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# THE TRANSFORMATIVE POTENTIAL OF LAND USE CONFLICTS

UNRAVELLING PROCESSES OF
POLITICISATION AND DEPOLITICISATION

University of Antwerp
Faculty of Design Sciences

**The Transformative Potential of Land use Conflicts**
**Unravelling processes of politicisation and depoliticisation**

Thesis submitted for the degree of doctor in
Urbanism and Spatial Planning
at the University of Antwerp
Antwerp, 2020

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# CONTENTS

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This PhD trajectory has brought some truly inspiring, educational and eye-opening encounters with a variety of people. All in their own way, they contributed to the accomplishment of this thesis, something I am sincerely grateful for.

First of all, I wholeheartedly would like to thank my supervisors, Stijn Oosterlynck and Thomas Vanoutrive, for supporting me throughout this journey, giving me the space to explore my intellectual path independently, while always being there to assist with constructive feedback when needed. It is *the* cliché of PhD acknowledgements, but this doctoral thesis truly wouldn't have been here without your support.

My most genuine appreciation goes to the members of my committee and jury. To Lara Schrijver, for being the first (and still most important) role model I could look up to in our faculty. To Crystal Legacy, Enrico Gualini and Filip De Rynck, for inspiring me with their work. Crystal and Enrico I would like to thank in particular for allowing me to strengthen my findings during the conference tracks and seminars they organised on the topic. I thank Tom Coppens for stimulating me to start a PhD and guiding me throughout my first years.

I am extremely grateful to my colleagues and ex-colleagues at the Faculty of Design Sciences and the CRESC research group of the University of Antwerp, for creating such an inspiring working environment. Thanks go especially to Kato Allaert, Jasmien De Smet, Selin Geerinckx, Nina De Jonghe, Stijn Rybels, Michelle Bylemans, Kaat Verdickt, Nina Serulus, Glenn Lyppens, Sigrid Heirman, Johan De Walsche, Paul Van Beek, Marjan Michels, Eva Storgaard, Inge Somers and Hendrik Van Geel.

Two colleagues deserve a special mention. Menna Agha and Tine Poot have not only been the most supportive colleagues, both inspire and amaze me on a daily basis by being the strong, independent, intelligent and resilient women they are.

I express my deepest gratitude towards all residents of Clairwood and Brugse Poort who were so kind as to share their experiences with me, and to all municipal employees and activists in Ghent, Antwerp and eThekwini who took the time to answer my questions. Tom Brouckaert, Sally Degraeve, Ruben De Buck and Johannes Degraeve I would like to thank for sharing insights on the Landhuis case with me. The same goes for Cedric Goossens who was so kind as to teach me about proper interviewing procedures and share his ideas on the Living Streets experiment in Brugse Poort. I am extremely grateful to Marthe Janssens, not only because she is the best friend one can wish for, but also for transcribing all interviews for my chapter on the Living Streets. Faith KaManzi I would like to thank for being a great companion and translator, standing me by when interviewing some residents of Clairwood.

A special thanks goes to Patrick Bond for his hospitality in Durban, to Shauna Mottiar for accepting me as a visiting scholar at the Centre for Civil Society at the University of Kwazulu Natal, and to Desmond D'Sa, Joanna & Geraldine Groom and Shannon Leigh Landers for teaching me about South Durban activism. The research visit to South Africa was financed by EUROSA, and I thank them for their support.

I have been blessed with a warm and loving family whose uplifting wit, exceptional ability to put things into perspective, incredible hospitality and resilience make me extremely grateful and proud to be part of this household. To my grandmother, my parents, Katrien, Sebastiaan, Anneleen, Grietkin and Jan-Frederik, thank you for all the love you give. Paul Van Wijmeersch I would like to thank to be my tower of strength every time I need someone to proofread texts.

Many friends and relatives have made this journey more pleasant. The last years I have neglected some of you more than intended. I would like to mention in particular Marthe, Detlef, Lenie and Koen C. for being such kind-hearted, empathic and genuine companion.

I am pretty sure this dissertation would never have been finished (or could have been finished earlier, who will tell) without the uplifting and stimulating distraction I found in Plan A and Elcker-Ik. I would like to thank Steven, Sarah, Ciska, Wouter, Wietse, Karolien, Dré, Stefaan, Yael, Jan and Koen W. for keeping me inspired throughout these last doctoral years. I learned a great deal from you when it comes to political engagement and activism, and I am eager to learn a great deal more in the future.

Last but not least. Elias.

There are many things which I am grateful for: your wit, your peacefulness, your eagerness to learn and share this with others. The essence, however, is this:

Thank you for making 'being happy' such an easy thing to do.

# SUMMARY | ENGLISH

This dissertation makes a critical inquiry into how land use conflicts contribute to social transformation and the relevance of these processes to urban and spatial planning theory.

Arguing that often traditional planning theories neglect the role of conflict as a transformative force with an impact beyond the planning profession, the study examines the ways activists and non-professional planners challenge and change how we think about planning and the way land is or should be used, and as such contribute to social transformation.

Drawing on post-foundational political thinkers such as Jacques Rancière and Chantal Mouffe, and engaging with contemporary transformative planning approaches such as collaborative planning and insurgent planning, this dissertation observes that different planning approaches apply multiple interpretations of social transformation, hence identifying other processes in land use conflicts to have politicising and depoliticising effects. The thesis describes three perspectives on social transformation.

A first conceptualisation sees transformation as including multiple interests in the decision-making process (i.e., *inclusion-oriented*). A second interpretation understands transformation as changes in power relations through the struggle of counter-hegemonic movements (i.e., *power-oriented*), and the third interpretation links social transformation to the emergence of new political subjects that change the symbolic order of society (i.e., *subjectification-oriented*).

By mobilising four cases –three in Belgium and a fourth in South Africa– and by unravelling the political dynamics that make social transformation possible or prevent it in these empirical cases, this research finds that working with all three interpretations of social transformation often offers the best understanding of the transformative processes at work in complex land use conflicts. Additionally, the dissertation argues that the transformative planning field benefits from exploring the diversity in both politicising and depoliticising processes in land use conflicts. This can be done by diversifying the contexts in which land use conflicts are studied.

# SUMMARY | NEDERLANDS

## Planningsconflicten en sociale transformatie:

*Een kritisch onderzoek naar de politiserende en depolitiserende processen in conflicten rond landgebruik en hun impact op maatschappelijke verandering*

In dit proefschrift bekijk ik hoe conflicten rond landgebruik kunnen bijdragen aan maatschappelijke verandering en onderzoek ik de relevantie van deze conflicten voor planningstheorie.

De verhandeling start vanuit twee kritieken op traditionele planningstheorieën. Enerzijds stelt het dat de rol van conflict als transformerende kracht met een impact buiten het planningsberoep te vaak wordt genegeerd. Anderzijds, beweert het dat er binnen traditionele planningstheorieën te weinig aandacht is voor de manieren waarop activisten en niet-professionele planners onze manier van denken over planning uitdagen en veranderen.

Het theoretisch perspectief van dit proefschrift steunt op het werk van post-fundamentele politieke denkers zoals Jacques Rancière en Chantal Mouffe en wordt verder aangevuld met hedendaagse, op transformatie gerichte, planningsbenaderingen zoals collaboratieve planning en 'insurgent planning'. Deze planningsbenaderingen werken met verschillende definities van sociale transformatie en identificeren zodoende andere processen als zijnde politiserend en depolitiserend. In het proefschrift beschrijf ik drie verschillende perspectieven op sociale transformatie die ik terugvond in hedendaagse planningsbenaderingen.

Een eerste interpretatie van sociale transformatie is er op gericht om zoveel mogelijk stakeholders en belangen te representeren aan de onderhandelingstafel (i.e. op *inclusie gerichte transformatie*). Een tweede interpretatie koppelt sociale

transformatie aan veranderingen in de machtsverhoudingen (i.e. op *macht gerichte transformatie*). Tenslotte linkt een derde interpretatie sociale transformatie aan het opstaan van nieuwe politieke subjecten die de bestaande symbolische orde in vraag stellen (i.e. op *subjectivering gerichte transformatie*).

Door in vier casussen – drie in België en een vierde in Zuid-Afrika – de politieke dynamieken te analyseren die sociale transformatie stimuleren of net onmogelijk maken, concludeert dit proefschrift dat de transformerende dynamieken in conflicten vaak het beste kunnen begrepen worden wanneer alle drie de interpretaties van sociale transformatie gebruikt worden.

Tenslotte stelt het proefschrift dat het op transformatie gerichte planningsveld verrijkt wordt door het verkennen van de diversiteit in politiserende en depolitiserende processen die aanwezig zijn in planningsconflicten. Dit kan onder meer door te diversifiëren in de contexten waarin landconflicten worden bestudeerd.

# FIGURES AND TABLES

## Tables



## Figures

# PART ONE

Setting the scene

# CHAPTER 1

## Introducing conflict's transformative potential in planning theory

### 1.1 Introduction

Hiding among the greenery, a lone villa overlooks the river Scheldt. An image of a black lightning bolt on its facade indicates that members of the squatters' movement have settled here. On its right side, the manor enjoys the shadow of tall trees; on its left, residents can look upon a small hectare of vegetable gardens.

In 2011, this idyllic piece of land at the outskirts of Ghent, Belgium, stood on the verge of being demolished. The land's owner, the City of Ghent, planned to erect new training fields for the city's first division youth soccer team and had started a juridical eviction procedure against its current inhabitants. These inhabitants resisted and remained, arguing that the land was far more valuable for society when used as vegetable gardens and to alleviate the city's current shortage of affordable housing. Both the then-alderman responsible and the occupants were fully aware that, according to existing property and spatial planning legislation, the residents were in no position to make claims regarding the land's future use. The alderman saw the existing legislation as a justification to ignore the residents, arguing that he does not negotiate with people who illegally live in property owned by the city. For the residents, however, their resistance was about more than just a choice between a training complex and allotments. They were challenging some of the fundamental premises of the decision to evict the residents, as one occupier noted:

> The city of Ghent does a lot. They really do, and we know and respect that. But this is also political. It is about: 'What is permissible? What can we accept? What still fits within the neoliberal discourse?' In fact, you still cannot touch the foundations of ownership. […] Property law is actually a very old system that we should be able to reform. […] There must be other ways possible. (resp. 2.02, 08 04 2015)[1]

As a reader, you may or may not agree with the man's opinion. You might share the alderman's outlook that land ownership is the best foundation to decide who can and who cannot determine how land is used. Nevertheless, with his remark, the man reveals that society, both from a social and spatial point of view, could have equally been organised differently.

While you may feel that private land ownership is a logical foundation to decide on whose opinion counts and whose do not,[2] ownership is certainly not the only possible foundation. Land could be commonly owned and managed, or private property owners could lose their right to decide on the land's use if they neglect their property. In other words, the occupier indicated with his comment that, like any other societal foundation, the way we think about property entitlement is contingent. It is challengeable and transformable. His comment equally demonstrates that, like any other societal foundation, private land ownership relations both include and exclude people: A society built on ownership relations gives some people more power than others and excludes people from society based on their ability to buy land. As such, by challenging private land ownership as a societal foundation, the occupier also challenges its exclusionary effects.

With his disagreement on what should happen with this piece of land and who should be able to decide, the young man touches quite closely upon the topic of this PhD. This dissertation makes a critical inquiry[3] into how land use conflicts can contribute to social transformation. As elaborated on in section 1.2, I link

social transformation to reordering the social order by undoing certain forms of exclusion, injustice or domination. Analysing four land use conflicts, I aim to unravel the dynamics that make this transformation possible or prevent it from happening in different contexts.

Why would a spatial planning scholar focus on conflicts and the actors that start these conflicts by challenging the rules and conventions of spatial planning, you might wonder. Surely it must be to better control these actors in the future and manage the conflicts they cause?

While there is no doubt that conflict management is an essential part of planning theory, it would be a mistake to reduce theorising on planning conflicts to their management. Land use conflicts, defined here as conflicts concerning the organisation and use of land, are the privileged site for *analysing* and *understanding* the dynamics that make social transformation possible. Through conflict, planning processes that are exclusionary in their procedures or in their outcome can be altered for the better. Especially for planners who are engaged with contributing to social transformation, *understanding* the dynamics in land use conflicts that stimulate or prevent transformation from happening is a first crucial step in actually contributing to social change. When planning theory is too focused on *prescribing* how to manage land use conflicts, it runs the risk of overlooking the beneficial changes contentious dynamics can actually bring about in the dominant ways we think about spaces and their users. As such, this dissertation does not intend to present professional planning practitioners with a list of tips to eliminate or prevent conflict from happening. Rather, it aims to strengthen a growing tradition in planning literature that values conflict as a productive force for social transformation (see section 1.3).

Additionally, while I do not deny that it is important for planning theory to focus on the acts of 'the professional planner' and to set out procedures for planners to follow, this dissertation sees those actors that challenge dominant rules and conventions of spatial planning - the political radicals - as equally important in the discipline of planning. If we reduce the subject of planning theory to the profession, then only those who qualify as 'professionals' are seen as relevant historical agents in the organisation of space (Sandercock, 1998a, p. 7). Following Leonie Sandercock, among others, I maintain that for planning theory:

> [s]tories of resistance to planning by the state […] are as important a part of the historical narrative as are the more familiar stories of master plans and master planners, of planning legislation and state planning agencies. (Sandercock, 1998a, p. 28)

By challenging the existing boundaries of what we define as planning, political radicals co-determine (the procedures for) the type of land use that will be established. As such, and in line with radical planning thinking, it is necessary to expand the realm of inquiry beyond the work of the professional planning practitioner and include 'community organizers, activists, and everyday citizens as "planners" working either in collaboration with, opposition to, or completely beyond the purview of the state-sanctioned, formal planning process' (Beard, 2003, p. 15). If planning scholars only tell the story of the professional planner and exclude or erase the story of community organisers, activists and citizens, they implicitly sustain the status quo, reaffirming the existing power dynamics (Sandercock, 1998a).

In the remainder of this introductory chapter, I first elaborate on how social transformation is conceived in this dissertation and explain why the political dimension of planning is crucial when aiming for social transformation (1.2). Secondly, I present the existing transformative theorising in planning, discuss why

social transformation is an important goal for transformative planners and elaborate on planning scholars' recent turn toward post-foundational political thought (1.3). Thirdly, I reveal the main and corollary research questions of this dissertation (1.4.), and I elaborate on the methodology applied (1.5). Finally, I provide an introduction to the remaining chapters (1.6).

## 1.2
## Social transformation and the political side of planning

Spatial and urban planning is always about transformation. It is about converting the current ordering of a built environment into a desired new kind of ordering. It is about re-imagining and restructuring a city, urban region or wider territory and adjusting the way its land is used. Libby Porter (2011) rightly argues that when things stay the same after the planning intervention, then planning has failed.

Transformation, however, can take many forms.[4] Transformative processes can alter society for the better or the worse. For example, when dedicated spatial planners and politicians drew and implemented sophisticated racial zoning maps during the South African apartheid era (see Chapter 5), they drastically transformed the built environment. The implementation of these zoning maps 'physicalised' widely embedded racist beliefs, resulting in a socio-spatial order in which even more power was distributed to a white elite and in which other populations were oppressed. While it could be reasonably argued that this process is transformative, most people today would not categorise the transformation to be for the better.

As such, in this dissertation, I opt to focus on the form of transformation as identified by the critical planning tradition. This field of planning primarily involves uncovering societal forms of domination (in urban and spatial planning practices) and transforming the related power relations that produce inequality (Bond, 2011).

From this perspective, social transformation in the South African spatial planning context would refer to challenging and undoing racial segregationist laws; for example, it would mean that skin colour could no longer be used to legitimise hierarchical differences when deciding how land is organised and used. From a critical point of view, in other words, social transformation occurs when people challenge existing power relationships or alter the way we look at space and the right to decide how a space should be used in name of equality. By perceiving social transformation in this manner, I narrow down the transformative processes that are considered in this dissertation. The rise of alt-right politics, for example, is a transformative process I do not consider in this dissertation, as it tends to produce extra inequality, to exclude more people from society instead of less.

Perceiving social transformation as an alteration in the way we look at space and the right to decide how a space should be used also highlights the political dimension of spatial and urban development. While some aspects of the implementation process – such as the required slope of a bridge to be constructed – may be technical and 'non-political', the act of deciding how space should be distributed and organised, the way in which a plan is formulated and implemented, the people involved in formulating and implementing this plan, and the role a spatial planner is assigned in society… are pre-eminently political decisions (Fainstein & Fainstein, 1971, p. 341; Friedmann, 2005 [1987]). When using the most common definition of 'politics', a decision is political when it deals with organising our society and the fundamental disagreements concerning how we want to and can organise this society. As a political act, planning policy creates divisions between people who can co-decide and people who cannot, between people who can occupy certain places and people who cannot.

## 1.3
## A theoretical encounter with transformative planning literature

My engagement with social transformation and its connection to spatial development as a political planning scholar is not unique in the discipline of spatial planning.

Particularly since the mid-1960s – when mass struggles placed pressure on institutionalised racial discrimination in the United States, when French students challenged the moralistic institutions of society, and when women were fighting for equal rights across 'the West' - an increasing number of academics started to realise the societal relevance of moments in which the dominant socio-spatial order is questioned,[5] as well as the importance of grasping the processes that initially caused these contestations. This realisation dawned not only on scholars in social movement studies and social geography but also on certain scholars in spatial planning.

Planning scholars and practitioners became more reflective about their own position in power structures, wondering how they and their field sustained oppressive power regimes, as well as how they could change this situation. Since then, transformative planning scholars have sought methods in related disciplines to utilise planning practices as ancillary to broader social change.

#### *Transformative planning approaches*

Over a period of about sixty years, several planning approaches have been created to stimulate social transformation. Ranging from advocacy (Davidoff, 1965) to transactive (Friedmann, 1987) to radical (Grabow & Heskin, 1973) to collaborative (Healey, 2003) to agonistic pluralistic (Mouat, Legacy, & March, 2013) to insurgent planning theory (Miraftab, 2009), these approaches all originated from an urge to democratise planning or to undo perceived forms of oppression and social injustice through planning practices (see Chapter 3). All are

part of the critical planning tradition, each trying to make sense of the world and its systems of domination and oppression, and each searching for alternatives to bring about a more just, democratic, and egalitarian society (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000, p. 285).

Since the rise of these critical planning studies, however, fierce discussions have emerged among followers of different transformative planning traditions. Opponents of collaborative planning, for example, accuse collaborative planners of consorting with the dominant neoliberal system (Purcell, 2009, p. 141), while collaborative planning scholars reproach their opponents as making a cottage industry out of criticising their approach and creating a brouhaha in an unnecessary turf war over whose views are correct (Innes & Booher, 2013).

These tensions can partially be explained by the fact that each of the transformative planning traditions works with its own assumptions of what social transformation entails (Faludi, 1973 as cited in Yiftachel, 1989), often without making these assumptions explicit (see also Chapter 3, section 3.1). Consequently, a lack of precision exists in terms of how we recognise social transformation empirically and how to achieve transformation. An important ***first theoretical contribution*** to the transformative planning literature could be to make more explicit the differences in what social transformation entails according to different planning approaches, as well as to examine whether and how this polysemic understanding of the notion of 'social transformation' could help gain a deeper and more nuanced analysis of the transformative dynamics at work in actually existing land use conflicts. This contribution is in line with Enrico Gualini's argument that connecting different approaches concerning 'the role of conflict as a potential resource for political emancipation and democratic transformation' provides 'much scope for exchange and mutual focus on understanding processes of formation and potentials for social and political transformation of insurgent

practices of contestation in urban development and planning' (Gualini, 2015, pp. 3-4).

The substantive focus on social transformation can also be seen as a reaction to the often procedural-oriented approaches in planning theory. Theories of planning are commonly normative, prescribing measures and processes that must be undertaken to reach the most desirable planning outcome. Following Robert A. Beauregard (2005), I agree that:

> [p]lanning theory has always been less about what planners do than about how they should do it. As a normative project, it elevates exhortation over explanation. […] And, although substantive critiques of planning practice are also prevalent, they are almost always a prelude to proposals for more desirable planning processes, institutional structures, or democratic practices. (Beauregard, 2005, p. 203)

By returning to a study of the actual dynamics at work in planning conflicts and relating them to the different ways that one could look at social transformation, without feeling the need to focus on how professional planners *ought* to act, I believe that planning scholars, practitioners and non-professonial planners alike can gain a better understanding of the processes that make social transformation possible.

#### *Introducing post-foundational political thought into planning theory*

In recent years, transformative planning scholars have increasingly turned to post-foundational political thought (Marchart, 2007) to reveal how a variety of depoliticising processes safeguard the status quo in spatial governance, as well as to highlight the contentious forces that challenge and transform these governance systems (Bond, Diprose, & McGregor, 2015; Gualini, 2015; Iveson, 2014; Legacy,

2016a; McClymont, 2011; Metzger, Allmendinger, & Oosterlynck, 2015; Mouat et al., 2013; Uitermark & Nicholls, 2013). From a post-foundational perspective, social transformation occurs through the interaction between what post-foundational thinkers define as the sphere of 'politics' and of 'the political'.[6]

*Politics*, in this context, refers to the generally stable societal foundations on which any society must be built. Think, for example, of the role that religion can play in ordering society, or of economic models such as capitalism. These foundations prescribe how people living in this society ought to act in certain situations, how to make sense of what happens around them, and what to perceive as just and unjust, acceptable and unacceptable, legitimate and illegitimate. By defining 'who is at his place and who is not, what can be done in a place and what cannot' (Rancière, 2007b, p. 561), these societal foundations create clarity and stability.

Although not always defined as such, planning largely deals with this dimension of *political difference* (i.e. the distinction between 'politics' and 'the political'). Following, for example, Jean Hillier's (2010, p. 3) definition of spatial planning as 'processes used by agencies (in both public and private sectors) in deliberate attempts to influence the spatial distributions of humans and non-humans and of various land use activities', the managerial character of the bulk of planning theory becomes evident. In its practices, planning creates control and order in territorial spaces (Gualini, 2015, p. 82). '[It] enables city making by imposing limits on what is to be done, who should be included, what proper roles should be played, and who needs to be excluded' (Nicholls & Uitermark, 2017, p. 513). Planning practices, in other words, are generally part of 'politics' - that is, create socio-spatial order.

To indicate that no created societal foundations can be final, post-foundational thinkers distinguish 'politics' from *the political* (i.e., the dimension of the political difference that always escapes the efforts of social domestication) (Marchart,

2007). By highlighting this political dimension, post-foundational thought exposes the inevitable injustices that are created by any societal foundation and it demonstrates that any societal order will always include some and exclude or wrongly represent others. As such, any established order can be disrupted by those who are unaccounted for (Rancière, 2007b).

Applying this distinction between 'politics' and 'the political' to analyse the contentious dynamics in the case[7] of 't Landhuis, one could argue that the individuals living in 't Landhuis manor felt wrongly represented by a socio-spatial order that only marginally includes those who do not have the financial means to buy property (i.e., politics). By occupying 't Landhuis and demanding a voice in the decision-making process, these occupants challenged a fundamental foundation of our society (i.e., the political): that is, the foundation of 'property-holding democracy'. Interestingly, the emergence of property-holding democracy itself has been a result of political contestation. Throughout the Middle Ages, societies across Western Europe were based on the foundation that people are natural subjects of the monarch creating a socio-spatial order in which regular citizens could not make claims to property (i.e., politics). In the 17th century, however, the growing merchant class sought safety and security for their individual rights and newly gained wealth, challenging this foundation (i.e., the political). John Locke, for example, developed his liberal theory of limited government, in which he argued that all men have certain equal rights, such as the right to life, liberty, and property; he consequently provided a theory securing the individual rights and property of the growing merchant class of that period, laying the foundation for a new grounding for society based on liberal principles (i.e., politics) (e.g. Chambers, 2013).

In the planning literature, post-foundational political planners demand more attention for the political dimension. While the focus on systems installed to manage and control spatial development is an essential part of planning theory,

this focus falls short when trying to understand actually existing spatial developments that can be neither predicted nor managed. Particularly if one is interested in social transformation, more attention is needed on activities and processes that expose and challenge patterns of exclusion stemming from existing management and control attempts in the socio-spatial order, as it is those political actions that may shift the boundaries of what is possible in a dominant system (Rancière, 2014 [2009], p. 187).

An analysis on the purely or genuinely political (Van Puymbroek & Oosterlynck, 2014), however, would be of limited use. The dimension of 'the political' is never autonomous; it always exists in relation to 'politics', and is always a response to a wrong created through 'politics'. Similarly, when people challenge the existing socio-spatial order (i.e., the political), they will almost always encounter a response by depoliticising forces that aim to reinforce or defend the existing order. As such, the transformative potential of actually existing (land use) conflicts is always a result of the complex interaction between 'politics' and 'the political'.

In the empirical application of post-foundational political thinking, however, a significant lack of theoretical elaboration exists on the mediation between the dualistic poles of 'politics' and 'the political' (see Gualini 2015, p. 15). As such, alongside a better understanding of social transformation, further exploration into the interconnectedness of 'politics' and 'the political' can be seen as an interesting ***second theoretical contribution*** to the transformative planning literature. In this dissertation, I do so by focusing on the politicising and depoliticising forces that determine land use conflicts. Depoliticising processes, on the one hand, are those processes through which the existing order is maintained and defended; this type of process neutralises and pre-empts all challenges to the social order, thus suppressing democratic politics; politicising processes, on the other hand, challenge the contingent symbolic ground upon which the socio-spatial order is

built, foregrounding democratic politics. Politicising processes are essential to transforming the existing order.

Relatedly, previous critiques laid against scholars addressing *political difference* argue that the different depoliticising tactics through which the existing order is maintained and defended are underemphasised (Van Puymbroek & Oosterlynck, 2014), and that the variety of processes by which moments of the political either transform the existing order or are folded back into it (Brown, 2015, p. 25) are ignored. As a ***third theoretical contribution*** to the transformative planning literature, an exploration of this diversity in the forms of both politicising and depoliticising processes could be useful to understand the complexity of the transformative dynamics at work in land use conflicts.

## 1.4
## Research aim and question

Considering the above-mentioned challenges and theoretical gaps, this study seeks to make visible the different transformative dynamics at work in land use conflicts and understand the interplay of various forms of politicisation and depoliticisation.

On a theoretical level, this research is motivated by a desire to bring together different transformative planning approaches and enrich the field of critical planning by exploring the ways in which post-foundational political thought can contribute to existing transformative planning approaches.

The main research question guiding this investigation is formulated as:

**Which processes of politicisation and depoliticisation shape land use conflicts and how and to what extent do they transform the socio-spatial order?**

This question can be divided in three corollary questions, with the first sub-question addressing the processes of politicisation and depoliticisation that shape land use conflict, the second focusing on the extent to which these processes transform the socio-spatial order, and the third looking at the ways these processes have transformed the socio-spatial order (see Table 1.1).

| |
|---|
| ▪ Which processes of politicisation and depoliticisation shape land use conflicts? |
| ▪ To what extent do these processes of politicisation and depoliticisation transform the socio-spatial order? |
| ▪ How do these processes of politicisation and depoliticisation transform the socio-spatial order? |

**Table 1.1** Corollary questions

Several concepts in these questions require further elaboration, the first being my understanding of *politicisation* and *depoliticisation*. Combining post-foundational political insights and relating them to the fields of spatial planning and development, I consider 'politicising processes' to be those processes that challenge the current socio-spatial organisation of society and 'depoliticising processes' to be those processes through which the existing order is maintained and defended.

The term *land use conflict* refers to a conflict between individuals or groups that are concerned with the organisation and use of a specific piece of land or area.

The term *socio-spatial order* refers to a set of implicit and explicit rules on how spaces ought to be ordered and by and for which social actors. These rules affect both the spatial and the social organisation of a society, and they create a certain stability and order in life. A dominant socio-spatial order is maintained not only by urban planning laws and land use protocols but also by more implicit assumptions concerning the question 'Who is qualified to say what a particular place is and what is done in it?' (Rancière, 2003). It defines how we commonly think about (who can decide) how to use space. Being aware that a socio-spatial order is a complex and heterogeneous entity, and that this definition remains broad and rather vague, I focus in this research on small fragments of the relevant

socio-spatial order and explore which aspects of this never fully graspable concept are challenged and possibly altered throughout the land use conflicts.

The definition of *transformation of the socio-spatial order* is also intentionally kept quite general, as several aspects of this order could be challenged and altered: Transformation of the socio-spatial order could refer to a fundamental change in the (type of) actors with the right to participate in the decision-making process or to a fundamental change in the decision-making process itself. Equally, transformation of the socio-spatial order could refer to a change in the topics or issues we commonly accept as being relevant and open for discussion when organising the socio-spatial order. In general, transformation happens when certain rules or assumptions that lay the foundation of a certain socio-spatial order are challenged as being unjust or oppressive, and altered.

| | **Definition** |
|---|---|
| Social transformation | a reordering of the social order by undoing certain forms of injustice or domination |
| Socio-spatial order | a set of implicit and explicit rules clarifying 'Who is qualified to say what a particular place is and what is done in it?' |
| Land use conflict | a conflict concerning the organisation and use of land |
| Politicisation | a process that challenges the current socio-spatial organisation of society. |
| Depoliticisation | a process through which the existing order is maintained and defended. |

**Table 1.2** Conceptual framework

## 1.5 Methodology

When examining land use conflicts and attempting to make sense of what is happening, it is important to keep in mind that one's understanding of the events occurring during these conflicts is only one interpretation of the situation, limited by certain boundaries and 'blind spots'. My decision to start with a critical approach, for example, defines what I will indicate is relevant, and not relevant, to the analysis. Within these limitations, however, the interpretation emerging from this hermeneutic process can elevate us to new levels of understanding (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000).

