

What is public?

**An approach to stage a debate
in a village as a spatial practitioner**

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Abstract

There are two main strands in this research. The first is how participation urges each discipline, each form of expertise, to question authorship, roles and power relations. In the field of architecture participation is generally considered as a way to involve multiple stakeholders in pursuit of a spatial project. What if we consider participation as a way to go beyond this logic of projects and predefined planning procedures? Then how can we, as a practitioner, contribute by staging a debate, as an ongoing democratic challenge or culture, more than a momentary intervention? Secondly, we worked in the changing context of villages, trying to understand what is changing; starting from many different and autonomous actions. We consider the village as a set of public, private and common spaces, with its own rhythm and dynamic of local actors. How can we support villagers and other actors, by staging a debate on what is spatially changing in their daily living environment?

Both strands were strengthened by the choice for action research. The idea that participation is more than an instrument, aligns with ideas on action research to not focus on the intervention, nor the method but on the situation and practice itself, and then learn from what this means. Secondly, starting from how to understand many, but specific changes in villages, we staged many distributed actions, with different actors in different ways. This coincides with the approach of action research to start from practice and connect different understandings to a broader frame of reference. Although the focus is not on the intervention, as a practitioner you will of course always intervene, making use of knowledge frameworks and methods you know. In this way, our practice was based on design methods, spatial knowledge and theoretical explorations.

We developed a conceptual track in parallel and in relation to a fieldwork track as an ongoing exploration of concepts via literature, testing, discussing, experimenting and intervening on site. In the conceptual track, ideas of 'participation' and 'the public' (with its political and spatial connotations) were further explored and defined towards other concepts and perspectives, as a language to make and discuss a spatial practice. In the fieldwork track we set up different case studies connecting different scales in space and time (local and regional, shorter and longer term). All case studies were set up to stage a debate and focused on three activities: (1) mapping and understanding how changes are perceived; (2) collectively reflecting on how we would prefer the situation to be, not only by discussing but also (3) through acting: testing and practicing, aiming to come to a perspective how one

can contribute. These three activities are ongoing and interrelated, happening in all case studies on different moments, augmenting spatial agency from many actors. The idea of 'spatial agency' is introduced, as *supporting people to engage in their spatial environment in ways previously unknown, opening new freedoms and potentials*.

Both the conceptual and fieldwork track; wanting to stage a debate as well as come to an understanding of changing villages, were interrelated and strengthened each other. Questioning *what is public* offered theoretical concepts to open this debate towards a plurality of voices, to interrupt and stage a dissensus. Not to define overarching labels of *why* things happen, but to come to perspectives to understand *how* things happen. This understanding induced a way of practicing. But at the same time it was in this practicing and by experience, by taking actions, that we moved to an understanding of the concrete situation. Questioning concrete spaces, supported us to create the opportunity for actors to connect, to assemble, share an understanding and make sense; making use of a more visual language and of spatial knowledge frameworks. Furthermore, questioning the publicness of particular spaces, proved to be a valuable entry point to articulate different agendas and define future images, as well as to explore and investigate conceptual ideas on plurality, citizenship and public pedagogy.

Connecting different spatial scales, as connecting what happens in the village to a more regional dynamic, and vice versa, was a valid strategy to collectively learn about small-scale changes as well as more regional themes. Connecting different spatial practices, as sharing or multiplying can support practitioners to learn from each other; as augmenting our own agency as spatial practitioners. We need to further investigate ways to create a collective and moreover to create space for this learning, for these kind of practices. Within villages we learned how open spaces in transitions to the surrounding landscape came to the fore as valuable public places. We did not further explore the concept and role of landscape as such, neither did we work through on the idea of commons or theories and practices of commoning. However, both concepts have rich potentials to further nuance an understanding of what is public in a village.

