when on top of that the municipal council released the 3D visuals of the plan to the wider public four weeks later, including both the tunnels and Topçu Kışlası, it functioned as the triggering event that would spur a thrid *protest coalition parralel to the previous ones, namely Taksim Solidarity [Taksim Dayanışması]* (See Fig.18, Fig.19, Fig.23, Fig.17, Fig.20, Fig.22)

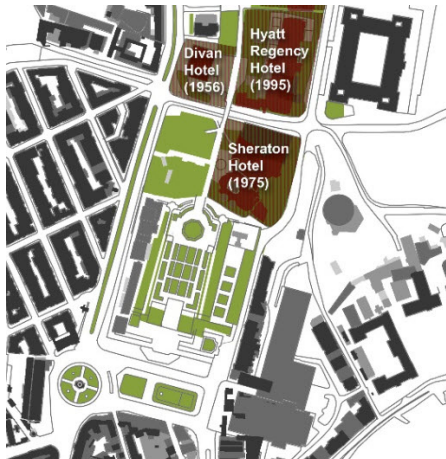


Fig.22. Green Space in Taksim square. The long green line --running parallel to Gezi Park form Divan Hotel to the republican monument-- are the ancient threes

Fig.23. Areal view of Taksim in 2011



Fig.20. Figure Z: 3D Simulation of the UDP & TCPP

Fig.21. Figure T: TCPP & UDP on map: Topçu Kışlası in light red, in orange the tunnels, in blue the tunnel mouths



Fig.24. Logo of Taksim Solidarity

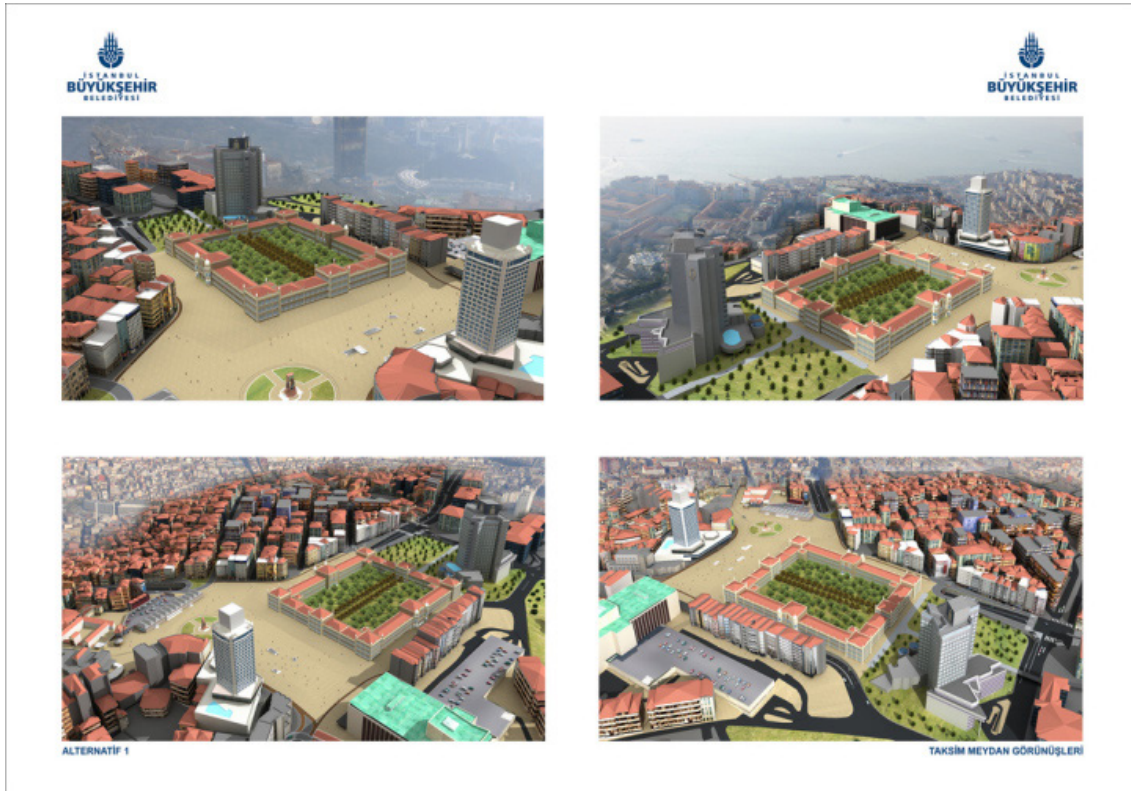


Fig.25. UDP or Urban Design Plan for Taksim Square and Taksim Gezi Park

The coalition included several members of Taksim Platform and all members of the Beyoğlu Neighborhoods Associations Platform, but this time the initiative came from the Chamber of Architects and of Urban Planners ⁸⁶; and whereas the previously founded coalitions counted between 6 and 10 local civil society organisations, ‘Solidarity’ counted with a much broader group of 68 organisations and it had a clear national character. It actually included most of the professional

86 And who took care of the secretary work.

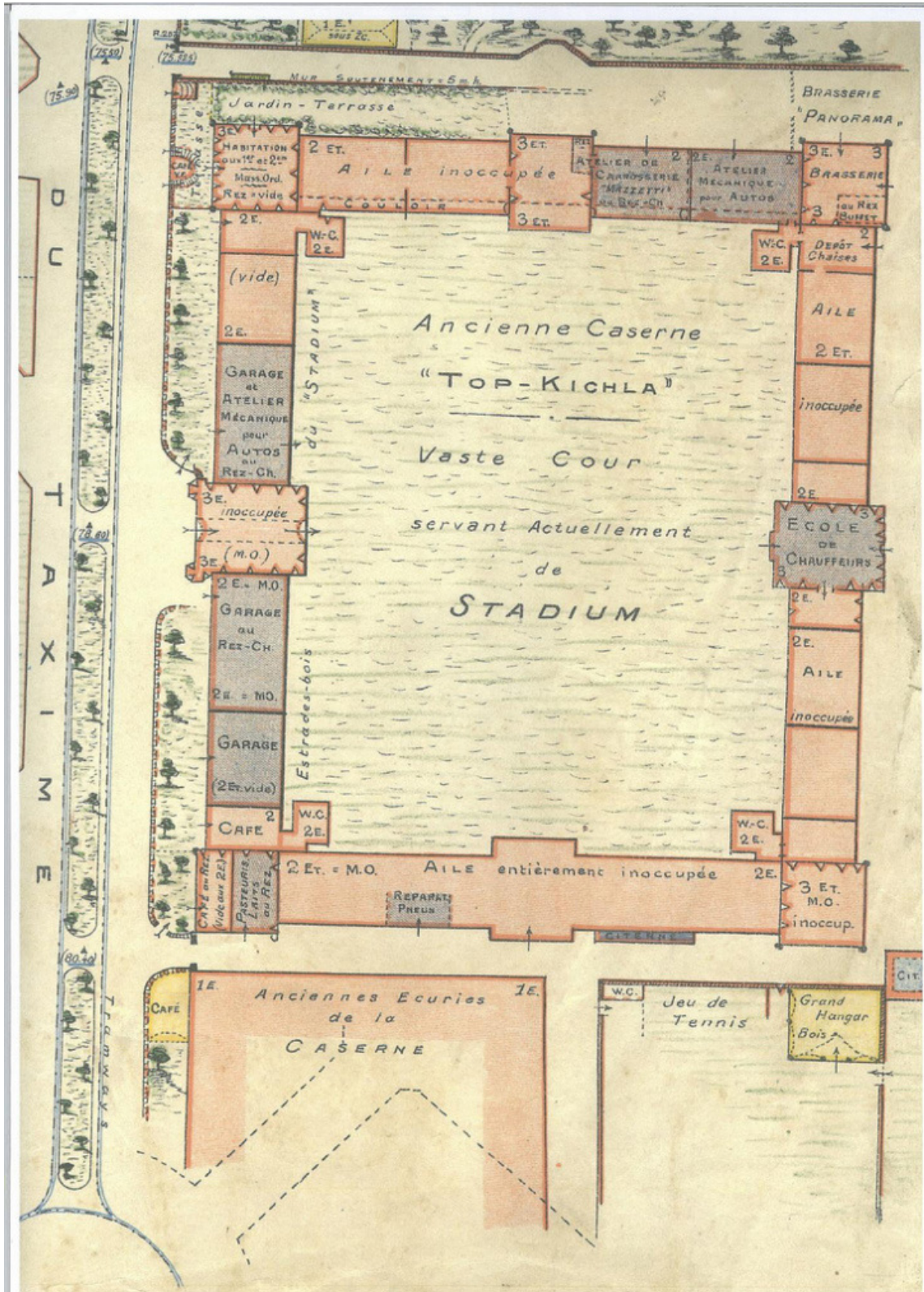


Fig.26. Old plan of Topçu Kışlası

chambers [TMMOB],⁸⁷ professional interest groups,⁸⁸ trade unions,⁸⁹ secular opposition parties,⁹⁰ environmentalist associations, LGBTQ platforms,⁹¹ consumer rights organisations,⁹² other urban and rural action groups from the Blacksea Region to Haydarpaşa and the Sulukule neighborhood,⁹³ academic associations,⁹⁴ cultural centers and artistes⁹⁵ and so forth. (See Annex X). Seen the equally secular character of the participants and the close collaboration with members of Taksim Platform for their positioning, it does not come as a surprise that much of the discourse has a similar focus: the defence of Taksim; stopping the “tunnel” plan and the “betonization” [betonlaştırma]; opposing the destruction of “monumental trees” [anıt ağaçlar]; denouncing the arrival of yet another “shopping mall” [AVM] and commercialization [ticarileştirme]. They equally denounced the government’s top down way of making decisions [üsttenci tavı/tepeden inme kararlar] “by fait accompli” and demanded honest [dürüst], transparent [şeffaf], participatory [katılımcı] and good planning practices.

Yet, despite the strong similarities, their discourse did defer in the sense that they accepted Prime Minister Erdoğan’s national framing of the conflict fully, by positioning themselves much more clearly on the other side of the Islamic-Ottoman / Secular-Republican divide. Their key metaphors and narrative were an (even more) explicit defense of ‘Taksim’, while Topçu Kışlası was framed as a direct threat to one of Turkey’s most important republican cultural heritage sites. Taksim Gezi Park is often not even mentioned by name (See for example Annex X: 1st Taksim Solidarity statement) and while the area is defined as a “a place to walk and rest” it is not the concept of life place [Yaşam Alanı] (which will become dominant in phase 4) but the concept of public space [kamusal alan] that is used. The discourse is furthermore different from that of Taksim Platform in its reference to leftwing cultural heritage [our labor and democracy square][marching up to Taksim/Taksim’e çıkmak]⁹⁶ and in its more legal response. The former is certainly explained

87 Aside from the TMMOB of urban planners and architects, the TMMOB’s of environmental engineers, electric engineers, mapping and cadaster engineers, construction engineers, machine engineers, lanscape architects.

88 Such as: İstanbul Dişhekimleri Odası (dentists), İstanbul Eczacı Odası (pharmacies), İstanbul Tabip Odası (doctors) Çağdaş Hukukçular Derneği (Modern Lawyers), Tüm Restoratörler ve Konservatörler Derneği (Restorators and Conservators), Arkeologlar Derneği İstanbul Şubesi (Archeologists)

89 Such as: DİSK, İstanbul Eğitim Sen 6 Nolu Üniversiteler Şubesi, KESK, Kültür Sanat Sendikası, Sendikal Güçbirliği Platformu

90 Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (Republican People’s Party, CHP), Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi (BDP), Emek Partisi (Labor Party), Eşitlik ve Demokrasi Partisi (Peace and Democracy Party), Halkın Sesi Partisi (Voice of People Party), Özgürlük ve Dayanışma Partisi (Freedom and Solidarity Party), Türkiye Komünist Partisi (Communist Party), İşçi Partisi (Workers Party), Yeşiller Partisi (Greens).

91 Such as: Lambda İstanbul & LGBTT Dayanışma Derneği

92 Tüketici Bilincini Geliştirme Derneği, Tüketiciyi Koruma Derneği Beşiktaş Şubesi, TÜKODER İstanbul Şubesi

93 Such as around the HES struggle in the Blacksea region: ‘Karadeniz Çevre ve Kültür Derneği’; the 3rd Bridge Crazy Project, ‘Üçüncü Köprü Yerine Yaşam Platformu’; the struggle concerning the Haydarpaşa railway station, ‘Kent ve Çevre için Haydarpaşa Dayanışması’ or the Sulukule Platform.

94 Such as: Mülkiyeliler Birliği İstanbul Şubesi (Ankara), İstanbul ODTÜ Mezunları Derneği

95 Anadolu Kültür ve Araştırma Derneği & Nazım Hikmet Kültür Merkezi (cultural centers); Tiyatro Oyuncuları Meslek Birliği (theater players), Kamusal Sanat Laboratuvarı, Özerk Sanat Konseyi, Sanatçılar Girişimi (artists)

96 i.e. with reference to the 1st of May and Labour Day and as a place of public contestation.

by the presence of left leaning and left wing organizations and trade unions in the coalition, while the latter is in line with the formal role of all professional chambers [TMMOB] in the process architecture of the urban planning process. Indeed, they have an appointed responsibility to comment all plans and procedures on their intrinsic value, on the process quality and on their lawful nature. And in line with that mandate they also file formal objections and lawsuits when their points have not been heard or integrated.

Logically, the strategy and action forms of the *coalition* were also slightly different from those of their predecessors (as it was more confrontational and it had a stronger legal focus), but they worked closely together with Taksim Platform for most actions and when not, they echoed each other's actions through press briefings and social media. They gathered thousands of formal objections to the plans by local citizens and shopkeepers, which they handed over to the Municipal Metropolitan Council during the thereto foreseen period in the planning process (3/3/2013). They organized a meeting with a few hundred people "join hands in Taksim" (3/3/2012); and several smaller meetings in Taksim, holding banners saying "Taksim belongs to all of us" to raise awareness and gather signatures (for example on 17/3 & 17/4/2012) for the petition they launched against the plans in February. They organized several small "Traditional Gezi Park Festivals" during weekends to demonstrate the life in the park (March & April 2012). They released regular press briefings and wrote open letters in the public opinion papers, directed for example at Mayor Topbaş (13/4/2012). They organized a 24 hour protest (27/06/2012) and debates (Cezayir meeting hall, 18/06/2012; Kadir University, 19/10/2012). They announced & supported actions of other action groups who were also active around the case ("Architecture for All"⁹⁷, "Guerilla Tree knitters"⁹⁸ and "Carton Space Action"⁹⁹). They went to court against the 'plan alteration' of the 17th of January 2012 (9/5/2012). They started patrolling the square with the other platforms and action groups to make sure works didn't start without them knowing about it (June 2012) and called upon government contractors not to apply for the tender (August 2012). By the autumn that year, they had gathered tens of thousands of signatures against the proposed tunnels and Topçu Kışlası. But despite their efforts and despite the fact that there was no formal approval of the TCPP's implementation, the shopkeepers and teahouse owners received an eviction notice on the 6th of October. On the 9th of October the watering and care for the trees in Taksim Gezi Park stopped. And on the night of 30th-31st of October 2012, the works started in a midnight operation triggering the fourth *protest coalition*.

6.4.4 Taksim Gezi Park Association (Phase 4: 31st of October 2012)

97 Organized Picnic actions with a focus on Gezi Park and Life Place [Yaşam Alanı] to demonstrate life in the Park and what it can be using a horizontal organizational approach.

98 Direct-action group knitting jackets as a symbolic protection for the trees and to highlight that what is about to disappear.

99 Direct-action group, Kayitidise, showing with carton boards what space will be left for pedestrians to walk up to Taksim Square at the tunnel mouths by the use of physical space, not through speech or writings.

The second and third phase were marked by protest coalitions that conflicted over the classic, national, Secular-Republican / Islamic-Ottoman cleavage with ‘Taksim’ as the key metaphor for both the opposing coalitions as the government on either side of that divide. In contrast, the fourth phase shows no less than a paradigm shift among the above described opposing coalitions.

Taksim made place for Gezi as the key metaphor, Taksim Gezi Park became more and more Gezi Park, public space [kamusal alan] made place for life place [yaşam alanı], while Topçu Kışlası turned into a side issue and the shopping mall [AVM] became key. Indeed, the planning conflict was reframed as an urban struggle between life place [yaşam alanı], breathing space [nefes alanı], trees [ağaçlar] and green areas in Istanbul [yeşil alanı] on the one hand; and shopping malls [AVM], profitability [rant] and betonization [betonlaştırma] on the other; with the former under threat of the latter because of the Prime Minister’s top-down and patronizing way of making decisions [tepeden inme kararlar/üsttenci tavı]. So despite the difference on the level of the imaginary of the city or of the nation, what the new discourse did have in common with the previous ones was precisely the latter, an imaginary of decision making for the city in which citizens who live in the place should at least be consulted and heard, before the demolition of their houses and livelihoods is decided upon from the top down.

That does not mean that the other arguments previously used by Taksim Platform and Taksim Solidarity, vanished, or that suddenly ‘Taksim’ was no longer mentioned. Nor does it mean the arguments in this new framing weren’t used before, in the previous discourse (because indeed they all were present from the start). The difference however was that these concepts, names and metaphors now acquired a unarguably prominent role in the new narrative, an urban narrative as frame through which the planning conflict was made sense of (as opposed to the one defined by the national cleavage). And this is what subsequently set a less divisive tone,¹⁰⁰ pushed a more inclusive imaginary and opened the road for the wider “Gezi” Movement half a year later.

The shift in discourse became clear fairly quickly in my fieldwork on the basis of my discourse analysis in NVIVO including all written documents by Taksim Platform and Taksim Solidarity; that is all press briefings, public statements as well as all Facebook posts and Tweets between the 1st of June 2011 and the 1st of June 2013. Not only was the narrative shift (between November 2012-March 2013) clear on the basis of my qualitative discourse analysis, even a quantitative count of the most used names, concepts and metaphors over time, gave conclusive evidence of the shift I observed. The question I struggled with was why it occurred and why in that specific point in time. Why, discursively, the protests over “Taksim” turned to a conflict over “Gezi”? Or even more bluntly, why we observed the rise of discourse coalitions carrying names such as Taksim Platform or Taksim Solidarity in the first phases, while we observed the assembly of the Taksim Gezi Park Association and the Gezi Movement in the latter (the 4th and 5th phase)?

The shift occurred over a period of 5 months’ time and was not only marked by a change of narrative among the existing protest coalitions, but most importantly by the assembly of the ‘Taksim Gezi Park Preservation & Beautification Association’, in short the Taksim Gezi Park

100 with regards to the national classic Secular-Republican / Islamic-Ottoman cleavage

Association or the fourth protest coalition. Its root can be brought back to three triggering events that followed each other closely, beginning with the night of the 30th-31st of October 2012, when the (i) first pick axe hit the ground to prepare the works for the tunnel excavation in a midnight operation in the Republican Boulevard [Cumhuriyet Caddesi]. Within days, the (ii) Boulevard was closed for cars generating a second triggering event within six days' time. And then, on the 8th of November, (iii) the Urban Design Plan (UDP) of architect Halil Onur leaked in 'Radical newspaper'. It included no less than an ice rink in between Topçu Kışlası's surrounding walls, implying the complete demolition of Taksim Gezi Park and the felling of all its 550 trees.

So not only did the plans become physically tangible that week, the leak also revealed the original plan --to keep the existing trees-- to be untrue. And the effects were multiple.

It first of all drew about every user of the Boulevard into the debate as they became aware of the change. And everyday day those people passed at Taksim Square or Gezi Park, they could find someone from *Taksim Platform*, *Taksim Solidarity* or one of the direct action groups there: patrolling, gathering signatures¹⁰¹ and explaining the Municipality's plans, for indeed, they had continued to do so on a daily basis since July.



Fig.27. UDP, 3D-image of Topçu Kışlası by Halil Onur leaked to *Radikal* Newspaper on the 8th of November 2012

Secondly, both the start of the works as the proposal to completely demolish the park led to a sense of urgency and an intensification of actions in the form of, for example, civil disobedient deeds of local shopkeepers and *Taksim Solidarity* members, braking down the fences around the excavation perimeter (9/11/2012); increased patrolling to keep an eye on the potential start of other works in Taksim Gezi Park (from 2/11/2012 onward) and upscaling the gathering of signatures for the petition against the TCPP and the UDP. They furthermore continued to organize activities in Taksim Gezi Park (ex. Sports 11/11/2012) to demonstrate what the place could be, despite its rundown character, and continued to hold 'outside-info sessions' about the future of the area (ex. 22/11/2012).

101 for the petition against the plans

Thirdly, the start of the works did not only raise awareness and a sense of urgency, it also drew in the active involvement¹⁰² of previously less- or un-involved individuals (such as musicians, artistes, actors, urban scholars) and action groups (such as the recently established ‘commons network’¹⁰³, the Sulukule activists¹⁰⁴, the Anatolian ‘Resistance for Life’ activists¹⁰⁵ or the EMEK Cinema activists¹⁰⁶) while the local shopkeepers got organized and created an NGO to stand stronger against their pending evictions.

But it was not until the actual cutting down of all the old monumetal trees in the republican Boulevard [Cumhuriyet Caddesi] on the 6th of December¹⁰⁷ that the Taksim Gezi Park Association was informally established: including the Beyoğlu Neighborhoods Association Platform’s members, counting several local shopkeepers as well as activists of the commons network and the ecological movement living in the neighborhood. The protest coalition had in that sense a very local character, but through their experience and connection to previous activities and struggles (i.e. different neighborhood resistance groups in Istanbul¹⁰⁸; the anti-IMF protests ‘Resistanbul’ of 2009; the Third Bridge Protest; the Ak Saray Palace protest in Ankara; The HES struggles in the Black Sea Region and different part of Anatolia; & Tekel 2009) they had a network that reached from Istanbul to different parts of Turkey. This moreover provided for an ‘alarm network’ to call upon in case of urgency.

In opposition to Taksim Platform or Solidarity, they knew the experience of the ‘HES hydro-electric dam struggles’ with the Yaşam Alanı discourse and they had experience with holly different forms of organization during the ‘Resistanbul’ weeks of 2009. That is without formal leadership roles or otherwise said, within a so-called horizontal structure¹⁰⁹, with intensive use of social media¹¹⁰ and with a concentrated effort on applying audio-visual art and design with the aim of giving protests and communication an accessible, even funny outlook. One that is less ideological, less divisive and less scary than the classic forms of leftwing and anti-capitalist forms of action and communication. Indeed, their first hastily written Facebook Post, the choice of color (green instead of red) and the logo (a tree carried by/supported/enjoyed by people) set the tone immediately:

Taksim Gezi Park is alive! Taksim patrolling continues in Taksim Gezi Park! Those who claim that Taksim is not a place for living, but that it is a transit hub, want to take Taksim Gezi Park from our hands. Instead,

102 To a larger or a lesser extent.

103 That is an anti-capitalist, anarcho-yaşam alanı’st network that was established a few weeks before by the same people who had organized ‘Resistanbul’: the Anti-IMF protest in 2009.

104 See later in this chapter

105 See later in this chapter

106 See later in this chapter

107 And to a lesser extend Erdoğan’s announcement that Topçu Kışlası would include a mosque (28/11/2012)

108 against ‘rationalisation [rantsal] and urban transformation’

109 That was key in the Anti-Globalist Movement after 1999, the Arab Spring and the Occupy Movements of 2011 (Castells, 2015; Mason, 2013)

110 In this case mainly Facebook, Twitter and Youtube (combined with mobile phone use)

they want to build concrete blocks. But they are wrong. Because Taksim is alive! Taksim Gezi Park is alive! Let's show everybody that Taksim Gezi Park is an alive Park, in which people live from Saturday December 8 forth. Do whatever you want - sport or picnic, take photos or drink a tea. We will organize live performances. The band Yolda already likes playing in Taksim Gezi Park. We will spend time and have fun in Taksim Gezi Park and show that Taksim Gezi Park is alive. Until today, Taksim Gezi Park has given us space to breath, now it is our turn to return the favor. Saturday December 8: meeting at 3 PM at Taksim Square tram station. Press release at 4 PM. Concert at 4.30 in Taksim Gezi Park. We wait for everybody who is sensitive to protect our life place, our park and our trees. (first Facebook Post, Taksim Gezi Park Association, 8/12/2012)



Fig.28. Logo of the Taksim Gezi Park Preservation and Beautification Association
 Fig.29. Poster for the Taksim Gezi Park Fest. Remark the highlight in green of 'Gezi' in the title

Yet, it took another triggering event for the *association* to become a formally founded *coalition*, this is what was then called, as I will explain, the “denial of the denial” in the final approval of Topçu Kışlası on the 4th of February 2013. That is when they started working on formal establishment of the ‘Taksim Gezi Park Association’ and when they started setting up a social media campaign that would institutionalize the above described new narrative and make it dominant.

They did so in three steps, first by organizing a formal press presentation (15/03/2013). Directly followed by an intensive well-prepared one-month communication campaign, based on the release of ‘2 to 4 minute YouTube videos’ of famous movie & television actors, speaking their mind about the proposed plans and calling for people to ‘Stand Up’ [Ayağa Kalk] and ‘safe the Park together’. While they finished their message with a call to join them in Gezi Park on Saturday, the 13th of April 2013, at the Taksim Gezi Park Fest.

As a social media campaign the results were a vast success, both with regards to the other protest coalitions' reach (Taksim Platform and Taksim Solidarity)¹¹¹ as with regards to the outcome. The 'Fest' counted many volunteering music bands and actors that showed up in support and were willing to perform, while the public counted 40 thousand people, according to the organizers, 10 thousand according to the police. Put differently, as with regards to previous actions of the other *coalitions* --that counted between a few dozen to maximum a thousand people -- this coalition had the capacity to mobilize.

DATE	TAKSIM GEZI PARK ASSOCIATION'S MEDIA CAMPAIGN
15/03/2013	Press Conference: national & international
17/03/2013	Youtube video: Lale Mansur
18/03/2013	Youtube video: LeMan
19/03/2013	Youtube video: Derya Alabora
20/03/2013	Youtube video: Pelin Batu
21/03/2013	Youtube video: Ayhan Taş
24/03/2013	Youtube video: Levent Üzümcü
25/03/2013	Youtube video: Ahmet Mümtaz Taylan, Ali Atay, Cengiz Bozkurt, Atilla Şendil, Cihan Ercan & Şafak Pekdemir
27/03/2013	Youtube video: Tuncay Akgün
29/03/2013	Youtube video: Eraslan Sağlam
02/04/2013	Youtube video: Tuna Kiremitçi
03/04/2013	Youtube video: Ufuk Uras
09/04/2013	Youtube video: Ömer Madra
10/04/2013	Youtube video: Yaşar Kurt
11/04/2013	Youtube support video: Superman, Can Gider & Mert Erçin
12/04/2013	Youtube support video: Batman, Can Gider & Mert Erçin
13/04/2013	Taksim Gezi Park Fest under the slogan 'Stand Up' [Ayağa Kalk], Let's save our Park together! 40.000 people
14/04/2013	Press Release

111 I measured the social media campaign's success as with regards to the other coalitions in NVIVO's social media feature: by comparing the number of Facebook likes, the number of Facebook shares and the number of retweets in general over time at the same periods and with regards to specific messages that translate the classic national narrative with regards to messages that translate the new urban narrative. Both with regards to Facebook as Twitter and with regards to shares and likes over time and for both narratives, does the Taksim Gezi Park Association score numbers multiplied by an average of 8-12. And especially towards the end of May the difference grows significantly larger to the advantage of the Taksim Gezi Park Association, indicating the success of her narrative and her broader social media reach.



But even more important than that, was the ‘message discipline’ with which they delivered the new *narrative* of [life place] and [breathing space] vs. [the shopping mall city] and [top-down, patronizing decision-making] by [the Prime Minister]. My discourse analysis of all the campaign-YouTube videos, the two press releases (15 March & 14 April 2013) and communication about the festival revealed barely two references to the *Secular-Republican / Islamic-Ottoman narrative*.¹¹²

Through their capacity of mobilisation and their message discipline they influenced the discourse of Taksim Solidarity and Taksim Platform who shifted more and more in the same direction. Indeed, it can be said that the *fourth coalition* was responsible for *institutionalizing* the new urban *narrative* and making its key *metaphor*,

[Gezi] dominant as opposed to [Taksim]. But it does not, explain why the shift in discourse began, from November 2012 onward in Taksim Solidarity and Taksim Platform press releases, Facebook and Twitter posts. Indeed, the *fourth coalition* was yet to be born. Nor does it explain why the *fourth coalition* itself—that included several members of the *1st*, *2nd* and *3th*-- decided to focalize so strongly on [Gezi] and [Yaşam Alanı]; even if there were several people in that *coalition* who knew of the experience with that framing elsewhere in Turkey. Indeed my in-depth expert interviews show that there are three more elements that need to be taken in account to understand the initial shift.

The first element is related to what happened in the week of the 30st of October “when the first pick axe hit the ground”, a quote that indeed came from one of Taksim Solidarity’s spokespersons. The fences that were put up around the excavation perimeter immediately after and the actual felling of all the ‘monumental trees’ one month later led to a feeling of loss. It is expressed by several people in my expert interviews as “*that moment we lost the square*”. Indeed, *place matters*, the fact of having physically “lost the square” made them according to my interviewees focus on Gezi Park. Especially, seen Halil Onur’s leaked documents and the thread of its complete eradication.

That explains to a large extent the emergence of [Taksim Gezi Park] and especially [Gezi] as a key metaphor. But it does not explain the narrative shift, which is more related to a second element, namely the feeling of defeat, often expressed in my interviews: that is, the failure of their legal strategy and the failure to be consulted & to negotiate with the Municipality, with Mayor K. Topbaş or even with Prime Minister Erdoğan if necessary. Indeed the excavation works started even before the Preservation Council took its final decision on the matter, therefore undermining the strategic choice of the coalition to focus on judicial contestation. So even if formally speaking that decision included a victory one week later (as will be explained, the cancellation of about

112 One had already to focus on the body language of the actors (wink of the eye, a smile) to understand that they implicitly referred to the ‘Secular-Republican heritage argument’ as well. Most of the youtube videos can still be found here: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3EJIDipB_MW6ll0wTW3ojw

two thirds of the tunnel project) , the disillusionment was sufficient to point toward another approach. One in which a power relation would have to be established through for example civil disobedience or mobilization. And to the latter end there probably was a need for “*a less academic and less technical speech*” as one person from Taksim Solidarity put it.¹¹³

The third element that came forward from my expert interviews was the importance of the input from the so-called “patrolling & signature gathering”. As already mentioned, it is argued that the weeks of actually being in the park (especially after “the square was lost”) on a daily basis and the discussion with thousands of actual users directed the attention to the ‘life place’ [Yaşam Alanı] argument. One Taksim Solidarity Facebook Post even explicitly referred to such a conversation in December 2012.

“[...] We will stand by the signatures of the people. With the power these signatures endow us with, we will arise to the struggle, more and more. During this patrolling we personally felt the pulse of the people and the most important subject was to keep Taksim Gezi Park. Nobody wants the trees in Taksim Gezi Park to be cut down or to be stubbed. They don't accept it! If the common ground of the people is Taksim Gezi Park, then we will give priority to Taksim Gezi Park and the defense of its life place, we will bring Taksim Gezi Park to the fore. After December 8, Saturday, until this project is stopped, we will meet for Taksim Gezi Park on every Saturday, between 15.00 and 18.00. And we will definitely stop this project. If the people do not want this project which is told to be for the public benefit, then no one has the right to say a word. What the people say, is what will happen! This should be known! We wait for everybody who are decided to protect their nature, tree, life spaces to Taksim Gezi Park every Saturday. Indeed, Taksim belongs to all of us! Come If you love Taksim!

(Taksim Solidarity Facebook Page, 05.12.2012)

Put differently, it was the combination of (i) “having lost the square” and still “being able to save the park”, (ii) the failure of the previous strategy, (iii) the input from users of the park during the patrols and (iv) the arrival of the *Taksim Gezi Park Association* that will lead to the shift and institutionalization of the [Yaşam Alanı] narrative and the focus on [Gezi].

There are two additional elements I briefly mentioned above that need further clarification at this point, as they are related to what I coded as ‘victories of the opponents’ during my discourse analysis (of all written documents) and what turned out to be perceived as defeats for my interviewees.

The first element is the decision of the Preservation Council on 10th of November 2012 to cancel almost 2/3th of the TCPP tunnel plan. Originally they had proposed 5 tunnel mouths and a complex of different underground tunnels. However, the Council finally decided that only one tunnel and two tunnel mouths --exiting at the Republican Boulevard [Cumhuriyet Cd.] next to Gezi Park and at the beginning of Tarlabaşı Boulevard-- could be built.

113 Important remark: even if the shift can be identified, I want to emphasize that Taksim Platform & Taksim Solidarity did continue to defend their other arguments with vigor as well and that it never became as clearly articulated for them as it was for the *fourth coalition*. The change only indicates that a general shift occurred among all opponents, which is what is of importance; even if it is less so for some than for others.



Fig.8. Map of the Taksim Area. In grey, the tunnel between Tarlabası Blv. and Cumhuriyet Blv. that is currently there and whose works began on the 30-31st of October 2012.

This meant in practice a cancellation of about 2-3th of the TCPP tunnel project, since the tunnel mouths in Mete Boulevard, İnönü Boulevard and in Sıraselviler Boulevard were cancelled as well as two third of the proposed underground structure. But as the choice for one tunnel included the excavation of the Republican Boulevard --against which they had focused from the start because of its ‘monumental trees’—and this excavation physically started even before the final decision was adopted, this was not even considered a Pyrrhic victory. In fact, in my expert interviews it was considered an outright defeat. And that related to the fact that the Council’s decision came 12 days after the start of the works. As I described above, consequently, the *coalitions* had not only “lost the square” but their means of action were no longer viable either.

The second element concerns the so-called “denial of the denial”. In January 2012, the hard work of collecting signatures finally bore results. To what regards the TCPP tunnel excavations there was nothing that could longer be done. But with regards to the Urban Design Plan (UDP) and

Topçu Kışlası which had not yet arrived at the implementation phase.¹¹⁴ On the 18th of December 2012 they handed 50 thousand signatures over to the Preservation Council. Meanwhile (in August 2012), Mete Tapan, had stepped down (allegedly because of unrelated reasons) and he was replaced by Hilmi Aydın under the auspices of National Minister of Culture and Tourism Erteğrul Günay. Aydın rescheduled a discussion with regards to *Topçu Kışlası* for the 17th of January 2013 with the arguments that although the building was recognized as ‘preservation worthy heritage’, that:

“there wasn’t any information regarding the traces of the building in the underground, nor was there any plan, sketch or analysis of the materials, etc.” And with the argument that, “the area that the Barracks used to cover, had become the last green area of Beyoğlu, with its 70 year old trees.”

(My interview with Ex-Minister Erteğrul Günay Gunay, 25/10/2015, my translation)¹¹⁵

Remark the resemblance with Taksim Solidarity’s and Taksim Platform’s discourse. Remark also that this is the third decision with regards to the edifice: the disapproval of August 2009, the approval in February 2011, both under Mete Tapan, and the subsequent ‘de facto’ disapproval under Hilmi Aydın, in January 2012.

That AK Party Minister Günay would be sensitive to pressure from the Secular-Republican angle did not entirely come as a surprise. He is known as “as an old leftist” and was also in part appointed within the AK Party’s government as a consensus figure to show openness towards the electorate and the army. But the price was high. Prime Minister Erdoğan perceived the Minister’s defense of Gezi as a coup against him personally and he was relieved of his position on the 24th of January 2015.

One week after the meeting it turned into a hot debate, I left my post on 24th of January. In February, the new minister took this issue -by order of Prime Minister Erdoğan- to the Supreme Council of Preservation; the project was approved with the same content in a way that goes against the procedure. [...] The fact that I defended Gezi was perceived by Erdoğan as a coup attempt against himself.

(My interview with Ex-Minister Erteğrul Günay Gunay, 25/10/2015, my translation)¹¹⁶

A new Minister was appointed and received the order to push the dossier through, by going to the Supreme Council of Preservation who ‘rejected the rejection’ of the Regional Preservation Council, a in any case a very irregular move and by many (of the experts in my interviews) described as an illegal maneuver that became known as “the denial of the denial” (after R.T. Erdoğan own speech, on 4/2/2012).

114 First the TCPP had to be finalized for the UDP to enter the implementation phase.

115 In need of anonymity when published

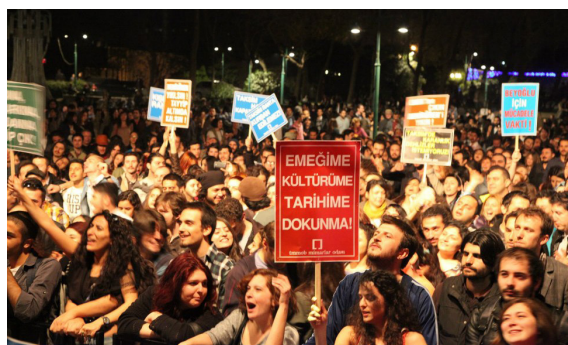
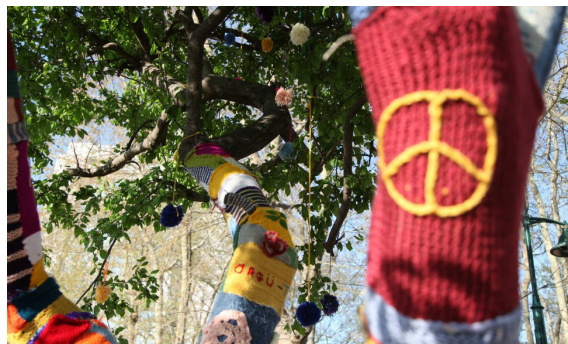
116 In need of anonymity when published

That is how, the ‘17th of January victory’ turned into a defeat within two weeks’ time. But it is also that government decision that will confirm the discourse of [top down][patronizing decision making] with regards to [one of the last green spots] and [life place] in the Beyoğlu area. The frame, through which many had started to interpret the conflict, just got a full blown affirmation. And it had –as I described above– at least four major consequences: (i) it triggered the formalization of the Taksim Gezi Park Association. (ii) It triggered the more active involvement of some people from the Commons Network and (iii) it triggered the direct involvement of famous movie and television actors (including their large social media reach). Finally, “the denial of the denial” is responsible for triggering (iv) the organization of the YouTube media campaign that laid the basis for the institutionalization of the new [life place] narrative and its key [Gezi] metaphor which will define the Gezi Movements discourse and its diverse coalition a few months later.

This analysis explains how the new narrative became dominant. But what it does not explain however is the size and the speed with which the Gezi events occurred and expanded after the 27th of May in less than a week time. To understand that: a small intermezzo is needed about the unusual month of May and the vast build-up of frustrations and mobilization with regards to related and unrelated issues in the Beyoğlu District, in Istanbul and in other parts of Turkey.



Fig.9. Taksim Solidarity Meeting at Taksim Square (19 March 2012)



Intermezzo: the Month of May 2013

The ‘unusual month of May’ was set in by R.T. Erdoğan’s ‘29/4/2013 ‘bombshell declaration’ that Topçu Kışlası would become a shopping mall. All *opposing coalitions* had assumed and argued this would be the case. But even in February, Istanbul Mayor K. Topbaş had gone on the record stating there would not be any shopping mall in Taksim or Gezi Park.

“There will be no AVM in Gezi park, in Taksim. No way. When we said AKM (ed. Atatürk Cultural Center) should be rebuilt, they were opposing us too, with the same arguments. Gossips about a mosque, about an AVM, about an hotel,... Everybody is talking about their concerns, they are expressing dreams” (07/02/2013, K. Topbaş, Source: Beyoğlu District Website, my translation)¹¹⁷

As such, the Prime Minister’s declaration did not only confirm what the *opposing coalition* had expected all along. It more importantly affirmed the disciplined message that the *Taksim Gezi Park Association* had been conveying to the press and the public until just two weeks before, during their intensive communication campaign (between 15/3 and 13/04). Indeed, their framing of the conflict just got corroborated by the Prime Minister himself, fully validating their narrative: a [life place], [a breathing space], [one of the last green spots] in the area was indeed under threat of extinction in exchange for another [shopping mall]. It is my hypothesis that the combination of the *fourth coalition’s* communication campaign, on the one hand, and this declaration, on the other, is what led to the [life place]-discourse becoming dominant and becoming *institutionalized*, including among friend and foe in the Turkish press.¹¹⁸

Yet, it was only the beginning of a long month that started with another --less related--conflict, the interdiction of the Mayday celebrations on the 1st of May 2013 that historically takes place on Taksim Square. The social democrat left and the radical left did not accept the Prime Minister’s decision and the day turned to heavy clashes, pepper spray & gaz and severe police violence (see pictures). 4 days later R.T Erdoğan came out in the press stating that from now on “*all protests would be forbidden in Taksim Square*” (4/5/2013, Source: Beyoğlu District Website).

Not only is this moment described in many of my expert interviews, it is also mentioned as a time in which the labor movement and left wing organization “*who usually do not have a strong*

117 It should be noted that K. Topbaş himself had alluded to the construction of a shoppingmall in Taksim, in Hurriyet Daily news, on the 8th of November 2012.

118 I included the journalists of Radikal newspaper in my in-depth interviews as they were directly involved in leaking the Halil Onur documents and as they followed the case closely throughout the years (2009-2013), but my research does not include other journalist or other newspapers. But I state it nonetheless here, as an important hypothesis, because it is clear that something led to the change in narrative about Topçu Kışlası’s re-erection in the media in general. Indeed, after the 27th of May 2013, all main national newspapers will unanimously use the narrative of the opponents, including those newspapers close to AK Party; hence my hypothesis. Yet, a thorough discourse analysis of all newspaper reports on the issue from January-February 2013 onward, and a set of 8 in-depth interviews with the involved journalists for the different newspapers could clarify the issue. Unfortunately, that fell outside the scope of this research.

opinion on urban issues” (interview, N.Z., 10/06/2015) became more attentive and outspoken on the Taksim Gezi Park development.



Fig.10. 1st of May Protest

Fig.11. Clash with the police in Istikal Street near Emek Cinema, at the end of April 2013



Aside from the ‘Mayday events’ my ‘participant interviewees’ also recurrently pointed at a few other elements¹¹⁹ that made them angry and that got them actively involved in the weeks that followed: Namely the ban on alcohol being consumed outside on the terraces in certain parts of the Beyoğlu Area and the national government attempt to rush legislation through parliament that would curb alcohol sales and drinking in Turkey (24th of May).¹²⁰ Those policies were perceived by my interviewees as a reduction of their freedom and of their own choices in the way “they want to live their own lives” [yaşam tarzı], and it was often defined as “a patronizing decision by Erdoğan”. Again, the decision triggered protests. It drew in more people in the political debate and brought in new protesters, while triggering (again) a strong police response.

“It felt,... it felt as a reduction of my freedom. Just,... I want to be able to choose my own way of life. ”
(Interview, P.T., 9/15/2015)

Two elements that were not mentioned in my citizen interviews but that were cited in my expert interviews about elements that frustrated, angered and stirred them, were ‘the Third Bridge’ over the Bosphorus, who was finalized and unabatedly named ‘Yavuz Sultan Selim Köprüsü’¹²¹ on the 27th of May; and the Sulukule neighborhood¹²², who’s ‘urban transformation’ got started that same month(i.e. the complete demolition). As the activists of both cases were in close contact with the people from Taksim Solidarity, it created a “reality check” and it increased the sense of urgency with regards to the pending Gezi Park demolition.

Yet, the most mentioned element was the proposed destruction of Turkey’s oldest movie theatre: ‘Emek Cinema’. As I described it in the beginning of this chapter, it was an Istanbul landmark, near Taksim Square, dating back to the early days of Atatürk’s rule. And like Taksim Gezi Park it had to make way for an Ottoman-style construction that would house a shopping mall. From half of April onward, the police clashed with the growing group of protesters that occupied the theater.

119 Following my methodological approach, I only name those elements that were mentioned in my expert and citizen interviews. As explained in the methodological chapter, I assume that these are the ones who are key for understanding the case. That does not mean however, they were the only events that contributed to the frustration or anger. Some may have contributed less explicitly, others might simply be forgotten. If they are not mentioned by the interviewees, they are not mentioned here in the general text. It should be noted for example that the hugely controversial ‘giant Camlica Mosque’ in Istanbul (who’s excavation works began on the 3th of April 2013) were never mentioned.

120 The proposed regulations would prohibit retail sales between 10pm and 6am, ban all alcohol advertising and promotion, and stop new shops and bars from opening within 100m of schools and mosques.
<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/parliament-adopts-controversial-alcohol-restrictions.aspx?pageID=238&nID=47518&NewsCatID=338>

121 After Selim I the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire from 1512 to 1520. His reign is often described as a period of vast expansion of the Empire, but he is also considered responsible for the deaths of tens of thousands of Alevi (during the Battle of Chaldiran). Consequently the opening did not only stir anger among urban activists and ‘Secular-Republicans’, the naming caused outrage among Alevi as well. http://www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail_getNewsById.action?newsId=316969

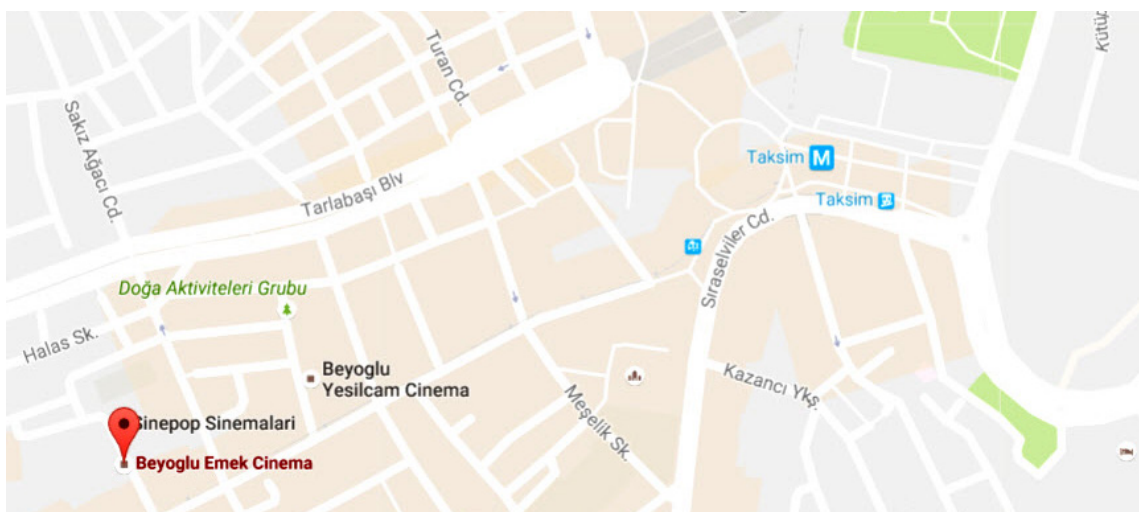
122 i.e. In Istanbul’s Fatih District, at the Golden Horn.

Indeed, the struggle in Istikal Street lasted for weeks, until the edifice's demolition on the 21st of May 2013.

Seen the similarities and geographical vicinity of both cases, the *protest coalition* over Emek Cinema were closely intertwined with the protest coalitions over Taksim and Gezi Park. The experience of the cinema's occupation certainly alimeted the step toward the occupation of Gezi Park a week later. But while the plans and the actual demolition generated a lot of anger, it also produced a much larger network and social media network between protest organizers, protesters and activists who came out publically in support of each other and it drew in many who had never protested before.

"We are not gonna let them demolish the occupied Emek Cinema today. Emek is ours, İstanbul is Ours."
(example of Taksim Solidarity on Facebook, 1/4/2013)

All those elements explain why the month of May was described in my interviews as an unusually tense period and why it was often pictured as "those weeks in which you could smell the pepper spray everyday" in Istikal Street and the Taksim area.



6.4.5 The Gezi Movement (Phase 5: 27st of May 2013)

As I describe in the introduction of the first part of this chapter, it is in that tense context, on a Monday evening late in May, that a man decided to risk his life to halt a caterpillar, in an attempt to stop it from beginning the unauthorized demolition of Gezi Park on his way back from a ‘Taksim Gezi Park Association’-meeting. That night, a call went out across the social media demanding immediate support. By the early morning they had gathered 50 of the protest coalitions’ leading figures and a number of politicians who, despite police abuse, held their ground. They managed to postpone the works on the basis of a legal argument. That only granted them half a day but it was enough to spread the call and grow their numbers, because of¹²³:

- 1) The local buildup of frustrations in previous months, especially the month of May;
- 2) The active involvement of many new people;
- 3) The creation of several new action groups in the district and in Istanbul;
- 4) The growth in numbers of participants to those actions (each one of them with their own social media network, esp. Facebook)
- 5) The experience those actions generated
- 6) The growing involvement of previously less attentive social democrat groups, trade unions and the Commons Network.
- 7) The growing personal network and social media network between the different activist groups, between the actively involved citizens, organisers and participants
- 8) The *institutionalized* less divisive narrative (at least with regards to the classic national Secular-Republican / Islamic-Ottoman cleavage)
- 9) And lastly because it regarded Gezi Park at Taksim, or better ‘on’ Taksim, the Secular-Republican heart of the city and a place that literally everybody knows.

That last point was not important for its character per se, even if it did for several people in the *Taksim Solidarity Coalition*. But it spurred, more importantly, a fear best summarized as “if they

123 I base this statement on the analysis reported in my expert interviews. I was able to formulate (a slightly different) hypothesis on the basis of my desktop research and document analysis in July 2015. That hypothesis was consequently put forward --for an in-depth discussion-- to all my expert interviewees. These discussions led to the current set of points I put forward here. A social media network analysis would be suited to further corroborate the argument, but it fell outside of the scope of this research.

can do it there, they can do it everywhere” (my own synopsis). Put differently, I argue --on the basis of my interviews-- that not its symbolic Secular-Republican character, but its centrality and importance in general are key to understanding: why this local urban planning conflict drew an estimated seven hundred people in response by 7 PM that same day and why they stayed the night, setting up tents, building a kitchen, preparing the occupation. And it also explains why the images of police violence against a young woman standing her ground the next morning, became national news in the days that followed.¹²⁴



Fig.12. [The woman in red] 11 AM - 28 May 2013

¹²⁴ Launched first in the press by Radikal newspaper at midnight on the 28th of May 2013. Milliyet reported about it on the 29th and the other national newspapers followed on the 30th. [Lhttp://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/gezi-parkindan-mesaj-mesele-sadece-agac-degil-1135478/](http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/gezi-parkindan-mesaj-mesele-sadece-agac-degil-1135478/)

By the next evening between 10 and 25 thousand people showed up in support (28th of May).¹²⁵ But the local government and police did not intend to stop the works. Instead police officers raided the park and set fire to the tents, while the caterpillar resumed its works at the back of the park (in Asker Ocağı Cd).

The images of peaceful protesters being hit by excessive force, while their tents were calmly burned by municipal police officers spread across YouTube and Facebook.¹²⁶ As did the image of the police confronting the protesters “who were just reading books there”. Of course the book reading action¹²⁷ was planned in line with the spirit of other actions that attempted to demonstrate life in the park (the previous 2 years). But this time, the image showed exactly how their [life place] was under threat of disappearance under the auspice of [top down] state power.

While the events became a national news story, the government and R.T Erdoğan communicated it as they had done since 2011. They were being opposed by those people who they had fought all their: i.e. Secular-Republicans, who were preventing them from restoring valuable Ottoman heritage. And it is to them that the Prime Minister spoke when he declared.

“Do whatever you want. We decided for that Park. We will built Topçu Kışlası” (Newspaper interview, R.T. Erdoğan, 29/05/2013, source: Beyoğlu website)

But that was no longer the frame through which the social media or the national newspapers communicated about the story.



Fig.13. Figuur x The young people “reading books” in Gezi Park

125 10.000 according to the police, 25.000 according to the protesters.

126 Ex <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PNPHd7vFcmU>, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_gBG4PaBUAc

127 The book reading actions were organized from the 28th of May by a small student activist group related to X University. In line with the yoga sessions, the festivals, the sport events, the picnics that had taken place in Gezi Park since 2012 they aimed at demonstrating what the park could be and that the park was alive. A side from reading books, they also read books out loud.



Fig.14. "Police officers burning the tents of the activist trying to save the park"

Indeed even when analyzing the articles in those newspapers close to AK Party, it becomes evident they framed the conflict following to a great extent the narrative institutionalized by the Taksim Gezi Park Association.¹²⁸ Indeed, all of them reported a very similar story, while dating its origins a few days before: "it all began on 27th of May with a handful of peaceful protesters, environmentalist, that were trying to save [Gezi Park] and its [trees], one of the last [green spots] in the [center of the city] from being demolished and replaced by a [shopping mall] imposed/proposed by [Erdoğan]."¹²⁹

That does not mean the articles reported positively on the action of the "environmentalists" or on that handful of people. But the newspapers accepted the framing of the activists. In one case (SamanYoluhaber), a newspaper close to AK Party, even added the picture of the 'bookreaders' (here above) on the cover. An image portraying young people in Gezi Park, enjoying their [life place] and reading a book, while at the same time being confronted by state force, about to take their [life place] away in an [authoritarian, top down] and forced way.

When the news and the images of the caterpillar demolishing Gezi Park, the woman in red, the book readers, and the burning tents flood the social media and the news cycle; they became metaphors. It triggered a sort of intuitive recognition among young Istanbulites --and young citizens all across the country-- with something they had been experiencing themselves. That feeling of their own [life place] -their own [Yaşam alanı]- being threatened, being reduced or being taken away in a top down patronizing manner, by Erdoğan. For many of them that feeling, that recognition of

128 My analysis included the 10 most read newspapers in Turkey with regards to their reporting on the issue on the 31st of May 2013.

129 My synopsis. And "imposed" or "proposed" depending on the political color of the newspaper

resemblance, led to a conversation with sisters and brothers, or friends from the neighborhood, the school or the university.¹³⁰ And it led to a discovery that they were not alone. Or as one respondent put it:

“I remember thinking that I was alone with those feelings, when I realized I was not, I had to go, I had to stand up. One day later I went to Gezi Park with a friend”. (Interview with O.Y., 19/09/2015)

Yet, it were not their words that spoke most, but the way in which my interviewees spoke about those conversations, even two years later, with glimmers in their eyes, hope and an ungraspable energy that I can only describe as the diametrical opposite of defeatism. Thus they took to the streets in defense of [Gezi Park], but more importantly in defense of “Gezi” as the metaphor for their own [life Place].

When the municipal government consequently doubled down on the police violence in the following days and when the Prime Minister defined that highly diverse coalition --including both secular and Islamic youth, as well as youngsters coming from AKP families themselves-- as “çapulçu” or looting scum on the 31st of May, he validated exactly what they had been feeling “since he started shouting”: i.e. the reduction by Erdoğan’s patronizing and authoritarian decisions and speeches with regards to their personal [life place] and their [freedom] to behave and speak as they want.

On the first of June 2013 the movement spread nationwide, with indeed more than three million -generally young people- protesting and

130 Never at work, in my interviews it was often indicated as to dangerous to speak about it at the workplace. The parents are mentioned, but always in a context of a discouragement

Snowball Research with 35 Early Arrival Citizens

My research is very clear when it comes to this general finding. I was able to establish those conclusions on the basis of a snowball research among 35 non-politicized, fairly young protesters (18y to 40y). It is true of course that the ‘Gezi movement’ included a highly diverse group of political participants and groupings. But they were a small minority as opposed to the 79 percent of participants, from both more secular and more Islamic families, who had no prior political affiliations at all. Thus I decided to focus on them, while limiting the sample:

- » to younger participants, as we know that the average age was around 28 years old.
- » and to participants who arrived in the early days of the Gezi Movement --between 27 of May and the 1st of June-- as I was interested only in seeing how the movement started.

The objective was to identify what the motivations for protesting and how their discourse would be influenced by the narrative and metaphors developed by either of the opposing coalitions.