I use a *collective case study*, in which the selected cases are not chosen to be compared with one another but to jointly create a better insight in the phenomenon in which I am interested: the interplay between political processes apparent in land use conflicts. The cases, in other words, are used as a heuristic device to develop a fuller and more coherent understanding of how land use conflicts can become socially transformative by examining this phenomenon in different contexts (Stake, 2000).

#### *Case selection*

The examined land use conflicts were selected on theoretical grounds, in a manner that would enable me to further refine the theory on the transformative potential of land use contestation and also to better understand and explain this social phenomenon (Billiet, 2006, pp. 20-21).

Four cases were selected, each with a unique context that moves us forward on different paths of theory-building. In the selection procedure, three general requirements were set out as preconditions for all selected cases.

The first requirement deals with the content of the conflict. As planning conflicts could refer to a wide variety of contentious encounters during planning practices, I decided to narrow the focus of this dissertation to land use conflicts.

1. *The contestation has to deal with the organisation and use of land.*

   In all selected cases, a conflict has to occur in which (i) a person or group challenges the way a piece or area of land is currently used or organised, or in which (ii) a person or group challenges the way a dominant group aims to use or organise a specific piece or area of land.

To further narrow down the research scope, the second and third requirements focus on the critical planning and post-foundational interpretation of social

transformation. Both are, in other words, theory-driven. They are based on the work of political theorist Jacques Rancière that deals with the political difference.

2. *The conflict transcends particular interests, referring also to more universal claims that are applicable to not only that specific place.*

   The claims of this person or group should go further than an argument for 'no development in his, her, or their backyard'. The demands should be motivated by more than particular and competing interests. The claims made in this conflict should reflect dissatisfaction with more universal forces concerning how society should be organised.

   While the contestation can be organised around an emblematic quilting point (such as threatened garden allotments, a planned megaproject endangering the air quality in a city, a participatory planning initiative trying to ban cars from the street, or a port expansion plan jeopardising the existence of a community), the involved actors should also universalise their claims to embrace a desire for a full-fledged transformation of the political structuring of life (Wilson & Swyngedouw, 2014, p. 3).

3. *The contestation has to deal with an equal right to determine the future of a place.*

   This precondition is a clear normative choice, linked with the earlier remark that the existing socio-spatial order can be challenged and altered for both the better and the worse. Social transformation could also result in the oppression of some populations that were previously not oppressed. Being situated in the field of critical planning studies, each of the selected cases presents a conflict in which transformation is pursued that undoes certain forms of injustice or domination. More specifically, in each of the selected cases, (a) contestant(s) make(s) a claim of equality, demanding an equal right to determine how a certain piece of land or

area is used or organised. This precondition is based on the work of political theorist Jacques Rancière, who argued that political subjectification can only occur through the claim of equality.

Keeping in mind these preconditions, four cases were selected based on their accessibility and their anticipated added value for theory-building. All of these cases offer learning ground to reflect on practices that produce or prevent social transformation, as well as on theoretical planning currents in academia.

The case selection and methodological approach in each of the cases are determined in a cumulative way: things that were missing in the analysis of a previous case, were food for thought in the next. In this context, it is important to know that in the earliest phase of my doctoral research, my theoretical frame of reference was primarily inspired by the work of post-foundational political thinker Jacques Rancière. As I gradually noticed that not all transformative dynamics at work in complex land use conflicts can be grasped adequately when working solely with a Rancièrean approach to politics, I started to broaden my theoretical frame of reference.

*Case 1. The interplay between politicising and depoliticising processes apparent in the land use conflict concerning 't Landhuis (Ghent, Belgium)*

The first case study, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, deals with 't Landhuis in Ghent, Belgium, a piece of land owned by the City of Ghent but squatted on by people who cultivate vegetables on the grounds and try to govern it as an ecological commons. While the city aimed to replace the allotments and residential building on this ground with training fields for the city's main soccer team, the occupants challenged this decision and questioned the idea of a 'property-holding democracy' as the dominant foundation to make this decision.

Given the issue under challenge - that is property rights - the political character of this struggle is evident, making an ideal first case. As part of this endeavour to examine how the fields of 'politics' and 'the political' are interconnected in actually existing land use conflicts, I focus in this case study on the frames that are used by the involved key actors to substantiate their demands and examine whether and why some frames are easier to incorporate into the existing socio-spatial order than others. The theoretical approach in this chapter is primarily fixed on the work of Jacques Rancière. I examined in particular how is notion of particularisation works in a depoliticising way, while his notion of universalisation has a politicising effect.

*Case 2. The interplay between politicising and depoliticising processes apparent in the land use conflict concerning the Oosterweel link road (Antwerp, Belgium)*

The second selected case study deals with one of Belgium's most notorious planning conflicts in recent decades, the conflict concerning the development of the Oosterweel link road in Antwerp.

The theoretical approach in this study should be understood as a reaction to the previous case study. Throughout the analysis of the first case, it became clear that not all transformative dynamics at work in land use conflicts can be grasped adequately when working solely with a Rancièrean approach to politics.

Unlike the Landhuis case, the conflict concerning the Oosterweel link road is well-documented and has been analysed thoroughly in articles and opinion pieces in popular newspapers, in academic studies, and in more popular reflections of involved activists and interested followers. Through preliminary research of these written analyses, I made the assumption that to explain the transformative dynamics at work in the Oosterweel link road case, a firmer dialogue with existing transformative planning approaches was necessary. Each of these approaches uses its own definition of transformation.

Additionally, many perceive the Oosterweel link road conflict to be a paradigmatic case of a new type of politics in the Flanders. Evaluating whether this is so contributes to this theoretical endeavour, to examine the variation in political processes and transformative dynamics at work in land use conflicts.

*Case 3. The interplay between politicising and depoliticising processes apparent in the land use conflict in the Living Streets experiment in Brugse Poort (Ghent, Belgium)*

As in the first case, the third case study is situated in Ghent, and it addresses the contentious dynamics that arose when a participatory non-profit lab teamed up with some residents in 2016 to redesign their neighbourhood into a car-free area for two months.

This case was selected with the specific aim of examining the impact of the involved actor's meaning-making practices on the conflict's transformative potential. While in the second case, I examined how the variation in the meaning of social transformation among planning approaches can help to grasp the transformative effects in actually existing land use conflicts, in this case, I studied whether this is also the case for the multiple meanings of social transformation given by the actors involved in the conflict. In other words, in this case study I aimed to examine whether -apart from the theorists in planning literature- actors in the conflicts as well can have different perspectives on what the main problem is in the contemporary planning process and how to make these processes more democratic.

Preliminary research clearly indicated that different parties gave different meanings to the notion of democratic politics. Thus, it was presupposed that this case could help in the endeavour to bring different transformative planning approaches closer together by focusing on the actor's sense-making processes.

*Case 4. The interplay between politicising and depoliticising processes apparent in the land use conflict over the port expansion in Clairwood (eThekwini Municipality, South Africa)*

The final case study is concerned with the political and contentious dynamics that arose when the Durban City Council and later the eThekwini Municipality attempted to rezone its suburb Clairwood (South Africa).

This case is an outlier compared to the other cases that are based in Belgium. It was selected to enrich the post-foundational political (planning) literature, as I observed that in this scholarly field, surprisingly little work has been conducted to relate post-foundational thinking to the oppressive dynamics of race relations. Especially in settler-colonial and post-colonial contexts - where alleged racial inequalities have long legitimised a symbolic order in which skin colour determines individual's spatial, economic, and societal position but 'race' is equally used to challenge and disrupt this symbolic order - race- and ethnicity-based framing has a profound impact on the socio-spatial configuration of cities.

Keeping in mind that the cases are selected on theoretical grounds, this case study seeks to fill a gap in post-foundational inspired planning literature by reflecting on the link between racial capitalism and urban development and by focussing on the empirical reality in 'the Global South'. Doing so, I aimed to contribute to the third of the theoretical endeavours, providing examples on the diversity of ways that both politicising and depoliticising processes play out in actually existing land use conflicts.[8]

#### *Data collection and processing*

Depending on the specific aim of the case study and the data available, I relied on some techniques more than others when retrieving the necessary data. Each of the following chapters contains a full elaboration on data retrieval and processing for the respective case study described in the chapter.

In general, however, all empirical cases involved a mixed-methods approach that relied on (i) a literature review, (ii) semi-structured in-depth interviews, and (iii) observations.

During the *literature review,* newspaper articles, policy documents, reports of meetings between key-actors, memoranda, and social media posts were collected and used to gain initial insights into the case, create a timeline of the most important events during the land use conflict, and - where possible - explore the narratives used by the different actors involved in the conflict. For the Belgian cases, the electronic database GoPress Academic was used to retrieve the relevant newspaper and magazine articles. For the South African case, material was retrieved via the electronic database Sabinet and the archives of the Gandhi Luthuli Documentation Centre and the Killie Campbell Library.

When key actors in the conflict did not document their view on the conflict, the document analysis was complemented by *semi-structured interviews* with policymakers, public administrators, members of organising committees, activist groups and/or residents living in the affected area. In these interviews, I explored how the different actors framed the contestation, which assumptions they made, how they positioned themselves in the conflict, and why different actors were involved. As a general protocol, several instruments were used to inform participants and protect interviewees' privacy. First, all participants were informed in advance of the research topic, either by e-mail or by telephone; when these contact details were not available, this briefing would take place in advance of the interview. Before an interview, this information was repeated, and participants were asked to sign a consent form. Respondents who participated in an interview as part of their occupation (e.g., municipal employees or non-governmental organisation members) were informed that their answers would not be anonymised when quoted in the publications. The interviews with other respondents were stored and processed in an anonymous form. Once the

interviews were transcribed, when possible and requested, the participants received the interview transcript by email and had the opportunity to clarify certain statements made during the interview.[9] In the case of Clairwood, each resident that participated in an interview received compensation of 50 ZAR.

For the Living Streets, Oosterweel link road, and Clairwood cases, *observations* were conducted on public hearings, activities, and meetings between stakeholders. For the Oosterweel case, for example, I participated in meetings of the steering group of one of the citizen movements, attended campaign gatherings and information events for volunteers of all citizen movements, and volunteered in one of the citizen movement's campaigns (October 2016 – December 2016). An advantage to this method is that people are more at ease in these environments than in a one-on-one in-depth interview, additionally, they express their motivations and beliefs without having to be explicitly asked for them. When applied, this method was used to triangulate the findings retrieved through other methods.

All empirical materials - the transcribed interviews, the collected written data and the notes from the observations - were coded in the Nvivo software program for efficient analysis of the results.

## 1.6 Introduction to the chapters

This dissertation consists of an introduction, four chapters in which different case studies are presented, and a conclusion. The chapters that deal with empirical cases are originally written as academic articles. Most of them have already been published elsewhere.[10]

Each empirical chapter brings both (i) unique empirical evidence on the multitude of political dynamics making social transformation possible or preventing it from occurring, and (ii) new theoretical insight into the field of transformative planning

literature. While primarily focusing on the added value of post-foundational political thought in the field of transformative planning, this focus remains situated in a broader intention to bring supposedly opposing theoretical views closer together.

In Chapter Two, I analyse how the abstract concept of 'the political difference' can be utilised to explain the contentious dynamics at work in the struggle for 't Landhuis in Ghent. Starting specifically from Jacques Rancière's approach to 'political difference', I observed a dichotomy between urban studies scholars who either used Rancière's thinking to describe particular instances of spatial politics as suffering from the 'post-political condition' or to identify them as 'purely political'. In this chapter, I highlight the relationality between the two sides of the 'political difference' and search for analytical tools in Rancière's thinking to demonstrate this relationality in actually existing land use conflicts. More specifically, I utilise his concepts of 'universalisation' and 'particularisation' to describe important political dynamics that affect the transformative potential of the 't Landhuis struggle. I demonstrate how social transformation always implies navigating the field of tension between particular subject positions and acting as a stand-in for a universalising message of equality.[11]

In Chapter Three, I illustrate how a polysemic understanding of the concept of 'social transformation' provides a deeper analysis of the transformative dynamics at work in the Oosterweel link road conflict, a conflict between citizens and the Flemish government concerning the peripheral ring road in Antwerp. Starting from existing transformative planning literature, I argue that broadly, three understandings of social transformation can be discovered: an inclusion-oriented, a power-oriented, and a subjectification-oriented understanding. To fully grasp the transformative dynamics at work in the Oosterweel link road conflict, all three approaches to social transformation must be applied relationally, as the different

forms of transformation co-exist and interact with one another, making the realised transformation more comprehensive.

In Chapter Four, I explore the land use conflict around the Living Streets experiment in *Brugse Poort* (Ghent). I argue this conflict is partly the result of the different actors in the conflict having different understandings of democratic politics. These understandings are closely related to the political-philosophical views on democratic politics by Jürgen Habermas, Chantal Mouffe or Jacques Rancière. I also maintain that these actors use their (unevenly distributed) capacities to impose their specific understanding of democratic politics on the planning process. Hence, I argue, providing space for multiple approaches to democratic politics and social transformation in the analysis - regardless of their ontological differences - can provide a better understanding of the dynamics at play in this land use conflict.

Chapter Five applies a post-foundational political approach to explore how race-related and ethnicity-based framing is used both to depoliticise and to politicise socio-spatial development in the long-lasting struggle over Clairwood (eThekwini Municipality, South Africa). I argue that throughout the conflict, racialised and ethnicity-based framing has played a crucial role in this battle and been used by the local elite to legitimise the racialised socio-spatial differences as the most logical way to organise society (i.e., as a force of depoliticisation) and by activists to challenge this hierarchical order and claim equality between 'European' and 'non-white' cultures (i.e., as a force of politicisation). For post-foundational political thinking, this case provides evidence of the ways in which one oppressive symbolic foundation is replaced by another. In the case of Clairwood, 'race' as a foundation to build a society upon, was delegitimised but still the 'haves' and 'have-nots' remain largely the same during and after Apartheid.

Chapter Six provides concluding thoughts. I give an overview of the four empirical studies, summarise where I see aspects of society that were challenged and potentially changed throughout the conflict, and specify which dynamics were involved in making this transformation possible or prevented it from occurring. I then explore how the empirical findings can advance planning theory dealing with the transformative potential of land use conflicts.

In all of the articles, I have been responsible for the data retrieval, the empirical research and the first draft. My supervisors, Thomas Vanoutrive and Stijn Oosterlynck, presented suggestions for the theoretical and analytical approach of the articles and added some revisions.

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# PART TWO

List of papers

# CHAPTER 2

## Applying a relational approach to political difference:
### Strategies of particularization and universalization in contesting urban development

Published as H1:

Van Wymeersch, E., & Oosterlynck, S. (2018). Applying a Relational Approach to Political Difference: Strategies of Particularization and Universalization in Contesting Urban Development. In: Knierbein S and Viderman T (eds) *Public Space Unbound: Urban Emancipation and the Post-Political Condition*. New York: Routlegde, pp. 38-53.

## 2.1 Introduction

Over the last decade, many scholars have analyzed the depoliticization of territorial governance, a phenomenon often referred to as 'post-politics' (Mouffe, 2005; Žižek, 1999). They argue that with the global acceptance of neoliberal capitalism and the entrepreneurial state as the only legitimate organizational foundations of contemporary society, the antagonisms emerging from the divisions that run through society are suppressed (Swyngedouw, 2009). Working from a post-foundational approach to politics (Marchart, 2007), these contributions make a sharp distinction between the specific practices and institutions through which socio-spatial order is created on the one hand, and the antagonisms and disagreements that are constitutive to every society on the other. While there are different ways of naming the two sides of this distinction (cf. Wilson & Swyngedouw, 2014), we work with Rancière's notions of 'the police' referring to all practices which create order in a society by distributing places, names and functions (Nash, 1996), and 'politics' to indicate that this distribution can always be disrupted by those who are unaccounted for in the established order (Rancière, 2007b).

In this chapter, it is argued that research inspired by this perspective predominantly aims either at describing particular instances of spatial politics as suffering from the 'post-political condition' (Phil Allmendinger & Haughton, 2012; MacLeod, 2013; Raco, 2015; Swyngedouw, 2009) or at searching for instances of the 'purely political' in all kind of resistance movements (Badiou & Elliott, 2012; Basset, 2014; Douzinas, 2013). In contrast to approaches privileging one or the other side of this political difference, we adopt a more relational approach, searching for political dynamics in the interaction between ongoing attempts of depoliticization and properly political practices (e.g. Chambers, 2011; Gualini, 2015; Legacy, 2016b; Uitermark & Nicholls, 2013; Van Puymbroek & Oosterlynck, 2014). The proposed relational approach holds on to this binary distinction on the ontological level to stress the absence of an essential ground of any social order, thus keeping open the very possibility of politics. Still, our claim is that politics is not about the annihilation of the police, but that the police inevitably calls into being instances of politics, and that politics works through rather than destroys the police order, hence a relational perspective.

To show the added value of a relational approach to the political difference, this chapter uses a Belgian case of contested urban development—the struggle for 't Landhuis in Ghent. In this case, a group of citizens challenged the Ghent City Council and its intention to erect a training complex for their first division soccer team 'A.A. Gent' on the terrain that they had kept occupied for some time. We analyze the political dynamics in this case with particular attention to how both politics and the police have manifested themselves and how the interaction between the two unfolded. To make the rather abstract language in these debates on the political difference more operational, we focus on the frames used by the main actors during the conflict. More specifically, we organise our analysis of these frames around notions of universalization and particularization as used by Rancière, in which the first stands for claims grounded in universal categories

such as equality or humanity, while the latter refers to demands reflecting specific interests or positions (Nash, 1996).

In what follows, we first introduce post-foundational political thought and explain why the political difference should be approached in a relational way, highlighting what this entails for our understanding of emancipation. Subsequently, this theoretical framework is used to analyse the case of 't Landhuis in Ghent. Our analysis focuses on how the main actors frame their demands and thus sheds light on the emancipatory nature of the political dynamics in this case of contestation. We conclude this chapter by stressing how emancipation as subjectivization implies navigating the field of tension between subject positions and acting as a stand-in for a universalizing message of equality.

## 2.2
## Post-Foundationalism and the Relational Approach to the Political Difference

For post-foundational political thinkers, mainstream political thinking is too much focused on ordering, managing and governing the social, ignoring the impossibility of a fully ordered society. They argue that any social order must deal with the absence of an essential and definitive foundation, which implies that the social will always be fundamentally split along many different lines (Marchart 2007). For the post-foundational theorist Rancière, the police order is what emerges to conceal this absent ground. The police attempts to ground a specific kind of order and pacify its divisions. It is a symbolic order and consists of all the practices that distribute places, names and functions in society, designating everyone into their 'proper' place in a seemingly natural order of things (Dikeç, 2002).

However, post-foundational thinkers also argue that this order can only ever be contingent (Wilson & Swyngedouw, 2014), as it is always open to disruption by those highlighting the inevitable injustices implied in grounding an order. Called

*politics* by Rancière, this activity manifests in antagonistic practices (Marchart, 2007). As social and political analysis is too often concerned with the mechanisms of creating order and tends to identify democracy with the institutions ordering political activities, post-foundationalists are foregrounding this *political difference*, developing a different perspective on democracy (Marchart, 2007).

We work with Jacques Rancière's interpretation of this political difference because of the way in which he (1) grounds democratic politics in the notion of equality and calls it emancipation; (2) sees equality not as a goal to be attained, but as a presupposition that disturbs the social order and fuels the coming into being of a new political subject and (3) describes this process of subjectivization/ emancipation in terms of the universalization of particular conflicts. As explained earlier, we argue for a relational approach of this political difference, as politics and police presuppose each other and neither has any meaning without the other. In this chapter, we aim to give substance to this relational approach by focusing on the interrelation and co-evolving dynamics between universalizing and particularizing framing.

## 2.3
## Emancipation as the Promise of Equality: A Rancièrean Approach to Political Difference

To Rancière (2004), politics is not merely about conflict. Antagonism only carries emancipatory potential when the notion of equality is at stake. For him, emancipation emerges because democracy's promise of unconditional equality is inevitably broken. Since every order is based on 'a distribution of names, places and functions', it necessarily institutionalises inequalities. Emancipation is then the process through which this unequal (police) order is confronted with the democratic promise of equality. It is

> the verification of the equality of any speaking being with any other speaking being. It is always enacted in the name of a category denied either the principle or the consequences of that equality: workers, women, people of color, or other. (Rancière, 1992, p. 60)

Thus, when a wrong is being declared, a new political subject comes into being by dis-identifying itself from the place, name and function given to it in the social order. This is what Rancière calls political subjectivization, i.e. "the production through a series of actions of a body and a capacity for enunciation not previously identifiable within a given field of experience, whose identification is thus part of the reconfiguration of the field of experience" (Rancière, 1999, p. 35). Hence, there is no privileged political subject pre-existing the occurrence of politics as this subject only comes into being when and if claiming equality (Chambers, 2013, pp. 16-17).

According to Rancière, this coming into being of new political subjects "rests on the capacity to universalize particular conflicts as general instances of dissensus" (Panagia & Rancière, 2000, p. 125). Emancipation then is about a "struggle [of people] to free themselves from the place assigned to them, to assert themselves as bearers of a project that could be universally shared" (Rancière, 2014 [2008], p. 178). It is only when a demand transcends a particularizing framing and starts functioning as a stand-in for a universalizing message of equality, that we can say that a conflict is properly political. Although always initiated by *a part*, i.e. someone with a specific name, place and function, it is the process of dis-identification from the symbolic order by claiming universality in the name of equality that triggers a process of politicization.

While politicization and depoliticization are two sides of the same coin, attempts at particularization have the effect of depoliticizing a conflict by keeping it within

a certain fixed partitioning of social space, identities, interests and positions. As Baeten (2009, p. 248) puts it, through depoliticizing processes

> particular demands (for example the demand for more schools) are kept particular (the demand for more schools) in an attempt to avoid them acquiring a wider, universal status (demand for universal state provision of high-quality public services) that could make them enter the sphere of the political.

By holding a conflict in a particularizing frame of demands and interests, it can be given a place within the existing police, hence not forming a direct threat to this order (Oosterlynck & Swyngedouw, 2010).

It should be stressed that particularizing and universalizing framings can take various forms and are inextricably linked to one another, and several ways of framing often occur at the same moment. Universalizing framing cannot exist without a particular conflict, and often particular interests are also at stake when universalizing frames are used in a conflict. Additionally, it must be highlighted that attempts at the universalization of demands inevitably fold back in forms of particularization. However, we do argue that the use of universalizing claims changes the very nature of conflicts, enlarges the basis of struggle, is necessary to open the debate of what is negotiable and what is not, and makes it more difficult to incorporate these claims into the existing order of things.[1] The performativity of forms of politics grounded in this understanding of emancipation as political subjectivization can then be gauged from the extent through which the police order is transformed in the process. The importance of universalization for emancipation, and its interrelation with a particular context and particularizing frames, will form the focus of the empirical analysis in the remainder of this chapter.

## 2.4
## The Struggle at Ghent's Landhuis: A Relational Approach

In order to explore the merits of a relational approach to political difference, we utilize this approach to assess the political dynamics in the struggle for *'t Landhuis* in Ghent, a mid-sized Belgian city. *'t Landhuis*, literally translated as 'The Manor', is a former organic farm located at the outskirts of the city.

This domain -housing a central building, a herring smokehouse, outbuildings and some organic farmland- was abandoned in 2009 and squatted in the spring of 2010. The initiating group of occupants were searching for a place to start their own open, urban farming initiative.


**Figure 2.1** Logo vzw De Warmoezeniers

For about one and a half years, they lived and worked there with the consent of the private owner, who did not mind them occupying the land since he was planning to sell the land to the City of Ghent and had no further intentions to do something with it. During that time, they held sessions on urban gardening, organized vegan peoples' kitchens and allowed neighbours to have their own allotments in the organic garden. By 2015, about 50 people were involved at *'t Landhuis*, of whom about 40 were gardeners who used only the allotments and a dozen who also used the residential building. However, since the purchase of the plot of land by the City of Ghent in the winter of 2011, the continuation of this 'autonomous ecological centre' has been threatened by expulsion and demolition, as the city council intended to erect a training complex for the city's first division soccer team (Van Pee, 2012).

In what follows, we examine how this conflict has unfolded since 2011 and the effects on the city as a space that may nurture ecological commons.[2] To reconstruct the conflict, we collected data from newspaper articles reporting on 't Landhuis, policy documents and reports of internal meetings of the association 'De Warmoezeniers', meetings between occupants and employees of the City of Ghent, meetings between different departments of the City of Ghent and a meeting between the members of the 'Municipal Committee for Spatial Planning' (GECORO). Furthermore, we interviewed several actors involved in the conflict. On the basis of this empirical material, we identified three phases in the conflict: (1) a first phase in which a non-negotiation policy was applied towards the occupants, (2) a second phase in which the city council started negotiating with them and reached an agreement on the maintenance of the allotments, and finally (3) the revival of the conflict due to the occupants affirming the right to housing.

**Figure 2.2** Allotments at 't Landhuis. Source: Elisabet Van Wymeersch, 2016

***Squatting 't Landhuis: No Voice in 'Property-Holding Democracy'***

In the first phase of the conflict, the city council refused to negotiate with the occupants. Even though they used the land and invested their time and resources, the occupants' voices were ignored by aldermen at the time, who identified the occupants as squatters with no legal ownership. The alderman used the policing effects of property rights in the existing social order to reduce the occupants' voices to noise. In December 2011, the parcel at the 'Warmoezeniersweg' was purchased by the City of Ghent and it soon enough became clear that Christophe Peeters, the alderman at the time, would not tolerate squatting. Between 2007 and 2012, Christophe Peeters was alderman of Finance, Facility Management and Sports in a city council that consisted of members of the socialist (SP.a-Spirit) and the liberal (VLD) party. His approach towards squatting stemmed from a long-lasting anti-squatting stance within the Flemish liberal party, of which this

alderman is a member. According to this party, it is unacceptable that ownership would not be universally respected.

Furthermore, Alderman Peeters already had other plans with the land on which 't Landhuis has its activities. He promised the city's first division soccer team that they could use the site to erect an extra training complex (Van Pee, 2012). The alderman's vision of ownership in general and his particular intentions with the Landhuis terrain specifically explain why he did not perceive the occupants as negotiating partners. Lacking an ownership claim or official political function, they were seen as having no right to co-determine the future of this plot of land. In this context, it came as no surprise when Alderman Peeters ordered the occupants to leave the terrain.

In February 2012, the occupants reacted to this threat of expulsion by starting a petition, titled "wasteland & anti-squat for the socio-ecological project 't Landhuis?!" (vzw De Warmoezeniers, 2012). In this petition, they accused the city council of undermining its own sustainable image by closing its eyes to a valuable socio-ecological project. Furthermore, the occupants laid down a complaint with the city's ombudsperson, appealing to the value of their project for the city and defending that

> more than ever, it is crucial to handle our planet in a sustainable way. It would be a shame to put a socio-ecological project in full development on hold, and make the residents/concierges homeless, while there is no worthy alternative scenario laying on the table. (Dienst Ombudsvrouw Stad Gent, 2012, pp. 68-69)[3]

In both actions, universalizing framing can be recognized. Although there is no doubt that particular interests were also playing a role in occupying the site, the occupants framed their claims in terms of an equal right to co-determine its (and by extension the city's) socio-ecological future. By doing so, they disrupted the

police order, which requires you to identify as a landowner to be recognized and heard as a negotiation partner. The occupants challenged this 'distribution of names, places and functions' along the lines of property owners and non-property owners, and contested their identification as 'squatters', as they felt it institutionalizes inequalities in discussing the city's socio-ecological future. It is important, however, to acknowledge that the order of 'property holding democracy' is itself the result of a previous moment of disruption in name of equality, as property law was created to protect citizens against the arbitrariness of political rulers (cf. John Locke).[4] As this claim to equal rights to property was institutionalized and became part of the existing order, it inevitably created its own inequalities between property and non-property owners. It is against this new inequality, which wrongs everyone's equal right to determine the future of the city as an ecological common, that the occupants in the case of 't Landhuis react.[5]

***From Noise to Voice***

Although official plans were still to evict the occupants, the expulsion date was delayed until August 2012 due to a personal intervention by the mayor. This intervention should be seen in the light of the contentious context in which this struggle was going on: not everyone working in and for the municipality shared the opinion of Alderman Peeters. The ombudsperson, for example, who is a neutral mediator employed by the city council to conciliate in such conflicts, believed tenants should also be heard in discussions on the future use of the land. She suggested the occupiers present themselves as the 'caretakers' rather than squatters of the building and urged the alderman to let them stay in the building under the custody of an anti-squat company provided they were willing to pay rent. The ombudsperson's intervention opened more space for negotiation, but only on the condition that the occupants would take the more 'acceptable' position of tenants and caretakers of the building, a position that could be easier accommodated for in the existing order of property-holding democracy.