Samenvatting

Er zijn twee hoofdlijnen in dit onderzoek. De eerste vertrekt vanuit hoe participatie iedere discipline uitdaagt; of hoe participatie rollen, auteurschap en machtsverhoudingen in vraag kan stellen. In het domein van architectuur wordt participatie over het algemeen beschouwd als een manier om meerdere belanghebbenden te betrekken in een ruimtelijk project. Hoe kunnen we participatie organiseren als we voorbij een logica van projecten of vooraf gedefinieerde planningsprocedures willen gaan? Hoe kunnen we dan een debat vormgeven; als een voortdurende democratische uitdaging; als een cultuur, meer dan als een tijdelijke interventie? De tweede lijn focust op de context van dorpen. Dorpen veranderen zowel door veel verschillende, kleine, als meer globale veranderingen. Het autonome dorp waar we woonden én werkten is nu een ander dorp; een woondorp ingebed in een ruimere regio. Er ontbreekt een manier om in debat te gaan over wat er dan verandert; in dat dorp als een geheel van publieke, private en gemeenschappelijke ruimtes, en als plek met een eigen ritme en dynamiek van bewoners, lokale en meer regionale actoren.

Deze twee lijnen werden versterkt door de keuze voor actie-onderzoek. Om te beginnen sluit het idee dat participatie meer is dan een instrument, aan bij ideeën over actie-onderzoek. Vanuit die aanpak is het de bedoeling om niet te focussen op de methode of de manier waarop, maar om vanuit een praktijk een situatie te veranderen. Het gaat dan om wat je leert door dat te doen. Zo probeerden we via verschillende acties met verschillende actoren vat te krijgen op hoe, vanuit die verschillende hoeken, veranderingen begrepen worden. We deden dit door een verkenning van concepten, literatuur, concrete experimenten, interventies op locatie, discussies en reflecties. Ideeën over 'participatie' en rond wat 'publiek' is werden verder verkend en zowel in dorpen als op de meer regionale schaal van Haspengouw zetten we verschillende experimenten op. Iedere case had tot doel een debat vorm te geven om zo: (1) in kaart te brengen en te begrijpen wat er verandert en hoe dat wordt ervaren; (2) samen na te denken over waar we naar toe willen en wat dat voor wie betekent; (3) samen te testen en te zoeken hoe je van hieruit andere acties kan opzetten. Deze drie activiteiten liepen door elkaar in alle case-studies op verschillende momenten. Deelnemers gingen niet altijd rechtstreeks in één ruimte of op hetzelfde moment met elkaar in debat. Sommigen stapten later in, sommigen haakten af. Soms was er een moderator, soms niet, dan waren er beelden, collages of de ruimte zelf. De ene keer was er een grote groep, de andere keer drie enthousiastelingen. Er waren intense momenten, maar ook lange stiltes.

We zochten hoe actoren aan te spreken in hun '*ruimtelijke vermogen tot handelen*'; hiermee bedoelen we dat we samen de mogelijkheden verkenden hoe we die ruimtelijke omgeving kunnen begrijpen, maar ook waar en hoe je er op kan ingrijpen. Verwijzend naar ideeën rond '*spatial agency*' uit een architectuurdiscours en ideeën uit de publieke pedagogie. Hierin wordt gesteld dat het niet de mensen zijn die capaciteiten missen om deel te nemen, maar dat wel vaak mogelijkheden of gelegenheden ontbreken om dat te doen. Een eerste manier om zo een mogelijkheid te creëren is om de dagelijkse situatie te onderbreken. Als een uitnodiging om in gesprek te gaan over wat er kan en mag op een bepaalde plek. Deze meer theoretische of conceptuele ideeën ondersteunden ons om acties op te zetten. Die acties zelf, het proberen en zoeken in een concrete situatie, leidden op hun beurt tot een beter begrip en tot andere inzichten. We leerden hoe in dorpen, open ruimtes in overgang naar het omliggende landschap, publieke ruimtes kunnen zijn, verbonden met een netwerk van trage wegen. Wanneer er concrete initiatieven volgden, bleek vooral het verbinden van verschillende rollen rond de tafel van belang, het creëren van een collectief en het zichtbaar maken van agenda's, net als het verknopen van verschillende schaalniveaus. Het zijn mensen (buren, vrijwilligers, eigenaars) die tot een overeenkomst moeten komen en die elkaar dus moeten tegenkomen en leren kennen, om de rol die ieder hier in opneemt te leren respecteren. Kleine initiatieven van onderuit worden beschouwd als interessant, maar erg fragiel. Een koppeling met ambities op iets grotere schaal, bijvoorbeeld binnen een ruimer plattelandproject, kan zorgen voor meer duurzame transformaties (zowel voor het van onderuit-initiatief als het ruimere project).