The role of the 4th coalition’s [life place] discourse was thus very clear. But what the interviewees meant by [life place] itself was not always the same thing. In fact, three meanings should be distinguished:

- » [Life Place] as a physical space, a livelihood, a home, a neighborhood but also a forest or a park and the threat of it being demolished.
- » [Life Place] as ‘life style’ or [Yaşam Tarzı] expressed (in my interviews) as a freedom to live according to modern-secular values, including the freedom to for example drink alcohol or kiss openly in a metro station.
- » [Life Place] as a personal space in which each one of us can choose to be who they want to be, say what is on their mind or decide over their own bodies and lives, without an authoritarian father-like Prime Minister telling them what to do
- » It is that last very liberal position that is shared by all interviewees, whether they come from a more Sunni-Islamic, an Alevi or a more Secular family. Secondly, [Life place] as a physical place is always

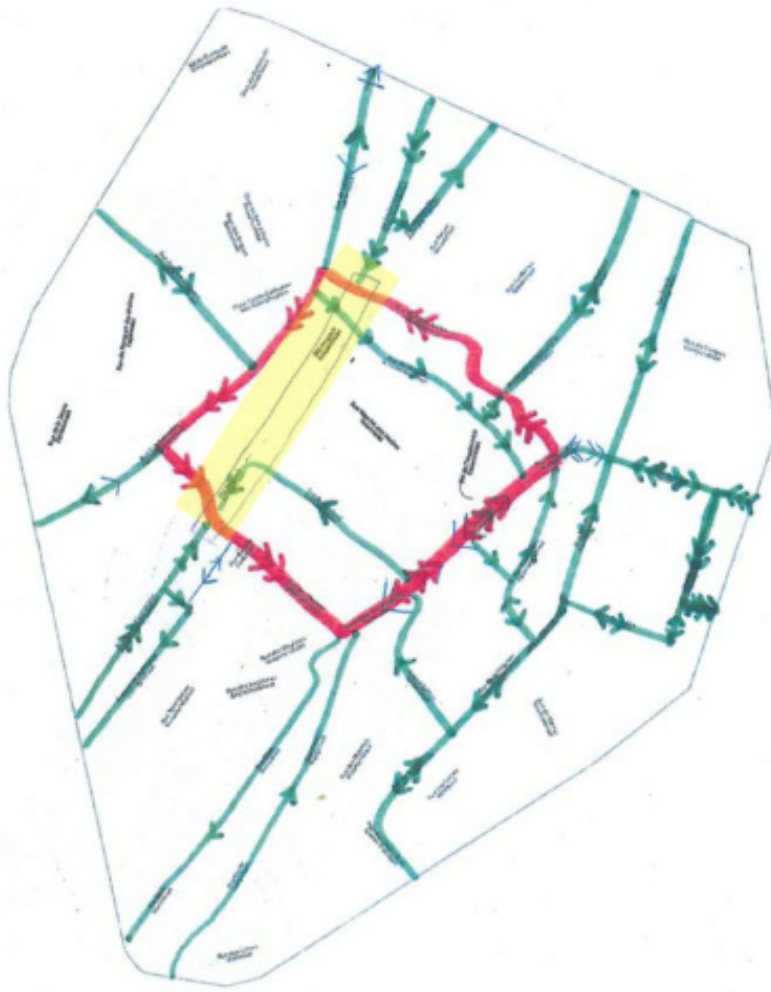
occupying squares and parks in 80 of 81 Turkish cities. Not for one instant did they consider the conflict over Gezi Park to be a confrontation between Secular-Republican and Islamic Ottoman heritage. And just like the newspapers, every single interviewee repeated an almost identical version of the following story:

“It all began on the 27th of May 2013 with a handful of peaceful protesters, environmentalist¹³¹ which were trying to save the park and the trees from demolition. When the police cracked down at daybreak the next morning, they did so brutally. In response thousands started flocking in. Within days hundreds of thousands occupied the Park and Square and what started as an environmental protest turned into a movement against Erdoğan and against his authoritarian rule.” (my synopsis)

And this despite AK Party’s efforts to push back on the framing in the national newspapers. Indeed they had lost the battle over the imaginary. The framing of the opponents had taken the overhand and it became dominant. The narrative even turned to a form of foundational myth about a spontaneous uprising that occurred in less than a week time: as if the 4 year long hard work of the protest coalitions had not occurred; as if those petitions weren’t made, those press briefings weren’t written and those patrols didn’t take place; as if a national minister had not been fired by R.T Erdoğan over his disapproval of the project; as if it had never even been a prestige Ottoman-style Crazy Project at Taksim. Instead, the press, the social media and all my citizen interviewees agreed, and stated, that the conflict concerned an authoritarianly imposed shopping mall on one of the last green spots and life places in the center of the city. Just as it was described to me in Cihan Baysal’s and Bengi Akbulut email on the 31st of August 2013, the story was not wrong. Many of them were concerned with the environment and with life places and the protests were triggered by the caterpillar’s arrival on the 27th of May. Yet without understanding the years of hard work by the protest coalitions, the local and national buildup of frustrations, it is impossible to understand how the power relation with regards to the Prime Minister could be established and how ultimately the plans were put to a stop.

This is where my analysis ends, on the 1st of June 2013, when the ‘Gezi movement’ gained more and more support, including internationally, and when its name shifted to #OccupyGezi. The period that followed, the efforts and the heavy sacrifices that were made during those weeks, led to the establishment of a power relation with regards to the AKP government and R.T. Erdoğan. It made it impossible to redevelop Gezi Park without the thread of vast public unrest and potential political fallout, which is how the ‘Crazy Project’ of 2011 has been put on hold since July 2013 and why it stayed on hold till the day of writing (in September 2016). But, as those weeks in June are extensively documented by other scholars, an analysis of them is not included in this research.

131 some even say ‘Greenpeace’ (despite the organization not being involved at all)



Chapter 6
Brussels
The Case of the Central Boulevards (Belgium)

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Brussels, the Case of the Central Boulevards (Belgium)

The planning and implementation process of the Brussels' pedestrian zone and the new 'circulation plan' offers rich empirical material to study the role of imaginaries and discourse coalitions in the urban planning process and how they function. It exemplifies how the dynamic of the urban planning processes is not only a matter of means, time, well established arena's or planning procedures (Healey, 2006); of citizens with large networks or politicians with an institutionally established power to decide. It shows that the dynamic of the planning process is not a question (only) of a lack of knowledge or experience amongst decision makers or of a highly fragmented institutional context. Indeed, what the case demonstrates is how the urban planning process is driven by imaginaries and the discourse that refers to them. How strong images, metaphors, names, storylines and places define the dynamic. (Hajer, 2006) Whether those discourses mobilize citizens in the streets, help to find support for the plans and policies or whether they galvanize opposition.

The aim of my research in Brussels is to scrutinize how they drive the process precisely and it is the objective of this chapter to lay out those findings in detail so as to respond why Picnic the Streets was formed around an imaginary of the Livable City? How their actions and discourse set the political agenda in 2012? Why the plans of the new mayor became contested in 2014 and by whom? Which discourse coalitions were formed and why? How was the debate broadened to the larger population in several steps? What was the role of the institutionalized imaginary of the place itself in that process? Why did the city lose public support from all sides? And how, ultimately, did the mayor's political isolation come about? What was the role of imaginaries in these phenomena? How do they interlink with several triggering events, the process' architecture, the legal framework, the arena's and place itself over time? All these questions will be responded in detail in the chapter below.

In this chapter, I first give a summary of the case study (part 6.1). I will then situate the case extensively (part 6.2) with attention to the space itself, key historic elements, important

institutional, administrative and political events as well as with regards to different societal events. I also describe the legal framework, the process architecture and the (limited) formal arena that was created with regards to the public. Next, in part 6.3, I give a description of the identified imaginaries and motivations that drive the formed discourse coalitions, their subgroups and the creative individuals. Subsequently, in part 6.4, I give an overview of the imaginaries of both the city and of the decision-making process the different discourse coalitions shared or disagreed upon, and what their role was in the dynamic of the urban planning process. Next, in part 6.4, I give an overview of the key triggering events and what their role was in the process. In this same section, I elaborate on how place mattered in the process. In the last part finally, I provide a thick description and detailed timeline with all the corroborating documents and quotes from my interviews of what happened between May 2012 and June 2016.

To complete the analysis presented in this chapter, in annex X, I give an overview of the involved actors and their specific role in the process. Finally, in annex Z, I go through the case study again in a summarized way, but from a different perspective focusing on the *discourse coalitions* that were formed over time, why and out of which *subgroups* they consisted and how they evolved over the case study time lapse.

6.1 Presentation of the Case

The most important urban planning conflict in Brussels¹ in recent years concerns the closure of the Haussmannian 'Boulevard Anspach' that connects the inner city's beltway from North to South by cutting through the historic center. The road was established as a four-lane axe for cars in the 1970s when the tram lines were put underground and the pre-metro system was created. Since then, the boulevard served as a fast transit for cars and an 'urban highway' of sorts.

The transformation was part of a broader change in *imaginary* about the role of the capital and its indispensable function as economic motor of the Belgian industrial-based welfare

1 In the city of Brussels and the Brussels Capital Region there have been other important urban planning conflicts: the construction of the shopping centers NEO and DOCX, the construction of the new football stadium, the Flagey Square redevelopment and the enlargement of the 'large Ring' around the Brussels Capital Region. Maybe with the exception of the latter (that technically falls on Flemish territory) none of these conflicts were so socially and politically divisive and mediatized, as the case of the Central Boulevards. The only cases that are more important in Belgium lie outside Brussels' borders, namely in the province of Antwerp; where a 2-decades old conflict is being fought out between the Flemish government, who plans to finalize the small ring around the city (the so called "Oosterweel Connection") and civil society groups (Straten-Generaal, Ademloos & Ringland) who oppose the plans. And secondly in the province of Vlaams Brabant where the construction of the shopping Center Uplace has been derailed by a coalition of local mayors from Leuven and Halle, activists, civil society groups and academics. Now, if we stretch the concept of 'urban planning conflict' we can maybe include the highly contested case of 'the airplane routes over Brussels' as a contender for most important planning conflict on the Brussels-city territory.

state. In line with ideas that became *hegemonic* in the 1950s of the *automotive city* –conceived especially after the World Expo of 1958--, sprawling suburbanization and road infrastructure shifted the criterion to one of efficient accessibility by car. But although the convenience for car drivers and commuters improved sturdily, it deteriorated living conditions of inhabitants, while it led to the destruction of entire parts of the city elsewhere. The transformation of the Central Boulevards has thus been part of a contentious debate, since their establishment or better their *institution* in the 1970s; when local inhabitants and civil society organized the opposition. They reclaimed their ‘right over the city’ as its inhabitants and demanded ‘a livable city’. But when it concerned the city’s Anspach Boulevard and Central Boulevards, they were unsuccessful. That is, until two groups of urban activists, once more with the support of civil society, managed to put these claims on the political agenda again by use of civil disobedient occupations of the Boulevard. This occurred two times. First in 2000, under pressure of the ‘Streetsharing’ actions and NOMO, and had as a result that the political majority developed a car low scenario for the inner city and a proposal to reduce the number of car lanes on the boulevard to two, but the plans were never implemented. The second time, in 2012, it turned out differently.

This time the pressure came from a group of civil disobedient citizens that decided to ‘Picnic the Streets’ in the run up to the 2012 local elections. Once more, activists, citizens and civil society had decided to send a message and they cut the traffic themselves by having Sunday picnics at noon, right in the middle of the Anspach Boulevard. Just in front of the old-stock exchange building, they occupied the road with a few thousand people and called for more and better public space. And symbolically, they demanded a car free ‘Stock Exchange Square’,² for they “were sick and tired of the air and noise pollution, the ugliness, the traffic congestion” and the car flux counting more than a thousand cars during rush hour (Technum, March 2014).³ They managed to set the political agenda. The local politicians answered to the demands in their majority agreement (2012-2018).

The ambition of the local political majority was to cut the automobile traffic at the Stock Exchange (La Bourse) Square, while boosting the economy by investing in tourism, high quality commerce, events and while “continuing to guarantee a decent accessibility for cars”. By the latter they meant “a strong link between the inner city neighborhoods” and “a good access to the historic inner city and the pedestrian zone” through the development of a new circulation plan for the Brussels Pentagon (Bruxelles-Ville, December 2012).⁴

2 i.e. ‘Place de la Bourse’(FR)/‘Beurs plein’(NL) situated halfway the Central Boulevards, 280 meters from Grand Place, 3 minutes by foot.

3 Plan de circulation dans le Pentagon. Situation existante. Atlas Cartographique.

4 In the city of Brussels, a “circulation plan” is the name used to indicate a mobility plan that only includes certain parts of the municipality, in this case the historic Pentagone.

In January 2014, these goals⁵ were adjusted to include a much larger part of the Anspach highway,⁶ a *destination loop* or “*Mini Ring*” that circles the zone and 4 underground parking lots, of an estimated four hundred places each (Bruxelles-Ville, 2014).⁷

Both the City of Brussels (i.e. the municipality), the Brussels Capital Region as the Belgian Federal State were involved in the project.⁸ The lack, however, of a pre-established procedure regulating the cooperation among government levels in urban planning, and the lack of a clear hierarchy among those levels, did not make the process any easier. In fact, the case study is a good example of the difficulties and political solutions that are inherent too the highly fragmented institutional context of Brussels (Vaesen, 2008; Deschouwer, 2006).⁹

Different activists’ groups, civil society organizations and several business owners’ associations mobilized throughout the process, often independently from each other and with regards to different aspects of the proposed plans: originally the mobilization was in favor of change (with *Picnic the Streets* or the civil society organization *BRAL*), later it was mainly in opposition to parts of the proposed plans or to the way the planning process was organized. In the last stadium several local academics and urban planning experts also got involved, individually or collectively, under the form of an “observatory”. Indeed, the debate on the *pedestrian zone* did not pass unnoticed. It became the subject of a heated discussion in the regional as well as the national public opinion. Opinion writers on both the Flemish and the French speaking side spoke out on the subject. National politicians went as far as to debate the *pedestrian zone* in the Belgian Chamber of Representatives. While some of the activists that initially occupied the Stock Exchange Square even turned against the plans. By September 2015 the plans had lost about all vocal public

5 The Original agreement of December 2012 included only a carfree zone, “pedestrianization” from Rue Peinturier/Ververstraat to the Beursquare. (Dossier de presse. Un Nouveau Cœur pour Bruxelles!)

6 Including the Fontainas square and a one lane street for cars leading up to it (from Rue peiturier/Ververstrand to the South the famous Brouckere Suare and the street to it, to the North.)

7 Press conference, Alderman of Mobility Els Ampe (November 2014): « L’échevine estime toutefois que ces emplacements seront au nombre de 400 environ par parking» quoted in *Le Soir* that same day as well as on the *Ecolo* oppositions website. The number of parking places that were mentioned in the beginning were strongly reduced later, to around 190 places (i.e. under the number of places that would have required an impact study according to the Brussels COBAT. The announced locations are Place de Jeu de Balle (FR)/Vossenplein(NL), Place Yzer (FR)/Ijzerplein (NL), Nouveau Marché au Grain/Oude Graan Markt (NL) and Place Rouppe (FR)/ Rouppe Plein (NL)

8 These three government levels co-finance the project. Mobility or urbanistic studies, legal advises, etcetera have been ordered at the different levels. The master plan, the pre-design and final-design for the central boulevards were made in a joint effort as was the circulation plan (at least with regards to the city and the region). The preparation of the building permit transgressed the three different governments and their respective administrative levels. And so forth.

9 In this case study and fort he competence of urban planning the fragmentation is mainly the consequence of the formation of Brussels as Capital Region in 1989 and the 4th reform of the Belgian State in 1993 with the creation of Beliris.

support and by April 2016 the conflict revolved into wavering political support and the political isolation of the city mayor on the dossier.

But ultimately, it was the court case of two civil society organizations and a set of business owners against the *pedestrian zone's* urbanism permit that brought the project to a halt in June 2016. In fact, the city of Brussels decided not to wait for the outcome of the court case after the preliminary audit report of the court was leaked. The local majority coalition decided consequently to introduce a new demand for an urbanism permit does cancelling the old one. The implementation of the city's plan is as such, at the time of writing, effectively on hold.

I have analyzed this case study around a series of imaginaries that I argue are key to understanding this planning process: four imaginaries of the city, two imaginaries of political decision-making in the city, and one stereotype. As I will explain in more detail in section 6.2, I have identified on the one hand the imaginaries of the Automobile city (or City of Expo '58), the City of Commerce, the Livable City and the Just City; on the other hand, related to the political decision-making process, the Participatory City and the Representative City; and lastly, the stereotype of Brussels as a 'dirty and unsafe city'. Yet, I have also argued in my conceptual approach to my case studies that these imaginaries play a powerful role in, because of, and through the emergence of discourse coalitions.

In this regard, during my research I identified a set of discourse coalitions which integrate in multiple forms one or various of the above referred imaginaries. Firstly, the 'Livable City coalition', which appears at the beginning of my story triggered by Van Parijs' op-ed piece and shares a strong imaginary of the "Livable City", but that is actually composed by two subgroups that differ on the matter of commerce: the more liberal and social democrat leaning people who share an imaginary of "the City of Commerce", and the left wing and more left leaning people who share an imaginary of "the Just City". Secondly, the 'Expo '58 coalition' which could be described as a union of business owners, lobbies and organizations who share the imaginaries of "the City of Commerce" and of "the City of Expo '58". Thirdly, we find what I called the local government's 'Majority coalition', that had to find a compromise around the pedestrianization process to conciliate two internal subgroups with different imaginaries, the ones of the 'Expo '58 subgroup' and the one of the 'Livable City' subgroup. Later, new complex forms of coalitions arose that represented different combinations (and prioritizations) of the different imaginaries of the city and of the political decision-making process.

What I will demonstrate in this chapter is the illustration of a disconnection between the local government coalition and the public. I argue that the Majority coalition's political agenda was set by a protest coalition with a very specific set of demands revealing a shared imaginary amongst the activist and participants of the 'Livable City coalition'. When the local government came to power they granted them a victory by giving them their iconic demand, i.e. the car free Stock Exchange Square. But although the 'Majority coalition' found an agreement over the square, most complementary plans and policies they put forward afterwards contradicted the underlying 'Livable City imaginary': a "Mini Ring" around the pedestrian zone to ensure fluidity for cars, four vast underground parking lots and an all-out focus in the communication on the zone's role in stimulating commerce rather than convivial public space.

Seen the dominance in the majority coalition of the *'Expo 58' subgroup* (with their *automobile city imaginary*) composed of the governing political parties (MR & Open-VLD, partly PS), and with only one minor party defending the *'Livable City'* position full-heartedly (SP.A), those are consistent choices. But it explains how they lost the support of the Picnic the Streets or *'Livable City coalition'*. The choice however, for this iconic gesture of making a clean cut of traffic at the Stock Exchange Square, and the symbolically strong verbal blurbs such as “a gigantic pedestrian zone” (the mayor; November 2013) or “the biggest pedestrian zone of Europe” (alderman of mobility; November 2014) antagonized its *City of Expo '58* electoral base and lobby groups (the car lobby, businesses associations,...). In fact, they opposed the plans from the start and they never wavered. Consequently, the *Majority coalition* found itself without the public support of the two discourse coalitions that followed the process and they found themselves criticized from both sides.

This lack of public support was, however, compensated by a strong political compromise between the parties and with the different involved government levels. But due to a bungled planning process that support started wavering as well.

The *Majority coalition* fragmented the urban planning process over several aldermen, who started working independently and parallel to each other. One of them set up a vast consultation (an *arena*) for the public, but in the process the participants were not allowed to discuss their concerns (with regards to mobility issues) as these were the competence of another alderman. Thus, the so-called “participation process” galvanized frustration, doubt and anger rather than producing support and offering reassurance. Especially, when the alderman of mobility announced her circulation and parking lot plans in the midst of -but totally independent from- the participation process, it reinvigorated the *Expo '58 Coalition* and triggered several opposing civil society initiatives. The latter actually assembled a powerful coalition of inhabitants, shopkeepers, neighborhood associations (*private and collective interest groups*), civil society organizations and members of Picnic the Streets (with an *imaginary of the Livable and the Just City*) in their common aversion for the proposals. This led to even less public support. But to top it all off, the majority coalition bungled the start of the pedestrian zone's test phase¹⁰ and they failed to put a communication cell in place. So when the first days went wrong while the national press was reporting, there was no team or coordinated communication strategy in place to answer questions from the public or push back on criticisms and disinformation. Instead the mayor answered personally, with off the cuff and often “unfortunate phrases”. And while it was true that most problems were solved within days, what remained was a negative image in the national public opinion and a mayor that became singled out.

An Avaaz petition demanded his resignation while another campaign went as far as to state “Not elected, not welcome” (which rhymes in French: “Non élu, pas de bienvenue”). What it revealed was a deep conflict that had been festering for more than a year between two *imaginaries of decision-making in the city*. On the one hand most political parties in the *Majority coalition* believe in (what I call) the *Represented City* in which they have a mandate of the electorate to make the decisions¹¹ while all opposing discourse coalitions argued that the

10 Officially the local government speaks of a test phase of the circulation plan, yet it is generally considered and spoken of in my interviews as the test phase of the pedestrian zone (beginning from the 29th of June 2015 onward).

11 With the exception of the Flemish socialist party SP.A

inhabitants, users and/or business owners had to be consulted and involved in the decision-making process (*the imaginary of the Participative City*). All opposing parties united easily around this argument. And the non-diplomatic style of the mayor, as well as his alleged quotes such as “that they form a political party if they want a say” or “participation, we tried that once, it didn’t work” made him the personification of that what they opposed. Namely, a city in which decisions are taken in a top down manner without consultation and without a decent study of the impact the plans might have.

As the mayor became more and more identified with the problems related to the pedestrian zone, supporting the project became increasingly seen as an endorsement of the mayor. That made it even more difficult to speak out in support of the pedestrian zone which in turn led to even less public backing.

Eventually, these key elements (i) lack of public support, (ii) mismanagement and (iii) little/unfortunate communication combined with a military lockdown of Brussels, terrorist attacks and a highly mediatized refusal of restaurant owner to let the mayor enter. Thus what began as a lack of public support gradually turned into political isolation of the mayor regarding this dossier and a wavering political compromise.

Ultimately, out of fear for losing the pedestrian zone (and losing “the biggest step forward in decades toward a Livable City”¹²) it was the academic world that stepped in the void and came with push back in an attempt to objectify the debate (in the form of an observatory). And it were two minors who launched a Facebook page “don’t you touch my pedestrian zone” in defense of their newly gained public space. It remains to be seen, however, if the *Majority coalition* will be able to keep that support, as they wait for a new urbanism permit and as they hold on to their strategy to address the concerns of the *Expo ‘58 coalition* first.¹³ But that falls outside the scope of this case study.

6.2 Context

6.2.1 Spatial Situation and the Plans

As announced, the redevelopment of the ‘Central Boulevards’ of Brussels’ (2012-...) as a pedestrian zone is at the core of this case study. Boulevard Maurice Lemonnier, Boulevard Anspach, Boulevard Adolphe Max and Boulevard Emile Jacqmain were originally developed as

12 Bruzz Interview. 26th of April 2016 “*Il faut arrêter de dénigrer le piétonnier*” & 22th of July 2016 “*Verkeer op bestemmingslus niet gestegen*”

13 Ex.: On the 1st of July 2016 for example, the City of Brussels announced that it will take two measures to support the success of the seasonal sales by allowing free parking in the Pentagon on shopping Saturdays.

KEY FACTS - BRUSSELS PEDESTRIAN ZONE

START: 2012

PLANNED COMPLETION: 2018

OPP: ca. 500.000 m² (ca. 50ha)

STATUS JULY 2016: The urban planning permit demand is ongoing

FUNDING: ca. 33 miljoen €

- Federal (Beliris): 20 mln €
- Regional (Brussel Mobility): 7 mln €
- Local (Brussel-City): 6 mln €

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTORS (Studies and implementation)

- Redevelopment Central Boulevards: [SumProject](#) and [B-Group - Greisch](#)
- Mobility plan: [Technum \(Tractebel\)](#), [Flow](#), [AME](#)
- Participation Process: [Artgineering](#)
- Commerce: [Citytools](#) and [Devimo](#)

POPULATION:

1.175.173 inh. (Brussels, 2014)

8207 inh./km² (Stock Exchange neighborhood)

a ‘Haussemannian’ artery that had to create a connection between the North and the South of the historic inner-city. (Genard, 2016) When the tramway went underground (in the 1970s) the lanes that had a mixed mobility usage turned into a 4-lane urban highway for automobiles, without separate space for public transport or cyclists and with relatively limited space for pedestrians.¹⁴ The record growth of car ownership in Belgium (Hubert, 2008) and the growing number of commuters by car had consequence for the main axes and urban highways of the country’s capital.¹⁵ The Anspach Boulevard for example, who passes in front of the old stock exchange building, drew in 2012 more than 1100 vehicles per hour during peak moments in the early morning and late afternoon. It is this part of the Central Boulevards (from the Brouckère Square to Fontainas) that has been “pedestrianized”, whose public space will be redesigned and for which a new plan for mobility, for parking and for commerce was developed as well.

It is thus necessary to understand that the case of the “pedestrianization of the Central Boulevards” consists of different spatial development plans. One concerning the redesign of the Anspach Boulevard (‘the Beliris plan’), another concerning mobility (‘the circulation plan’) and a last one concerning the establishment of four new underground parking lots (‘the parking plan’). Less important, but key nonetheless, is to comprehend that those plans were part of a general vision of the *Majority coalition* to regenerate the economy of the inner city. (Bruxelles-Ville, Un nouveau coeur pour Bruxelles, 2014). Indeed, it was announced that the spatial planning of the Boulevards would go together with a plan for local commerce (bars, restaurants, high quality shops,...), an “event” based approach (Christmas

¹⁴ “Relative”, i.e. with regards to the previous situation on the Central Boulevards.

¹⁵ By the mid-2000s, 363.000 people commuted every workday to the Brussels Capital Region from the surrounding regions (Coppens, 2005) more than half of which use the car (Verhetsel, 2007) and those numbers do not take the daily commuting within the Region itself into account: i.e. furthermore in one of the city’s with the highest motorization rates of Europe: one motorized vehicle/less than two inhabitants. (CRB, 2007) (De Witte & Macharis, 2010). According to the FOD mobility there however a significant decrease in car use amongst commuters since 2005 (-8%). But the population of the BCR has grown simultaneously with more than 10% (FOD-Economie, 2016). Meanwhile, Brussels ranks second in the top ten of most congested cities of Europe on the INRIX traffic scoreboard (Inrix, 2014) and 33th worldwide among cities bigger than 800 thousand in 2016 (Tomtom, 2016)

market, new year’s eve celebrations,...) and that it would be assisted by the intervention of the ‘Régie Fonciere’, the public housing and real estate company of the city.¹⁶



Fig.32. The Brussels Pentagone. In purple, the January 2014 development perimeter. In green, the existing pedestrian friendly areas.

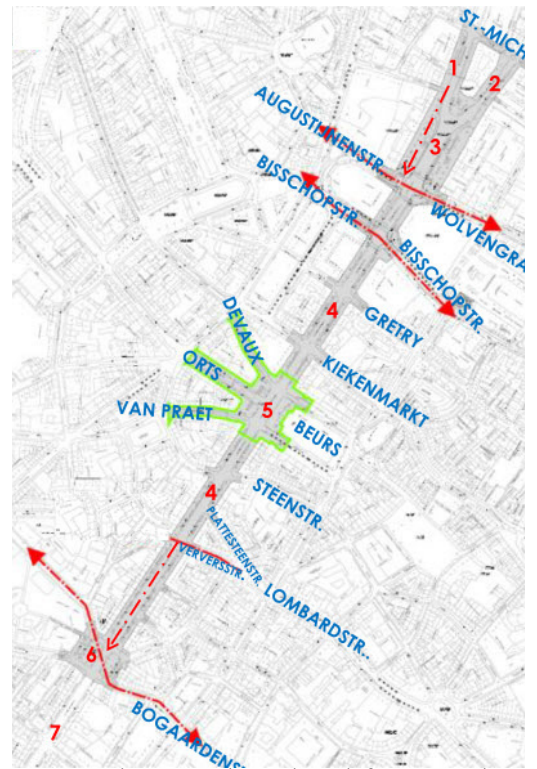


Fig.31. The Anspach Boulevard from Brouckere Square (above) to Fontainas (down under), including in red arrows the original indications Beliris received from the alderman of mobility, Els Ampe, of where there would still be car traffic or public transportation passing the pedestrian zone (above grounds).

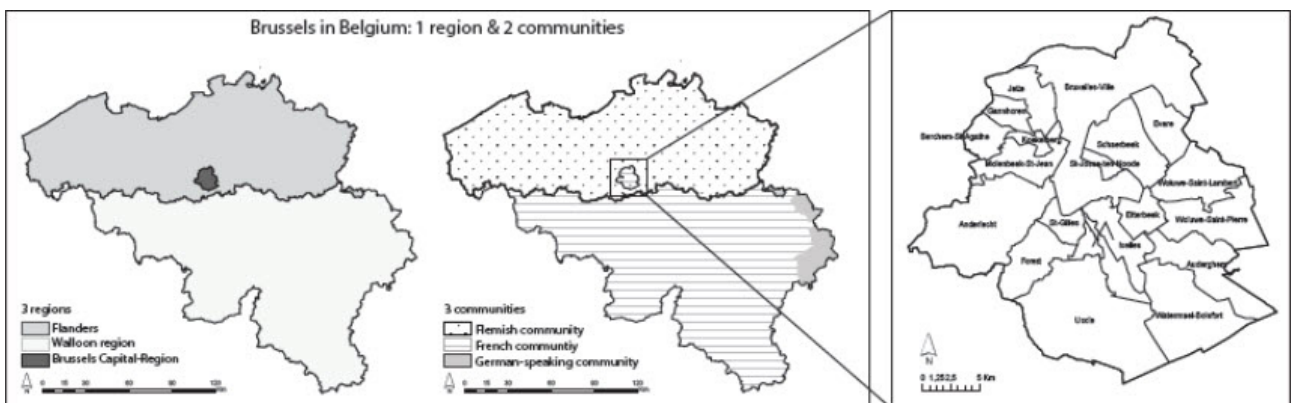


Fig.30. Brussels in Belgium (in black). Flanders in Grey. Wallonia in light grey. On the right the brussels municipalities with the Brussels-City ‘Pentagone’ in the middle

16 The ‘Régie Fonciere’ owns the majority of buildings on the development perimeter and its direct vicinity: including 930 apartments, 220 stores and a variety of historic iconic buildings such as the old ‘Stock Exchange building’, the ‘Palais du Midi’ (i.e. the old railway station) or the ‘Continental building’ at Brouckère.

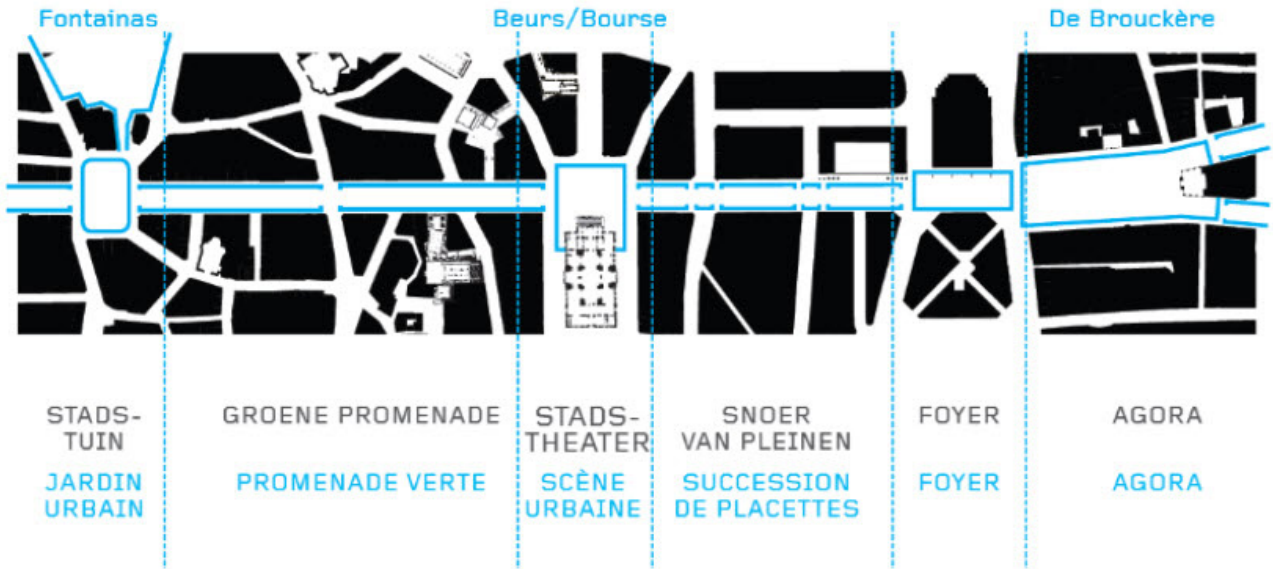


Fig.34. Proposed identity per square in the development perimeter

These are the processes and plans that we will be discussing:

#. First, a planning process concerning the redesign of public space of the Central Boulevards (from facade to facade). As you can see on Fig.1 the development includes mainly the Anspach Boulevard in the perimeter, plus small parts of the directly adjacent boulevards and streets. The plans are developed by an urban planning & design office: SumProject (before Groupe Planning), B-group Greisch for the implementation of the plans, and a participation office Artgineering. Indeed, when in this case study ‘participation’ is mentioned it concerns this planning process.

These three government contractors work on behalf of the federal government (Beliris) and the local governments (Brussels-City and the Brussels Capital Region) and their respective administrations (Brucity & Brussels Mobility). The key persons in government that follow up this dossier are the mayor of the city of Brussels, Yvan Mayeur, the alderman

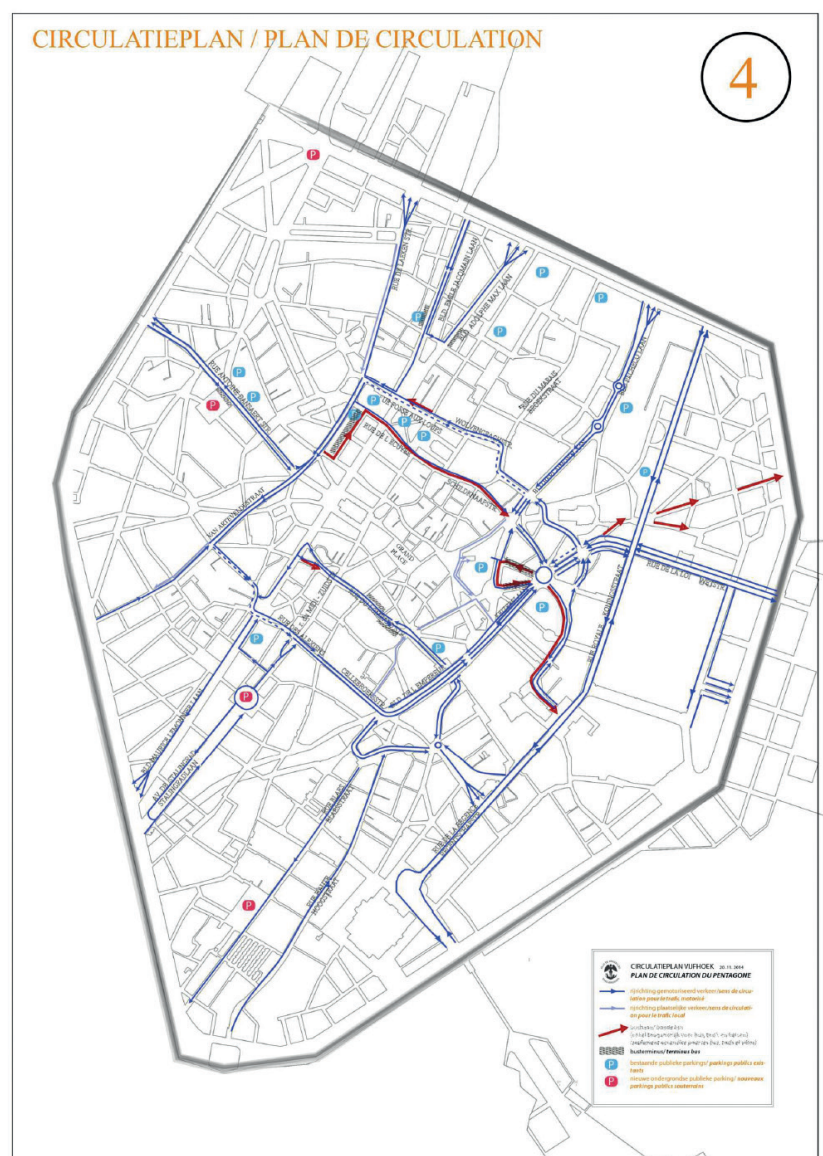


Fig.33. Beliris Masterplan (September 2014). Fontainas Square on the left, Stock Exchange Square in the middle, Brouckère Square on the right.

for participation, Ans Persoons, the regional minister for Mobility, Pascal Smet and the federal minister for Beliris, Didier Reynders.

#. Second, a redrawing of the mobility and traffic plans of the inner city (Pentagon), specifically with regards to the circulation around the *pedestrian zone*. The plan is officially described by the local authorities as a “circulation plan”. But it is often also referred to as “the destination loop” or “Mini Ring” (by the different actors and media). In reality, it is a traffic-technical plan developed -from 2013 onward- by the Brussels-city alderman of mobility Els Ampe and with the help of government contractors Technum, Flow and AME. It is not incorporated in the design sketches and plans for the refurbishment of public space (i), nor is it embedded or in accordance with the spatial-strategic plans of the municipality or the region. Indeed the realization of the *circulation plan* is happening at the hand of 18 temporary police ordonnances.¹⁷

#. Third, the parking plan is also developed by the alderman for mobility Els Ampe. The objective was to foresee four new underground parking lots in the ‘periphery’ of the inner city, inside the Pentagon. The described destination loop would guide automobile traffic to those parkings (in red, ‘P’ on the map). Originally it was announced they would count around 400 places each.¹⁸ Later, there was only speech of parking lots of less than 200 places. And by 2016 it became unclear if any of the proposed parking lots would be implemented in practice.



17 Circulatieplan Vijfhoek (2015). Ingevoerd op 29/06/2015. <https://www.brussel.be/artdet.cfm/8227>

18 (at Place de Jeu de Balle(FR)/Vossenplein (NL), Nouveau Marché au Grain/ Oude Graan Markt (FR/NL), Place Yzer(FR)/Ijzerplein(NL) & Place Rouppe(FR)/Rouppe Plein(NL). In a later stadium

#. The master plan for commerce was developed by government contractor Citytools and Devimo with data of the public utility company Atrium (yet without their involvement) mandated by the Brussels-City alderman of commerce, Marion Lemesre. They did not involve local shopkeepers or businesses in the development of the masterplan (that came out in March 2015, 9 months after the start of the *pedestrian zone's* testphase). Nor did the alderman of commerce coordinate with the alderman for participation or mobility. The plans did target the whole inner city Pentagon (as did the circulation plan).

#. The event based approach is developed by the alderman of tourism Phillippe Close (but little is known so far about what to aspect).

#. Whereas the involvement and role of the *régie foncière* falls under the auspices of Mohamed Ouriaghli yet in this case too little is known about what the role of the public housing and real estate company will be. (a plan is expected to be revealed soon)

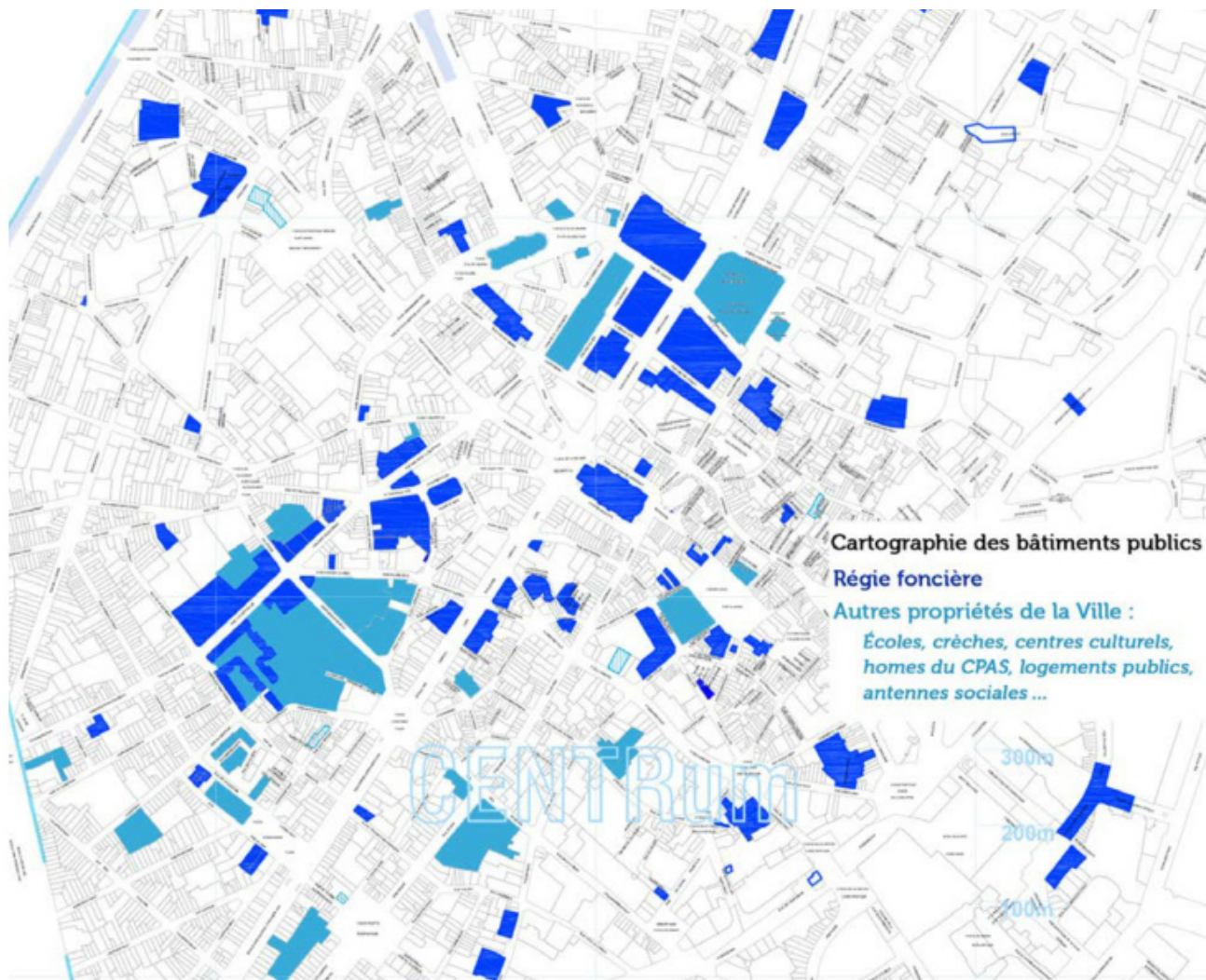


Fig.35. Cartography of the buildings of public real-estate owned by the City of Brussels: including schools, cultural centers, social housing, public housing, social antennas, a set of historic buildings, ...

These divisions between the plans are a first important element to understand the dynamic of the case study. On the one hand, they do fall under the same denominator of “the pedestrianisation of the Central Boulevards”. They are in practice part of a complex city project and they are considered as such by the different actors (in my interviews). The local government communicates about them as a coherent ensemble “to regenerate the inner city”. But on the other hand, the local government deals with them, formally, as a set of unrelated parallel planning processes. And that choice has affected the individual procedures and proceedings greatly (as this case study will show).¹⁹

Secondly, the urban planning process of the Central Boulevards is embedded in a historic-, political-, societal- and planning-context. This context is key to understand the proceedings and the content of the refurbishment program. For this, I will take as a basis those elements that were perceived and raised by my interviewees as the explanatory factors of the current situation. The first part deals with government related elements and politics. The second part focusses on civil society and activist’s elements. The third part discusses the predecessors of the current “pedestrianization” plan as there is a long history of proposals since 1997 for both the Central Boulevards and the Pentagon.

6.2.2 Government Related Elements

The main public actors involved in the case of the pedestrian zone operate at different institutional levels, have different competences, became involved at different stages of the process and had a different scope of action and impact on the process. The key actors in this case are:

- The BCR’s regional government (government officials, political staff & administration) as they are competent on urban and mobility issues on the *regional* territory. Especially the minister for mobility and the Brussels mobility administration play a key role .
- The federal administration Beliris, responsible for the large majority of the funding, the drawing up of the plans and the implementation.
- The city of Brussels, as the commissioning entity and body that takes the key decisions and sets out the specifications for Beliris to follow.

19 Either because of their uncoordinated and (at times) inconvenient parallel presence galvanizing frustration and anger. Ex: the effect of the parking and circulation plans on the Beliris plan and its ‘participation process’. Either by their absence rousing doubt and speculation. Ex: as a consequence of the absence of consultation of the shopkeepers and of the master plan for commerce in the run up to the start of the *pedestrian zone’s* test phase; as well as of the absence of clarifications on the role of the Régie Foncière in the development of the pedestrian zone.

The character and history of the different entities, and the way they relate to one another are important to understand the dynamic of the urban planning process.

The Brussels Regional Government: a Young Legal Spatial Planning framework

A first element to take in account is that Brussels is a young Capital Region, founded only in 1989. It explains, according to my interviewees, at least in part the lack of clarity with regards to the hierarchy of the involved government levels in planning procedures and the absence of a coherent planning practice.

After more than two decades of political abandonment of the city, urban flight and 15 years of de-industrialisation and impoverishment (Corijn & Vloeberghs, 2009), the state reform of 1989 made the agglomeration²⁰ of Brussels²¹ into a Region: the “Brussels Capital Region”(BCR). This institution has the possibility to make ordonnances (instrument with legal value) in a growing set of competences ranging from social and economic issues to environmental, urbanism, town planning and mobility concerns (Sägesser, 2002). The BCR did develop furthermore a good set of tools to those concerns, including strategic development plans and operational land use plans that apply both to the regional or the municipal territory.

Formally speaking, the Regional Development Plan (PRD) guides the Municipal Development Plans (PCD); Whereas the Regional Land Use plan (PRAS) underpins the municipal Special Land Use Plans (PPAS). Furthermore, included in those plans are the strategic mobility plans Iris I and Iris II (that operate at the regional territory) (AATL-BROH, 2011; Lévy, 2013; Vermeulen, 2015).

But due to a persisting lack of a clear political hierarchical situation and due to the institutional fragmentation (see Fig.1) with regards to spatial development on the territory of its 19 municipalities, the strategic planning instrument of the PRD is not always translated on the municipal level (PCD) as the legal planning framework prescribes. The PRAS or the regional land use plan (which does have regulatory power) on the other hand is followed more strictly. Yet, it still happens that municipalities develop a PCD or PPAS without taking the regional plans into consideration.

As a result, territorial development is often solved by political bargaining and compromises between different actors at different policy levels, rather than on the basis of a political vision or principles of urban planning (Lévy, 2016). And indeed, this case study shows ample evidence of political bargaining: to deblock the federal funding in January 2014 for example or to regain political support in June 2016.²²

20 In geographical terms an agglomeration is a functional zone (the commuting area). After the Belgian Federal State was (re)formed it was allowed by law to create “agglomerations” as an institutional form of organization. Only Brussels and there 19 municipalities did so at that time.

21 A specific administrative body with similar competences to the provinces and municipalities

22 i.e. on a moment the Beliris plan had already its urbanism licence since 6 months and on a moment that even the preparatory works of the concession holders were about finished.

	Agriculture	Welfare	Cemeteries	Communications	Development	Religions	Culture	Defence	Economy and trade	Labour and employment	Use of languages	Energy	Education	Environment	Registry	Immigration	Justice	Housing	Nationality	Research	Foreign relations	Health	Security and order	Social security	Sports	Tourism	Transport	Public works	Town planning	Planning policy	Urban regeneration	Heritage		
Federal Government	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		
Flemish Community		•					•						•							•	•	•		•	•									
French Community		•					•													•	•	•		•	•									
Regional Governments	•		•			•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		
<i>Flemish Region</i>																																		
<i>Walloon Region</i>																																		
<i>Brussels Capital region</i>																																		
AATL/BROH (8 operational services)																			•									•	•	•	•	•		
ATO/ADT																																		
Regional Development Commission																																		
Royal Commission for Monuments and Sites																																		
Housing Advisory Council																																		
Communities in Brussels																																		
<i>French Community Commission</i>		•					•						•							•	•	•			•	•								
<i>Flemish Community Commission</i>		•					•						•							•	•	•			•	•								
<i>Common Community Commission</i>		•					•						•							•	•	•			•	•								
Municipalities		•	•			•	•						•	•	•									•	•	•		•	•	•				
Governor																								•										
Vice-governor											•																							

Fig.36. Institutional complexity and fragmentation in political competencies within the Brussels Capital Region from Sägeser, 2002.

The Federal State – The Beliris-Fund

Beliris is a federal administrative institution. It is one of the most important, yet invisible, actors in the case of the Brussels pedestrian zone, as it provides most of the budget –i.e. more than 20 million euros (Staatsblad-MoniteurBelge, 1016) for the preliminary schemes, studies, and implementation of the infrastructural works.²³ The Beliris fund, established in 1993, is a contractual agreement between the federal state and the Brussels Capital Region, providing financial means for ‘improving the international image of Brussels’. But in reality, most Beliris-funding is invested in infrastructural works and renovation of public space. (Corijn & Vloeberghs, 2009; Lévy, 2016).

This particular situation was the consequence of the reforms of the Belgian State in 1989 and 1992. Beforehand, the political management of Brussels has been the formal responsibility of the Belgian state. The historic lack of political attention from the federal level for the capital was famously known, but the willingness of the federal government to keep the European Union in the city led it to serve the institutions on demand. (Magosse, 2007). It always initiated important construction works such as building the Berlaymont headquarter, allowing the ICC (later known as the European Parliament) to be built against local land use-regulations, changing the shape and direction of the metro-system, etcetera. (Bernard, 2008; Lagrou, 2000; BRAL, 2014). Once the Belgian state was reformed and the Regions became responsible for mobility and town planning,

23 Transfer from bijakte-avenant 11, 2014: 1.283.357€ + Budget September 2015: 17.316.643€ (except. decision) + Budget addition April 2016: 1.800.000€. I.e. total Beliris funding: 20.400.000€.

the Federal state nevertheless continued to finance development projects related to the European institutions and the international appearance of the capital. This is why originally the Beliris-fund was created.

But today –in the light of its broadened range of projects- that means that a Federal administration is de facto handling urbanistic and mobility interventions, parallel to the Regional administrations and municipal administrations of mobility and town-planning. So, instead of creating a coherent planning framework for Brussels, in fact it created fragmentation. It should be noted that the evolution in terms of planning expertise within Beliris was a big step forward (as most strategic-led town planning was practically absent). But it can hardly be described as an example of coherent planning practice. Beliris and the Regional administration of town planning and mobility are not even obliged to collaborate; and they often do not (as is also shown in this case study of the Central Boulevards).

The result is that decisions on town planning are in the first place an exercise in the art of political bargaining, at least when it comes to Beliris funding. Those decisions are made in a ‘collaborative commission’ of Federal and Regional ministers. The funding falls under the competence of the “Federal minister for Brussels” and the implementation is done by a federal ‘Beliris’ administration.

The last three responsible federal ministers were: I. Durant (Ecolo, 1999-2003); L. Onkelinx (PS, 2003-'14) and currently D. Reynders (MR, 2014-...).

Brussels-City, a Power House

The city, “Bruxelles-Ville or Brussel-Stad”, represents the political and economic hearth of a region that counts 19 municipalities. This municipality has not only the largest territory as compared to the other municipalities (32,6km²); it can be considered a powerhouse, with a municipal budget of 760 million euro/year (i.e. 1/6th of the budget of the Region) and a notorious amount of real estate property, especially housing. As such, it is one of the biggest public real-estate owners in Brussels. On the Central Boulevards for example, the city (Régie Foncière-CPAS) owns a large majority of the buildings on the development perimeter and just outside of it (covering 930 apartments, 220 shops and several historic iconic buildings – See Fig.1 above). Controlling the city hall allows, at least in part, cutting through the political, institutional and communitarian fragmentation in which the city has to operate to get things done (as this case study shows).

Brussels-City, Expo '58 & the Lack of a Strong Tradition in Town Planning and Urbanism

Despite changes and advances made in the practice of town planning and urbanism concerning the instauration of car-free zones in other Belgian cities in the 1990s -Bruges and Ghent- and in the 2000s -Leuven and Antwerp,²⁴ Brussels did not follow similar and more innovative approaches to town planning in terms of mobility and infrastructure. In fact, the main planning principles in Brussels remained explicitly car-oriented.

24 See for example (Secchi, Viganò, Steingut, & Gerson, 2009)

Both the liberals and socialists who controlled the city (from the 1970s till the 2000s) were not interested in a more environmental-ecological, bicycle-shaped, pedestrian-friendly city, with public spaces designed for the daily lives of urban dwellers. On the contrary, the dominant *imaginary of the city* largely remained the one of “the Crossroad of Europe”: it was the spatial vision of what Brussels should be in the after-war period, developed for the organisation and development of the “World Expo of 1958” in the northern quarters of the city-region. (Billen, 2013; Dessouroux, 2008; Deligne, & Jaumain, 2009; Hubert, 2008; Oosterlynck, 2012). Indeed, Brussels needed to be the place where people from the North-, East-, South-, and West-Europe would encounter through the easy access by rail and train, air and plane and of course most importantly, by individual transportation: the private car. According to this vision, one had to be able to go everywhere and efficiently, thanks to separated lanes, urban highways and parking space.

As such, all streets and most squares of Brussels were designed to ease transportation by car. That is how the “Grand-Place” of Brussels became locally known, as “the most magnificent parking lot in the world” (the “Picnic Grand Place” actions of the 1970’s will be the source of inspiration for Philippe Van Parijs to launch “Pic Nic the Streets” at the Stock Exchange square in 2012).

Modernisation, progress, freedom and even social mobility became inherently connected to the use of the private car. In Brussels, town planning then became a matter of opening squares to parking and enabling the flow of cars. This was done by enlarging roads, using tunnels for underground and surface car-use (in the same place); while land use regulation was used to indicate streets for “car use only” so as to enhance fluidity. They constructed different





‘ring roads’ around the city: such as “La Petite Ceinture” or “Kleine Ring” around the historical city centre; ‘the Brussels Pentagone’.²⁵

Put differently, for decades Brussels’ urban planning was in practice considered a matter of car-mobility first, regardless of the political background of local politicians that ruled the city since the 1970s.

25 The latter is referenced extensively in my case study by both the political opposition and activists alike when they started using the metaphor “Mini Ring” (January 2014) to indicate the destination loop around the pedestrian zone proposed by the local government.

This has had major consequences for our case today. Indeed, local politicians, political staff, as well as the public servants in the administration have little experience with urban planning when it comes to creating public space, alternative modes of mobility and the changes in local commerce that follow it. In fact, aside from the involvement in small-scale projects in collaboration with the Region (named ‘neighbourhood-contracts’) they have no experience with larger-scale planning of this sort, especially with regard to the involvement of citizens, inhabitants, shopkeepers, neighbourhood committees, city-wide environmental movements, and so forth. Indeed, this lack of practice explains at least part why the large scale redevelopment of the Central Boulevards has been such a difficult task to deal with for the local government, even for a powerhouse such as the City of Brussels.

Bruxelles-City, a New Generation of Politicians Comes to Power

At the city of Brussels a new generation of politicians came to power after the local elections in October 2012, as the majority of political figures in the *Majority coalition* became alderman or mayor for the first time: the Mayor Y. Mayeur (socialist, PS), the alderman for mobility E. Ampe (liberal, MR), the alderman for commerce M. Lemesre (Liberal, MR), the alderman for participation A. Persoons (social-democrat, sp.a) and the alderman for urbanism G. Coomans de Brachène (liberal, MR). Although all will be involved in way one or another to the renewal of the pedestrian zone, each one of them is new in the domain they start working in. So not only do they lack a culture of larger-scale urban planning in general in the city; they also lacked technical expertise; both in their cabinets²⁶ and at the personal level at the start of their mandate.

Furthermore, the current majority is formed by members of 4 different parties (liberals and socialists)²⁷, which does not favor constant and fluid communication and coordination between them either.

Fragmentation in the decision-making process. Every big decision is a political compromise

The City of Brussels is a centuries old institution, but the federal Belgian state is young (1970s) and the Brussels Capital Region as mentioned even younger, dating back to 1989. From an institutional point of view, there is – in principle- a hierarchical relation between the city and the region, for which the region and the Federal state have an exclusive set of competences, making a hierarchical relation unnecessary.

In reality however, the city council operates fairly autonomously, as there is no clearly established hierarchy with regards to the region yet. And the Federal government, for its part, has kept a set of competences, with Beliris as an excellent example.