Tensions between Landhuis adherents and opponents became aggravated in January 2013 when the Green party joined the Socialists and Liberal party in the city council. The occupants of 't Landhuis emphasized that their project is in line with the official governing program of both the Greens and the Socialists and spoke to the ambition of the new socialist alderman for Urban Development, Housing and Public Green, Tom Balthazar, to expand garden allotments in the city (Balthazar, 2014). Because of the enhanced sensitivity to ecological concerns of the newly established city council and favourable publicity of 't Landhuis in a local newspaper, by May 2013 the city council officially changed its approach towards the conflict and announced that it wanted to maintain a share of the allotments at 't Landhuis. This action was a first rapprochement towards the occupants, acknowledging their voice as legitimate stakeholders in the discussion. While previously there could be no legally binding conversation with the occupants because they were identified as squatters, they were now invited to share their vision of the situation. By speaking as equals and demanding the right to have a say on the socio-ecological future of the city, the occupants managed to challenge the police order, obtaining a right to speak on certain topics that they previously were not heard and making the preservation of the allotments negotiable.

However, the negotiation on the allotments came with the condition that the occupants would formally organize themselves into an official association, unifying occupants and gardeners. This pushed them into a more particularized subject position. Though not everyone involved at 't Landhuis completely agreed with this move, in February 2014 the occupants created the association 'De Warmoezeniers', whose name is a reference to the street where the allotments are located.

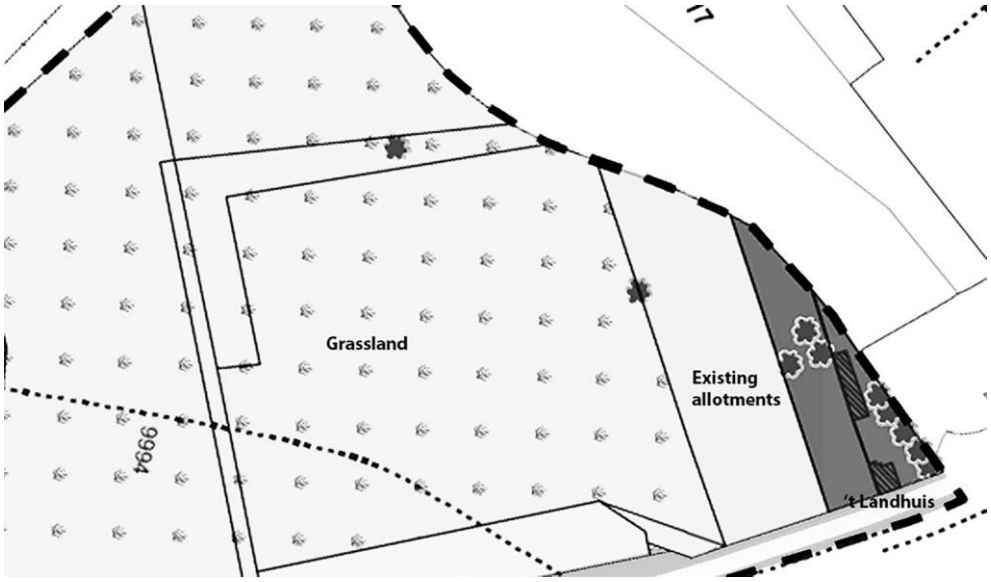


**Figure 2.3** Map of the current situation at 't Landhuis
Source: Excerpt from Gemeentelijk Ruimtelijk Uitvoeringsplan nr-160 Groenas 4—Bovenschelde; Figure 'Feitelijke toestand' [Municipal Spatial Implementation Plan No-160 Green axis 4—Upper Scheldt; Figure 'Current condition']. Adapted by Elisabet Van Wymeersch from (Stad Gent, 2015).

After a few months of negotiation, the city council and the association came close to reaching a conclusive solution. It was agreed the occupants' residential building could be demolished. The allotments, on the other hand, could partially stay and be reorganised by the association. In this way, the occupants could safeguard the land for cultivation by neighbours and govern it as ecological commons through the association. At the same time, their involvement in negotiations and subsequently in the management of the land pushed them to see their position and activities in more particularized terms.

#### *The Conflict Repoliticized: The Right to Housing as New Universalizing Strategy*

In August 2014, a newly founded neighbourhood committee on cultural heritage[6] intervened in the conflict and started pushing for enhanced maintenance and preservation of the central building, arguing the unique structure should be preserved for cultural heritage.

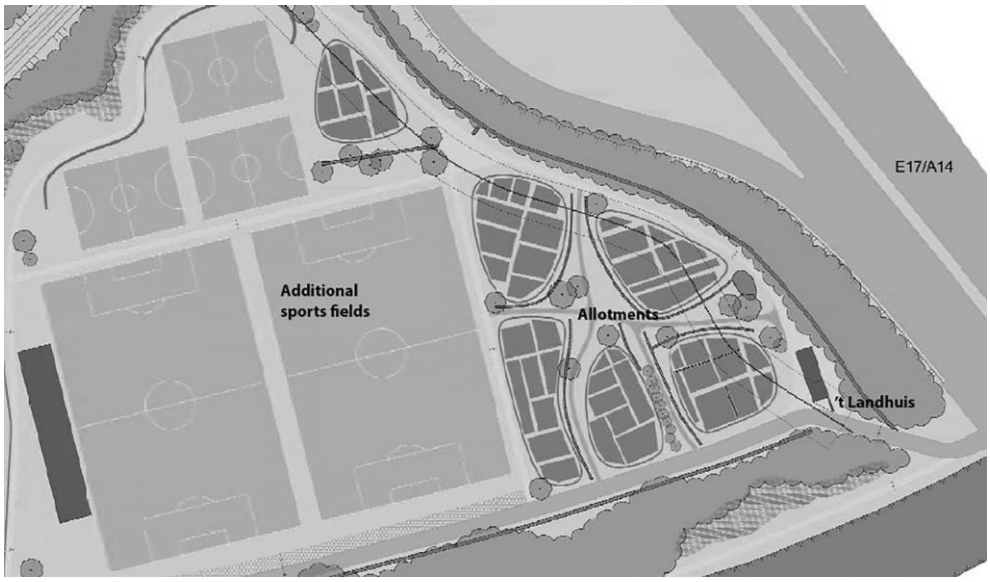


**Figure 2.4** Proposed plan by the City of Ghent to maintain and expand the allotments at 't Landhuis. On this plan, the residential building is erased.
Source: Excerpt from Ruimtelijk uitvoeringsplan Groenas 4—Bovenschelde Concept-RUP. Infomoment 9 januari; Figure 'Mogelijke invulling van het gebied met sportvelden, parking, verlegde Warmoezeniersweg en uitgebouwde groenas' [Spatial implementation plan Green axis 4—Upper Scheldt Concept. Info moment 9 January. Figure 'Possible completion of the area with sports fields, parking, displaced road and expanded green axis']. Adapted by Elisabet Van Wymeersch from (Stad Gent, 2014, p. 14).

Because of renewed interest in the building, the occupants in the association decided to keep fighting for the preservation of the building as well (vzw De Warmoezeniers, 2015). This change of mind should be seen in the light of another discussion regarding the statutes of 'de Warmoezeniers' that was going on between the occupants and the gardeners in the association. In the goals written down in the Articles of Incorporation, it is stated that "the association aims at [p]romoting sustainable agriculture and nutrition, sustainable organic lifestyles, animal welfare, short-chain initiatives and food sovereignty"; "showing solidarity without borders, and resisting oppression and social or environmental abuse, while focusing on communities and farmers in the South"; and "contributing to a positive role for squatting in society" (vzw De Warmoezeniers, 2014b, p. 1).

The city council was unwilling to accommodate the reference to the positive role of squatting, as it shied away from confronting the potential contradictions between its promise to mobilise citizens for an alternative socio-ecological future and the unequal speaking rights in property-holding democracies. While the primary interest for most gardeners was in maintaining the allotments, others—mostly residents of the building—kept framing their interest in 't Landhuis in more overarching universal concerns. In the summer of 2014, this dispute was won by the residents, helping to resist the confinement of their struggle to 't Landhuis alone. On the association's general assembly in August 2014, members who did not agree with this more principled approach decided to leave the association (vzw De Warmoezeniers, 2014a). Since then, the official point of view of 'de Warmoezeniers' towards the city can be described as follows: no demolition of the building, no eviction of the residents, more space for grassroots initiatives and the recognition of squatting as a valuable answer to the high vacancy rate.

In January 2015, the city eventually withdrew its demolition permit. While this shift can be partly explained by the fact that the city council encountered strong opposition against the expropriation of the adjacent plots, the permanent opposition of 'de Warmoezeniers' and their adherents—framing their claims on universalizing socio-political and ecological grounds, which resonated with the stated ambitions of the new city council, also contributed to the shift. One instrument of opposition leading to the withdrawal of the demolition permit was a second petition started by 'de Warmoezeniers', in which they denounced the intentions of the city to tear down the building, referring to both the socio-ecological value of the initiative, the current affordable housing shortage and the right to housing (vzw De Warmoezeniers, 2015).

Regarding the socio-ecological value of the project, 'de Warmoezeniers' got support from the 'Municipal Advisory Committee for Spatial Planning' of Ghent (GECORO):

> Where does the city want to go? Does she not see the potentials of this growing social and societal relevant initiative, which perfectly complements various thrusts of this year's policy agreement? Given the city's choice for climate neutrality, a green and social policy, co-creation and co-production, it is the GECORO's belief that this should also be reflected in her vision on the future and the choice made by the City for this site. (De Kezel, 2015, pp. 4-5)

After the withdrawal of the demolition permit, a new spatial implementation plan for the area was implemented in which the building was included but remains located in a recreation zone and should therefore not be permanently inhabited. However, at the time of finishing this chapter, the occupants are still living and organizing activities on a regular basis in 't Landhuis.

This case shows how the transformative dynamics of the conflict are driven by attempts of the occupants to position themselves and their demands around 't Landhuis as stand-ins for a universalizing message on each and everyone's right to decide on the socio-ecological future of the city, as well as the right to housing. In a context where the city council had explicitly committed itself to the co-production of a 'socio-ecological city', they could resist attempts at policing their 'place, name and function' and continue to disrupt the existing order, which increased the collective capacity of citizens to co-determine the city's socio-ecological future. This acting as a stand-in for a universalizing message is, however, always a precarious exercise, as some members who preferred to focus exclusively on gardening left the association, putting its capacity to mobilize at risk.

## 2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, we argued for a relational approach to the political difference between politics and the police, which is advanced as a crucial analytical distinction to understand the emancipatory potential of unfolding political dynamics in post-foundationalist political thought. To analyze how new political subjects are co-constituted on a relational field shaped by the logics of politics and policing, we applied Rancière's notions of universalization and particularization and the invocation of equality as a universalizing strategy to a case study on the struggle for ecological commons around 't Landhuis in Ghent.

To Rancière, emancipation emerges as the verification of the equality of any speaking being with any other speaking being. He argues that this happens when people contest the distributed name, place and/or function that is given to them and thus become new political subjects. This becoming of new political subjects takes place on a field of tension between a particularization and universalization. In this case, we have shown how the occupiers of 't Landhuis acted as properly democratic political subjects by claiming their equal right to have a say on the future of the city, hence contesting the order of 'property holding democracy'.

However, during this conflict, as the occupants could use openings in the police order, they were drawn into negotiations, which pushed them to take on a more particular subject position. This is clarified by how the occupants turned into a legally sanctioned formal organization to negotiate the saving of the garden allotments and their governance as ecological commons. From this particular subject position, it was easier to incorporate certain claims in the existing order of things rather than universalizing claims like the rights to housing and the democratic governance of the whole urban environment as ecological commons. In an attempt to put rights to housing more centrally in the political conversation, the occupants took on a more principled position, which led to some of the

gardeners leaving the association. This shows how emancipation requires the navigation of a difficult field of tension between particularization and universalization.

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# CHAPTER 3

## Unravelling the concept of social transformation in planning

### Inclusion, power changes and political subjectification in the Oosterweel link road conflict

Published as A1 in Planning Theory & Practice:

Van Wymeersch, E., Vanoutrive, T., & Oosterlynck, S. (2020). Unravelling the concept of social transformation in planning: Inclusion, power changes, and political subjectification in the Oosterweel link road conflict, *Planning Theory & Practice*, 21(2).

## 3.1 Introduction

In March 2017, the Flemish government proudly proclaimed to have reached a 'historic agreement' with three Antwerp citizen movements and the Antwerp municipal government. At stake was completion of the city's ring road, a project that led to one of Belgium's most notorious planning conflicts in recent decades. For years, the necessity of this connection road, its physical positioning (closer or further away from the city centre), its material form (by means of a series of tunnels or a combined tunnel and viaduct), and the non-transparent character of the decision-making process were heavily contested. The 2017 agreement marked the beginning of a public-civic collaborative process previously unseen in the Flemish planning context, sparking international interest: Antwerp won the Eurocities 'Cooperation in physical transformation' award in November 2019.

In the aftermath of the agreement, the spokesperson for one of the citizen movements and several experts argued that the transformative potential of this planning conflict lay in the creation of a collaborative 'safe space' safeguarded by a mediator whose main task consisted of bringing together the opposing parties. While it is clear that a collaborative planning approach is at work in this case, the

article intends to provide a deeper and more nuanced analysis of the transformative dynamics apparent in the conflict by working with a polysemic understanding of 'social transformation'.

Over the past half-century, transformative planning scholars have discussed what 'social transformation' entails. For example, in a Plurimondi special issue on insurgent and radical planning practices, Leonie Sandercock hints at the relevance and difficulty of defining social transformation:

> Most of us would agree that the aim of 'radical planning' is social transformation in the interests of greater social, economic and environmental justice. But what precisely does that mean? Social transformation can imply changes in dominant values and institutions, shifts in relationships of power, and ultimately a transformation of the state apparatus. But do changes which fall short of a transformation of the state (to use the language of structuralists) still qualify as social transformation? [We] have agreed only to disagree on this question. (Sandercock, 1999, p. 41)

We begin from the premise that defining social transformation is a contingent act and accept that different transformative planning traditions will work with their own definitions of what social transformation is. Rather than problematising the polysemic nature of the concept, we argue that these definitions do not need to be seen as mutually exclusive but rather can help to capture multiple aspects of the complex processes of social transformation.

In what follows, we first examine, both substantively and procedurally, three interpretations of social transformation present in planning theory. A first conceptualisation sees transformation as including multiple interests in the decision-making process (i.e., inclusion-oriented). A second interpretation

understands transformation as changes in power relations through the struggle of counter-hegemonic movements (i.e., power-oriented), and the third interpretation links social transformation to the emergence of new political subjects that change the symbolic order of society (i.e., subjectification-oriented). Later in the article, we illustrate how a polysemic understanding of social transformation, in which inclusion-, power-, and subjectification-oriented approaches to social transformation are all taken into account, better captures different aspects of the complex processes of social transformation, hence providing a deeper and more nuanced analysis of the transformative dynamics in the Oosterweel link road conflict.

## 3.2
## Planning theory and social transformation

To determine whether transformative dynamics occurred during the Oosterweel link road conflict, we must first consider the question of what 'social transformation' entails. Since the late 1960s, planning theorists have focused on planning as ancillary to broader social change, examining how planning practices can contribute to a more equal and just society (e.g. Brenner, Marcuse, & Mayer, 2012; Fainstein, 2010; Harvey, 2012). Advocacy (Davidoff, 1965), transactive (Friedmann, 2011 [1973]), radical (Grabow & Heskin, 1973), collaborative (Healey, 2003), agonistic pluralistic (Mouat et al., 2013), and insurgent planning theory (Miraftab, 2009) all come from an urge to democratise planning or to undo perceived forms of oppression and social injustice through planning practice. While the differences between these transformative planning traditions are not always clear-cut, each tradition starts from its own substantive perspective on what social transformation is (Faludi, 1973; Yiftachel, 1989) and which procedural steps need to be taken to get there. In what follows, we discern three ways of looking at social transformation that we identified within traditions in the field (see Table 3.1).

***Transformation as inclusion***

A first method of conceiving social transformation appears in planning traditions such as advocacy planning (Davidoff, 1965), transactive planning (Friedmann, 2011 [1973]), and the collaborative planning wave that began in the 1990s (Forester, 2009; Healey, 2003; Innes & Booher, 1999; Ozawa, 1993; Susskind & Ozawa, 1984). While the differences between these traditions are substantial, for all three, social transformation lies in the inclusion of plural narratives in the decision-making process, especially those of minority or oppressed groups. Inclusion can occur either by representing proposals in the political arena (Heskin, 1980, p. 57) (i.e., advocacy planning) or by inviting all stakeholders—including marginalised groups—to the decision-making table to represent themselves (i.e., transactive and collaborative planning). Through including (people with) different interests at the negotiation table—through dialogue, social learning, and 'making sense together'— changes in practices, cultures, and outcomes of 'place governance' can occur (Healey, 2003, pp. 107-108). An inclusive deliberation process makes social transformation possible, as dialogue with actors holding different views allows participants to rethink positions, interests, and even values (Innes & Booher, 2013, p. 3). The process changes the players, what they know, and what they are likely to do.

***Transformation as changes in power relations***

A second common understanding of social transformation focuses on changes in power relations and power structures. It occurs in planning approaches such as agonistic pluralistic planning (e.g. Mouat et al., 2013; Pløger, 2004), radical planning (Friedmann, 2011 [1987]; Grabow & Heskin, 1973), and insurgent planning (Miraftab, 2009; Sandercock, 1998a, 1999).

Some planning theorists believe that planning practices are transformative when performed by small non-hierarchical groups less dependent on the state and

capital (i.e., Friedmann's radical planning approach). Others argue that planning practices are transformative when performed by people who use 'passion' (i.e., the affective dimension at play in collective forms of identification (Martin & Mouffe, 2013)) to create a chain among those equivalently disadvantaged by existing power relations. Such a 'chain of equivalence' can become a strong counter-hegemonic force as Mouffe and (ant)agonistic pluralistic planning adherents argue (Purcell, 2009). In both situations, though, transformation is inherently linked to creating (temporarily) new power relations. The same is true for certain forms of insurgent planning. In her account of insurgent planning, Sandercock (1999, p. 39; 41) argues that existing power relations can be challenged by progressive and bottom-up radical planning practices by communities, activists, or marginalised groups who—through social struggle—act as planners for themselves and go beyond state-led participation (1999, pp. 41-42). These 'thousand tiny empowerments', Sandercock argues, are the path towards enduring social change. Insurgent planning scholar Faranak Miraftab (2009) highlights the role of similar bottom-up planning practices as counter-hegemonic responses to the depoliticising and neoliberal specifics of dominance through inclusion (p. 32).

This is not to say that the issue of power is undiscussed within inclusion-oriented approaches. Collaborative planners such as Healey (2003) and Forester (2009) recognise the importance of power relations in their analysis of planning conflicts. However, for collaborative planning scholars in general, power plays a less prominent role in their theory of change than dialogue, inclusion, and joint sense-making. When power is discussed as a driving force for social change, collaborative planners explicitly link it to acts of inclusion and communication (i.e., 'How can power differences be overcome through, and in acts of, participatory and collaborative planning?').

| | Inclusion-oriented | | Power-oriented | | Subjectification-oriented | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **What? (substantive)** | Transformation as the inclusion of multiple interests in the decision-making process<br><br>Transformation as changes in how people understand society | | Transformation as changes in power relations | | Transformation as disruption and the emergence of new political subjects<br><br>Transformation as changes in the symbolic order | |
| **How? (procedural)** | **Advocacy planning theory** | **Communicative planning theory** | **Radical & Insurgent planning theory** | **Radical antagonistic pluralism** | **Insurgent planning theory** | **Radical political urban theory** |
| | Through the advocacy of different interests and values by planners<br><br>Through the struggle between competing planning proposals | Through including stakeholders in decision-making process<br><br>Mutual learning and understanding through communicative action | Through self-development driven by small action-oriented groups bonded through dialogue and non-hierarchical relations (Friedmann)<br><br>Through acts of resistance by communities, activists or marginalized groups, operating in the interstices of power (Sandercock)<br><br>Through counter-hegemonic responds to the neoliberal specifics of dominance through inclusion (Miraftab) | Through the use of passion<br><br>Through building chains of equivalence<br><br>Through counter-hegemonic acts | Through defamiliarization | Through dis-identification<br><br>Through claiming equality |

**Table 3.1** Three interpretations of social transformation in transformative planning literature

***Transformation as the emergence of new political subjects***

The third and final interpretation of social transformation found in transformative planning literature revolves around a reordering of the *symbolic* order of society engendered by the emergence of new political actors. This interpretation begins with the observation that every society is built on certain dominant ideas of what reality is, who is seen as a legitimate speaker in that reality, which arguments and narratives are considered acceptable or reasonable to use, and which instruments and channels can be used to express claims. Transformation, then, resides in people rejecting the 'place' they were assigned in this symbolic order: hence, they become political subjects. Such political subjects emerge through their *dis*-identification with an allocated position in the symbolic order and through redefinition of the question, 'Who is in a position to speak and act legitimately in which context?'

Some of the most explicit references in planning theory to this interpretation of social transformation are found within the insurgent planning tradition (e.g. Miraftab, 2009; Miraftab & Wills, 2005; Shrestha & Aranya, 2015) and rely on James Holston's (1998) definition of 'insurgency': 'new metropolitan forms of the social [that are] not yet liquidated by or absorbed into the old' (p. 39). To Holston, an act is insurgent when it introduces new identities and practices into the city that 'disturb established histories' and 'disrupt the normative and assumed categories of social life' (p. 48; 50). An insurgent act is 'a counter-politics that destabilizes the dominant regime of citizenship, renders it vulnerable, and defamiliarizes the coherence with which it usually presents itself to us' (Holston, 2009, p. 15).

Urban (planning) theorists such as Legacy (2016b), Metzger et al. (2015), Gualini (2015), and Dikeç (2012) employ a similar interpretation of social transformation but explicitly refer to the political thought of Jacques Rancière. To Dikeç, social

transformation is disruptive and 'inaugurative' by nature and depends on acts that introduce something new and interrupt the established order of things (2017, p. 50). While certainly interconnected with some inclusion- and power-oriented traditions in planning, the subjectification-oriented interpretation of transformation is distinct in its focus on the symbolic dimensions of transformation and the establishment of new political subjects through disagreement. In reaction to the inclusion-oriented interpretation, in which transformation is obtained merely by including multiple and often competing interests and values in the decision-making process, Rancière insists that social transformation is about the possibility of being included on one's own terms and as an equal, which requires a transformation of societal arrangements:

> Before any confrontation of interests and values, before any assertions are submitted to demands for validation between established partners, there is the dispute over the object of the dispute, the dispute over the existence of the dispute and the parties confronting each other on it. (Rancière, 1999, p. 55)

To Rancière, social transformation occurs with the dis-identification of individuals with the name, place, and function given to them in society and in the formation of new subjects that claim equality by speaking in a time and a place that they are not expected to speak (Lie & Rancière, 2006). This interpretation of equality appears also in the assertion of both radical and insurgent planning approaches that anyone can function as a planner regardless of whether he or she is recognised as such by the dominant system.

While the previous sections risk creating the impression that inclusion-oriented, power-oriented and subjectification-oriented interpretations of social transformation are in opposition, several transformative planning traditions do not perceive these interpretations to be mutually exclusive. For example, the

insurgent planning tradition clearly combines power-oriented and subjectification-oriented interpretations of social transformation, as it focuses not only on shifting the power dynamics among stakeholders but also on bringing in new stakeholders and actors that were previously never recognised or identified as such. In planning practices, different interpretations of social transformation reinforce each other and intertwine. Scholars such as Kenis and Lievens (2015) argue that while acts of political subjectification in a Rancièrean sense are crucial for opening up the symbolic order, on their own, these acts remain limited in their effects: 'It merely opens a space where something new can be imagined' (p. 153). For a transformative dynamic to be effective, it must go further. Alliances and chains of equivalences that can challenge existing hegemonic relations of power have to be constructed. Similarly, Silver et al. (2010) argue that both struggle and deliberation could be apparent in the same process, each having transformative potential. To these observations, we add that while both power-oriented and inclusion-oriented transformative processes could be at work simultaneously, this is unlikely to be the case with inclusion-oriented and subjectification-oriented processes. With the acts of deliberation and consensus-building, political subjects tend to disappear through their re-incorporation and identification with social groups or imaginary bodies (Rancière, 2004, p. 7).

## 3.3
## The transformative potentialities of the Oosterweel link road conflict

Having surveyed the main interpretations of social transformation in transformative planning literature, we now turn to a case that illustrates how applying different understandings contributes to an in-depth analysis of the transformative dynamics in contentious cases of urban development.

As a long-standing, complex, and divisive conflict, the Oosterweel link road struggle is appropriate for exploring the added value of a polysemic approach to

social transformation. While this case is well-documented in newspaper articles, opinion pieces, academic studies (e.g. Coppens, Van Dooren, & Thijssen, 2018; Van Brussel, Boelens, & Lauwers, 2016), and reflections by involved activists and interested followers (Claeys, 2013; Leysen, Noels, Nonneman, & Saverys, 2017; Wolf & Van Dooren, 2017a), most analyses of the Oosterweel conflict focus on the causes of conflict escalation (Wolf & Van Dooren, 2017b). Some activists (Claeys, 2018) reflect on the transformative potential but do so mainly from an inclusion-oriented perspective on social transformation which, we argue, leaves out important parts of the transformative dynamics at work. In our analysis, we broaden the analytical perspective by starting from a polysemic understanding of the concept of social transformation and by examining the fit between the procedural and substantive sides of the different interpretations of social transformation apparent in transformative planning.

To reconstruct the conflict and to examine which interpretation(s) of social transformation help(s) best to grasp the transformative dynamics at play, the research draws on data collected from interviews with three activists; observations made at meetings of the citizen movements between September and December 2016; and a document analysis of relevant newspaper articles published between 2005 and 2017, published memoranda, and other promotional material by action groups, and governmental policy documents.

We first introduce the history of the Oosterweel conflict and its most important evolutions and actors. Next, we analyse the transformative dynamics at work. We examine which procedures described in the different transformative planning traditions as carrying transformative potential occurred and whether they brought forth the expected (i.e., inclusion-, power-, or subjectification-oriented) social transformation. In other words, we scrutinise the interrelation between the procedural and substantive sides of social transformation as proposed by the different transformative planning strands.

***From 'bridge' to 'bridge too far' to 'tunnelling together'***

The idea to complete Antwerp's ring road originated in the 1990s and was seen by the Flemish government as a key solution to deal with Antwerp's intractable mobility problem. As home to the second-largest seaport of Europe and situated on one of Europe's busiest traffic routes, Antwerp copes with a constant flow of traffic, making it the most congested city in Belgium in 2017 (HLN, 2017).

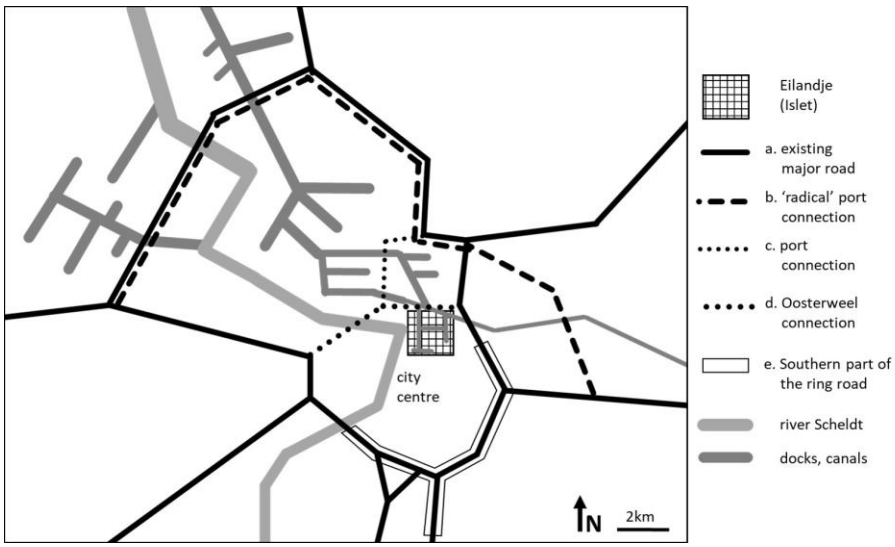


**Figure 3.1** Map of alternative trajectories of the link road, Antwerp

Decades have passed since policymakers first feared that Antwerp would face perpetual gridlock. In 1996, Antwerp's provincial governor began advocating completion of Antwerp's ring road to prevent congestion. Half a decade later, in April 2000, the governor took initiative on behalf of the Flemish government and organised a '*Staten-Generaal*', a gathering with local politicians and representatives of the Port Authority, the Province of Antwerp, and the Flemish administration to discuss the 'mobility problem', and to find consensus among selected stakeholders. In the same period, the Flemish government launched a 'Masterplan Mobility Antwerp' to further deal with the problem and legitimised the plan by stating that the civil society members, businesspeople, and politicians who attended the second *Staten-Generaal* in 2001 backed the proposal. In 2003, the

Flemish government created a management company (a public limited liability company named BAM)[1] to implement the Masterplan, and decided to connect two unconnected parts of the Antwerp ring road, as agreed upon on in the previous *Staten-Generaal*. The Oosterweel link road (see Figure 3.1, connection d) included a 'landmark' viaduct called the 'Lange Wapper'. A high-profile local member of the Green Party lauded the proposal:

> Everywhere in Europe, you see bridges that are a real added value to the cities. Why would the Lange Wapper bridge not do the same for Antwerp? (Mieke Vogels as cited in JVE, 2005)

Although not every expert agreed on the solution, protest against the initial development plans for the Oosterweel link road and its Lange Wapper viaduct was virtually non-existent. When a model of the proposed viaduct was presented to the City Council in 2005, the action group *stRaten-generaal*[2] began to question the desirability of a viaduct crossing the city. This led to an increasingly polarised debate between advocates for the government's Oosterweel trajectory close to the city by means of a tunnel and the Lange Wapper viaduct on the one hand, and advocates for a connection further away from the city and/or only utilising tunnels on the other.