Zoeken en werken aan een manier om te leren van elkaar kan bovendien ook ruimtelijke praktijkwerkers zelf ondersteunen, in het zoeken naar een rol om voorbij die projectlogica te gaan, als een versterken van ons eigen '*spatial agency*'. Het gaat dan om het oefenen van een praktijk, een houding en een vertrouwen dat je nodig hebt om een complex beslissingsproces te begeleiden. Een dergelijk proces draait om vragen en kwesties waar een veelheid van stemmen in betrokken zijn, maar waar geen zekerheid te produceren valt. De uitdaging is om verschillende actoren te ondersteunen om kritisch te reflecteren en samen te werken aan een toekomstbeeld waaraan ieder wil bijdragen. Ruimtelijke praktijkwerkers kunnen hier een rol opnemen door mee in de situatie te stappen, ze te onderbreken vanuit een kritische houding tegenover wie deelneemt en wie niet, om van daaruit agenda's zichtbaar te maken, richting te geven aan ideeën, een collectief te creëren en vanuit concrete ruimtes te kijken wat mogelijk is.

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INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Participation is generally considered as an instrument to involve multiple stakeholders in the pursuit of a certain goal. In many policy domains, such as those that concern the production of space, participation has become a compulsory part of procedures, which has led to the professionalization of participatory methods. However, in practice, it often effectively remains the story of those empowered to begin and design the process and take the initiative on who to include. Participation is, then, not a liberating technique in itself. Where an approach of its potential demands questions of authorship, roles and power relations. This expansive and active use of participation can urge each discipline and policy domain to renegotiate the status quo. We should consider participation not as an instrument but as a starting point, as an assumption upon which to act. As such, participation is inherent and becomes visible when frictions between aspirations and needs can emerge and trigger a new public debate. Acting upon the assumption of participation in order to investigate its potential requires real situations, and the concrete context in which we practiced this investigation are villages in Haspengouw.

Villages are changing as a consequence of global processes of transformation as well as a summation of small-scale and individual decisions. These communities are challenged by the way identities change, and search for ways to reflect and exchange ideas on what has disappeared, what aspects of life remain, and what possibilities there are for space and living conditions in the village. We believe that an openness towards different viewpoints and ways residents identify with the village is important. Taking part is not a matter of getting exactly what you want, or get your point validated, but it is a matter of gaining confidence, and moreover, growing the desire to participate in the village, of understanding what is happening, coming to a perspective for action, for how one can contribute. How to redefine the village identity is thus a democratic question.

Participation and changing villages challenge us, as spatial practitioners, to go beyond the dominant logic of spatial projects or planning procedures, beyond roles, projects and clients, and beyond any predefined category or building block that are supposed to construct society; to better understand how these many, but specific changes in villages can become points for public debate, and future actions.

Approach of this research

Starting from the specificity of villages, its own hybridity and complexity, the challenge is to stage a debate that supports villagers and other actors to collectively reflect and come to a perspective for action.

We developed a conceptual track in parallel and in relation to a fieldwork track as an ongoing exploration of concepts via literature, testing, discussing, experimenting and intervening on site. In the conceptual track, ideas of 'participation' and 'the public' (with its political and spatial connotations) were further explored and defined towards other concepts and perspectives, as a language to make and discuss a spatial practice. In the fieldwork track we set up different case studies connecting different scales in space and time (local and regional, shorter and longer term). All case studies were set up to stage a debate and focused on three activities: (1) mapping and understanding how changes are perceived; (2) collectively reflecting on how we would prefer the situation to be, not only by discussing but also (3) through acting: testing and practicing, aiming to come to a perspective how one can contribute. These three activities are ongoing and interrelated, happening in all case studies on different moments.

We practiced an approach for debate by engagement, starting with an open-ended evaluation of what is given. We were not looking for a stable structure and neither were oriented towards a point where processes can be finished and terms can be unambiguously defined. Hence, we practiced an attitude and explored different frameworks, concepts and a language to support this. The 'added value' of our research can be defined in terms of what we learned and what we would do otherwise, based on this experience. These lessons themselves could be inspirational, but moreover this experience creates a space as a *praxis*², adding knowledge to architecture as a critical discipline. Where this theoretical discipline is mainly operating 'through thinking', we contributed through testing and acting. Looking for how to rethink the role of spatial practitioners, beyond a logic of projects and markets. With a spatial practice we furthermore want to refer beyond the discipline of architecture itself, and the logic of spatial projects.