26 The ‘cabinet’ is an institution in Belgium politics. It consists of a set of personal advisors to elected officials. They are appointed for the term of the mandate and function parallel to the administration. When a new government official comes to power it thus often means a renewal of the ‘cabinet’ as well.

27 These are the French- and Dutch speaking liberals (MR & Open-VLD) and socialists (PS & SP.A).

For the case of the Central Boulevards that means that three different government levels are involved, with different political rhythms due to the asymmetric timing of the elections²⁸ and with different political majorities (Vaesen, 2007; Deschouwer, 1987, 2006).²⁹

The demanding party is the local Brussels-city council, the funding and execution has to come from the Federal fund and administration 'Beliris', and the final decision happens in a discussion between 6 federal and 6 regional ministers in the 'Collaborative Commission'. Furthermore, some complementary funding can come from the Region or from the local municipality itself to complement the federal fund with regards to specific missing elements as was the case for the redevelopment of the Central Boulevards.

So when it comes to big renewal projects where Beliris is involved that means that a political deal concerning content and budget needs to be brokered locally, regionally and nationally (even when the leading party at the local level, PS, is part of the governing majority at all levels).

From a political perspective that means a speedy pace is advised for the deal to be consumed before a new majority is formed at a next election at one of the other levels.³⁰

As a consequence urban planning is, in the Brussels Capital Region, often more a matter of the art of politics than it is related to planning principles, planning regulations (PRAS/PPAS) or planning strategies (PRD/PCD), an issue illustrated in depth in Lévy's (2016) and Vermeulen's (2016) research.

Put differently, if it would appear too slow to involve the responsible regional administration, a politician might just choose to work with Beliris alone and not to involve them all together (at least until late in the process); Even if this would be considered bad planning practice. And indeed this is what happened in the case of the Central Boulevards. The administration of mobility was de facto side lined, even if Technum (the private mobility contractor) did make use of their computers and software to make its simulations. On the contrary, the local government did forge a strong deal with the regional minister of mobility in order to move forward. *Quod erat demonstrandum*.

The Brussels public transportation company, STIB-MIVB

Lastly, "MIVB" or "STIB" is the public transport company. Any big town planning involves their presence as they are responsible for infrastructural works related to public transport; yet again it is an administrative body that functions rather autonomously and without necessarily finding an agreement with all parties first. As one person in the regional administration put it: "in a complex

28 Ex.: for the city, October 2012, for the Region and the State, May 2014

29 At the local level alone 4 parties form the majority: PS-SP.A and MR-Open Vld. At the Regional level (until 2014) we find 6 parties, including the PS and Open VLD, but not the SP.A nor MR. It are the Christian democrats (CDH as well as CD&V) and the greens (Ecolo as well as Groen) that form the majority with them. At the federal level we find again another coalition with the PS, MR, CDH and CD&V, VLD, SP.A. At least until 2014 that is, for indeed it was clear from the polling in 2013 that a major victory awaited the Flemish Nationalists, N-VA.

30 I.e. the negotiated budget for the renewal had to be approved by the federal state, yet the planning process was agreed upon in January 2014 while federal elections were foreseen in May 2014.

situation as ours, their autonomy is probably mainly due to their speed and efficiency in getting things done”.

6.2.3 Civil Society and Activism Related Elements

Inspired by an old picnic-action to ban parked cars from the Grand-Place (March-June 1971)

The local Expatriate newspaper ‘The Bulletin’ decided to launch a campaign (in English) to ban the parking lot from the Grand-Place. Although it would take many years for the Grand Place to become a car-free area, it was the story of this action that inspired Philippe Van Parijs to call for “Pic Nic The Streets”. A petition at that time (March 1971) resulted in a partial success, when drivers were banned from parking, but through traffic was still allowed. The Bulletin kept fighting. The staff organized a protest picnic on the 25th of June. “Bring your children, your grandmother, your umbrella (just in case)” the poster urged. The response was sensational. But more important here, it inspired the civil disobedient actions of Picnic the Streets 40 years later.

The catalyst of “Hotel Central” (1995-1997)

Another important point of reference with respect to the activist involvement in the present renewal of the Central Boulevards, is the symbolic occupation of the vacant Hotel Central (1995-1997). The actions are an important hall mark in the collective history of Brussels’ urbanisation, especially in the city centre. They are important for this case: Firstly, because they spurred a new generation of urban activists that are involved today; Secondly, as they emphasized the importance and centrality of the Stock Exchange Square in the inner city; And thirdly, as they exemplified how to set the political agenda at the hand of a ‘contre-projet’ or ‘counter project’.

The ‘Foundation Pied-de-biche’ or ‘Stichting Opendeur’ organized the occupation of Hotel Central. (BRAL archive). The name made reference to the housing bloc across the street from the old stock exchange building at the Stock Exchange Square. The fight focused on speculation, vacancy and deteriorated housing blocs, locally called “city cancers”, or “Chancres Urbains”. A great variety of people was involved³¹ but the protests were carried out by a few important locally situated civil society organizations and cultural institutions such as BRAL (the Dutch speaking ‘council for the environment’³²), IEB (The French speaking ‘council for the environment’), ARAU

31 The current mayor and at that time CPAS president Yvan Mayeur even signed the pamphlet.

32 BRAL (Brusselse Raad voor het leefmilieu) and IEB (Inter Environmental Bruxelles) are non-profit umbrella organizations for resp. Dutch-speaking and French-speaking neighborhood committees that organize actions, supports citizens’ initiatives and provides advice to the authorities (the latter only BRAL) with regards to the environment and social issues related to the environment, such as for example topics as public health and polluted air or urbanism and gentrification,...

(‘Atelier de Recherche et d’Actions urbaines’³³), the cultural Beurschouwburg, the (Dutchspeaking) community centre De Markten and the local neighborhood association ‘Comité ter verdediging van de Inwoners van Brussel Centrum’ (Bru1000), people from the Liberal Arts Colleges Sint Lucas and Rits. A coalition, put differently, that brought together academics, civil society organizations, and activists (both French-speaking and Dutch-speaking) in a professionally executed action over a time span of several years.

This is a first for Brussels. Not only do we see a coalition emerging that will reoccur in the Street-sharing actions of 2000-’03 and Platform Pentagone 2014; the protest also takes the form of showing the population what the plot of land can be when it is taken care of and used differently, instead of abandoned. As such they made clear what they wanted (restauration and use of the 19th century housing bloc) and what they didn’t want (real-estate speculation and urban deterioration).

They managed to put the issue on the local political agenda by organizing public debates and leisure activities in the by themselves-repaired housing bloc of Hotel Central (at least parts of it). By keeping the funny edge with actions such as the “Gouden Sloophamer”, a sense of humour appealed to sustained attention of local media.

Their activism will function as a network and catalyst for urban activism in the city. It first of all sprouted a new generation of activists and civil society projects for years to come: such as G. Van Den Abbeele who will successively mount Streetsharing actions, such as reclaim the streets in 2000-2003, that will go and work for BRAL and that will participate in the organization of picnic the streets in 2012. Or G. Breës that will be a figure in the newly created ‘Cinema Nova’ where they work further on the same topics such as vacancies (“terrains vagues, speculation...”). Breës will play a key role later in the anti-speculation struggle between 2000 and 2009 around the South-Station (Gare du Midi/Zuid Station) and will become president of IEB (2009-2014) and officious coordinator of Platform Marolles (November 2014-March 2015) in this case study. J. Segers will create City Minded. M. Hubert and others will start NOMO asbl³⁴ for another type of mobility in Brussels and will create together with Eric Corijn (see later) the ‘observatorium of the pedestrian zone’ (in May/June 2016) in this case.

Hotel Central, secondly, serves as a first example of the how the Stock Exchange Square functions as the symbolic centre of Brussels. In 1995 Brussels counted around the size of 25 football stadiums of vacant derelict housing (expressed in square meters). They could have chosen any of those housing blocs to make their point, yet they chose for Hotel Central right in front of the old stock exchange building, at the Stock Exchange Square. The parallelism with the recent action is clear. The same choice was made by the people of “Street Sharing” in 2000, and by Philippe Van Parijs in 2012 for action of civil disobedience ‘Picnic the Streets’ or by the youngsters who turned the Stock Exchange Square in a spontaneous commemoration ground for the victims of the terrorist attacks of the 22th of March; all independently from each other. Indeed, it seems

33 L’ARAU (Atelier de Recherche et d’Actions urbaines) is a group of Brussels residents organised as a non-profit association, which examines urban development projects, both public and private, and attempts to improve them from the point of view of local residents, by suggesting more housing, more mixed-function buildings, a more varied mix of social classes and devotion of public space for the use of active citizens

34 For NOMO asbl, see next paragraph

that to the ‘Bruxellois’³⁵, the Stock Exchange Square has become the symbolic centre of Brussels, a symbol that was once more likely contributed to the Grand Place or the Place De Brouckère.

Hotel Central, thirdly, served as a strategic example for urban activism. By dismissing an existing situation (real estate speculation, vacancy, political failure), naming it (“urban cancer”) and by exhibiting what the place is and can be. They exemplified it by restoring the electricity and water network in the housing bloc. They refurbished parts of the buildings, reopened the cinema, organized theater and debates, opened a bar, etcetera. (A strategy very similar to the Street-Sharing actions and Picnic the Streets in later years). As such they reformulated a tried-and-tested strategy of political agenda setting of the 1970s: the so-called “contre-projet”. It is this same approach that was used to reimagine the Stock Exchange Square: by occupying it, picnic’ing it and demonstrating what that place could potentially be.

From 1996 onward the protest and discourse coalition operated under another name “Brussel Vrijstaat” – “Bruxelles Ville Libre”. The battle over the housing bloc was won and the newly formed local government of F-X. De Donnea (PS) and alderman of Urbanism H. Simons (Ecolo) would at least pay lip service to the issue of speculation, deterioration and “urban cancers”.

Alderman Simons, Groep planning and Plan Nomo (2000)

It is in that same period of the actions around ‘Hotel Central’ that the Alderman of Urbanism, Simons orders a study for re-planning and reducing the car-traffic in Brussels at a private spatial planning office, Groep Planning (later known as SUMProject, the designer of the current Beliris plan for the pedestrian zone).

Planner, Paul Lievevrouw, proposed three different socio-spatial scenarios on mobility, ranging from a minimal to a maximal impact on the reduction of car-traffic. The alderman chose to propose the minimal scenario. But even this was too radical for the Mayor at that time, F-X. de Donnea. The minimal scenario was, on the other hand, far from good enough for a great deal of the citizens and academics that followed the topic and the new examples abroad and in Belgium (such as Bruges and Ghent). A group of Brussels-based researchers-activists (amongst whom Michel Hubert) organised themselves in the non-profit organisation, ‘NOMO asbl’ in opposition to Group Planning’s minimal scenario. They emphasized the size of the car congestion problem in Brussels and demanded that at least the maximal scenario of Groep Planning would be used.

In 2000 the group came forth with a plan of their own, “Plan NOMO”. It was largely based on the principles and proposals of the “maximalist” scenario of Groep planning, but it went a bit further on two or three aspects. Michel Hubert, Michelle Populaire (staff member on mobility, IEB) and Frédéric Dobruszkes were the key persons leading the effort. The objective of their plan was a 50% reduction of car-traffic in the city centre by (i) pedestrianizing the Central Boulevards and its direct surrounding area, (ii) by installing a new tramline on those boulevards, and (iii) by heavily reducing car traffic in the rest of the Pentagon through the use of a loop system (“boucles de déserte”): a system allowing cars to enter from “La Petite Ceinture” (the ring

road around the historical city-center) but obliging them to leave Brussels at the same place they entered. That meant all transit traffic would de facto have to go around the historical city-center.

ARAU, BRAL and IEB would again associate themselves in support, this time together with a one-person association “Pieton à bruxelles” and with local resident and activist, G. Vandenabeele. The latter will later mobilise around the plan NOMO in the Street Sharing actions.

Of importance for my case study is that the NOMO plan is still mentioned often: by both activists, civil society organisations and the political opposition. They see it (or the similar plan Ceux of 2011) as the circulation plan that should have been used by the current local government. They oppose it to the *Majority coalition's* proposal for a ‘destination loop’ that creates a ‘*Mini Ring*’ around the pedestrian zone and that still permits transit traffic to occur³⁶

“Street sharing” actions: the occupation of the Stock Exchange Square (2000-2003)

When the city of Brussels, as well the regional government, refused to participate in the European day of the Car Free City, a group of local activists decided to organize it anyway. They chose to symbolically occupy the urban highway crossing the historic city centre, namely Boulevard Anspach, at the Stock Exchange Square. Right there, in between the old stock exchange building (*La Bourse*) and the still (vacant) Hotel Central. The platform text that was written by Street Sharing in the beginning of the 2000s will later inspire and resemble (strongly) the Picnic the streets platform text.

During the action, called “Street Sharing”, some 5000 people closed off the square in front of the old Stock Exchange building and partied all night (three years in a row). The Platform included: Collective Sans Ticket, Cinema Nova, City Minded, IEB, BRAL, Cyclo (bicycle movement), etcetera. The size of the coalition and diversity was (amongst other reasons) related to the professionalism and specificity of Plan NOMO that was put forward by G. Vandenabeele. It gave a seriousness to the action that allowed more established action groups, organizations and platforms to join in (such as Collective Sans Ticket & IEB).

The political debate that was organized by NOMO asbl in October 2000 (a month before the local elections) was supported by Street Sharing and became widely diffused. Together they managed to set the political agenda. Mobility became a key issue and the formation of the new local majority coalition was influenced by it. The French speaking socialists abandoned their pre-electoral deal with the French speaking liberals and instead complemented the coalition with the Green party (Ecolo) who had campaigned on the issue.

To keep the pressure, Street Sharing continued organising on the European day for the car free city in 2001 and 2003 as well.

36 both on the ‘Mini Ring’ as hidden transit in the small parallel roads to the ‘*Mini Ring*’

Under that continued pressure and in with the Green party scoring high the local municipal government worked (again) together with Groep Planning to present a new local mobility plan based on the minimal scenario. The Alderman of Urbanism, H. Simons, furthermore, managed to convince Beliris to put money aside for the refurbishment of the Central Boulevards two a two-lane street with separate bicycle lanes and broadened footpaths (2003). But he did not however manage to implement his mobility or refurbishing plans. The Beliris plan was approved by the city council, but the mayor lingered on with its implementation.

The “real estate speculation” movement and the radicalization of IEB 2009-2014

One of the keys to understanding the dynamic of the urban planning process concerning the central Boulevards can be brought back to the fragmentation on the side of Brussels civil society as well: i.e. between (for example) BRAL and IEB.

Whereas both platforms had worked together in the past, IEB went through a radicalisation process in the beginning of the 2010s. In fact, their new positioning and different strategy (with regards to the past) is witnessed in the hesitant, and even wary position of IEB towards Picnic the Streets in 2012; whereas BRAL started co-organising as they had done with IEB during a similar action such as Streetsharing or during the Hotel Central case. This fragmentation is in part responsible for the illegibility of the architecture of the debate in this case study (both for outsiders as for government officials)

Originally, a group of activists coming forth from the Hotel Central actions³⁷ continued to work on the issue of real-estate speculation, vacancy and “urban cancers” in the Brussels’ city centre. The iconic case of the 2000s, was fought out by them over the arrival of the high-speed train-infrastructure (TGV) at the “Gare du Midi”. The issue was however no longer a question of speculation alone, but of the displacement of the local population and shopkeepers in the area.

In the same period a number of academics³⁸ had started working on the issue of gentrification, dualisation and the displacement of the local population it entails in the Brussels Capital Region (Van Criekingen, 1997) (Van Criekingen, 1996) (Van Criekingen & Decroly, 2003).

After the struggle over the Gare du Midi is over, G. Breës became the president of IEB. The neighborhood associations’ platform (formerly known to work closely with the regional government) changed its strategy and radicalized content-wise under his presidency.

They distanced themselves from the political world and the administration, and chose to develop a more antagonistic power relation instead (‘rapport de force’). The previously used strategy of developing “counter-propositions” (cfr. le contre-projet) as a way to move forward and increase pressure on the political decision-making was abandoned. For such a strategy implies “selling out to the government” or at least making yourself “easily ‘recuperable’”.

37 who will create the alternative and activist movie-club Cinema Nova, such as G. Breës

38 at the geography department of the Brussels French speaking university ULB-IGEAT; such as M. Van Criekingen

Over time the network of IEB, Cinema Nova, Brussels-based activists' groups such as 'Prison Haren', 'Patatists', 'Lutte Paysanne',... etc. will develop a shared discourse on topics of gentrification, speculation, residents' displacement (as well as privatisation of public space & Disneyfication). And they will develop a culture of opposition, confrontation and "rapport de force".

When Picnic the Streets then, puts forward its contre-projet by civil disobediently 'picnic'ing' the Stock Exchange Square in 2012 and 2013 not even seeming aware of danger of gentrification; IEB stays on the sidelines and follows with suspicion. Only when Picnic the Streets shifts focus -in January 2014- from its 'contre-projet'³⁹ to an opposition against the proposals of the local government's mobility plan ('Mini Ring') and against the proposals for 4 new Parking lots, do they find each other.

Brussels Civil Society starts giving itself a voice: Brussels Cultural Capital of Europe, Réseau des Arts, We exist, Etats-Généraux de Bruxelles,...

In the face of bi-communitarian struggles (between the Flemish and French community), Brussels Civil Society started giving a voice and representation to the city from an urban, instead of a communitarian perspective. Ignited by a clash with the public institution around 'Brussels Cultural Capital of Europe' ('BXL2000') they did so through a number of initiatives such as the Zinneke Parade, Réseau des Arts, We exist, Etats-Généraux de Bruxelles, Brussels Citizen University, Brussels Studies Institute. Gradually these initiatives converged into an imaginary and a discourse about what Brussels is and an agenda for what Brussels should be. The demands for a severe reduction in car traffic and a convivial city are part of that discourse (Staten-Generaal-van-Brussel, 2010). And it is in line with that discourse and agenda that we should read the op-ed piece of Phillippe Van Parijs that triggered the Picnic the Streets movement in 2012. It is equally in that framework that we should understand the involvement of academics such as Eric Corijn or Michel Hubert who created the observatorium of the pedestrian zone in 2016 --in the framework of the Brussels Studies Institute--and who played a key role in the mentioned initiatives of the 2000s. Either because they founded them (Corijn, Van Parijs) either because they were key in formulating the mobility agenda (Hubert).

In 2000 Brussels was elected as one of nine European Capitals of Culture. The thematic topic chosen for the cultural program and festivities was 'the city' (Corijn & De Lannoy, 2000, de Lannoy, Corijn & De Corte, 2000). The cultural sector which was supposed to produce the program clashed with the approach of the Belgo-Belgian Brussels political institutions. These institutions approached 'the city' as a bi-communitarian territory where their two national cultures should be represented (the so-called Flemish and the French community). The cultural sector, on the other, hand did not understand 'the city' as such at all. In fact, for them Brussels was in the first place a crossroad and a mixture of cultures. Indeed, to them it is a place of 'métissage' and 'urbanity' as opposed to a territory contained by two national communities (Berzin, 2016).

39 Of the demand for a pedestrianization at the Stock Exchange Square

The Zinneke Parade, a socio-cultural and artistic project ending in a public artistic parade in the city centre, served as one of the centre pieces during the cultural capital festivities. They did exactly the opposite of what the political actors desired: they enacted a carnival celebrating the “bastardy-character” of Brussels and its citizens (Berzin 2016; Vermeulen, 2009)

The clash represents a symbolic start, in which Brussels civil society starts giving itself a voice with the aim of representing the Brussels reality in a different, more transversal way. Over the next decade their discourse will evolve and become more present in the public opinion and in the public debate as the consequence of a number of initiatives.

In the aftermath of BXL2000, the cultural sector decided to organize itself across communitarian fault lines in the bilingual cultural network “Brussels Kunsten Overleg” (2002)/Réseau des Arts (2004) as a way of bringing a relatively autonomous voice in the public opinion.⁴⁰

2005/2006, the think-tank Aula Magna was created, an interclassistic think-tank of different socio-economic and cultural fields that aimed for having two functions: (i) build a discourse about Brussels as a metropolitan region and (ii) create bridges between segments and fragments in the city, that need to come to a transversal practice. The Initiator was entrepreneur Alain Deneef, supported by Prof. Philippe Van Parijs, Prof. Eric Corijn.

The process of this movement was reinforced by the national communitarian struggle around the electoral circumscription Brussel-Halle-Vilvoorde (2008-2011). Brussels became more and more seen in the Belgian public opinion as an aberration, as a symptom of a failed state-reform. Indeed, Brussels was defined negatively, as the impossibility to delimit mono-cultural territories. Therefore, the reasoning goes, this territory should be placed under the control of “two states in formation”. Brussels as an institutional-political entity has, with other words, in this scenario no right to its own territorial expression. It would be a place in which two monolingual entities operate. Amongst ‘Bruxellois’ that led to a growing fear for a “colonization” of the Brussels Capital Region by its neighbours. And it ignited the birth of Aula Magna and a politically inspired manifest “Wij Bestaan, Nous existons, We exist”⁴¹ that gathered then thousand signatures of ‘Bruxellois’ in a few days’ time.

The success of that manifest will lead to the idea that the debate could be held with a larger part of the population which in turn led to the “Platform of Civil Society”. That platform included the network structures IEB and BRAL; Réseau des Arts and Brussels Kunsten Overleg; The unions and employers’ organisations; and Manifesto, Aula Magna en Brussel.

And it is this platform that will take the initiative to organize the “Etats Généraux de Bruxelles” in 2008/2009 (proposed by Van Parijs, Corijn and Deneef; Aula Magna) and who will collaborate with

40 See for example the “cultural plan for Brussels they created with the whole sector including all important Dutch and French speaking organizations. http://www.reseaudesartsbruxelles.be/sites/default/files/plan_culturel_pour_bruelles_FR.pdf

41 Written by ‘Aula Magna’, ‘Manifesto’ & ‘Bruxsel’

the three Brussels universities (ULB/VUB/Saint-Louis; Flemish and French-speaking, catholic and laic) to prepare the work for a grievances book and an agenda together for each field: mobility, environment, culture, education, economy,...⁴²

Michel Hubert, by now professor in urban sociology and mobility at Université de Saint Louis (Brussels), will for example play an important role in the academic working group on the topic of mobility. Van Parijs, Corijn and De Neef are constantly involved in the process.

Moving forward, Corijn will facilitate the creation of the Brussels Studies Institute to pool Brussels Urban research on a daily basis. Corijn and De Neef will start with Aula Magna the yearly “Citizens University of Brussels”; Van Parijs will continue working on multilingualism and help developing the Marnix plan; Deneef will become the coordinator of Brussels Metropolitan and Employers network beyond the borders of the capital region.

Put differently, the Brussels civil society path and its discourse is at least in part institutionalized (while resisting a political party expression), their discourse became gradually more coherent and their agenda became more precise as well. But it is also a group of people that form a loose coalition and that will always support the initiatives of the others (without a concerted effort).

Thus, when Van Parijs for example calls for a civil disobedient Picnic on the Central Boulevards of Brussels, in front of the old stock exchange he has the support of Corijn. When his opinion piece appears in three different newspapers, in three different languages and when it calls for another “public space” and “mobility” worthy of “the capital of Europe”, we can for example clearly identify the demands and the discourse of the “Etats Généreaux de Bruxelles”.

6.2.4 Planning Context and Precedent Procedures

The strategic regional development plans (PRD, 2002 & PRDD, 2014)

It is an often mentioned criticism in my interviews that the current local government’s mobility plans are not in line with the region’s strategic plans (PRD and IRIS II) as opposed to her predecessor who did follow the PRD. It is one of the elements that contributes to the imaginary of the *Representative City* (i.e. without consultation, top down, not transparent...) of the local *Majority coalition* in my case study.

42 16 transversal academic working groups in total, followed by two series of 8 hearings for each subject. The hearings brought together all the people professionally involved in the field in question and the academics who prepared the hearing (each time a few hundred persons in total). Two synthesis congresses and a book pooled the information on the existing knowledge and the grievances together.

In September 2002, the strategic town planning instrument of the Region (the PRD) is updated and approved by the regional government. (PRD II, 2002) It now also includes strategic development instruments (called Schema Directeurs) that specifically apply to the development of strategic zones and areas across the city (and mostly located at municipal borders (called “Zones Leviers” or leverage-zones. The aim at the level of mobility is to reduce the car traffic to the “summer-level”, meaning: minus 20%.

In October 2011 the region approves the legally required revision of the Regional Development Plan. The city and its challenges changed a lot over the last years; a new spatial planning approach was required to adapt the urban tissue accordingly. The new PRD, had to focus on the different challenges the city is facing: demographic boom, education and employment, environment and sustainable development, the internationalization and dualisation of the city (Projet du PRDD, 2014).

The mobility-component of the strategic regional development plan (PRD II, 2002) , the “IRIS II-plan” got only approved in 2011; it continues to focus on a 20% decrease of car traffic, this time including the demand for cyclability of every road that is renovated (also the large axis) and “first class public transport”.

When alderman C. Ceux develops his *Plan-Ceux* in 2011 for the mobility of Brussels-city it is in accordance with IRIS II and the PRD II. That can indeed not be said for the plans originally proposed by the new mayor Mayeur and Echevin E. Ampe in 2014. That is why it reinforced the imaginary of how decisions are taken by current *local Majority coalition*.

The Predecessors: 1st Mobility Scenario (Groep Planning, 1997), 1st Beliris Plan (2003-2007), 2nd Mobility Scenario (Simons, 2004), 3th Mobility Scenario (Ceux, 2011)

Before Y. Mayeur proposed his plan for the redevelopment of the Central Boulevards in 2014 (the ‘Beliris Plan’) and before Mayor E. Ampe proposed her mobility plan (the ‘circulation plan’), there had been a long history of planning the renewal of the Central Boulevards and proposing car low mobility plans for the Brussels inner city (the ‘Pentagon’). In fact, in 2014, Mayeur works further on the 1st Beliris Plan that was developed from 2003 onward, whereas Ampe starts anew from scratch. Although both strategies have led to disapproval, the most commonly heard criticism is not related to either one approach, but to their relation; or better to the absence of a relation between both.

The argument goes as follows: “the current (e.d.) local government has separated its urban planning process over different procedures, with one on the Central Boulevards and another on mobility and parking. This way majority can push its Central Boulevards agenda through quick -and get it done before 2018- without having to discuss what is really bothering the people, namely the mobility proposals and parking lot plans”.

What is less known however is that this separation is in fact inherited from their predecessors and the antecedent planning procedures who had always separated the redevelopment plan of

the Central boulevards (with Beliris funding) from the development of a 'circulation' plan for the Pentagon. Even if both plans were being studied and drawn up by the same design office (Group Planning/today: SUMprojects).

The first mobility scenario: The 'Minimalist Scenario of Groep Planning', Plan Simons and Plan Ceux.

In 1997 three scenarios for traffic circulation were ordered by Alderman Simons to Groep Planning who had pedestrianised the city of Bruges only a few years earlier. They developed a minimal scenario, a medium scenario and a maximal scenario for the reduction of car traffic in the Pentagon. However, by the end of the political term (October 2000) even the minimalist scenario was never seriously discussed politically. Apparently, "the proposals scared the hell out of the liberal mayor of that time, F.X. De Donnea, at least to what regards the political fallout". And surely the proposal where not in line with the dominant imaginary of the city at that time: namely that of an automobile city or of the City of Expo '58, an imaginary the mayor likely shared.

It did create however, as mentioned, a serious response on the activist side in the form of NOMO asbl, the Plan NOMO, and the Street Sharing actions of the 2000s. The actions put the issue of mobility centre stage on the political agenda during the 2000 local elections. And the majority coalition was influenced by it. The greens were included instead, whereas the liberal party of the sitting mayor lost its place in the majority.⁴³

But again, when the plans were ready and voted (they were approved by the council in 2004) the circulation plan was never implemented. This time the Mayor was no longer F.X. De Donnea, but French speaking socialist F. Thielemans (2000-2014). Yet it seems he shared the fears and vision of his predecessor. Or at least that is the most likely hypothesis: that Thielemans (as De Donnea, 1995-2000) didn't believe in a city that reduces car traffic in favour of alternative modes of transport and public space, holding on to the Expo'58 vision of the city.

Even the attempt of the alderman of Urbanism, C. Ceux (2011) to produce and propose a plan that was in line with the regional mobility plan (IRIS II) and with the regional development plan (PRD II) went wrong.

Again it got voted at the municipal council and again it was never executed, even though this time the plans already included the necessary process of "public enquiry (enquête public)" and "impact studies", called "études d'incidence".

43 Mayor F.X. De Donnea did went on to become the Minister-president of the Brussels Capital Region the next year (in 2001).

The previous urban design plan for the central boulevards: the 1st Beliris Plan (2003-2007).

While in 2004 the circulation plan got voted in the municipal council, money was already available on the federal level, for the execution of the redevelopment of the Central Boulevards” (from Rogier, across De Brouckère, Stock Exchange Square, Place Fontainas to the end of the Avenue Lemonnier).

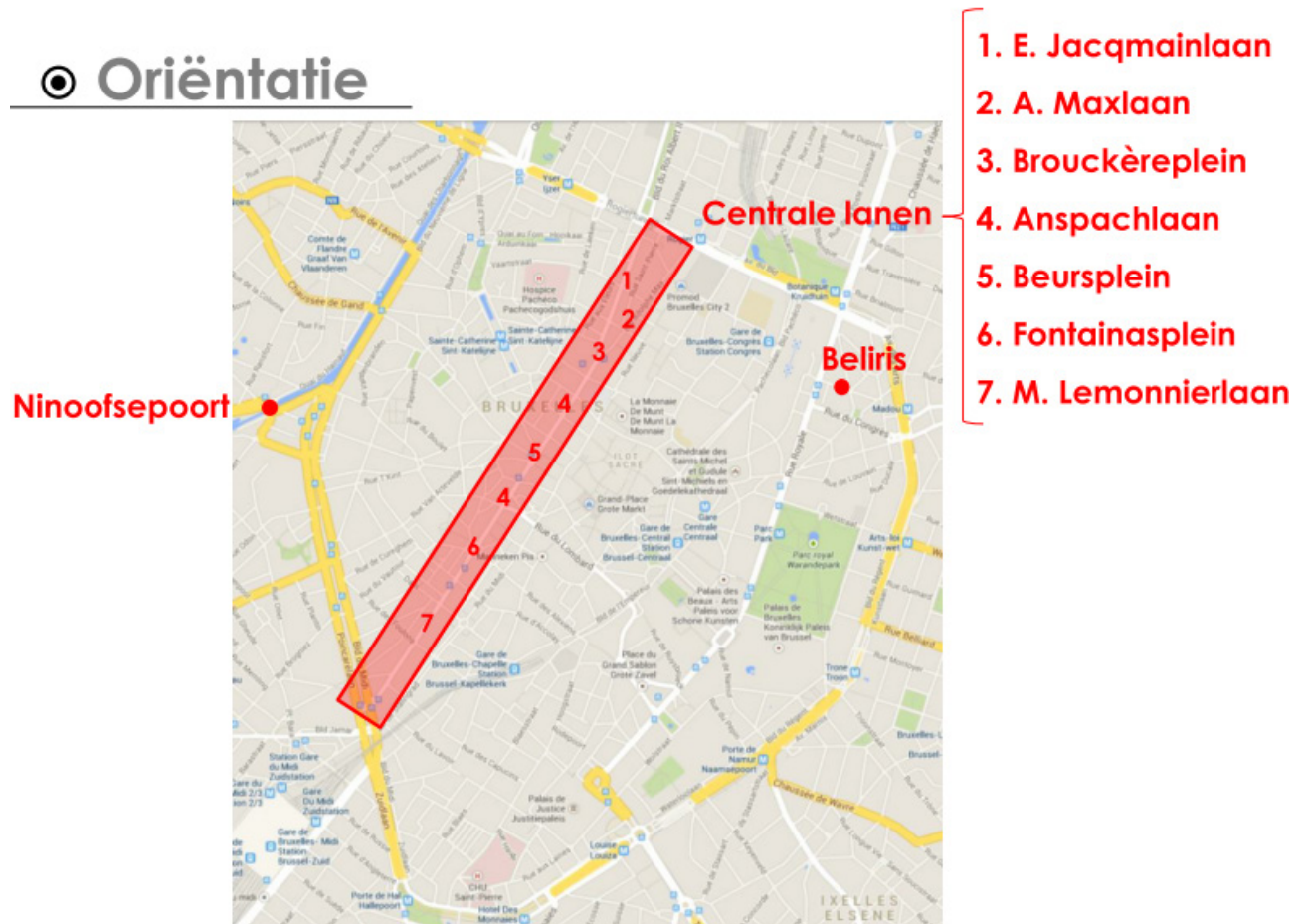


Fig.37. Image from the Beliris dossier. Presentation on the history of the dossier (on June 20th, 2014). In red the original perimeter.

The subject was already then treated as a separate issue with regards to the circulation plan. The funds was originally set aside by the green minister Durant (Ecolo) who was at the time responsible for Beliris (before 2003) and it was later kept in place by Onkelinx, PS (or at least partially for further studies: 1.3 million⁴⁴) who stayed in power and in control of the Beliris money until the federal government “Michel I” was formed (that means from 2003 to 2014).

It is in this context that the position of the newly appointed mayor Yvan Mayeur should be understood in December 2013 when he says: “we have to go quick otherwise we will lose the

44 See Beliris Bijakte-Avenant 11: 1.283.357€

money”. Indeed, at that time the polling indicated that the federal election of May 2014 could bring about a serious shift in the federal government coalition (which indeed occurred).

And it is also the original separation of both dossiers that the current mayor inherits and upon which he builds further. As we will see, that will become a heavy burden and the reason for several court cases.

Process Architecture, Legal Framework, Formal Arenas (Annex Y)

The *process architecture* of the redevelopment of the Central Boulevards happened on 6 separate trajectories.

- #. The pedestrianization plan or Beliris project to refurbish the Central Boulevards.
- #. The mobility or circulation plan
- #. The parking lot plan
- #. The master plan for commerce
- #. The redesignation of the Stock Exchange building
- #. The public real estate plan

The fragmentation of the *Majority coalition's* city vision “to give a new heart to the Brussels inner city” (Bruxelles-Ville, 2014) explains at several instance the dynamic of the urban planning process. Especially the separation of the three spatial planning dossiers -the Beliris plan, the circulation plan & the parking lot plan (that are the focus of this research)- impacted each other mutually. The latter three parts of the vision (economic, real estate and Stock Exchange) played respectively a role due to their late arrival (master plan for commerce), their absence (a public real estate plan) or the redesignation of the most iconic building on the development perimeter, even before the information and participation in the urban planning process of the Central Boulevards got started (the old Stock Exchange building as a ‘Beer Temple’). The rhythm and process architecture of the different individual processes plays nevertheless a very important role as well in the dynamic of the planning proceedings. I will discuss them individually in Annex Y, while emphasizing parts of the *legal framework* that played a role and while pointing out the attempt that was made to create a formal *arena* for public debate (the so-called ‘participation process’ with regards to the Beliris plan).

6.3 Imaginaries of the City and Interests

The first element of my conceptual framework that I will discuss concerns the imaginaries as well as the other motivations that I identified in my case study. The following chapters will describe their role in the dynamic of the urban planning process, but first it is important for the reader to have a view on what is meant by the imaginaries that I will name.

It should be noted here at the beginning that these *imaginaries* are categorizations by my hand and that they are thus part of a hypothesis. For indeed the underlying imaginaries are not always made explicit. But even then I argue that most actors in this case study react, argument, organize or decide with reference to an underlying *imaginary* of what the city is and what it should be for them. And that it is possible to identify those imaginaries. That includes those actors⁴⁵ whose imaginaries are more implicit.

I will layout in this chapter what the arguments are, that I say make reference to a certain imaginary. I will note which actors make use of them and I will corroborate those claims with quotations from my in-depth interviews that exemplify the analysis. Thereafter, I will furthermore discuss the other drivers that motivate the actors in this case.

6.3.1 Imaginaries of the City

General

The used *discourse* of the different *coalitions* and their *subgroups* references, I argue, four main *imaginaries of the city* and two *imaginaries of decision-making* in the city.

Identifying those *imaginaries* is a main task of this thesis as the objective is to understand their role in the urban planning process. They help to comprehend the architecture and the dynamic of the debate. They aid in seeing the wood for the trees to what concerns the great variety of arguments used by numerous *creative individual*, *subgroups* and *coalitions*. It allows understanding the strong -sometimes visceral- emotion that the debate entails and the involvement it generates. It explains in part the motivation to laboriously assemble discourse coalitions, negotiate and write press briefings or organize (civil disobedient) actions. And it is also in part what drives politicians and what makes compromise so difficult in the face of opposing *imaginaries* within the same governing *coalition*; i.e. either for them personally or because of the electorate that supports them.

That is why I will give an overview first, in this part, of the invoked *imaginaries* that play the lead role in my analysis and the meaning they cover more precisely in this case.

The second element that is expressed and that in part motivates *creative individuals*, *subgroups* and *coalitions* in this planning process is not concerned with the public interest, but it addresses

⁴⁵ The explanation about who each actor is follows in the next part.

the private interest. Whether that interest is of a personal nature to one person or whether the interest is collective and collectively expressed by a group of persons (such as a neighborhood association). Indeed some have to gain or lose as a consequence of the new ‘pedestrian zone’, the ‘circulation plan’ and underground parking lots. Think for example of a shopkeeper or merchants, a real-estate owner or a collective of inhabitants grouped as a residents or neighborhood association. They use arguments that concern the impact of the plans on their house, their shop, street or neighborhood. And I will therefore discuss those motivations as well. But the actors that are motivated by private and collective interest almost always include as well normative arguments that reference the public interest. Indeed these arguments make reference to the same *imaginaries* of what the city should be as the ones used by other actors.

So I will turn to those invoked *imaginaries* first: namely, The City of Expo ‘58, The City of Commerce, the Livable City and the Just City. And on decision-making: the Participative City and the Representative City.

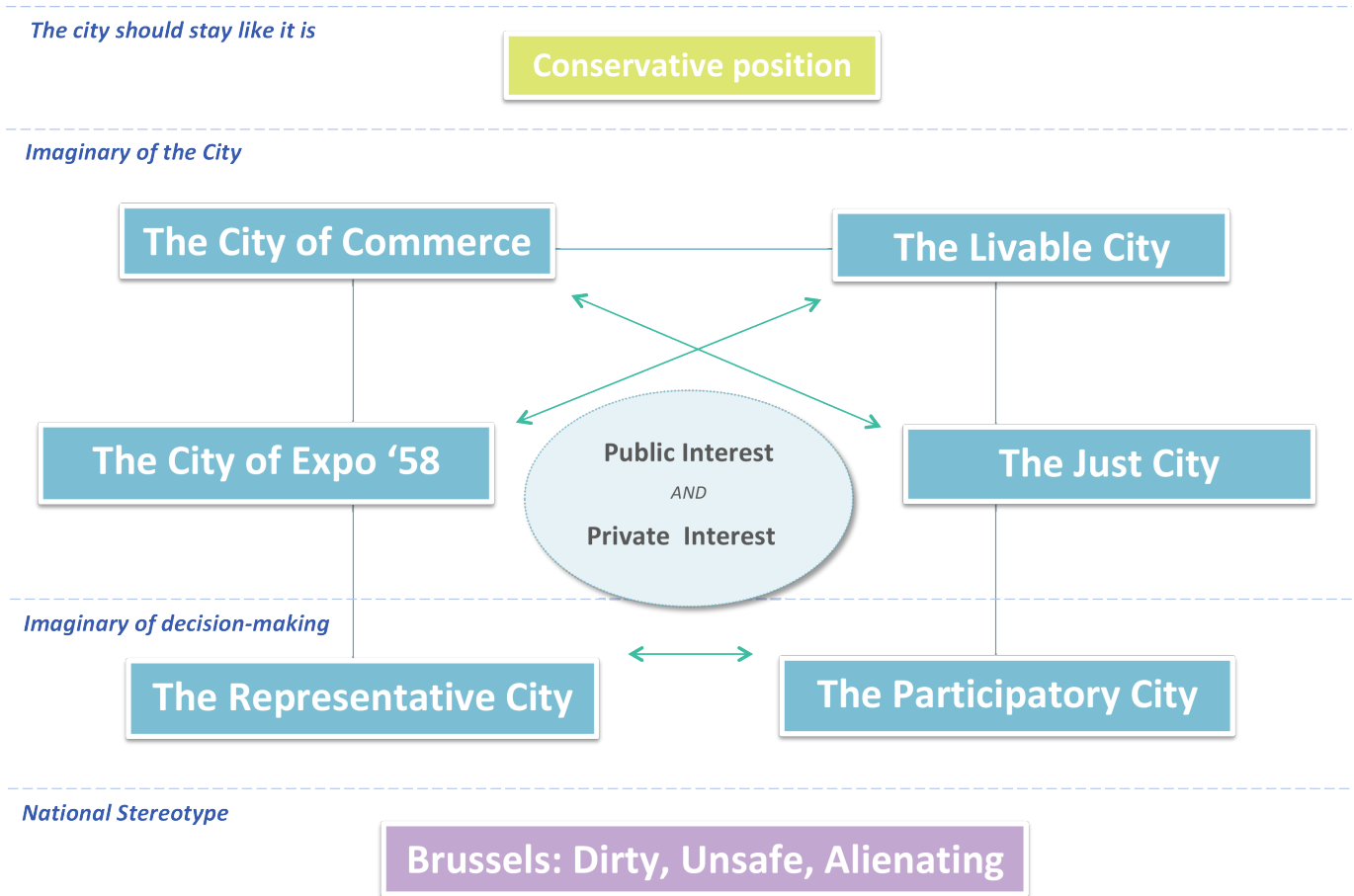


Fig.38. Imaginaries of the city in the Brussels case study.

The City of Expo '58

The first imaginary of the city that we encounter in Brussels is that of the automobile city or what I will call the imaginary of the *City of Expo '58*. In this imaginary, the city is a hub, a crossroad of mobile citizens, enabled by prioritizing car use and by adjusting its infrastructure and legislation to mono-functional mobility use. By that I mean that zones are and should be indicated for unique use by one transport modus only. For cars that means roads where bicycles or pedestrians aren't allowed legally speaking or bridges, tunnels and railings that make their presence practically impossible.

But the same mono-functional zoning policy also goes for other transport *modi*, at least as long as it doesn't obstruct the car use. Hence the prioritization for public transport by metro or "pré-metro" (underground trams) and small sidewalks and bicycle lanes for as far that they don't obstruct the fluidity of car use and parking possibilities.

In this view, public space serves the individual mobility needs of the citizens first; and that function can only be efficiently guaranteed if both car use and parking are made possible and guaranteed.

Individual mobility (by car) is so important because it engenders freedom and even social mobility in this view.

The actors that refer to this imaginary:

Amongst business owners and the car lobby (Expo '58 coalition): Touring, Berlinblau's Merchant committee, BECI

"We are against cutting the main axes," points Isabelle Norro, from Touring, insisting mainly on the economic importance of Boulevard. The countryside is the countryside and a city is a city, she summarises. The city is first of all an economic centre. It is fine to try to create pedestrian everywhere, but we are still the capital of Europe, with a lot of traffic, adds Isabelle Norro rejecting the idea that a pedestrian zone between Stock Exchange Square and de Brouckère would be a boost for the quality of life of inhabitants. According to Touring, the current traffic of vehicles on the Boulevard would be diverted towards the small surrounding streets, where habitations are concentrated in the city centre. People live in those streets, not on the Boulevard. They have no problems now, so why would we like to create them? she said. « (Isabelle Norro, Touring, Convinced subgroup, in Belga, 2 January 2014)

«It is a very dangerous policy. This pedestrianization projet, it would mean the death of commerces», (Alain Berlinblau, Belga, 2 January 2013)

Amongst the Majority Coalition: MR, VLD, (majority in the) PS

«[...] in the city of Brussels and Brussels region you must have a kind of heart. A kind of center where many people can gather without being bothered and where they can go shopping just like in a shopping center. In a shopping center you also don't have cars. Sitting there under somewhere, in parking lots or something. And for the rest no one is bothered there, you are free to look at storefronts, to sit at ease in a restaurant or a cafe. That all, you got it, there too, but the advantage is that you also will, in the

center, combine the historical aspect with the 'more entertaining' or the 'leisure' aspect. So we thought if you really want to respond to the competition from shopping centers, then you should offer the same in the open air: but much better, namely also with parkings, also with shops, also including the historical ... the museums and stuff, [...] For us, it is purely a project that actually puts the city center again on the agenda after years of decay. «(F.B., 31 May 2016, my translation).

For 20 years they have not renovated tunnels, for 20 years they have not created metro lines, and for 20 years, and there is a lot of things like that that have not been made which makes that the alternative mobility... Bah it has not been improved and reinforced. Therefore in the city centre we still depend economically on the car. [...] but at the moment and we can all see this, all the controversy is over the tunnels, and there are some people, fully wrongly, which though that we could do without.. (N.M., 24 March 2016)

They are very conservative, they are very frightened of hindering the car transportation, very, very frightened, and more particularly so in the City of Brussels, Freddy Thielemans was openly pro-car, I can testify that one day we went to see him with R.S. — therefore the former President of X — when he was still President, i.e. before 2000 because he resigned from the Presidency in late 99, so before 2000 we went to see Thielemans in his office and at the end when he accompanied us out he said to us: "the central boulevards are very useful cause I drive on them at 120 km an hour to get home in the evening'. Voila, it was half for provocation, half true. It had a plate with BXL 001 so yes, we saw him passing! (Testimony about F.Thielemans, PS, by H.Q., 14 April 2016)

The City of Commerce

The second imaginary views the city in the first place as a tool for economic growth. With the industrial economy in large parts gone, and blue color jobs going overseas, the service economy became key. The city's public space became an instrument. Bars and restaurants play a vital role in creating non-delocalisable employment. Their terraces on squares and street corners allow for a multiplication of the consumer space and of customers. Tourist shops, hotels and high quality stores feed of, and attract, tourists and middle class city dwellers with a higher purchasing power. Events such as Christmas markets, open air music and theater festivals or urban beaches attract spectators on a regular basis, while entrepreneurs are motivated to undertake creative enterprises. As such neighborhoods should have a specific unique identity that can attract different shares of the consumer market and their public space should be adapted in kind. And depending on the character of the businesses in question these neighborhoods should allow easy access for car traffic and parking or rather for pedestrians, cyclists or public transport. That means that this imaginary is both complementary with the City of Expo '58 imaginary as that of the Livable City.

The actors that refer to this imaginary:

Amongst business owners and the car lobby (Expo '58 coalition): Touring, Berlinblau's business owners association, BECI, Atrium. Amongst the Majority Coalition: MR, VLD, PS-SPA, CDH-CD&V, Defi

Regarding the development of new businesses poles in the Brussels Region and surrounding areas, the reorganization project of the streets and squares of the Centre must be seen as a strategy for promoting and stimulating the economic and commercial activities of that perimeter, now in decline. The reclassification of the Centre, its massive pedestrianisation are tools for the promotion and consolidation of the core city that the College wants to reinvigorate. We should prioritise as far as possible the emergence of a commercial mix adapted to the planned developments and capable of strengthening the overall attractiveness of the Centre. Through its project, the city intends to support proximity trade for the inhabitants and destination trade in order to position Brussels as “destination city shopping” [quote BRU13\ L 2067] (Bruxelles-Ville, Un nouveau coeur pour Bruxelles, 2014, my translation)

[...] and therefore it was contested by saying that Lemerse wanted to gentrify, gentrification, she wants to bring in the neighborhood rich people, well actually I have nothing against it, I find that when bringing in rich people in poor districts, they are less poor.

[...] because the rich spend in the surrounding businesses, subsequently shopkeepers recruit and maybe from the neighborhood, and that money calls money. (N.M., MR, 24 March 2016)

[...] I am attacked saying that I commercialise the public space, and I respond that I prefer that people go consume a glass of beer in a terrace rather than that they lie down on the ground with a bottle of vodka. (N.M., MR, 24 March 2016).

“The square”, he stated, “should become like Time Square in New York”. And the city dwellers and visitors should be able to “stroll between De Brouckère and the Stock Exchange Square, through a complete car free zone where they can enjoy the Brussels bars, restaurants and terraces”. And commuters “should not be coming to Brussels by car; but by public transport.”(Y. Mayeur, January 2014 , my translation)

The Livable City

The *Livable City* is in this case first concerned with public space as a place of encounter. The city is and should be lively and convivial for city dwellers, to meet each other and for children to play safely. It is a healthy place without air and noise pollution by cars. It is a green place with public space that contains trees, flowers and water. It has a design and esthetic appropriate for both passerby pedestrians and immobile spectators, seated on a public bench or terrace. It exposes public art in the form of statues or fountains. It has all kinds of urban furniture that allows for unexpected fleeting contacts with strangers, a chat with a neighbor or a meeting with friends or family. In the *Livable City*, the function of public space can be described as “pleasant immobility”.

This of course does not mean the imaginary is void of specifics with regards to mobility. Indeed, the pedestrian, the bicycle and public transport are key to understanding the imaginary of the *Livable City*. That doesn’t mean cars are absent from the scene, but it is the pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users that have the priority. Consequently, in the livable city the space for car use and parking is reduced to the minimum while pedestrian zones, bicycle lanes, bus lanes, tram lanes (on the surface) and mixed zones for these transport *modi* are maximized.

The metro is certainly accepted as part of the ideal, but it has no priority over public transport on the surface. And for some it should not have a place in this imaginary at all. Indeed, this is related to a debate that divides the group of people who share the *imaginary of the Livable City*. Namely, those people who believe (as do the Expo'58 people) in monofunctional and "efficient" zoning. Not for cars but pedestrians with pedestrian zones for them only, with separate bicycle lanes, separate bus or tram lanes and of course underground metro. On the other hand of the divide we find the idea of transport mixity. By that is meant that these different modes of transport should use the same space. That they should learn how to function together instead of putting a metro underground, putting cyclist on bicycle lanes or giving a vast space too pedestrians only.

The actors that refer to this imaginary:

On the side of civil society: PicNic the Streets, Philippe Van Parijs, Michel Hubert, Eric Corijn, BRAL, ARAU, IEB, GRACQ, Platform Pentagone, Valerie Berkman, Partially Platform Marolles,

Picnic the Streets, means that you can do something in those streets [...] that the street not only serves for mobility, sustainable mobility or unsustainable mobility, but that it also can be a matter of pleasant immobility. But at the same time Picnic the Streets is also "pick", (laughs), like picking it and so gosh, ... that combination worked actually very well. And now people remember it, they still speak of Picnic the Streets. An expression that you will never use in an other context. (Q.Q., 23 March 2016, my translation)

" Belgians are attached to their car and there is even young people, who are younger than me that are like that, whereas for me it is to live badly. (...) People should consider if they have two legs, and a bike, one can do it until 75 years if one is in good health. And actually, if one remains healthy is because one makes sport, I find that the city, I would never want to live in the countryside, because the city is a structure with everything completely close and this is what is that is magic, that we have public transport, because we have the car... euh the car... the bicycle that allows us to do everything in 10 minutes' (V.B., 3 May 2016)

Amongst government contractors, public utility companies or administration: SUM/Greich, Atrium, Admin. Brussels Capital Region

Amongst the Majority Coalition: SP.A, Groen-Ecolo, Partially MR-VLD, Partially PS ("the young garde"), cdh-cd&v, Defi

The Just City

The fourth imaginary that is referred too is the socially and economically *Just City*. It is a city in which it is good living for all inhabitants. In this view the city's functions as a tool for generating profit on the back of the lower middle classes, working class migrants and the poor. Processes such as 'gentrification' and 'speculation' create a displacement of the local lower class population. Either in favor of higher income earners in the case of *gentrification*, either in favor of future

profits through long-lasting dereliction of housing blocks.⁴⁶ Such processes should, according to this *imaginary* of the city, not take place in Brussels and thus they should be stopped. Therefore they oppose the *imaginary of the City of Commerce*.

With regards to public space, they view the city as a ‘Disneyfying’ and ‘privatizing’ entity with squares and street corners losing their truly public character. Terraces for consumption fill the space while events fill the streets with consumer spectators, whereas in this view public space should be accessible for all, especially the inhabitants of the city. Including those city dwellers who have no purchasing power or no desire to spend a Sunday afternoon or evening consuming.

Public banks should take the place of terraces while squares should function as agoras in the classic sense of the word: namely as spaces for encounter of citizens and spaces for public debate. They oppose the trend of extending the “red zone”, i.e. urban space out in the open where demonstrations are forbidden. On the contrary to them all places should be public. Consequently, they should allow contestation by principle.

In this view, the refurbishment of the city through urban planning and urbanism has the potential of triggering ‘gentrification’ and ‘speculation’. So, although they believe in a more environmentally friendly city, they are hesitant and critical with regards to any such interventions.

The actors that refer to this imaginary:

On the side of civil society: IEB, ARAU, BRAL, Picnic the Streets, platform Marolles, Platform Pentagone

“We did not participate in that period, in any of the Picnic the Streets. We watched from a distance. “What is this thing? Because it posed many questions to us, indeed, IEB, one of the largest working areas of IEB is the question of gentrification. And this kind of initiative, from the beginning we felt behind it... uh ... well ... the.... risk of amplify the gentrification process that is already underway. [...]there is a huge pressure of gentrification that brings along a population change ... the most vulnerable will definitely have to move, they will be replaced by another population... new people with higher income who can afford it ... that’s it. “(N.C., spokesperson IEB, 22 April 2016, my translation)

On decision-making: The Participatory Cifrotty

The last two imaginaries that are often evoked concern not so much the city itself, than the political decision-making with regards to the city. In the first view decisions are taken in concertation with the local population. The city is a place where city dwellers participate in processes that concern their livelihoods. Decisions should, furthermore be made in a transparent, professional and legally correct way. This imaginary of how the city should operate is -in this view- opposed to how it functions in practice when it comes to decision-making. The current situation is described as ‘top down’, ‘opaque’, ‘ad hoc’ and ‘amateuristic’. I will name this the *imaginary of the Participatory City*. As “participation” and “Fake-Participation” were the key names used by both politicians and

46 and their reconstruction of more surface (in square meters) at a later date

civil society to describe an important part of the decision-making by the local government in this urban planning process.

The actors that refer to this imaginary:

All actors, except the political parties PS, MR, Open VLD (at least on the local level of Brussels-City)

On decision-making: The Representative City

The Second imaginary that is evoked with regards to decision-making in this urban planning process comes from the political scene only. Indeed, for the liberals and French speaking socialists decision-making happens by them. They are legitimated to do so based on their mandate, granted to them by the electorate in 6 yearly elections. And based on the political majority they obtained in the city council. In their view, the political agreement between parties and government levels is the basis for moving forward. They are open for input from the outside (especially from the private sector). But they do not believe their decisions should be steered by it or that they should organize in depth, transparent and structural participation in which the population informs the process and partakes in the decisions. They do believe that they are responsible for organizing information moments. But if citizen want to oppose their decisions, they should use the legally established procedures (such as filing a formal plaint or go to court) or form a political party.

The actors that refer to this imaginary:

Amongst the Majority Coalition: MR, Open VLD, PS

Stereotype of Alienating Brussels

A last imaginary that played an important role in the urban planning process concerns an existing national imaginary of Brussels that takes the form of a stereotype. Indeed, in the rest of the country Brussels is often viewed as alienating, dirty, unsafe and mismanaged. When the image of the pedestrian zone appeared to coincide with that.

The national public opinion and national political parties (especially MR)

The Conservative Position

Lastly, one of the driving factors for some of the actors (with private interests) in the urban planning process is what I call the '*conservative position*'. I do not mean holding traditional values or believing in conservatism as a political philosophy. I refer to the original meaning from the

Late Middle English in the sense of “aiming to preserve”⁴⁷ and “being averse to change” (Oxford Dictionary) or more precisely in this case study “disliking having to change daily routines” even if that dislike is not motivated by an underlying imaginary of what the city should be. In fact, what it should be in this view, is the same. Whether that is the case for a car driver, who has to adapt her daily road to work, a public transport user, who has to walk 25 meters more to his relocated bus stop, or a cyclist having to use another road, 50 meters further. They are angered by the change, not because they fear it or out of private interest; But because of the adaptation they have to make. Especially when the change is sudden, when it is badly announced or when they have to figure out the practical solution themselves, it can function as a strong trigger to action or at least to speak out (very) negatively.