At the end of 2007, a group of elderly neighbours created the action group *Ademloos* ('Breathless') to raise awareness of the health risks of the new link road, and the viaduct in particular. This action group enforced and won a public referendum against the proposed link road in October 2009, providing proof that many people living in Antwerp did not want the Lange Wapper viaduct to cross the city.[3] While the referendum was not binding, one year later, the Flemish government decided to drop the Lange Wapper viaduct and replace it with a tunnel. The BAM/Oosterweel trajectory, however, remained untouched.

With this new proposition, the Flemish government was obliged to order a new strategic environmental assessment (SEA) investigating not only the Oosterweel trajectory but also the alternative trajectory proposed by *stRaten-generaal*. In February 2014, the new SEA concluded that the Oosterweel trajectory scored best for mobility, prompting the Flemish government to make a definitive choice for the trajectory. As a response, *stRaten-generaal* and *Ademloos* filed a notice of objection to the Council of State in the summer of 2015. They claimed that the SEA did not study properly their proposal and they demanded that the government put its decision in favour of the Oosterweel trajectory on hold.

At the time of the SEA announcements, a group of Antwerp citizens, urbanists, and academics founded *Ringland*, a citizen movement that mobilised for the complete tunnelling of the existing ring road along with a traffic system that would separate local traffic from through traffic. With its public actions, *Ringland* popularised the idea of tunnelling among the citizens of Antwerp.

By the end of 2015, the Flemish government decided to examine the feasibility of tunnelling the ring road. It appointed a 'liveability mediator', a consultant responsible for examining tunnelling possibilities and forging a compromise among the action groups, the BAM management company, and the Flemish government. In the summer of 2016, the mediator negotiated with the action groups and other stakeholders, examining the possibility of tunnelling the southern part of the ring road (see Figure 3.1, section e). The trajectory of the link road, however, remained contested, with the Flemish government and BAM continuing to insist on a full Oosterweel trajectory and the opposing organisations aiming for a trajectory further from the city (see Figure 3.1, trajectory c). To maintain pressure on the negotiation process, the three main action groups—*Ademloos*, *stRaten-generaal*, and *Ringland*—collaborated and collected another 75,000 signatures in favour of a second referendum on the Oosterweel trajectory.

In January 2017, *stRaten-generaal* and *Ademloos* received an answer on their objection at the Council of State. The auditors agreed with the action committees' objections and advised the government to annul the zoning plan based on the SEA (hence, implicitly advising that the SEA had to be redone as well). The necessity for the Flemish government to reach agreement with the action groups thus became more pressing. In March 2017, the Flemish government, the City of Antwerp, and the three action groups made the 'Pact of the Future'. The action groups dropped their juridical claims at the Council of State and their call for a second referendum. In return, if possible, the entire ring road would be covered, the Oosterweel link road would become a light version of the original one, and an additional 'radical port trajectory' (see Figure 3.1, trajectory b) would be built to keep through traffic away from the city. The pact also included the objective of achieving a modal shift towards more public transport and non-motorised vehicles. On some parts of the ring road, local and through traffic would be separated in different tunnels. Alongside the infrastructural promises, the pact laid the foundation for a 'work community', a collaborative forum in which the involved governments, government administrations, experts, action groups, citizen movements, and selected social actors would come together to set up a co-operative forum to formulate, review, discuss, and develop proposals and projects to improve mobility, quality of life, health, and urban structure (D'Hooghe, 2017).

The preparatory work for the construction of the Oosterweel link road began in summer 2019, and tunnelling of this part of the ring road has been approved. The Pact of the Future, however, also promised developments such as the full tunnelling of the ring road and the construction of the 'radical port trajectory'; both require further political and financial guarantees before they can be realised.[4]

***Opening up space for collaboration through power building***

Inclusion-oriented transformation, as perceived by collaborative planning traditions, marks the late years of the Oosterweel link road conflict, both on the procedural and substantive level. In the aftermath of the 2017 'Pact of the Future', the spokesperson of *stRaten-generaal* and several experts have claimed that the appointment of a mediator and the establishment of new decision-making fora are democratic innovations that allow for joint sense-making and mutual learning. In their analysis of the conflict, the transformative potential of the conflict is situated in the creation of a collaborative 'safe space' (Claeys, 2018, p. 171).

On a procedural level, the decision-making process has changed qualitatively since the early years of the conflict. While it was initially a predominantly closed and expert-driven process, since 2017, the Flemish government, BAM, and the mediator have focused more on civic-public cooperation, deliberation, expert mediation, and transparency. The spokesperson of *stRaten-generaal,* for example, criticised the early decision-making process for being de-politicising, arguing that outsiders faced a *fait accompli*:

> The BAM undoubtedly performs a lot of useful work, but it remains unclear which criteria determine its composition and modus operandi, how public its activities are and to whom accountability must be given. In the case of major project developments, the government continues to opt for closed participation processes. By discouraging substantive debate, they hardly have to pay any attention to urban development, medical, social or environmental criteria. As such, the government can hide behind technical and financial scenarios that are put forward by Limited Liability Companies and temporary associations as the only possibility. (Claeys, 2005, p. 28)

By 2018, the spokesperson of *stRaten-generaal* was more enthusiastic about the participation process, praising its inclusion- and consensus-oriented turn:

> The case of the Oosterweel link road became a symbol. With the consent and cooperation of the executive powers, we finally took a different approach: together, we opened up the policy preparation process and developed decision-making methods in which the expertise of citizens, civil servants and experts was combined. Participation replaced competition, involvement was no longer about winning. (Claeys, 2018, pp. 18-19)

The 'Pact of the Future' paved the way for the creation of a new participation instrument bringing civil society stakeholders, civil servants, and experts together in workshops. In these workshops, the stakeholders debate the various themes linked to redevelopment of the Antwerp ring road, from the tunnelling of the ring road to the development of the Oosterweel trajectory and the Port trajectory. In line with the communicative planning approach, the mediator perceived the collaboration platform as inclusive and dynamic since mobility and liveability goals are reconciled in consensual, joint decisions by all stakeholders (D'Hooghe et al., 2016). Furthermore, during six months of workshops, 'walkshops', focus groups, and debate nights, the Antwerp citizens were asked to provide input concerning priority projects in the tunnelling of the ring road. Finally, representatives of the citizen movements were invited to seats in public institutions. In October 2018, the spokesperson of *stRaten-generaal* became part of the board of directors of BAM, the management company he previously opposed. The spokesperson of *Ringland* similarly joined the coordination committee of the 'work community', showing how deliberation with civil society groups and citizens was institutionalised. Such evolutions demonstrate a growing willingness

to listen to opposing parties, making mutual understanding and agreed-upon solutions easier to reach.

This inclusion-oriented turn in the procedural side of the planning practices evolved into inclusion-oriented social transformation on a substantive level as well. Through mediation, BAM and the Flemish government recognised that quality of life and health need to be focal points in transport planning. They cancelled their plans to fell a forest during the development of the link road, promised a 'modal shift' towards more public and non-motorised transport, and promised to tunnel the ring road. The citizen movements acknowledged that a new crossing of the river Scheldt was necessary, accepting a light version of the Oosterweel link road. The spokesperson of *stRaten-generaal* argues that the evolution was possible through the inclusion of different stakeholders and through dialogue and joint sense-making. The participants rethought their own positions and opinions (e.g. Innes & Booher, 2013), making different solutions possible:

> In [the] period [that] the mediator Alexander D'Hooghe was […] appointed[,] [w]e were allowed to bring in experts. They dared to let go of their premise - "Oosterweel and nothing else". Taboos were killed, also on our side. That is how we found each other, even though it remained a dime on its side until the last days. (Manu Claeys as cited in Renson & Winckelmans, 2017)

However, deliberation and participation—and the way these processes changed how mobility problems and solutions are perceived by both sides—are only one part of the transformative dynamics at play. We must take a power-oriented approach to social transformation into account to fully comprehend what is occurring.

Currently, the unfolding events are mainly portrayed as a win-win situation in which different actors have come to a shared and improved understanding of the mobility problems and how these are best solved. When analysing the transformative dynamics and outcome of the conflict, however, an equally valid frame would be a victory of one actor over the other. Given the long neglect and marginalisation of the citizen movements by BAM and the various governments in charge of the Oosterweel link, the Pact for the Future also signified a transformation in relations of (hegemonic) power, despite the pact being framed in conciliatory and collaborative terms. Indeed, 15 years of contention passed before this collaborative way of working became possible. Collaborative planning only became conceivable once the government encountered citizen movements that wielded sufficient power to form a threat.

The threat was 'constructed' through years of building power through citizen organising. Opposition to the link road plans existed but was hardly effective before 2008. While the counter-arguments of *stRaten-generaal* were technically and juridically sound and supported by important managers of port companies, and the Green Party, the arguments fell on deaf ears in the Flemish government (Leysen et al., 2017). We argue that this is because *stRaten-generaal* could not set up a counter-hegemonic movement on its own, as it lacked visible public support for its position. For inclusion to matter to citizens, the concerns addressed should be widened to those that touch, and hence mobilise, broad sections of the population in their everyday life.

When the action committee *Ademloos* entered the scene, the balance of power began to shift. *Ademloos* was able to mobilise thousands of protesters in a march in the fall of 2009, demonstrating against the perceived health risks of the Lange Wapper viaduct. *Ademloos* enforced the referendum by collecting signatures of 10 percent of the people living in Antwerp. During the 2009 public referendum, about 135,000 voters turned up, and 79,000 voted against the governmental link

road plans. Crucial in this shift is how *Ademloos* reframed the discussion from urban planning to air pollution and associated health risks, which appealed to a much broader section of the population.[5] This reframing of the topic being contested also introduced more passion into what had been a rather technical debate, making room for feelings and 'common affects' (Oppelt, 2014).

Furthermore, by introducing air pollution as an argument in the debate, *Ademloos* added public health as a major issue alongside mobility and economy. In doing so, they enlarged the group of 'actors with a right to speak' from only politicians, traffic specialists, and urban developers (some of whom were already backing *stRaten-generaal*'s proposal) to include cardiologists, pulmonologists, physicians, and other health experts. Including these new actors in the debate further strengthened the chain of equivalences emerging around *Ademloos* and *stRaten-generaal*. When *Ringland* entered the debate in 2014, they further reinforced the system of equivalences by organising festivals, assembling experts and academics into a '*Ringland Academy'*, and bestowing more passion onto the conflict by making citizens enthusiastic about a possible future in which the ring road would be covered by greenery.

In the citizen movements' struggle against the Flemish government's plans, two elements in particular provided leverage: the (run-up to the) public referendum initiated by *Ademloos* in October 2009 and *Ademloos* and *stRaten-generaal*'s notice of objection at the Council of State in 2015.

*Ademloos'* first successful power-building strategy in the run-up to the referendum involved gathering 500 health patients and staff members in front of Antwerp city hall. These patients were going to be drastically affected by the traffic on the Lange Wapper viaduct. *Ademloos* thus put a face to those who would be affected by the abstract notion of traffic-generated particulate matter. A series of events was already eroding BAM's legitimacy during that period, making the action

groups' position stronger. In March 2009, an independent research team asserted that the BAM route was perhaps 10.1% cheaper than the *stRaten-generaal* trajectory, but the *stRaten-generaal* trajectory scored better on all sustainability indicators (mobility, people, and the environment). Several Antwerp and Flemish politicians showed increasing unease with the decision to build a viaduct. Additionally, several months later, the auditor of the Council of State concluded that there was a conflict of interest in the drafting of the environmental impact report and advised the government to repeal the relevant zoning plan. While not submitted by the citizen movements, the auditor's advice affirmed the citizen movements' claims of partiality during the decision-making process. These events resulted in a loss of public credibility for BAM. With the public referendum indicating that a majority of the voting inhabitants rejected the Oosterweel link and the associated viaduct, the public support for the citizen movements and their considerations for 'public health' became more tangible.

The second area of leverage for the citizen movements was the notice of objection filed with the Council of State in July 2015 demanding it annul the zoning plan. When the auditor of the Council of State endorsed *Ademloos'* and *stRaten-generaal's* objections in January 2017, the Flemish government was pressured to find a solution and gave the mediator more space for negotiation. The *stRaten-generaal* spokesperson maintained that:

> The matter tilted after we filed a complaint with the Council of State in the summer of 2015. The Flemish government realized that there was no other option than to analyse the various scenarios scientifically, based on figures on traffic flows about which we all agreed. (Manu Claeys as cited in Renson & Winckelmans, 2017)

The inclusion-oriented approach to social transformation is important when analysing the transformative dynamics in this case. However, for joint sense-making through inclusive dialogue and rational argumentation to work, the existing power relations first needed to shift. On a procedural level, hegemonic conflict, the development of a chain of equivalence, and the use of passion were necessary to arrive at a point where deliberation became a possibility.

***Dis-identification and subjectification as forces for transformation***

An analysis focused on changes in the balance of power and the more inclusive process of joint sense-making still does not capture all transformative dimensions in this case. A shift in the symbolic order is reflected in statements made by academics and businesspeople when the 'Pact of the Future' was announced:

> [P]oliticians accept that elections are not the only source of legitimacy and recognize through direct negotiations that pressure groups equally contribute legitimacy. Both are new. (Filip De Rynck, academic political analyst, 2017)

> The most important achievement of the past process is that the government is aware that it must deal with its stakeholders differently. It is no longer conceivable to push a big infrastructure project down the throat of many stakeholders and whole communities. (Christian Leysen, businessman in the Antwerp Port, 2017)

These statements reveal that actors not previously seen as legitimate speakers were being recognised as legitimate in the process of designing space. The symbolic order which determines 'who is qualified to say what a particular place

is and what is done in it' is altered, accepting citizen movements and citizens as legitimate decision-making partners next to the classical political powers.

This transformation began with the individual who later became the spokesperson of stRaten-generaal. Observing the decision-making procedures in the Oosterweel link road and other development projects in Antwerp, the spokesperson questioned citizens' role in these projects. To him, the main problem with the projects was not merely related to infrastructure but about who should be able to decide what would be built and how it should be decided.

> In case of the Oosterweel link road, various actors in our democracy are not only battling over a bridge or a tunnel, it is also a battle over territory. […] the classical political powers are losing power within our democracy. The Oosterweel struggle shows that it is not productive for those classical, elected powers to oppose it, but to deal with it as efficiently as possible when making political decisions. (Claeys & Verhaeghe, 2009)

Resembling Rancière's notion of disagreement, this challenge cannot be reduced to a confrontation of interests and values between established partners. It is also a debate over the object of the dispute. Most politicians and planners were unwilling to listen to the claims of the stRaten-generaal spokesperson and other opponents, negating their legitimacy. On the eve of the referendum, one planning professor, for example, stated:

> A viaduct is a drastic decision. […] I, therefore, assume that specialists have thought very carefully about this. I have full confidence in the people who have to decide. Let us certainly not organize a referendum. *This file is food for specialists* [italics added by the authors]. (Oswald Devisch, urban planner, as cited in n.k., 2009)

As a writer who studied Germanic languages, the *stRaten-generaal* spokesperson was in no position to interfere with planning processes but he disagreed with the classification, arguing:

> I often hear the self-evaluation that one does not feel like a specialist in urbanism, and therefore remains cautious when expressing criticism. Because others will know more about it. I think this is a reflex to throw away as far as possible because in the area of urban planning and spatial planning we are all specialists until the opposite is proven. It's about our living environment, and *we know everything about it* [italics added by the authors]. (Manu Claeys, spokesperson of *stRaten-generaal,* as cited in Claeys, 2013)[6]

Although officially not a planner, the spokesperson of stRaten-generaal acted as one throughout the conflict, presenting technically and legally founded alternative planning propositions and formulating rational counter-arguments. He presented himself, in other words, as a 'citizen-planner' (Beard, 2012) equal to professional planners. He acted as a radical or insurgent planner, in Friedmann's and Sandercock's terms, and demanded to be heard as such.

The spokesperson of stRaten-generaal did so using rational and technical arguments. In a sense, he still responded to the image of the planner as an expert. Through his actions, however, he opened up the symbolic order for other citizens and action groups, who presented themselves not as expert planners. The spokesperson of Ademloos and a group of elderly neighbours, for example, became involved after attending and being inspired by a public presentation of *stRaten-generaal* (Van Hees & Avonts, 2018).

In sum, alongside changes in power relations and the sense-making process through the inclusion of various stakeholders, a third type of transformation is apparent in this case. The third interpretation defines transformation as the alteration of the symbolic order by the emergence of a new political subject. By dis-identifying from the position given to him and by presenting himself as equal to professional planners, the individual who later became the spokesperson of stRaten-generaal disrupted the common method of looking at planning and who should be involved in planning practices.

Admittedly, the *stRaten-generaal* spokesperson can hardly be compared with, for example, the Anti-Eviction Campaign activists whose insurgent planning practices Miraftab and Wills (2005) and Miraftab (2009) describe. However, we follow Jacques Rancière's argument that there is no specific group in society destined to bring forth transformation (Chambers, 2013, pp. 16-17). The symbolic order can be disrupted and altered by anyone who does not feel represented.

By itself, however, political subjectification as a force of social transformation remained limited in its effects. Power-building through the development of alliances and chains of equivalence was necessary for the government to perceive the citizen movements as a significant enough threat to begin a deliberation process.

The case also shows how political subjectification as a transformative force is temporal. The eventual rapprochement between the citizen movements on one side and the Flemish government and BAM on the other, the institutionalisation of their collaboration in the 'Pact of the Future', and the incorporation of the *stRaten-generaal* spokesperson into the BAM board of directors resulted in the reformation of the symbolic order. Once incorporated and normalised in the symbolic order, a subject loses its transformative character when transformation is perceived as political subjectification. For example, by becoming a member of

the BAM board, the *stRaten-generaal* spokesperson engaged in an extensive collaboration with BAM, the 'work community', and the involved administrations and politicians. In this position, he became an important defender of the policy pursued (Claeys, 2019), countering the critiques of activists and academics who believed that the citizen movements have given in too much to the Flemish government and BAM/Lantis (Boelens, 2018; Van Dooren, 2019).

## 3.4 Conclusion

This article argues that using a polysemic understanding of 'social transformation' provides a deeper analysis of the transformative dynamics at work in contentious planning cases. Inclusion-oriented, power-oriented, and subjectification-oriented social transformation can impact day-to-day planning. We have substantiated this claim by examining the transformative dynamics at play in one of Belgium's most notorious planning conflicts in the past two decades, the Oosterweel link road conflict in Antwerp, focussing on these three forms of social transformation.

The first interpretation, the inclusion-oriented approach to social transformation, links the possibility of social transformation to the inclusion of multiple interests at the decision-making table and to the change in people's conception of reality through inclusion. In the Oosterweel case, the appointment of a mediator to facilitate dialogue between opposing parties and creation of a collaborative 'work community' resulted in shifts in stakeholders' opinions: The spokesperson of one of the action groups that initially fought the Oosterweel link road developments admitted that, through inclusion and dialogue, taboos were killed on both sides. In other words, inclusion-oriented procedures, such as plural narratives in the decision-making process, resulted in social transformation as defined in the inclusion-oriented interpretation (i.e., actors rethink their positions, interests, and values).

The second interpretation of social transformation, the power-oriented approach, associates the possibility of transformation with explicit counter-hegemonic struggles that aim to change power relations. In the case of the Oosterweel link road conflict, deliberation between the government and citizen movements was impossible until the citizen movements gained enough power to form an actual threat to the government and its plans. The enormous public support for the citizen movements—mobilized by activating political passion about the subject—as well as the pending notice of objection at the Council of State, put pressure on the Flemish government to find a solution that could satisfy both parties.

The subjectification-oriented interpretation of social transformation, which revolves around the emergence of new political subjects changing the symbolic order of society, is a third interpretation relevant in the analysis of this case. Alongside the power struggles and inclusionary processes that took place, a disruption of the symbolic order of planning processes occurred and new subjects were created. Ordinary citizens such as the spokesperson of *stRaten-generaal,* who until then had not been seen as legitimate participants in planning processes and whose voice was ignored and treated as irrelevant, were able to break into the planning process. They established themselves as equals and legitimate participants, hence altering the symbolic order.

We have shown how different forces of transformation intertwine and can be mutually reinforcing in contentious planning processes. In this case, for example, political subjectification remained limited in its effects as a force of social transformation until it was accompanied by power-building. Similarly, the inclusion-oriented transformation we observed in stakeholders' perspectives shifting through mediation and dialogue could only occur because the citizen movements gained enough power to form an actual threat to the government and its plans. But also, the combination of a shift in the balance of power with the emergence of new political subjects, the establishment of their equality of

speaking and their eventual inclusion in the formal decision-making process shows that there is more to social transformation than a shifting balance of power.

At the same time, however, certain forms of transformation can exclude others. Inclusion-oriented transformation and subjectification-oriented transformation are unlikely to occur simultaneously. With the act of deliberation and consensus-building, political subjects tend to lose their subjectification-oriented transformative character. In the Oosterweel case, for example, the spokesperson of *stRaten-generaal* became part of the symbolic order once accepted as a legitimate speaker.

What do these insights mean for the field of transformative planning practice and theory? If we accept the fundamentally political nature of planning, we also must accept that planning practices will always include and exclude certain actors and topics in its attempt to manage and control the socio-spatial order. While the degree of exclusion differs, planning processes exclude regardless of whether a planning practitioner works with a rational comprehensive or collaborative state of mind.

The way actors challenge exclusion will differ. Some professional planners will try to undo exclusion through including relevant stakeholders in the decision-making process, action groups such as *Ademloos* build a strong grassroots movement to strengthen its power base, relevancy and legitimacy. Both transformative forces are equally important for planning theory and practice, regardless of whether they are performed by a professional planner. Planners with transformative ambitions that aim to use planning as ancillary to broader social change and as contributing to a more equal and just society, need to be aware of these different forms of social transformation. Indeed, we argue that social transformation is most comprehensive when understood in a polysemic way: that is, when realised

through inclusion-oriented, power-oriented, and subjectification-oriented transformative forces.

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# CHAPTER 4

## The political ambivalences of participatory planning initiatives

Published as A1 in Planning Theory:

Van Wymeersch, E., Oosterlynck, S., & Vanoutrive, T. (2019). The political ambivalences of participatory planning initiatives. *Planning Theory*, 18(3).

## 4.1 Introduction

Participatory planning is trending among policymakers all over the world. It is presented as a tool to initiate spatial transformation, deepen democracy and improve spatial governance. On a theoretical level as well, there has been a renewed interest in this multifaceted phenomenon, with critical planning theorists examining whether and which types of citizen engagement can be seen as the way forward in democratising the planning system or exploring whether consensus or conflict oriented approaches to participation provide the best tools in understanding its transformative potential (Aylett, 2010; Bäcklund & Mäntysalo, 2010; Legacy, 2016a; Monno & Khakee, 2012).

When it comes to analysing processes of citizen participation in planning, the collaborative planning approach and the agonistic planning approach have dominated the debate for the last two decades (Silver et al., 2010). Both approaches originate from the same dissatisfaction with the top-down, technocratic spatial planning practices that ruled the field in the post-war decades but provide different alternatives of what democrat politics in spatial planning practices entails. To that end, many of the planning scholars in the collaborative line of thinking find inspiration in Jürgen Habermas' theory of communicative action (Forester, 1987; Healey, 2006; Innes & Booher, 2010), while adherents of the second strand take Chantal Mouffe's thinking on (ant)agonism as a starting

point (Jean Hillier, 2003; McClymont, 2011; Mouffe, 1999; Pløger, 2004; Purcell, 2009).

While initially these two approaches were positioned as fundamentally opposed to each other, in recent years there is a growing tendency of scholars attempting to overcome this rather dichotomising view on participatory planning processes. Beaumont and Loopmans (2008) for example argue for a more 'hybridised' conception of participation (i.e. 'radicalised communicative rationality') in which a Habermasian 'ideal speech' situation is combined with bottom-up agonistic processes as Mouffe would foreground them. Bond (2011) develops an analytical framework in which Mouffe's ontology is privileged, but in which she co-opts principles of collaborative planning theory. Silver et al. (2010) and Aylett (2010) take a less 'ontologising' stance and propose an empirically informed perspective, in which both consensus-building and divisive social struggles are seen as different 'moments' in the same democratic planning process. They do accept that both perspectives may be incompatible on ontological grounds, but this does not at all preclude that actors in participatory planning processes may draw inspiration from both perspectives to different degrees in different phases.

In this paper, we argue that in order to understand the complexities and ambivalences of actually existing participatory planning processes, we should refrain from 'over-ontologising' the question of democratic politics in planning processes and start from the assumption that participatory planning processes as an empirical reality can sustain and accommodate radically different, even incompatible views on democracy. By over-ontologising we mean the tendency in the academic debate on democratic politics to focus more on the ontological differences and incompatibilities between different approaches than on the empirical reality one wants to study, ignoring those empirical elements that do not fit in the chosen ontological point of view.

Building further on Silver et al.'s view (2010), which pleads for a more empirically grounded understanding of participation in planning processes, we claim that while different approaches to democratic politics may differ strongly from each other, they may occur alternately in the different phases of the participatory planning process or even simultaneously. We argue that this is the case due to the different actors involved in the spatial planning process being informed by different understandings of participation and the notion of democratic politics underlying it and using their (unevenly distributed) capacities to impose their understanding of participation on the planning process. Secondly, we argue that while current planning scholars predominantly focus on the applicability of the collaborative and (ant)agonistic approach to democratic politics, a third approach may be discerned. This third understanding of democratic politics, which is based on Jacques Rancière's notion of political subjectification grounded in equality, has only recently started to emerge in planning theory but, as we will show in our empirical analysis, helps refraining from over-ontologisation and is useful to fully capture the empirical complexities of actually existing citizen participation.

The article begins with a brief and necessarily stylised review of the key aspects of Habermas', Mouffe's and Rancière's thinking on democratic politics as applied in planning literature: what is the nature of democratic politics, what is threatening democratic politics in spatial planning processes and who is the subject of democratic politics. To show the political ambivalences encountered when opening up public space for citizen participation, we mobilise a case of a contentious participatory planning initiative in Ghent (Belgium), i.e. the Living Streets-experiment. The case illustrates well how multiple approaches to democratic politics are often simultaneously at work in concrete participatory planning processes and indeed explain their contentious nature. Rather than presenting one definition of democratic politics as superior to the other, we highlight the relevance of combining multiple understandings of democratic

politics to arrive at a deeper understanding of the ambivalent and contentious dynamics of citizen participation in spatial planning.

## 4.2
## Planning theory and democratic politics in citizen participation

The democratisation of spatial planning has been and is still argued for based on a range of approaches with different ontological stances. One well-established distinction in this context is between collaborative and agonistic approaches, the former inspired by among others the work of Jürgen Habermas on deliberation and the latter on Chantal Mouffe's work on the political (Beaumont & Loopmans, 2008; Bond, 2011). More recently, yet another approach has emerged, inspired notably by the work of Jacques Rancière, which stresses the importance of (disruptive) processes of subjectification in planning processes (Gualini, Mourato, & Allegra, 2015; Legacy, 2016a). We are not focused here on discussing the variety of understandings of, and nuances in different planning approaches, whether they are collaborative, agonistic or disruptive, but aim to distil the fundamental differences in how democratic politics are conceived in planning processes by the involved actors. We are therefore more concerned with (the authors of) the underlying social theoretical perspective than with the actual planning approach in all its nuances and complexity. We will now compare and contrast the three perspectives on democratic politics by analysing their views on the nature of depoliticisation (the suppression of democratic politics) and of politicisation (the foregrounding of democratic politics) and their conception of the subject engaging in or being formed in democratic political practice.

The philosopher and sociologist Jürgen Habermas has had a major influence on thinking about participation and spatial planning, most notably in the collaborative (Healey, 1992) or deliberative planning approaches (Forester, 1999). Habermas famously distinguishes the lifeworld and system world (Habermas, 1981, p. vi), with the lifeworld referring to shared values and assumptions that

give meaning to everyday experiences (e.g. Innes & Booher, 2010, p. 23), while systems refer to rationalised processes (like economic, juridical or administrative systems) and are characterised by efficiency, calculability and control. These systems are dependent on the lifeworld for their legitimacy, since it is in the lifeworld that people create common assumptions on how things are supposed to work and on what is (not) fair.

| | Habermas | Mouffe | Rancière |
|---|---|---|---|
| Nature of depoliticisation | Lifeworld as privileged site for making sense of the world is colonised by instrumental rationality | Conflict and social division delegitimised by search for rational consensus | Specific distribution of the sensible/police order that is normalised and presented as given |
| Nature of democratic politics | The application of communicative rationality in ideal speech situation leading to rational consensus (deliberation) | Opposing political identities and building counter-hegemonic power (agonism) | (Temporary) dis-identification with given name, place and function and subjectification through claiming equality (disruption) |
| Subject of democratic politics | Rational and consensus-seeking individual, focused on common good | Passionate, (politically) identitarian and adversarial (but accepting legitimacy of adversaries) | Always in the making through assertion of equality as human being |

**Table 4.1** Three perspectives on democratic politics: Habermas (deliberation), Mouffe (agonism) and Rancière (disruption)

The problem of late advanced capitalism, according to Habermas, is the colonisation of the lifeworld by instrumental rationality. This type of rationality is goal-directed and links means to ends in the most efficient way (Habermas, 1981). This colonisation entails a crowding out of communicative rationality, which is rationality grounded in a mutual understanding of how things (should) work. A large amount of collaborative planners mobilise Habermas' understanding of instrumental rationality to criticise the reduction of spatial planning to a rational

and comprehensive task carried out by experts (Dryzek, 1994; Innes & Booher, 2013). Having its main theoretical foundations in the Frankfurt School of critical sociology, much of the writing in collaborative planning is implicitly built on the assumption that planning is depoliticised because the lifeworld as the privileged site for making sense of the world is colonised by a range of instrumental rationalities promoted by experts and the highly rationalised systems through which they organise space.