Outline of this thesis

Questioning what is public, the title of this thesis announces an approach for spatial practitioners to stage an open debate in a village. Exploring concepts, perspectives and handles entangled in the idea of 'the public' and collectively discussing the public value with villagers, the role of public space was an entrance point in of this debate.

Part I is the introduction to the research question, situating the need or challenge we see in the idea of participation in the current context of villages.

Part II discusses the methodological choices, outlining the emergence of this study and motivates our choice for action research. As there are many schools and visions on action research, we will first explore some of the theoretical concepts of action research that we chose for relevance for this study and defend these decisions. Then we will define and explain our own approach.

From there, this thesis further unfolds in two tracks: the conceptual track (described in part III) and the fieldwork track (part IV). In part V we will reflect on the fieldwork track (IV) with concepts explored in the conceptual track (III).

Part III is no clear-cut theoretical framework to be tested or verified in the cases, but an exploration of concepts. In Part IV we do not further explore the concept of participation, but unravel the idea of 'the public' and the perspectives it offers for spatial practitioners to understand the public value, how to collectively reflect and arrive at perspectives for action.

Part IV, the fieldwork track, discusses different case studies. Part IV begins with a set of actions that we performed to stage a debate. The different chapters discuss the context, the framework and the actions that took place, and the findings of the three (most relevant) case studies.

Part V discusses lessons that emerged. It starts with reflections on the choice for action research and our struggles and issues in wanting to take an open-ended approach, as well as combining action research with design-based methods. We then define what was learned about 'the public' in relation to villages, and discuss to what extent and in what way the actions in our fieldwork staged a public debate. Finally, we reflect on how to make a practice, a role and approach to intervene as a spatial practitioner.

Backdrop of this research

As a backdrop of this research, I want to take a position towards architecture as a discipline and practice, in order to address architecture in its widest and richest possible meaning. I will not invoke recent societal, political and cultural contexts, notwithstanding their strong impact on the perception of 'participatory' practices. The tightening of austerity measures in many European countries over the past decades have caused an increase in co-productive practices, more attention for self-organisation, pop-up spaces, participatory food workshops, urban agriculture, and other activity. These mark a culture of projects and constant activity in which there is little time to be critical and to reflect. With respect to the immediate benefits of these practices, they have a tendency to be regarded, and claimed as solutions by politicians and decision makers for all kind of social problems, even though they are not able to answer the structural problems underneath, the pitfalls and limits of engagement, and a greater possibility of what participation in relation to spatial production could entail.

Architecture can be considered as a question of how to relate to the world, as a way to make the world inhabitable, in all senses - not as a mere and obvious protection, but as a permeable and negotiable middle. This is nicely illustrated by Dom Hans van der Laan (1977) in his book *'De architectonische ruimte' (the architectonic space)*, comparing a house with a sandal -as a 'middle' or addendum we carefully choose to make this world habitable:

'(...) The soil is too tough for our bare feet, and therefore we wear sandals that are softer than the ground, but tougher than our feet. If they are too hard, there is no use wearing them; if they are too soft they will soon be worn out.'
(van der Laan, 1977: 3, own translation)

A house defines the encounter of our whole existence with the full natural environment and carefully balances different social relations and spaces of experience. Since Plato's idea of the *chora*¹, space in itself can be considered as that middle, as something in between ideas and things. Space (*chora*) can be interpreted as an ambivalent mental construction between material and non-material, what exists and what becomes. As such, space can be considered as a concept that mediates, relates, and connects, as well as the container of all of these relations.

This idea of *chora* addresses space in its widest possible meaning, as a framework for architecture. And this idea of space is so essential or *meta* since the question will always remain of how to make it possible to relate to the world we live in, how to cohabitate, despite a changing context over time – in a pressing example, today's urgency about climate change. How to create a middle between one and the other, how to relate to a context and its variables? Far from minimizing any role for architects, nor to abandon the skills and ways of thinking that go into the production of buildings, it is a matter of extending, exploring a richer set of activities that can give new contexts or another scope for architectural activity.