6.3.2 Interests

Private & Collective Interest

The key actors are driven by profoundly different *imaginaries of the city*. About how they perceive it and how they believe the city should serve the common good. Indeed, they all make their case based on a set of arguments, *metaphors* and reasoned *storylines* that address the public interest. But although they formulate their positions -at least in part- as such, many have private interests and corresponding arguments as well (i.e. they have something personally or professionally to win or lose). These interests drive and motivate them professionally, personally, cognitively and emotionally. They play an important role in the urban planning process’ dynamic. So if we are to understand the role of *imaginaries of the city*, we have to indicate the private and collective interests that drive a significant part of the actors.

The inhabitants of the addressed perimeter (and its direct vicinity), for example, are worried about their street or neighborhood. They fear more transit traffic, fewer parking spaces, more noise of bars and terraces. Some house and shop owners will see the value of their real-estate rising. While others on their side worry about the customers or delivery trucks not able to reach the store or find parking space. These shopkeepers are in many cases not against the plans themselves. But they are in almost all cases at least afraid of the transition period of the infrastructure works that may keep customers away.

The house and apartment owners and tenants are often organized in neighborhood associations. While the shopkeepers and business owners are organized in business associations. Like their individual members these associations often refer to (the above described) *imaginaries of the city* that express a public interest, what the city is and should be. But they do also defend the private interests of their members collectively. That is why, when they are grouped, I denominate the collective expression of their private interests (in accordance with the legal distinction in Belgian law) as ‘collective interests’.

47 Derived from late Latin *conservativus*, from *conservat-* ‘conserved’, from the verb *conservare*

The actors that are at least in part driven by private and collective interests:

Amongst business owners and the car lobby (Expo '58 coalition): Touring, Berlinblau's business owners association, BECI. On the side of civil society: Platform Pentagone, platform Marolles, neighborhood associations

6.4 Triggering Events and Place

Now I will turn to two important additional elements. First, I will analyze the triggering events that sparked the attention of the local government or on the side of the activists, civil society and business owners. Secondly, I will say a word about the role of place with regards to the Central Boulevards, the Place de Jeu de Balle, the Stock Exchange Square and Brouckère.

6.4.1 Triggering Events

As mentioned before, all *discourse coalitions* or important local government decisions with regards to the urban planning process were the consequence of a series of *triggering events*. In this part I describe those key moments chronologically.

24 May 2012: The op-ed piece of Philippe Van Parijs in three languages (English, in The Bulletin; French, in Le Soir; Dutch, in Brussel Deze Week) demanding to cut the traffic flow at the Stock Exchange Square just a few weeks before the start of the local election campaign. Calling on the Facebook generation to do its job and occupy, or reclaim, the streets with civil disobedient picnics (hence "PicNicTheStreets!"), demanding a more healthy place, public space as garden for its citizens, aesthetics and livability worthy of the city center of the "Capital of Europe". It triggered the picnic the Streets movement and *Livable City Coalition*. Their Facebook call went viral (with around 3000 people "saying they would be present").

10 June 2012: Picnic the Streets first civil disobedient "picnic" drew between 2500 and 3000 people and unlocked the decade old gridlock in the mobility dossier of the city of Brussels. It forced local political parties to take a stand on the issue as much as it gave them the necessary support to finally move on this sensitive political issue. As a consequence, all parties spoke out positively with regards to a "car low" inner city and a car free Stock Exchange Square (without exception).

15 November & 13 December 2013: After it became clear that the old mayor Thielemans would give up his seat and be replaced by Yvan Mayeur, the newcomer spoke strong language in the press making the pedestrian zone his showpiece project to be reelected upon in 2018. He declared that the Brouckère Square should become as "Times Square" and that the pedestrian zone will be

“gigantic”. On commuters, Mayeur announced: “that they abandon their cars!”, “the four lanes at the Stock Exchange Square must go”. The *Livable City coalition* starts to celebrate, albeit carefully, even though the comments about ‘Time Square’ do not sit well with a part of them (esp. the *Just City subgroup*). But the speech on a car use triggers a fierce response from the car lobby and Berlinblau’s businesses association (the *Expo’58 coalition*)

14 January 2014: Press conference by the new local mayor Mayeur and his alderman with the project for “Un nouveau coeur pour Bruxelles”. In this conference, they announced the official plans for the enlarged “pedestrian zone” (including Brouckère to Fontainas) and the “destination loop” for cars: a two-lane one-way street around the pedestrian zone. The image that accompanies it is a handmade drawing with a red circle indicating that “loop”. It will be the trigger for Picnic the Streets (the *Livable city coalition*) to turn against the city’s plans as they recognized in it the opposite of that what they were asking: namely *the city of Expo ’58*. That is when the name “Mini Ring” is born as a metaphor (referring to the small ring around the Brussels Pentagon) to frame the proposals of the city as *Expo ’58 proposals*.

To a lesser extent, a second dimension of the plans -namely the proposal to regenerate the city commercially- will trigger the attention of civil society organizations such as IEB: I.e. Later the so called *Just (& Livable) City subgroup* who will get involved from that point onward.

29 September 2014: The kickoff of the participation process triggered a new front on the opposing side: i.e. with regards to the *imaginary of decision-making in the city*.

The popularly attended start of the process drew in several hundred local new people in the urban planning process and it informed many thousands through the medialization of the event. At this meeting the expectations were high. The *Livable City coalition* wanted to speak about the circulation plan and the parking lot plans. The *Expo ’58 coalition* on her side wanted to discuss the size and character of the pedestrianization. At the opening of the process however the *Majority Coalition* (the mayor and alderman of participation) made clear that mobility issues were not part of the discussion while the perimeter of the pedestrianization itself would not be discussed either. Indeed, the mayor argued that there would be the possibility to speak about that on a later (undefined) date. Furthermore, in the meeting the *Majority coalition* proposed a plus minus finished masterplan of what was to happen with the zone urbanistically speaking.

As a consequence, both the *Expo’58* and the *Livable City coalitions* were angry. Immediately after the meeting, the discourse of the opposing groups (including the Green parties in the city council) turned against the way this mayor and his local government were taking decisions. They described the process as “fake participation” and the decision-making as “top down”. From that point onward the way decisions were taken and would be taken in the years after stayed at the center of the debate while proposing their own idea of a participatory city that consults the population and decides in a professional, transparent and informed way.

14 November 2014: The alderman of mobility, Els Ampe decided suddenly (in all likelihood under political pressure) to announce her finalized “circulation plan” and parking lot plans independent from, and in the midst of, the ongoing participation process were the number one question was to discuss exactly that: the mobility and parking issues. She announced her finalized plans without public consultation or transparent impact studies. Yet she used strong symbolic statements to

describe her plans: “the biggest pedestrian zone of Europe (“after Venice”) and “4 underground parking lots of 400 places each”. This confirmed the framing of “top down” government as formulated by the opponents after the start of the participation process. But more importantly the announcement of these far reaching as well as symbolic Expo ’58 proposals, triggered the establishment of powerful new discourse coalitions (Platform Marolles, Platform Pentagone) that including the *Just* and *Livable City* groups (IEB, BRAL, ARAU, Gracq, Picnic the Streets) and *private/collective interest groups* (shopkeepers, merchants, neighborhood associations). Indeed, these groups were established within days following the alderman’s announcements.

14 December 2014 & 31 January 2015: angry inhabitants and merchants from the Marolles neighborhood, platform Marolles, Platform Pentagone, activists from Picnic the Streets and civil society organizations make their voices heard in a tumultuous city council meeting first (in December), and a second time in the ‘general assembly’ at Ancient Belgique (in January). This will function as the trigger for the *Majority coalition* to abandon the *Parking Jeu de Balle* project.

29 March 2015: The announcement by the alderman for commerce Marion Lemesre of her master plan for commerce. Until that moment the focus of the civil society organisations, shopkeepers, merchants, inhabitants and activists of the *Livable and Just city platforms* had been mainly on mobility issues. With this announcement, that did not only change. It made them realize that aside from the absence of public consultation, an economic impact study of the pedestrian zone plan was missing as well. This lacking impact assessment became a key concept in the discourse from that point onward as a way to describe the local government’s method of decision-making. And it will ultimately lead to the court case that halts the planning process in June 2016.

29 June 2015: On the 29th of June 2015 the new circulation plan and the car free Anspach Boulevard went in to effect. This literally drew in every inhabitant, shopkeeper and user of the space in the discussion as their daily lives and daily routines had to change and all national media reported on it as well. Bunglingly however, the local *majority coalition* had only approached the test phase as a mobility issue. They did not prepare a policing strategy or a waste management strategy. Nor did they have a communication cell that was ready to give quick responses to questions or push back on criticisms. Consequently, the first days went sideways, and stories of insecurity and images of dirt, empty beer cans and people sleeping in the street dominated the news cycle while youtube videos of hefty car congestion on the ‘Mini Ring’ flooded the social media. The image that was created confirmed and reproduced an existing stereotype of Brussels as an alienating, dirty and unsafe city and it did so on a national level. Indeed, still today the *Majority coalition* has difficulties to repel the image that was so impactful at the start of the test phase.

For the local discourse coalitions on their side, it confirmed again the way they had framed decision-making of the local government. But now the protest turned against the mayor personally as he was the person who embodied both the pedestrian zone project and the culture of top down decision-making (Cfr. his role in ‘Parking Jeu de Balle’).

21-25 November 2015: The military lockdown after the terror thread did not only trigger an economic downturn. It also fostered the sense of economic urgency in the inner city and the direct surroundings of the pedestrian zone, now that they featured military convoys on its surface.

22 March 2016: The terrorist attacks lead to a spontaneous commemoration ground at the Stock Exchange Square, even though this was far from the blast side. It demonstrated how the people of Brussels consider it their meeting point; not the Grand Place or any other well-known symbolic square. As such the pedestrian zone became a place for grievance and national and international support from around the world. What began as a few chalk drawings and messages of solidarity of a handful of young people, turned to thousands covering both the square and the Stock Exchange building itself. It is in the aftermath of this extraordinary moment (and combined with the wavering political support for the pedestrian zone) that the *Livable City coalition* came out again in support. This time the initiative came from two young women that launched the Facebook group “*Touche pas à mon piétonnier*” (or “do not touch my pedestrian zone”). The page was shared by the members of the Picnic the Streets coalition and many others drawing 5000 likes within days. As such the void that was left by the *Majority coalition* to push back on the many criticisms was finally occupied, at least to a minor extent. Not by the local government, but by citizens who were afraid that the wavering political support would lead to them losing their just conquered public space and meeting ground.

18 April 2016: The chef Mélanie Englebin of restaurant Cécilia refused the entrance to mayor Mayeur and his alderman of mobility, Ampe. Englebin stated that she wouldn’t serve somebody “whose decisions brought her to the brink of bankruptcy”. Her actions became the symbol of what the *Expo ’58 coalition* and the media had been saying for months: i.e. that the mayor embodied the pedestrian zone project, that this is a bad project or at least a failing project and that he himself is personally responsible for it. The feeling of political isolation that had been building up for months suddenly became explicit. As a consequence, on the federal level, Minister responsible for Beliris, D. Reynders, started stalling the dossier politically and even SP.A came out with a strong criticism of the mayor’s attitude (two weeks later).⁴⁸

6.4.2 Place Matters

At four different moments either the physical place, the routines in that place, the institutionalized imaginary or the alternatively projected imaginary of that place played a key role in understanding the dynamic of the urban planning process. I describe them in this part one by one.

#. The first moment found place when the Picnic the streets movement literally occupied the Urban Anspach highway at the Stock Exchange Square. The civil disobedient picnic did not only send a message in the form of a written discourse. It demonstrated what the place could and should be in reality: a livable place where people meet and are not burdened with air and sound pollution. It established an alternative imaginary for that place. In the first place amongst the

48 This wavering of the political compromise with regards to the pedestrian zone also came in the wake of a month of negative headlines in the local and national press about how the mayor had handled the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of the 22th of March.

participants themselves and secondly through the image that it communicated in the media and social media to the citizen who were not present.

#. The second way in which place mattered concerned the physical restraints the design office had to work with. Indeed the most mentioned demand in the questionnaire and participation process was “More Green, Many trees”. The Anspach boulevard however is a defacto vaulting of both the Senne river and the Brussels Pré-metro system. Consequently only a rather limited amount of trees, in specifically designated places, was possible even if the demand and the willingness was there.

#. The third moment concerned the Place de Jeu de Balle in the Marolles neighborhood that was about to receive a large scale underground parking lot. Here three elements of place mattered:

#. Physically: under the square lay a hidden second world war bunker that would have implied the application of strict landscape and monument regulation.

- a) The place’s institutionalization: Routines, daily life and local culture. The square is used on a daily basis by dozens of merchants and hundreds, if not thousands, of visitors every day; and especially in the weekends. The fear of losing the economic activity, the clients and the cultural phenomenon (of the fleemarket) as a consequence of the transit period of infrastructure works triggered enormous unrest: both among merchants, inhabitants and users.
- b) The historic imaginary: the neighborhood and the square had been endangered in the 1960s as the local government decided to enlarge the nearby justice palace. The announcement triggered what is famously known as “the battle of the Marolles”. This struggle is known as one of the first victories in Brussels against modernist and blue print planning. As a consequence the neighborhood and the square have continued to carry an imaginary of a recalcitrant and unruly place, even today almost 50 years later. In my case study the tumultuous protests of the Marolliens with regards to the parking lot, were often described in line with “the character of the neighborhood, as it has always been”. Both by the activists, civil society and the merchants (platform Marolles) as by government officials.

« Then (they’ve or we’ve come up with) the locations, and, yes, especially for the Marolles it has led to a lot of situations and I think that the history of the city plays a role in the Marolles [...] yes, the whole history [...] and on top of that the ‘Bataille des Marolles’ (the Battle of the Marolles) and all that might have happened in the past, but in a way all of that has in a way culminated in the reactions on the parking.” (F.B.)

#. The test phase on June 29, 2015. From one day to the next the urban highway Anspach Boulevard was closed for automobiles.

- a) at broke the routine of thousands of automobile users, pedestrians, cyclists and bus users who's stops were displaced. This break is frustrating for many as they have to adapt both their routines as the way they see the place. It is often described as somewhat destabilizing. Not only for car users who do not like the change. But also for pedestrians who set foot on the Boulevard's tarmac for the first time, hesitantly. The change it made in their daily live was in any case not experienced neutrally and it drew consequently thousands of people in the debate. Everybody had an opinion and often strong visceral emotions about it (as I could experience continuously throughout my research). Or as was put two interviewees:

"then in fact one days they realised that the pedestrian zone was there. And euhhh... And that it was not bad. And that in the end, it was not necessarily won. And I think, conversely, that many people who did not dream about this pedestrian zone, and when they saw it... they said to themselves 'but there it is. And we still do not want it'. And so it is no only, it takes three to four days for... for people to become aware is like a death, probably, but suddenly they realise that... It is set up." (city government official, 20 June 2016, my translation)

"Still every time I come out of the Metro (ed. Brouckère) I doubt about entering the street. When I do I enjoy it, but still,... still I expect a car to arrive suddenly, any moment. It's an awkward experience.[...] It is silly, but often I walk on the footpath (laughs)[...]" (A.R.S, 20 February 2016, my translation)

- b) A second element was how the mismanagement of the first days of the pedestrian zone defined the image of the zone as dirty and unsafe in the national media. An image in line with an existing institutionalized stereotypical imaginary of the Brussels inner city amongst Belgians. Suddenly not only the Bruxellois but even Belgians who had never visited the place had an opinion on the matter and the consequence was one of wavering political support; even if, in reality, the majority of management problems (waste, nightlife noise,...) was solved within days.

Place matters, when changes occur in them it triggers strong emotions. The more central that place is situated and the more it is known the more people share those emotions. Changes and proposed changes trigger emotions and consequently involvement: Either by speaking out for the change or by speaking out and organizing against it. For several reasons in both cases the feelings are often visceral which leads to strong involvement. If not canalized in an arena the risk is one of powerful opposing civil society and business platforms. As this case demonstrates these platforms often have the power to define and institutionalize a way of seeing the government proposals (ex. Mini Ring). This definition (at the hand of storylines, metaphors, names, images...) can sink public support and thus the legitimacy of a project as it did 2 times in this case study (Jeu de Balle and Pedestrian Zone). And that in turn can lead to wavering political support as well, as was the case here. Consequently, it is fair to say that place mattered and that it had a particular powerful role in this case study.

6.5 Timeline, Analysis and Corroboration

In this chapter, I describe and analyze the emerging *coalitions* and how they relate to the different categories of *imaginaries* I identified above; around or against which *imaginaries* they are built, out of which subgroups they consist and how they influenced the dynamic of the urban planning process. And I will corroborate this analysis with excerpts from interviews, images of what happened, plans and validating information.

6.5.1 Triggering Event and the Rise of the Liveable City Coalition

It is argued and substantiated extensively that Brussels has been dominated policy wise and with regards to urban planning by the ideas of the World Expo of 1958 since the 1950's until at least the early 2000s (Hubert, 2008)⁴⁹. By *Expo '58* they mean a functional city consecrated to economic growth and fluid auto mobility as a way to organize the economy and society, generate economic growth, revenue and create employment (Beule, 2010) (Ryckewaert, 2011), (Ryckewaert M., 2012) (Yonnet, 1984). In this view, public spaces such as squares, parks or footpaths are acceptable, as long as they do not hinder the fluidity of automobile traffic and parking possibilities. With a growth of private car ownership in Belgium ranging from 175 percent in the 1950s and 60s, 50 percent in the 70s and 20 percent every decade since, that basically meant that almost all large boulevards in the cities turned into urban highways.⁵⁰ Meanwhile, almost all squares became parking lots, including even the most iconic central squares such as the "the Grand Place". It is against *this* city that 'Bruxellois' and philosopher Phillippe Van Parijs launched his rallying cry to "Picnic the Streets".

Triggering event: the Op-Ed Piece of Phillippe Van Parijs' (24 May 2012)

Indeed, the issue of the Brussels' pedestrian zone became key in the local media after the Brussels-based and international renowned professor⁵¹ launched a tri-lingual op-ed piece in the local expat magazine the 'The Bulletin', in the national Brussels-based newspaper 'Le Soir' and in the local weekly magazine 'Brussel Deze Week'. In his op-ed he pled for a "livable city", with nice "public squares", where it is "healthy" to live, and where one can enjoy "beautiful public space

49 For example only since 2004, when the new regional land use plan ('PRAS'/GBP) was introduced, did regional roads start including bicycle lanes. Before that time the policy was to keep cyclists out were possible to guarantee fluidity and to not endanger the cyclists.

50 Furthermore, according to Michel Hubert (2008) Brussels was in the statistics of car ownership an outlier well above the national average.

51 He is professor in political-economy at the Université Catholique de Louvain (Belgium), and philosopher at Oxford, and an active member of the different neighborhood committees in the European Quarter; involved with different think tanks such as Aula Magna, Pavia Group and the civil society initiative 'Etats Généreaux de Bruxelles' (Berzin, 2016).

that can serve as a garden for its citizens". He asked for a city worthy of its status as the "Capital of Europe" and he proposed to "start that change" by cutting the urban highway, "the Avenue Anspach", in two at the Stock Exchange Square. It is this article that triggered the emergence of what I have called above the *Livable City coalition*.

He proposed to make the zone in front of the old Stock Exchange building an example of what the city can be: that is a public space not polluted by air and noise, but a healthy place. He proposed a zone of "pleasant immobility" and "aesthetic beauty". And to do so, he called on the Facebook generation to do the job and recapture the streets. He called for a civil disobedient picnic under the phrase: "Picnic the Streets!".⁵²

The name of the action 'Picnic the Streets' is based on three discursive elements:

- #. A non-communitarian name (English)
- #. The example of the existing global movement "Reclaim the streets"⁵³
- #. And a once forgotten local struggle organized by the Bulletin newspaper to abolish the parking and cars from the 'Grand Place' by the use of a civil disobedient picnic in June 1971.⁵⁴

"I needed a name as in the case of the Pavia Group. A name that wasn't French nor Dutch. That was important here in Brussels in order to avoid it immediately became uh ... a "Community" thing. That was one. Two, it was of course an operation to recapture the public space. Hence an expression that had some success in the past namely: "Reclaim the streets". But "Reclaim" was too much of a ... uh ... technical term. Well, not technically I would say but an esoteric word. [...] "reclaim", what could it mean? So that I would not. I didn't like "Reclaim". But the "streets" could be part of it. And indeed, there was the inspiration. Something that was forgotten by everyone and that I had found by chance, because I knew the editor, the former editor of the Bulletin. It was actually her mother that founded the Bulletin and she was even arrested by the police when that pick nick happened. "(P. Van Parijs, 23 March 2016, my translation)

52 http://archives.lesoir.be/la-carte-blanche_t-20120523-01YFRC.html

53 The earliest written source for the phenomenon "reclaim the streets" can be found in Marshall Berman's (Berman, 1982) *All That is Solid Melts Into Air*.

54 The keywords that were used in the op-ed and around which the discourse of the emerging Livable City coalition was constructed were: [*leefbaarheid/livability*], [*publieke ruimte/public space*], [*de stad als tuin/the city as garden*], [*esthetisch/esthetic*], [*gezondheid/health*], [*aangename immobiliteit/pleasant immobility*] [*facebook generatie/facebook generation*], [*Brussel hoofdstad van Europa/Brussels capital of Europe*], [*herover het Beursplein/recapture the Place de la Bourse*], [*PicNic the Streets!*]

Rise of the Livable City coalition: Picnic the Streets! (10th of June & summer of 2012)

Phillipe Van Parijs' rallying cry to "Picnic the Streets" triggered activists and citizens to get organised. Fed up with the situation, their "Ras-de-bol" translated in a demand for what they call a "Leefbare Stad" or a *Livable City* (the *imaginary of the Livable City*); which is why I call them *Livable City Coalition*.

PICNIC THE STREETS

The Livable City Coalition

May 2012 - June 2014 (2015)

Shared imaginary and interests:

- The Livable City
- No private interest

Subgroups:

- Open-Ended subgroup
- Just City subgroup
- City of Commerce subgroup

Note: Direct political impact, setting the agenda and by continued pressure indirectly guaranteeing the urban

There is an extensive debate in the literature on the different meanings of the concept. Its relation to *quality of life, sustainability, direct democracy, public health, the natural environment, safety* or how livability is used differently as a political concept and as an analytical tool (Evans, 2002) (Pacione, 2003) (van Dorst, 2005)⁵⁵. But the only importance here is what the activists, albeit bluntly, attributed to the concept:

More public space, more green and esthetics, more breathing space, less cars, less pollution and a car free Stock Exchange Square (ed. as metaphor for all squares in the city).

Importantly, their discourse was in the first place concerned with public space, what it should be, look like and serve too. So although they denounced the way cars invade the city, in the beginning they focused on space rather than on mobility.

In response to the op-ed piece the young Facebook generation responded immediately with three different calls for a "1st Picnic the Streets" on the social media. C.E., Z.T. and K.W. made event pages independently from each other. Staff member K.W. of the urban movement, BRAL⁵⁶, sees the emergence of two of the three parallel initiatives and puts C.E. and Z.T. in contact. A first preparatory meeting is called and a group of mainly Dutch-speaking, and a handful of French-speaking, highly educated, white middleclass people responded.⁵⁷ Amongst the organisers we find H.W. (of the Streetsharing actions of '00-'03) or H.C. (Brussels Situationists, present at the occupation of Hotel Central). But besides these two, the group does not count many organisers

55 For more on the debate in the Dutch-speaking literature on "de leefbare stad" there is an elaborate and very well written summary by Machiel van Dorst in his book "De duurzaam leefbare woonomgeving" written originally in 2005 as a PhD thesis at the TU Delft, for a debate and set of articles/chapters in the Anglophone literature see for ex. Evans' book 'Livable Cities? Urban Struggles for Livelihood and Sustainability.'

56 BRAL is one of three urban social movements in Brussels, focusing on local urban development. The organization is often coined as the Dutch-speaking counterpart of Inter-Environnement Bruxelles, due to the supporting role they execute for local residents' associations. However, their size, action strategies, positioning and strategic visions are very different.

57 <https://www.facebook.com/PicnicTheStreet/>

with a long time ‘activists’ past. The others can best be described as city dwellers who shared the imaginary of the *Livable City*, who agreed with the op-ed of Van Parijs and who wanted to do something.

Beyond the initial core group of organizers, Picnic the Streets or the ‘*Livable City coalition*’ can be described as a union of three *subgroups* that share a strong imaginary of the *Livable City* but that diverge on the matter of commerce.

Firstly, the more liberal and social democrat leaning people who share an *imaginary* of (what I will call) “*the City of Commerce*” and the left wing and more left leaning people who share an imaginary of (what I will call) “*the Just City*”. Within the *Livable City Coalition* we can thus distinguish the *City of Commerce subgroup* and the *Just City subgroup*. Their divergence lies in a (non-explicitized) agenda concerning trade, terrace licenses, the kind of shops that may come to replace existing ones, the uses of public space for events, etcetera. The first *subgroup* was certainly present among the participants to the actions, but cannot be identified among the organizers. The latter, on the other hand, was present among the organizers as well.

But the third and largest group in the *Livable City coalition* is the *Open-Ended subgroup*. This group does not have a position on the agenda of commerce or on the *Just City*. They are mostly citizens with little or no activist experience. They do not really know the debates, the different points of view or described processes such as for example gentrification, speculation or privatization of public space. And they form the majority of people among the organizers, and most likely also among the participants.⁵⁸ Over a period of 5 months’ time the *Livable City coalition* defined the political debate and set the agenda in the run up to the local election of October that same year.

Or as H.C. put it: “A group of people who thought that it would indeed be good to have some more space and some more green in the city center; A group of people who wanted the Stock Exchange Square car free. That’s it. No more than that. And that is what attracted the people”. (interview March 2016, my translation).

As in the case of other social media movements of that moment (Cfr. Gezi movement, Indignados, Occupy) the organizing group chose for a horizontal working method without leaders or spokespersons. They organized working committee’s aside from a general assembly (where the important decisions were taken). And they called for a first protest picnic, “PicNic the Streets” to take place on the 10th of June 2012, less than three weeks after Van Parijs’ opinion article. The call went viral on Facebook. Amongst local politicians a rising awareness grew concerning the

58 As I do not have a sample of interviewed participants I cannot make this claim with certainty. However, I assume (i) that the organizers attracted at least to a big extend people with a similar profile as theirs to the action; Especially, seen the fact that the mobilization happened through Facebook. (ii) I had the chance to talk to at around 40 participants hazardously chosen in short conversations throughout the actions in in June & September 2012, June 2013 and June 2014. Those conversations did confirm the assumption (i). Furthermore, (iii) the first results of the research of Julie Tessuto (Doctoral Research on Picnic the Streets, Saint Louis University) points in the same direction.

potential size and media coverage of the protest picnic. This led mayor Thielemans to tolerate the action, even though he did not support the *Livable City imaginary* that the actions referenced.

First actions and the narrative

The “1st PicNic the Streets” a few weeks later was a success: between 2500 and 3000 people showed up. Like most mobilizing storylines (Hajer, 2006)(Brink & Metze, 2006) the message of its participants was both vague and straightforward:

“We no longer want a highway in the city centre, we do not want the pollution, the dirt and the noise it entails”. “We want more green, more public space and a car free Stock Exchange Square; we want a Livable city. (See the Facebook posts from 10 of June 2012 and my interviews with picnic the streets organizers Z.T., M.N. H.C., H.W., C.E., K.W. between 15 and 31 March 2016, my translation)

Remark again, that the narrative is in the first place explicitly concerned with a demand for *liveable public space*. Indeed, even though it implicitly demands an end to one of the symbols of the *Expo '58 city* (i.e. the urban highway on the Anspach Boulevard's) its stays vague with regards to mobility more in general. Remark furthermore that while the demand for liveable public space and the symbol of a car free Stock Exchange Square is explicit, that the aspects concerning the *Just City* or the *City of Commerce* are not mentioned.

Several local organizations supported the first protest-picnic. BRAL helped with the logistics, the cultural center ‘Beursschouwburg’⁵⁹ opened its doors to the Picnic'ers in support. Think tank Aula Magna's other key persons, Eric Corijn and Alain Deneef, distributed the call amongst their local networks. The Brussels Indignados supported the action and mobilized as well.

On the day itself the image that dominated was that of young middle class families with children, occupying the pavement using picnic carpets, picnic baskets and even a barbeque set. (see Fig.1)

59 In the past, BSB used to be the logistic center for the occupation of Hotel Central. (BRAL archive;

Also see:

(i) <http://community.dewereldmorgen.be/blog/lievendecauter/2016/01/04/from-hotel-central-to-picnic-the-streets-small-panorama-of-urban-activism-in-brussels> ;

(ii) <http://www.dewereldmorgen.be/blog/lievendecauter/2015/12/22/de-bezetting-van-hotel-central-katalysator-van-stadsactivisme-in-brussel>;

(iii) <http://www.bruzz.be/nl/nieuws/city-mined-toetst-theorieen-sociale-geografen>; <http://www.ieb.be/+lIot-Hotel-Central->;

(iv) <http://ehbrief.ehb.be/nieuwsbericht/waar-staat-brusselse-stedenbouw-vandaag>;

(v) <http://www.cobouw.nl/artikel/210921-sloop-van-brussels-hotel-central-lijkt-van-de-baan>;

(vi) <http://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/1995/01/28/belgie-de-brusselaars-laten-hun-stad-niet-langer-slopen-7254645-a1388179>;

(vii) <https://prezi.com/arcgnl7xn8qu/50-jaar-beursschouwburg>



Fig.39. Invitation and pictures of the first Picnic the Streets action, June 2012

Several people of the surrounding neighbourhood committees and civil society organisations -such as BRAL and ARAU- were present.

Following the estimates of people in my interviews and my own observation I would furthermore argue that a majority of participants was Dutch speaking or at least bilingual (Dutch/French), while a large minority spoke French and a significant group of European expats was present as well.

According to my analysis, it was the vagueness of the narrative (with regards to *Commerce* and the *Just City*) that permitted them to unite a broad coalition around (i) the request for liveable public space and (ii) the symbolic demand for “a car free Stock Exchange Square”.

This allowed the coalition to include the *Open-Ended subgroup*, the Dutch-speaking *Just City Subgroup* and the *City of Commerce subgroup*. Whereas the ‘one demand strategy’ (a car free Stock Exchange Square), on the other hand, allowed them to have a concrete demand and potentially symbolic victory,⁶⁰ especially seen the timing.

Political Response

The action of the 10th of June took place 5 months before the local elections in Brussels-city (14 October 2012) and 1 month before the official start of the electoral campaign. That forced politicians to speak out about the subject, as the mayor’s decision to tolerate the action reinforced the pressure on all political fractions to clarify their position.

Or as one academic observer put it: “You get an issue of public policy. I mean, if you let 100 people occupy some space then you have enough with a few police officers. They say: ‘Come on, it has been enough now: “degagez”. If there are 2500 people with children, etc. effectively occupy the street, you can not clean it up in a quarter. So originally Thielemans banned it, but eventually tolerated it. And once it is tolerated and present, you get a legitimacy of the debate. So [...] an agenda in which one had to take position because it was not in conflict with the police, and because it was not a banned demonstration [...] As a result, you get the question: “So, what do you say to those people?” (EC, 28 April 2016, my translation)

But not only did they speak out on the subject, on the 10th of June all political fractions, including their leading candidates, were present at the Picnic as well.⁶¹

Their (relatively) positive reactions can indeed be explained by the electoral timing, the success of the action and the strong imaginary it projected of what the Stock Exchange Square could be (see section 6.4.2, place matters). But it was also a triggering event for politicians, as it came (a) in the context of fifteen year of planning and gridlock on the issue of making the Central Boulevards

60 However, as we will see later in this chapter, the vagueness and ‘one demand’ also handicapped them once the local government started filling in the blanks themselves with regards to mobility and commerce.

61 Both those who would form the majority after the next elections : ‘PS-SPA, MR-Open VLD’ as the opposition: Ecolo-Groen and CDH. (With regards to Défi and the smaller parties CD&V, NVA and PTB-PVDA I am not certain)

if not car free at least “car low”. And (b) in the context of important steps made toward a car low situation in nearby Bruges, Ghent, Antwerp & Leuven and a bit further out in Bordeaux & Paris.

Keeping the pressure

Despite the political lip service, the ‘Picnic the Streets’ movement continued to organize smaller actions throughout the summer of 2012 and a “2nd Big Picnic the Streets” in September to keep up the pressure in the run up to the election. Again, the action was a success drawing 1500 people.

Meanwhile Philippe Van Parijs, who did not get involved himself in the organization of the actions, tried to mount the pressure as well. Throughout the summer he contacted all local politicians individually pressuring them for a written response of what they will do once elected.

All of them answered positively, at least to the symbolic demand of a car free Stock Exchange Square and they went as far as to inscribe it in their electoral programs. But as we will see that didn’t mean all of them were about to let go of their *imaginary* and policies of the *Expo ’58 City*.

IEB’s Criticism

Missing from the coalition however was the support of well-established civil society organisations such as IEB or Cinema Nova because of the lack of an explicit position with regards to the *Just City* and the *City of Commerce*.

As one of them put it: “we were standing by without participating and we were watching it with suspicion.” (N.C. staff member of IEB, 22 April 2016, my translation)

In the aftermath of the “2nd big Picnic the Streets” (September 2012) IEB even came out with a fierce criticism. That reproach was in line with the organization’s *imaginary of the Just City*, making explicit their fear that the redeveloped Central Boulevards would likely mean an enhancement of the *City of Commerce* with fancy terraces and upper middle class events, as opposed to “real non-consumerist public space for the inhabitants of the city”.

“The calls for revalorisation and refurbishment of public spaces in the city center, either in Sunday picnic-the-streets type or in the form of fancy terraces, quality architecture, or urban beach ‘apperos’, have become a constant in so-called ‘urban renaissance’ contemporary politics “. The challenge is hereafter to set the concrete terms of this “value”: is it value from their use for resting, playing, discussing and debating ... or the land value for consumption and speculation? the aesthetic value for the locals or the brand image for the customer/consumer (and the architect)? “(IEB, 1 oktober 2012, my translation)

“We did not participate in that period, in any of the Picnic the Streets. We watched from a distance. “What is this thing? Because it posed many questions to us, indeed, IEB, one of the largest working areas of IEB is the question of gentrification. And this kind of initiative, from the beginning we felt behind it... uh ... well ... the.... risk of amplify the gentrification process that is already underway. [...]there is a huge

pressure of gentrification that brings along a population change ... the most vulnerable will definitely have to move, they will be replaced by another population... new people with higher income who can afford it ... that's it. "(N.C., spokesperson IEB, 22 April 2016, my translation)

But the opinion stayed under the radar and the *Livable City coalition* was formed around its straightforward albeit vague liveable public space agenda. This had as a great advantage the broad coalition it allowed which in turn let them set the political agenda and push through its one key symbolic demand: i.e. 'a car free Stock Exchange Square'. But at the same time it also gave the politicians the liberty to pedestrianize the Square under their own conditions. And that is what was about to happen.⁶²

6.5.2 New Local Government and Emergence of the Majority and the Expo'58 Coalitions

Local election, mayor Thielemans & the first political Compromise (October 2012-January 2013)

In the local election of October 2012, the social democrat cartel (PS-SPA) won 18 out of 49 seats and gained the majority in the city council. The two term sitting mayor F. Thielemans stayed in place⁶³ and formed a governing majority coalition with the French and Dutch-speaking liberals

62 The key words of Picnic the Streets that referenced what I call the *imaginary of the Livable City* were used at the time were in line with P. Van Parijs' op-ed piece (with the exception of his narrative about "Brussels as the capital of Europe"):

[no urban highway], [no pollution], [een autovrij beursplein/a car free beurssquare], [meer groen/more green], [meer publieke ruimte/more public space], [leefbaarheid/livability], [PicNic the Streets!]

The key words of IEB that reference what I call the imaginary of the Just City are:

Against : *[terrasses],[valeur foncière], [consommation], [spéculation], [pour le client]*

For : *[d'usage pour le repos, le jeu, la discussion et le débat], [pour l'habitant]*

63 Before handing over the mayoralty in November 2013 to CPAS president Y. Mayeur (PS). He was until then federally elected in the chamber of representatives (since 1987); and responsible for the local welfare system of the city of Brussels (indeed since 1995). He was also in charge for the 2nd regional mobility plan IRIS II (between 2005 and 2008). In October 2012 he presented himself to the local elections ranked 3th on the list of the cartel of French speaking socialists PS – and Dutch speaking social democrats -SPA ; he got elected with 2.662 preference votes (which makes him the 5th most popular politician of the city after the three "top candidates": Thielemans (PS), Milquet (cdH) and De Courtois(MR); and not far behind Hariche, 220 votes, the second person on the list of his own party).

(MR-Open Vld)⁶⁴. The result was a coalition composed by *subgroups* with very different *imaginaries of the city*. On the one hand the liberals and most French speaking socialists (including the sitting mayor at that time and the current mayor) who believe in the *City of Commerce* and the *City of Expo '58* (I call them the *Expo 58 subgroup*); and on the other hand the Flemish Socialists who believe in the *City of Commerce* and the *Livable City (the Livable City subgroup)*.

After lengthy negotiations and under pressure of SP.A (*Livable City subgroup*)⁶⁵ the local government coalition agreed to make the Stock Exchange Square car free. And indeed seen her *Livable City imaginary* of the city and her *Livable City electorate*, for SP.A the dossier was key. To Thielemans and the PS (mainly *Expo '58 subgroup*) the insistence of SP.A did not come as a surprise as they had pre-negotiated the proposal before the elections. But for MR-Open VLD (*Expo '58 subgroup*) the *pedestrian zone* was a more thorny issue. Even though they had paid lip service to the idea of a car free Stock Exchange Square in the summer, it did go against their intuition and ideas about the importance of auto-mobility and fluidity in relation to commerce.

Confronted with this diametrically opposed imaginaries (of the *Livable* and the *Expo '58-City*), the government agreement to pedestrianize the 'symbolic' Stock Exchange Square under pressure of the Picnic movement was bound to become a first political compromise for which the *Expo '58 subgroup* (MR, Open VLD, PS) would demand serious compensation and for which the *Livable City subgroup* (SP.A) would have to pay a price. The political compromise forged to make the project acceptable for the *Expo '58 subgroup* had therefore a strong focus on guaranteeing automobile access while banning "transit traffic" (I will call this 'the first political compromise'). Put differently,

64 **Government composition:** PS-SP.A, cartel of Fr. & D.-speaking Social Democrats, MR-OpenVLD, cartel of Fr. & D.-speaking Liberals.

Portfolios: *Mayor:* F. Thielemans IV (PS) replaced by Y. Mayeur in November 2013, *Big projects:* F. Thielemans (PS), *CPAS president:* Y. Mayeur (PS), *Alderman Mobility:* E. Ampe (Open VLD), *Alderman Participation:* A. Persoons (SP.A), *Alderman Commerce:* M. Lemesre (MR), *Alderman Urbanism:* Coomans de Brachène (MR), *Alderman Housing:* M. Ouriaghli (PS), *Alderman Tourism:* Ph. Close (PS).

Policy Program (January 2013):

<https://www.brussel.be/dwnld/28045225/Beleidsprogramma%20Stad%20Brussel%202012-2018.pdf>

65 On urban development, the local and regional Brussels SP.A fraction fully subscribed to the imaginary of the *Livable City*, with more green and public space and places of encounter. (See for example the party's proposals in '100% Brussel' - <http://100procentbrussels.be/programma>). Considering the other parties of the current majority, their approach is certainly closest to the ideas proposed by Picnic the Streets. And at least the SP.A politicians themselves had the feeling that their electorate subscribed to the Picnic demands.

THE LOCAL BRUSSELS-CITY GOVERNMENT

The Majority coalition

October 2012 – September 2014

Shared imaginary and interests:

- The City of Commerce
- Private interests:
 - (i) Electoral party interests
 - (ii) Distribution and fragmentation of competences between the aldermen
 - (iii) City competences versus collaboration with the Region

Subgroups:

- The Expo '58 subgroup (MR, Open VLD, PS)
- The Livable City Subgroup (SP.A)

those people who have to be in the city should be able to get there “easily” and “fluently”, such as shoppers from the “1st and 2nd crown” around the city (who have higher purchasing power) and the inhabitants of the city.

«But so yes, I did not necessarily adhere to the anti- car position. So I am not an anti- car. In the city center, on the contrary, I say that we are in a sociological configuration ...which determines that, as the wealthiest populations live outside of the city, ... In the first, in the second crown of the Brussels region, and in the periphery, car penetration acts must be allowed, as close to the city heart as possible and to the pedestrian zone » (B.M., 24 March 2016, my translation).

The following parts explain that first political compromise more in detail, beginning with the most obvious element, the car free stock exchange.

1) The first compromise, part 1: “The car free Stock Exchange”

In the majority agreement it was stipulated that there would come...

“Three urban squares with pedestrian zones (ed. Presumably De Brouckère, Stock Exchange, Fontainas) of which one would become car free: from the Stock Exchange to Rue des Teinturiers (enabling exceptional access for emergency services and deliveries), with as a main objective to close the central boulevards for transit traffic. (Bruxelles-Ville, December 2012)

How did this element come about aside from outside political pressure from *Picnic the Streets*?

On the one hand, as mentioned there was SP.A insisting on the issue. On the other hand there was the previous aldermen of Urbanism H. Simons (by that time PS, see [annex X](#)) who played a key role in 2012⁶⁶ as mediator, in convincing initially hesitant PS party-members. He knew the subject well from his period in office (1995-2006) and had afterwards continued to follow the dossiers of pedestrianization and circulation within the city. Furthermore, in the years leading up to 2012 he had worked closely together with the current Minister for Mobility Pascal Smet SP.A (at that time replaced-alderman at the city of Brussels).

Q.T. on I. K.: “[...] even though I was prevented by the alderman, I actually developed a little further the work of Simons (ed after 2006.) who had ideas of ... but wasn’t successful . I agreed on a lot with him and reused it. We eventually managed to make the Oude Graanmarkt car free. We succeeded on the square at the Varkensmarkt ... even though we afterwards regretted we did not make a full square of it and still let cars drive by, that’s actually been a mistake then, but ok, yes, it is, and so in that way those steps were actually made [...]” (P.Smet, 10 May 2016, my translation).

66 He also developed the mobility plans in 1997 and 2004 and the first Beliris plan in 2003 under Mayor F.-X. de Donnea (1994-2000) and Mayor F. Thielemans (2000-2006)

When in 2012 the cartel talks take place (to form the PS-SP.A alliance) during the Picnic the Street actions, H. Simons and P. Smet were present in the room and convinced the aldermen of Tourism, Ph. Close (PS) and Mayor F. Thielemans (PS) and in second instance also Y. Mayeur (PS) of the importance of pedestrianizing the city center. Ph. Close came easily around. F. Thielemans and Y. Mayeur took more persuasion. In the end however a further pedestrianization of the city center and making the Stock Exchange Square car free was decided as one of the main proposals of the campaign; even though mayor Thielemans continued to hold a more hesitant position (see the late night TV show “Reyers Laet” in September 2012).

“Then there actually was a political meeting with me, I think that Simons was there too in first instance, with Close, then Thielemans and only in second instance Mayeur. To say, yes, we have to evolve to a pedestrian area in the city center anyway. [...] That went well because Simons was obviously in favor, Close actually as well, Thielemans was more difficult, Mayeur wasn’t at the start. He was convinced as last one, but it actually was an agreement between PS and SP.A of ‘we must do that ‘and that is useful in the program come from the municipal election of 2012” (QT, May 10, 2016, my translation)

The Dutch-speaking liberal party -Open VLD- had included the idea of car free zones in the city and at the Stock Exchange Square in its program. But they added the conditions of having an alternative for “drive through traffic” or “doorgaand verkeer” (Brussels-OpenVLD, 2012) and as their French speaking counterpart (MR), they added the development of the zone as a high-quality place for shopping, like a shopping mall, where you are not hindered to go by car.

“[...] in the city of Brussels and Brussels region you must have a kind of heart. A kind of center where many people can gather without being bothered and where they can go shopping just like in a shopping center. In a shopping center you also don’t have cars. Sitting there under somewhere, in parking lots or something. And for the rest no one is bothered there, you are free to look at storefronts, to sit at ease in a restaurant or a cafe. That all, you got it, there too, but the advantage is that you also will, in the center, combine the historical aspect with the ‘more entertaining’ or the ‘leisure’ aspect. So we thought if you really want to respond to the competition from shopping centers, then you should offer the same in the open air: but much better, namely also with parkings, also with shops, also including the historical ... the museums and stuff, [...] For us, it is purely a project that actually puts the city center again on the agenda after years of decay. “(F.B. 31 May 2016, my translation).

2) The first compromise part 2: fluid auto mobility and a destination loop

This brings me to the second part of the compromise. As the quote demonstrates easy circulation in the inner city by car was core demand of Open VLD and MR. Especially Open VLD (with E. Ampe leading the campaign) made this a key issue. The proposal to dig a car tunnel under the Stock Exchange Square illustrated that position in tragicomic way. The party blundered as it had forgotten that the Stock Exchange Square was already tunnelled holding a heavily used, highly frequented pre-metro line (every 2 min.) that connects the South-, and the North-railway station of the city with each other. But the intention and message was clear. It is in this light that we should understand the second element that was outlined in the majority agreement: with regards to the

redevelopment of the Central Boulevards. Indeed, the aim was to close the Central Boulevards for transit traffic, but...

“with a focus on good signalization of the different neighborhoods, public parking and guaranteeing optimal reachability for the inhabitants of the city, employees, visitors and other users. That includes keeping the accessibility between the neighborhoods, the creation of a new bus line for the Pentagon and the development of new entry places to the city.” (Bruxelles-Ville, December 2012)

For the mayor F. Thielemans (*Expo '58 subgroup*) this was not a particularly difficult “compromise”. Maybe it was not even a compromise at all. For he, and many in his party with him, shared the MR-Open VLD’s vision in favour of free automobile use in the city. For SP.A (*the Livable City subgroup*) on the other hand this decision was a real compromise. Yet only in January 2014 it became clear how big the compromise was, i.e. when the mayor and the alderman communicated their “destination loop” or “Mini Ring” (see Jan. 2014 in this line).

3) The first compromise part 3: commerce and tourism

The element that convinced Aldermen of Commerce, M. Lemesre (MR and *Expo '58 subgroup*) to sign up for the pedestrianization was the promise of an “upgrade of the commercial offer, using real estate owned by the city itself, and an economic renewal of the central boulevards”.

“[...] I have myself evolved ... in my analysis by saying, OK we agree, with the Socialist partner, « you want to do a pedestrian zone, but this is not a circulation plan, it is an economic redeployment plan for the city center . » [...] But so yes, I did not necessarily adhere to the anti- car position.” (N.M., 24 March 2016, my translation).

“we will develop and promote a new qualitative identity for the shops and commerce of the Central Boulevards.” (Bruxelles-Ville, December 2012, my translation)

4) The first compromise part 4, redevelopment of the Stock Exchange building

The last element included was that the old Stock Exchange building would become a new cultural and touristic place. This demand seemingly came from the PS and was later followed up by Alderman of Tourism, Ph. Close. Even though it had been written in the Majority agreement of December 2012 (Bruxelles-Ville, December 2012), it is only in May 2014 that the public learns that the building will become a modern museum showcasing Belgium’s’ beer history and heritage – a “beer temple”.⁶⁷ Indeed the project had not been put forward to the population nor had it been integrated in the participation procedures concerning the Central Boulevards. It will galvanise small amounts of frustration throughout the urban planning process.

67 With the press briefing of 5 May 2015 announcing the opening of the tender by the Alderman Ph. Close. « The call for tenders is launched for the refurbishment of the Stock Exchange Palace»

Response of The Livable City Coalition and first signs of the Expo '58 Coalition (January-November 2013)

Response of the Livable City Coalition

Picnic the Streets has just gained its first victory. The Stock Exchange Square would become car free, i.e. the symbolic demand of the Livable City coalition. And the De Brouckère Square and Fontainas Square will be at least partially pedestrianized as well. For months it was clear that something would happen, but a symbolic clean cut of traffic at the Stock Exchange was a clear triumph for the Picnic the Streets. What would happen with the newly won public space and how the mobility dimension would be dealt with was still unclear to them. So the Picnic movement celebrated its victory. The only doubt they articulated concerned their fear for lip service: whether the declarations would remain stuck on paper; or whether they would be realized. Indeed, 15 years of gridlock on the issue had fed the necessary disbelief over the effective implementation of promises, hence their newly baptized slogan “First seeing then believing” and the announcement of new actions for the spring of 2013.

Important to indicate is that while there had been communication by the *Majority coalition* about their ‘mobility’ and ‘commerce’ intentions, these topics were not picked up by the Picnic movement at that time. One reason therefore, was that the city had not communicated with strong symbolic expressions. Another reason was the lack of knowledge on the more technical mobility issues in general in the *Livable City Coalition*, as well as the absence of a clear position with regards to commerce (among the *Open-Ended subgroup*, the largest group among the organisers).

While Picnic the Street took a winter break, IEB continued to stay on the side-lines. Despite the formal majority agreement they did not get involved. That seemed to be a consequence of both workload (with regards to other issues) as disbelief about the intentions of F. Thielemans and his majority to actually realise the pedestrian zone and circulation plan.

In retrospect, it seems both Picnic the Streets as IEB were right to doubt. Despite a large press conference held by the city council on the 24th of May 2013 (including all the related aldermen) under the title: “As one man behind a low traffic pentagon”, it seems Thielemans did not start working on the dossier at all. Indeed, for as far as I can see, no coordinator was appointed to work on the dossier within the administration, nor were there political talks with Beliris (who would fund the project) or with the Brussels Capital Region (who would have to fund small complementary parts of the project).

But nonetheless, in June 2013 Thielemans asked the organisers of Picnic the Streets publically, in a press statement, to go elsewhere: to other municipalities “as we are already doing what you asked for”. PicNic the Streets had in fact discussed the idea in August 2012 and they thought it would recapture the attention and in turn, indirectly, pressure the mayor of Brussels as well. So they decided to respond by actually organizing two more civil disobedient Picnic’s: this time in Ixelles (Chausée d’Ixelles) and Molenbeek (Porte de Ninove) in September 2013.

MORE

PICNIC ~~THE~~ STREETS

WEEKEND MENU

13 & 15 / 09 / 2013

1 HORS D'OEUVRE

FRIDAY 13TH

TENUE "CYCLISTE ACCOÛTÉ SOUHAITÉ"

A CRITICAL BIKE TOUR

IXELLES

CRITICAL MASS

MOLENBEEK

LE DÉPART **19H** PORTE DE NAMUR AANKOMST 20U15 NINOOFSEPOORT

2 MAIN COURSES

DIMANCHE/ZONDAG

PICNIC THE STREETS IXELLES
PLACE FERNAND COCOPEIN
15 SEP 12HU

2 PIC NICS!

TAKE YOUR BIKE. THE BUS OR TRAM
AND COME TO BOTH PICNICS

15 SEPT 12H/U

PICNIC
THE STREETS
2013

ZOH. 15 SEPTEMBER 12U NINOOFSE POORT
DIM. 15 SEPTEMBRE 12h. PORTE DE NINOVE

First signs of the Expo '58 coalition

With Picnic the Street setting the agenda the car lobby 'Touring' and the 'businesses association' of Alain Berlinbau had been weary for months. But when they got wind of the local governments plans to indeed pedestrianize a part of the Anspach Boulevard they came out swinging through their personal networks and in the press. They strongly argued that the instauration of such a zone would mean "the dead of commerce". And declared their disagreement with the Picnic movement and called upon the city to arrest the civil disobedient Picnic'ers.

"The picnics have already cost taxpayers nearly 30,000 euros. Each time 12 to 14 agents are sent sometimes for one protester. If picnickers are again occupying the Stock Exchange Square this Sunday outside the authorized hours, the police must remove them." (Touring, Latest News, 8 September 2012, my translation)

This is what I call the first signs of the *Expo '58 coalition*. Indeed, at that first phase they do not form a *coalition* with other business owners, lobbies and organizations yet. But on the basis of that same message, they will do so one year later.

Both Touring and Berlinbau share two views (that I name) "*the imaginary of the City of Commerce*" and "*the imaginary of the City of Expo '58*". In their opinion, the city as it is and should be was in grave danger, as economic growth depends on the ease of automobiles to reach and park at their destination. And although a compromise was made to compensate for the pedestrian zone in line with their *imaginary of the city*, the only thing they saw was the symbol of the *Livable City Coalition* (or of what they call "les Anti-voitures") of a car free stock exchange square and thus the dead of one of the symbols of the *Expo '58 city*: the Anspach Boulevards or urban highway. They imagined their revenue and the economic growth of the city plummeting, as the key principles of Expo '58 would no longer serve as guiding principle.

The alderman of mobility initiates the preliminary studies (Spring 2012-October 2013)

In contrast with Thielemans who procrastinated, the Aldermen of Mobility, E. Ampe (Open VLD & *Expo '58 subgroup*) started 'her part of the job', meaning the development of a circulation plan around the pedestrian zone "to guarantee the connection between the neighborhoods" and "keep the city accessible and fluid for public transport, pedestrians, cyclists and cars".

"This traffic plan aims to reorganize the traffic in the Pentagon, in order to maintain or even improve both the accessibility and the attractiveness, to ensure a more fluid access for public transportation"

TOURING & ALAIN BERLINBAU'S BUSINESSES ASSOCIATION

(first signs of The Expo '58 coalition)

December 2012 - December 2013

Shared imaginary and interests:

- The City of Commerce
- The City of Expo '58
- Private and collective interests are important in this coalition

Subgroups:

No subgroups yet (that I can identify)

NOTE: Impact obliging the Majority coalition to take a firm stance with regards to its symbolic decision to pedestrianize the Anspach Boulevard

and traffic either as a pedestrian, cyclist or automobile.” (F.B., Press Release, ‘Les comptages du plan de circulation de Bruxelles’, 14 October 2013, my translation)

She moved forward in the first part of 2013 and ordered a study of the automobile flux (in the Pentagon) with regards to local and transit traffic. The private consultancy firm ‘Flow’ was appointed and started counting at 24 key crossroads on the 14th of October 2013. (What is remarkable is that Ampe did not rely on the elaborate work carried out by her predecessor Christiaan Ceux, CDH - in 2011).

In the meantime the alderman hired a private consultancy firm, Technum (Tracetebe) ⁶⁸ to model the newly gathered and existing information on buses, bicycles and pedestrians in the inner-city. Despite the involvement and financing of Bruxelles Mobilité (the regional administration for mobility) of the model that Technum used (they in fact used it in the Region’s offices, on their computers), the regional/city administration was not actively involved in testing the different scenarios, nor in the interpretation of the outcomes (that later, at least in part, appeared to be a serious over-estimation), nor in deciding which plan would be best (or if it was in accordance with the mobility plan of the Region, the Iris 2, in the PRD II -the overall strategic plan for the region, see 6.2, 2002). Put differently, the tests did happen in the offices and on the computers of the region by Technum consultancy, but the people of the regional administration themselves were not actively involved.

Interviewer: “And how have they had access to the model, if you were not yet in conversations?”

Respondent: “[...] it was a joint study between the Region and the City, and so it was carried out, well actually the study was financed by the region. It is the exploitation of the model developed by the Region. And simply what happened is that all the scenarios that have been tested, they were tested directly by the city with the design consultancy firm (ed. Technum) [...].” (12 May 2016, my translation)

Els Ampe and Technum used two different models, both covering issues on passengers and freight distribution (MUSTI and FRETURB).

[...] and uh we have chosen a scenario chosen from it, then it was still simulated a second time in the model the Region also had. They have a Mousti model and a ... they have two models, one model that was used by Technum and then Mousti. So they have applied another time Mousti on it. Mousti assumes that 20% of traffic is looking for an alternative. So we have tested it both, conservatively in (ed. other) the model wherein we say that there is no traffic that changes its mind or mentality. And Mousti to be positive. And so we could then see what could be the problem streets, even though we have overestimated it [...]” (F.B. 31 May 2016, my translation).

68 Technum has a long-standing proven experience on mobility issues in Brussels both at the local and metropolitan scale.

So indeed the impact of the new mobility plan had been tested with regards to traffic congestion. Even though several people have claimed that even this limited impact study (that did not include economic or social effects) was fraud. Or as one person in the administration put it:

"[...] Yes that's right, so there were the City and the Region, we had a service contract with Technum, who made a series of models, a variety of scenarios. And I think for them also... for them it also went wrong after a while because they were eventually asked to ... arrange the results a little bit according to the the ... what was finally the political will to have this loop with two -way all along." (Respondent , 12 May 2016, my translation).