To counter this, collaborative planning theorists argue that spatial planning decisions – in order to be truly democratic and hence politically legitimate – should be the result of a consensus reached through reasoning on the basis on well-founded arguments in the absence of coercion (ideal speech situation) (Booher & Innes, 2002; Forester, 1980; Habermas, 1979, p. 3).[1] The political subject of communicative rationality is hence a rational and consensus-seeking individual, which is focused on the common good (as defined through processes of deliberation) (e.g. Inch, 2015).

The political philosopher Chantal Mouffe has a very different view on the subject of democratic politics, although she would also reject the idea that the expert, as a manager of territory, is the primary democratic political subject. Mouffe refers to the latter – the predominance of a technical-managerial governance logic – as 'post-politics' (Mouffe, 2005). However, for Mouffe, the subject of democratic politics cannot be rational and consensus seeking, but is a subject – complex and always in the making (Mouffe, 2013 [1988]) – that comes into being by opposing a 'constitutive outside', an 'other', an 'adversary' (Dikeç, 2012a). In that sense, democratic political subjects are not consensus-seeking but adversarial, not just rational but also passionate and identitarian. Subjects thus become politicised through the development of counter-hegemonic narratives that can transform the existing power relations and establish a new hegemony (Purcell, 2009, pp. 151-153).

Democratic politics, to Mouffe and followed by the agonistic planning approach (Metzger et al., 2015), is defined by a struggle between different political identities tied to opposing hegemonic projects that could never be reconciled rationally but depend as much on passions and that compete for power and influence (Mouffe, 2005, p. 21). Seen like this, it becomes clear that for Mouffe not only the 'instrumental rationality' criticised by Habermas is depoliticising, but also the search for a rational consensus that he proposes as an alternative. Habermas' framework erases antagonism from the public sphere (Mouffe, 1999). In Mouffe's political theory and the spatial planning approach that is inspired by her, antagonisms is immanent to all human societies and is precisely what gives rise to the political (Mouffe, 2005; Pløger, 2004).

At first sight the work of the French philosopher Jacques Rancières, which more recently began to inspire spatial planning scholarship (Gualini, 2015; Metzger et al., 2015; Legacy, 2016; Allmendinger and Haughton, 2012), carries some similarities with the approach of Mouffe. For Rancière, depoliticisation resides in a specific distribution of the sensible that is normalised and presented as given. This so-called 'police order' creates order in society by distributing places, names and functions (Nash, 1996) and determines what can be said, seen and done in a particular context by a particular person. Although the discourse reminds of Foucault, the stress on the 'givenness' of this distribution of places, names and functions (Dikeç, 2007, p. 17) also shows affinity with the notion of hegemony. Where Rancière clearly departs from Mouffe, however, is in his notion of the democratic political subject, or better the process of political subjectification (e.g. Davidson & Iveson, 2014; Dikeç, 2012a).

Contrary to Mouffe, Rancière does not define a political subject as a group that becomes aware of itself, finds its voice, forms a counter-hegemonic bloc and imposes its weight on society (Rancière, 1999: 40). Nor does he believe – as Habermas does – that the political is situated in subjects performing

communicative reasoning in order to reach consensus on the common good. Rather, to Rancière political subjectification occurs beyond both the realm of power and rational dialogue, when a subject dis-identifies with the name, place or function assigned to it and thus disrupts the existing societal order (Kaika & Karaliotas, 2014). "It makes visible what had no business being seen, and… makes understood as discourse what was once only heard as noise" (Rancière, 1999, 30). This is not done by building counterhegemonic power or engaging in deliberation, but by claiming equality as a fellow human being and thus testing the democratic promise of equality between human beings on the unjust social order. Democratic politics then entails disrupting the symbolic order that constitutes society by giving everyone a particular name, place and function.

Although it may appear that Habermas' ideal speech situation also upholds a notion of equality, it is conceived very differently. An ideal speech setting assumes a common lifeworld, where different opinions may each reflect one side of a multi-sided reality (Innes and Booher, 2010: 7) and where political debate implies that already existing political subjects are made to converge towards consensus through rational argumentation. To Rancière (and Mouffe as well), there is no common lifeworld. What is at stake in democratic politics, is what can be seen as an identity, interest or an opinion in the first place (Rancière, 1999: 55), about who is visible as a speaker able to utter and who is not. Political subjects, then, are not already established but are created in the disagreement. Additionally, while for collaborative planners equality is about giving people with different identities, interests and functions the same opportunities to voice their rational arguments at the negotiation table, Rancière sees this as a situation in which one group 'gives' equality while another group 'receives' it (May, 2009). For Rancière, society is instituted through a 'distribution of the sensible' that defines whose claims are understood as legitimate and whose are not, whose claims are recognised as comprehensible and whose are just seen as noise. This cannot be easily undone

through rational arguments. Equality cannot be distributed but is asserted by people claiming equality against an unjust social order.

This is also different from Mouffe's understanding of democratic politics, which is based on antagonistic identities being created through the logic of the constitutive outside. To Rancière, a true political struggle is not a battle between enemies or adversaries, in which a political subject is created by its opposition to a different subject. Not identification with a particular group but (individual) dis-identification from society's symbolically constituted order stands central in Rancière's political thinking. While Mouffe sees the constitution of new bodies based on a constitutive outside as a precondition for the political, for Rancière the political ceases to exist when identitarian positioning ('we' vs. 'they') takes over. Dis-identification is by nature short-lived and eventually gives way to (new) forms of identification. To Rancière then, the political is always both temporal and a precarious act. "Political subjects are always on the verge of disappearing, either through simply fading away or, more often than not, through their re-incorporation, their identification with social groups or imaginary bodies" (Rancière, 2004, p. 7).

Now that we briefly discussed how Habermas, Mouffe and Rancière see depoliticisation, the nature of democratic politics and the subject of democratic politics, we will use this framework to analyse the political ambivalences in a case of participatory planning that triggered a lot of contention. We first give an introduction to the case-study of the Living Streets in Ghent's Brugse Poort and briefly discuss the applied methodology. In the empirical section, we then show how different visions on democratic politics can be observed when looking at different actors and different phases of the spatial planning conflict.

## 4.3
## Contentious participatory planning in a changing post-industrial neighbourhood: the case of the living area in Brugse Poort

The Living Street-concept originates in 2012, when a think-tank of public servants, citizens and business people brainstorms on Ghent's future with regards to sustainable mobility, a focus which coincides neatly with the city's ambition to become climate neutral by 2050. The brainstorm results in a concept that combines a reduction of car usage with neighbourhood parking and participatory decision making. This so-called Living Street concept entails that residents redesign their street for a period up to two months, as such turning it into 'the street of their dreams'. Residents who are interested in participating in this experiment are supported by 'Trojan Lab', a temporary non-profit organisation founded for this purpose. Trojan Lab provides the organising residents with logistic support, facilitates communication between the City administration and residents and mediates when conflicts arise. While residents are free to choose how to redesign their street, often however, the design includes a low-traffic or car-free zone, covering tarmac with artificial turf mats and replacing parking lots with colourful picnic tables, self-made flower boxes, street furniture and pop-up bars.

The Living Street-experiment grew gradually, starting with 2 Living Streets in 2013, steadily increasing to 18 Living Streets in 2016. With 46 Living Streets already organised between 2013 and 2017, this initiative has become more and more embedded in the urban fabric of Ghent, while becoming popular in cities all over Europe as well. Cities like Amsterdam, Brussels, Utrecht and Rotterdam already experiment with their own version of the Living Street, other cities like Turin and Milton Keynes indicate to be interested in the concept. Adherents of the Living Streets praise the initiative for deepening local democracy, for its ability to encourage the feeling of togetherness in streets and for creating more urban

greenery in the neighbourhood. From 2018 on, the City of Ghent took over the supporting role from Trojan Lab, hence anchoring the initiative in the city policy.

**Figure 4.1** Living Street as it occurred in 2015 in Brugse Poort, a neighbourhood in the 19th- century belt of Ghent, Belgium. Source: Lab van Troje (www.leefstraat.be)

However, the Living Streets created many tensions as well, especially in the neighbourhood of Brugse Poort, a densely populated, disadvantaged and ethnically diverse neighbourhood in the 19th century belt of Ghent. In 2016, five Living Streets were organised at the same time in this neighbourhood, creating significant effects on the traffic situation in adjacent streets. This 'Living Area' generated higher tensions between residents than during previous experiments, leading to heated discussions between the City Council and opposition parties, with the latter disputing the legal and democratic basis of this initiative. In one street, an information panel was daubed with the text 'green selfish jerk's', in another street residents started a petition against the arrival of the Living Street. Before we explain our methodology and analyse the political dynamics around the Living Streets in the Brugse Poort neighbourhood, we briefly introduce the neighbourhood and the set-up of the Living Area.

***Brugse Poort: a post-industrial neighbourhood in transition***

Brugse Poort's chaotic street pattern and high density of buildings originate from the 19th century, when the textile and steel industry settled in the area, attracting a mass of labourers for whom new houses were built in an unplanned fashion (Oosterlynck & Debruyne, 2013). When the textile industry started declining from the 1930s onwards, Brugse Poort deteriorated in physical as well as socio-economic terms. Since the 1970s, the population ethnically diversified when labour migrants with mainly Turkish and Maghreb roots came settling in the neighbourhood. When in 2004 and 2007 Slovakia and Bulgaria joined the European Union, an influx of Eastern European migrants further diversified this neighbourhood. Since the second half of the 1990s, a growing number of white middle class families came settling in Brugse Poort (e.g. Goossens & Van Gorp, 2017; Loopmans, Cowell, & Oosterlynck, 2012; Oosterlynck & Debruyne, 2013). This is partly the result of an urban renewal program implemented to increase the liveability in the neighbourhood and partly because of the availability of relative cheap housing in the neighbourhood.

Despite gentrification, today Brugse Poort remains one of the poorer, densely populated and ethnically diverse neighbourhoods of Ghent. In 2013, about half of the population living in this district had a foreign background. The population density is 4,5 times higher than the city's average, and the average annual income per taxpayer in Brugse Poort lies 20% below the average annual income on city level.

Brugse Poort became acquainted with the Living Street-concept in 2015, in the third year that Trojan Lab was actively experimenting with the concept in Ghent. In that year, two streets participate. (see Figure 4.1) The year after, from mid-May to mid-July 2016, Trojan Lab expands the experiment in Brugse Poort, hoping to learn more about what it means to have several Living Streets in one neighbourhood at the same time. In total, five groups of initiators are found, each

creating their own Living Street. While on some occasions, these teams join forces, each Living Street had its own interpretation of the experiment. Four teams opt for a complete cut of traffic in their Living Street, while the other team chooses to work with parklets, thus keeping space for car traffic to pass through the street. Because of the four cuts, traffic in the neighbourhood is diverted quite drastically, affecting not only residents in the specific Living Streets but in the entire neighbourhood.


**Figure 4.2** Scheme of the five Living Streets occurring in 2016 in Brugse Poort, in which the dark purple strips mark a road cut for cars, the light purple strips with arrow suggest a Living Street with a passageway for cars and the red arrows refer to an adjusted travel direction. Source: Lab van Troje, own adaptations. (www.leefstraat.be)

***Data and methods***

We used different methods to retrieve the data that were used in the analysis. Firstly, we analysed relevant news articles and social media to get a first sense of how the Living Street experiments were received by different actors and social groups in Ghent between 2012 and 2016. Secondly, we carried out observations on public hearings and meetings organised by Trojan Lab . We analysed a range of documents provided by Trojan Lab and did in-depth interviews with 3 staff members of the non-profit organisation to get a better insight in the organisation's line of thinking and their motivation to promote Living Streets.

Thirdly, we held in-depth interviews with 29 residents of Living Streets and streets surrounding the Living Streets in Brugse Poort, reflecting upon their experiences with regards to the Living Streets edition of the summer in 2016. For the interviews with initiators of Living Streets, we received contact details from Trojan Lab. Other interviews were arranged, either by meeting respondents on a feedback moment of Trojan Lab, either by inhabitants responding to an advertisement on social media or by snowball sampling asking interviewed initiators whether they know non-initiators in their street who would be interested to give their insights. By opting for several ways of contacting respondents, we aimed to maximise the diversity of respondents. As our sample of interviewees contains mostly residents with strong (positive or negative) opinions on the Living Streets, we were probably less successful in reaching out to those who are indifferent or ambivalent on the issue of the Living Streets. Given our focus on political dynamics, this form of underrepresentation is perhaps less problematic, but should nevertheless be borne in mind when assessing our argument. In order to substantiate our findings and get a better understanding of the neighbourhood's dynamics in general, we also carried out an in-depth interview with the community worker responsible for the Brugse Poort neighbourhood. Both the interviews and the attended public meetings occurred between June and

December 2016, i.e. the period during and after that the Living Area took place in Brugse Poort.

## 4.4
## The political ambivalences of participatory planning in Ghent's Living streets

We now turn to our empirical analysis of the political dynamics that played out around the Living Streets in the neighbourhood Brugse Poort. We will analyse how different actors in the planning process work with different understandings of what constitutes democratic politics. This implies that one cannot understand the political dynamics around the Living Street solely on the basis of one particular (often normatively grounded) understanding of democratic politics. Approaching the definition of democratic politics as an empirical question and democratic politics as something that acquires its meaning in the planning process itself, offers an alternative to 'over-ontologising' the nature of democratic politics and is thus a good entry point in understanding the (often ambivalent) political dynamics in participatory planning processes. More concretely, we will identify specific understandings of democratic politics and their interaction by following the unfolding of the planning process in the case of the Living Streets.

#### *Turning the street into a site for communicative rationality*

The ambitions of those setting up the Living Streets in Ghent reflect a strong commitment to re-establish communicative rationality in a space that over the past decades has been colonised by the instrumental rationality of car mobility. When asked what Trojan Lab intended to achieve with the Living Street experiment, the answer is "we want to give back the street to the residents". The Alderman of Mobility, who strongly supports the Living Street experiments, argues that "the public domain is for everyone, not only for those driving a car". He argues that in many Western cities the function of the street is predefined by traffic circulation and street users identified as car drivers. Both the Trojan Lab

members and the Alderman see in this initiative a way of creating a democratic debate on other possible uses of the street. Once the dominance of car mobility is lifted, streets are opened up for other functions and users, which are often characterised as 'weaker' because they get easily squeezed out or (literally) pushed to the margins by car use. As a Trojan Lab member explains:

> The most important issue to us is: 'how to become neighbourhood again'. For some it is about his car, for the other it is about a neighbour who is not talking to him. For yet someone else, it is about having a street and occupying this street and for others it is about working at night and wanting to rest. You name it. And then you notice that everyone is [living behind closed doors]. How can we break out of this [pattern] again? (member Trojan Lab, 2016)

What becomes visible here is the firm ambition to use the street to create common lifeworlds. To do so, the streets must become truly 'public' again, a meeting place of all kind of uses and visions rather than one determined by the instrumental (and thoroughly individualising) logic of through-passing traffic and parking.

For Trojan Lab, inclusive decision-making in (temporary) re-designing streets is of utmost importance, emphasising the necessity of deliberation, both between residents and between residents and the City administration (as accessibility for the fire department, garbage collection, the emergency services etc. must be guaranteed). They stimulate initiators of a Living Street to go from door to door, consult each resident of the street on how they would like the street to change. The final set-up of the Living Street should hence be the result of deliberation, which includes as much as possible the wishes and concerns of all residents, but with a firm focus on shared concerns and the common good rather than on individual desires. One initiator says:

> We were actually obliged to say: everything you want for yourself, put that aside and talk to everyone in the street and confront them with the question 'what would you like'. We have done that. […]. So that was very intensive. […]. And then it turned out that -we felt- there were quite a few people with the same kind of concern: People drive too fast [in our street], let us do something about that. Perhaps that was the most shared concern. (resp. 4.05, organising resident of Living Street, 2016)

A Trojan Lab member points out:

> A Living Street cannot depart from your own idea about how it should be organised, […] it should depart from a common vision. […] when you do something of which everyone gets better, you'll get better yourself as well. (Vilain, 2015)

In their aim of creating a shared idea on what the street should look like, Trojan Lab and initiators draw heavily on rational argumentation. For example, when opponents raise their fear that the Living Street-experiment would threaten the availability of parking spaces in the neighbourhood, initiators propose that for every parking space occupied by a Living Street, someone would voluntarily put his or her car on a neighbourhood parking. Or when someone raises concerns of not being able to easily drive to his or her house, initiators give examples of how they themselves navigate through the neighbourhood. This deliberative dialogue between neighbours also leads to the adaptation of plans to make streets (temporary) car-free. In one of the Living Streets, residents decided not to ban traffic from the street as this would exclude less mobile residents. One Living Street resident recalls:

> So in [our street], cars could still pass [during the Living Street]. With the neighbours, we asked to do so because there is a neighbour who is not that mobile. There is also another neighbour whose husband needs nursing. […]. [We wanted] for those people that the doctor could drive [through the street] and the nurse could come. (resp. 4.04, non-initiating resident in Living Street, 2016)

Some residents see glimpses of what we earlier called a 'common lifeworld' in the process of creating and realising Living Streets. They claim that by engaging in dialogue, neighbours learn to know and respect each other's context, hence making it easier to come to a commonly agreed end result. One Living Street organiser says:

> I learned to know way more people [...] even neighbours who didn't like what we do. You address them on the street and you get to know them. [...] You know the stories even more than before, you know who lives in the neighbourhood and you get a piece of history. (resp. 4.05, organising resident of Living Street, 2016)

Another organiser explains how the common life world is experienced:

> […] everyone is involved. The day that we build the Living Street is great. That first day, everyone comes outside, the turf mats are rolled out, flags are hung... It gives an immense feeling of togetherness because you have worked on it yourself. Everyone has been involved, the whole street, everyone has had multiple opportunities to join in, to work out the ideas. (resp. 4.07, organising resident of Living Street, 2016)

However, opening up the street for communicative rationality about the streets' possible futures gave rise to forms of subject formation that highlight the shortcomings of Habermas' view of the political subject as rational and focused on the common good. In the next section, we focus on how the Living Streets in the Brugse Poort neighbourhood are confronted with fierce contestation and analyse the political dynamics and subject formation that is taking place in and through this phase of contestation.

#### *Urban sustainability as a hegemonic narrative*

In Brugse Poort, the participatory planning initiative of the Living Streets soon ran into fierce opposition. The terms in which opponents frame their contention with the Living Streets is very far removed from Habermasian discourse of rational consensus-seeking in ideal speech situations. Opponents perceive it as a power struggle between different social groups with different societal positions and resources pushing very different ideas of what makes a neighbourhood liveable. Against the discourse on deliberative democracy of Trojan Lab and its supporters, they present the neighbourhood as socially divided and use identitarian terms to describe their adversary (and themselves).

Residents opposing the Living Streets say:

> And now with these Living Streets, they really make me crazy. You settle in a neighbourhood, a working-class neighbourhood, an authentic neighbourhood and then you say "and now we're going to make it liveable". […] what an arrogance, to say "we just lay some artificial turf mats, and we put ourselves in the middle of the street […]". […]. How arrogant can you be to do such a thing? (resp. 4.19, non-initiating resident of Living Street, 2016)

> The problem now is that there are people who came living in the neighbourhood and got a cheap house. And what happens? They begin to set their own laws here. [...] They begin to change your lifestyle. [...] not everyone is lucky like those people who sit there all day with their wine. Not everyone is lucky enough to work from home. [...] I have problems with it because I am a taxi driver, you understand? We always try to be with a customer within 15 minutes. (resp. 4.24, non-initiating resident of Living Street, 2016)

> A lot of alternative types, which is not per se a bad thing, bought and renovated a house in the neighbourhood, and came living here. And in fact, and this has happened gradually, now they are in power in the street and in the neighbourhood. (resp. 4.25, non-initiating resident of Living Street, 2016)

Around these newly emerging social divisions, new identities – or political subjects – take shape. In a post-industrial neighbourhood like the Brugse Poort the term 'newcomers' changed meaning. In the past decades, it referred to low income non-European migrants and highlighted the (perceived) shift in local social hierarchy between the established (and often impoverished) white working class and the incoming non-European migrants (Oosterlynck & Debruyne, 2013). Now, the term newcomer increasingly refers to new (white) urban middle classes and reflects a growing unease of the established population with the shift in power relations in the neighbourhood. It creates new forms of solidarity among the opponents of the Living Streets, between certain residents with a white working-class background and families with Turkish background to whom those who 'attack' car usage became a shared enemy. As one Living Street organiser recalls:

> In that sense, the conflict brought cohesion on both sides of the conflict. Not only on the side of the adherents of the Living Streets, but also at the side of the opponents. And it is cross-cultural. In that sense you can say it [i.e. the Living Streets] strengthened the social cohesion, because John [i.e. an autochthonous opposing neighbour who lived in Brugse Poort for more than 20 years] never chatted as much with his Turkish neighbours than over the last two years. (resp. 4.06, initiating resident of Living Street, 2016)

In other words, the usage of a car determines the 'constitutive outside' for the community of opponents. In this context, 'the car' and 'the cargo bike' (i.e. a mode of transportation often linked to white, progressive middle-class families) serve no longer as merely functional vehicles to move yourself around but became powerful signifiers of the social group to which residents belong and their status in the city. A local taxi driver with a migrant background and long-term resident claims:

> I am a stranger in my own neighbourhood ... We have the impression that we don't have anything to say here anymore. [...] And that creates a feeling of "you come home, you get in, you close the door and you do not want to do anything outside anymore". (resp. 4.24, non-initiating resident of Brugse Poort, 2016)

The contentious dynamics triggered by the Living Streets-initiative show how – at least in this case – deliberative planning processes do not succeed in playing down social divisions and working towards a joint understanding of the common good. Despite the sustainability discourse surrounding the Living Streets, the initiative is not seen by opponents as a contribution towards the common good, but as a claim for hegemony of one particular group in the neighbourhood.

Opposing residents hence do not experience the (temporary) reduction of cars in their streets as enabling the creation of a 'common life world'. As residents explain:

> But one time, we went sitting there as well, and after an hour, an hour and a half, we did have the feeling that if you are not part of that gang, […] you don't completely belong there. I guess that's logical, it's in every social company like that I think […]. (resp. 4.14, non-initiating resident of Living Street, 2016)

> I have already spoken to those people and I do not understand them and they do not understand me. We see things so very differently, I cannot understand. (resp. 4.19, non-initiating resident of Living Street, 2016)

Opponents of the Living Streets are keen to point out that the Living Streets are part of a 'bigger plan'. It is not just as an attempt of newly arrived middle class families to 'take over' their neighbourhood by claiming public space and impose their lifestyles on others, but part of the City Council's general policy vision to transform the city according to their socio-ecological vision. As one resident claims:

> [But] to me, it's so much more [than those Living Streets]. It's everything. It's that traffic circulation plan, it's Watteeuw [i.e. Alderman of Mobility], it's those Living Streets, it's the entire neighbourhood… For me, they are birds of a feather. And yes, Brugse Poort is changing.... (resp. 4.19, non-initiating resident of Living Street, 2016)

Living Street opponents point out that because the vision of the new white urban middle-class residents is aligned with the City Council's socio-ecological vision for the city, they have easy access to governing politicians. The way Living Street proponents use extra-local resources to tilt the balance of power in the neighbourhood in their favour gives rise to strong feelings of disempowerment among opponents. Opponents feel that Living Street initiators can do whatever they want, with the support of the current City Council.

> Yeah, those families [i.e. those organising the Living Streets] can afford everything and get everything they ask for. […]. They have connections, they know their way around. They have ties to Tom Balthazar [i.e. then Alderman of Environment and Social Affairs], they have connections with that man. They have connections with Watteeuw. [i.e. Alderman of Mobility]. (resp. 4.25, non-initiating resident of Living Street, 2016)

> I went to that meeting before the Living Streets started. And the majority [of the people that were there] was against it, literally! Trojan Lab explained it all so very well, and then I raised my finger and said 'are you going through with this? Are we here to give our thoughts or are we just here to hear what you're up to? Because if you've already decided everything, it makes no sense that I'm wasting my time here because then it's going through'. (resp. 4.25, non-initiating resident of Living Street, 2016)

These strong feelings that the relationships of power in the neighbourhood and beyond are working to their disadvantage explain why opponents do not regard attempts to engage in dialogue from Trojan Lab and other proponents as sincere. In this context, attempts to engage in 'rational argumentation' is often seen by

opponents as proof that they only want to convince them and push through their Living Streets projects anyway.

> What they [i.e. Living Street initiators] say is 'but in the past you did not have a parking space either'. That is true, I also had to drive around but at least I was driving around. […]. But they have an answer to everything, most of it I find irrelevant. (resp. 4.19, non-initiating resident of Living Street, 2016)

> I think they [i.e. Living Street initiators and the City of Ghent] are laughing with us. It becomes so incredibly annoying. It's always that same nagging. […] After a while, you even find yourself becoming a nag. Because it is useless, it does not change anything. I just find it horrible that they do not take anyone into account. It's like [they say] 'this is how it's going to be and you will just have to accept it'. (resp. 4.21, non-initiating resident of Brugse Poort, 2016)

Trojan Lab members and City officials went out of their way to cool down tensions between residents with feedback moments and other mediation attempts. They also tried to include key figures of the Muslim community in Brugse Poort in their project, but they often did not succeed, neither were they able to maintain the image of neutral mediator. As opponents resisted the role of rational, consensus seeking subjects, but highlighted the unequal power relations and let their attitude towards the Living Streets also be determined by feelings of disempowerment, what was meant to be an ideal speech situation in which residents openly discussed the future of their street, (partially) became a battle field between opposing identitarian political subjects.

## 4.5
## Alternative modes of subjectification?

The dynamics of contention around the Living Streets seem to have reached a stalemate, with two fundamentally different understandings of democratic politics clashing which each other and providing little perspective on how one might move beyond it, except for the exercise of power. Still, there are glimpses of a third understanding of democratic politics, which may make the contention of the Living Streets productive of new democratic opportunities. This third understanding of politics resembles Rancière's vision and does not reduce (or even focus) on the notion of (hegemonic) power as the core of democratic politics nor turns a blind eye to the very real limits of communicative rationality as the basis for democratic politics. Both the Habermasian and Mouffe-inspired approaches have an important flaw, namely that in both approaches the political subject is predefined. For the Habermasian approach, a subject becomes political when it uses rational argumentation to come to a shared lifeworld, while to Mouffe, a subject becomes political through building a counter-hegemonic power, also using passions and identity markers in the process. A Rancièrean approach revolves around the notion of equality as the promise of any democracy. Although banning or reducing car traffic from public streets is a pre-condition for proper democratic politics, as the Living Streets proponents argue, that alone is not enough as its opponents claim that not everyone is in a position to speak as equal human being. The latter implies a situation in which one is willing to hear and make room for other voices than those of the highly articulate and well-reasoned members of the new urban middle classes and their widely circulating discourses on sustainable and liveable cities. It implies a situation in which one is responsive to utterances not couched in rational and argumentative terms. The Living Streets have the potential to allow for non-identitarian political subjects to emerge. A Living Street organiser describes a process of dis-identification of the

streets and its users of the 'name, places and function' given to them in car-oriented urban societies (but also the difficulties involved):

> Many people believe […] streets are created for cars. Recently we had an evaluation moment [on the Living Streets] and some of the people were saying: "We have the right to park our car and drive in this street". I even had a discussion about this with my partner. For me, the discussion already starts with this given, because I do not feel like that. […] I think: "where does this right come from". I do not think a car has more right to be there than for example a family who wants to picnic. But yes, my partner also says, "Well, that's a public road, it is supposed to drive on." But how did it actually become like this? It could also be used differently. (resp. 4.17, organising resident of Living Street, 2016)

By banning or reducing car traffic, the experiment created space for dis-identification from the existing symbolic order and its acceptance of the dominance of motorized vehicles on public streets. However, as we described in the previous section, for a significant section of the residents this potential for dis-identification, almost immediately turned into (an exclusionary) identification, as the involved people were quickly identified with one of two opposing and identitarian defined camps (e.g. car versus bike users).

In the Living Street case, there is no disruptive moment in which an actor, which was up until then unheard and unseen, claims equality and through speaking becomes a new political subject, but there are several moments in which the promise of democracy to be able to speak as equals is hinted at. We claim that these moments reflect more than just the longing for a Habermas-like ideal speech situation, but through their concern with a re-organisation of the categories through which we speak – of the roles, names and places given to people – are

more in line with Rancière's focus on equality as the ground from which political subjectification emerges and offer a potential way out of the stalemate reached. We discuss two of these instances.

A first instance is in the opponent's refusal to accept a depoliticised conception of 'sustainability' as promoted by Living Street proponents and the City Council. By equating the notion of sustainability with more greenery and less car usage, the content of the term has been fixed on a primordially ecological foundation. Social (power) relations are hardly addressed in this sustainability discourse (Swyngedouw, 2013). Opponents of the Living Streets argue that sustainability discourses need to take into account the socio-economic needs of citizens with car-related jobs (resp. 4.24) or jobs with irregular hours (resp. 4.22; resp. 4.10) – a job that they need to sustain themselves and their family – but also the situation of less mobile citizens (resp. 4.21) who may need cars to remain mobile and sustain their social life. By doing so, they broaden the experiential basis from which the meaning of sustainability is articulated and claim equality in determining what makes a city sustainable.