Thus, concerning the current climate we all work in - with an increase of self-organisational and participatory initiatives, as well as more uncertainties and shifting systems - and looking how to relate to the world around us, continuously adapting and developing the role of an architect, other ways of working and behaving are demanded. Finding a role in a process of spatial production is a matter of knowing how to contribute to a complex process of decision making with multiple voices, where there is not one certainty to be defined, but where different actors can be critically supported to collectively define a future image to which they want to contribute. Activities, skills and frameworks are needed that go beyond building and the formal aspects of spatial production, not limiting spatial intelligence to work in three dimensions or by physical constraints. An openness towards what is there, the culture or context that can make things possible or not, asks for ways to access the social and relational aspects of space. These are aspects and activities that touch upon a meaning of space as *chora*, as that middle, that permeable and fluctuating 'container', not as a fixed shape or object, but as an intermediate.

These ideas are introduced here as a backdrop of this research, outlining my motivation to address architecture in this broad sense: as a critical discipline and transformative practice towards which I want to contribute.

Introducing myself as a researcher

In the run up of this PhD, I worked on two projects; the first one was a preparatory track funded by IWT³ to prepare a research proposal *'Urban planning and participation towards a set of instruments supporting spatial, participatory processes'* lead by Oswald Devisch and in collaboration with other members of Arck. This project introduced me to issues with participation I could not grasp, that motivated me to first investigate participation from a different perspective than that of a

spatial project. The second research project was funded by European funding of rural development (LEADER⁴) '*The Most beautiful villages of Haspengouw*' (discussed in Part IV as case 1), following on an earlier research project '*Towards an interactive vision for villages in Haspengouw*' (to which I did not contribute). These two projects outline two topics of the research group of that time; being media or 'instruments' to support participatory processes, and secondly villages in Haspengouw. From both angles the question was put forward how to support a longer term participation. I started working on the Leader-project, '*The Most beautiful villages of Haspengouw*' that then later became the start of my PhD research.

The research group developed further under the name of '*Spatial Capacity Building*'; focusing on different spatial typologies on an urban scale (e.g. residential subdivisions, post-industrial sites, city centers, etc. and villages) using different approaches (e.g. cartography, prototyping, serious games, etc.). In different fieldwork cases I collaborated with members of this research group, each engaged in these cases from their own research interest. I will introduce these colleagues as team-members in discussing the fieldwork in Part IV.

By introducing and situating myself as a researcher, I want to articulate some aspects that framed my own learning, in order to distinguish it from the contribution to knowledge that is further developed in this thesis. Not having a background in social science research, being an architect by training but never in practice, was a source of doubt towards how to set up an action research, as well as how to value the role of design. Continuing my studies of architecture with more history, architectural theory and philosophy, I moved further away from the expertise of giving form to a space and it became harder to position myself as a designer and certainly as an architect. Overstated, there remains a division between architects as designers who build and those who write or talk with people and do not design. Extending the role of an architect beyond building easily slips into extending this role beyond designing. Throughout this study the role of design was not clear to me, not knowing how to position myself. More clear was that the role of space remained a clear and prominent focus, albeit not through design as giving form to a space, but by starting from spatial aspects (both 'in situ' and represented) in activating a debate. In search for how to access social and relational aspects of space, it became a matter of looking beyond the three dimensions and the formal aspects of spatial production, and at the same time, the physical space remains a shared base and

starting point. Building an understanding of how villagers perceive, use and relate to their village as a specific place or set of places, I asked other questions and made other choices than for instance a social scientist would do. These aspects of searching my own role, position and background, became a question or learning process in itself, specifically in relation to action research.

I struggled writing this thesis leaving behind the 'authorial we'; it is common in academia, and many actions were factually set up in collaboration with colleagues, students, participants, etc.. However, as situated above, my own learning started from relating myself to different disciplines and frameworks, and is entangled throughout the research. This requires more clarity to unpick and differentiate this 'we' at different points of the thesis. In Part I, II and III, the 'authorial we' will be used in developing the research question, methodology and exploring theoretical concepts and perspectives based on different bodies of literature. In Part IV, 'we' will refer to several researchers who will be introduced.