6.5.3 A New Mayor and a Renewed Compromise

"The pedestrian zone" as flagship project of the new mayor (December 2013)

On the 4th of November Mayor Thielemans stepped down after a 13 year rule of the Brussels town hall. Meanwhile elected official and CPAS President Y. Mayeur was indicated to replace him as Mayor of Brussels. Even before he is officially appointed, he immediately took a firm stance on the pedestrianization project. On the day of his inauguration, the 13th of December, he will declare:

"The four lane traffic in front of the Stock Exchange, it has to go!"

"That they abandon their cars!"

"We will make the Stock Exchange, De Brouckère and the zone in between car free" (ref)

"I want a gigantic pedestrian zone" (ref)

(Y. Mayeur, 13 December 2013, my translation)

Y. Mayeur (*Expo '58 subgroup*), who originally was difficultly convinced, now had put his mind to it. He decided to make the pedestrianization his flagship project and put it at the heart of his 4 year term. He even went a step further than the majority agreement of January 2012.

Whereas the first political agreement focused on the Stock Exchange Square and a "low car"-zone towards Fontainas (starting from the Rue des Teinturiers); he focused on the extension towards the Brouckère Square.

"The square", he stated, "should become like Time Square in New York". And the city dwellers and visitors should be able to "stroll between De Brouckère and the Stock Exchange, through a complete car

free zone where they can enjoy the Brussels bars, restaurants and terraces". And commuters "should not be coming to Brussels by car; but by public transport."(Y. Mayeur, January 2014, my translation)

What led him to this decision is probably a combination of technical reasons (in fact there are technically speaking not so many options once you make the Stock Exchange fully car free) and his personal focus on De Brouckère.

What is clear, is that Y. Mayeur wanted to earmark this dossier as a means to become re-elected in the next elections scheduled for 2018.⁶⁹ His knowledge about the case that had been politically blocked for 15 years, however, led him also to declare:

"We must decide quickly otherwise I know what will happen. We will be confronted with a bunch of experts and committees which will give their, of course, negative opinion. Besides legal procedures which are a real pleasure" (Y. Mayeur, January 2014, my translation).

Put differently, he stated that they (the *Majority coalition*) had to move quickly before the dossier would get blocked again "by people with bad intentions". And indeed, with less than 5 years to the next elections, Y. Mayeur kick started and accelerated the dossier at a hasty pace.

In January 2014 the vice president of the PS and federal minister for Beliris, L. Onkelinx (PS), invited the Director General of Beliris, C. Bossut, for an exceptional meeting over the budget once informally set aside for the renewal of the area (in 2003). The new Mayor Mayeur and "first alderman" of the city of Brussels, A. Courtois, were present as well. They asked the Beliris administration to start working on the dossier at full speed "so it can be finished by 2018". And even though the "avenant 11"⁷⁰ did not foresee the funds (only 1.2 million was set aside at that time for further studies), a political unwritten agreement existed for about 13 million, and in the negotiations ultimately an envelope of around 18 million was negotiated.

Although this was perfectly legal, it was nevertheless remarkable, as in 5 months' time new federal and regional elections would take place (May 2014). Consequently, the next federal government would in principle have to set aside the envelope they agreed upon in January that same year.

The phrase of one alderman "*We had to go quickly, otherwise the money would have been lost*" should, I believe, be interpreted in the light of those elections. A different coalition at the federal and/or regional policy level might not have approved the agreement. However, by putting the dossier in motion, the next federal minister would have to decide to stop a running project which was probably less likely to happen than the disapproval of a newly proposed project.

69 This is also confirmed by the timeframe put forward Beliris will be asked to finish the works before 2018; even if that is in their point of view technically impossible.

70 the contract between the regional and the federal public entities about their spending, decided upon by the Beliris council of federal and Regional ministers.

First reactions: car lobby and business holders' association

The new mayor's choice for strong language and for making the *pedestrian zone* his flagship project suddenly made things more serious (even if the enlarged project was not officially announced yet). Beforehand, the car lobby Touring or Berlinbau's business holders association (i.e. the emerging *Expo '58 coalition*) didn't really believe Thielemans would have cut the Central Boulevards. But suddenly the project became much more likely to be implemented. And consequently, they came out with strong statements arguing that the countryside was there for pedestrians, whereas the city serves economic interests first, and that that necessitates a lot of car traffic; especially in the Capital of Europe.

A potential reduction of car traffic is consequently unthinkable. Let alone cutting the Boulevard Anspach. Furthermore, they argued that it would make life in the city of Brussels worse, as the decision would lead to transit traffic in the small streets around the pedestrian zone. (An argument that soon after will be used by the *Livable City* and the *Livable & Just City coalition*.)

"We are against cutting the main axes," points Isabelle Norro, from Touring, insisting mainly on the economic importance of Boulevard. The countryside is the countryside and a city is a city, she summarises. The city is first of all an economic centre. It is fine to try to create pedestrian everywhere, but we are still the capital of Europe, with a lot of traffic, adds Isabelle Norro rejecting the idea that a pedestrian zone between Stock Exchange Square and de Brouckère would be a boost for the quality of life of inhabitants. According to Touring, the current traffic of vehicles on the Boulevard would be diverted towards the small surrounding streets, where habitations are concentrated in the city centre. People live in those streets, not on the Boulevard. They have no problems now, so why would we like to create them? she said. « (Isabelle Norro, Touring, Convinced subgroup, in Belga, 2 January 2014)

A second criticism came from Alain Berlinbau of the 'businesses association of the city centre':

"An important concern regarding the shops is also expressed on the side of the businesses association of the city centre. This is a very dangerous policy. This pedestrianization projet, it would mean the death of commerces », concludes immediately Alain berlinblau, President of the Association. "There are already very few access routes leading to the city centre. And we know that 60 % of business customers of Boulevard Anspach do their shopping coming by car. Referring to the examples of Montois et Carolo, Alain Berlinblau considers that that type of projects is doomed to business' failure. "We see how this has happened in other cities of Belgium "; he states (A. Berlinblau , convinced subgroup in Belga, 2 January 2014)

Put differently, he re-stated that the pedestrianization would be "the dead of the commercial establishments" or "*mort des commerces*". For indeed, "60% of all clientele in the avenue Anspach comes by car".⁷¹

71 This figure is in contradiction with the existing data that show that between 12 and 20% of the pentagone clientele come by car. It is of course likely that their positioning on the urban highway leads them to have more clients that come by car. But it seems highly unlikely that it would be an increase of 40-50%.

First Reactions of the Livable City coalition: “First seeing then believing”

The Picnic movement did not pick up on the Time Square comments and the looming commercial plans. Yet, the mayor did also mention two new underground parking lots: i.e. at the Rouppe Square and the Dansaert neighborhood. And civil society organisation BRAL and the Picnic movement did respond negatively to it in the press. (J.Vandenbroele, Nieuwsblad, 21 December 2013). However, their main slogan continued to regard the pedestrian zone: “First Seeing then believing”. (And despite this moment of attention for the parking lot plans, it is only in November 2014 that the issue will start to play a key role in galvanising the opposition).

‘A New Heart for Brussels’, the official project is announced. The ‘second’ political compromise (January 2014)

In 6 weeks time Mayor Y. Mayeur made a deal with Beliris (see 6.2.2 and annex Y, A) concerning the funding for the pedestrian zone and he developed, with his aldermen, both a more global vision and a new political compromise. On the 31st of January 2014, Mayeur presented his plan for “A New Heart for Brussels” (Bruxelles-Ville, 2014) including the vastly enlarged pedestrian zone (i.e. triggering event, [see 6.4](#)):

The Pedestrian Zone: in purple (in green, the existing “car low” and “car free” pedestrian zone or “zone comfort”)



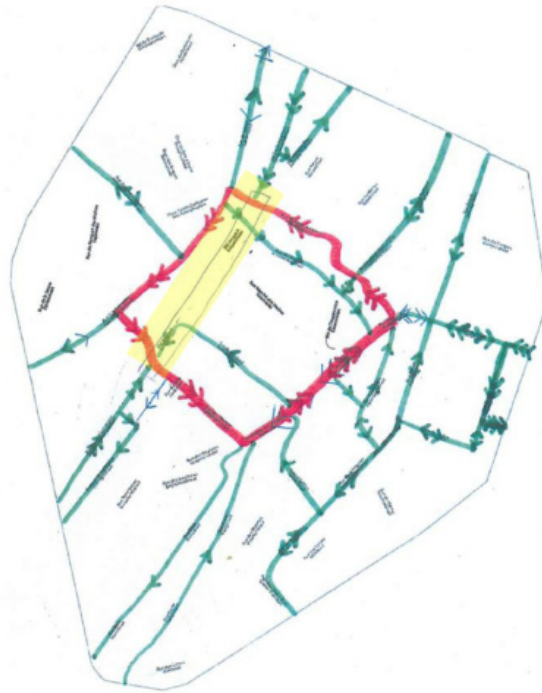
Fig.40. First proposal for the enlarged pedestrian zone in January 2014

Meanwhile, Alderman of Mobility E. Ampe presented her first proposal for “car fluidity” and “keeping the neighborhoods connected”, by the use of a “destination loop”: a two-lane one-way street for cars that circled the pedestrian zone.

On demand of the mayor, the plan indicated the central destination circle in red. In the second plan, we find a similar emphasis marked this time in blue.

● **Verkeersplan:**

- Samenwerking Stad Brussel en Brussel Mobiliteit
- Centrumlanen niet langer ‘autostrade’
- Transitverkeer uit centrum naar Kleine Ring
- Bestemmingsverkeer via bedieningslus naar (openbare) parkings leiden



● **Voetgangerszone:**

Bestaande zone
= 280.000 m²

Uitbreiding
= 220.000 m²

Totaal
= 500.000 m²
= 50 hectare

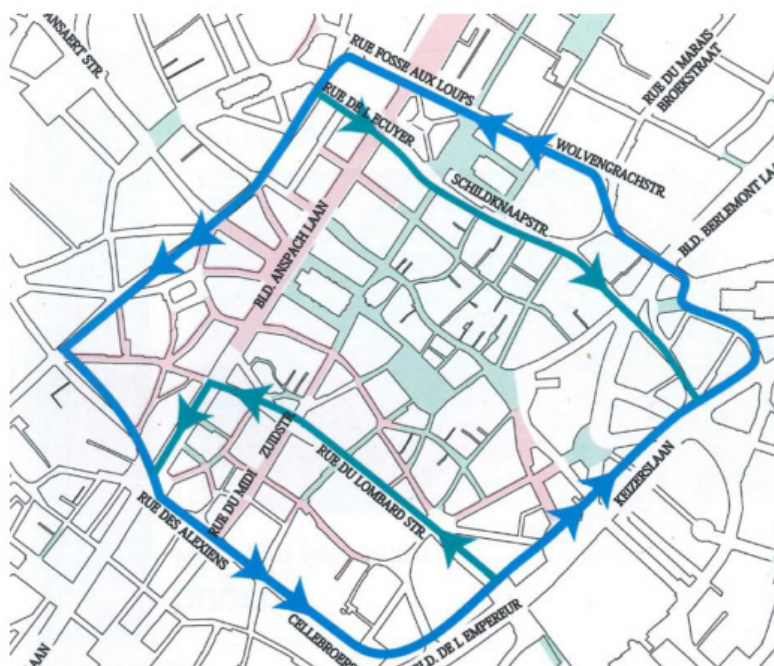


Fig.41. First representation (handdrawn) of the Mini Ring. January, 2014; and a more detailed representation

That “destination circle” of the alderman furthermore included approximately 1600 new parking places spread across four different underground parking lots, situated in the inner city...

“most likely at Yser Square, Nouveau Marché aux Grains Square, Rouppe Square and the Jeux de Balles Square” (Alderman E. Ampe, January 2014)

According to the alderman, those places were chosen “where parking lots were most needed”. The thinking behind it was basically to locate them in the “periphery” of the Pentagone. Circled in red “P” we can see the foreseen locations:

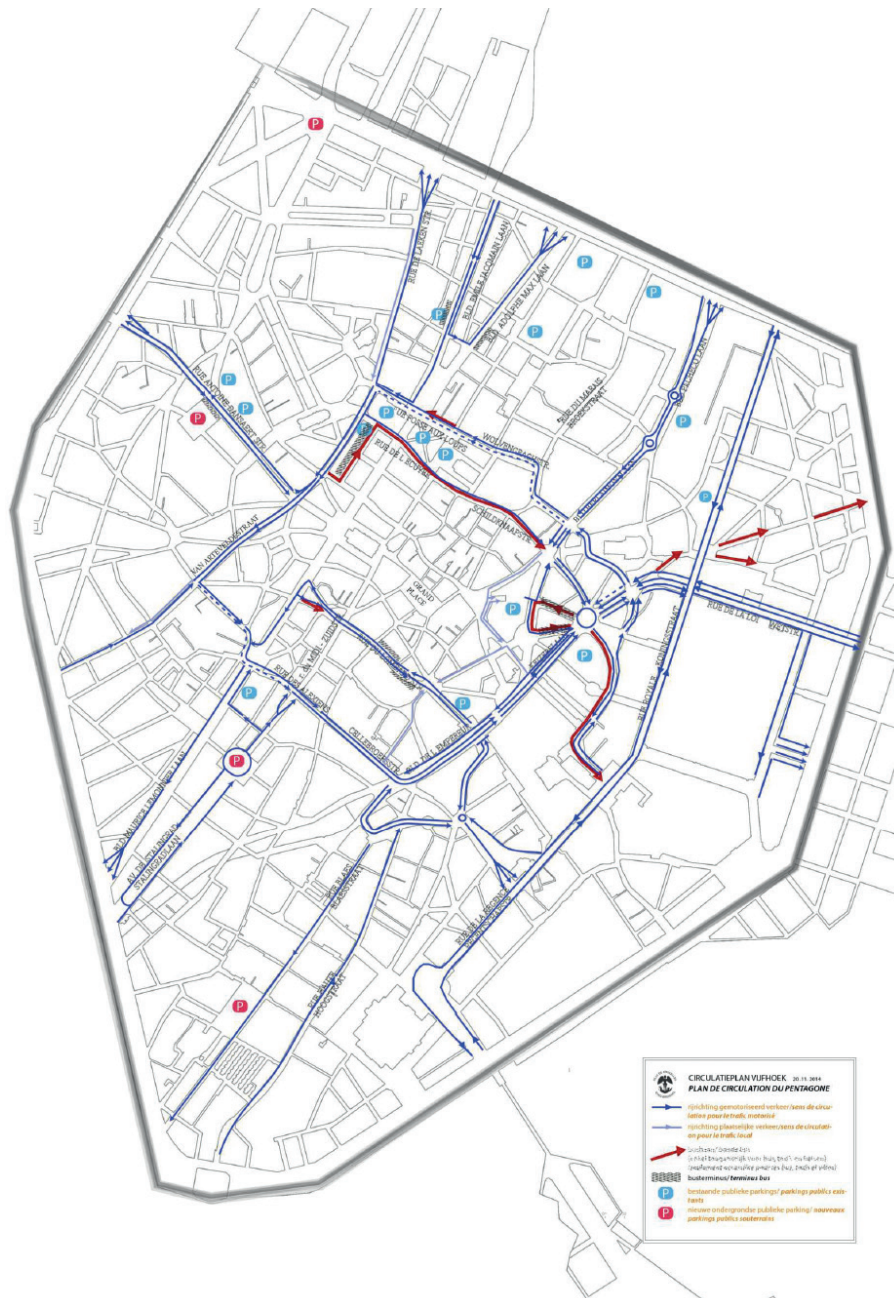


Fig.42. Announced circulation plan and parking lot situation (November 2014). The Parking lots here proposed are in the same locations as when they were announced in January that same year.

The policy document ‘A new heart for Brussels’ (2014), further emphasized the plan to economically, commercially, event-wise and touristically revitalize the city, with a focus on bars, restaurants and terraces, and the establishment of more high quality offer of the shops and businesses (and less explicitly, also a qualitative higher Horeca -bars & restaurants- offer). Alderman Ampe even announced in the press that the Brussels inner city would become:

“the shopping capital of Europe”(E. Ampe, Het Laatste Nieuws, 1 February 2014, my translation).

Furthermore, the same press release announced that the ‘Régie Foncière’ (the public housing and real estate agency of the city) would join the effort of economic redeployment. The city has serious leverage at its disposal indeed, owning numerous large iconic buildings (Palais du Midi, Stock Exchange building, Hotel Continental “Coca Cola”, etcetera), 930 apartments and 220 shops/businesses on the central avenues and in its direct vicinity (Bruxelles-Ville, 2014).

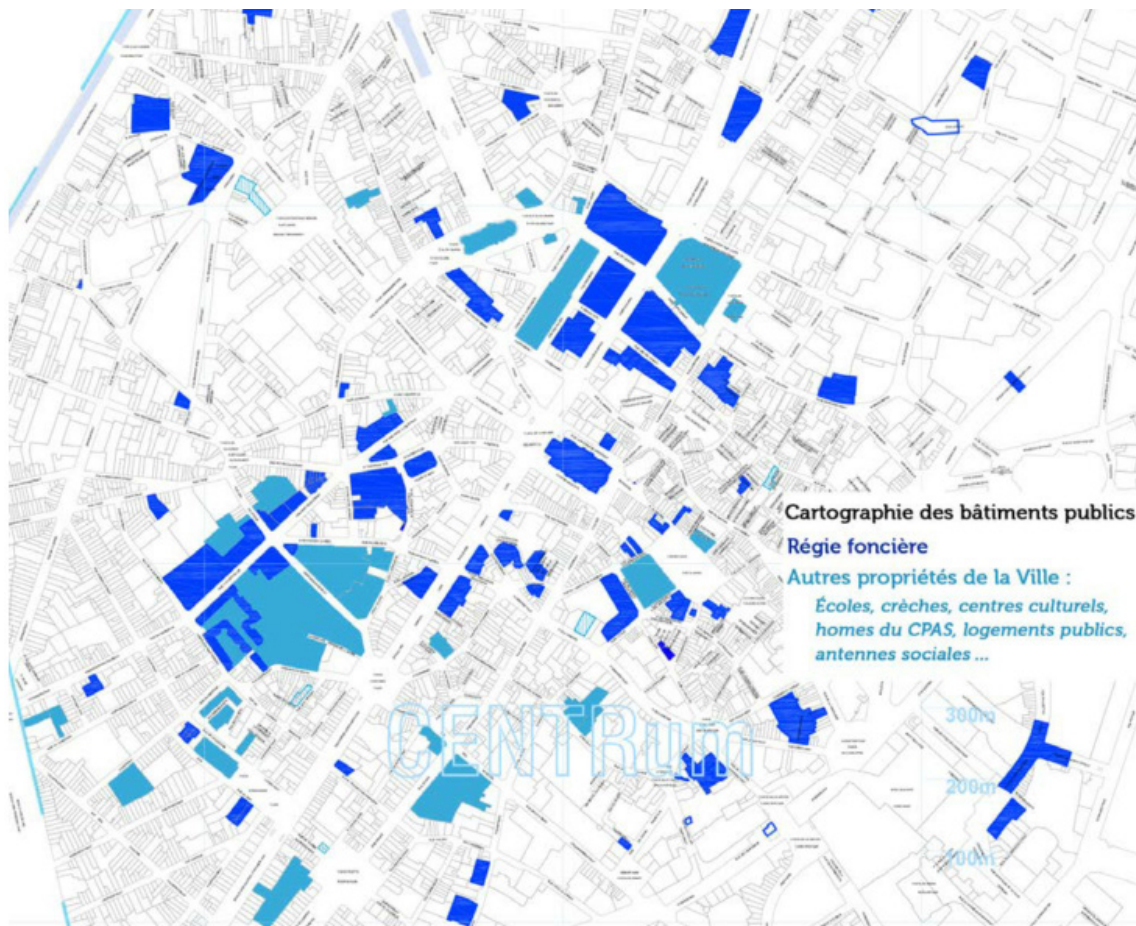


Fig.43. Cartography of the buildings of public real-estate owned by the City of Brussels: including schools, cultural centers, social housing, public housing, social antennas, a set of historic buildings, ...

In summary, with the arrival of the new major the ‘second’ compromise became clear. The pedestrian zone was larger than expected (i.e. the symbol of the Livable City) but the auto mobile

fluidity and access to the city center would be guaranteed (i.e. symbols of the Expo '58 city). Furthermore, In the Majority coalition's discourse, the pedestrian zone was given the strategic function to regenerate the inner city's urban economy, guaranteeing "non-delocalizable employment" at the hand of high quality shops, bars and restaurants and a sort of a new "Time Square", that would house future key events (the City of Commerce). But this new compromise would not take long to provoke reactions.

Alienating the Livable City coalition (1 February 2014-September 2014)

Reaction of the Green parties in the political arena

The newly found compromise and vision of the city triggered an important response from the Green opposition parties Ecolo and Groen (Ecolo and Groen!, *Livable City subgroup* in the city council). Indeed, they launched a metaphor that would structure the debate from then onward. They started speaking about a "Mini Small Ring" or "Mini Ring".

B.D. "So the pedestrian zone, very well but around it... and you saw on the entire drawing, they actually are going to make a parking route, a service loop (...), you already have the outer ring, the inner ring, the small ring, and now they also are going to make a mini ring so ... it just came this way and we stood there, talking a bit with a few people and then we said yes, ok, that's it.

Interviewer: So that name 'Mini Ring' actually comes from you?

B.D.: I was convinced by it, yeah yeah

Interviewer: I have to say one of the most effective metaphors I have encountered.

*B.D.: and now they often say Mini Ring, you are right about it, the Mini Ring was indeed a metaphor [...]
(C.E., 12 April 2016, my translation)*

The term became a strong metaphor, used by the opponents of the 'circulation plan'. In a discursive way, it mobilised the collective images of the "awful" small, medium and large ring roads around the city: i.e. the main road system for transit traffic in the region and some of the most iconic symbols of the Expo '58 city.

In turn, the Green parties proposed to the alderman of mobility and to the mayor an alternative 'circulation plan' they had already developed just a month earlier (in December 2013). This circulation plan was based on the proposal of C. Ceux (CDH, in 2011) using a loop system in which cars have to exit on the small ring (around the Pentagon) the same way and at the same place they entered it.

Reaction Philippe Van Parijs, BRAL and Picnic the Streets in the public arena

Unaware of the mobility aspects, P. Van Parijs (the original initiator of the Picnic movement) was however very enthusiast. He was surprised even about the courage of the Mayor to not only clean cut the Central Boulevards but also make it into a pedestrian space that was much larger than the originally demanded Stock Exchange Square.

"[...] in any case, it went much further, it was very ambitious, more ambitious than I thought, so I have all those implications of course, uh of the mobility around and the public transport. Very important of course. I didn't look into details of it at the time. I'm also no specialist in it. [...] but in any case I only had to acknowledge I saw political courage in it. That was clear. I also have admitted this. On Tele Bruxelles I also said that I have admiration and respect for politicians that not only promise beautiful things, but also do what they promise. "(Q. P., March 23, 2016, my translation)

The environmental organization BRAL and Picnic the Streets continued to express a positive position with regards to the introduction of the pedestrian zone. As the mayor made it his flagship project they became convinced that the Beliris plan would indeed be implemented. But as the *Majority Coalition* provoked with drawings of the "Mini Ring" (circled in red), the *Livable City coalition's* shifted away from its demand for public space toward an opposition against the Mini Ring and the parking lots.

As mentioned above, in December BRAL (part of the Picnic movement) had already publicly opposed the announcement of the 4 parking lots. They argued those parking lots would draw more traffic rather than reducing it. Furthermore, BRAL expressed its doubts about the newly announced "plan de circulation".

But from January-February 2014 onward, the Picnic movement would therefore focus on the latter. They reacted by expressing their worries concerning an actual displacement of the traffic problem from the Central Boulevards to the adjacent streets and on the "Mini Ring" that the city proposed to create around the pedestrian zone. Furthermore, as the proposals for commerce and events became more clear and as it appeared that demonstrations would no longer be allowed at the redeveloped Stock Exchange Square (i.e. the expansion of the so-called "Redzone"⁷² by the Majority coalition); they started expressing their fear for the privatization of public space as well. And they also started mentioning the danger for gentrification. (See Facebook Picnic the Streets, February 2014). This shift was on the one hand due to the proposals of the local government with regards to mobility as well as the (much bigger) size of the pedestrian zone in combination with the commercial proposals. That triggered a learning process and an internal evolution in the *Livable City coalition* towards a smaller *Open-Ended subgroup* and a bigger *Just City subgroup*.

72 The "Redzone" in Brussels is that zone that is administratively designated as an area where it is forbidden to protest, have demonstrations, actions, and so forth, because of the presence of the Belgian and Flemish Federal institutions and the Royal Palace..

BD: "Yes, because we felt some requirements were not met such as clean air [...] Every time you also learn, it goes from ... how can I say ... just from a starting activist to an informed person, you are learning, together ..."

Interviewer: "But isn't it also that people around the table of the Picnic organizers change, that there is a trend to ..."

BD: "It is possible."

LVH: "More experienced people, more activist experience"

BD: "Yes, yes" [...]

BD: "And gentrification, that's a next step. You start to think about the public sphere. And it raises all sorts of questions. It is when you read and think about it and you get informed about gentrification, you start to realize the importance of the city in its effects."

(B.D., 25 March 2016, my translation)

At the same time the evolution was also in line with changes in the *coalition* that occurred throughout two years of contestation. Indeed they had started to include more long-term activists, which strengthened the *Just City positions* as well:

G.V.: "those elements were always apparent, but have increased in importance since the population is reduced to a core of veteran activists who were not there from the start. When the large and differentiated group with which we started off gets accompanied by those veterans, you soon start to notice a far more political stance of reasoning, especially when the group gets slimmed down over time."
(G.V., 18 March 2016, my translation)

But the most powerful intervention of the *Livable City coalition* was that they institutionalized the name "Mini Ring". (cfr. Hajer). By that I mean that the denomination of the Majority coalition's 'destination loop' changed to 'Mini Ring'. The new name was picked up in debates, newspaper coverage and even by the aldermen of the city themselves. Indeed after a while, the *Majority coalition* had to decide to not use the word. Or as one government official accidentally put it:

"I think we have failed on a communicative level. I think we've lost that because we didn't adress those parkings and the small circular road. The 'Mini Ring', an expression I shoudn't actually use." (24 March 2016, my translation)

The discursive institutionalization of this metaphor (both in words and images, see Figure 1) happened without coordination. In fact nobody of the activists knew where the name came from.

For the next action, the Picnic movement decided to make the Mini Ring its main focus. They had started speaking about just city issues and the slogans for the action were "Yes (to the pedestrian

zone), but no (to a badly conceived one)” and “No Mini Ring, no bling bling”. Yet the image centered on the demand for public space and more importantly the opposition against the Mini Ring.



June 2014: toward a Livable & Just City coalition and the end of Picnic the Streets

On June 8, 2014 Picnic the Streets organized a bicycle tour on the 'Mini Ring' and a civil disobedient Picnic. And even though the action was smaller in numbers than a year before (+/- 1500 people), the diversity of people was bigger. Indeed, the choice to oppose the “Mini Ring” (a symbol of the Expo '58 city) allowed a broader grouping: a collaboration with the local cycling movement Critical Mass, the French-speaking civil society organisation IEB came out to speak in their favour. The 123 collective squat called to join the action. Furthermore, suddenly there were also a whole lot of inhabitants and even shopkeepers that were in favour of the actions as they were directly concerned (I call them the *Private Interest subgroup*). Or as one shopkeeper put it:

“But quite quickly, I think it was in 2014, well we understood, we understood what was going to happen, how it would be done... and there were people precisely... I don't know I have never exactly understood very well who it was. But I think is Picnic the Streets and it was this flyer as a loupe, which made everything look nice around the Stock Exchange Square and then all around there were only cars. Of course, then I told myself that it began to smell bad because the thing was recovered but was wrongly interpreted [...]” (V.B., 3 May 2016)

As such, the *Livable City coalition* opened up its alliance in two different ways: (I call this the first signs of the *Just & Livable City coalition that will re-emerge in November 2014 under the name of Platform Pentagone*) Firstly, longtime activists and French-speaking civil society organizations

that had stayed on the sidelines started speaking out loudly and they became more present.⁷³ The reason for their absence beforehand could be brought back to a strategic disagreement: Indeed they shared with the picnic movement the imaginary and the feeling of the necessity of a *Livable City*. But they also firmly believed in a *Just City*⁷⁴ without ‘speculation’, without ‘gentrification’, without ‘Disneyfication’ and without ‘privatization’ of public space.

In the original coalition there was as mentioned already a (Dutch-speaking) *Just City subgroup* present, but they did not make the same prioritization. For them the *Livable City* came first and they believed that it was necessary to move forward on this issue. They didn’t take possible side effects into account with regards to the *Just City*.

For the French-speaking civil society organization IEB or activist H.C. the *Just City* came first. As for them, processes such as *gentrification* are triggered by improving public space (as an intended or an unintended side effect). So although they also believed in more and better public space; without guarantees with regards to the social consequences, they preferred not to get involved.

The shift in focus of the Picnic movement then, away from the demand for public space and towards the mobility dimension of the *imaginary of the Livable City*, allowed them to unite a broader *coalition* with a larger *Just City subgroup* (in their last actions). Including the support of those French speaking civil society organizations that I will distinguish as the *Just (and Livable) City subgroup*.

Secondly, a set of inhabitants, neighborhood associations and (a few) ecology-minded shopkeepers became more present as well in the coalition. They didn’t necessarily reject the *Expo ‘58 City*, at least not viscerally. But they certainly were worried about their apartment, their house, street or square and how the Mini Ring and underground parking lots would affect them. I call them, the *Personal Interest subgroup*.

The slogans of the next organized Picnic in June 2014 included the worries of the broadened coalition: “Yes, but No” & “No Mini Ring, No bling bling”. The Picnic was a success with over 1500 people showing up and the cyclist movement ‘Critical Mass’ joining to cycle the Mini Ring before the start of the occupation of the Stock Exchange Square.

In either way, once again the Picnic movement had managed to dominate the debate and put her agenda forward in the public opinion. And indeed, from then onwards the city council started having difficulties defending the entire project because of issues related to the circulation plan

73 Some had been present beforehand as participants

74 I borrowed the English nomination from Feinsein’s, ‘The just city’ (Fainstein, 2010) and Harvey’s ‘Social Justice and the City’ (Harvey, 2010). With regards to the literature this *Just City group* is inspired by De Corte, De Lannoy & Rijdsams, ‘*Les immeubles à l’abandon et la spéculation à Bruxelles*’ as they inspired (what I call) the *Just City group* in the 1990s with resp. to the actions around the Hotel Central housing bloc (De Corte, De Lannoy, & Rijdsams, 1995). Furthermore I would refer to Van Criekingen and Decroly on ‘gentrification’ as they are the authors that inspired the *just city group* with regards to this key concept, central to their vision of a *un-just city* (Van Criekingen, 1996) (Van Criekingen, 1997) (Van Criekingen & Decroly, 2003)

and the proposed parking lots.⁷⁵ But this moment is also seen by the organizers as the end of the movement⁷⁶, and this action as their last Picnic, even though they organised “a goodbye” picnic in June 2015.

Indeed, the proposals of the government and their own shift in discourse had affected them deeply. The *City of Commerce subgroup* and a part of the *Open-Ended subgroup* was ok with the government proposals and left the coalition. Leaving the more motivated of the *Open-Ended subgroup* and the *Just City subgroup* to walk the fine line between celebrating their car free Stock Exchange Square and criticizing the local government plans: for not being in accordance with their imaginary of the *Livable City*. Meanwhile the other part of the *Open-Ended subgroup* went through a learning process and positioned themselves in accordance with the *Just City imaginary* (albeit, not in a visceral way)

The Picnic movement (*Livable City coalition*) did develop, therefore, a message and an appropriate action form with regards to (those more technical) mobility issues related to the *City of Expo '58* and with regards to social and economic issues associated with the *Just City*. The new image (see figure X) was for example mentioned by a great variety of actors in my interviews.⁷⁷ Picnic the Streets managed to capture the attention once again, thus influencing the debate.



75 Indeed, a few months later, when the city's participation starts the central demand of the city dwellers will be to speak about the Mini Ring and the mobility plans.

76 Although the activists organised another picnic the streets one year later in June 2015, in the interviews the June 2014 Picnic is often mentioned as the last real picnic.

77 ex. Especially the image is mentioned several times both by a government official, three persons from different administrations, by a government contractor SUMprojects and by a shopkeeper just to name a few

But the shift from a fight in favour of something (public space), to a positioning against a number of things (the Mini Ring, parking lots, gentrification, privatisation) wasn't easy for the Livable City Coalition. It demanded hard work. And it combined with a fatigue of two years of hard-fought activism. The 'against message' did allow a broader coalition, but it was also very different from the playful almost unwitting approach of their start in May 2012. Thus, it led to the fading of the movement after the Picnic of June 8th, 2014.

It did however not mean their discourse disappeared. In fact, in September 2014 for example, the structuration of the 'Mini Ring' metaphor continued by an action of unknown activists (close to the Picnic movement) who distributed a leaflet 'on behalf of the city government' -using the same yet slightly adapted city logo on the letter- to "announce the Mini Ring in the concerned streets". Each inhabitant of those streets received a copy. As such, the leaflet announcing the (fake) official launch of the "Mini Ring" raised awareness among inhabitants and neighbourhood associations who became worried for an invasion of cars and pollution.

Despite the 'de facto' disappearance of Picnic the Streets, it didn't take long for a new wave of protests to take off. They were galvanized by the *Majority coalition's* way of making decisions: as a consequence of the strong internal differences within their own *coalition* between SP.A (the *Livable and Participatory City subgroup*) and PS, Open VLD and MR (the *Expo'58 and Representative City subgroup*). And those protests, secondly, ignited because of the proposal and decision to build an underground parking lot under the "Place du Jeu de balle", the city's daily flea market.

Remark lastly, that what the *Majority coalition's* proposals didn't do among the *Livable City coalition* --namely finding support and legitimacy for the plans-- eventually alienated its support among the one group that had demanded the change in the first place. Of course, the coalition continued to make the argument that they were in favour of the pedestrian zone they asked for. However, among the liveable coalition, although some were fine with the plans (especially among the participants) for most of the organizers it didn't sit right. Yes, they got what they asked, a car free Stock Exchange Square and more even. But what they deciphered in the proposals was "a pedestrian zone for cars" rather than a project for a Livable City.

Both the way the Majority Coalition saw that zone economically (which especially bothered the *Just City subgroup*), but particularly, the mobility plan (the "destination loop" which they coined "Mini Ring" and the four parking's), was for them unacceptable, on a visceral level. Not because of the concrete proposals themselves, but because of the *imaginary* they revealed, despite the symbol of the car free Stock Exchange Square. Indeed, what made them angry, I argue, was the *imaginary* it revealed: namely that of a project in line with the *imaginary of the City of Expo '58*. Put differently, that what they were fighting in the first place. They recognized it clearly. And as a consequence they opposed the local government with the storyline: "yes, but no". "Yes to a pedestrian zone, but no to a poorly thought pedestrian zone" and their focus moved from a demand for public space, to a position against the proposed mobility plans and the underground parking lots.

And their intuition was right. While the Livable city subgroup of the majority coalition (SPA) had made the pitch toward its electorate --and the Livable City coalition of Picnic the Streets-- by pointing out the enlarged pedestrian zone; The Expo '58 subgroup in the local government had successfully pushed for compensation and a compromise that could address their concerns as well (as well as those of a part of the business owners and car lobby, i.e the *Expo '58 coalition*). Or as one alderman put it:

“At a certain point the action groups proclaimed it was going to be a like a pedestrian zone but then for cars. And I didn’t deny that that was the actual intention.” (E.A., 31 March 2016, my translation)

Broadening the Expo '58 coalition

The *Expo '58 coalition* reacted nonetheless very negatively and came out with strong statements. Although the government’s proposals had tried to address their talking points; they saw the symbol of the *Livable City* (“the gigantic pedestrian zone”) even enlarged. Thus, they continued to repeat the argument they had been making from the start: “your plans mean the dead of commerce in Brussels”, but then with even more vigor and with the threat of legal action.

The concerns of the *Expo '58 coalition* did of course not only express a matter of public interest and a defense of what they believe the city should be. Indeed, this group is concerned with their private interest (as well). That is important because amongst the growing group of people who are part of this coalition, we can now distinguish two *subgroups* on that basis. First, the ones that are afraid of what the plans will mean for their business in the long run (think for example of parking-lot owners, business owners dependent on clients who come by car, the car lobby and so forth). They fully engage with the Expo '58 imaginary of the city. I call them the *‘Convinced subgroup’*.

Secondly, the ones who are afraid of the transition period, the infrastructure work and who fear the impact it will have on their revenue (local shop owners, businesses who depend on the delivery of goods by truck, businesses that are close to bankruptcy, and so forth). This second group includes business owners who share the imaginary of the Expo '58 City but not viscerally. And they do not necessarily oppose the imaginary of the *Livable City* as such. In fact they have joined the *Expo '58 coalition* in order to protect their private interests from the impact the change would imply for them. A part of this latter group is also likely to have a conservative position out of fear for the change itself; even if the change does not go against their private interests. I call them the *‘Transition subgroup’*.

TOURING, ALAIN BERLINBAU’S BUSINESSES ASSOCIATION

The broadened Expo '58 coalition
December 2013-

Shared imaginary and interests:

- The City of Commerce
- Private and collective interests are important in this coalition

Subgroups:

- The Convinced subgroup T
- The Transition subgroup

NOTE: Impact obliging the Majority coalition to make concessions with regards to the mobility aspects.

The official announcement did not only start the alienation process of the *Livable City coalition*. It also had an effect on what had been until then a small *Expo '58 coalition*. Indeed, this is the moment in which the *coalition* broadened. In the months following the press conference of the Majority coalition they started to include a much larger *transit subgroup*. For example, the Chamber of Commerce *BECI*, the platform for small entrepreneurs *IZEO* and the platform for the defense of Real Estate owners *UPSI* joined in.

Although their collective discourse continued to be in line with the imaginary of the Expo '58 city, the much more moderate tone demonstrated the influence of the transition subgroup:

‘The pedestrianization of the Central Boulevard in Brussels and the creation of new parking lots in the heart of Brussels [...] may be positive and strengthen the economic attractiveness of the area. Remember however, that reducing the traffick from two to only one lane in one unique direction has already been a challenging operation, which has also created daily problems of mobility. What can we expect from a complete abolition of access roads [...] welcome this draft pedestrianization requires from the authorities [...] which implement all measures not only preserve, but to improve the access to the centre of Brussels. The accompanying policies will be crucial: strengthening of the underground and public transport on the surface on a human scale, frequency rates increased, dedicated cycle lanes. Next, there is room for leaving marge of manoeuvre to individual vehicles: synchronisation of traffic lights, effective access to the parkings of the city centre, close off of the Small Ring between Yser and South Station, compensation for out-of-street parkings vs street parkings which will disappear.» (Open letter to the Majority coalition from the Expo '58 coalition, 27 February 2014)

Remark that they do not exclude the possibility of a pedestrian zone. That the open lettre does not exclude the acceptance of the symbolic cut at the Stock Exchange Square and that it does not argue the potential “death of commerce”. The tone is different and much more set towards compromise. Yet, the *Expo '58 imaginary* is still clearly revealed in the concrete demands: (i) to install -in the case of the pedestrianization- an alternative transit road between exactly the same points where the transit would be cut, i.e. “from Yzer to the South Station”; (ii) to create parking for every place that would potentially disappear; and (iii) to invest in mono functionally zoned public transport: i.e. the metro of course first. (see 6.3.1)

Despite that more moderate tone, it was nevertheless clear that the *Majority coalition's* compromise to accommodate the *Expo '58 coalition* hadn't worked. In fact, while they compromised on the *Livable City* dimension (losing the support of the *Livable City coalition*), the *Expo '58 coalition* had only grown. Consequently, they found themselves attacked from both sides. In summary, when the *Majority coalition* announced its political agreement in January 2014, they angered both discourse coalitions: the *Expo '58 coalition* over the “gigantic pedestrian zone” and the transition period; And the *Livable City coalition* over the Mini Ring and parking lots on the one hand and over the economic proposals on the other hand (i.e. for the *Just City subgroup*).

VILLE DE BRUXELLES
AFFAIRES PERTINENTES



STAD BRUSSEL
PERTINENTE ZAKEN

N/Réf. – Onze Ref. : PTS/3/08.06.14/MiniRing
V/corresp. – Uw corresp. : Urbain Bonair

Aux habitants des rues des Augustins, de Laeken, de la Vierge Noire, des Poissonniers, Van Artevelde et des Six Jetons, de la place Fontainas, des rues des Bogards et des Alexiens, du bld de l'Empereur, de Cantersteen, des rues des Colonies et de la Chancellerie, de la place Ste-Gudule, des rues de la Collégiale, d'Assaut et du Fossé aux Loups. Aux habitants des rues de l'Evêque et de Ecuyer. Aux habitants des rues de l'Hôpital et du Lombard et du bld Anspach.

Cher citoyen,

Le Collège des Bourgmestre et Echevins a décidé de réaménager votre rue en fonction du MiniRing autour du centre historique de la ville (Bourse et Grand-Place).

Toutes les rues nommées ci-haut deviendront ensemble une autoroute à deux bandes à sens unique. Par cette mesure, le Collège veut attirer plus d'automobilistes de la province pour venir consommer et jouer des atouts de Bruxelles. C'est pour cette même raison que le Collège veut construire 5 parkings souterrains en plus à Yser, au Nouveau Marché aux Grains, à la place Rouppe, à la Place du Jeu de Balle et près du Palais de Justice.

Les intentions de la Ville sont à consulter sur le web: <http://www.bruxelles.be/artdet.cfm?id=8143>

Si vous n'êtes pas d'accord avec cette décision, vous pouvez réagir auprès du cabinet du Bourgmestre (02/279.50.00 - cabinet.bgm.mayeur@brucity.be) ou de l'Echevine responsable de la mobilité et des travaux publics (02/279.50.64 - els.ampe@brucity.be).

Bien évidemment, pour exprimer votre désaccord, vous pouvez également participer au grand pique-nique, organisé par Picnic The Streets à la place de la Bourse ce dimanche 8 juin à partir de 12h. Le mouvement Picnic The Streets s'oppose fermement au concept du MiniRing.



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The Majority coalition's & the Federal administration moving quickly (January-November 2014)

From January 2014 onwards Mayor Y. Mayeur started working at a hasty pace to develop a spatial development plan for the Central Boulevards. He does this through the Federal administration: Beliris. A top level meeting takes place between the federal minister for Beliris (L. Onkelinx, PS), the head of the Beliris administration (C. Bossut), the Mayor of Brussels-City (Y. Mayeur, PS) and the first alderman of Brussels City (A. Courtois). They negotiated a budget of 18 million euros and C. Bossut gets the assignment to start working immediately as the project has the highest priority.

“and in January 2014 we are well... invited by Laurette Onkelinx to a meeting. Therefore Laurette Onkelinx, who was the Minister responsible for Beliris Hein...

Interviewer: Yes, she still is hein...

CB: Yes, that's it. And so we were invited which is a rare thing... euh... we are invited to a meeting with the Minister herself. At the meeting there were... well, the members of her cabinet, but also Mayeur and Courtois. Euh.... And they say: 'bah voilà, the redevelopment project of the central Boulevards must be reactivated very quickly...And this is your top priority.'” And we are nonetheless in a government which is close to its life end and we receive political priorities that arrive on the table. Euhm...

Interviewer: This is particular. ”

CB: 'It is quite particular in terms of...of political management. ”

(C.B. 4 May 2016, my translation)

To speed up the process and to avoid delays or large scale public involvement, Beliris chose to work with the consortium of planning offices they had been working with before: SUMProject/B-group/Greich (originally called Groep Planning, I will call them SUM from here on out) that had been working on the Beliris dossier since 2003 (see section 6.2.4). The consortium had already developed a detailed design plan for the renewal of the Central Boulevards. The preliminary studies for granting a planning permission were completed. Potential technical restrictions had been identified and they had worked out solutions for them (ex. how to plant trees there seen the vaulting of the prémetro underneath), an (environmental) impact study⁷⁸ had been carried out as well as an 'enquête publique'. The only difference was that the previous 2003 Beliris plan's perimeter was much bigger (see Fig.1 down under) and cars were still allowed on the Central Boulevards, reducing the four lanes to two lanes.

Discarding car access and choosing for a pedestrians and bicycles' only zone, could be relatively quickly introduced –at least from a technical perspective- by SUM. So Beliris negotiated a contract with the City of Brussels (signed in May 2014) and they negotiated a contract with SUM to make the masterplan, the predesign and prepare the urbanism permit.

78 Cfr. Etude d'incidence, (AATL-BROH., 2011)

Due to time constraints, no design contest was organised and by June 2014 the planning office presented a first sketch design and draft-design (*schets ontwerp*). Two months later, by the end of August 2014, the detailed masterplan was presented and approved by the Brussels-city council.

The figure below shows the previous perimeter (2005-2007) of the renewal of the Central Boulevards as indicated in the plans commissioned by Beliris:

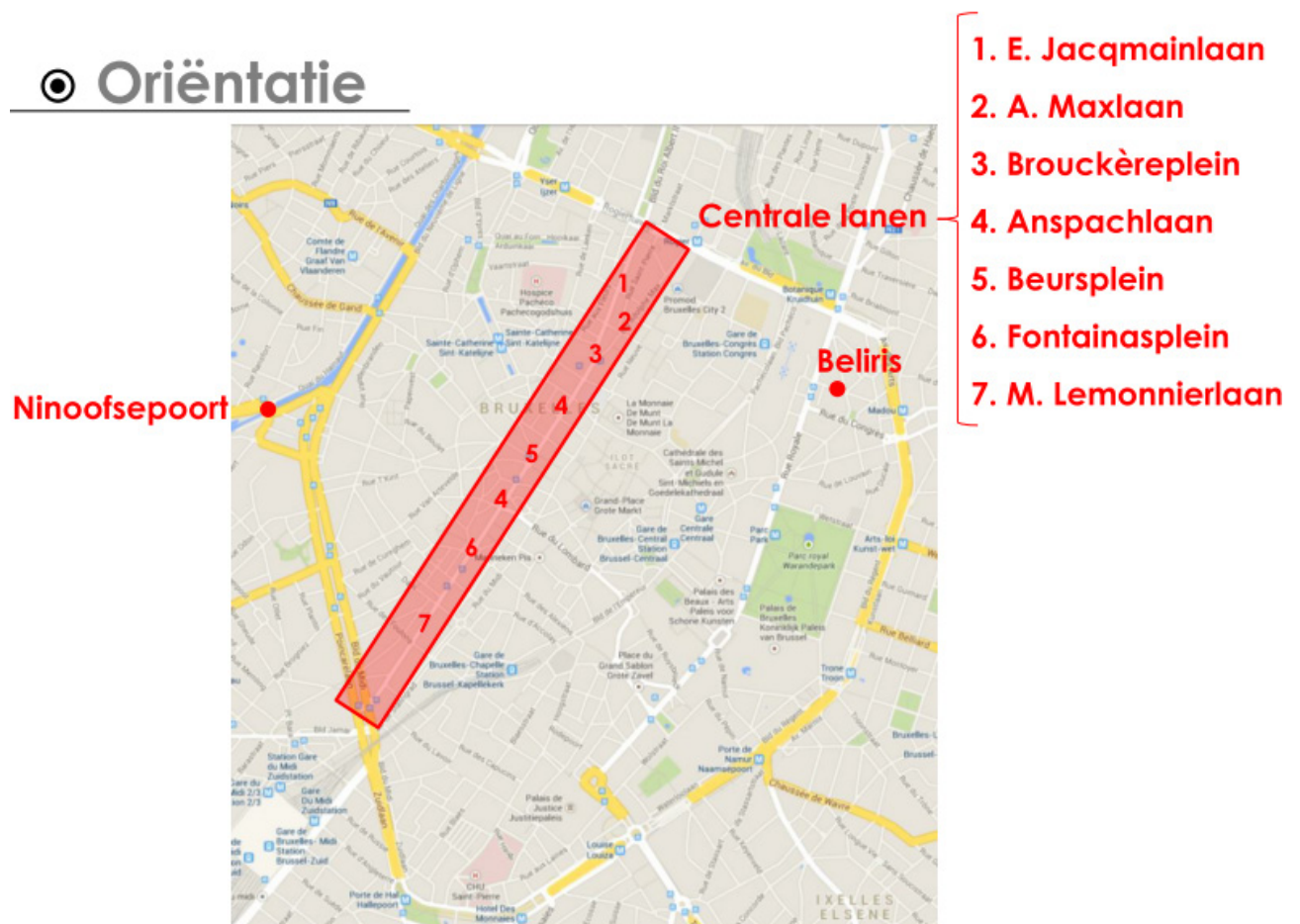


Fig.44. Beliris Plan perimeter, 2003 for the redevelopment of the Central Boulevards

The current perimeter to which the urban design of SUM for the renewal of the Central Boulevards applies is the following (the Beliris plan 2014 Perimeter):

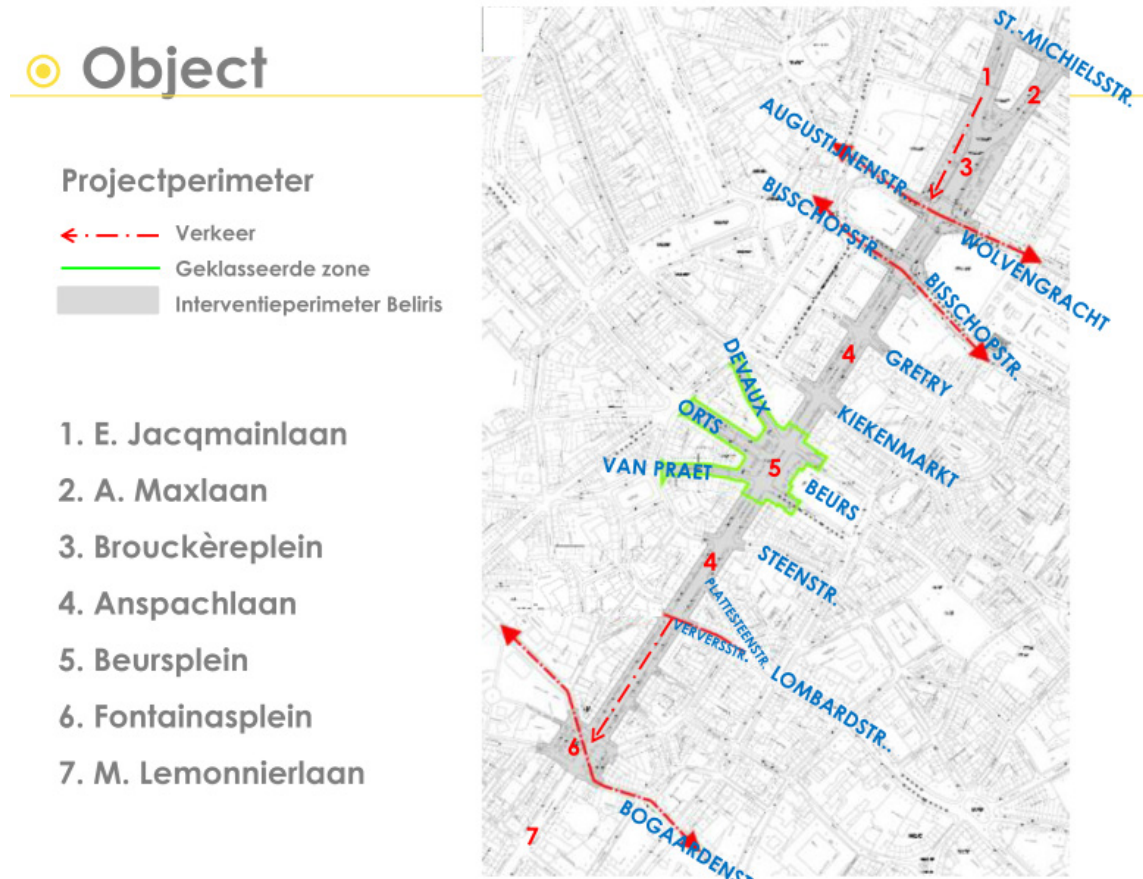


Fig.45. Indications for Beliris concerning circulation on the development perimeter for the pedestrian zone. May, 2014

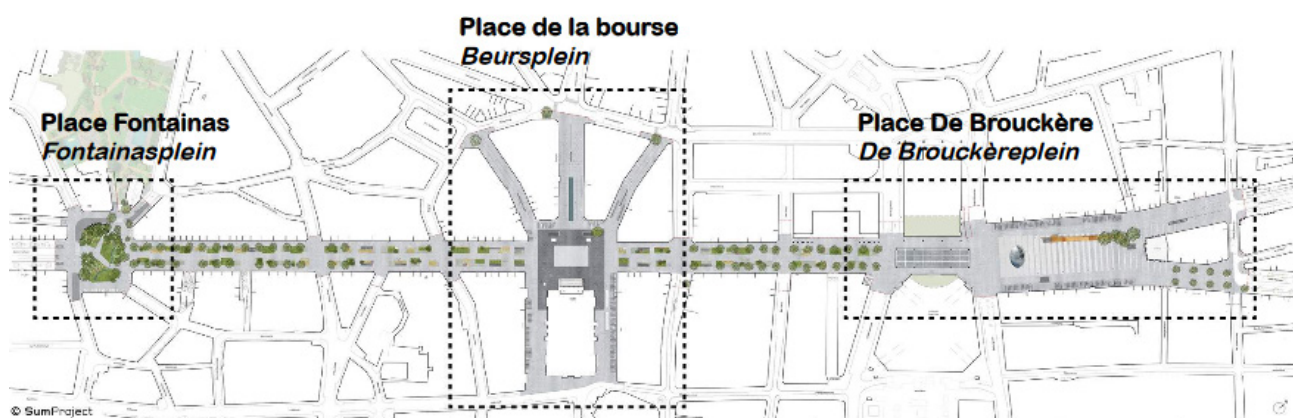


Fig.46. The SUM Masterplan August 2014:

Having the circulation plan related to the renewal of the public space in the same area, is obviously a requirement for transversal spatial planning and qualitative urbanism, yet nor SUM neither the Beliris project manager were clearly informed by the *Majority coalition* about the progress of the traffic plans. The main reason being that the plans of Aldermen of Mobility, Ampe, were not ready.

This is the information they got and on the basis of which they were working for the masterplan:



Fig.47. very basic mobility indication upon which the Beliris 2014 masterplan was developed

Indeed, the budget and planning provided by Beliris in 2003 had always been limited to the embellishment of the Central Boulevards, with the related circulation plan for the Pentagone as a separate planning process. Actually, in the last 15 years, there had been up to three different planning processes to develop a new mobility plan for the inner-city: the ‘first plan Simons’ under X.F. De Donnea in 1997; the ‘second plan Simons’ in 2004 under F. Thielemans and the ‘third plan’ this time under alderman C. Ceux in 2011 under F. Thielemans as well. In the same line, when Y. Mayeur proposes his ‘2014 Beliris plan’ he also approaches it as a fully separate matter as with regards to the development of the circulation plan. Yet, although his predecessor did propose a reduction of car traffic on the Central Boulevards, none of the plans had discarded the car traffic completely. In fact, it always stayed a large two lane street. Consequently, the involved parties never perceived the separate handling of the Beliris plan and the circulation plan as ‘unnatural’. It was actually in line with the political competences attributed to each policy level and each

political function: the alderman of urbanism dealt with the first issue and sought an agreement with the federal Beliris fund; while the alderman of mobility dealt with mobility in dialogue with his/her local administration (i.e. Brucity).

As we will see in the next section, the simple persistence in this separation by Y. Mayeur between both plans quickly became a major issue, galvanising frustration and triggering a new set of criticisms with regards to the way this *Majority coalition* makes its decisions. And this because of several reasons:

(i) First, because of the difference with the past. They decided to cut the car traffic. (ii) Second, because of the size of the pedestrian zone. Indeed, both directly impacted the circulation whereas this was not the case in the former 2003 Beliris plan. (iii) Third, because the city had announced the plans as an ensemble in its communication. And fourth (iv) because Picnic the Streets had emphasized that the pedestrian zone should not include a Mini Ring, in specifically claiming so, the government made the debate about the pedestrian zone into a broader debate about the Mini Ring.