A second glimpse of attempts at egalitarian subjectification are to be found in the way opponents link the Living Street experiment to a broader and ongoing sociological transformation of the city (mostly referred to as (green) gentrification) and the implication of policy-making in this process. This link not only reflects hegemonic thinking (as described earlier in this article), but also reflects the notion of 'equal intelligence' as described by Rancière (2007a). Regardless of their social and political contexts, Rancière argues that all human beings are capable of creating meaningful lives with one another, talking with one another, understanding one another, etc. Hence, all human beings share an equal intelligence (May, 2009: 7). When confronted with this assertion, Trojan Lab vehemently rejected this link, claiming that they were only responsible for the Living Streets and that they should not be drawn into wider debates on local

policy-making. The opponents' reference to citywide evolutions were dismissed by Living Street proponents, setting these residents aside as 'embittered people', thus refusing to hear their voices and denying their 'equal intelligence'. When asked why some residents are against measures to reduce car traffic in the city, two Living Street proponents answer: "[They are] conservative, I think. […] A Trump voter." (resp.4.6); "This person is against everything really. An embittered person in fact. […] It is impossible to talk with this person. It is impossible to negotiate with him." (resp. 4.7). By refusing the debate to be narrowed down to the Living Street experiment, opponents may be said to engage in egalitarian subjectification, a process which quickly becomes identitarian presumably due to not being heard nor seen by others.

To conclude then, although the Living Streets have the potential to disrupt the symbolic order of streets dominated by car mobility and give rise to new political subjects, there are clear limits to the deliberative approach pursued by Trojan Lab. Debates on the (temporary) redesign of streets seem to take place within a rather narrow ecologically oriented notion of sustainability that does not take into account the full range of life experiences as related to different labour market positions or health conditions. Similarly, the framework for debate, within which rational arguments can be exchanged, is a priori restricted to the Living Streets initiative and interventions that point out the relationship between Living Streets and broader, partially policy-induced societal transformations of the neighbourhood are dismissed as not relevant. In this context, processes of egalitarian subjectification are suppressed and what was aimed to be a participatory planning process runs into serious opposition. What the third perspective on democratic politics has on offer then is an understanding of equality that is deeper than the one offered by Habermas: one in which there is no assumption of a common lifeworld and in which equality entails the very

possibility to dis-identify from and disrupt the very names, places and functions that organise the so-called common lifeworld.

## 4.6 Conclusion

In this article, we analysed the political ambivalences of participatory planning processes and focused on the dynamics of contention that play out when public streets are opened up for citizen participation. Our focus in this article lies on what it is that makes a planning process political or depoliticised and what is the political subject that acts in participatory planning processes. We distinguished three approaches and started from the by now well-known debate between deliberative and agonistic approaches, inspired respectively by Habermas' theory of communicative action and Mouffe's vision on (ant)agonism. Additionally, we introduced the somewhat newer (at least in spatial planning debates) ideas of Jacques Rancière, arguing that his vision on democratic politics does not reduce it to a rational exchange of arguments neither to power struggles. For Rancière, the political subject is neither a rational, consensus-seeking citizen, nor an adversary in a struggle, but a subject-in-the-making that is involved in an open-ended dis-identification from a given symbolic order. In this context, we argued against the over-ontologisation of debates on democratic politics and for an empirical approach that is attentive to different understandings of what constitutes democratic politics and political subjects. It is precisely this theoretically informed, yet empirical approach of political dynamics that leads to a richer understanding of the contentious nature of participatory planning processes.

In line with our call for theoretically informed empirical analysis, we analysed the ambivalent political dynamics at play in the case of the Living Streets in the Brugse Poort neighbourhood in Ghent, Belgium. We showed that while the different approaches to democratic politics do not align with each other, all three can be

seen to operate in this particular case of participatory spatial planning. This is the case because different actors operate on a different understanding of what constitutes democratic politics and the (often) contentious interactions between actors can be partially brought back to these different understandings. An analytical approach in which different understandings of democratic politics are combined is therefore required to fully capture the ambivalent dynamics of participatory planning processes. The Habermasian notion of democratic politics is promoted by Trojan Lab. Convinced of both the desirability and possibility to reach consensus through inclusive deliberation, Trojan Lab sets up a participation planning trajectory in which rational argumentation and focus on the common good was of major importance. Although this approach did result in a number of successful, collaborative outcomes, we also observed how the Living Street experience in the neighbourhood became tainted by adversarial and identitarian politics, creating unexpected and unwanted polarisation around the issue of car usage and making visible that for at least a significant section of the population there is no common lifeworld. A Rancière-based approach very much concurs with the observation that there is no common lifeworld, but – as we suggested – also offers a way to move beyond the stalemate that comes about through the opposition of a deliberative and hegemonic approach. Although no full-blown process of egalitarian subjectification can be observed in the Living Streets case study, there are claims to equality and of equal intelligence visible in the unfolding of the planning process, e.g. when residents bring other life experiences to bear on the notion of sustainability or link the Living Street initiatives to a broader sociological transformation of the neighbourhood. We suggest that the partial failure of the deliberative approach in the Living Street initiative to capture all democratic political energy in the neighbourhood can be explained by a notion of equality and political subject formation that is too limited.

To conclude, this paper has shown the added value of combining different understandings of democratic politics in participatory planning processes. A theoretically informed empirical analysis can explain the often ambivalent and contentious nature of participatory planning trajectories by referring to how different involved actors operate on different understandings of democratic politics. This conclusion leads to questions that can be explored in further research. More could be said and learned about the interaction between the three understandings of democratic politics. By way of inspiration, we mention two questions on this interaction. Firstly, although Rancière rejects a notion of democratic politics that is tied to unequal relations of power, when applied to empirical reality, it is impossible to ignore the role that power plays in the suppression of processes of egalitarian subjectification. This leads to conceptual questions on how – if Rancière is used to inform empirical analysis – power can be brought into the analysis, perhaps on a different ontological level than at which the nature of democratic politics is defined. Secondly, and relatedly, in their shared attempt to evacuate power from the site of democratic politics, Habermas and Rancière have perhaps somewhat more in common than one might think on face value. This is for example clear from the way that the initial moment of the Living Street initiatives both has elements of deliberation as well as dis-identification. An important difference between both approaches of course resides in the degree to which they see the symbolic order as something that can be shared or something that inevitably excludes and silences some people. Further empirical research can however help to clarify whether a rapprochement between these two approaches is possible.

## 4.7
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# CHAPTER 5

## Race, class and the (de)politicisation of urban development in Clairwood, South Africa

Submitted as A1 in Urban Studies

Van Wymeersch, E., Oosterlynck, S., & Vanoutrive, T. Race, class and the (de)politicisation of urban development in Clairwood, South Africa.

## 5.1 Introduction

Increasingly, radical geographers and critical planning scholars turn to post-foundational political thinkers (Marchart, 2007, p. 8) when studying both hegemonic forces in spatial governance and the contentious forces that transform these governance systems (Bond et al., 2015; Gualini, 2015; Iveson, 2014; Legacy, 2016a; McClymont, 2011; Metzger et al., 2015; Mouat et al., 2013; Uitermark & Nicholls, 2013).

Often substantially drawing on the work of political thinkers like Chantal Mouffe (1999, 2005) and Jacques Rancière (1999, 2001), these scholars start from the presumption that every society tries to create stability and structure by designating everyone to their 'proper' place and distributing the 'proper' functions, competencies and shares in a seemingly natural order of things (Nash, 1996). This order of things is a symbolic order, determining who is seen as a legitimate speaker when dealing with the design of space and who is not, and which arguments and narratives are considered to be acceptable or reasonable to use and which are not. *Depoliticising processes*, according to this approach, will try to maintain this socio-spatial order, by naturalising the hierarchical differences that arise when creating its foundations and by neutralising any force that challenges these foundations.

However, while every societal order will try to naturalise constructed hierarchical differences, the post-foundational political approach highlights that this naturalisation can always be challenged, disrupted and transformed by those who feel wrongly represented by it. *Politicising processes* can disrupt the socio-spatial system and its contingent symbolic ground, potentially altering it. For political thinker Jacques Rancière, for example, politicisation depends on political subjects claiming their equality as a fellow human being with any other human being, thus challenging the existing order by testing the democratic promise of equality between human beings on the unjust social order (Van Wymeersch, Oosterlynck, & Vanoutrive, 2019). From a post-foundational perspective, any socio-spatial order results from depoliticising and politicising processes interacting with one another.

A widely reflected upon societal foundation within post-foundational radical planning and geography literature is capitalist class relations. This foundation legitimises the hierarchical differences between property-owners and non-property-owners, and between those owning the means of production and those that don't. The class-based foundation only allows political debate regarding what can be said and done to take place within the boundaries of a capitalist economic system (Swyngedouw, 2009) and will use participatory practices to conceal the fundamental undemocratic character of this limitation (Phill Allmendinger & Haughton, 2015; Baeten, 2009; Raco, 2014, 2015). Examining unequal power relations between classes in participatory urban development projects, MacLeod (2013, p. 2200), for example, argues that power remains in hands of 'powerful landowners, glitzy architects, consultants and other associates' even though participatory planning projects create the pretence that citizens decide.

While class relations are broadly discussed, race relations,[1] on the other hand, are hardly reflected upon when examining the politicising and depoliticising forces that determine the socio-spatial image of cities. Race-related frames, however, are

both used as a means to create, naturalise and maintain hierarchical differences (i.e. as a force of depoliticisation), and as an argument to challenge these differences, putting equality at the centre of the political debate (i.e. as a force of politicisation). Especially in settler-colonial and post-colonial contexts, where alleged racial inequalities have long legitimised a symbolic order in which skin colour determines your spatial, economic and societal position but is equally used to challenge and disrupt this symbolic order, race- and ethnicity-based framing have a profound impact on the socio-spatial configuration of cities (Heynen, 2019; Stein, 2019). Post-foundational inspired planning literature, however, does hardly reflect on the link between racial capitalism and urban development. While some radical scholars apply a post-foundational political analysis in settler-colonial contexts (Legacy, 2016a, 2016b; Mouat et al., 2013), they hardly do so to address their settler-colonial history.

In an academic context that demands increased attention for the various ways a socio-spatial order is maintained and defended and for the multiple ways this order can be transformed (Brown, 2015; Metzger, 2017; Van Puymbroek & Oosterlynck, 2014), this article enriches post-foundational political theorising by exploring the politicising and depoliticising forces that create a symbolic order characterised by the lasting effects of colonial oppression, uneven racial development and racial capitalism.

We examine how race-related and ethnicity-based frames are used both to politicise and depoliticise the socio-spatial development in cities and neighbourhoods. We do so by providing a genealogy of the land use conflict in Clairwood, a small district in the South African port city eThekwini Municipality. Throughout the last 60 years (the 1950s-2010s) the socio-spatial configuration of Clairwood has evolved from an informally created residential neighbourhood to an area in which industrial and logistic facilities are increasingly taking over. Both the apartheid and post-apartheid governments have strongly stimulated this

evolution. For more than half a century, Clairwood residents have been fighting off the governments' ambitions to rezone their suburb either for industrial, either for logistic purposes. Racialised and ethnicity-based framing has played a crucial role in this battle. It has been used by the local elite to legitimise the racialised socio-spatial differences as being the most logical way to organise society (i.e. as a force of depoliticisation), and by activists to challenge this hierarchical order and claim equality between 'European' and 'non-white' cultures (i.e. as a force of politicisation). Approaching this long-lasting land use conflict from a post-foundational political point of view, we elaborate on the racialised (de)politicising dynamics that established the order of socio-spatial production in the neighbourhood.

The data for this analysis are derived from a variety of primary and secondary documentary sources, ranging from archival material from 1920 to 2000 (i.e. newspaper articles, memoranda, government and non-government records) and semi-structured interviews with 14 current key informants and 31 Clairwood residents, to secondary sources such as doctoral theses and academic articles. Dianne Scott's (1992, 1994, 2003) research on Clairwood, in particular, has been of inspiration. Scott accurately describes how between the late nineteenth century and the 1980s the Durban municipality employs seemingly neutral and technocratic tools (like legal regulations and zoning plans) to modernise and industrialise the Clairwood area without political debate. We build on these analyses of the Clairwood conflict, updating it with more recent material on the struggle between 2000 and 2015, and focussing in particular on the role racialised processes of (de)politicisation have played in the socio-spatial production of the area.

In what follows, we first introduce the conflict in Clairwood. We briefly describe the neighbourhood's geographic and economic position in the eThekwini Municipality and the current issues threatening its residents. We then examine

how matters such as the lasting effects of settler-colonial oppression, uneven racial development in Durban and racial capitalism impacted the socio-spatial development in the area. We argue that the race-related frames that have been used to (de)politicise the socio-spatial development in Clairwood are strongly interconnected with class-related matters motives.

For post-foundational political thinking, this case provides evidence of the ways in which one oppressive symbolic foundation is replaced by another. While the symbolic order altered during the conflict in Clairwood, delegitimizing 'race' as a foundation to build a society upon, the 'haves' and 'have-nots' remain largely the same during and after Apartheid.

## 5.2
## Ongoing threat in the Back of Port area

Being one of Africa's busiest container ports, the Durban Harbour (eThekwini Municipality, South Africa) has a major influence on the social life and physical appearance of the city. Especially in the 'South Durban Basin' or the 'Back of Port', the presence of the port leaves a profound mark on the social and built environment of citizens. Squeezed between the harbour and the city's industrial hub at the South Durban Basin, the residents of Clairwood, in particular, have to deal with the constant dangers of heavy freight trucks driving through the neighbourhood, illegal businesses popping up overnight and a slowly decaying public infrastructure. Like the rest of the South Durban Basin, bit by bit this suburb loses its residential touch and becomes a hodgepodge of container depots, warehouses, scrapyards, trucking businesses and noxious industries (Barnett, 2014).

Clairwood has its origins in the late nineteenth century, when mainly indentured Indian labourers settled there after completing their contracts (Moodley, 1985). Throughout the first half of the 20th century, Clairwood grew informally as the

community built all its facilities and communal institutions (Scott, 1994). At its peak in the 1950s and early 1960s, Clairwood and surroundings was the cultural and religious centre for many Indian Durbanites (SAIRR, 1984). With its 40,000 residents, it represented the largest Indian settled area in the whole of Africa ("Indians hit at Milne's "we're helping" speech," 1964). Today, however, the suburb lost much of its original appearances and the number of people living in Clairwood has been drastically reduced to 3,700 inhabitants in 2011 (Statistics South Africa, 2011).


**Figure 5.1** Map of Clairwood & South Durban Basin

For more than half a century, both the apartheid and post-apartheid governments have been trying to rezone this suburb for industrial and logistic purposes. While Dianne Scott claims that Clairwood was 'the only instance where the municipal authority was forced to modify its blueprint for industrialisation' (2003, p. 258) during the apartheid era, the current government is successfully rezoning Clairwood in silence, hence preparing it for the anticipated port expansion. And while today's residents and activists fiercely fight against these development plans,

they do not seem to be able to hold back these redevelopment plans. Going back to the roots of this conflict, in what follows, we examine how, over a period of 60 years, race- and ethnicity-based framing have impacted the current situation.

## 5.3
## Sixty years of (de)politicisation in (settler-)colonial Clairwood: Race and class as fault lines

The socio-spatial production of Clairwood is profoundly marked by the racist foundation that supported South Africa's symbolic order for decades. Being deeply affected by British colonialism, South African policies, practices and minds have long been entrenched by scientific racism, social Darwinism and feelings of white superiority, legitimising why 'blacks'[2] only marginally could partake in decision-making (Butler, 2017). It was a reason to restrain blacks from equal voting rights and to distribute land unequally among 'races'.[3]

On a local level, since the 1920s several provincial bills and local clauses were built on existing assumptions about racial differences and controlled the economic practices of non-white people. For people with an Indian background, i.e. the biggest ethnic group in Clairwood at that time, legislation was installed to prevent them from becoming an economic threat to the white middle class and to restrict their right to hold property (Kuper, Watts, & Davies, 1958, p. 101; Maylam, 1995, p. 23; Moodley, 1985, pp. 2-3).[4] As such, decades before the first apartheid government took power, racist and economic motivated governmental decisions already determined the socio-spatial configuration of Durban.

During this period, elites on different governmental levels[5] set their eyes on Clairwood to expand their industrial capacities. It was not until 1932, however, that the Durban Town Council gained legal jurisdiction over Clairwood and its residents, as previously this area was not part of Durban Borough (Scott, 2003). In 1932, the Town Council, encouraged by the Natal Chambers of Industries,

incorporated Clairwood as an 'Added Area' (Kuper et al., 1958, p. 117; Maharaj, 2002). Adding this area to the Borough of Durban provided the space and the authority for the City Council to expand its industrial activities in this area (Maylam, 1995, p. 26). Additionally, this decision almost doubled the Borough's black population, guaranteeing controlled and cheap labour (Kuper et al., 1958, p. 117; Maharaj, 2002).

***Industrial ambitions and racialised framing (50s – 70s)***

Once incorporated in the Borough of Durban, white politicians and industrialists could pursue their ambitions for Clairwood more easily. In 1952, the Durban City Council applied for the first time to have Clairwood zoned for industrial purposes. The Council argued that since Clairwood is situated in the midst of an industrial area, it is only logical that it should be rezoned for industrial use, providing job opportunities for the unemployed (SAIRR, 1984). While the responsible provincial authorities, i.e. the Provincial and Regional Planning Commission, rejected these earlier rezoning applications, the Group Areas Act (1950) of the then recently installed pro-apartheid government provided extra perspectives ("Clairwood's dying breed - digging in inspite of rocketing rates," 1982). The Group Areas Act compelled municipalities to enforce racial segregation on a frequent and grand scale, demarcating separate zones for whites, coloureds, Indians or Africans to live and own property.

The Group Areas Act and the racial inequalities these types of segregating legislation created was legitimised both through social Darwinist arguments and 'archi-political' framing (Rancière, 1999).[6] The latter type of framing was applied by the apartheid government to install a 'Homeland' policy. Inspired by doctrines from the United States (Butler, 2017), it argued that while 'blacks' might not be inferior to 'whites', they are fundamentally different and as such should have their own zones and governments. The result is a socio-spatial order in which every

citizen is designated to a specific place, both hierarchically and physically. And since 'whites' held 87 per cent of the available land during the last years of the Apartheid era (Atuahene & Brophy, 2015), race determined which class position you received. Kwame Nkrumah describes this specific interconnection between class and race as the foundation of the symbolic order in South Africa as follows:

> In a settler area such as South Africa, class is a race issue first and foremost –the "haves" are white, the "have-nots" are black –and all the usual arguments- the myth of racial inferiority, the need for government by the most able, and so on – are used to justify the perpetuation of the enforced, racialist, settler arrangement. (Nkrumah, 1970, p. 21)

In Clairwood, the national segregating policies encouraged the City Council in 1956 to recommend to the provincial Town and Regional Planning Commission that Clairwood should become a White Area for industrial use (SAIRR, 1984). While this recommendation was not followed by the Commission in 1956, in 1964, the Durban City Council and the local Group Areas Board eventually did convince the provincial Town and Regional Planning Commission to rezone about 300 acres of Clairwood for industrial purposes. The Council relocated all the people who could be forcibly removed to housing schemes in Indian zoned areas (Scott, 2012).[7] Additionally, it terminated all the leases of council-owned property in Clairwood and imposed a building ban which prevented inhabitants from building, repairing or altering their homes (CDRRA, 1965). This "freezing" of development in Clairwood lasted throughout the 1970s and 1980s and resulted in grave dilapidation of the area (Scott, 1994). Once dilapidated, the national 'Slums Clearance Act' was used to demolish houses under the pretext of improving the hygienic living conditions of residents ("Many hit by area proposals," 1970).[8]

The uncertainty regarding Clairwood's future made property owners reluctant to invest in their houses. Together with the purposeful negligence of the area by the government, this disinvestment resulted in a gradual deterioration of housing and public infrastructure, making it easier for the government to declare the houses slum and demolish them. Simultaneously, the government promised better housing with modern sewer systems in alternative areas, seducing many residents to move out of Clairwood (Toli, 1987, pp. 17-19).[9]

Reflecting on these first decades of the Clairwood conflict, one can argue that socio-spatial development is first and foremost determined by the hunger for economic gain by a small economic and political elite. In a symbolic order where race plays an important role regarding who is seen as a legitimate speaker, assumptions on racial differences function as an extra legitimisation to industrialise an area inhabited by Indians. In this context, racialised policies and legislation that ensure an unequal right to suffrage, representative power, property and access to public infrastructure and civic amenities, work as depoliticising forces. They naturalise the racialised hierarchical differences and make sure that this societal foundation is safeguarded.

These attempts to industrialise Clairwood did not go unopposed. Clairwood residents raised their voice and tried to alter the government's ambitions. The most active opposition came from the 'Clairwood and District Ratepayers and Residents Association' (CDRRA), an organisation that was founded in 1946 by residents of Clairwood and exists until today under the name 'Clairwood Ratepayers and Residents Association' (CRRA). In these early years, the CDRRA primarily objected through legal and institutionalised channels (Scott, 2003, p. 254). The CDRRA wrote memoranda to the members of the Indian Affairs Advisory Committee (CDRRA, 1965) and Councillors of the Durban City Council. They addressed the provincial Town and Regional Planning Commission in letters, held rallies and proposed alternative sites for industrialisation to the City

Council's Planning and Development Control Committee. However, while the residents criticised the government and its decisions, they lacked politicising power as they did not openly question the foundations of the existing socio-spatial order. At this stage of the conflict, the protest is mainly framed in technical and politically-neutral terms (Scott, 1994), asking for alternative housing or proposing other places for industrialisation (CDRRA, 1965). These demands do not challenge the fundamental inequalities that are anchored in the symbolic order and can be easily accommodated in the existing order. The protest was never meant to form an actual threat to the existing socio-spatial order. Rather, opposition intended to delay and modify the Council's policy concerning Clairwood. According to Govender (2012), at that stage of their struggle, Indian organisations felt that their opposition would at least enable displaced people to secure alternative accommodation.

Dianne Scott (2003, p. 254) links the lack of politicising forces to a lack of experience and resources, but also to the fact that the increasingly repressive and coercive political climate in the 1950s and 1960s constrained resistance. With the discriminatory and segregationist legislation on the rise, resistance grew as well. As a reaction, police became increasingly brutal, leaving, for example, 67 protesters dead at the Sharpeville massacre in 1960. Following, the apartheid government acted decisively and striking down all forms of political resistance. Opposition movements were banned (i.e. the African National Congress and Pan African Congress) and important movement leaders were arrested, imprisoned or exiled (Mabin & Smit, 1997; Swilling, 1985, p. 364). Repression was further institutionalised in the 1962 Sabotage Act and the 1963 90-day detention Act, legalising imprisonment without trial by Act of Parliament.[10]

Apart from fear of repression, one could also argue that in the Clairwood struggle, the symbolic order hindered a united front between different groups. In their framing, the CDRRA argued along the partitioning of the symbolic order,

differentiating between themselves and other 'races'. Addressing the Indian Affairs Advisory Committee to support its fight, the CDRRA maintained:

> It is always the Indian community which has to surrender settled areas of residence and development to Europeans, Coloureds and Africans, road development and industrial expansion. (CDRRA, 1965, p. 6)

The racialised societal foundation of the existing symbolic order, in other words, is not questioned by the main activist group.

***The anti-apartheid struggle and the claim of racial equality in Clairwood (70s-90s)***

When the national political climate shifted throughout the 1970s and 1980s, and the symbolic order based on racial hierarchisation was no longer maintainable, this had its impact on the Clairwood conflict as well. More than ever, the struggle to safeguard Clairwood as a residential area became politicised. On a national level, a massive flare of resistance marked the mid-1970s. Nationwide labour strikes, civil obedience campaigns, rent and other boycotts, the military defeat of the apartheid troops in Angola and the international divestment campaigns crippled the racist capitalist system, strengthening 'blacks' to resist white oppression (Kurtz, 2009).

Due to the highly politicised (inter)national context, democratic movements of all sorts were able to gain power. The national government tried to regain control, first by co-opting 'Indians' and 'coloureds' in the existing political structure, but still within the parameters of apartheid thinking (Mabin & Smit, 1997, p. 209). When the protest wouldn't settle, they did so by unbanning the black liberation organisations, including some resistance leaders in the decision-making process,

proposing political and economic reforms and undoing racial segregationist policies (Harrison, Todes, & Watson, 2008, p. 37).

In this context, the Clairwood Ratepayers and Residents Association grew greater confidence and power by building an interracial alliance with church groupings, progressive academics, protest groups and NGOs under the banner of the 'Help Save Clairwood' campaign (Toli, 1987, p. 45; 47). The CRRA shifted its framing away from technical arguments to a full-scale protest against the racist motives underlying the seemingly objective rationality of industrial zoning plans (Scott, 2003, p. 255). The organisation and its adherents started to see their struggle as part of a universal struggle against racist capitalism. Reporting on a community gathering concerning the rezoning proposals, a local paper writes:

> Dr McCarthy pointed out 95 percent of all land currently zoned industrial was previously in the hands of Indian, black and Coloured people and only five percent was previously owned by whites. The Rev. Sol Jacob of the Methodist Church in Pietermaritzburg said Clairwood residents should see themselves "as part of the struggle against the white man's greed to take away black land". ("Clairwood rezoning irresponsible. Meeting told of desperate need of housing," 1983)

The framing of the opposition, in other words, shifted away from the techno-managerial problems they saw in rezoning Clairwood to a frame that challenges one of the fundamentals of the existing symbolic order, i.e. the widespread political and economic inequality based on 'race'.

The result of their resistance was felt in 1986 when the South African national government obliged the Durban City Council to keep Clairwood a residential area and zone it as such. By 1990, when at the national level preparations were made to transition towards a democratic system, the municipal authorities engaged the

CRRA in the planning process to physically reconstruct the Clairwood and provide it with civic amenities. Together with the CRRA and the academic 'Built Environment Support Group', the local government prepared a Structure Plan which was approved in 1992, providing a blueprint for uplifting the area in terms of its infrastructure and services. This plan was later revised and adopted by the eThekwini Municipality in 2000.[11]

In sum, while previously ignored by the symbolic order because of their skin colour, the CRRA was able to break into the local decision-making process regarding the development plans of Clairwood. Through its speaking as equals, the interracial alliance between a variety of civil society actors, its direct opposition against the racist foundations underlying the rezoning plans and the altered (inter)national political context, the CRRA obtained the safeguarding of Clairwood's residential core and the right to co-decide on a governmental level.

***Back of Port Local Area Plan: class replaces race as foundation (00s-10s)***

Yet, from the mid-2000s onwards, the residents of Clairwood are again threatened by relocation. In this period, Transnet (i.e. the national rail, port and pipeline company) expressed the ambition to expand the container handling capacity of Durban port, an ambition that is supported by both the national and municipal government.[12] The plan that elaborates this ambition suggests to develop a new dig-out port in South Durban and to create extra space for logistics (i.e., warehouses, offices, assembly, container storage, distribution) in Clairwood (Iyer & Graham Muller Associates, 2011).

When legitimising the erasure of Clairwood's residential zone, the authorities could no longer invoke discriminatory racial segregation legislation that was common during the apartheid era. Tools that maintained the racialised symbolic order, such as of the Population Registration Act and the Group Areas and the Native Land Acts, were abolished in the 1990s. The eradication of these

discriminatory laws ensured that no one could claim, or be deprived of, any land rights based on race.

Instead, Transnet framed the upgrading of the container capacity as a necessity and unavoidability, since 'the projected container volume growth and an anticipated iron ore and manganese export boom, mean [that Transnet] has no option but to grow capacity'(Oirere, 2016). It argued that if Durban port wishes to compete with other global ports, it has no other option than to expand its docking space, its trucking capacity and its facilities for container storage. In the same line, Transnet framed the port expansion to be beneficial for the local community as it would increase employment possibilities in the area.

Like Transnet, the local government and its administration saw economic growth as the main argument to rezone Clairwood for logistics (see also Martel & Sutherland, 2018). When asked why his unit does not enforce existing zoning laws to keep trucking companies out of Clairwood's residential area, the head of the municipal Development, Planning, Management and Environment unit replied:

> […] You see, our job is not to stand in the way of economic development when the market forces dictate so. (Head of Development, Planning, Management & Environment Unit, 2017)

Similarly, when asked her opinion on the rezoning conflict in Clairwood, the senior manager for the Area Based Management in the South Durban Basin argued:

> I do believe in the bigger picture, in terms of the city, in terms of the development of our port which is our biggest asset as a city […] and I believe that Clairwood is just so well situated for one not to consider it for Back of Port activities. It would be very silly from an economic

> development point of view. (Senior manager for Area Based Management office in SDB, 2017)

From a post-foundational political point of view, we could argue that Clairwood residents are still threatened by relocation because the capitalist foundation in which economic growth is the hegemonic narrative to order society by—while shifted from racist Keynesianism to neoliberalism—remained apparent in the Post-Apartheid era. As Harrison, Todes and Watson (2008) argue:

> Clearly a break with the past of some significance was made in 1994. The obtaining of full political rights by people of colour was not without importance, and it is also possible to point to a new constitution regarded as progressive in world terms, new policies in almost every field of government, major institutional reorganization, and important new legislation, particularly in the field of labour. But the continuities (particularly in terms of the economy) are there as well. In fact in the years following the 1994 election, macro-economic policy shifted closer to a neoliberal-position, and an emphasis on economic growth replaced the previous concern with redistribution. (Harrison et al., 2008, p. 7)

While a democratically elected ANC government replaced the ethnocratic apartheid government in 1994, their plans for Clairwood resemble those of previous governments.