Each Part is closed with two illustrative and summarizing pages using sketches. These sketches were made for the development of my own reasoning, based on a habit of making small diagrams in the margin of books and texts to help me understand what I am reading. These sketches, until now, never had a communicative role: meaning I did not use them to introduce ideas to other participants for instance. Including them here, merely is to illustrate a part of my own process. As a little byproduct of writing the thesis, I furthermore made two sets of cards. The first set is an extendable lexicon of concepts, illustrating a language and defining concepts that started to frame, as well as triggered actions. It are no closed definitions, as they change through reading, discussing and experience; both as a collection and as separate cards, they are extendable or can get lost in different contexts. The second set is a set of actions that were performed in the fieldwork. By making separate cards of these concepts and actions, I just want to further explore the performative character of this language as a set of words and verbs, a language to reflect on what we do and say.

(Endnotes)

1 Plato, 'Timaeus' in: *Complete Works*, with introduction and notes of John M. Cooper, Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis, 1997, 1254-1255. [(chora) = space, place, county] For Plato, space is something that always exists and cannot be destroyed. Intuitively and pragmatically all physical things exist somewhere, space thus can be considered as a collection of all 'somewhere's, and since space is not mental nor spiritual, space seems to be part of the physical world. However, in contrast to all other physical objects, space does not seem to be material neither. For Plato, space is not part of the world of forms that we can understand through pure reason. But it is also not a physical object that we get to know through experience. Plato makes a threefold distinction between: 'that what is', 'that what becomes' and 'that to which the becoming is formed, the source'. The *chora* is introduced as that where things become.

I only read two pages of 'Timaeus', when searching my role as an architect, continuing my studies with more theory, history and philosophy. At that time, this idea of space became a part of my framework. There are multiple threads of meaning in this text, and there are many interpretations written (also in literature on architecture theory, criticizing ideas of gender in this text) I did not take in account.

2 Defining a *praxis* Bekker (2007) makes a difference between an acting oriented on a goal outside of the action and the idea of a practice of making where the goal is included in the action, as a thing, a table, an object, a building to be made. The actions that take place in a *praxis* include an orientation, are aspirational, and hence are ethical. In everyday reality, both types of acting are interwoven and influence each other.

3 IWT, *Instituut voor Innovatie door Wetenschap en Technologie*, Institute for Innovation through Science and Technology

4 LEADER, "Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Economie Rurale", is a European funding for rural development.

I. problem statement & research question

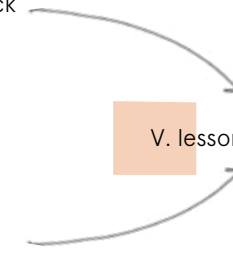
II. methodology

III. conceptual track

IV. fieldwork track

V. lessons learnt

What is public? How to make a spatial practice in changing villages?



**PARTICIPATION AND
CHANGING VILLAGES**
problem statement

PART I

PART I

This Part situates how participation on the one hand, and villages on the other, challenge spatial practitioners. As both the particular context of a village and the issues and questions coming with participation, were the starting point for this research.

Chapter 1 develops a better understanding of the concept of participation, starting with literature coming from sociology, public pedagogy and philosophy, as well as architecture, spatial planning and urbanism. Questioning power relations, responsibilities and authorship, participation challenges the borders of a practice; to go beyond projects, instrumental perspectives, procedures or predefined objectives. We conclude to consider participation not as an instrument but a starting point, as an assumption upon which to act.

Chapter 2 further explores the general concerns and possibilities of villages that are changing as a consequence of global processes of transformation as well as a summation of small-scale and individual decisions. As a next important starting point, we consider an openness is needed, towards many viewpoints and ways that people identify with the village; challenging us to intervene at many points in many different ways.

This Part concludes by outlining the research questions and aims, going from participation and the democratic issues villages face.

CHAPTER 1. PARTICIPATION AND A SPATIAL PRACTICE

In this chapter we start unravelling the concept of participation from an angle of ‘community development’. This approach has become part of the focus of many spatial renewal projects, and community development offers an entry point in another body of literature (sociology, philosophy). Next, we outline how participation is an issue in literature coming from spatial planning, urbanism and architecture.