6.5.4 Arrival of two new Imaginaries: the Representative versus the Participatory City.

THE LOCAL BRUSSELS-CITY GOVERNMENT

The Majority coalition

September 2014 - end of the case study

Shared imaginary and interests:

- The City of Commerce
- Private interests:
 - (i) Electoral party interests
 - (ii) Distribution and fragmentation of competences between the aldermen
 - (iii) City competences versus collaboration with the Region

Subgroups:

- The Expo '58 and Representative City subgroup (MR, Open VLD, PS)
- The Livable and Participatory City Subgroup (SPA)

The city initiates a participatory process on the refurbishment - (September 2014-January 2015)

The advances in the development of the Beliris project brought about a new discussion, this time not on the content but on the decision-making process. On the one side, the liberals and French speaking socialists believed in representative democracy, this is on elections, the mandate of the electorate and top down decision-making on the basis of that mandate. They both shared an imaginary of what I call the *Representative City* (I call them the *Representative subgroup*).⁷⁹ In their view, what needs to be established is a political agreement between the parties and the different government levels. This does not mean they are not open for input from outside (especially from the private sector). But they do not believe their decisions should ultimately be based on it, nor that they should organize an in-depth consultation or participation in which the population informs and

⁷⁹ As they coincide with the same parties (MR, Open VLD, PS) which conformed the Expo '58 subgroup of 2012, they can also be called the Expo '58 and Representative City subgroup.

takes part in the decisions. What they were ready to organize were information sessions where they informed the population and the private sector of their decisions.

On the other hand, the Flemish Socialists in the *Majority coalition* do believe in consultation, citizen involvement, and participation in which citizens and politicians co-produce ideas for the planning process. I call them the *Participatory subgroup*.⁸⁰

The *Majority coalition* was, put differently, split over two profoundly different views on how to proceed in the urban planning process. Which, by the way, coincided with the Expo'58 and Livable City previous divide, within the Majority Coalition. And instead of finding an agreement on one way of moving forward, they made a political compromise in which each one of the involved aldermen would organize his or her part of the process in parallel to the others and in the way they saw fit (Private interest).

The French-speaking socialist mayor Y. Mayeur (Representative subgroup) announced his plans and urbanistic vision for the pedestrian zone in a set of information moments. He made clear that, with the exception of details, the masterplan was not open for debate. However, while Beliris finished its masterplan, the city's aldermen for participation, A. Persoons (SPA, *Livable and Participatory City subgroup in the Majority coalition*) demanded that there would at least be an extensive process of "participation" (at least to Brussels-City standards) with the city dwellers. The city accepted to give her the mandate to organize such a process on how the pedestrian zone should look like and how it should be used. But the circulation plan for which the alderman of mobility Els Ampe (Open VLD, Expo '58 and Representative City subgroup) was in charge, would indeed be dealt with in a separate process at an undefined date. She finally organized a handful of information moments for inhabitants and a dozen information meetings with the private sector⁸¹.

The alderman for commerce however M. Lemesre (MR, Expo '58 and Representative City subgroup) of the French-speaking liberals, on her part, failed to organize any participation, consultation or information process with the shopkeepers and business owners. Even by the time the pedestrian zone's test phase went into effect (July 2015) no such process had been organized. The same was true for both the alderman responsible for the public housing and real estate company (i.e; "la Regie Foncière") M. Ouriaghli (PS, Expo '58 and Representative City subgroup), regarding what would he be doing with its real estate on the development perimeter and in its direct vicinity. Or with regards to the redesignation, by alderman Ph. Close, of the most iconic building on the development perimeter, the old Stock Exchange building. The absence of information on these areas further contributed to the creation of a lot of rumours about speculation, gentrification and densification as well throughout the process.

80 Similarly, as the (SPA conformed the Livable City subgroup of 2012, they can also be called the Livable and Participatory City subgroup.

81 Each time, one meeting for a set of a few neighborhoods (mainly organized in city hall itself). Three meetings were organized in March 2014 after the initial decision was made. Four inhabitant meetings were organized in December 2014 after the announcement of the concrete circulation plan and underground parking lot plans were announced. And the alderman organized thirteen meetings with the private sector from January 2014 onward.

The announcement and organization of the participation process drew in hundreds of citizens in the debate (about 600 present in the room). The French speaking activists and several civil society organisations and the neighborhood committees, that did not really believe in the actual implementation of the Beliris plan (after years of gridlock), started believing that (this time, after 17 years of gridlock) the proposals were for real and suddenly started paying more attention. It attracted, secondly, a lot of attention amongst the broader public through the media and social media and got many more people involved in the process (especially amongst the local population and shopkeepers). As was the case for the *Livable City coalition* of picnic the streets, the participants in the participation process did not disagree with the idea of the pedestrianization itself. They contributed extensively to see improvements made to the proposed master plan.⁸²

However the, in principle positively seen, participation process confronted serious difficulties from the outset and, aside from the existing doubts that the mayor would accept changes to “his” plan, the process was severely handicapped by a more important matter: the impossibility to discuss the circulation plan.

As explained, the participants were not allowed to discuss the most contentious issues related to the pedestrian zone, namely the parking and circulation plan that accompanied it. This blockage was further exacerbated by the lack of coordination between Els Ampe and Alderman A. Persoons or the consultancy firm that was organizing the participation process. Nor were evolutions with regards to the mobility or parking plan signaled to the organizers of the participation process.

What made things even more fragmented and complex, was that the participation process, prepared and funded by the City of Brussels and tendered to Artgineering, did not foresee a role for the principal commissioner and coordinator of the project: Beliris; nor to the design office (i.e. SUM).

This situation confronted to the eagerness among the public to talk about mobility and the expectations raised by the process that had been installed by alderman A. Persoons to create an *arena* (‘a combined arena’) and construct a collective vision and support, led in the end to the opposite: negative headlines of “fake participation” in the press (TeleBruxelles, 29 September 2014) and a lot of expressed frustration among participants (in my participation observation and in my in-depth interviews).

The argument of “false participation” was not surprising given: (i) the speed with which Beliris and SUM were moving, indeed the masterplan was very close to being the fully developed predesign plan (see Annex Y.A); (ii) the fact that neither Beliris nor SUM had (even) an official political mandate and obligation to take part in the participation (which didn’t contribute to the image of seriousness either); and (iii) the fact that they weren’t allowed to discuss the circulation plan. Lastly, (iv) this situation combined with the personal communication style of the mayor, which led to a further loss of support. Indeed, the mayor was often criticized for his “fait accompli” approach, meaning by already taken decision, by done deal.

82 Many of these proposals were effectively included: such as a change to the perimeter, more greenery, drinking water fountains or more cyclist infrastructure.

So, although Artgineering organised the participation process in a very elaborate and detailed way (see Annex Y.A), the most commonly heard question during the process was: “what about mobility?” (see Dec. 2014 participation end rapport by SUM). In several of my interviews people claimed to be forced by the city to constrain the debate to small elements such as greenery, furniture, colour of the design or bicycle accommodations... (see the final recommendation of the process, 31 January 2015). Or as two interviewees put it:

“I think it was information given on the completion of the project. What was discussed ? We discussed about the furniture, decoration, layout. We didn’t discuss on the substance. I.e. on the purpose of the pedestrian. We did not speak about the impact this would have on the circulation plan, on the other neighborhoods. We did not discussed an overall approach to avoid harming others. Because it is easy, I can say here: ‘I want to make a great project at my home without taking into account...’. Well, this did not do. AC has not been a process of participation in the proper sense of democratic participation.” (M. C., 26 March 2016, my translation)

“But it is a pseudo... This is not what participation is. It is not participation. It is not parti.... well... this is mere window-dressing. Because, I... you set up the project. It is here and now come to choose the colours of benches for that tree, this or that plant” (M.B., 22 April 2016, my translation)

So even if the process did indeed get good input from the participants, it did not generate support but instead created frustration both among participants and observers, and this time with much more people following it than in January 2014. And that frustration was about to turn into anger when the alderman of mobility announced her parking lot plans in the midst of that already tumultuous participation process. Or as one interviewee put it:

« [...] They can discuss the color of plant trays, reverberations... And the 60 people will participate to 6 workshops of 10 people each, but they will finish terribly frustrated because we have not treated the real issues. So this is September 2014. It stays relatively confidential, in quotation marks, but anyway it starts being discussed saying “but this pedestrian zone...?”. I hear the comments. I hear everybody saying the pedestrian zone is shit, it’s a real disaster their project!” Then, the project of parking lots arises and at this moment I start waking up, if you want; because I tell myself, but wait, what is this thing? And therefore, I get involved in the story of the Jeux de Balle and the day after... The first day, I am told that there will be an underground parking under the Jeux de Balle Square and again the next day I discover that there is one under the square where I live (I.M. 21 March 2016, my translation).

The result was that, although the picnic movement had faded, its message (“Yes, but No”) didn’t. In fact, the discourse was kept alive and complemented with arguments concerning decision-making: “yes to the pedestrian zone, but no to more pollution, no to the Mini Ring, no to the four underground parking lots” and “no to fake participation, no to authoritarian and top down

decision-making without consultation”.⁸³ The discourse at that time was not defended by one particular group. But there were many individual actors (both individuals from the picnic movement, as civil society actors as politicians of the opposition) that made those arguments heard in the participatory process and in the press. A new imaginary, of the participatory City and a visceral collective turn against the Representative City, had emerged among several the individual Livable City members of picnic the streets and the participants to the process), in which constituted a step towards Platform Pentagone (the Just & Livable City coalition) a month later (see further).

“The Biggest Pedestrian Zone in Europe” (24 November 2014)

The second intervention of the government that ignited the protests was related to the alderman of mobility Els Ampe’s announcement that she would construct a parking lot underneath the historic flea market of the city, called Place the Jeu de Balle (FR)/Vosseplein (NL). Seemingly unaware of her role in the sensitivity of the situation, the alderman E. Ampe announced in the midst of the participation process ‘her’ circulation plan for the pedestrian area and the 4 new parking lots.

Interviewer: “so that process of participation substantiated, and started to exist aside of the plans that you introduced in November...”

E.A.: “Wait, the process of participation, no, that process was in no way concerned with the plans for circulation.”

Interviewer: “I know, that was about...”

E.A.: “It was only about construction...which materials, where to install benches, where to plant the trees, how to dress it up. To put it otherwise, it was about the decoration of the zone. It did not concern the structural organisation with respect to the pedestrian zone. And that, by the way, entailed a lot of dissatisfaction. The fact that people were only to speak their minds about the stones and not the system, so to speak. That brought about a lot of frustration.”

She had been working together with Technum and the experienced mobility expert and urbanist, J. Schollaert, detached from the regional administration, to develop a detailed and feasible mobility plan. In response to the traffic counts on cars, public transport, cycling and pedestrian movements, different scenarios were outlined and pondered against one another. The city council approved one of the scenarios (i.e. scenario 5).⁸⁴

83 The element of privatization of public space or Disneyfication are mentioned in the participation process as well, but stay under the radar in the press.

84 All scenarios are outlined in the preparatory work of Technum (technum, 6/5/2014).

In June 2014 the city hired a top aid and mobility specialist from the Brussels Capital Region, (J. Schollaert) to coordinate the work concerning the circulation plan and the central boulevards for the city.

A good plan for alderman E. Ampe was a technical plan: one that avoided car jams (“embouteillages”) and congestions while guaranteeing “fluidity”. That is why she chose for a two-lane one way street for cars. It is also why she decided to abolish the separate bus lanes in the opposite direction and why she chose to build 4 new parking lots in the ‘periphery’ of the Brussels inner city. For indeed, in line with the political compromise made in 2012, the city centre had to remain accessible by car by all means.

She did not however (before November 2014) sit together with any of the involved public actors or organised a consultation process with the local populations where the parking lots were to be build. It seems that at the moment of the public presentation of the circulation plan, the regional administration for mobility, the public transport company, the police and fire brigade,... had not been involved yet. It seems she wanted a solid political compromise and a detailed plan, before involving anybody else. Or as one involved person put it:

J.S.: “(,,,) a few other people who are a good match. They won’t intentionally drag the process. But at the time the cabinet Ampe was...was wary of including outsiders who aren’t constructive. They were really on their guard about that, in a similar way as with the pedestrian zone: ‘after 12 or 13 years, we have a decision. And we have someone who dares to take it on’, referring to Mayeur, who said ‘ I will boldly take my chances. She took on a similar stance and said ‘ I dare stick out my neck for a new circulation plan (...) and I will think it through with a limited number of insiders. After we reach a conclusion, we will open the debate’. I, on the other hand, thought this should be open for debate much sooner.”

Interviewer: “So up to 2014 the police, nor the fire department were consulted?”

J.S.: “heum, that only took place at the end of 2014. That was a really intense discussion for me (J.S., May 2016, my translation)

The course of events emphasized again the separate way with which the case was dealt with since the start by the city council (the aldermen and the mayor). The decisions were taken by them, the compromises were negotiated internally and the other public actors were only at a later stage informed about the plans, as a ‘fait accompli’. However, although most of them would have liked to be involved earlier, the interviews show that a number of them understood this way of dealing with the renewal project. Even more: most of them agreed “that it was probably the only way”. The fear for political blockage after 15 years of stand still seemed to be shared amongst all public actors involved.

From a political strategic point of view, the city council chose to take up the different plans in the classic way:

- (i) every alderman his or her competence, his/her plan and procedure (*private electoral interest*)
- (ii) together with their responsible cabinet and (sectorally organised) part of the city administration
- (iii) while the de facto piloting of the circulation plan happened without too much public-public partnership worried it would get blocked (private interest of the local level versus the regional level).

Finally, the limited experience of the mayor and the aldermen with regard to the management of complex urban renewal projects should also be noted. Indeed, it also partly explains their reluctance with regards to involving other public institutions early in the planning and design process.

That strategy is in line with what the city of Brussels is also historically known for: namely “its way of acting alone” (G.E., 03.05.2016). Yet the worries among the local government officials about political and administrative (potential) blockages seemed to blind them. That is with regards to the consequences of their way of proceeding on the side of the public.

Indeed, in the midst of Ans Persoons’ participation process and fully independent of it E. Ampe announced her plans (24th of November 2014): her circulation plan and 4 new parking lots connected by the “destination loop”. And not only did she explain her plans, she made a strong symbolic statement about the pedestrian zone as well when she launched the phrase: “*Brussels will become, after Venice, the city with the largest pedestrian zone of Europe*”.

E. Ampe did not inform the organisers of the participation process (Artgineering) before talking to the press. For the majority of people there, however, who were already frustrated because they couldn’t speak about mobility this just threw oil on the fire. In fact, they had been promised (orally by the mayor on 29 September 2014) that they would be able to debate the plans in another moment. Here they saw the ready-made plans, another ‘*fait accompli*’. And another confirmation of the discourse that had been developing amongst opponents for 2 months, that of the top down city instead of how they think *the Majority coalition* should decide on the city: in a participatory, transparent and professional way.

At this time, the Picnic movement was fading and we cannot say there was a strong Livable City coalition left. Yet the press conference of the alderman had as we will see strong unintended consequence. The *Expo ’58 coalition* heard E. Ampe’s announcement that Brussels will have the “largest pedestrian zone of Europe” and found their fears confirmed. Furthermore, they too will make the argument of a city that should consult them.

To counter the criticisms, E. Ampe did organise in the next two weeks 3 information meetings in the city hall for people of the involved neighborhoods. And in the beginning of the next year, she organised 13 information meetings with private sector actors. Yet, these meetings stayed under the radar with only one person in my interviews referring to it (aside from the organisers of the meetings themselves). Just like the mayor and alderman Lemesre, she has a very different view of decision-making in the city (that I have called the *imaginary of the representative city*). In that view, they first decide and then inform the people. Furthermore, if you would have to talk

to people, it should be either people that live in the concerned neighborhood or street, or the private sector actors.

“I don’t think the participation process (ed. for the Beliris plan) wasn’t that good of an idea. It was actually...I don’t know...What I have realised, is euh. Look, if people are opposed to cars, that’s within their rights. But inviting them to sabotage your project? But that is what happened. They were invited, while they don’t actually live in that region. I can’t understand that (...)”

Interviewer: “Who are you talking about?”

E.A.: “well, Participatie Brussel invites those people to sabotage their own project. I would never have done that. I would simply invite the people who are involved. For instance, I visited companies that are located in the city center, de Post, the... (E.A., 31 May 2016, my translation)

Emergence of Platform Marolles and the Just & Livable City coalition: Platform Pentagone (November 2014-29th of June 2015)

Platform Marolles and the Descent on City Hall (December 2014)

As referred, the alderman of mobility Els Ampe’s announcement of a parking lot underneath the historic flea market of the city --Place de Jeu de Balle (FR)/Vosseplein (NL)-- ignited protest locally. The square was named from the start (in January 2014) as a contender for one of the four parking lots, but when it became certain (in November) it triggered a NIMBY (“not in my back yard”) effect with several people independently of each other launching petitions against the parking lot plan. The people living in the area, the fleemarket merchants and the local shopkeepers were worried about their square and the impact the works would have on the neighborhood and on them personally.

What began as 4 or 5 different petition-initiatives evolved into a more coordinated effort after a loosely organized Facebook-event brought the different actors together. The meeting was coordinated by a local inhabitant, longtime urban activist and ex-president of Inter Environmental Bruxelles (IEB). During the gathering the question was raised if the fight shouldn’t be broadened to the four parking lots and the circulation plan. But the large majority of people did not feel concerned. Some (like H.C.) did have a problem with the *Expo’58* proposals of the city. Others were there out of a belief in the necessity of the *Livable city* (such as the individuals of picnic the streets that took part as well). But the choice was made to focus on the common

PLATFORM MAROLLES

Anti-Top Down coalition

November 2014-March 2015

Shared imaginary and interests:

- Top down planning endangering the neighborhood and the culture of resistance to it.
- No underground parking lot (for a variety of private interest reasons)

Subgroups:

- *Private and Collective Interest subgroups*
- *Heritage Subgroup*
- *Just (and Livable) City subgroup*
- *Livable City subgroup*

NOTE: Direct political impact, cancellation of the Parking Jeu de Balle

denominator. Namely that what they were all against: the underground parking lot. Or as one organizer put it:

“Well ‘Plateform Marolles’ is therefore the lowest common denominator, well it was the text of the petition etc., but, well, it was no to Jeux de Balle parking. And thus, obviously, the issue was this one, do we fight against the 4 parking lots? etc. and actually a majority of people did not feel concerned by the 3 other parking lots within the circulation plan etc. Even myself even if I felt concerned by the whole, I wanted to win. Well, I felt like that to win it was necessary to be eh, united. eh otherwise is too easy for the City to discuss with this one, but not with the other, to place over divergences. And so it was very important to be united. And therefore we succeeded»(G.B.17 March 2016)

This NIMBY position against a concrete proposal allowed a very broad range of people with very different *imaginaries* of *the city* as well as diverging *private interests* (with regards to public space, historic cultural heritage, mobility, commerce or social justice) to unite around a common agenda. When they launched their united petition it went viral. The activists gathered more than 22 thousand signatures on the square and online in two weeks’ time.



Although the coalition did not agree on an *imaginary* they favored, they did identify what they were against besides the parking lot proposal itself: namely *top down political decision-making*. Especially when it comes to large scale infrastructure projects that endanger their neighborhood; projects decided upon by politicians in an authoritarian way. Projects they have resisted as “Marolliens” for decades. The *imaginary* has its origin in the 1960s with the infamous “Battle of the Marolles” where inhabitants and civil society activists managed to save the neighborhood from demolition against the enlargement of the large-scale Justice Palace. (Dessouroux, 2008) The *Platform Marolles coalition* promised to re-invigorate if anybody would even try to touch their square again now in 2014. Hence, their slogan “*touche pas à mon Jeu de Balle*”.

When the fleemarket merchant started believing they had been lied to and that they would not even be able to use the parking lot for their specific vehicles, the anger boiled over. Or as one of the involved people put it:

“At the beginning the merchants did saw an interest in the idea for a parking lot. They could use it for putting their large camionette’s under the square. (ed. large pretty high vehicles to bring the supplies) But when they realized they had been lied to and that technically it would be impossible for them to park there (ed. because of the limited height in the specifics of the parking lot) they were infuriated and turned against the city” (B.D., 19 August 2016)

By the time the city council intended to vote over the decision in December 2014, 200 angry *Marolliens* descended on city hall to voice their fierce opposition. The protest was perceived as being carried by thousands among city hall officials and it was attributed to the “unruly character” of the neighborhood (at least by one government official in my interviews). It had made a strong impression on the aldermen. And indeed the city was forced to its knees within three months’ time over the Parking Jeu de Balle.

Alternatively, a parking enlargement would be installed at the nearby Brigittines, but again the decision was taken without public enquiry or participation. Soon the project was forgotten, but for a number of people this behaviour of the city council reinforced the perception of top-down governance, improvisation and ad hoc decision-making, especially with regards to the mayor himself. In the local media he was increasingly presented as an “*incompetent and arrogant cavalier seul*” an image eagerly enforced by his opponents.

Platform Pentagone and the tumultuous meeting at Ancienne Belgique (January 2015)

But the ‘NIMBY’ protest of Platform Marolles played an indirect role with regards to the planning process in general. (i) It inspired other neighborhoods to do the same. (ii) Secondly, it spouted an offspring with some of the Platform Marolles members creating a ‘No4Parkings’ action group. This group did take position against the *Expo ’58 imaginary*. (iii) Thirdly, it alimented the frustration inside the participation process. Because, while the announced parking lots were clearly on the political agenda and while they were discussed in the public opinion, the participants were not allowed to talk about them. Fourthly, (iv) it spurred ‘Platform Pentagone’, a convergence between some key organizers of ‘Platform Marolles’ and partakers in the participation process, such as the civil society organisations (IEB, BRAL, ARAU, GRACQ,...), the different neighborhood associations and some Picnic the streets activists. In my interview, they called signing the pamphlet “their last move” as Picnic the Streets:

“At my request, Picnic the streets, has still signed the platform text, so we were among the signatories, that was in fact when B.D. still had to give his approval, B.D. and Y.S. who I have both mailed to ask if we were going to sign the text ? ‘Yes, we’re going to sign the text’. And this must be more or less, according to me, our last action of Picnic the Streets” (J.V. 31 Maart 2016, my translation)

The objective of this convergence was to address the pedestrian zone, the underground parking lots and the circulation plan in their entirety. It in fact re-united ‘de facto’ the *Livable and Just city coalition* that started to emerge at the “last Picnic the Streets” 6 months earlier

PLATFORM PENTAGONE

The Just & Livable City coalition

November 2014-June 2015

Shared imaginary and interests:

- Livable and Just city
- Participatory City
- Anti-Top Down City
- Anti-Expo ’58 City
- Anti-City of Commerce
- Private interests: no parking lots, no Mini Ring (inhabitants, neighborhood committees)

Subgroups:

- *Livable City subgroup*
- *Just (and Livable) City subgroup*

Private and Collective Interest subgroups

NOTE: Discourse around a list of demands, no very coherent storyline yet. No direct political impact.

(June 2014), and included some inhabitants and several neighborhood groups defending their private and collective interests as well.

We can say that the discourse coalition of Platform Pentagone existed of three subgroups: (a) The *Livable City subgroup* who was viscerally against the imaginary of the City of Expo '58 (BRAL, PICNIC the Streets, GRACQ...); (b) the *Just (and Livable) City subgroup* who were against the imaginary of the City of Expo '58 as well, but in the first place because of the danger it implied for the inhabitants (IEB). (c) The *Private and Collective Interest subgroups* (inhabitants, neighborhood committees and a few shopkeepers) who follow the argumentation of the *Livable* and the *Just city subgroups* when they talk about the public interest. Moreover, what they all share in common is their demand for real participation, for thorough preparatory studies and consultation, for transparency rather than opaque top down decision-making or what I call the *imaginary of a Participatory City*.

Their discourse did not address the pedestrian zone itself and it was more a list of demands breathing compromise, rather than a very coherent story line. (see annex X) It first of all focused on the city's culture of decision-making upon which everybody agreed easily. The discourse furthermore included a strong opposition to all elements in the city's plans that referenced the *imaginary of the City of Expo '58* (the Mini Ring, underground parking lots, transit traffic, car speed, abolition of separate bus lanes) and against those elements that referenced the *Un-just City of Commerce in their point of view* ('privatization' and 'Disneyfication'). At the same time they pronounced themselves in favor of elements that reference the *Livable city's* public space (more green, more clean air, more public amenities) and its mobility dimension (more ease for cyclists, a reference to trams, less noise, less pollution) as well as better public health.

The Platform got a lot of support in the form of signature of civil society organizations, but it never developed direct political impact. They were not perceived by government officials as a *coalition* that was carried by a great number of people.



However, the convergence between Platform Marolles, members of Picnic the Streets and the Civil Society organisations, etcetera in Platform Pentagone; did contribute at least to one iconic action (in the Ancienne Belgique, see [picture X](#)).⁸⁵

That action combined with the December action of the Marolliens, led to the abolition of the plan for the parking lot under Place de Jeu de Balle. Indeed, the moment was so tumultuous that the aldermen and the mayor did not dare to come on stage.

One of the speakers put it as follows:

J.S.: "It was the idea that Mayeur and Ampe, and maybe Persoons too, would take the stage to clarify a few things and I, for my part, would discuss some technical matters. (...) At the time, on the day of the presentation or the day before however, was decided that only the technicians would take the stage, not the politicians, nobody from the city council.

Interviewer: "that was decided with one day notice?"

J.S.: Yes, very late, a day before or even the day of the presentation itself (...) No one was willing to stand up for a project that wasn't theirs. And otherwise, it was too hot an item to communicate objectively or to discuss in a serene way. Anyway, that was the decision. And it turned out that it was a full house in the Ancienne Belgique. There were lots of people (...) but only a minor part of them were there to obtain information. The adversaries, Platform Pentagone, (...) monopolised the room with banners they were handing out, and they were shouting: 'no parking! no parking! no parking!' And people were climbing up with those banners"

The action had direct political impact. 3 weeks after the mayor Y. Mayeur singlehandedly decided to cancel the plans. Aside from this exploit Platform Pentagone was not very active, yet in the next phase (after the Marolles victory was secure in March 2015 and after the start of the test phase) they had a far greater impact: namely in contributing to the isolation of the mayor Y. Mayeur.

85 Activists of Picnic the Streets, Platform Marolles and the members of Platform Pentagone had made their message heard with flyers and supersized banners.

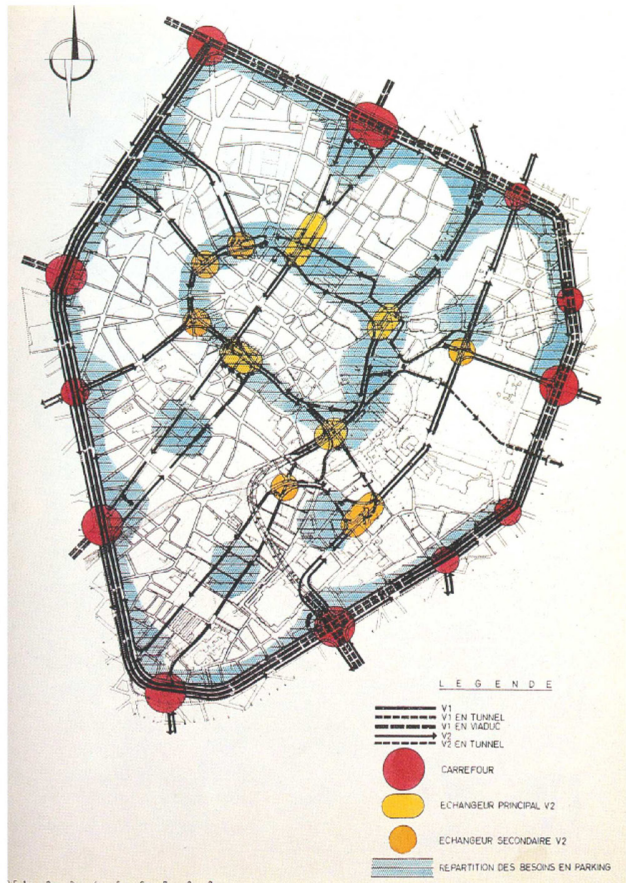
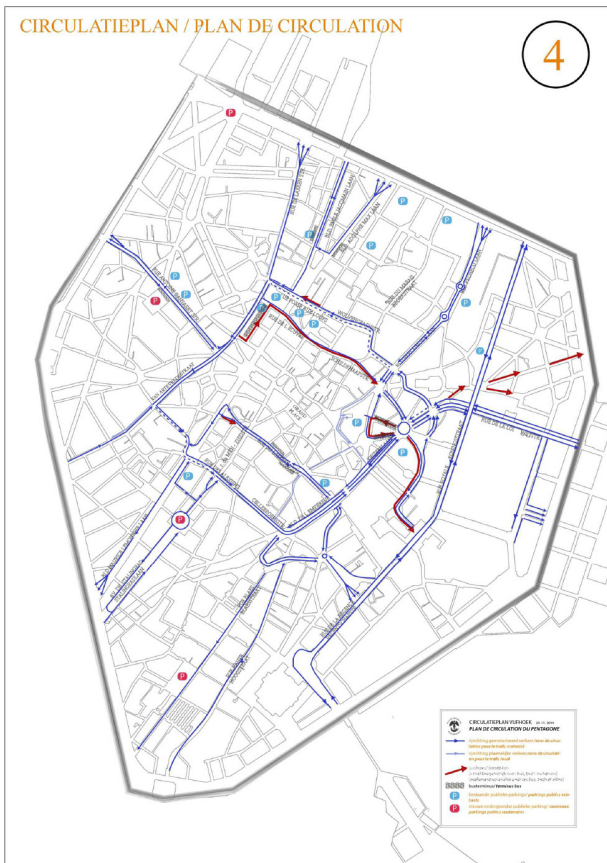
Other actions in the winter of 2015

But those were not the only actions or action groups at that time. In fact the alderman of mobility's announcement and Platform Marolles spurred many offsprings from December 2014 onward.

1) In the other designated 'parking lot neighborhoods' for example at Yzer or at Vieux Marché au Grain we see how locals (led by resp. M.W and I.M.) started organising the opposition in a similar vain.



2) In the same period, 1st of December 2014, civil society organisations and group for urban action ARAU came out verbally with a press release that published the Green party's discovery (Ecolo): namely the striking resemblance between the current circulation plan and the old strategic regional development plan, Plan Techné (dating back to 1962). The nearly similar traffic solutions reveal in a striking way the feeling that lived among the *Livable city coalition*: that the currently proposed circulation plan is in fact fully in line with *Expo '58 imaginary*.



3) Meanwhile another ad hoc local action group of urban planners, 'ParkingMythe', decided to 'reveal the myth' of the lack of parking spaces in Brussels. During peak hours they manually counted (and filmed) the empty parking spaces in city centre.



4) On the 27 of February the mayor Y. Mayeur announced the cancellation of the plans for a parking at the Jeu de Balle Square. Consequently in March 2015 the Marolliens celebrated their victory at the 142nd birthday of the square. The objective of the days'-long festivities was to get the place recognised as historic heritage. That way its safety would be guaranteed for good. The slogan used was "no parking, no bling bling". And the program was announced as follows in the Belgian Press:

«This was an anniversary which is usually not celebrated, explains H.V. from Marolles collective platform. But it is a way of supporting the request of classification of the square.» Therefore, the programme of "week without parking nor bling-bling" according to the organisers, typical activities, starting with an open-air reception of the Orde van de Brusselse moestasje ("Moustache Brussels Order"), which is currently preparing the election of the most beautiful city moustaches. Idem Sunday, with the ceremony of the Howl in honor of Jeux de Balle at 13h, followed by the birthday cake» (Le Soir, 14 March 2014, my translation).



Absence of the alderman for commerce and the electric train of the alderman for mobility







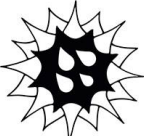


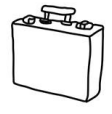




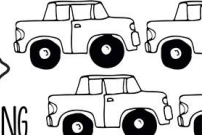

At this point of the process, the absence of alderman of commerce Marion Lemesre and the absence of alderman M. Ouriaghli only created space for doubt and speculation amongst the *just and livable city coalition*. Meanwhile alderman E. Ampe launched the idea of a little luna park train on the pedestrian zone (Over Twitter, Bruzz, 12 March 2015). The discourse of Platform Pentagone had by that time already started to focus on the possible danger of Disneyfication and presumably the image only reinforcing that fear while other in the social media dismissed it as amateuristic and silly.

Actions in May and June 2015

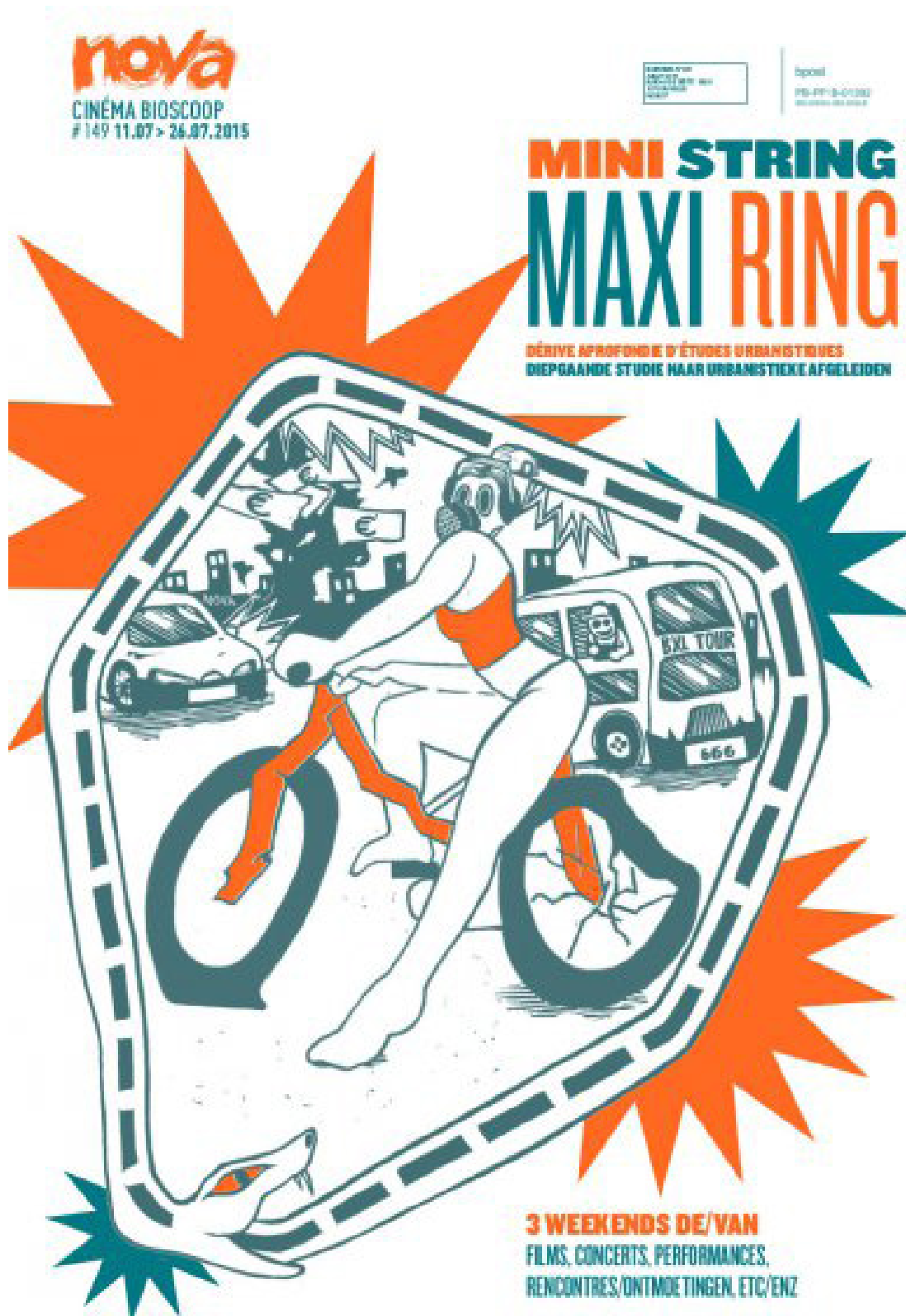


1) On May 2015, Steps of protest (“activism”) is set up. The action wanted to shed light on the historical heritage of protest at the steps of the Stock Exchange Square. These stairs were now about to become part of the “Red Zone” or protest free zone. So Anna Rispoli curated the re-enactment of all the demonstrations and actions in the past that had taken place there. The objective: stopping the privatisation and commercialisation of public space.

2) On June 7, 2015 Picnic the streets organizes its last “goodbye” picnic with the title “Yes, But No”: Yes to the pedestrian zone, but no to a badly thought one. And “No Parking, No Bling Bling”.

				
	PICNIC THE STREETS 07/06/2015 - 12H00			
			OUI MAIS NON	
				

3) A few days later the activist organisation Cinema Nova (See 6.2.3) gets also involved with a weekend of debates and documentaries under the name “Mini String, Maxi Ring”.



4) On the 28 June 2015, I.M launches the inauguration of the “new Mini Ring” under the title:

“Mini Ring, ça rime avec happening!” To make the argument again that the “Mini Ring” will not only create congestion, but that it will also produce a public health problem in the narrow middle aged streets of the Pentagone.



5) Meanwhile in March 2015, Marion Lemesre had come with a plan: namely, to put more terraces on the Place Saint-Catherine, a square nearby the pedestrian zone. In July of that year, when things got real (the pedestrian zone was being tested and at Sint Catherine the banks were taken away); the youngsters of “54” started demanding their banks back (with amongst other the support of several Picnic’ers). As the alderman had not yet announced what would happen with the newly created public space of the pedestrian zone this moment added to the speculation that the central boulevards would indeed be “privatised”, “just like at saint-cath” [sic, Place Sainte Cathérine].



6) And another smaller action came from Clean Air Bxl, a group of (expat) mothers lobbying for improved air quality in Brussels (“Help Brussels Breath”), yet their spatial focus is less on the pedestrian zone as compared to other groups.

6.5.5 The Failed Start of the Test Phase as a Triggering Event (July 2015)

At the start of Picnic the streets three years before some city dwellers got first aware of the debate about the Central Boulevards. When the new majority announced its plans in January 2013 more people entered the debate. When Y. Mayeur took over the mayorship and he made the plans into his flagship project, more people who were aware of the plans also started following the dossier (esp. civil society organizations). Platform Marolles and Platform Pentagone had drawn many people in the urban planning process. The opposition of Berlinbau's business owners' association and the car lobby Touring had drawn attention to the coming change. But so far still relatively few people had been involved.

That changed the first time (1) in September 2014 when the 'participation process' drew in hundreds of local city dwellers including lots of media attention. It happened a second time (2) when the parking plans were announced in November 2014 by the alderman of mobility, which gathered a lot of citizens' contestation. And finally it happened a third time (3) when the test phase for the new circulation plan and the car free Anspach Boulevard went into effect. Following the participation process, the design office SUM had made small adaptations to the Beliris plan and had finalised the project by drawing up the so-called predesign for the urbanism permit demand. Artgineering continued its work by setting up an information process about the Beliris plan; while meanwhile the city council voted the mobility changes (i.e. April 2015) that would go in effect on the 29th of June 2015. Only that they everybody knew. It literally drew in every inhabitant, shopkeeper and user of the space as their daily lives and daily routines had to change. And as the change occurred in the city center of the capital of the country, all national media reported on it as well.

The literature on urban planning teaches that every step of the urban planning process, from the small beginnings to the whole population, demands different approaches to build public support for the project; such as bilateral discussions, consultation with the different groups, large scale participation, a vast and thorough information campaign... Yet, at every step of the way the local government did not prioritize those steps of building public support. Instead they focused on the political compromise and potential blockages from other political levels. The Alderman of Commerce, Marion Lemesre, did not even sit together with the shopkeepers in the run up to the test phase, while the participation that was organized did not include a discussion on that what was about to be tested: the circulation plan. But the moment which came at the strongest political cost was when literally everybody entered the discussion on the 29th of June.

The local government had not managed to build public support, but they had also failed to sufficiently prepare the project, logistically.

(i) Missing public support.

Throughout the planning process for starters, within each protest coalition there were *subgroups* that might have been swayed to support the plans and that could have spoken in their favor.

But they didn't sway them and instead they galvanized frustration and created doubt. Think for example of two of the biggest *subgroups*.

The *Transition subgroup* of shopkeepers and business owners in the *Expo '58 coalition* could have been wavered by informing them extensively and coherently, creating overall transparency on what was about to happen (mobility wise and with regards to the plans for commerce in the zone), reassuring them, consulting them and by finding practical solutions. Instead, the alderman of participation organized a process concerning mainly the pedestrian zone's urbanism. The alderman for mobility organized an independent information process on her side with regards to the circulation plan. And the aldermen for commerce M. Lemesre, and for public housing and real estate M. Ouriaghli⁸⁶ made no effort whatsoever to sit together with the involved parties and city dwellers. So indeed instead of reassuring them, they created frustration, confusion and doubt.

Or think for example of the *City of Commerce* and the *Open-Ended subgroup* in the original *Livable City coalition* of Picnic the Streets. Many of them had no fundamental problem with the commercial proposals of the city to use the pedestrian zone for reviving the inner-city. Or at least they had no strongly formed opinion on the matter. As long as it meant they would have a car free Stock Exchange Square and new public space that was convivial, family friendly, beautiful and green. For many of them, more terraces and events were not in contradiction with those 'public space' demands. But when the local government proposed a mobility plan breathing Expo '58: car fluidity, vast underground parking lots, a ring for cars on two lanes in one direction around the pedestrian zone; the *Majority Coalition* pitched them against the proposals on a visceral level. "This is not what we asked for, a Mini Ring and a pedestrian zone for cars!"

In proposing those mobility plans the local government applied its internal political compromise (between the *Livable City subgroup* and the *Expo '58 subgroup*) and probably they had hoped to sway the *convinced subgroup* of the *Expo '58 coalition*, but to them the announcement of symbols of the *Livable City* ("a gigantic pedestrian zone" Mayor Y. Mayeur; "the biggest pedestrian zone of Europe after Venice" alderman of mobility E. Ampe) were exactly the opposite of what they believed in. In fact, the compromise didn't wave the *convinced subgroup* for one second. Yet, the *Majority coalition* continued to execute its political agreement, despite the lack of public support and protest from all sides.⁸⁷

(ii) Insufficient logistical preparation

They failed to sufficiently prepare the project, logistically. Even with regards to the best developed aspect mobility and signalization they did not count on having to make quick adaptations the day of the implementation or the day after. Or as one person in the city government strikingly put it "amateurism" and inexperience:

"Now, at technical level... It is clear that.. I think that technically we had plenty of errors. It is full of errors. I.e.... well. Sometimes they are justified, but well... the fact of pedestrianizing and not starting

86 And the alderman for Tourism Ph. Close

87 And indeed they celebrated the agreement as an exceptional success for Brussels. Which it was seen the history of 16 years of gridlock. But it was an agreement that entailed political support alone.

works immediately, there is a technical reason also because it was the test phase, we wanted to be able to change it, adjust it, if necessary, if we were asked to do so, but err... Should we do this in July so that the STIB can...can change all its bus lines? So there is a... a whole.... whole planning like this that was put in place but.... We make signaletic mistakes. So euh...for... our teams have been working, well the teams had worked ... until 29 June as strenuous almost everything overnight to have a new circulation plan. This was a very intensive work for them... well I think that.... Afterwards we realised that there was plenty of loopholes, which today it is hard to... improve them, a signaletic problem. The region which puts itself a signaling err... very negative in the outskirts saying "the city center is inaccessible"... Summarising, that is all very down-to-earth technical errors, which indeed show very concretely, which demonstrates a certain form of amateurism... " (June 2016, my translation)

While another interview clearly demonstrated the importance of fragmentation of the competences, as they had 'only approached it as a mobility issue' they did not prepare strategies in areas such as policing or waste management. They had not developed neither a specific safety or cleaning plan:

E.A.: "But I think that this was caused by the fact that at first there was no safety plan and no cleanliness plan and the during the first days that became apparent and that was a huge problem. In my opinion, the problem was the constant focus on mobility, which entailed a disregard of an overall management plan; a clear stance on the global outlook of the pedestrian zone. A pedestrian zone concerns more than just mobility. It has to be clean, it has to be safe. There is need of a plan for directing the commercial opportunities. There needs to be a plan with regard to the properties in the zone. There is need of..."

Interviewer: "who was responsible for that plan? The cleanliness plan or ..."

E.A.: "wie doet er de coördinatie van alles?"

E.A.: "Who is ultimately in charge of all coordination?"

Interviewer: "That would be Mayeur?"

E.A.: "well yeah, of course" Interviewer: "So that was a matter of oblivion, or of some kind of inexperience with those matters?"

E.A.: "No, I must have pointed out the importance of those matters a thousand times, but it always came back to mobility. I mean, one year before the implementation of the pedestrian zone the several distinct departments started taking meetings, that was the police, the mobility department, the regional as well as the city departments and even the Flemish community a few times."

Interviewer: "that was starting November 2014?"

E.A.: "Euh yeah. And the fire department and the ambulances and even the demography department. All the departments that had to grant their blessing were all involved. But demography is also a competence of a council member of MR, and everything was still about mobility. But I was not going to invite people of

other departments or other political parties myself. That would be difficult, you know. I have mentioned a few times that the coordination should be done,... about the safety and the cleanliness features and the realisation of the commercial zone in the areas where the city is proprietor too... and that...and that...and that, but hey...I can only mention those things, you know.”

(iii) *The absence of Communication*

Moreover, they did not have a communication cell that was ready to give quick responses to questions or push back on criticisms. The contracts of the government contractor that had been responsible for communication about the changes ended at the start of the test phase. In principle the city administration had to take over, but in reality there was no communication cell. One person was hired a few months earlier (which was then enlarged to other two). But there was no service capable of dealing with the needed capacity to (i) answer practical questions quickly and extensively, (ii) pushback on criticism, (iii) wage a national communication campaign (iv) and counteract disinformation.

The result was a communication disaster. Stories of insecurity and images of dirt, empty beer cans and people sleeping in the street dominated the news cycle. Every shop, bar or restaurant that went bankrupt was linked to the arrival of the pedestrian zone. And Youtube videos of hefty car congestion on the ‘Mini Ring’ flooded the social media. Even when erroneous information concerning the mobility dimension of the plans started circulating (i.e. that the inner city was supposedly inaccessible for cars ⁸⁸) the *Majority coalition* had difficulties to repel the mistake and communicate the correction. And there was no build up public support that could come to its defense.

Only by May 2016, the newly established communication cell of the city of Brussels was up and running (with 6 people). That meant that coordinated communication about the different plans ‘de facto’ stopped and was absent in the moment the test phase began. The communication came down on the work of the aldermen’s cabinets (with regards to questions concerning their competence). One person from the administration talking openly, analysed it in a razor sharp way. It is a long quote, but there is no better description of what went wrong:

« A communication agency has been appointed for the circulation plan who was mainly in charge or was meant to guide everything until the 29th of June, until everything would start [...] I do not think they’ve done a good job. But they’ve done lots of things [...] a specific website, [...] a newsletter, [...] a specific callcenter with two, three people who were all the time sitting next to the phone to answer calls with complaints or questions of the merchants [...] I found they haven’t done it in a promotional way [...] and that they haven’t met their targets. I found it a mistake of them. The mistake was that they did not focus on their mission which was in fact over after the 29th of June. When we started with the test [...] Every

88 This happened after a mistake was made by the mobility administration of the Brussels Capital Region in its traffic signalization on the small ring around the Brussels Pentagon: stating the inner city was inaccessible with large red sign posts. This confirmed furthermore the message of the *Expo ’58 coalition* that had been warning for months that “the inner city would become inaccessible”.

time there was a problem, a technician, there was support [...] of the circulation service [...] but the general public was not aware anymore. So, it sufficed that person said 'I wanted to do this, but it was not possible' and no one would counter it. There was no immediate reaction. Objectively speaking, nor by the politics via a communication service who could 'yes, this is it', 'you can get this' [...] after the 29th of July "poepoepoet" it was finished. I had already found them not very strong before. And afterwards nothing has happened anymore, so, that's a mistake according to me, about the pedestrian or pedestrian zone, there wasn't even that communication. So, from the side of the communication agency nothing came and they have in fact tried to go low profile. They've done the participation process. Quite a lot of people went there. [...] At my sense, it was quite ok [...] but well, for the rest, once all that was done. When the test was done. The ping pong tables were liked by everyone, it was a big success from day one, you could say. A marvelous summer, lots of people on the street. But it did not create a wave from inside the city 'look all what's happening here', 'it is really good, he'. [...] This creates a phenomenon of people who have never been on the pedestrianized area, but who've read about it in the press, "we do not get with the car in the center anymore' and' it's dirty and it's like this. There has never really been a proactive communication. "

Put differently, when during the first days of the test phase, the 'new' pedestrian zone was reported in the national press as a "disaster", "dirty", "unsafe", "nightlife disturbances", "beer cans everywhere"; the lack of a communication service had a high price. The pedestrian zone became represented across the country, nationally, as a "dirty, ugly and even disgusting place". The negative narrative in the national media (July-September 2015) of insecurity and messiness, of businesses going bankrupt and of a bungling mayor actually confirmed an existing national stereotype of Brussels. Indeed in the rest of the country Brussels is often viewed as alienating, *dirty, unsafe* and mismanaged. That made the narrative in the national press of the pedestrian zone, once established, very difficult to combat, and in fact, the majority coalition never managed to push back on that and turn it around (at least not until May 2016); even though most problems were solved a week after the start or even when it became clear that the circulation plan was functioning better than expected (End-October 2015). One local government spokesperson confirmed that feeling in his interview:

And then another issue is that the city and the centre of Brussels belongs to many people, we see this in the debate as well, i.e.. people who live in Tournai, Courtrai, they all have a opinion (ed. negative) on that pedestrian zone... they have most probably never come to see it... Therefore there is a genuine questioning [...] (unnamed, 20 June 2016, my translation).

The consequences of all this were threefold:

1) Firstly, within the Brussels public opinion, the *Expo '58 coalition* saw its discourse and its "worst fears" confirmed. The "dead of commerce" was happening right under their eyes with "dozens of shops closing while hundreds were suffering severe revenue losses". The inner-city was no longer accessible and those who did venture inside the Pentagon found themselves "stuck" in its narrow and fully congested middle-age streets. The mayor and alderman of mobility who were sensitive to their arguments, actually they did adapt the plans to create better car fluidity and make (what



“Contre le piétonnier de Bruxelles et sa mayerisation!”

they considered) one of the shopping neighborhoods in the city center more accessible⁸⁹. But for the *transit subgroup*, the changes appeared as improvisations and as ‘ad hoc’ decisions adding more doubt and uncertainty to their fears; while for the *convinced subgroup* the changes went not at all far enough.⁹⁰

So on the one hand we had the lack of a communication to disseminate at least the plans that were ready and the ad hoc changes to it, leading to great confusion, even with regards to the most developed part at that time: i.e. the mobility aspect. On the other hand we had a mayor that made the pedestrian zone his showpiece intervention for 2018⁹¹. The consequence was not only that the local government became isolated for this dossier on their City of Trade & Expo ‘58 flank, but that the mayor himself (not aided by his unfortunate phrases) got singled out personally.

[...] I believe that in general it is his personality, but... for the positive and for the negative. He is someone who actually occasionally places inadequate phrases. This is true... we have well heard it with the Flemish who came to make Brussels ‘dirty’, this kind of things that when we hear them, when we are in front of our TV we think ‘we shouldn’t say things in that way.’ (unnamed spokesperson, local government, June 2016, my translation).

What started as a coalition against a planning proposal, had now turned against the mayor personally. That the liberal alderman of commerce or the socialist alderman of public housing had not organized any consultation or participation didn’t matter. The mayor was held accountable. A turn that is best exemplified by the petition that was launched a few months later asking the resignation of the mayor as well as the campaign against Mayor’s person “Non élu, pas de bienvenue” or in English: “not elected, not welcome (ed. in our restaurant, bar or shop); or by the facebook group

89 The Dansaert neighborhood got better car accessibility for clients coming from the Sablon Area.

90 Indeed, for the *convinced subgroup* only reopening the Stock Exchange Square and the Anspach Avenue (taking away the symbol) would have been a ‘far enough’ concession.

91 The next local elections.

2) Secondly, within the Brussels public opinion the *Livable and Just City coalition* saw its discourse and its “worst fears” confirmed as well. The *Mini Ring* was “flooded” with transit traffic searching an alternative road. And on top of that, the lack of policing and waste management on the newly established pedestrian zone did not create a *Livable* environment for the inhabitants. With the noise of drunk passersby keeping people up at night as the most often mentioned complaint and doubts about the future of those disturbances; as it was still unclear what would happen concerning the increase in events or the expansion of terrace licenses.

“people living in the pedestrian zone is not fun eh ?; They complaint that the noise of cars, who was a kind of permanent background noise... Now it is the standing silence and then all of a sudden there is a stupid which breaks a bottle against the ground. And this every night. And the nights where it is calm they do not sleep well neither; because it is as the ‘Chinese torture’; they say to themselves that there is a stupid that will arrive and though a beer can. You see? Therefore it has become infernal! It is sad eh!”
(I.M. 21 March 2016)

At the foundation of Platform Pentagone the coalition had found a compromise amongst the *Livable city subgroup*, the *Just (and Livable) city subgroup* and the *Private and Collective Interest subgroups*. They had developed talking points, but they did not have a clear storyline. This started changing a few months later when H.C. and J.N. of IEB—and of the *Just (and Livable City) subgroup*—got more actively involved. The tone became more antagonistic and more personal.

They continued to hold their position against the City of Expo ’58, while becoming more explicit on their position against processes that could make the city *unjust* such as gentrification, Disneyfication or privatization of public space. They continued their opposition against the lack of transparency; against the top down approach; against the lack of consultation and of the side effects of the proposed plans. But on top of that they now established a stronger “rapport de force” by turning against the mayor Yvan Mayeur personally.

Indeed, he had embodied the urban planning project from the start, but in the aftermath of the tumultuous events in the Marolles and due to his undiplomatic communication and “unfortunate phrases” he became the personification of that what went wrong with the proceedings. And so the tone became more political in the sense that they started protesting the mayor himself as well, aside from what went wrong with the urban planning proceedings.

The consequence of this change in tone, was that the *Livable City subgroup* (with the exception of civil society organization BRAL) gradually went out of the coalition. That in turn opened the door for a turn in the discourse. Away from “Yes but No” towards “No”, full stop: including “no to this pedestrian zone”. Exactly what the Picnic movement had fought for since 2012.

The storyline became:

“We don’t want this pedestrian zone. Mayeur (ed. the mayor) should have consulted the population and studied the different possibilities before acting. In fact, he would have better chosen to take the same 50 hectares of car free space and spread them out over the whole Pentagon, making the narrow middle age streets car free. Instead of a pedestrianizing this broad 19th century Boulevard, perfectly fit for car

*traffic and which does not capture and retain the air pollution as do the narrow streets of the Mini Ring”
(my own synopsis on the basis of Platform Pentagon Facebook posts).*

The shift in discourse had no direct political impact. In fact, among city officials there was a feeling that Platform Pentagone represented just a hand full of people.

But they did have an important indirect effect. Indeed, they managed to get their message across among both the city’s Just City and Livable city activists and civil society organizations; especially on the French-speaking side.⁹² This did not mean everybody unanimously made the turn, but the new storyline did become dominant (on the “left”).

So, the departure of the *Livable City subgroup* (People from the Picnic movement) *from the coalition* on the one hand and the change in the storyline on the other hand had as a secondary effect that the *Majority coalition* got isolated on their *Livable city* flank as well. As such the pedestrian zone became attacked by all camps that now appeared to find themselves in a peculiar de facto opposition together.

3) Thirdly, what they had lacked in support amongst the most verbal and organized local population, they had so far made up in political support. The *Majority coalition* had indeed a solid political agreement between the local majority parties and with the different involved government levels (resp. regional ministers R. Vervoort & P. Smet and Federal minister D. Reynders). But this support started wavering and would lead to a feeling of political isolation as an indirect consequence of (a) the lack of public support and (b) the badly managed and badly communicated start of the test phase.