> […] under apartheid [the Clairwood residents] were essentially being evicted, and finally, when the apartheid government fell, they thought: 'Great, now all our dreams and ambitions are going to be realized, and the things we have been fighting for, and whatever'. And then it turned out the new ANC government had pretty much the

> same view on Clairwood than the previous government had. Because of the logic of it. (Head of Land use Management, 2017)

With the end of the racialised symbolic order, forced removals as well became taboo, even if used to ensure economic growth. When the authorities presented the final Back of Port plan and proposed the rezoning of Clairwood, the chairperson of the CRRA replied: 'They are doing the same thing as the Group Areas Act which saw thousands moved' ("South Durban vows to fight dig-out ports," 2012). This alteration in the symbolic order made it harder to pursue full capitalist ambitions. While the eThekwini Municipality would like to speed up this process, they admit that forcefully relocating the Clairwood residents is out of the question because of the apartheid legacy (Head of Land Use Management, 2017).

The current residents of Clairwood, however, are divided on the outlook of a port expansion. As many citizens live in complete impoverishment, they hope that the 'Back of Port' mega-project will increase employment in the area and benefit their living conditions (Desai, 2015).

Somewhat contradictory, when including residents in the negotiation process, the eThekwini Municipality is not looking at these residents. During the participatory process in the run-up to the Back of Port Local Area Plan, it mainly consulted the CRRA and property and business owners in Clairwood, leaving renters and shack dwellers unheard. Renters and shack dwellers are equally left out the governmental anticipated outcome of this development project. In his ideal development plan for Clairwood, the head of the Development, Planning, Management & Environment Unit of the eThekwini Municipality sees existing property owners join forces. To him, owners should combine their plots to create larger pieces of useable land and jointly start successful businesses in logistics (2017). In this plan, however, no words are wasted on renters and informal dwellers, who are the majority of people living in the area. Equally, members of

the CRRA argue that shack dwellers don't want to be heard in this struggle, as they 'have no vested interest' in the area (field notes 14/03/2017). Purcell (2009) argues this tendency to be a common issue in participatory planning:

> […] exclusion is all too often not random, but systematic. While it may be going too far to say that poor and non-white communities are being systematically excluded from communicative processes, it is not at all too much to say that property owners are being systematically *included*. Under the hegemony of neoliberalism, it is almost inconceivable that property owners or other business interests will be among those excluded from a communicative process. They are, therefore, systematically advantaged by a decision-making practice that must of necessity exclude some affected parties, but virtually never excludes *them*. Moreover, that process is commonly understood to be inclusive, and its exclusions are rarely questioned. (Purcell, 2009, p. 154)

Class division, in other words, remains persistent in the symbolic order, defining who is seen as a legitimate speaker when dealing with the design of space and who is not.

And while state-organised racial discrimination is prohibited, the neoliberal turn emancipated only a small percentage of black people economically. The original racialised class divides are mainly intact. Hence, apart from the properties owned by the eThekwini Municipality, owners in Clairwood are predominantly South Africans with an Indian, Tamil background. Keeping in mind the long apartheid history in which 'Indians' and 'coloureds' were portrayed as superior to 'blacks' (but inferior to 'whites'), and acted as a buffer between the minority 'whites' and the increasingly militant and revolutionary 'black' majority (Nkrumah, 1970, p. 28), racial inequalities and unease with one another[13] have never completely been

resolved. Racial stereotypes that were institutionalised during the apartheid era, seem to persist.

As predominantly the Tamil-Indian community inhabited Clairwood for decades, preserving the rich Tamil cultural heritage in the neighbourhood has for decades been a mainframe for resistance. CRRA members highlight that their Tamil forefathers actively created a vast number of social, cultural, educational and religious institutions in the area (CDRRA, 1965). In the fight against apartheid during the 1970s until 1990s, this demonstration of the equality of 'non-white cultures' with 'European culture' united different (racial) groups to struggle together in solidarity to overcome white dominance.

Today, however, the joint fight against 'the white oppressor' has mainly disappeared as the ANC, i.e. the former anti-apartheid movement, holds governmental power. Furthermore, the demographics of Clairwood changed substantially over time. Black South African citizens became the biggest group of inhabitants (Statistics South Africa, 2011). Like the residents who migrated from Zimbabwe, Malawi and Mozambique, many of these residents don't own property. They either rent or squat. For many of these residents, the Indian cultural heritage frame does not convince. When asked what she thinks about the idea to preserve Clairwood as a cultural heritage site, a young Black African woman living in an informal settlement answered:

> They [i.e. the Indians] can remove us out of the area, and we will be happy to leave them with their temples, ceremonies and trucks. We don't really get along with Indians, we feel like they are still discriminatory towards us. (resp. 5.16, 2017)

While in the Apartheid era, ethnicity-based arguments were successfully used to claim equality with the white oppressors, we see that today these frames create

their own hierarchical differences between residents with an Indian background and other residents.

Instead of supporting the CRRA in their struggle, many black South Africans in Clairwood put faith in the ANC ward councillor, hoping he can provide them with decent housing. Ashwin Desai (2015) summarises the link between race and class relations and highlights the difficulty of finding an adequate politicising frame to counter the government's port expansion plans:

> The communities of the South Basin are tightly woven around racial identities. This is part of what makes them strong and weak at the same time: the latter because the tendency to insularity debilitates their ability to confront the social dislocations that will emerge with the dugout port. How to keep the strength of community, the local networks, while building alliances that cross the old racial boundaries is a central challenge for activists. Then there are class interests that range from shack-dwellers who see relocation as a chance to jump the huge queue for houses to owners of residential properties in Clairwood who have seen their market value deteriorate but are now faced with a once-off opportunity to cash in. (Desai, 2015, p. 30)

While some elements of the Back of Port plan, such as the dig-out port, were temporally put on hold due to the effects of the economic global crisis in 2008, the Council adopted the general BOP Local Area Plan in 2014. And while this plan is yet to be translated into legal planning frameworks (Martel & Sutherland, 2018), zoning adjustments are already approved on an individual base if in line with the ambitions of the BOP LAP. The consequence of this implementation is that

> If anyone would bring in a rezoning to 'residential', we wouldn't approve it. If it was to 'logistics', or to 'light industrial' or 'industrial' or whatever the case, we would approve it. Because it is then in compliance with our strategic intentions. So, that's what has been working, and has been in place for the last couple of years. (Head of Land Use Management, 2017)

The Council uses this legal fuzziness to keep residents ignorant regarding their intentions to fully change Clairwood into a logistics area. In the meantime, informal businesses keep entering the remainders of the special residential area, and noxious industries and freight trucks increasingly pollute the living area of the residents of Clairwood.

## 5.4 Conclusion

In this article, we analysed the ways in which race- or ethnicity-based depoliticising and politicising frames have marked the socio-spatial appearance of a neighbourhood in the South Durban Area (eThekwini Municipality, South Africa) throughout a period of about 60 years (1950s-2010s). Applying a post-foundational political approach, we explored not only how this theoretical lens helps to better understand the socio-spatial developments in the suburb of Clairwood and other settler-colonial contexts, but also how this empirical case enriches post-foundational political theorising. We argued that while post-foundational planning literature draws plenty of attention to class relations and the ways they determine the socio-spatial development of cities, little to no attention is given to the role of race relations. Especially in settler and post-colonial contexts, where alleged racial inequalities have long legitimised a symbolic order in which skin colour determines your spatial, economic and societal position but is equally used to challenge and disrupt this symbolic order,

race- and ethnicity-based framing have a profound impact on the socio-spatial configuration of cities.

We demonstrated how in Clairwood over the course of about 60 years, different race-related and ethnicity-based frames have been used, both in terms of depoliticisation and politicisation, jointly impacting the socio-spatial appearance of this neighbourhood during the Apartheid- and Post-Apartheid-era. While from the start of the conflict, in the early 1950s, economic growth has always been an important driver to try to industrialize Clairwood, race relations played a crucial role in getting there.

Racialised narratives, policies and legislation had a depoliticising effect as they ensured an unequal right to suffrage, representative power and property, keeping the socio-spatial order in order. Race constructions, in other words, was used by the local elite to legitimise the existing racialised socio-spatial differences as being the most logical way to organise society. When residents of Clairwood opposed the industrialization plans during that period, they did not openly question these racist societal foundations. Instead, they focused on technical solutions, such as alternative housing or other places for industrialisation. These demands do not challenge the fundamental inequalities that are anchored in the symbolic order and can be easily accommodated in the existing order.

During the 1980s and 1990s, a shift in policy was achieved by a change in the activists' frame, away from the techno-managerial problems they saw in rezoning Clairwood to a frame that challenges one of the fundamentals of the existing symbolic order, i.e. the widespread inequality based on 'race'. Opposition in Clairwood successfully politicises their struggle in the 1980s by specifically tapping into the unjust 'race' relations that determined the existing socio-spatial order, and by claiming equality between 'European' and 'non-white' cultures. This politicisation along the racial fault line resulted in the fact that race is no longer seen as an official legitimisation to exclude.

While the symbolic order has been adapted as to delegitimise discrimination based on race, economic growth remains a crucial frame in determining the socio-spatial development in the area. It is a key motivation for turning Clairwood in an area for logistics. This frame reflects the prevailing capitalist and economic growth logics that underpin policy- and city-making all over the world.

In this context, the case of the Clairwood conflict shows the remaining interconnection between class and race, demonstrating that the contemporary protesters against the governmental plans are predominantly property-owners with an Indian background, while the majority of the population either rents or squats and is either a black South African citizen or a resident who migrated from Zimbabwe, Malawi and Mozambique. These persisting racialised class divisions explain partly why contemporary opposition is not able to politicize the conflict. The main frame of contemporary resistance—i.e. the preservation of the rich Tamil cultural heritage in the neighbourhood—does not convince those residents who do not feel affiliated with, or even feel oppressed by residents with an Indian background and the Indian culture. While in the Apartheid era, ethnicity-based arguments were successfully used to claim equality with the white oppressors, we see that, today, these frames create their own hierarchical differences between residents with an Indian background and other residents. As such, this article provides evidence of how one oppressive symbolic foundation—based on race- and ethnicity-related hierarchisation— intermingles, reinforces and eventually is partially replaced by another oppressive foundation. While economic growth and class division have mainly replaced race-related framing as a force of depoliticisation, the socio-spatial order that was built under the Apartheid era is mainly kept intact.

Exploring the role of race relations in the processes of politicisation and depoliticisation, this study provides evidence of its importance in the symbolic order when determining who is seen as a legitimate speaker when dealing with the

design of space, and which arguments and narratives are considered to be acceptable or reasonable to use. Ethnical prejudices as a determining symbolic ground for the existing socio-spatial order, however, is often overlooked in post-foundational radical planning literature. While countries with a (settler-)colonial history, such as South Africa, are evident cases to examine the politicising and depoliticising forces that create a symbolic order characterised by the lasting effects of colonial oppression and uneven racial development, more could be said about the role of ethnicity and racial capitalism as a symbolic ground in the socio-spatial development of cities in the 'Global North'.

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# PART THREE

Conclusions

# CHAPTER 6

## Grasping the transformative dynamics in land use conflicts

### 6.1 Introduction

Conflict and disagreement are crucial in any democracy. They keep the discussion alive regarding how to organise society. They transform norms and practices that long have been taken for granted into subjects of political discussion. Essentially, conflict and disagreement offer the possibility of *changing* the norms and practices that are responsible for the exclusion of individuals or groups from society. They provide, in other words, the possibility of social transformation.

When conflict is perceived as a productive force for transformation and is provided with the necessary space for fulfilling this role, it can lead to the recognition of previously ignored citizens as adding an insightful contribution to the urban development debate. Through conflict, topics that previously were considered irrelevant when developing large infrastructure projects can become priorities on the political agenda. Spaces can take on a different function as a result of political conflict. In other words, through conflict, the implicit and explicit rules clarifying who is qualified to say what a particular place is and what is done in it may alter.

Focussing specifically on conflicts that revolve around the organisation and use of land, this study sought to demonstrate how conflict can function as a productive force of social change. As such, it is relevant to urban studies and planning in a way that goes beyond the management of these contentious dynamics. This dissertation offered insights into how political dynamics in land use conflicts make social transformation possible. These are especially relevant for planning scholars and practitioners who are interested in transformative

planning and the relationship between politics and planning, but equally for activists and non-professional planners who do not agree with contemporary planning practices.

These insights are based on examination of four cases of contentious urban development, i.e. four land use conflicts in which people contested hegemonic logics in society. In each of the cases, people challenged certain aspects of the socio-spatial order that had been generally taken for granted. They perceived these aspects as creating injustice or maintaining structures of domination. In each case, I investigated whether the socio-spatial order was changed during the conflict. Further, I specified which dynamics were involved in either making transformation possible or preventing transformation from happening (see 6.2 for research question).

The study of these land use conflicts is based on an explicitly critical and political approach. It is critical in that I focussed on societal forms of domination (in urban and spatial planning practices) and asymmetric relations of power (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000). It is political in that I perceive the field in which I am writing this dissertation—i.e. the field of urbanism and spatial planning—as being inherently political. The act of deciding how space should be distributed and organised, how a plan is formulated and implemented, what people are involved in formulating and implementing this plan, the role a spatial planner is assigned in society: all of these issues are pre-eminently political decisions. That is, all of these are related to the broader question of how people want to organise society and fundamental disagreements concerning how they *want to* and *can* organise their society.

By introducing post-foundational political thought (Marchart, 2007) to the theoretical framework, I aimed to add an analytical layer to this political approach. What differentiates post-foundational political thought from other approaches is that it distinguishes 'politics' from 'the political'. As described throughout the

dissertation, most post-foundational thinkers define 'politics' as the societal foundations that are created to legitimise a certain social order. Acting as a more or less coherent set of implicit and explicit beliefs regarding how society should be organised, this social order creates certainty and stability. In the introduction of this PhD, I argued that planning theory and practice are already well equipped to address the dimension of 'politics'.

However, while the dimension of *the political* is increasingly being explored in the field of planning (Phill Allmendinger & Haughton, 2015; Gualini, 2015; Legacy, 2016a, 2016b; Metzger et al., 2015; Oosterlynck & Swyngedouw, 2010) it is still underdeveloped in comparison to the dimension of 'politics'. The dimension of 'the political' is used to highlight the inevitable contingency of the above-mentioned societal foundations, and is especially relevant for critical planners, scholars, and practitioners who are interested in social transformation. This is because 'the political' highlights and challenges patterns of exclusion that stem from existing attempts to manage and control the socio-spatial order. 'The political' demonstrates that every socio-spatial order could be organised differently.

Social transformation is not a binary system in which society either completely lacks transformative potential or is fully transformed. Rather, it is an uncertain and complex process which is constant in the make and in which context and counter-actions matter. Additionally, I should clarify that I do not see 'politics' as being inherently bad. 'Politics' is necessary as every society is in need of foundations. And as there is an endless variety to how we could organise our socio-spatial order, some socio-spatial orders will exclude more than others. A second issue that I must clarify is that I do not see 'politics' to be synonymous to governmental institutions and everyone working for these institutions, nor is 'the political' to be equated with the activists opposing these governmental institutions. Both 'politics' and 'the political' are linked to patterns, dynamics and

processes, and cannot be reduced to actors in certain positions without examining their actions.

Therefore, I focussed on *processes* and the interrelations between these processes that either stimulate transformation or prevent transformation from happening. I concentrated, in other words, on the politicising and depoliticising processes apparent in land use conflicts. Depoliticising processes reinforce or justify the existing socio-spatial order. Politicising processes challenge this order and move certain aspects of that socio-spatial order to the centre of political debate. In each of the examined case studies, I described the relevant politicising and depoliticising processes characterising the land use conflicts and examined the impact they had on the existing socio-spatial order. In this context, actors and their actions remain relevant to study as they may be in the position to stimulate certain politicising or depoliticising processes.

In the remainder of this conclusion, I first reprise the main research question and briefly contextualise the examined cases (6.2). In the next section (6.3) I elaborate on the difficulties of defining the notions of politicisation and depoliticisation, by demonstrating how transformative planning traditions work with multiple interpretations of social transformation (resulting in multiple interpretations of what can be classified as politicising and depoliticising). I show that working with multiple meanings of these notions can be beneficial when trying to fully understand the transformative dynamics at work in the examined land use conflicts. Section 6.4 considers the extent to which social transformation has occurred in the examined cases, and explores the processes that made transformation possible. The added value and limitations of post-foundational thinking in planning studies are discussed in section 6.5, while section 6.6 discusses some paths for further research. In the final section (6.7) I offer some general reflections on the contributions of this research to the field of critical and transformative planning.

## 6.2
## Research question(s) and cases

The central research question in this dissertation reads as follows:

**Which processes of politicisation and depoliticisation shape land use conflicts and how and to what extent do they transform the socio-spatial order?**

This question addresses three distinct issues: the processes of politicisation and depoliticisation that shape land use conflicts (see 6.3); the extent to which these processes transform the socio-spatial order (see 6.4); and the ways these processes have transformed the socio-spatial order (see 6.4).

I selected four case studies that enabled me to further refine the theory on the transformative potential of land use contestation. The case selection has been a cumulative process, in which the theoretical insights extracted from a previous case study were the foundation for the selection of the next case.

In the first case study (Chapter Two), I described how a group of youth occupied and utilised land owned by the city of Ghent (Belgium) to develop a socio-ecological commons initiative called 't Landhuis. I interpreted their resistance to the city's eviction attempts as being framed around two issues: the occupiers (i) wanted citizens to have an equal right to co-decide on the socio-ecological future of the city, but felt that (ii) existing property ownership relations hindered that right. In that socio-spatial order, ecological sustainability and participatory planning were becoming increasingly important, but more legitimacy was still given to property owners than to non-property owners. The 't Landhuis occupants challenged this hierarchisation and contested their identification as 'squatters'. They did so because they felt the 'squatter' identity institutionalised inequalities in discussions of the city's socio-ecological future.

The second case study (Chapter Three) presented the struggle against the Oosterweel link road in Antwerp (Belgium) and the ways various action groups challenged aspects of that existing socio-spatial order. The action group *stRaten-generaal* challenged the lack of transparency and the absence of participatory opportunities for citizens in the decision-making process. Another action group, *Ademloos*, targeted the lack of concern with public health and air quality in the decision-making process. In other words, for *stRaten-generaal,* transformation was primarily focussed on changes in the (type of) actors who have the right to participate in the decision-making process. In contrast, *Ademloos* concentrated on changing the topics or issues commonly accepted as being relevant and open for discussion when organising the socio-spatial order.

In the third case study (Chapter Four), I showed how some residents in *Brugse Poort* (Ghent, Belgium), in collaboration with members of the organisation *Trojan Lab*, challenged the decision-making process for determining how public streets were being organised and the dominance of motorized vehicles on public streets. They did so by temporarily occupying the streets on which they lived (with the consent of the local government) and transforming them into green recreation and play areas. At the same time, opposition against this initiative challenged the power relations in the neighbourhood. Opponents claimed that the local government and the initiating residents of the *Living Streets* initiative represented the same social class, and were imposing their will on others.

The last case study (Chapter Five) provided a genealogy of the struggle of the residents of Clairwood (South Africa) and their sympathisers against the eThekwini Municipality's ambition to rezone the area for industrial and logistic purposes. The case study spans both the Apartheid and post-Apartheid eras. Throughout the course of this conflict (1950s-2010s), various aspects of the rezoning attempts were challenged. In the initial years of the conflict, mainly techno-managerial arguments were offered in opposition to these attempts. By

the 1980s, the framing of the opposition shifted in order to challenge the widespread political and economic inequality based on 'race'.

While the object of the conflict is very different in all of these cases with some cases having a stronger impact on the daily life of people than others, all cases have relevance when examining the politics of planning and the social transformative potential of land use conflicts. Especially when analysing the cases from a Rancièrean approach –in which transformation is linked to a change in the symbolic order- one cannot put some conflicts aside as being non-relevant because they deal with so-called 'bourgeois concerns'. In this thesis, I purposefully chose for a wide variety of land use conflicts and land use activists, as –according to Rancière- there is no specific group in society destined to bring forth transformation (Chambers, 2013, pp. 16-17). The symbolic order can be disrupted and altered by anyone who does not feel represented. A conflict does not need to deal with the basic economic needs of people in order for it to be relevant or to bear transformative potential.

## 6.3
## The multiple meanings of social transformation, politicisation and depoliticisation

When trying to grasp the transformative potential of land use conflicts and the political dynamics responsible for transformation, it was first necessary to define what social transformation entails and what it means for planning theory. This is not self-evident, as various transformative planning approaches give differing meanings to this concept.

As indicated in Chapter One, I started my doctoral research with an interpretation of social transformation, politicisation and depoliticisation that was heavily inspired by the work of post-foundational political thinker Jacques Rancière. For Rancière, politicisation is linked to the coming into being of new political subjects,

through their (temporary) dis-identification[1] with the name, place and function given to them in the existing society. Rancière argues that the process of subjectification/politicisation 'rests on the capacity to universalise particular conflicts as general instances of dissensus' (Panagia & Rancière, 2000, p. 125).

Relying on Rancière's political theory, in Chapter Two I illustrated how the occupiers of 't Landhuis politicised the debate by applying universalising frames such as the right to co-decide on the socio-ecological future of the city and the right to housing. Actors within the local government tried to depoliticise the conflict by making negotiations dependent on the occupiers' concessions of becoming a legally-sanctioned formal organisation and of agreeing to the demolition of the building in which they live. By putting the occupiers in this particular subject position, it was easier to depoliticise the debate by incorporating the claims of opponents in the existing symbolic order.[2]

As I gradually noticed that a purely Rancièrean approach to politics insufficiently recognises the multiple forms of politics apparent in land use conflicts, I broadened my theoretical frame of reference, also focussing on earlier transformative planning theories. Various transformative and critical planning approaches such as transactive planning, equity planning, advocacy planning, collaborative planning, radical planning, insurgent planning and agonistic planning have preceded the post-foundational approach in planning theory. All agree that social transformation necessitates undoing certain forms of injustice or domination. However, they each give different interpretations of what this implies in practice. While each transformative planning approach starts with an attempt to make sense of the world and its systems of domination and oppression, the analyses that emerge from these attempts may differ. Further, the issue identified as the main problem in the existing socio-spatial order can vary. Similarly, the counter-analysis provided for how society could be better organised and the set

of procedures regarding how to achieve this varies between these planning approaches (e.g. Sandercock, 1998b, p. 85).

In Chapter Three of this dissertation, I tried to be more attentive to a hybrid form of actually existing politics. I identified three broad interpretations of social transformation commonly used in the existing transformative planning approaches: inclusion-oriented, power-oriented or subjectification-oriented. It was argued that most transformative planning approaches apply at least one of these interpretations. In brief, the inclusion-oriented interpretation of social transformation links the possibility of social transformation to the inclusion of multiple interests in the decision-making process and changing the people's conception of reality through this inclusion. This interpretation can be found in traditions such as advocacy planning and communicative planning theory. The power-oriented interpretation associates the possibility of transformation with explicit counter-hegemonic struggles that aim to change power relations (e.g. antagonistic pluralism, radical and insurgent planning theory). The subjectification-oriented interpretation of social transformation revolves around the emergence of new political subjects changing the symbolic order of society. It is primarily found in insurgent planning theory.

In the study concerning the Oosterweel link road struggle, I argued that, in addition to the subjectification-oriented interpretation of politicisation closely linked to Rancière's approach, an inclusion-oriented and power-oriented interpretation should be included in the analysis. Subjectification-oriented politicisation, revolving around the temporary dis-identification of subjects with given names, places, and functions in society, can be found in the *stRaten-generaal* spokesperson's assertion of equality towards professional planners and politicians.

However, the transformative effects of this subjectification-oriented politicisation remained limited until it was accompanied by power building. In the power-oriented interpretation of social transformation, politicisation is dependent on a counter-hegemonic struggle. I argued that in the case of the Oosterweel link road conflict, deliberation between the government and citizen movements was not possible until the citizen movements gained enough power to pose an actual threat to the government and its plans. The enormous public support for the citizen movements - reinforced by the use of passion - as well as the pending notice of objection at the Council of State, put pressure on the Flemish government to find a solution that could satisfy both parties. Hence, both subjectification-oriented and power-oriented forms of politicisation created a context in which inclusion-oriented politicisation became possible. This case study showed that citizen movements can make clever use of various forms of politicisation. Combined, these forms of politicisation provided a comprehensive shift in the Antwerp socio-spatial order (see also 6.3).

The chapter on the Living Streets conflict in *Brugse Poort* (Ghent) (Chapter Four) built further on these findings. It dwells on the fact that each of the above observed interpretations draws on its own theoretical sources of inspiration. Many of the inclusion-oriented approaches turn to Jürgen Habermas' theory of communicative action. In contrast, several power-oriented approaches find inspiration in Chantal Mouffe's vision on (ant)agonism. Subjectification-oriented approaches rely on the work of, amongst others, James Holston and political philosopher Jacques Rancière (see Table 6.1; see Chapter 4). . The case study presented in Chapter Four found that while the Living Streets project was presented as a prime example of how to achieve democratic politics (i.e. politicisation in other chapters), the reality was more ambiguous. This was precisely because actors had different understandings of what democratic politics entails and used their resources to advance their understanding in the

neighbourhood. The Living Streets project and its organisers were strongly inspired by the Habermasian understanding of democratic politics, politicisation and depoliticisation. They were convinced that a democratic dialogue about what should happen on public streets would not be possible if its function is (pre)defined by traffic experts and politicians, and if the street is, by definition, reserved for traffic circulation. Thus, the organisers set up a participatory planning trajectory in which inclusivity, rational argumentation and focus on the common good were of major importance (i.e. a Habermasian inspired interpretation of politicisation). Although this approach did result in some successful collaborative outcomes, I also observed how in the Living Area in *Brugse Poort*, a considerable number of residents experienced this participatory initiative as being imposed in a top-down manner. Opponents perceived the participatory trajectory as an obligatory act without meaningful repercussions, as the real decisions were already made upfront (i.e. a Mouffian understanding of depoliticisation). In the conflict that followed, the use of a car determined the 'constitutive outside' for the community of opponents, making 'the car' and 'the cargo bike' powerful signifiers of the social group to which residents belong and their status in the city (i.e. a Mouffian understanding of politicisation). Adversarial and identitarian politics tainted the Living Streets experiment in the neighbourhood, as the opponents perceived the initiative as a claim for hegemony by one particular group in the neighbourhood. I argued that glimpses of the Rancièrean understanding of politicisation were apparent in the opponents' claims of equality, e.g. when residents brought other life experiences to bear on the notion of sustainability or linked the Living Street initiatives to broad sociological transformation of the neighbourhood. I demonstrated that although banning car traffic had the potential to achieve a Rancièrean form of democratic politics by creating space for dis-identification from the existing symbolic order, in this case, social hierarchisation rapidly started to determine the organisation of the public space again (see also Table 6.1).

| | Inclusion-oriented | Power-oriented | Subjectification-oriented |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Social Transformation** | Transformation as the inclusion of multiple, sometimes competing interests or narratives in the decision-making process<br><br>Transformation as changes in how people perceive and understand society | Transformation as changes in power relations | Transformation as disruption and the emergence of new political subjects<br><br>Transformation as changes in the symbolic order |
| **Main sources of inspiration** | Habermas | Mouffe | Rancière, Holston |
| **Depoliticisation**<br><br>Processes through which the existing socio-spatial order is maintained and defended | Lifeworld - as the privileged site for making sense of the world - is colonised by instrumental rationality | Conflict and social division is delegitimised by the search for rational consensus | Specific distribution of the sensible that is normalised and presented as indisputable |
| **Politicisation** (~democratic politics in Chapter 4)<br><br>Processes that challenge the current socio-spatial organisation of society, putting certain aspects of that order in the centre of political debate | Application of communicative rationality in ideal speech situations, leading to a rational consensus | Opposing political identities and building counter-hegemonic power | (temporary) Dis-identification with a given name, place and function, and subjectification through claiming equality |

**Table 6.1** Forms of politicisation, depoliticisation and social transformation

Lastly, in the struggle for Clairwood (Chapter Five), I focussed on the added value of a post-foundational political approach in a settler-colonial context. I noticed that 'race' is highly underexplored as a (de)politicising frame in the empirical applications of post-foundational political thinking. Therefore, I made this central in the analysis of the socio-spatial developments in this South African suburb in which the country's settler-colonial history had a profound impact. I showed how,

for decades, racist framing had been a crucial part of the symbolic foundation upon which the South African capitalist order was installed, and was used as a depoliticising force to legitimise the industrialisation of Clairwood. In the 1980s, the Clairwood residents were able to shift policy by changing their framing. They moved away from the techno-managerial problems they identified in rezoning Clairwood towards a frame that challenged one of the fundamentals of the existing symbolic order, i.e. the widespread inequality based on 'race'. I argued that one result of this politicisation along the racial fault line was that race was no longer seen as a legitimate rationale for exclusion. However, while racial discrimination and forced racial segregation lost its legal base after the end of the Apartheid era, Clairwood residents were still being threatened by relocation. I argued that this is because the capitalist foundation in which economic growth is the hegemonic narrative to order society, remained apparent in the post-Apartheid era, although it shifted from racist Keynesianism to neoliberalism. Class divisions remained persistent in the symbolic order, defining who is seen as a legitimate speaker and who is not when dealing with the design of space.