1. PARTICIPATION, A LAYERED CONCEPT

1.1. The attention for participation and for community development in spatial policy

In the current governmental practice of most Northern European welfare countries, increasingly diverse forms of consultation and participation of citizens and civil organizations are established to support policies in different domains (Van Damme, 2012; Horelli, 2013). Spatial development (traditionally housing, infrastructures, welfare facilities, landscape, urban renewal, upgrading of public spaces, etc.) is a policy domain in which the importance of participation is increasing. In Flanders we saw how, since the introduction of the Spatial Structure Plan (1997), civic participation has become a part of most planning procedures, and even an obligatory part of the Flemish Municipal Decree. In the *White Paper on Urban Policy* (Boudry et al., 2003), spatial projects are described as an important instrument of governmental practice and expand this from spatial to community development. As a starting point, these projects can be considered *as never exclusively physical projects but always demonstrating the double objective of being a combination of spatial development and community development* (Boudry et al. 2003). Spatial projects as such can include possible economic, social and cultural aspects besides the improvement of the physical urban fabric. This starting point rests upon a paradigmatic position on the role of built space in recent urban development: where *built space is considered as a suitable platform and an integrating medium for the economic, social or cultural dimensions and even as a mediating agency between multiple objectives, diverse authorities and contradictory interests* (ibid.). This is the underlying paradigm for many urban renewal projects in Flanders over the past decades. As spatial projects intervene in both spatial and social environment of people, they should result in an established framework for better living and, as such, must combine ‘spatial with social quality’, following

the *White Paper*. What we consider this ‘quality’ to be is subject of a democratic process, and consequently marginalizes some other aspirations and needs.

For De Bie, Oosterlynck and De Blust (2012) participation arises when frictions between these aspirations and needs can become visible and trigger a new public debate. They also argue that the increasing focus of policy makers on participation meant that participatory practices and instruments became professionalized, embedded in policy documents and part of many spatial projects, and that participation became a ‘sedimented practice’ within a formalized and institutionalized setting. In addition, Wildermeersch (2014) addresses how the ‘power to the people’ is no longer a slogan of radicals but has become an instrument of community developers, politicians, consultancy bureaus, etc. Participation is everywhere. Wildermeersch denounces the ‘hidden agenda’ of participation: expecting participants to define themselves as self-directed agents in an ‘active society’. The increasing and almost pervasive attention for participation goes along with a critique. To better understand this critique, we first want to explore how to define the concept of participation.

1.2. Situating the concept of participation from a social agogic perspective

Neither participation nor the objective of ‘community building’ is smooth, clear and straightforward. From a perspective of community development, the concept of ‘participation’ is key in addressing and acting upon problematic situations. To define participation, Bouverne-De Bie starts from two different approaches: a method-technical and a critical-political approach, both respectively related to a utilitarian and a normative idea of citizenship (Bouverne-De Bie, 2003: 43-44). A *method-technical* approach defines participation as ‘access’, that is, to policy procedures, or to social integration. Participatory actions are then to enable everybody to take part in the policy-making process. This has the depoliticising effect of moving the core of the discussion from the problematic situation to the contradiction between participants and non-participants. De Bie emphasizes that ‘not taking part’ has a meaning in itself. Considering this ‘non-participation’ as a problem is devaluing its meaning. The question is not how to involve non-participants, but why do we think they should take part? Participation as a method has different advantages and meets different purposes: (a) an educational purpose (via participation people become competent in participatory processes), (b) a pacifying purpose (via participation a social basis is found) and (c) an integrating purpose (via participation solidarity increases). A second, *critical-political*, approach

defines participation as taking part in society; this is *'the society as a historically developed societal project'*. Participation then is the counterpart of 'marginalization'. A historical and social analysis of problems (of why people get excluded) will this time form the basis for participatory actions. This analysis needs to be inclusive, meaning that the 'problem-owners' also need to be involved. Participation as such not only contributes to policy making but is also considered as a condition for policy making. The diversity of meaning is considered as a societal quality in itself. And social-agogic practices are fundamentally considered as cultural processes.