Aside from the absence of a functioning communication cell, the reasons therefore were twofold: (i) First, even when the changes solved the problems, the ad hoc decision-making confirmed the image of an improvising mayor that had not done his homework beforehand. And (ii) secondly, by the time the objective data came in, a severe terror thread led to a military lockdown of the inner city and to an economic downturn (November/December 2015), making it difficult to communicate about for ex. the positive congestion results around the pedestrian zone. In fact, in the months following the lockdown and later the 22th of March terrorist attacks; the critiques would only mount leading up to the symbolic (and widely mediatized) refusal of a restaurant owner to serve the mayor and his alderman of mobility (April 2016).

“Well, the way it happened makes that today people makes a political fight turned againt him more than against the project, too. Therefore it is... This is again inherent I would say at his... his personality, but he feels isolated. (unnamed local government’s spokesperson, June 2016) my translation)

92 More research is necessary to substantiate this claim further. Yet from my interviews, on the basis of dozens of conversations with passersby, as well as in coincidental encounters with familiar activist and left leaning faces (on the pedestrian zone itself) there was a striking, almost identical, resemblance with the Platform pentagone storyline.

As such, the lack of local public support, the negative national narrative, the lack of a means of communication to turn it around and the isolation with regards to the Brussels public opinion (with not one coalition coming to his support) led to the start of political isolation of the person embodying the project, the mayor Y. Mayeur.

Proposal of an “Observatory” by the city’s universities (29 June-31 August 2015)

Local academics had largely been absent in the public debate between 2012 and 2014. When the ambitious project risked to be discarded because of the increasing polarization (in the summer of 2015), M. Hubert and E. Corijn (*Livable City coalition*) propose to objectify the public debate. Thereto they proposed a Brussels Observatory of the pedestrian zone (now: of Observatory of Brussels Centre). Hubert made the proposal at the Brussels Summer University and got the support of Corijn of the VUB University. The Mayor, Y. Mayeur, is present at the event, when the proposal was made public and he expressed interest in the idea. The Observatory became operational in May-June 2016.

2nd Phase of the test phase: start of a difficult school semester (1 September-December 2015)

Image of the pedestrian zone

When the zone stayed like it was after the summer (and due to the lack of communication) many citizens assumed that the place would stay like it is, that it would not be redeveloped. In fact, that it was ready. People started complaining about the aesthetics of their new pedestrian zone. And with the social control dropping (due to shorter days and worsening of the weather) some of the problems that occurred throughout the summer got worse: aggressions later in the evening were reported, like *parochialization* of the space and women harassment. By now the temporary games and urban furniture had also disappeared, taking away some of the joyful play that took place on the zone throughout the summer. As a consequence, the image of the zone did not improve.

Lockdown

In this period the attacks in Paris (Nov 2015) and presumed relations with Brussels induced a lockdown, decided by the federal government. Most economic activity in the center stopped, army tanks and soldiers were deployed for extensive security measures. The pedestrian zone became an empty area according to the dramatic pictures taken and distributed in national press.

On top of the previous bad communication by the city on the renewal project, the negative publicity (fuelled by the Expo '58 and the Just & Livable City coalition), and the confusion created concerning the car accessibility of the city centre: the new pedestrian zone seemed to be a place



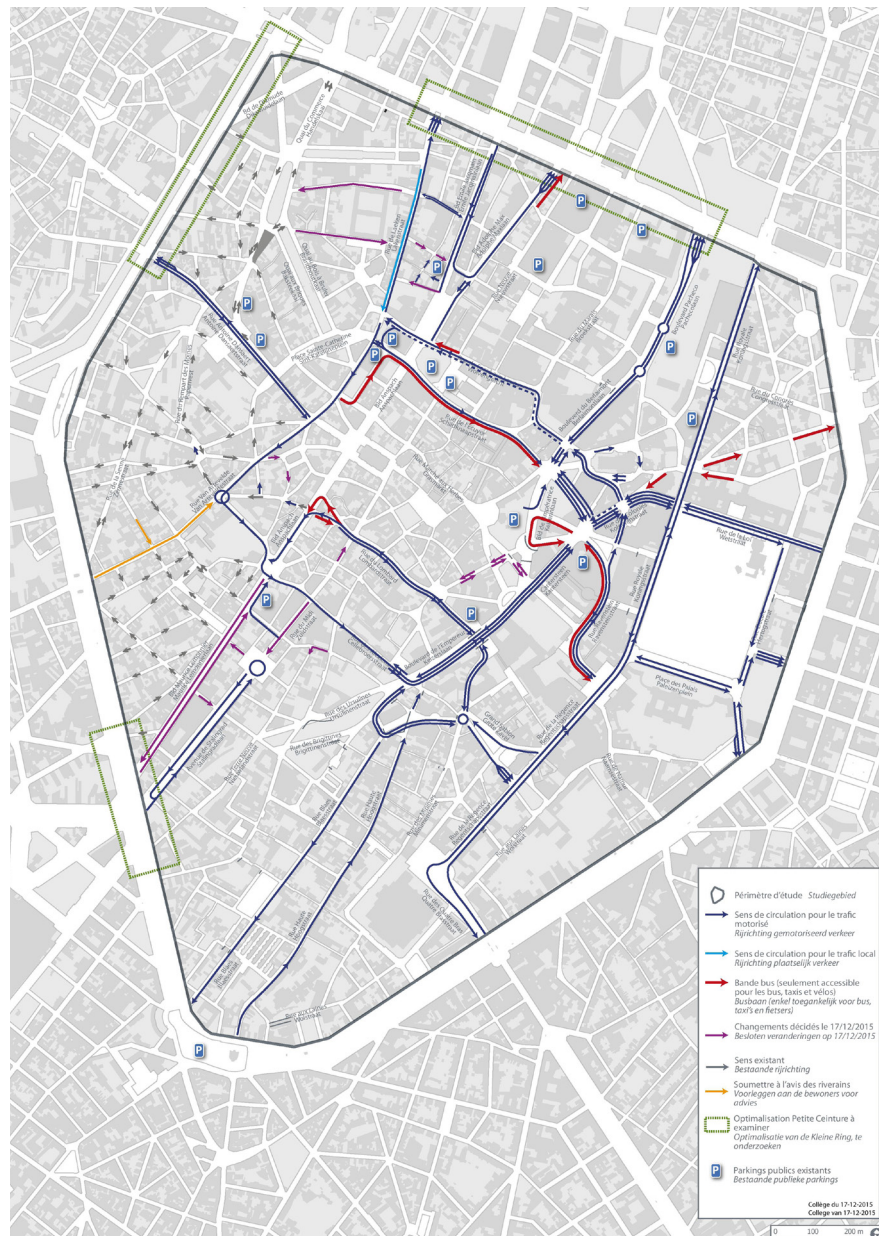
to avoid. Consequently, the shopkeepers and hotels had a heavy revenue loss and the pedestrian zone became once more the black sheep to blame.

To improve the plans and make concessions with regards to Hotel Metropole that had gone to court in September 2015, Yvan Mayeur made changes to the circulation plan.

The Boulevard Adolph Max is reopened from the Faussée au loup, making it again possible to cross the De Brouckère Square from the destination loop. (As you can see on the map also the Rue de Midi is changed in the direction of the Stock Exchange and the Boulevard Lemmonier has become a two directional street again).

Nonetheless, the willingness of the city to adapt did not stop the business owners' protests. On the contrary it seems rather that for the protesters "their new power relation" was working and it actually may have given them a boost to continue and ask more in favour of their private NIMBY interests.

Within a few months' time, the *Majority coalition* was obliged to make changes again as numerous people filed additional requests concerning traffic directions, parkings, etcetera... , this time at the Rue de Midi, and minor changes at other places.



The region does its part: bicycle parkings, bicycle lanes on the Mini Ring and waterproofing

A part of the renewal project proposed by SUM is funded by the region (Annex Y.A). Minister of Mobility, P. Smet, engaged for financing the necessary and awaiting renovations of the metro stations along the Central Boulevards. Apart from necessary waterproofing works, he would invest in bicycle infrastructure for a budget of 7 million euro in total.

Smet ordered the waterproofing works of the pre-metro stations De Brouckère, Stock Exchange and Fontainas. These works were planned for a few years later normally. He took care of the financing of two underground bicycle parkings respectively at De Brouckère and Stock Exchange. The funding and the works concerning the bicycle parkings will go through Beliris to SUM/Greich to facilitate the process. 3 million of the 7 million budgeted will go to the separate bike-lanes on the 'destination loop' or 'Mini Ring' (at least one of both sides of the road). But it is unclear when those works will start.

Legal urban permit procedure

Following the participation process, the design office SUM made small adaptations to the Beliris masterplan and prepared the predesign and specification for the building permit demand. This opened the legal obligatory process of public enquiry. That means the plans had to be discussed in a consultation commission (Comité d'Accompagnement) including all involved regional administrations to be present with a special delegate (heritage and landscapes, environment, urbanism, mobility...) Law stipulates such meetings are widely open to the public; but for Brussels standards it was an unseen number (over 200) participants. IEB had mobilized throughout the summer and they had handed in over 400 official complaints: filed against the lack of an impact study. This meeting took place at the Casino in the city centre on 14 October 2015. At the meeting the same frustration that had been building up since September 2014 came out. One person from the commission testified to the situation:

"It is in the urban permit. There was a petition but... there were a few hundred, I believe we were 400 (ed. 400 vocally complainants) I believe... but... it was difficult. But in fact, it went very wrong, very, very wrong. Because people came, they came as revolutionaries, demonstrators, but that is not the aim of the game. We are members of a consultation committee, we are here to be lit by comments, not for feeling.... It is not the quantity of people that complaint that makes the weight... it is the relevance of the arguments. If you have any interesting thing to say, your voice is heard. If you have stupid remarks, even if you say them very strongly, even if you say many of them, I do not listen to you, I am not a politician, so I do not listen to you. However, if you say smart things, I would like... I must take them into account, I take into account everyone. But I am not bound to take into account pressure. Voilà" (J.F., 19 may 201, my translation)

The complainants argued the dossiers should never have been dealt with separately, "fractioned". The Beliris plan on the "réaménagement" of the Central boulevards should have been dealt with as one project, including the changes in the circulation plan and the 4 new parkings. The

committee on the Beliris dossier decided that that was incorrect. They answered the questions and proposed (although they thought it to be not legally compulsory) an impact study. The court case introduced by Platform Pentagone on the matter is still ongoing. But the building permit was delivered at the normal pace (as the court case does not have the capacity to suspend the works).

Communicating the wrong figures

The city didn't communicate at all with the regional utility company for commerce (Atrium). However, it would use in March 2016 Atrium's data to speak proudly about the pedestrian zone. But in interpreting the figures wrongly, the mayor drew the attention away from the good results to what regards car flux on the 'destination loop' or 'Mini Ring'. In fact the misinterpretation created -or at least reinforced- the perception that the city council was trying to manipulate the figures. Indeed, before there had already been some doubts and rumors about the handling of data by Ampe and Technum.

Some less known Positive Figures

The positive figures that did not get a lot of attention :

- With the exception of two places the Mini Ring has not enabled increased car use.
- While taking away 1100 cars/hour in peak hours.
- Only the Boulevard de l'Empereur, Rue Saint Christophe and Rue Six-Jetons have significant heightened car figures.
- The zone between Parking 58 and the city-administration ('Brucity') was very successful with regards to its use by the Brussels youth.

However:

- Problems persist at four places parallel to the "Mini Ring": Porte d'Anderlecht, Quai du Commerce and to a lesser extend Rue Royal.)
- And the Rue six Jetons is a place for children (park + school)

The city received different petitions:

- Concerning Rue de Midi (two times 500 signatures), concerning bus 46 (1000 signatures)
- Not one petition concerning the central boulevards or from people living on the central boulevards
- No petition but a lot of protest at the Boulevard Adolphe Max, led by Hotel Metropole. In September 2015 they will start a court case

Platform Pentagone turns against the pedestrian Zone, BRAL goes out 2016

At the end of December 2015 the building permit was ready, the protest on the side of *Expo '58 coalition* broadened and got stronger as did the protest and tone of Platform Pentagon (the *Just and Livable City coalition*).

Motivated (it seems) by the success of Hotel Metropole's court case, 300 business owners decided to go collectively to court in October 2015. Although the city announced changes to make car use again more easy for them and their deliveries, the military lockdown (after the Paris attacks) aggravated the economic situation. The business owners were suffering and the pedestrian zone got the blame. They wanted to be compensated.

Meanwhile, Platform Pentagone had started to change its discourse. The attitude of the Mayor led to great frustration and whereas the business owners were being heard, their demand for less cars on the "Mini Ring" was being ignored. On the contrary, the adaptations made in favour of the *Expo '58 coalition* went in fact straight against their wish for lesser cars.

But what they retained from the compromises the mayor made is not so much this, but rather the "authoritarian" decision-making by "faite-accomplie", "without consultation". Their focus turned against him instead of against the specific problems. And as he is the one carrying the project of the Pedestrian Zone, by extension they will now also turn against the Zone itself. The political tone, focusing on the mayor, the "anti-approach" and the criticism on the pedestrian zone itself will lead BRAL to step out of the Platform (that it had itself originally created).

In doing so the platform lost its last strong defender of *The Livable city*. That is not to say that ARAU or IEB or J.N., N.D. or G.E. (i.e. spokespersons of the neighborhood committee) are against the ideas of the *Livable City*. But it does mean the coalition became now defined by people/groups with a strong private/collective interest on the one hand (the neighborhood comitee defenders) and people who prioritise another agenda, namely the one of the "just city" (i.e. IEB) and use another strategy (of the "Rapport de Forces").

From that moment onwards, after the Picnickers and BRAL were gone; the road was open to a full blown attack on the accomplishment of the Pedestrian zone and indeed (within 60 days) when the urbanism permit for the Beliris plan was delivered, they went to court against it. In the past they had taken legal steps, but never ones that could endanger the zone itself. By April 2016, the *Just & Livable City coalition* started pleading against the cutting of the Boulevard Anspach and in favor of a reopening. As such it seems they unwillingly found themselves in one same camp together with Touring and Alain Berlinbau's business platform⁹³.

93 The new argument from April 2016 onward of Platform Pentagone will become: [etude d'incidence], enquete publique], [re-open the boulevards for cars], [spread the 50 hectare pietonnier to the middle age streets], [no to the mega pietonnier], [lost public transport], [perimeter has to be smaller], [no privitisation], [no speculation].

6.5.6 After 22th of March 2016: Reemergence of the Livable City Coalition

It is in this climate and in the wake of the 22th of March's terrorist attacks when citizens and academics started fearing for the abandonment of the project altogether, that they started organizing pushback in the vacuum left blanc by the local government (from April to June 2016). The pedestrian zone had in the meanwhile become the Brussels citizen's meeting point to counteract the fear following the attacks, as a sort of commemoration zone.

Firstly, by the academic initiative of organizing an "Observatory of the Pedestrian Zone" that now became operational with the aim of objectifying the public debate. Secondly, by a group of young people who launched the Facebook group "Touche pas à mon Pietonnier". Thirdly, by some of the organizers of Picnic the Streets and BRAL who came out with renewed explicit support for the pedestrian zone, after a long period of absence.

As such the original *Livable city coalition* started reemerging in support of the project in another form. Not "thanks to", but "despite" the *Majority coalition*, who had always chosen to compromise and communicate with the *Convinced subgroup* of the *Expo '58 coalition* in mind.⁹⁴



94 It is not clear at the time of writing what to expect, and if these initiatives will also evolve into a Livable City discourse coalition.



#occupygezi

Chapter 7
Conclusions

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Conclusions

I write these words exactly four years after the start of this PhD. From November 2012 onward I had the privilege to read, study and empirically research the phenomenon of urban planning and indulge in the field of planning theory. It demands stern choices to conclude the corpus of literature I encountered, and the ample material the case studies provided. Indeed, both cases are supported by a vast and well-structured data collection and an analysis that can serve for separate chapters with individual conclusions, publications and further research. In the case of Brussels this is already well underway with two forthcoming publications (Vanhellemont & Vermeulen, 2016; Genard, Berger, & Vanhellemont, 2016), while the data collection and analysis are being used extensively by the 'Observatory of the Brussels City Center', i.e. a consortium of 44 researchers from the three Brussels Universities (ULB, VUB & Saint-Louis University) with whom I have closely collaborated since its creation. The data collected and analysis included in this PHD has been crucial for the work of the Observatory, as it provided to this moment the only comprehensive research of what is considered by now the most important urban planning conflict in Brussels in recent years, and more importantly, it did so at a very timely moment. With regard to the case in Istanbul, on the other hand, while the Gezi protest movement is discussed in an array of publications by many different authors; a detailed analysis of the urban planning conflict and narrative development that preceded the movement after the 27th of May, has received far less attention. In many cases the four preceding years of conflict have been eclipsed even, by a foundational myth of sorts, that is that it all began when a "handful of protesters, allegedly ecologists, on the 27th of May attempted to protect one of the last remaining green spots in the area, Gezi Park and its trees from demolition". A specific publication on 'the origins of Gezi' would therefore –I believe-- be a useful contribution to the field.

But my focus and the narrative of this PhD, inscribes itself in a tradition and evolution of planning thought, which is why I choose to conclude this work with the hope of making a small opening toward a theory of urban planning that would include the *imaginary*. In fact I believe, even more so now than at the start of this exploration, that there is a need to develop such a comprehensive approach. One that develops a consistent language, conceptual framework and

theoretical model that can serve for deductive research, detailed understanding and eventually ‘a handbook of sorts’, a normative proposal for planners, local alderman, planning administrations, civil society organizations, private sector, activists... as is common-place for urban planning theory.

To make that opening, I propose therefore conclusions on some of the findings with respect to the state of the art, based on elements that both cases had in common and that appear less context-specific; and therefore more inherently related to urban planning’s *imaginary institution of place*. Certainly, more research is necessary to elaborate and confirm the discussion below; and till that time these findings cannot be generalized. But they can provide --I hope-- some building blocks to move forward.

7.1 Re-centering the Object of Planning: Imaginary, Place & its Imaginary Institution

I started this PhD by explaining how urban planning theory evolved over time from a discipline that was originally concerned with the ‘object of planning’: the city, the neighborhood, the urban region, zoning, blueprint planning, urban design, infrastructure proposals..., and the development and implementation of the utopian ideas of modern urban planning. I describe how the canon of urban planning theory gradually shifted from this concern with the ‘object of planning’, to the ‘process of planning’; and how this gradual change was driven by fierce criticisms by the actual users of planned areas and the planning community itself. I argued that rising concerns with the undemocratic character of top-down planning and its actual capacity to implement what was being planned and “get things done”, came to occupy the center of attention from the 1970s onward. Yet, simultaneously this also meant that the attention from the object of planning, i.e. *place*, faded. This came along, as I have explained, with a preoccupation with the question of *power*, asked and re-asked by planning theoreticians over the decades, including by leading scholars such as Freedman (1998), or Gualini (2015), more recently. Asserting their dissatisfaction, they pointed out the state of ambiguity and lack of clear theorization that continues to characterize the current field when it comes to understanding the functioning of *power relations* in urban planning.

Place was either approached as the context or background against which the planning process happens, either as the result of human activity, molded into being, with *place* as an ‘independent variable’ so to say. In doing so, they neglected to see *place* for what it is: as a vivid and particularly powerful actor in the planning process. What I argue is that the *power relations* ‘inside’ the urban planning process, cannot be understood without understanding the *power relations* produced by *places* ‘outside’ of it.

To understand what is at stake in the urban planning process, one needs to understand the particular and powerful character of the *product of urban planning, place*, for communities at large. Not because of its physical qualities or technical specificities, but because of its capacity to endow the physical world with an *imaginary* and naturalize it. To construe what is considered ‘common’ and ‘normal’; its capacity to appear real and not socially constructed. Put differently, its ability to institutionalize and literally sediment the *imaginary* in a representation that --once

established—will function as *home places* and *vectors of communion* for all who know or use it. It becomes part of the daily routines and ‘place identities’. Once there, *place* is with other words, a particularly apt and powerful tool for maintaining a *hegemonic* or *counter-hegemonic imaginary*.

It is exactly this powerful role enacted by *place* in the community at large, that explains why the *power relations* ‘inside’ urban planning cannot be reduced to a matter of ‘negotiating interests’ (Cfr. Urban Regime Theory); why urban planning theory should not commence from an assumption that ‘consensus’ is possible, if only the conditions are right (Cfr. Collaborative Urban Planning); and why it is not enough to only focus on representations (Cfr. Hajer, 2006). Defining urban planning as the *imaginary institution of place*, reveals its contentious and often irreconcilable character, precisely because what is being ‘planned’ is not another representation of the same *imaginary*, but an alteration of the *instituted imaginary* itself. Precisely because it often challenges the dominant *imaginary* of a *place*. That means that planning should not only be aware of its role in negotiating *interests*, but also of its role in challenging the horizon of logic and reasoning, dreams, fantasies and desires that accompany a *place*. That is a function which goes beyond the rational and the irrational, and beyond the possibility of consensus. Indeed, it is what makes certain positions incompatible from the outset, why confrontations between actors are sometimes irresolvable and why the actors involve so passionately with planning.

Denying the role of *place* in the theory of urban planning --and the *imaginary* it is instituted with-- necessarily obscures the answer to why governing parties pursue planning with such tenacity. Mayor Erdoğan’s decision to excavate tunnels and build three mosques at Taksim in 1997 cannot be understood from a rational-interest point of view or a political calculation alone, nor can Prime Minister Erdoğan’s 2011 proposals for the re-erection of the old artillery barracks be properly elucidated by them. Mayor Mayeur’s ‘symbolic decision’ to impose a vast pedestrian zone on Brussels’ Anspach Boulevard in 2013 cannot be understood without the rupture it implies with the previous *imaginary* institution of that *place* in the 1960 and 70s, i.e. the *imaginary of Expo ’58*. The same goes for ‘Mayor’ and ‘Prime Minister’ Erdoğan’s determination to break with the *hegemonic institution* of Istanbul and Taksim in the early decades of the Turkish republic (1920s-1950s).

Conversely, the absence of *place* also eclipses the answer to why the opposition against planning proposals and their implementation is often so vigorous and visceral, even when private interests are not at stake. It obscures why so much time and effort is put in participating in urban planning’s *combined arena* (i.e. ‘participation process’) or the construal of discourse coalitions (or ‘protest coalitions’) that establish *power relations* from outside the foreseen *process architecture* and planning proceedings.

Recognizing ‘places’ as *places* instituted with an *imaginary* allows to explain what drives the eagerness, persistence and tenacity of citizens to follow an urban planning process for years. It is what drives doing ‘the hard work’ of socially producing a *discourse coalition*, writing the pamphlets and press briefings, drawing and designing the images that translate their views; organizing weekly meetings with often ‘tediously’ long discussions, to attune the talking points and to carefully calibrate the tone; setting up press moments, civil disobedient actions, occupations or demonstrations even.

The three year-long effort of Picnic the Streets for more and better public space cannot be understood without reference to the *imaginary of the livable city* that drove them along the process. On the side of the organizers, they had little or no private interests in the case. And while Platform Pentagon and Plateforme Marolles did include subgroups defending private and collective interests, there were other subgroups who did not. The same is true for Taksim Platform and Taksim Solidarity. They were triggered by the *counter hegemonic* challenge put to them by Prime Minister Erdogan on the 2nd of June 2011, when he announced the plans for the Taksim area and generated cognitive dissonance on a national level. Certainly, it was not the fact of the square, in itself, or the slowly deteriorating park besides it that were at play. At stake was the challenge to one of the key *representations* of the *secular-republican imaginary* by a *representation* of the *counter-hegemonic Islamic-Ottoman imaginary* in the form of Topçu Kışlası (hence the *coalitions'* focus of on the metaphor 'Taksim', the monumental republican threes and the square). Also when we look at 'phases four' and 'five' in the Istanbul case (that includes the Taksim Gezi Park association and the Gezi Movement), again what drives them is not the park or the square in itself, but what it represents; this time within the emerging *counter-hegemonic imaginary of life place*.

The animosity and contentiousness of the planning debate can, in these cases, simply not be understood as a conflict of interests or as a failed search for consensus alone. However, by bringing in *place* in the equation and defining the urban planning process as the *government organized activity of the imaginary institution of place*, it does become possible to understand why even good attempts toward participation and negotiation or the severest efforts of coercion are no guarantee for 'getting things done' and actually getting plans implemented.

Including *place* moreover, helps to explain why a big compromise or an apparent 'win' to the outside observer (or a planner), may not be considered as such by the involved actors. Think for example of how the cancellation of 60 percent of the tunnels under Taksim Square wasn't considered by any of the opposing discourse coalitions as a 'win'. In fact it was perceived as an outright defeat (at best a Pyrrhus victory). The key phrase of several Taksim Solidarity interviewees, 'we lost the square' and the strong emotion it accompanied, did not reference the actual loss of Taksim Square in itself, or at least not that 'physical loss' alone. It referenced in the first place the defeat of 'their' *imaginary* in that *place*. Think also for example of the Picnic the Streets activists who received more than they asked for in physical surface of public space. They 'were supposed to be content', but they were not. Indeed, they 'realized' that the circulation plan surrounding the newly won space would actually become a 'Mini Ring'; i.e. a loop of two car lanes around the pedestrian zone. It led them to believe that in fact what they were getting in surface had little to do with *the livable city*, but that it was rather 'a pedestrian zone for cars' befitting the *imaginary of Expo '58*; so they shouted 'Oui mais Non, Yes but No!'. A third example was the (relatively) vast participation process or *combined arena* that was set up in Brussels to decide on the interpretation of the pedestrian zone's urban design. A whole set of changes were made as a consequence of the proceedings, and even the zone's planning perimeter was adapted. That was more than hoped for. A change to the perimeter was full throatedly excluded by the mayor in the first participatory meeting and many of the reservations that participants had in the beginning were resolved (for instance with regards to greenery and bicycle facilities). But instead of taking contentiousness away and building 'institutional capacity', the process generated more

frustration as it didn't sit well with the participants that they had been 'forbidden' to discuss the circulation plan or the announced underground parking lots. What resulted was frustration and anger as opposed to construing support and consent. Indeed, despite resolving several issues regarding conflicting 'interests', restraining the debate to what was perceived as only one part of the urban planning process, the city hall made emerge an *imaginary* of the *representative* or top-down city. They 'violated' the expectations around the *imaginary of the participative city* of which the participation process was supposed to be a *representation*. And indeed what many of the participants experienced, and pronounced stridently, was their experience with --and visceral perception of-- wrongdoing by the local city council; because of the *imaginary* that was revealed *about decision-making in the city* (hence, the metaphor 'Fake Participation').

Additionally, an analysis that excludes *place* and only focuses for example on *interests* to understand the *power relations* in urban planning, would not be able to grasp why Ph. Van Parijs and the civil disobedient picnic'ers (in June 2012) would willingly risk prison to bring about change. Or why tens of thousands would risk physical injury and put even their lives at peril, with the intent of stopping the implementation of the urban design plan of Topçu Kışlası (between the 27th-31st of May 2013). Understanding the arguments, the tenacity, passions and frustrations in all these cases demands, at least in part, also the identification of the *imaginaries* they evoke, and the reasoning and logic, desires, fantasies and dreams that accompany them. Said otherwise, my argument is that denying *place* its appropriate role in the theory of urban planning processes, means eclipsing a fundamental part of what cognitively and emotionally drives the *power relations*; even in two cases as different as the Taksim-Gezi Park development and the case of the pedestrianization of Brussels' Central Boulevards: namely, the (urban or national) *imaginaries of the city* and of *decision-making about the city*

Imaginaries play a powerful role in themselves. But taking them into account simultaneously allows understanding why 'negotiating the interests' in a *place* and building local 'institutional capacity' (or public support) are key to 'getting things done'. The argument of their importance is made time and again in the canon of urban planning theory. But the reasons behind their importance are slightly different when urban planning is interpreted as a potential conflict over the *imaginary institution of a place*.

Certainly, as I argued throughout the PhD, both are insufficient to resolve the most contentious planning debates and they constitute no guarantee for finding consensus. But in the face of bigger issues concerning conflicts over the *imaginaries*, it does become evident why they appear so important. Indeed in light of the potency of the conflict, they should rather be defined as a minimum requirement to 'get things done' (as a local government or planner).

On the one hand, because they facilitate the urban planning process by taking away the avoidable obstacles: i.e. by 'at least' ensuring funding for the implementation; by 'at least' negotiating the private and collective interests, where possible, of local shopkeepers, merchants or inhabitants; by 'at least' identifying and mitigating practical problems and sensitivities; and by 'at least' providing ample information to take away unnecessary doubt, tackle misinformation and needless concerns as soon as possible in the process. On the other hand, the participation process or *combined arena* can be seen as the space where *institutional capacity* is 'at least' build

among those people who are uncertain about their position and those who actually share the newly proposed *imaginary*; but need to be convinced of its *institution* in this *place* in particular.

In this view, the *combined arena* no longer serves as a powerful tool to find and forge ‘consensus’ or negotiate interests alone, but also as one that can serve to identify the different (irreconcilable) positions in the debate, (i) to identify the local opposing *discourse coalitions*, their *narratives* & the underlying *imaginaries of the city* they represent; (ii) to identify a potential ‘coalition of support’ among them and; (iii) to construe it by negotiation about, and compromises on, the proposed plan for the *place*, as well as institutional capacity building.

Taking *place* into account also helps understanding the conservative position, the repining and often diverse protest coalitions with regards to the proposed or actual change. That, I argue, relates to the fact that *places* are ‘vectors of communion’, ‘home places’ and spaces for the ‘daily routines’ of all who know and use the *place*; also them who may in fact disagree with their *underlying imaginary institution* or those people who have no particularly stout views on the matter. Put differently, finding support is never guaranteed, it must always be build; even among those actors in the own ‘camp’.

The Brussels case, nor the Istanbul case, showed great efforts by the government to find local public support. With the exception of one plan: the development of the Beliris plan (the actual pedestrianization) in the Brussels case for which Picnic the Streets had already organized support in its 2012 actions, but for which the local government had set up an elaborate participation process as well. All other plans (circulation plan, parking lot plan & economic plan in Brussels; the TCPP and UDP in Istanbul) received heavy resistance and sharp, straightforward criticism from the opposing coalitions, but this one did not. It is the one plan in the Brussels case that could always count on more hesitant criticism. “Yes but No” (*Livable City coalition*), “we are not against the pedestrian zone *itself*” (contrarily to *Expo ‘58 coalition* after January 2014), “we are against *this* pedestrian zone” (*Platform Pentagon*). Indeed, all protest coalitions had to deal with the build-up of existing support for the pedestrianization; and the awareness of it, is acknowledges in these key sentences. This supports the idea that building on existing public support and developing institutional capacity through participation is important when ‘consensus’ cannot be found among participants as well.

Certainly, it is not possible to draw definite conclusions based on one case, but it does open the question for further research on what the relation is between coalitions with *irreconcilable imaginaries* in a participation process and the *power relations* that are established by the construal of support among a part of the local population and/or the participants. Put differently, it is not because participation does not lead to consensus (as in the Brussels case) that it was also senseless. It is likely to have served as a tool that did build support, just not as it was supposed to in theory.

Why is this important to note? Surely, one may argue, in practice, planners would acknowledge instantaneously that participation is useful, also when consensus and win-win situations are not found or when the institutional capacity building is not successful. I argue, that while that may be true for professionals and planners, local politicians or mayors may know little about planning in practice and they might even take planning theory’s word for it. For example, in the Brussels case, the mayor argued strongly against more participation, “because you cannot please everybody!”.

That phrase should not only be understood as a dismissal of participatory democracy. It should, also be read as a consequence of two of planning theory's flawed underlying assumptions about participation: (i) that there is a possibility of consensus and that (ii) the aim should be to find consensus. Both my case studies and my state of the art indicate that consensus is indeed an unlikely premise in participation processes in urban planning, precisely because of the contentious character of *the imaginary institution of place*. The mayor knows, as a political operative, that these assumptions are flawed, especially when it concerns a drastic change in the car mobility of the inner city. But while this PhD demonstrates that consensus is an unreasonable assumption and flawed objective, it also points out the usefulness of a well-designed combined arena or participation process to 'get things done'.

Indeed, even when flawed as it was in Brussels and even if it generated more frustration, there was no petition against the pedestrian zone itself, nor was there a petition of the local inhabitants or tumultuous protests of the shopkeepers who live or work on the building perimeter. It helped to identify some of the problems and sensitivities, it resolved several practical issues and brought to like a whole set of interests. And that does appear better, then the visceral and powerful opposition that was encountered in all the other plans (where no such process was organized).

More research is necessary, but it does not seem to be a coincidence in the Brussels and Istanbul case that two of the most powerful protest coalitions (Taksim Gezi Park Association & Plateforme Marolles) were construed in the absence of any capacity building or interest negotiation by the local government and planners. What is particular about them, furthermore, is that they include actors with and without private & collective interests; combining activists and civil society organizations on the one hand, and neighborhood committees and local shopkeepers or merchants on the other.

Plateforme Marolles developed a power relation that led to the cancellation of the plans to excavate a parking lot under the Brussels' historic flea market; while the Taksim Gezi Association managed to define and made emerge an alternative *counter-hegemonic imaginary, narrative and metaphors* that would form the *imaginary and narrative* behind the Gezi Movement a few months later.

In both cases, the neglect of the local government to negotiate at least the private interests of local shopkeepers and merchants enabled discourse coalitions to be formed with actors that were not likely to participate otherwise and that on top of that had a lot to lose, leading indeed to very passionate forms of protest in the form of civil disobedience. For example the breaking down of a part of the barricaded excavation perimeter at the Republican Boulevard next to Gezi in November 2012 or the tumultuous city hall and meetings at Ancienne Belgique in Brussels (resp. December 2014 and January 2015).

This confirms the argument made in urban planning theory, which highlights the importance of negotiating the interests. But what was particular about these coalitions was not the un-negotiated interests, but the fact that the structuring *narrative* of the *protest coalitions* was not uttered in those terms. Instead, in both cases, the *discourse coalition* was formed around *imaginaries of the city* and what it should be, and *of decision-making in the city*. In both cases, furthermore, three particularities in the narrative stick out:

First, the demand for the preservation of the existing situation and thus the plea for conserving the dominant *institution of place* (Jeu de Balle Square and Gezi Park). It seems that the ‘conservative position’ allowed for the very diverse coalitions with their highly diverging *imaginaries* to coalesce. For example, in the Brussels Case the market place vendors with their *imaginary of the Expo 58 city* coalesced with *Just & Livable City* activists in their opposition to the change. In the case of Istanbul, on the other hand, we find anti-capitalists, ecologists, secular-republicans and diverging neighborhood committees and shopkeepers together. But the narratives had more in common than this.

Two additional elements were their visceral opposition to the implementation of the plan on the one hand (underground parking Lot; Topçu Kışlası) and their visceral opposition to a person on the other. Indeed, in both cases the public officials that were considered politically responsible (i.e. Mayor Y. Mayeur & Prime Minister R.T. Erdoğan) were identified as culprits and both persons became a *metaphor* themselves for the ‘top-down and/or patronizing decision-making by fait accompli’. Said otherwise, they became *representations* of the *imaginary* of the *representative city*.

But aside from the narrative, what they also shared was a somewhat surprised government; in the sense that the people who came out in support of the protest coalitions contained groups of which they had not expected opposition. In the case of Gezi, for example, citizens who were no secular-republican elites; in Brussels, the flea market merchants who are not known to support *the imaginary of the livable city* and of whom the local government assumed they would be supportive of a proposal ‘that would profit them’.

I argue therefore, on the basis of these two coalitions, that when the interests are not negotiated, and the plan’s *imaginary institution* is not explained (i.e. local institutional capacity is not construed), that the dominant *imaginary of place* and the *imaginary of the top-down/representative city* are likely to drive the way the planning process is approached and to allow the coalescence of particularly diverse and consequently powerful coalitions. It also suggests, furthermore, that when government fails to build local capacity, opposing coalitions might more easily build local institutional capacity and define how the community makes sense of the plan and the process.

In conclusion, what is at stake in urban planning is *the imaginary institution of place*. It is hard to understand the dynamic of the *power relations* in the Brussels or Istanbul case when the particular role of *place* in the process is not taken into account as the vector of communion, the home place and space of daily routines that it is, *for all* who know it, or use it. *Place* stabilize identities, also of those people who do not necessarily agree with its *imaginary institution*. While changes to it --or proposed changes-- upset, destabilize and generate cognitive dissonance, for those same reasons. I argue thus for re-centering the attention of urban planning to its object of planning, i.e. *place*, to grasp what drives the dynamic of the power relations and the struggle over the representations.; that is, over *imaginaries* and the logic, reasoning, emotion, dreams and desires whit which they perceive the city; what it is and should be or not be; what it serves, should serve or not serve; whom it serves, should serve and whom less.

Re-centering the theory on *place* will help to grasp therefore the *imaginaries* and passions with which planning is proposed and contended, and allow to understand why planning triggers moments of intensified learning. Why it opens up space, in which the phenomenon at hand is made sense of. Why also, finally, the absence of participation and capacity building by the government, will leave the space open for others to do the work. Or why a narrative that chooses to oppose the proposed changes will allow particularly diverse protest coalitions.

7.2 The Foreseeable Rhythm of Triggering Events in Urban Planning

My first conclusion argues that *place* should be central in the theory of urban planning processes.. However, both my case studies demonstrate that *place* does not perform its upsetting influential role in the same way at all times. The impact is not gradual or continuous. It is strong at particular moments in time. That is when a *triggering event* happens related to *place*, but no only, also to a government announcement, a planning decision, a city council approval,... or triggered by a non-governmental coalition, a civil disobedience action, a demonstration or an occupation related to the planning process.

Indeed, *place* plays a powerful role when planning (or the opponents' actions) uproots the *dominant imaginary* of a *place*, and challenge its *imaginary institution*. *Triggering events* generated by the opponents are difficult to predict, but those produced by the planning process itself seem to be more predictable. Interestingly, in both cases the *triggering events* related to the planning processes seem to have a certain rhythm and a similar way of involving specific groups at specific scales. That is why I will focus on them here. Two case studies are insufficient to propose a typology, but these conclusions could serve as an opening in that direction for future research.

In my case studies I have identified five types of triggering events:

Firstly, in both cases **the symbolic announcements** of the new plan functioned as *triggering events* that spurred new opposing *discourse coalitions*. The only exception is the announcement of the pedestrianization of the Stock Exchange Square in Brussels. But it had as a particularity that Picnic the Streets (*the Livable City coalition*) had mobilized on the issue and had generated strong public and political support for the idea beforehand. All other announcements, however, (both in Brussels and Istanbul) came from the top-down and generated large opposing *discourse coalitions*. The announcement, for example, of the pedestrianization of the whole Anspach Boulevard in January 2014 (one year later) spurred the *Expo '58 coalition* and broadened/alterd the *Livable City Coalition* in opposition to the adjacent 'Mini Ring' and underground parking lot proposals. In the Istanbul Case, it was the Prime Minister's announcement of the re-erection of Topçu Kışlası and the tunnel excavation of Taksim (on the 2nd of June 2011) that prompted the *Taksim Platform* in defense of Istanbul's secular-republican heritage.

What is very particular about these coalitions is the involvement they gather. Indeed almost all opposing discourse coalitions that emerged after a symbolic announcement consisted of those creative individuals and groups that were already personally involved in urban issues, mostly people with higher education, active in civil society and of whom a part also works on urban issues in their professional life. As one interviewee put it, many of them are the ‘usual suspects’. In all cases the number of involved organizers lay between 15 and 50 people, while their actions draw in an average of a few hundred people. The exception here was formed by the Expo ’58 coalition, as it formed around the car lobby organization and business organizations, their profile was different, but this is related to the fact that the *coalition* had particularly high private interests at stake.

The second type of triggering event involving place in urban planning, concerns **the release of actual plans**; it usually comes in the form of a vote (ex. of the local city council) or in the form of a administrative approval (ex. heritage council) and the subsequent announcement by a public official. They have the particular role of making things ‘serious’. Spurred discourse coalitions will therefore involve the same groups (active after the symbolic announcements) but they will also draw in those individuals and groups that had been hesitantly following from the sidelines. In particular civil society and professional organizations that are used to playing a role in planning processes; in the form of a check and balance. In the Istanbul case, for example, Taksim solidarity is formed after the effective approval of the change to the land use plan (‘PLUP’) and the approval of the tunnel excavations (‘TCP’) in January 2012. The chamber of architects (‘TMMOB’) for example, enters now the process and presides over the newly assembled coalition. In the Brussels case, it is the release of the first plans for the pedestrian zone and (hand drawn) map of the circulation plan that triggers the involvement of IEB, one of the key environmental organizations in Brussels that had not taken the first announcement in the press (of 2012) seriously. These triggers were therefore responsible for drawing in a bigger part of civil society, while intensifying the efforts of the already involved groups.

The third type of triggering event only occurred in the Brussels case and was related to the **start of the participation process**, i.e. the production of a *combined arena*; with the intention of opening up an organized space for discussion. This triggering event had the particular character of drawing in a part of the local (non-organized) population and it offered a chance for the local government to define the narrative and explain the *imaginary* they were proposing directly to the people. But while it triggered the awareness among the local population and local business owners, the generated cognitive dissonance led rather to more frustration. The process that was set up did open the conversation on the Beliris plan (the actual pedestrian zone), yet it limited the debate on all the other plans with regards to mobility surrounding the zone (the ‘Mini Ring’ and underground parking lots). In doing so, the first evening of the participatory process triggered and set the tone for what became perceived as ‘false participation’ and what would result in the development of a new narrative and *imaginary* by the opponents: that is one of the ‘top-down city’ or the *representative city*.

Particular to this *triggering event* was that, instead of drawing in larger parts of civil society and the organized groups already active as a consequence of the first and second type of triggering events, it brought in a part of the local population; either because they were already part

of the hundreds of participants, either because of the word to mouth and the media attention. This particular effect is why participation offers a chance to build local support, but it is also why it can lead to the opposite when it is considered rigged. In the following months two new *discourse coalitions* were formed (Plateforme Marolles and Platform Pentagon) and the *imaginary* of the top-down or *representative city* was key to their dynamic.

The fourth type of triggering event is the **plan alteration** following the consultation process. It curiously functions in a similar way independently of the genuine purpose of the intervention. top-down Actually, while in the case of Istanbul, the plan alterations of January 2012 (ascribed above) or the alterations of February 2013 ('the denial of the denial') did not have the aim of finding a compromise; in the Brussels case they did (all the alterations to the circulation plan were attempts to build compromises). But nonetheless, they were both perceived in a similar way: as ad hoc top-down decision-making, thus reinforcing the *imaginary* of the top-down or *representative city*. This may possibly be ascribed to the character of the alteration itself, but it may also be an inherent characteristic of changes that are made late in the process.

The last and most powerful type of triggering event I could observe in both cases was the first day of the **actual implementation** of the plans themselves. This moment is particular as it draws in literally everybody who uses or knows the place. It generates cognitive dissonance among all the involved people for whom the *place* serves as a home place or a space of daily routines. In the case of Brussels and Istanbul, Boulevard Anspach and Taksim, respectively, are nation-wide known places and indeed, they triggered national debates. It confirms the role of *place* as a vector of communion, and leads to the conclusion that a debate should be expected on the scale of which the place is known; at the moment of implementation.

Both the Brussels and the Istanbul case demonstrate a rhythm of regularly occurring triggering events that are related to *place* and *triggered* by the planning process. In two very different contexts they are seen to function in similar ways when it comes to their outcome and the type of involvement they create. That makes me conclude that the *triggering events* are likely to be foreseeable, if a comprehensive typology would be made on the basis of further research.

Moreover, the different types of triggering events and their rhythm also allow to understand why certain planning tools are useful at certain times 'to get things done'. For example, the moment of the symbolic announcement involves a relatively small amount of actors that are 'usual suspects'. They may therefore be contacted and approached by the planner, before or just after the announcement, in bilateral conversations; while a structured broad participation may not be necessary at that time. Only in case of *triggering events* that involve larger sets of people, such a structured approach might be necessary to enable the conversation and make the discussion possible. However, when the amount of involved people reaches an even larger proportion, for instance in the phase of implementation, a large scale information campaign & service for direct problem solving with regards to practical issues may be more useful. That is at least with respect to the actual users for whom the *place* serves as a home place and a space of daily routines. For those people who only know the place, and for whom it functions as a vector of communion a communication campaign on the scale of the community in question may be more

appropriate (the region, the nation); while if it doesn't, it also might imply that communication will be less necessary.

These are no complex conclusions and in practice I believe most planners would argue them to be common sense. But they allow to understand why that is common sense; why certain planning tools matter at certain moments or why planning announcements, plans and their implementation function as triggering events. Put differently, these conclusions support my argument that planning theory would benefit from an approach that integrates *place* and the *imaginary*. It would, I believe, take away a part of the ambiguity that continues to characterize the current attempts to grasp the functioning of *power relations* in planning.

7.3 The Remarkable Similarity between Imaginaries of the City

In this third conclusion I would like to elaborate on the remarkable similarities that I encountered in the type of *imaginaries of the city and of decision-making about the city* that I identified. Indeed, urban planning theory has not only eclipsed the role of *place*, the *imaginary* and *triggering events*, in doing so it also eclipsed a part of the specificity of the debate regarding the competing *imaginaries* that planners encounter in their daily practice. Again more research is necessary, but this does indicate that further mapping of the *imaginaries*, in more case-studies, will likely confirm and reveal more similarities and help to provide a typology of the *imaginaries, the forms of reasoning and logic, fantasies desires and dreams* that can be expected to lead to irreconcilable debate and the impossibility of consensus.

The limitation of both my case studies is that I chose them, exactly because they were conflictual and contained and revealed a confrontation between the *imaginaries*. Indeed, keep in mind that in other instances planning does not always imply a strong challenge to the underlying *imaginary*, as it only proposes a different *representation* of the same *imaginary*.

Think for example of zoning policies that formalize or only slightly alter the existing situation; an urban design plan that redraws the existing infrastructure for pedestrians by enlarging the footpaths by tightening the car lanes, but without taking any lanes away; think of a planning proposal that does take away parking space at one place, only to recreate the same amount nearby (for example under the square, instead of on top of it). In these cases too, debates arise over the *imaginary institution of place*. But the challenge to the *dominant imaginary* is not proposed or imposed by the government or planners. That endows their position, at least on paper, with more ease to defend as they do not fundamentally challenge the *place's function* as home place, space of daily routines or vector of communion. Put differently, the burden to convince the local actors and population can be expected to fall, therefore, more heavily on the opponents who contest the planning proposals.

Both the Brussels and the Istanbul case however, concerned a clean cut break with the past and a direct challenge to the *dominant and hegemonic imaginary of place*. What is more, in

both cases the space in question is known nationally. Especially in the case of Taksim, but the same is true for Brussels' Central Boulevards, the Stock Exchange and Brouckère. These conclusions are therefore biased with regard to planning more in general and it should be kept in mind that the discussion below may be specific only to those direct, all-out, challenges to the *hegemonic imaginary* of 'capital' inner cities.¹

In both cases I identified a difference between 'urban' and 'national' *imaginaries* of what the city is and what it should be. The national *imaginaries* were country specific. In Istanbul the debate took a national character from the start as the proposal altered the form of one of the main symbols and spatial *representations* of the *Secular-Republican* imaginary: 'Taksim'. The proposal challenged its *hegemonic imaginary* and planned for the institution of the counter-hegemonic *Islamic-Ottoman imaginary*. Consequently, it triggered national media attention and debate from the moment the proposal was made by the prime minister in June 2011. And it also *triggered* an opposing *discourse coalition* of national actors, i.e. Taksim Solidarity. In the Brussels case, the aim had not explicitly been to touch and alter the *imaginary institution* of a national symbol, therefore it did not trigger a national debate immediately. But the plans did propose to alter the *imaginary institution* of the capital's historic city center and therefore, the effective implementation of the plan (on the 29th of June 2015 in the form of the 'test phase') did trigger a national debate over an existing *national imaginary*, i.e. the stereotype of Brussels 'as the dirty and alienating city'. The Turkish Prime Minister expected and was prepared for the secular-republican opposition, as he consciously attempted to alter the nation's place identity. He understood all too well the place's role as vector of communion. The local government in Brussels however did not at all expect, and was not prepared for it, a national debate. Indeed the Central Boulevards or Boulevard Anspach is not known to be a national symbol like Taksim. Consequently, the planning of the pedestrianization was approached as a local urban issue. But in doing so they neglected the role of the central boulevards as vector of communion. Not because they are a strong symbol of Belgian Identity, but because they are known by most in the nation as the inner city of the capital. Put differently, it is not the content that matters alone, it is also the shared recognition of *place* that makes it a vector of communion; and that was overlooked by the Brussels local government. The conclusion I draw from this is that an urban planning theory --should take *place* into account as a 'vector of communion'-- for it to be able to foresee at least the potential emergence of discussions, on the scale of the vector of communion with which the *place* in question operates (i.e. nationally in these two cases).

In both cases I identified 'urban' *imaginaries* of what the city is and what it should be. Remarkable about them was their similarity in both cases. It is true that both the Turkish and the Brussels case did include a mobility plan for car circulation, an urban design project and a project for commerce; but seen the very diverging contexts of both cases, I believe that more research might well find the occurrence of these same, similar' urban *imaginaries*.

The 'service city' or the 'city of *hizmet*' in Istanbul and the *Expo '58 city* in Brussels show remarkable resemblance. In fact, they are the local translations of what is also known in

1 Remember that Istanbul is formally speaking no capital, Ankara is, but that it does function as the cultural capital of Turkey, following its status of capital under the Ottoman Empire (see chapter 2).

the literature as the 'automotive city'. Both of them see the city as a quintessential part of the economic project and the access to services. Big infrastructure works must allow the city to fulfill this function efficiently and guarantee the individual access by car for the mass of people living in the (growing) suburbs. The city is an entity that must generate growth by servicing the commuting class as well as tourists from all over the country and beyond.

In both cases this *imaginary* combines with the *imaginary* of the *shopping mall city* or the *city of commerce*, in which the city is first perceived as a place that serves and should serve consumption. Either in the form of literal shopping malls (as in the Istanbul case) either by transforming the historic city center in an open air shopping mall (as in the Brussels case) where people are allowed to dwell the new pedestrian zone, while guaranteeing 'fluid' access by car to reach the zone, park next to it or, if possible, under it. I should note that I chose in the Brussels case for the broader name of *city of commerce* to cover more ground and grasp two related approaches to the city at once. The *imaginary* of the shopping mall city and the *imaginary* of vibrant consumer city on the basis of trending bars, restaurants and terraces, specialized high quality stores, small creative upstarts in design or high-tech, and so forth. But in these both imaginaries the city is first of all an entity of consumption and in both cases the normative dimension states that the consumer experience should be improved. The *imaginary* of the shopping mall city and the city of commerce have another thing in common. They both assume the city is there in the first place to serve the consumer and as many consumers as possible. That means the focus lies at least on the level of the city-region, the nation as whole and even the world as the gaze shifts toward (more) international tourism.

What is particular about the institution of these 'urban' *imaginaries*, is that they do not only upset the *place's* vector of communion, but that they also heavily impact the 'space of daily routines' and the 'home place'-function; whether that regards the car infrastructure works or the commercialization of the inner city centers.

Furthermore, in the opposition to both 'urban' *imaginaries*, we can identify strong similarities between Brussels and Istanbul. First, the *imaginary of the Livable City* (in Brussels) and the *Life Place imaginary* (in Istanbul). Even though the former developed a specific focus on air quality, while the later emphasized 'breathing space' rather metaphorically; both share a lot in common. First of all because they focus on the city, as an entity, that serves and should serve life. By that I mean the life of its inhabitant, its city dwellers, its shopkeepers and their children, not as consumers, commuters or tourists but as human beings; by giving them the necessary space to do so. That is why in both cases so much emphasis is found with regards to public space, trees and green and why both demand respect for the practices of everyday life of the citizens that are not related to the economy.

Secondly, the *imaginary* of the *just city*. Both in the Brussels and Istanbul case the city is perceived by several opposing *discourse coalitions* as an unjust and exclusive entity, that is misused for profit making (touristification, Disneyfication, gentrification,...) and in which only those who can afford it have their place. The *Just City imaginary* opposes therefore what the city is, while desiring a just and inclusive place that also allows the poor and the excluded to live as equals. As in the *Livable City imaginary* the city is seen as an entity that should serve those people who actually live in the city, but not just anybody; especially those who find themselves at the outer end of the inequalities and exclusion ladder.

The confrontation between these 'urban' *imaginaries* was expected in Brussels, as they opposed even the governing majority from within; with SP.A on the one hand fighting for the *Livable City* and the majority of the PS, Open VLD and MR on the other hand pushing to maintain the *Expo '58 city* where possible. In Istanbul, however, the government misread the protests that emerged on the 27th of May 2013. They interpreted what happened as the usual *Republican-Secular* opposition that they had encountered their whole political lives. Yet, by that time the implementation of the tunnel excavation had already begun, while the felling of Gezi Park was about to. Those triggering events, meanwhile, had broadened the opposing *discourse coalitions* to include a much larger diversity of people behind an 'urban' discourse and an *imaginary of Life Place*. Indeed, what the government had misunderstood is that *place* also functions as 'a space of daily routines' and as a 'home place' for all, and that this can also include people who do not necessarily disagree with a national Ottoman-Islamic *imaginary*.

This PhD had demonstrated how the encountered planning conflicts were marked by irreconcilable positions as a consequence of the different *imaginaries* of what the city is and should be, but also whom it serves and should serve. I would like to emphasize that second dimension here in the conclusions because the 'whom-question' reveals a scalar character in the debate.

Indeed, the conflict in both my cases can also be read as a fundamental disagreement over scale and it is inherently related to the question: 'who has the right over the city'. That question is time and again responded by how actors or coalitions define the city. If the city is perceived as a place to live, then the local level is essential. Locals should have the right to decide and made-decisions should improve the quality of everyday life. If the city is, on the other hand, defined as an economic entity, then the regional, national and even international levels are essential. The right to decide will be perceived as a matter of higher political levels, while their decisions 'should' be measured against the economic outcome that can be generated.

Put differently, when the *imaginaries* are mapped that underlie the debate or the conflict, it becomes crystal clear why consensus and win-win situation are impossible at times; i.e. precisely because the horizon --with which *place* and planning are approached by the different involved actors-- can be so fundamentally different.

The question of scale brings me finally to the last closely related similarity. That is the occurrence in both cases of what I have called the *imaginary* of the top-down or *representative city* and the *imaginary of the participatory city*. In both cases those actors that prioritized the local inhabitants and shared an *imaginary of the Livable and Just City imaginary* also shared an *imaginary* on how decisions should be taken in the city. Or more precisely, how they should not be taken: ad hoc, top-down, unconsulted announcements and decisions. Instead, they propose to be heard, asked, consulted and there is a genuine desire to participate and be part of the decision-making. In both cases, the local population and civil society organisations felt that they were confronted with a 'top-down' approach (what I have called the *representative city*) by their respective governments and it notably triggered very broad, local *discourse coalitions* in opposition to the plans and in opposition to the public officials 'making the decisions'.

Final Remarks

Based on the state of the art, based on my extensive fieldwork in both Brussels and Istanbul of these last 4 years, I believe that if we want to understand the *power relations* in urban planning, then we have to direct our gaze to the role played by the *imaginary*. More specifically, I believe we have to focus on the 'object of planning', *place* and its *imaginary institution*; while redefining planning as *the government organized activity of the imaginary institution of place*. I imagine that doing so will allow us to take at least a part of the ambiguity away that continues to define the canon of urban planning theory and I hope that this PhD made a contribution that can serve as a compelling argument for the future development of a comprehensive theory of the *imaginary* in urban planning processes.