## 6.4
## The transformative potential in the examined cases

I have taken into account the various interpretations of politicisation, depoliticisation and social transformation, and described how various forms of politicisation and depoliticisation interacted throughout the examined cases. I now depict *to what extent* and *how* these processes transformed the socio-spatial order in the studied cases.

I defined a socio-spatial order as a set of implicit and explicit rules clarifying 'who is qualified to say what a particular place is and what is done in it'. Social transformation was referred to as a reordering of the social order by undoing certain forms of injustice or domination. As such, a transformation of the socio-

spatial order should broadly be seen as the reordering of the dominant set of implicit and explicit rules that clarify 'who is qualified to say what a particular place is and what is done in it' by undoing certain forms of injustice or domination (see Table 6.2).

Taking these definitions as a starting point, I argue that, in the case of 't Landhuis (Chapter Two), a transformation of the socio-spatial order did occur. The occupiers were initially not listened to by the city's administration and the responsible alderman on grounds of their lack of legitimacy as non-owners of the property. During the course of the conflict, the occupiers were able to begin negotiations with the responsible actors within the city administration. The occupiers, in other words, were being heard in a context in which, previously, their arguments had been regarded as 'noise' (cf. Rancière). I argued that negotiation between the occupiers and the city administration became a possibility because the frame concerning the socio-ecologic value of their project resonated well with Ghent's city council's socio-ecological ambitions. Furthermore, their project was backed by important local stakeholders such as the municipal advisory commission for spatial planning, and members of the Green and Social Democratic political parties. By focussing on the value of their project for the socio-ecological future of the city, the occupants were able to take advantage of an opening in the socio-spatial order to start negotiations with the city, regardless of their identification as squatters in the existing socio-spatial order. As such, it could be said that social transformation, as interpreted in the subjectification-oriented fashion, did occur. However, in this case study, I described the exchanges and arrangements on a micro-level, recounting the interactions between local governmental actors and citizens over a specific piece of land. The findings in this case study give no assurances about similar patterns and interactions in other cases in Ghent. Nor do they indicate anything about broad or long-term social

transformation with regards to the decision-making power of non-property owners (let alone squatters).

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| General 'critical' definition of social transformation | "A reordering of the social order that undoes certain forms of injustice or domination" | | |
| Foci of the different transformative planning approaches when defining social transformation | **Inclusion-oriented** | **Power-oriented** | **Subjectification-oriented** |
| | Inclusion of multiple interests in decision-making | Change in power relations in society | Changes in the symbolic order |
| | Change in lifeworlds | | Emergence of new political subject |
| Transformation of the socio-spatial order | "A reordering of the dominant set of implicit and explicit rules that clarify 'who is qualified to say what a particular place is and what is done in it' by undoing certain forms of injustice or domination" | | |

**Table 6.2** Overview of the relation between the different definitions of social transformation in transformative planning

What the case study does indicate, is how dissidents (can) use aspects of the existing socio-spatial order or ongoing transformations in the socio-spatial order as a leverage to introduce new forms of potential transformation. In this case, the occupiers of 't Landhuis used framing that resonated with a dominant frame within the governing Green Socialist coalition (i.e. ecological sustainability) and used it to open up negotiation space on other topics (i.e. the right for non-property owners to take part in decision-making). Such frames can have politicising and transformative effects, even if they are already widely embedded in the existing socio-spatial order or regarded as being depoliticising in the contemporary planning literature (Swyngedouw, 2013).

In the *Oosterweel* link road case (Chapter Three), the action groups achieved the inclusion of 'non-planners' in the negotiation process. Informed citizens were recognised as having a relevant voice in the debate. Hence, to a certain extent, the action groups were able to alter the socio-spatial order in the Antwerp planning context, redefining the rules that clarify 'who is qualified to say what a particular place is and what is done in it'. Inclusion-oriented transformation became possible, but only because the citizen movements were able to shift power relations and pose an actual threat to the government and its plans. Apart from the power struggles and inclusionary processes that took place, a disruption of the symbolic order of planning processes occurred and new subjects were created, implying a subjectification-oriented interpretation of social transformation. Just as the *framing* used by the occupiers in 't Landhuis played an important role in the eventual outcome of the conflict (see Chapter Two), it is worth looking at the role of the framing used by the mediator in resolving the long-lasting *Oosterweel* link road conflict between the action groups, the Flemish government and the responsible management company. In this case, the Flemish government's agreement upon a (partial) covering of the Antwerp ring road was made acceptable to the government because the mediator framed it as being beneficial to Antwerp's economic position in the European market. As this framing was in line with the capitalist foundation used to legitimise the existing socio-spatial order, one could argue that this frame had no politicising features. Yet, by applying this frame, the mediator created an opening for the action groups to advance their priorities concerning public health and ideas regarding how the decision-making process should be carried out.

In the struggle concerning the *Living Streets* project in *Brugse Poort* (Chapter Four), members of the local government and the dominant actors in the neighbourhood argued that the participatory project had a transformative impact as it included the stakeholders in the neighbourhood, as such, creating a more just and

collaborative decision-making process. If it was truly social transformative (from a critical point of view), one would expect that the marginalized actors in the neighbourhood would partake in this transformation. Many of them, however, criticised the conclusion that the *Living Streets* experiment was transformative. This case demonstrates how, even in processes with a transformative potential[3] social hierarchies quickly start to play a role, thus such limiting its transformative character.

Lastly, in the land use conflict in *Clairwood* (Chapter Five), I showed how in an extremely politicised national environment, the residents were able to halt the government's rezoning attempts in the 1980s-90s, by challenging the racist assumptions underlying both the rezoning and the existing socio-spatial order. Moreover, the residents were able to break into the decision-making process and to safeguard the residential core of Clairwood. The symbolic order has been adapted to delegitimise discrimination based on race. However, economic growth remained a crucial frame in determining socio-spatial development and a key motivation for turning Clairwood into an area for logistics (i.e., warehouses, offices, assembly, container storage, distribution). This aspect of the socio-spatial order, in other words, was not successfully challenged. The analysis of this case provides evidence of the ways in which one oppressive symbolic foundation was replaced by another. While the symbolic order altered during the conflict in Clairwood and 'race' was delegitimised as a foundation upon which to build a society, the (economic) 'haves' and 'have-nots' remain largely unchanged. Overviewing the four case studies, two additional observations with regards to socio-spatial ordering stand out. First, land ownership determines a great deal about who has a right to (co-)decide. Both in the case of the struggle for 't Landhuis (Chapter Two) and the struggle for Clairwood (Chapter Five), I observed that property relationships are an extremely powerful form of depoliticisation. In the case of 't Landhuis, I observed that the responsible

alderman legitimised neglecting the occupiers with the argument that they are not the landowners. Similarly, the eventual withdrawal of the demolition permit for the 't Landhuis manor was strongly linked to the property owners' opposition to the expropriation of their plots that bordered the 't Landhuis plot. In the case of Clairwood, the eThekwini Municipality only consulted with property and business owners in Clairwood during the rounds of consultation prior to the port expansion plans, leaving renters and shack-dwellers largely unheard. The head of the local Development, Planning, Management & Environment Unit saw a future for Clairwood in which existing property owners would join forces, combining their plots to create larger pieces of useable land and jointly begin successful businesses in logistics. These findings prove that, whether in Belgium or South Africa, it is still difficult for planning to go beyond this aspect of the symbolic order.

A second observation is that both in the Clairwood and Oosterweel case, a worldview predetermined by economic growth was primary. In this worldview, cities are competitors and social relations are subordinated to the logic of profit production. This imperative of economic growth is so strong that, regardless of who is in power, this framing has a strong influence on policy. The (partial) covering of the Antwerp ring road and the *Oosterweel* link road, for example, was agreed to by the Flemish and Antwerp governments because the assigned mediator framed it as necessary and beneficial to the current capitalist system. The mediator systematically stressed the ambition to make Antwerp an economic competitive city-region in the European market:

> "In the global competition between cities for talent, creativity and investments, quality of life and network capacity (mobility) but also identity and openness are crucial. Antwerp and Flanders are using the full covering [of the ring road] to become one of the most

> competitive city-regions on the European stage." (D'Hooghe et al., 2016, p. 11)

Similarly, the decisions of the eThekwini Municipality to expand the Durban port and rezone Clairwood into an area for logistics were framed as being motivated by a desire to maintain South Africa's economic position and favourable competition with other international ports. Both in the *Oosterweel* link road case and the Clairwood case politicising forces had to take into account this imperative of economic growth. This drastically limits the scope for politicisation, and thus, for social transformation. This limitation often remains the elephant in the room for collaborative planners and inclusion-oriented planners in general.

## 6.5
## Post-foundational political thinking and transformative planning

As is always the case in scientific research, the choice of theoretical framework and methodology has an effect on what is indicated to be relevant to the analysis. Narrowing down the scope of the research always has advantages and disadvantages. Working with a theoretical framework that is primarily occupied with post-foundational political thinking and its value for transformative planning, for example, enriches the planning field by demanding more attention for the contingency of planning and land use practices, and of the dominant planning moral. Post-foundational thinking highlights the inevitable exclusionary character of each socio-spatial order and demonstrates that every order could be organised differently. It provides us, in other words, with a lens to look at planning theory and practices that is very different from what the ones we are used to.

Within this field of thinking, different political philosophers provide us with other insights. The work of Jacques Rancière, for example, has proven to be an

enrichment to transformative planning studies because it highlights the role of political subjectification in social transformation. Rancière's work helps to grasp the importance of forces that open up the symbolic order. However, when examining an empirical reality, his theoretical approach soon reaches its limits as it merely focuses on the forces that open a space where something new can be imagined.

Once this space is opened and other realities are imagined, different strategies will be needed for the imagined reality to become dominant in the symbolic order. Alliances and chains of equivalences that can challenge existing hegemonic relations of power have to be constructed. It is in this context that I think that the work of post-foundational political thinker Chantal Mouffe should be seen as complementary to the work of Jacques Rancière. Although Rancière himself refuses to draw attention to unequal relations of power, this dissertation provides evidence that, when applied to empirical reality, it is impossible to ignore the role that power plays in, for example, the suppression of processes of political subjectification.

While the post-foundational political approaches that have been addressed in this dissertation benefit transformative planning theory by addressing (ant)agonism as a transformative force, they tend to overlook transformative forces that come into play when complex land use conflicts are to be settled. For this reason, a broader theoretical frame was necessary in which deliberative practices are taken into account as a potential transformative force, next to power struggle and political subjectification.

## 6.6 Further research

In the previous section, I elaborated on some of the limitations of post-foundational political thinking as a theoretical framework to grasp the transformative forces in complex land use conflicts.

While I have tried to overcome some of these limitations by adding insights of other transformative planning approaches, future research in this field could benefit from further opening up the theoretical framework. Including agency theory and collective action theory, for example, could help to put the theoretical framework into a more active position.

Empirically, future research should focus more profoundly on conflicts in which the effects of the contestation are already clearly materialised. In this study, I have focussed on cases that are presently still running or only recently have been settled. Because of the freshness of the conflicts, it is often hard to make statements about the sustainability and profoundness of the transformations that took place because of these contestations. In the studied cases, it is hard to tell whether the transformations are episodic or more lasting. For example, while the creation of a collaborative 'work community' is proof that the Oosterweel conflict resulted in an institutional change, more time is needed before we can conclude whether these alterations had a more profound impact on planning practices in Antwerp and Flanders. Future research, in other words, should take into account that the more lasting effects of conflicts often become tangible years after the contestation took place.

## 6.7 Concluding remarks

This research was first and foremost motivated by an interest in the dynamics of social transformation. Every society is inherently unjust and most are

characterised by power inequalities. Societies will always include some and exclude others. Considering my background as a critical political scientist, these realities confirm not only that transformative forces always slumber in the shadows, but also that these forces *must* exist in any democratic society. To a large extent, I agree with most transformative planning scholars, regardless of whether they are inclusion-, power-, subjectification-oriented or positioned somewhere in between. Therefore, I believe that urban and spatial planners have a role to play in nourishing these forces. At the very least, they should be reflective about their own function in the existing socio-spatial order.

This study demonstrated that, while these different planning orientations towards social transformation can sometimes contradict one another on a theoretical level, the transformative potential of land use conflicts often lies in various forms of politicisation operating simultaneously or alternately in various phases of the conflict. Each of the discussed understandings contains transformative potential, alone or combined. Whether the socio-spatial order will be actually transformed (apart from being challenged) depends on the interaction that plays out between these politicising and depoliticising forces. Locked in a never-ending struggle, politicising and depoliticising processes will continue clashing, even if aspects of the socio-spatial order are transformed.

The insights in this dissertation are relevant for spatial planning scholars and practitioners, but equally for activists and non-professional planners. They indicate the fundamentally political nature of planning practices, and demonstrate that planning is always affected by the dominant perceptions regarding 'who is qualified to say what a particular place is and what is done in it' within the planning field. This symbolic order has set the rules concerning who/what is included and excluded from the field of planning. Political planning conflicts, such as the land use conflicts that are described in this dissertation, illustrate that these rules are socially constructed and therefore contingent. The added value of analysing these

planning conflicts for both planning theory and practice, then, is that these conflicts can 'defamiliarize' planning (Roy, 2009), yielding insights into how this is done. Chapter Three, for example, presented an example of how one stakeholder challenged the dominant ideas regarding *who* can be defined as being a planner by acting as an insurgent planner who is equal to professional planners. While 'professional planners' still receive the majority of the attention in planning literature, I agree with Faranak Miraftab that planning is 'a contested field of interacting activities by multiple actors' , not a 'prerogative of professionals who act in isolation from other spheres of action' (Miraftab, 2009). Community organisers, activists, and citizens all over the world perform similar radical or insurgent planning practices and urgently need more credit in the planning literature. This dissertation provided insights in how 'dissidents' break into the planning system by teaming up with others who are equivalently disadvantaged by existing power relations, but also how they (can) use aspects of the existing socio-spatial order or ongoing transformations in the socio-spatial order as a leverage to introduce new forms of potential transformation. On a more general level, I see this dissertation as part of a growing interdisciplinary tradition of academic work that puts 'the political' at the centre of its research. This has roots in the domain of political philosophy (Decreus, 2013) but extends to fields such as public administration (Filip De Rynck & Steyaert, 2019; Wolf & Van Dooren, 2017a), social work (Debaene, 2018; Van Bouchaute & Debaene, 2019), sociology (Oosterlynck, Hertogen, & Swerts, 2017), geography (Kenis & Lievens, 2014, 2015) political ethnography (Depraetere & Oosterlynck, 2017) and urban planning (Gualini, 2015; Metzger et al., 2015; Legacy, 2016a). Thus, an increasing number of researchers stress the societal importance and necessity of political conflict as described in the post-foundational political tradition. Doing so, these researchers demonstrate their belief in the strength of working together as a team to make this research available to a wider audience and stimulate political debate on relevant issues. With this dissertation, I hope to have made a small

contribution to reaching that one ambition each academic should have at heart: changing society for the better through scientific research.

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# NOTES

## Chapter 1

1. See Chapter Two for a more elaborate analysis of the struggle for 't Landhuis in Ghent.

2. In the current socio-spatial order, planning legislation does imposes restrictions on how owners can use of a piece of land.

3. Critical, in this context, refers to the field in social sciences that is linked to Frankfurt School and focusses primarily on uncovering and challenging societal forms of domination.

4. See also John Friedmann's (1987, pp. 38-39) differentiation between 'societal guidance' and 'social transformation'.

5. I distinguish 'social order' from 'socio-spatial order'. Social order, in this context, is equivalent to what Jacques Rancière calls the 'police order' or what other post-foundational political thinkers have named 'politics'. The concept 'socio-spatial order', then, is used to highlight the spatial aspect of this social order.

6. Jacques Rancière uses the concepts 'police' and 'politics', where other political theorists such as Chantal Mouffe – and we as well apart from Chapter Two- make a distinction between 'politics' and 'the political'.

7. I am aware that the term 'case study' refers to the phenomenon one wishes to study and not to the place where this phenomenon took place nor to the event that triggered the land use conflict (Czarniawska, 2014, p. 21). For reasons of convenience, however, I will sometimes refer to the different cases as the Landhuis case, the Oosterweel link road case, the Living Streets case and the Clairwood case.

8. While there are different settler colonial cases that could have been chosen to examine these dynamics (for example a case in Australia, the United States or Israel), I chose a South African case because I was already familiar with the political and historical background of the country due to previous research projects.

9. This was not the case with the interviews conducted by door-to-door contact in both Brugse Poort and Clairwood. During these interviews, no extra contact details were asked.

10. Chapter Two has been published as H1:

Van Wymeersch, E., & Oosterlynck, S. (2018). Applying a Relational Approach to Political Difference: Strategies of Particularization and Universalization in Contesting Urban Development. In: Knierbein S and Viderman T (eds) *Public Space Unbound: Urban Emancipation and the Post-Political Condition*. New York: Routledge, pp. 38-53.

Chapter Three has been published as A1 in Planning Theory & Practice:

Van Wymeersch, E., Vanoutrive, T., & Oosterlynck, S. (2020). Unravelling the concept of social transformation in planning: Inclusion, power changes, and political subjectification in the Oosterweel link road conflict. *Planninng Theory and Practice,* 21(2).

Chapter Four has been published as A1 in Planning Theory:

Van Wymeersch, E., Oosterlynck, S., & Vanoutrive, T. (2019). The political ambivalences of participatory planning initiatives. *Planning Theory*, 18(3).

Chapter Five has been submitted as A1 article in Urban Studies:

Van Wymeersch, E., Oosterlynck, S., & Vanoutrive, T. Race, class and the (de)politicisation of urban development in Clairwood, South Africa

11. This chapter has been written to be included in Knierbein and Viderman's (2018) edited book on urban emancipation and the post-political condition. It draws inspiration from Jacques Rancière's view on the political difference, as such working with the term 'police' and 'politics' instead of 'politics' and 'the political'. Additionally, this chapter talks about 'subjectivization' while other chapters use the term 'subjectification' to refer to the emergence of new political subjects that change the symbolic order of society.

## Chapter 2

1. We are grateful to Enrico Gualini for drawing our attention to this issue.

2. We define ecological commons as a system in which specific resources are not owned privately but are held in common by a defined community of commoners. In the case of ecological commons, the resources referred to are concerned with the environment.

3. The expropriation of the adjacent plots was fairly rough and it would take time before the training complexes could ever be erected.

4. John Locke, dealing with property rights in 17th-century England, contested the idea that all people are naturally subject to the monarch and as such cannot make claims to property. As a response, Locke developed his liberal theory of limited government in which he argues that all men have certain equal rights, such as the right to life, liberty and property and consequently provided a theory in which safety and security for the growing merchant class of that period was secured. Thus, Locke's theory of limited government intends to provide a check against any power that would violate the individual rights or property (see Chambers 2013).

5. We are grateful to Pascal Debruyne for drawing our attention to this issue.

6. This committee was founded in March 2014 and aimed at collecting and preserving (information on) cultural heritage in the district 'de Ottergemse Dries', the district in which 't Landhuis is located.

## Chapter 3

1. This company changed its name in April 2019 from 'BAM nv' to 'Lantis'.

2. The name *st*R*aten-generaal* is a pun referring to the *Staten-Generaal*. The 'r' turns *staten*—meaning states—into *straten*—meaning streets. The action committee *st*R*aten-generaal* argues that streets are democratic places where citizens come together and express themselves publicly.

3. The official question put forth in the referendum was: 'Should the city of Antwerp give favourable advice for the urban development permit of the Oosterweel connection on the current planned route between Zwijndrecht / Linkeroever and Merksem / Deurne? Yes or no?' Most residents voting 'no' declared they were against the viaduct.

4. The budget reserved is 1.25 billion euros, while the total project is estimated to cost 9 billion euros.

5. Some opposition groups did mention air and noise pollution in their objections, but in the larger debate, this argument remained rather marginal or situated at neighbourhood level.

6. Mail to city councillor on 12 September 2005, 18.08, as cited in Claeys, M. (2013). Stilstand: over machtspolitiek, betweterbestuur en achterkamerdemocratie. 'Standstill: about power politics, know-it-all governance and democracy back room democracy': Uitgeverij Van Halewyck.

## Chapter 4

1. Not every collaborative planner is inspired by Habermas in the same way or to the same extent. Healey (2003), for example, is more critical to his concept of 'ideal speech situation' than Booher and Innes (2002).

2. As Trojan Lab explicitly aimed to be a temporary, experimental vehicle, it inscribed in its statutes that at the end of 2017, it would automatically dissolve.

3. Source: https://www.leefstraat.be/leefstraten/ (accessed at 4 January 2018).

4. In total, 51 Living Street processes were initiated. Five Living Streets, however, did not occur because the opposition in the street was too fierce. Some initiating teams also participated for several years consecutively.

5. Source: Staes, B (2016), Europese steden komen Gentse leefstraten bestuderen, De Standaard, Oost-Vlaanderen, p. 31 (6 July 2016).

6. Source: https://stad.gent/brugse-poort-rooigem/over-de-wijk/geschiedenis-van-brugse-poortrooigem (accessed at 4 January 2018).

7. Source: https://gent.buurtmonitor.be/ (accessed at 4 January 2018).

8. 'GoPress Academic', the Belgian electronic database which contains all articles from the main Belgian newspapers and magazines, was searched for the period between 1 January 2012 and 31 December 2016, using the search code (Leefstraat OR Leefstraten AND Gent) (140 articles).

9. The meetings referred to dealt with the evaluation of the 'Living Area' in Brugse Poort. The attended public hearings of Trojan Lab were sometimes intended for the residents of Brugse Poort, but on other occasions organised for interested residents of other cities or urban planning scholars and practitioners.

10. These include (1) two reports published by Trojan Lab in which they combine essays of their own members, politicians, academics, residents of a Living Street and other experts reflecting on the Living Streets (2015, 2018); and (2) a registration form filled in by Trojan Lab to win the 'At home in the City' prize (2014).

11. When we argue that different actors in the planning process work with different understandings of what constitutes democratic politics, we refer to general tendencies and do not claim that there could be no exceptions to these general tendencies.

12. We substantiate this claim by a reflection made by one of the founders of the Living Street project in which he himself refers to Habermas' distinction between the lifeworld and system world:

The Living Street radically turned the […] normal course of events concerning dealing with public domain upside down. Residents received the experimental space to temporarily deal with their street environment differently. The two central ingredients [of this project] were to first limit the claim of traffic and mobility in surface area and then deal with the vacated space in a different way, and this only for a limited period of time. For this, one did not directly approach the system world. Instead the public domain was once again used as a medium to convey a certain message to the competent authority, but now in the language of the residents themselves. (Scheirs, 2015, p. 34)

Earlier in this reflection the founder already described that until now designing streets was primarily reserved to designers and the Government (2015: 34), and that designing was about 'car size' instead of 'people size' (2015: 33).

13. Deschamp as cited in Van Synghel, B (2013), Stad krijgt drie leefstraten, Het Laatste Nieuws, Gent-Wetteren-Lochristi, p. 17, 11 April 2013.

14. Watteeuw as cited in Van Synghel, B (2014), 'Speciaalstraten' bij de vleet in Gent, Het Laatste Nieuws, Gent-Wetteren-Lochristi, p. 20, 13 May 2014.

15. As mentioned earlier, the City of Ghent aims to become climate neutral by 2050. Apart from the Living Streets, plenty of other initiatives taken by the City of Ghent already endorse this ambition, ranging from the introduction of a 'traffic circulation plan' (i.e. a plan to reduce traffic in the city centre) to the financial support of ecological

bottom-up initiatives like local farming projects and the promotion of urban commons initiatives (Devolder & Block, 2015).

16. This claim is based on the feedback given by Trojan Lab when we presented them our analysis of our study.

## Chapter 5

1. Strictly speaking it is nonsensical to talk about hierarchical differences based on race-relations, since there is only one human race. However, as we try to understand the ways the social order during the Apartheid era operated, we maintain its use of words.

2. With Platzky and Walker (1985, pp. 83-93), we define 'blacks' as everyone suffering from white dominance.

3. The political rights that were given to 'blacks' varied over periods and from area to area. Black men with sufficient property, income and education, for example, were allowed to vote in the Cape since the 1850s. In Natal, i.e. the province in which Durban was situated, this right was far more restrained.

4. Later acts sustaining this discrimination were the 1943 'Pegging Act' that deprived Indians of the right to acquire or own property in areas reserved for the 'whites' for a period of three years, and the 1946 'Asiatic Land Tenure and Representation Act' that replaced the previous Act and prevented Indians from purchasing land from non-Indians except in specified areas (Moodley: 1985).

5. This group contained white industrialist members of the Natal Chambers of Industries (NCI), the Durban Town Council and the National Administration of 'South African Railways and Harbours'.

6. For Rancière, archi-politics is a prototype of depoliticisation. It grounds the symbolic order in the idea of a harmonious and integral community, in which people with the same identity and culture cohabitate in the same space (Rancière, 2004; Van Puymbroek & Oosterlynck, 2014)

7. Rehousing, however, was subject to the City Council providing adequate accommodation elsewhere for the 5000-odd Indian families who would be displaced. Because of a lack of budget to provide alternative housing, however, some of the envisioned relocations could not take place ("Clairwood re-zoned for industry. Administrator's consent for much-needed land," 1964).

8. This Act was created in 1934 to enable local governments to forcibly remove people who were settled in an area that was considered to be slums, and re-plan the impoverished area (Mabin & Smit, 1997, p. 202). Especially in Durban, 'slum clearance' proceeded mostly in areas that had been pinpointed by the Council as zones of future industrial expansion in areas that were predominantly occupied by 'blacks' (Scott, 1994).

9. According to Scott (2012), 4000 families were removed from municipal-owned land (24,000 people) between 1960 and 1978. Others left voluntarily (16,000 people).

10. *The Sabotage Act* of 1962 widened the definition of sabotage to include strikes, trade union activity, and writing slogans on walls, with a minimum penalty of five years' imprisonment and a maximum penalty of being hanged. *The 90-day detention act* of 1963 allowed a South African police officer to detain without warrant a person suspected of a politically motivated crime for up to 90 days without access to a lawyer. In 1950, the Apartheid government already installed *the Suppression of Communism Act*. Through this Act, the Communist Party of South Africa was formally banned and any party or group subscribing to –an extremely broad defined- communism was proscribed.

11. The eThekwini Municipality was created in 2000 and came to include the city of Durban.

12. This ambition was encapsulated in national policy through a Structural Infrastructure Program (PICC, 2012), and a local plan by means of the 2012 Back of Port Local Area Plan (BOP-LAP) (Iyer & Graham Muller Associates, 2011).

13. While elsewhere, we defined 'blacks' as everyone suffering from white dominance, in this section we follow the categorization of the Apartheid government -i.e. differentiating between 'Indians', 'coloureds' and 'blacks'- as to understand the Apartheid logic.

## Chapter 6

1. I consider dis-identification to be 'temporary' as all political subjects eventually tend to disappear through their re-incorporation and identification with (new) social groups or imaginary bodies (Rancière, 2004, p. 7).

2. As the notions of politicisation and depoliticisation are quite abstract and theoretical when used in an empirical context, I introduced Rancière's notions of particularisation and universalisation to indicate that there are different tools, frames and strategies one can use either politicise or depoliticise. In Chapter Two, I demonstrated how processes of politicisation and depoliticisation can take the form of particularising and universalising *frames*.

3. The *Living Streets* experiment had transformative potential as it restored the public character of streets.

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# APPENDIX

## Data collection

| Cases/ Methods | Field -work | N° of Resp. | Observation | Media Analysis |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **'t Landhuis, Ghent** | 2015 | **9 respondents**<br><br>4 government officials +5 residents & users | / | **GoPress** using the search code 'Landhuis' AND 'Gent' AND 'squatters' (9 results) and search code 'Landhuis' AND 'Gent' AND 'organic farm' (11 results) |
| **Oosterweel link road, Antwerp** | 2016 | **3 respondents**<br><br>3 activists | **October 2016 – December 2016** (i) volunteer meetings and activities, and (ii) steering groups of the citizen movements | **Go Press** using the search code 'Oosterweel' AND 'BAM-tracé' (2117 results), 'stRaten-generaal' AND BAM (1546 results), 'Oosterweel' AND 'intendant' (158 results) (08/11/2016) |
| **Living Streets Brugse Poort, Ghent** | 2016 | **33 respondents**<br><br>4 government officials & employees of non-profit association + 29 residents | **November 2016 – December 2016** (i) internal preparation meeting of Trojan Lab, (ii) feedback meetings with residents *Brugse Poort* and Trojan Lab | **Go Press** using the search code ('Leefstraat' OR 'Leefstraten') AND 'Gent' (140 results) (31/12/2016) |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Port expansion Clairwood, eThekwini Municipality** | 2017 | **45 respondents**<br><br>14 government officials & activists +31 residents | **February 2017 – May 2017**<br>(i) internal meeting CRRA & SDCEA, (ii) public meeting CRRA with residents Clairwood | **Sabinet** using the search code 'South Durban' AND port expansion (48 results); Durban AND 'port expansion' (58 results); 'South Durban' AND harbour (94 results); 'South Durban' AND port (194 results) (07/02/2017)<br><br>Archival material from the **Killie Campbell Library** and the **Ghandi Luthuli Documentation Centre** |