Chapter 8
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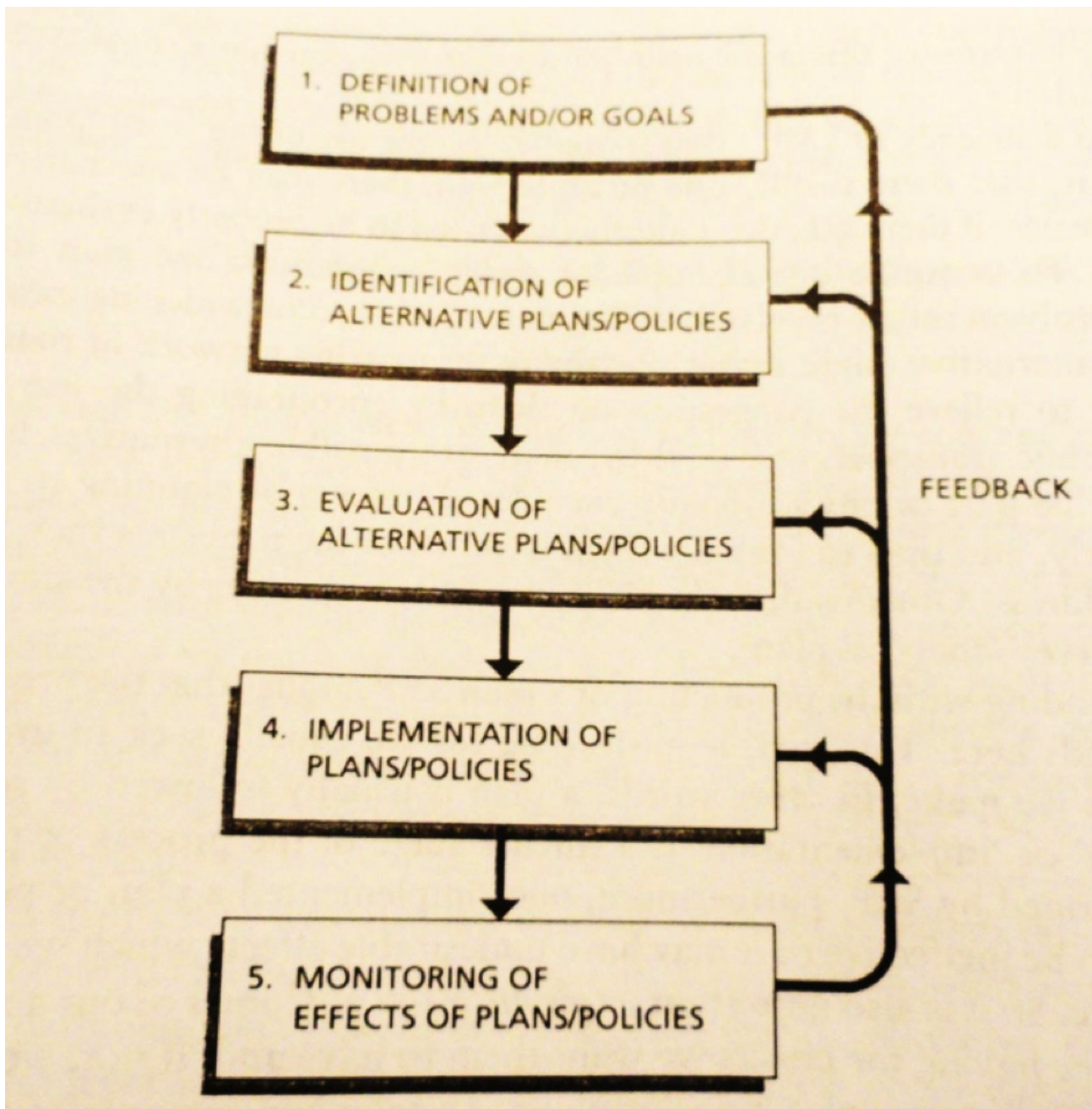
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8.2 Annexes

8.2.1. Annex 1: Rational Process View of Urban Planning in Taylor 1998



8.2.2 Annex 2: Taksim Solidarity Statement

THE COMMON DECLARATION OF TAKSIM SOLIDARITY

March 2, 2012

We are encountering decision making mechanisms [karar alma mekanizmaları] which are unacceptable in a modern [çağdaş] and democratic country, in case of the Taksim Project. The square project was made public without employing any scientific, technical and democratic processes. That is why we joined together to protect Taksim Square before its irreversible transformation.

Taksim Project was first declared by Prime Minister [Erdoğan, 2012] before the elections. After that, it was approved by İstanbul Greater Metropolitan Parliament and İstanbul No.2 Regional Agency for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage, under the name of pedestrian-friendly square project. The change in the plan was declared by ignoring universal urbanism values and scientific methods in transportation planning and project designing. Besides, preservation and legal agencies were violated. What has been declared is a project of filling the square with concrete [betonlaştırma], making it peopleless and of de-identification [dismantling of square from its historical function]. At the very same time, this is also an “underground” [yeraltı or yer altı, can be physically under the surface and also related with the crime/mafia, here the former is valid] project threatening the safety of cars and pedestrians by subterranean tunnels and concrete walls, hindering pedestrians to reach square because of sidewalks being obstacles and demolishing the visual [görsel] and life-sustaining [yaşamsal] integrity of a historical environment.

The public is imposed by new construction projects under the name of restoration of Topçu Barracks [Topçu Kışlası], which is articulated into the plan alteration in an extralegal [hukukdışı/ gayrihukuki] way. The only park in the center of the city which is open to all of us, the right of all of us – also a safe space for post-earthquake period- is taken away from us. The trees and the areas of rest, walk and meet are at the target of *concrete-ization* [betonlaştırma] and commercialization [ticarileştirme]. One more time, public opinion is deceived in order to make money and power [meaning rich & powerful or capital itself] achieve prestige.

Taksim as a whole is our cultural asset under protection and it is the most important public space [kamusal alan] of our city. We urgently demand this project to be stopped without implementing an accomplished fact [fait accompli] policy. We want Taksim to be designed by an integrative approach considering its social, historical, societal, cultural and environmental

8.2.3 Annex 3 & 4: List of Actors in the Taksim Solidarity & Taksim Platform Coalitions

Taksim Solidarity by March 2012	
field	Organisation
dentists	İstanbul Dişhekimleri Odası
pharmacies	İstanbul Eczacı Odası
doctors	İstanbul Tabip Odası
environmental engineers	TMMOB Çevre Mühendisleri Odası
electric engineers	TMMOB Elektrik Mühendisleri Odası
mapping and cadastre engineers	TMMOB Harita ve Kadastro Mühendisleri Odası İstanbul Şubesi
construction engineers	TMMOB İnşaat Mühendisleri Odası
machine engineers	TMMOB Makina Mühendisleri Odası
architects	TMMOB Mimarlar Odası İstanbul Bk. Şubesi
landscape architects	TMMOB Peyzaj Mimarları Odası
urban planners	TMMOB Şehir Plancıları Odası İstanbul Şubesi
theatre players	Tiyatro Oyuncuları Meslek Birliği
Confederation of Revolutionary Workers	DİSK
Union of Educationers, university branch	İstanbul Eğitim Sen 6 Nolu Üniversiteler Şubesi
union of workers in state enterprises	KESK
Union of Culture and Arts	Kültür Sanat Sendikası
Platform of unions	Sendikal Güçbirliği Platformu
Beyoğlu Neighborhood Associations of Platform	Beyoğlu Semt Dernekleri Platformu
Retirees and Elderly Movement	Emekliler Yaşlılar Hareketi
People's House İstanbul	İstanbul Halkevi
Culture Forum of İstanbul	İstanbul Kültür Forumu
right to city, environment	İstanbul SOS Girişimi
Public Art	Kamusal Sanat Laboratuvarı
Black Sea Platform	Karadeniz İsyandadır Platformu
Haydarpaşa Solidarity for City and Environment	Kent ve Çevre için Haydarpaşa Dayanışması
LGBTQ	Lambda İstanbul
Graduates of Ankara University Political Sciences Faculty	Mülkiyeliler Birliği İstanbul Şubesi
Nazım Hikmet (communist poet]	Nazım Hikmet Kültür Merkezi
Autonomous Art	Özerk Sanat Konseyi
Initiative of Artists	Sanatçılar Girişimi
Sulukule (old Roman neighborhood)	Sulukule Platformu
Taksim Platform	Taksim Platformu
Socialist* Engineers, Architects and Urban Planners	Toplumcu Mühendis, Mimar ve Şehir Plancıları Meclisi
Life instead of 3rd Bridge	Üçüncü Köprü Yerine Yaşam Platformu
Anatolian Culture and Research Association	Anadolu Kültür ve Araştırma Derneği

Archeologists	Arkeologlar Derneği İstanbul
	Şubesi
Neighborhood Associations	Asmalı Mescit Derneği
Neighborhood Associations	Ayasma Derneği
Neighborhood Associations	Bedrettin Derneği
Beyoğlu Entertainment Places	Beyoğlu Eğlence Yerleri Derneği
Cihangir Neighborhood Associations	Cihangir Güzelleştirme Derneği
Modern Lawyers	Çağdaş Hukukçular Derneği
Balance - Ecological Life	Denge Ekolojik Yaşam Derneği
Neighborhood Associations	Galata Derneği
Neighborhood Associations	Gazhane Çevre Gönüllüleri
Neighborhood Association	Gülsuyu Gülensu Yaşam ve Dayanışma

	Merkezi Derneği
İstanbul, Graduates of Middle East Technical Uni	İstanbul ODTÜ Mezunları Derneği
Blacksea Environment and Culture	Karadeniz Çevre ve Kültür Derneği
Neighborhood Association	Kızıldere Derneği
LGBTQ	LGBT Dayanışma Derneği
Social Rights	Sosyal Haklar Derneği
Hometownship Association	Tokatlılar Derneği
Neighborhood Association	Tozkoparan Derneği
Consumers' Rights	Tüketici Bilincini Geliştirme

	Derneği
Consumers' Rights	Tüketiciyi Koruma Derneği Beşiktaş Şubesi
Consumers' Rights	TÜKODER İstanbul Şubesi
Restorators and Conservators	Tüm Restoratörler ve Konservatörler Derneği
Academics	Tüm Öğretim Elemanları Derneği İstanbul

	Şubesi
Neighborhood Association	Validebağ Gönüllüleri Derneği
Equality and Democracy Party	Eşitlik ve Demokrasi Partisi
Peace and Democracy Party	Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi
Republican People's Party	Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi
Labor Party	Emek Partisi
Voice of People Party	Halkın Sesi Partisi
Freedom and Solidarity Party	Özgürlük ve Dayanışma Partisi
Turkey Communist Party	Türkiye Komünist Partisi
Worker Party	İşçi Partisi
Greens	Yeşiller Partisi.

* In yellow those organizations that also were a part of Taksim Platformü

Taksim Platform in January 2012

Field	Supporting Institutions
Platform of Neighborhood Associations of Beyoğlu	Beyoğlu Semt Dernekleri Platformu
Neighborhood Association	Asmalimescit Derneği
Neighborhood Association	Ayaspaşa Derneği
Neighborhood Association	Bedrettin Derneği
Neighborhood Association	Cihangir Güzelleştirme Derneği
Neighborhood Association	Galata Derneği
Women's Movement	KA.DER
<i>Mahalle</i> Life Association	Mayader
Cultural Heritage organisation	Europa Nostra Türkiye
International Council of Monuments and Protected Areas	ICOMOS-Türkiye
International Working Party for Documentation and Conservation of Buildings, Sites and Neighbourhoods of the Modern Movement.	docomomo- Türkiye
Foundation for Combating Soil Erosion, for Reforestation and the Protection of Natural Habitats	TEMA Vakfı
İstanbul	Şehristanbul Derneği
Chamber of Urban Planners - İstanbul	Şehir Plancıları Odası-İstanbul Şubesi
Confederation of Unions of Revolutionary Workers	DİSK
Architecture for All Association	Herkes için Mimarlık Derneği
Citizen Council of Kadıköy (decision-making mechanism which involves citizens)	Kadıköy Kent Konseyi
un-registered	Kayıtdışı
∑ In Yellow the members of the Beyoğlu Neighborhoods Associations Platform	

8.2.4 Annex 5: List of Actors in the Brussels Case

This tabel gives an overview of the different actors in the urban planning process and the role they played in the urban planning process. It includes both the public and private actors, as the civil society actors and media.

PUBLIC ACTORS	
LOCAL (MUNICIPAL) LEVEL	
<i>Bruxelles-Ville, majority (mayor(s), aldermen & civil servants at administrations)</i>	
F r e d d y Thielemans, P S	Mayor Bruxelles-Ville (2001 – 2013) - Initiated the circulation plans and the Beliris-plan for the Central Boulevards, Ca. 1995-2006: with Alderman of Urbanism, Henri Simons (ex-ecolo/PS) Ca. 2006-2012: with Alderman of Urbanism, Christian Ceux (cdH) - After the municipal elections in October 2012, Thielemans formally negotiated the majority agreement (Dec 2012) including both the decision on cutting the urban highway, the “Anspach Boulevard”, fully (between Rue des Teinturiers and the Sock Exchange Square) as on the current circulation plan and the idea of a destination loop (“boucle de déserte/bestemmingslus” that would connect the different Brussels inner city neighborhoods to each other)
Yvan Mayeur, PS	Mayor Bruxelles-Ville (Dec 2013 - ...) - Is elected to the municipal council in October 2012 - takes over the Mayorship of Freddy Thielemans in Dec 2013. Thielemans didn’t do anything to make the central boulevards pedestrian free, although he accepted it as part of the majority agreement. Yvan Mayeur on the other hand is a “young” mayor in search of a project that can strengthen his profile and that can serve in winning the 2018 elections. He chose the pedestrian zone as that project. Consequently, he kick started the process by immediately opening negotiations with the financier of the project, the federal minister for BELIRIS (Laurette Onkelinkx) and the Beliris administration. In the following years Mayeur will continue to drive the Beliris pedestrianisation project (while his alderman of mobility -Els Ampe- drives the studies, consultation and decisions concerning the new circulation plan).

<p>Philippe Close (PS)</p>	<p>Alderman of Tourism and Events</p> <p>Right hand man of Freddy Thielemans and contender for the mayorat. As he was chosen, he became alderman for tourism. As such he is indirectly involved in this case study; as he is responsible for an important part of the use of the newly shaped pedestrian zone. Especially with regards to the Christmas/New Year market called “Winter Fun” or “Plaisir d’Hiver”. Furthermore, as alderman he is responsible for the follow up of the refurbishment of the iconic old stock exchange building and its transformation into a “Beertemple”, a museum on brewing and Belgian beers.</p>
<p>Olivier Verstraeten</p>	<p>Key person at the cabinet member of the mayor; He followed Yvan Mayeur from the CPAS to the mayor’s cabinet and follows up the dossier.</p>
<p>Alain Courtois (MR)</p>	<p>First Alderman, sport, demography, families and Grand projects</p> <p>The first alderman of the city, second man in line after Mayor Mayeur. He is described as the “watchdog” for the liberal fraction in the negotiations with the federal level, and it is likely he played a mediating role when the Beliris competence of Onkelinkx (PS) becomes the competence of Didier Reynders (MR) after the federal elections of May 2014.</p>
<p>A. Persoons (SP.A)</p>	<p>Alderman of Participation, Neighborhood Contracts and Dutch affairs,)</p> <p>She is a young first term politician without experience on her competences. In the majority agreement negotiations she is one of the key persons to make sure the pedestrian zone is part of the political compromise. Later she will also make sure an elaborate participation project is organized around the Beliris project for pedestrianizing the Central Boulevards. She will no longer play a political key role in the process from 2015 onwards.</p>
<p>M. Lemesre (cdH)</p>	<p>Aldermen of Local Commerce, Employment, Economy, Education and Plan Public Car Parks</p> <p>When coming into power, she had no experience with regards to her competence. She will play a significant role due to her absence. In the 2 years and a half leading up to the “phase test” of the pedestrian zone, she did not manage to sit together or consult the shopkeepers. She did develop a strategic plan for commerce in the Pentagone (together with GEO consulting) but as one highly placed person in the administration put it: “the plan asks many questions, contains few answers, and those questions that were asked, are actually not even the right ones”.</p>
<p>E. Ampe (Open VLD)</p>	<p>Alderman of Mobility and Public Works</p> <p>When coming into power, she had no experience with regards to her competence. But she starts working immediately. She is the person who will develop the destination loop or “Mini Ring” in order to ensure car fluidity. She is also the person who developed the plan to install 4 new underground parking lots in the innercity. She used the help of Technum, Flow and AME (government contractors) to help her develop those plans.</p>

Two cabinet members Ampe (Open. VLD)	PERSON Y1 & PERSON Y2: The people responsible at the cabinet of Els Ampe for following up the dossier. They will take over a part of the work of the administration in the first phase, as there was a vacancy at the head of the department of mobility in the administration at that moment. Now, PERSON ZY is the person who took over.
Geoffrey Coomans de Brachène (MR)	Alderman of Urbanism and Patrimony Largely absent from the public debate , although involved as he is responsible for the UNESCO protected area in the pedestrian area
Mohamed Ouriaghli (PS)	Aldermen of Public Housing, Real Estate Policy, Equal Opportunities and ICT Largely absent from the public debate , did not propose his plans (yet) although he is involved as responsible for the local policy of the relatively large set of public real estate owned by Bruxelles-Ville. "Regie Fonciere
<i>Bruxelles-Ville, previous members of the majority</i>	
Ex-Ecolo/PS, Henri Simons	Alderman for Urbanism and Town Planning under mayor Xavier François De Donnea (PRL) from 1994 to 2000 and under Thielemans' first term until 2006. After 2006 Simons will switch parties and become a member of the PS. As such he became the president of the Atomium Association until 2013 when Thielemans replaced him. Simons played a significant part in this case study. Under De Donnea he is the first to propose a different automobile circulation plan that would prioritize other means of transport and public space. He assigned then Groupe Planning (now SUM) to develop three different scenarios for the Brussels Pentagone. Even the lightest scenario was never chosen. But the studies will have the effect of creating a debate on the issue that will impact the 2000 local election. Under Thielemans Simons continued his efforts and managed to get the lightest scenario on the table. Thielemans allowed the preparatory studies to be done and it is in this same period 2003-2006 that Beliris (at that time also an Ecolo competence under Isabelle Durant) is asked to finance and implement the refurbishment of the central boulevards as a two lane street. By 2006, nor the circulation plan, nor the Beliris refurbishment are approved (and implemented). But Simons does carry the responsibility for opening the road to today's plans. At least to what concerns the Beliris plans and with regards to the positions taken by civil society and the political minority in opposition to the current circulation plan. When Simons switches parties in 2006 he continues to play an important role behind the screens. Together with Pascal Smet (SP.A) he will be the one to push the pedestrianisation of several squares in the Brussels inner city forward and in 2011-2012 he convinced Thielemans, Close and Mayeur of the necessity of making the Beurs square car free.
C D H , Christian Ceux:	Was the alderman for Urbanism and Town Planning under the second term of Thielemans between 2006 and 2012. He developed together with the region, in accordance with the PRD and Iris 2, a circulation plan for the inner city that used a destination loop system that would ban all transit traffic. His plans are still hailed by many environmentalists as the scenario that should have been chosen and they are very similar to the "maximum" scenario that was developed by Group Planning (SUM) in 1997. The plans were voted and approved in 2011 but they were never implemented.
<i>Bruxelles-Ville, municipal council, opposition</i>	

Groen-Ecolo, Bart Dhondt, Mary Nagy and Liesbet Temmerman	All three politicians can be considered the most influential political opposition with regards to the circulation plan. Although the Christian democrats of the former alderman Christian Ceux (CDH) are now in the opposition they do not seem to play a very important role. Indeed, it is the green fraction that will oppose the plans vigorously: Firstly, by proposing an alternative in line with the plans of Christian Ceux; Secondly, by renaming the “destination loop” (bestemmingslus/boucle de déserte) of Els Ampe to “Mini Ring” (a metaphor that will dominate the political conversation from then onwards). Thirdly, in their full blown support for the Beliris development plan from (April?) 2016 onward.
<i>Bruxelles-Ville, Brussels city administration (Brucity)</i>	
Jan Schollaert	Key figure within the city administration to follow up both the circulation plan and the Beliris development plan. He was recruited as an expert (coming from the regional level) in July 2014 to coordinate the proceedings. He replaced De Meur who dealt with the dossier until he was moved aside (for other reasons).
Paul Van Gelder	Key figure in the administration that followed up the proceedings of the circulation plan.
Groendienst	Objected the idea of trees in the soil. Later, SUM and the results of the participation process (the voice of the citizen’s) as the solution was technically possible and inhabitants voiced a real desire for those trees.
<i>Police, fire brigade (SIAMU), CMU (ambulance service of Saint Pieters Hospital?)</i>	
<i>Government contractors (working for the City of Brussels)</i>	
° Dept. URBANISM, MAYOR PROJECTS (resp. Yvan Mayeur)	SUMProject/B-Group - Greisch (Urban design office and construction) Paul Lievevrouw, Livia De Bethune: the two people that have followed up both the circulation plans and the Beliris project over the years. Originally under the name Group Planning, later as SUM/Greisch. In 1997 it was Paul Lievevrouw that developed the scenarios. Since halfway the 2000s it is Livia De Bethune that has followed up the proceedings and she is still doing so today (nowadays as consultant for SUM).

<p>°Dept. MOBILITY: (resp. Els Ampe)</p>	<p>Technum: is the private consultancy firm that has developed different scenarios for the alderman Ampe. They ran the simulations (on the computers of the regional administration of mobility) in close collaboration with the alderman. The contract with Technum ran from 2012 to June 2015.</p> <p>Flow: delivered the traffic numbers in the Pentagone. They counted at 24 different crossroads all transport modi, but with a specific attention for car use and transit traffic. Technum based its simulations (for a large part) on their numbers of October 2014. According to one (credible) course it appears they also made a second count of the flux in May-June 2015.</p> <p>BE-AME: delivered the traffic numbers in the Pentagone during the test phase in October 2015. They counted at the same 24 different crossroads all transport modi, this time without specific attention for transit traffic.</p> <p>SIGNALISATION: xxx is the private consultancy firm that was appointed by alderman Ampe to prepare the road signalization for the start of the test phase on 29th of June 2015.</p> <p>COMMUNICATION: xxx is the private consultancy firm that was appointed by alderman Ampe to deal with communication concerning the circulation plan (for the period: January to June 2015).</p>
<p>°Dept. COMMERCE (resp. Marion Lemesre)</p>	<p>Geoconsulting: the private consultancy firm that has developed the commercial masterplan for alderman Lemesre (“Plan Directeur de Commerce”).</p> <p>Citytools and Devimo: making plans for the commercialization of the piétonnier: http://www.lesoir.be/1073981/article/actualite/regions/bruxelles/2015-12-19/deux-societes-pour-commercialiser-pietonnier</p>
<p>°Dept. PARTICIPATION (resp. Ans Persoons)</p>	<p>Artgineering: is the private consultancy firm that was appointed by alderman Persoons to organize the participatory process (between September 2014-June2015) concerning the Beliris dossier. PERSON X1 was the coordinator for Artgineering. The second phase that began from February 2015 focused however on informing the population rather than on participation.</p>
<p>LOCAL (REGIONAL) LEVEL - Brussels Capital Region (Ministers, cabinets, administrations, civil servants)</p>	
<p>Brussels Capital Region, Majority</p>	
<p>Minister President Rudi Vervoort (PS)</p>	<p>He is part of the Beliris collaboration committee and he has the regional competence of urbanism (including regional building permits, heritage).</p>

Civil servant at cabinet Vervoort	She is the person in minister president Vervoort's cabinet that is in charge for urbanism and building permits. She has followed up the dossier although Beliris nor the city actively engaged them in the process (at least not up until January 2016, a few weeks after the building permit had been approved).
Minister of Mobility, P. Smet (sp.a)	He is since the start involved in the debates around the pedestrian zone: first, as a key negotiating figure in making the PS-SP.A cartel; later, as the regional minister responsible for bicycle policy and public transportation (STIB-MIVB). His department also finances some part of the plans (i.e. the bicycle lanes) and some of the subterranean works (i.e. the waterproofing of the pre-metro stations at Bourse and Brouckère)
Didier Gosuin, Défi (ex-FDF)	Regional Minister for economy and employment, responsible for the utility company Atrium.
<i>Brussels Capital Region, Regional administration</i>	
B r u x e l l e s Développement Urbain (previously AATL-BROH)	Regional administration for Urbanism PERSON X2: Handling the building permit of the Beliris dossier PERSON X3: Handling monuments and landscapes (patrimony) of the Brussels region
Bruxelles Environnement – Leefmilieu Brussel	Regional administration for the Environment PERSON X4: in charge for ...
Citydev	Regional administration for City Development in charge economic expansion and urban renovation) PERSON X5: in charge for ...
Bruxelles Mobilité	Regional administration for mobility PERSON X5: In charge for the cooperation with the government contractor Technum PERSON X6: In charge for the bicycle policy PERSON X7: In charge for the public transportation debates for STIB-MIVB –
Regional Advise Commission of Mobility (STIB-MIVB):	the regional public transportation company (although the Walloon and Flemish company also supply public transport on the territory of the BCR). STIB wrote 2 very negative advises on both the plan for the pedestrian zone and the plan for the circulation plan.
Atrium.	Handling research and development of commerce – PERSON X7 & PERSON X8
<i>PUBLIC ACTORS not involved (remarkably)</i>	

<p>Brussels Chief Architect</p> <p>Brusselse Bouwmeester</p>	<p>The “bouwmeester” (or Brussels Chief Architect) and his team were never involved. They are normally responsible for the monitoring of the spatial quality of architectural and urban development projects, as well as projects in public space. Their goal is usually to stimulate and strengthen the ambitions with regard to urban development in the Brussels-Capital Region while acting from an independent position. It is likely that the recent character of this institution is (founded only in 2008, and in transition in 2013 with the selection of a new Chief Architect. i.e. Kristiaan Borret) is responsible for their full absence. In a later stadium there have been talks between this institution and the city, but it has so far not resulted in a collaboration.</p>
<p>ADT/ATO</p>	<p>Is the territorial development agency of the region. They usually focus on a set of leverage zones (zone leviers/hefboomgebieden) such as the Canal Zone of whom the Central Boulevards are no part. And indeed they are not involved at all in the development of the project.</p>
<p>B r u x e l l e s</p> <p>Développement Urbain</p>	<p>Part of this regional administration is involved but the service in charge for the renovation of public space at the level of the neighborhoods through the contractual instrument of the Neighborhood Contracts is not.</p>
<p>FEDERAL LEVEL (Ministers, cabinets, administrations, civil servants)</p>	
<p>Didier Reynders (MR)</p> <p>& Cabinet member D. Van Eyll</p>	<p>Federal minister in charge for Beliris & part of the Federal majority</p> <p>In charge for funding the project of the central boulevards.</p>
<p>PS, Laurette Onkelinckx</p>	<p>Ex-federal minister in charge for Beliris (until May 2014). In charge for the negotiations between Bruxelles-Ville and the region concerning the budget for the renewal project. Could fix a deal to put 18 mln euro’s aside. PS go-between person for Mayor Mayeur and Minister President Vervoort.</p>

<p>Beliris</p>	<p>Beliris is both a federal administration and an agreement between the federal state and the Brussels Capital Region for securing (large-scale infrastructural) investments that apply to the international appeal of the city, for which the region cannot provide funding.</p> <p>In charge for the development and execution of the urbanist intervention on the central boulevards. PERSON X9, project manager and PERSON X10, director. They work closely together with Mayor Mayeur and with the federal cabinet of Didier Reynders. Although the budget increased and the perimeter changed, they have been working since 2003 on the dossier of the Central Boulevards. From the start they worked with SUM/Greisch (then called Group Planning) and they have continued to do so in 2014 when they received the assignment. The budget that was officially 1 million for studies and unofficially 12 million for implementation was renegotiated between the city and Beliris to 18 million. The perimeter was changed to Brouckère-Fontainas (instead of Rogier-Lemonier). But the SUM continued to be the government contractor to make the design and do the works.</p>
<p>Other Concession holders related to the project (intercommunal associations)</p>	
	<p>Aside from the above mentioned government actors, administrations and their contractors there are a few concession holders that have intervened in the process as well. Indeed the refurbishment of the Central Boulevards has allowed the suppliers of telecom, internet, and electricity and gas to renew their infrastructure.</p> <p>Proximus (telecom and internet)</p> <p>Telenet (telecom and internet)</p> <p>Sibelga (electricity and gas supply and distribution)</p> <p>Vivaqua (water distribution within the Brussels Capital Region)</p> <p>And 12 others...</p>
<p>The Judiciary</p>	
<p>Raad Van State/Conseil d'Etat</p>	<p>The highest court. Its preliminary audit (with regards to the urbanism permit for the refurbishment of the pedestrian zone, the Beliris project) was leaked in June 2016. That is two weeks before the court's ruling. The audit was negative. As a consequence the local majority decided not to wait for the hearing and the refiled a demand for a new urbanism permit, thus cancelling the old one (and avoiding further negative headlines in the press).</p>
<p>PRIVATE SECTOR – MAINLY LOCAL ACTORS</p>	

Groupe ment des Commerçants du Centre-Ville de Bruxelles	Alain Berlinblau’s association of shopkeepers and business holders. He is together with Touring the first in January 2013 to react negatively to the plans for putting in place a pedestrian zone on the Central Boulevards. He uses the slogan “mort du commerce” and will continue to work with it until 2016. With his association he will also go to court against the building permit.
Touring, Isabelle Norro	She represents the car lobby and is to a large extent on the same line with Alain Berlinblau. They will come out in opposition to the plans as well from January 2013 onwards. They are together with Alain Berlinblau the first to react negatively.
Interparkjng	Private company providing car park facilities, founded in Belgium at the end of the 60s. Currently they operate over 700 car parks in nearly 350 cities, across 9 European countries. Concerning the project of the pedestrian zone In brussels, they were in charge for the construction of the 4 parkings envisioned at ‘the periphery’ of the destination loop.
BECI, Olivier Willocx:	Brussels chamber of commerce, pro-car lobbyists, defending the interest of the corporate stakeholders in Brussels – influential in regional policymaking. In general BECI is not opposed to the piétonnier, but as years evolved BECI start to be openly oppose to the way the dossier was dealt with. BECI also supported the call of some shopkeepers for the impeachment (stepping down) of PS-mayor Mayeur.
IZEO, Miguel Van Keirsblick	Le mouvement des indépendants et dirigeants de PME. Part of the Expo ’58 coalition who comes out in February 2014 with a open letter with regards to the the local government plans.
UPSI, Olivier Carette	Union Professionnelle du secteur de l’immobilier. Part of the Expo ’58 coalition who comes out in February 2014 with a open letter with regards to the the local government plans.
Fédération des Parkings de Belgique, Roland Cracco	Parking federation. Part of the Expo ’58 coalition who comes out in February 2014 with a open letter with regards to the the local government plans.
Valerie Berckmans, shopkeeper	In the Van Arteveldestraat that will become spokesperson of the shopkeeper protests in 2016.
AG Real Estate	Responsible for the renovation of the Centre de Monnaie – new shopping mall at Place De Brouckère
Hotel Métropole	Went to court because the car traffic was removed in front of their hotel – eventually managed to force the City to re-open the street
CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS - Organisations (established), platforms (ad-hoc) & activists (not formally organized)	

ORGANISATIONS	
IEB	PERSON X10 & PERSON X11 (the latter also active as a representative of the neighborhood committee Notre-Dame-Aux-Neiges, uptown Brussels): Inter Environnement Bruxelles is the platform of French speaking neighborhood associations. It has structural funds to follow up urban and environmental issues with around 15 employees. They have been involved in different urban struggles for decades. In this case they have stayed hesitantly on the sidelines when Picnic the Streets started its actions. Only later, when the project became real under Yvan Mayeur in 2014 did they become involved actively. At first, in opposition to the Mini Ring and the Parkings, later as part of Platform Pentagone against the pedestrian zone and how the project had been managed as well. In 2014 IEB also set up a radiophonic project to collect different opinions in popular neighborhoods around the piétonnier (especially Anneessens) http://www.ieb.be/-Le-centre-ville-a-coeur-ouvert-
BRAL	PERSON X12 – since beginning of 2000 helping in Street Sharing actions on the central boulevards, in 2012 actively and openly supporting and helping citizens of Pic Nic the Streets, position in favor of a large piétonnier but asking for more participation
ARAU	PERSON X13 – same involvement in the dossier as IEB (of which ARAU is member)– especially asking for a public tramway on the central boulevards
GRACQ, Fietsersbond	cyclist movement: in favor of a large piétonnier, but especially asking for bike lanes on parallel streets, since cycling on the piétonnier will not be fluent when full with pedestrians. Asked for a kind of marked bike lane on the piétonnier before
Neighborhood association Sint Goriks	PERSON X14 – same involvement as Neighbor
Neighborhood association Bru1000	(Comité ter verdediging van de bewoners van Brussel-Centrum), PERSON X15, PERSON X16 and PERSON X17– association originated in the 80s, especially house owners in the quartier de Béquinage, striving to protect the ‘livability’ of the their neighborhood
Neighborhood association Nouveau Marché Au Grains	PERSON X18 – leading spokesperson of Platform Pentagone – opposing especially to the dense traffic in the little streets in their neighborhood
Neighborhood association Saint Jacques	PERSON X19, PERSON X20, PERSON X21 and PERSON 22 – neighborhood around Manneken Pis and Fontainas – openly in favor of a piétonnier and strategically different from Platform Pentagone, in that sense that they decided to always stay on speaking terms with the city’s majority
Gemeenschapscentrum DeMarkten	[role has to be made clear]
Beursschouwburg,	Logistic help during Pic Nic the Streets + same position as AB, situated inside the piétonnier, challenged by the changes but positively constructive

Ancienne Belgique	Some logistic help in the participation process the concert hall to the city. In the public debate always favoring the project of the pedestrian zone. As well as constructively searching for solutions with regards to the technical and renting out difficulties it means for their musicians, tour busses...
CSC	French speaking, Christian-democrat union ... [role has to be made clear]
Cinema Nova	Takes over the discourse of Platform Pentagone in 2015. In June that year they come out with a long and precise (more technical) text on the issue of mobility and Els Ampe's circulation plan. They will organizes a "Mini string, Maxi Ring"-weekend including cinema and debates. The wide spread opposition to the current plans (pedestrian zone and circulation plan) amongst left wing and ecological activist can be brought back to the platform, IEB and Cinema Nova's effort to spread the opposing discourse.
NOMO asbl	This organization, established at the end of the 90s by Michel Hubert (now Prof. Sociology at Université Saint-Louis, a staff member of IEB and Frédéric Dobruszkes, researcher at ULB) emphasized the size of the problem of car traffic in Brussels and they demanded that at least the maximal scenario of Group Planning would be used. The aim was to "displace the mobility of the Brussels Pentagone " and move toward a car free inner city and a ban on transit-traffic in the other parts of the Pentagone.
PLATFORMS	
Platform Marolles	PERSON Y4 ontstaan in de strijd tegen de komst van een ondergrondse parking onder het Vossenplein – lanceerden succesvolle petitie, stoet richting parlement en persstrategie. Legden vooral de historische wortels van de PS in de populaire wijk Marollen (cfr. ook strijd tegen de uitzetting Manu Braconte) bloot en gebruikten die in hun strijd voor transparant en eerlijke politieke cultuur. Discours vooral geënt op angst voor gentrificatie en verdwijnen volkse sfeer in de wijk. De impact van Platform Marolles was veel groter dan die van Plaform Pentagone. Deze groep is verantwoordelijk voor de acties in december 2014 aan het gemeentehuis en tezamen met de picnickers voor de actie in de AB in Januari 2015. Ze maakte een sterke indruk op de politici en haalde hun slag (in februari 2015 thuis, in het bijzonder dat de parking aan het vossenplein wordt geannuleerd).

Platform Pentagone	<p>PERSON X23, PERSON X24 – opgericht als groepering die de verschillende kritische stemmen bij de aanpak van de voetgangerszone wilden samenbrengen. Meninge samengebracht in een 6blz-lang manifest en een petitie. Verenigd in het protest tegen vier geplande nieuwe parkings in het centrum en tegen en de dubbele Mini Ring (mobiliteit), maar naar verloop van tijd verschillend van mening over de aanpak en de strategie, wat er uiteindelijk toe leidde dat enkele eerdere ondertekenaars uit het platform stapten.</p> <p>Hoewel Platform Pentagone er ook al in November 2014 staat, slagen ze er niet echt in om op de politiek te wegen. Ze worden niet gepercipieerd als een grote groep mensen met veel achterban. Dat neemt niet weg dat ze wel indirect invloed hebben. Ze vormden namelijk in sterke mate de linkse ecologische en activistisch opinie bij de geëngageerde Brusselaars. Voornamelijk aan Franstalige kant (die zo wél bij heeft gedragen aan het gevoel van "isolatie" van burgemeester Mayeur).</p>
Action group Van Artevelde	Group of shopkeepers and inhabitants opposing the proposed plans of alderman of mobility Els Ampe in the wake of her announced circulation and parking lot plans in November 2014.
ACTIVISTS	
Philippe Van Parijs	Belgian philosopher and political economist (Université Saint)Louis, Université catholique de Louvain, KULeuven, Oxford & Berkeley) living in Brussels. He has been engaged into the Brussels-based think tank Aula Magna, the European Neighborhood committees, he established the think tank of the Pavia Group, and supported the Etats Généreaux de Bruxelles. His public call on 24 May 2012 published by three newspapers triggered the public debate on a pedestrian are in the city-centre of Brussels in an unforeseen way. His call for a civil disobedient picnic went viral and has been taken up by a 'new' group of people that later would become the group Picnic the Streets .
Picnic the Streets	(PERSON X25, PERSON X26; PERSON X27, PERSON X28, PERSON X29, PERSON X30, PERSON X31, PERSON X32, ...) - clear focus on public space and air quality –not so much on social issues – positive, family-friendly action on the street, car-free Place de la Bourse as a first aim in 2012; clear agenda setting before the elections of 2012, group gradually dispersed as years evolved
Picnic Sans Traffic	(HUB, PERSON 33), small initiative in the city center at the Warmoesberg, with the demand of making the zone in front of the school car free.

Clean Air BXL	(hebben zich niet echt uitgesproken over piétonnier)
(Free 54)	Group of young activists getting mixed up the debate on privatisation of public space in the city centre – strijdpunt: het verdwijnen van publieke banken ten faveure van privé-terrassen op het Saint-Katelijneplein, de plaats waar ze na school rondhingen - slaagden erin om verschillende keren veel mensen op de been op te brengen op te strijden voor meer publieke ruimte
ACADEMIA	
Involvement and Op-ed pieces	Matthieu Van Crieckingen (IGEAT, ULB), Stefan Decorte (Sociale geografie, VUB), Michel Hubert (socioloog, CES/IRIB, Université Saint-Louis), Bas de Geus (Menselijke Fysiologie, BLITS, VUB), Dag Boutsen (architect, decaan Faculteit Architectuur, KU Leuven), Stefan De Corte (geograaf, STeR*/Cosmopolis, VUB), Christophe Loir (historicus, sociAMM, ULB), Pierre Vanderstraeten (architect-stedenbouwkundige en socioloog, CREAT, UC Louvain en ISURU)
Observatory of the Pedestrian Zone	Observatorium, created by michel Hubert and Eric Corijn in order to objectify the debate in the aftermath of the Test Phase. The first negotiation with the city were held already in August 2015. The start took place in Mai-June 2016.
PRINTED PRESS, BROADCASTING COMPANIES AND SOCIAL MEDIA	
PRINTED PRESS	
The bulletin,	English expat newspaper in Brussels that organized the civil disobedient picnic on the Grand Place in the 1970's. Phillipe Van Parijs knows the current editor who's mother founded the paper and who organized the picnic (The person also got arrested at that time). The person's story inspired the name Picnic the streets. And in 2012 the will publish Phillipe Van Parijs' English version of the op-ed piece with the call to picnic at la Bourse.
Brussel Week and Brusselnieuws (now BRUZZ),	The local Dutch speaking news organizations. They played an important role both in publishing Van Parijs' op-ed piece in Dutch, as in alimentering the debate and passing on the "picnic the streets" message to the Dutch speaking population.
De Standaard	Published interviews with Van Parijs and one op-ed piece in Dutch.
Le Soir	The national, Brussels based, French speaking newspaper that published the French speaking op-ed pieces of Van Parijs from May 2012 onward and that followed up the debate in the next few years. Patrice Leprince was the journalist responsible for the follow up.
L'Echo	The French speaking newspaper that leaked the auditor report of the Conseil d'Etat in 2016.

De Morgen	Dutch speaking, partly Brussels-based national newspaper that published an interview recorded in Oxford met Van Parijs preceding the first Picnic in 2012.
BROADCAST COMPANIES	
RTBF	French speaking public broadcast-company in Belgium that covered the opinion article of Van Parijs preceding the first Picnic in 2012.
Télébruxelles & Tvbrussel	Are respectively the French- and Dutch speaking local broadcasting companies, covering Brussels-related news. They have regularly voiced several actors within the public debate on the pietonnier.
SOCIAL MEDIA	
Facebook	<p>Was the only social medium to play a significant role in the form of Facebook fan and event pages and public groups. A number of them were essential for activists, civil society and the shopkeepers/business owners in mobilizing and informing the local population of the plans.</p> <p><i>(This is not an exhaustive list but they are some of the most important links. Almost all the individual persons that are involved use their own Facebook-page as well to inform the public)</i></p>

Picnic the streets

<https://www.facebook.com/PicnicTheStreet/?fref=ts>

<https://www.facebook.com/PicnicTheStreets/?ref=ts&fref=ts>

Platform Pentagone

<https://www.facebook.com/platformpentagone/?fref=ts>

Platform Marolles and Touche Pas a Mon Jeu de Balle

<https://www.facebook.com/plateformemarolles/?fref=ts>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/platformarollen/?fref=ts>

FB-groups against the pedestrian zone

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1052778148106069/?fref=ts>

<https://www.facebook.com/contrelepietonnierducentrebruxelles/?fref=ts>

<https://www.facebook.com/Contre-le-pi%C3%A9tonnier-%C3%A0-Bruxelles-846395125453926/?fref=ts>

FB-groups in favor of the pedestrian zone

<https://www.facebook.com/pourlepietonnierdebruxelles/?fref=ts>

<https://www.facebook.com/pietonnierbruxelles/?fref=ts>

Business owner and shopkeeper page (that released the story of the restaurant owner that would allow Mayeur and Ampe to enter.)

<https://www.facebook.com/CessionCommerceHoreca/?fref=ts>

Others: free 54

<https://www.facebook.com/Free-54-1658129241072428/?fref=ts>

8.2.5 Annex 6: Process Architecture, Legal Framework & Formal Arenas of the Brussels Case

The *process architecture* of the redevelopment of the Central Boulevards happened on 6 separate trajectories. The fragmentation of the *Majority coalition's* city vision “to give a new heart to the Brussels inner city” (Bruxelles-Ville, 2014) explains at several instance the dynamic of the urban planning process. Especially the separation of the three spatial planning dossiers -the Beliris plan, the circulation plan & the parking lot plan (that are the focus of this research)- impacted each other mutually. The latter three parts of the vision (economic, real estate and Stock Exchange) played respectively a role due to their late arrival (master plan for commerce), their absence (a public real estate plan) or the redesignation of the most iconic building on the development perimeter, even before the information and participation in the urban planning process of the Central Boulevards got started (the old Stock Exchange building as a ‘Beer Temple’). The rhythm and process architecture of the different individual processes plays nevertheless a very important role as well in the dynamic of the planning proceedings. I will discuss them individually in this chapter, while emphasizing parts of the *legal framework* that played a role and while pointing out the attempt that was made to create a formal *arena* for public debate (the so-called ‘participation process’ with regards to the Beliris plan). Seen the limited role of the latter three, my focus will go to A, B and C.

- (A) The pedestrianization plan or Beliris project to refurbish the Central Boulevards.
- (B) The mobility or circulation plan
- (C) The parking lot plan
- (D) The master plan for commerce
- (E) The **redesignation** of the Stock Exchange building
- (F) The public real estate plan

The master plan for commerce (D). I will not focus on this plan here as it did not include any consultation process or planning procedure. The alderman of commerce only prepared a policy document together with two private consultancy groups. She did not even involve the regional administration’s utility company Atrium.

The redesignation of the Stock Exchange building (E), At the same time when the urban planning process was starting and the participatory process was being set (May 2014) the most iconic public building on the development perimeter of the pedestrian zone was designated a new function after it had been empty for years. It was to become a beer museum or “Beer Temple”. The reconversion became a topic that would galvanize the *Just and Livable City opposition* (Platform Pentagone) in a later stadium. It was dealt with independently from the participatory process and

for as far as I know without a public consultation proces by the responsible alderman for tourism, Ph. Close.

The public real estate plan (F), the public real estate policy was announced originally by the *Majority coalition* as an actor that would play a role in the development of the pedestrian zone perimeter. Yet they did seemingly nothing. What is important here is that the absence (at least of communication) itself raised questions, doubts and fears even about what would happen with the shopkeepers and tenants of those buildings (who made up a vast proportion of the real estate on the development perimeter and its direct surroundings). I should note that the Majority Coalition's spokesperson did argue (in his interview with me) that such communications went out, yet I couldn't find them in the list of press briefings of the responsible alderman M. Ouriaghli.¹

The parking lot plans (C) did not get far. The proposal of four parking lots in the vicinity of the pedestrian zone was approved by the city council. The book of specifications was drawn up and approved by the city council. It was voted twice as an adaptation had to be made with regards to the 4th parking.² By my knowledge the new specifications didn't move forward to the tender procedure or to the building permit. No consultation or participation process has been organized legally at the moment of writing.

Legally though, the question was raised³ if the parking lots as well as the circulation plan should not have been formally considered a part of the pedestrianization plan. If so, that would have meant that an impact study about the pedestrianization should potentially have included a study on the impact of the complementary circulation plan and underground parking lots. The court did not rule in the end, as the city of Brussels withdrew its urbanism permit before the court could make its ruling.

Procedures A, the Beliris plan and B, the circulation plan are at the heart of this research and they did go through vast procedures. Especially to what regards the Beliris Plan. Therefore I will explain them in detail.

The Beliris dossier (A)

The Beliris dossier for the refurbishment of the Central Boulevards involves three government levels: the local, regional and federal level. The local level is the demanding party. It proposes to the federal minister a project for 'Beliris funding' (in this case: January 2014).

- 1 Furthermore the statements of my interviewee conflicted with the original announcement that the public housing and real estate agency would play an active role in the process, as he argued that in fact there would be no change in the real estate policy, only some façade renewal.
- 2 That now would be built as an extension of an existing parking near the Place de Jeu de Balle at Brigittine.
- 3 By the preliminary report of the auditor of the highest court "le conseil d'état", in a leaked document (June 2016)

This funding is freed up in the form of an 'avenant' that stipulates all the projects that will be funded with Beliris money and they are agreed upon by a special commission of 6 regional and 6 federal ministers (here Avenant 12). In this case, the money was informally agreed upon in January 2014, formally upheld in the federal majority agreement after the May 2014 Federal elections, exceptionally voted in September 2015 (for it to be able to move forward administratively), and finally voted in the avenant of April 2016).

In practice the local government's regional and national party officials seek a political compromise on both the regional and the federal level to get the funding for their project approved.

Consequently the local government starts negotiations with the Beliris administration on modalities with the local government. Such as with regards to timing, complementary regional or local funding, to hold an urbanism competition or not and so forth. This can take up to half a year. (in this case only: January-March 2014). After these negotiations were concluded the mayor held three information meetings to inform the citizens of the plans that he proposed to develop with Beliris. (End of March-April 2014)

Beliris subsequently initiates the procedure to indicate one or more government contractors for the design and implementation of the project, either based on a competition or on previous work done by the contractor. In this case Beliris chose to work with government contractor SUMprojects/Greich as they had worked on the dossier of the Central Boulevards in previous years from 2003 onward. (the collaboration with SUMprojects/Greich was established in May, though informally the government contractor had already started working)

Consequently, the government contractor is asked to draw up a master plan which in turn is presented to the local city council before moving forward. As much preparatory studies with regards to the perimeter had been done already, by the contractor, they delivered a detailed masterplan within the timeframe of three months (May 2014-August 2014).

Then the municipal council has to approve the proposal (which in this case happened in September 2014)

Subsequently the local government decided to organize a consultation process or (as they named it "participation process") to discuss the proposals with the local population and city users. The project manager Beliris did not consider this part of its job. Consequently the local government's alderman for participation wrote out a tender to attract a government contractor that could organize the process. (the tender was won by Artgineering)

The job of Artgineering included organizing a collective start-meeting for about 600 people (end-September 2014), 2 moments where 4 thematic working groups discussed several dimensions of the urbanistic plan on the one hand. And on the other hand these groups discussed the possible social, cultural and economic uses of the newly established public space (October-November 2014). The process included a large scale questionnaire as well that questioned the

users of the Central Boulevards about their concerns and demands for the Central Boulevards. The questionnaire was conducted on the perimeter of the future pedestrian zone itself (October-November 2014).

One Remark: The mobility around the zone (the circulation plan and underground parking lots) and the idea of pedestrianization itself (from Brouckère to Fontainas) were excluded from the debate.

The results from these participatory meetings and questionnaires were reported in an elaborate preliminary report that Artgineering addressed to the local government and to the government contractor responsible for the design of the master plan SUMProjects/Greich. The design office makes a proposal on the basis of that input and in dialogue with the local government mayor or the responsible alderman (in this case mayor Mayeur), his or hers cabinet and administration. The consultation process holds no sway over the planning decisions itself, formally and informally speaking they only hold an advisory function.

The master plan was adapted to include a number of changes (in December 2014) including small enlargements of the perimeter and some changes that fell outside the foreseen Beliris budget: such as extra cyclist infrastructure, kiosks and some small additional elements. A political agreement was reached in which the city of Brussels and the Brussels Capital Region's mobility administration would supplement the Federal budget so that Beliris and SUMprojects/Greich could continue to be the sole responsible for the design and implementation of the project.

The adapted masterplan was voted and approved in the city council (January 2015) and presented in the last general assembly of the 'participation process' (at Ancienne Belgique, 31 January 2015).

Subsequently, SUMprojects/Greich was responsible for drawing up the predesign plan on the basis of the adapted master plan including all technical plans and features. (January-June 2015) The predesign was made public online (End-January to March 2015) and Artgineering was consequently responsible for an information process. The *Majority coalition* called this phase the "second part of the participation process". In this period the predesign plan was made public in 2 different ways. It included 4 information moments on the Anspach Boulevard itself with images and plans in order to meet the future users of the pedestrian zone and explain the changes that were about to come (March-April 2015) and a 'mock up' or simulation that was on show in public space (April-May 2015)

Consequently the urbanism permit had to be requested. This means the local government and Beliris hand in all the required documents,⁴ the predesign and requisite specifications at the Regional administration for urban development. There the administration for building

4 One such requirement is the guarantee of funding, normally inscribed in the Beliris avenant. This was however not voted yet by the regional-federal beliris committee. Indeed the avenant 12 was only approved in June 2016. Exceptionally however, for the dossier to move forward, the committee decided that this particular case could advance without waiting for the final agreement (which is there discretionary competence if they deem it correct).

and urbanism permits handles the demand. They work together with the responsible regional administrations for environment, monuments, mobility and so forth to conclude if the dossier can be moved forward. (July-October 2015) Meanwhile the public has the possibility to send in complaints on the basis of the public showing in April-May. All complaints are subsequently heard and answered in a public hearing as well. This hearing is presided over by the alderman for Urbanism and has all the responsible delegates of the different regional administrations present. If after hearing the complaints the urbanism demand is still considered to be in accordance with regulations, then the permit committee greenlights the dossier for moving forward (October, 2015 in the Casino Viage).

In this phase, before the urbanism permit is delivered, there still exists a possibility of introducing a demand for small changes to the plans without having to go through the whole procedure from the start. It is called Article 191. In this case Beliris introduced a change with regards to the implantation of the trees to conform with firebrigade regulations.(December 2015)

Consequently the urbanism permit is granted (January 2016). Citizens have 30 days to lodge a court appeal (which was done in this case by civil society associations and several business owners)

This allows Beliris to start the necessary antecedent works in preparation of the actual works. By that I mean renewals and improvements with regards to gas, water, internet and communications that needed to be implemented first (by different concession holders).

Meanwhile the Beliris Committee of ministers should have voted the avenant 12 that formalized and confirmed the exceptional decision of September 2015. This avenant is necessary for making the funding available (in June 2016 avenant 12 was approved)

Meanwhile Beliris had decided to “phase” the project in three parts (1, Brouckère; 2, Fontainas; 3, Stock Exchange Square) for which it would write out separate tenders for implementation. The reason therefore is (and was in this case) to avoid financial losses. Indeed, in the case of a negative court ruling with regards to the building permit, Beliris would only lose on the already granted tender of one phase instead.

The highest court, Le Conseil d'état (FR)/Raad Van State (NL) can rule that the urbanism permit is not conform regulation in that case the permit is abolished and a new procedure has to started from the beginning. That decision is based on the elements in the report made by the Court's auditor. (In this case it is that auditor report that was leaked, before the court could make its ruling. Seen the negative view of the auditor, the local government consequently decided to start a new urbanism permit procedure in order to avoid negative headlines).

The Circulation Plan (B)

The mobility plan of the local city government and its alderman for mobility was formally speaking not handled as a plan. In fact, the alderman announced it as a “circulation plan”. And indeed the plan did redraw the current situation completely for car users, public busses, cyclists and pedestrians in the Brussels Pentagon. Yet, legally speaking it was implemented as a long list of separate and temporary ordonnances. As a consequence the alderman was not obliged to follow due procedure for the implementation of a ‘mobility plan’. The alderman explained that a ‘mobility plan’ includes all parts of Brussels-City and not only the Pentagon, hence the reason to denominate it as a “circulation plan”. This meant, amongst other things, that no consultation process or impact study had to be organized legally speaking.⁵

This is how the process architecture looked like:

The first announcement was a press conference with a very basic (even hand drawn map) indicating which streets would become part of the ‘one way-two lane destination loop’ around the pedestrian zone. (January 2014)

She did ordered a mobility impact study from a private contractor (Technum) with whom she worked closely together to define and refine the plans. She ordered flux counts with 2 different private contractors (Flow and AME) at 3 moments: in the October 2014 and May-June/September-October 2015 to base her impact studies upon.

The proposed ‘circulation plan’ was explained in 3 information meetings for the involved neighborhoods. All inhabitants received an invitation letter in the postbus indicating the moment their neighborhood was invited to come and hear the specifics. (March 2014) These moments were not however moments to consult with the population, they were moments to inform and clarify the future changes.

In November 2014 (in the midst of and independently from the pedestrian zone’s ‘participation process’) she announced in a press conference more detailed plans for the different transport modi. From November 2014 onward the alderman brought the different local and regional services together around the table to discuss the details with her administration (fire brigade, public transport company, regional mobility administration,...).

In March 2015 the alderman and Technum were ready with the impact study and they proposed different scenarios. The city council -who had the discretionary competence- had to decide on one of those scenarios and they did. The city council approved the long list of ordonnances (one per street) and the *Majority coalition* announced a “test phase” from June the 29th onwards. 9 months after, the plans would be evaluated and possibly revised with regards to their mobility impact and with a special focus on traffic jams and fluidity.

5 Though this very narrow interpretation of regulations is contested by all opposing discourse coalitions.

Between March and June a private contractor was paid to prepare the signalization for the test phase. The region's administration also prepared new signalization for the ring around the Pentagon (for which they are responsible). The 'circulation plan' was implemented in June 2015.

After a lawsuit of a hotel on the pedestrian zone perimeter (On a place where cars could no longer pass: Hotel Metropole, September 2015) and after further impact assessments with Technum; a few ordonnances were changed (December 2015) and voted again by the city council (in January 2016). The changes would go in effect from March 2016 onward.

In March 2016 they went indeed into effect but only weeks later, under pressure of renewed protests (of shopkeepers at the Rue du Midi and Rue Dansaert) and combined with a weakening political compromise, the mayor and alderman of mobility introduced again a handful of changes which were once more voted by an ordonnance each. And in June 2016 again changes were introduced and voted by the city council under political pressure and protest from shopkeepers.

The process architecture of the Brussels-City development plan "un nouveau Coeur pour Bruxelles", was Fragmented over parallel proceeding processes. In one of them an attempt was made to create a formal combined *arena* at the hand of consultation or 'participation' process. But the very limited mandate had as a consequence that instead of producing support, it galvanized the frustration among hundreds of participants.

A last element to mention finally is that the process architecture was very much defined by the rhythm of the election cycles as well.

The start of the planning process in sociological terms can be brought back to June 2012 when 3000 citizens occupy the Stock Exchange Square and set the political agenda as they did so in the run up to the local elections.

Secondly, the process architecture for creating a well-functioning arena that touches on all issues and manages to build a common vision and support takes time. In this case that time was considered limited by all government and administrative parties. Indeed there was a consensus that the implementation of the urban planning process had to be at least ongoing at the time of the next local elections in 2018 (for the plans to be executed) and preferably finalized before 2018 (if the mayor wants to be reelected). This demanded a speeding up of all administrative steps along the way and it reduced the time for creating a well-functioning arena and construing support considerably. Indeed it produced exactly the opposite: varying from angry but constructive opposition to visceral obstruction amongst civil society platforms and businesses associations.