The difference between a method-technical and a critical-political approach is not so clear in practice. In practice, both approaches have their own value and influence each other. In practice, participation is both a method and a normative goal and searching for a good method is not per se in contradiction with a critical-political approach. Bouverne-De Bie explains how for both the method-technical (utilitarian) as well as the critical-political (normative) approach, coming to a method for participation brings on a paradox: an outside intervention is needed to enhance the autonomy to act (Duyvendak 1997). Also, Wildermeersch (2014) argues how the concept of participation time and again seems to provoke the paradoxical experience that emancipatory interventions may just as well strengthen polarization, due to lack of attention to contextual matters (Wildermeersch, 2014). De Bie & De Visscher (2008) propose to understand participation as an open process in which multiple ways of commitment are possible, with attention to the different ways of being a participant of everyday practices. In this way participation is more than an intervention and should be framed within a broad sociopolitical debate. De Bie *et al.* (2012) describe how the method-technical approach can evolve, and how the (a) educational, (b) pacifying and (c) integrating purposes of participation can be supplemented with a fourth (d) dynamic purpose, which refers to possibility of other needs that may become visible. Although we can acknowledge some important instrumental advantages of participation, they argue that it is important to not reduce participation to a method and allow it to be open for emerging aspirations and needs. It is then and there that participation can arise: when frictions between aspirations and needs can become visible and trigger a new public debate. For De Bie, *et al.* (2012) participation deals with making visible these frictions and ruptures in society and we have to work productively with these ruptures.

1.3. Understanding the concept of participation from a philosophical perspective on equality

The concept of participation from a social agogic perspective reveals different layers and theoretical assumptions that derive not only from sociology and pedagogy, but also philosophy. Wildermeersch (2014) describes how the more philosophical approach of the concept of 'emancipation', for instance, was important to reconsider certain assumptions that directed certain 'taken-for-granted' perspectives. As discussed above *'The concept of emancipation time and again seems to provoke the paradoxical experience that liberation necessarily implies patronage.'* (Wildermeersch, 2014 : 825) He refers to Rancière, who introduced the idea of 'equality of intelligence' and for whom *equality will not be the outcome of the process, but an assumption with which the process begins*, and hence offers a different perspective on how to deal with this paradox. It is this idea of equality that supported us to better understand participation. Masschelein (2007) explains how in *The ignorant schoolmaster*, Rancière (1987) gives lessons on emancipation that introduce this core idea of 'equality of intelligence'. For Rancière this intellectual equality is no aim to be reached; rather, it is an assumption on which we can speak and act, and exists in opposition to another assumption: that of inequality. It is a principle that needs to be verified over and over again but can never be achieved through any method nor a transfer of knowledge. Equality is as an axiom that supports a thinking, experimenting and discovery of the present. In mathematics, an axiom is *'a statement that is taken to be true, to serve as a premise or starting point for further reasoning and arguments'* (cf. the dictionary definition). Equality is such a statement and the truth of this statement needs to be verified in practice. In other words, the proof can only be found in practice, in acting. As such, an act to verify equality, Rancière refers to telling, rather than explaining: telling postulates an equality and explaining postulates an inequality. The meaning of the 'master' is hence connected to speaking as a form of announcing, of making public, of demonstrating, not to knowing nor to instructing.

Taking Rancière's lessons on equality, Wildermeersch (2014) proposes to no longer consider participation as a method but as an assumption, similar to how we can conceive the concept of equality (Bouverne-De Bie, 2003, Wildermeersch, 2014). The value of this idea is probably not very practical, as this idea of equality makes it hard to organise education or participation. Also Masschelein concludes, it is almost impossibly difficult to come to concrete programs and transformations by taking this 'equality of intelligence' seriously. But the true value of this perspective

is the awareness of the paradox in itself that is meaningful for the idea of participation. This awareness, similar to the lessons of Rancière, is something that cannot be explained, nor taught. The true challenge is to come with a concrete and valuable practice once one has 'heard' this lesson or understands the value of the paradox.

Summary

We linked an increasing attention for participation in spatial policy to community building, and further defined participation from this perspective. Participation deals with questions of emancipation, of democracy, with the political¹. This is an obvious statement on the one hand, but should always be recalled on the other hand, as also noted by De Bie et. al. (2012) and Wildermeersch (2014). In search for an approach, we learned how, in practice, interventions come 'from the outside' to change a situation 'from within'. Participation has methodological advantages, but it can never be reduced solely to a method; it should be open for emerging aspiration and needs. Participation can be considered as a dynamic and open process in which multiple ways of commitment are possible, with attention for different ways of being a participant in everyday practices. The proposal is to not see participation as a method, but as an assumption on which we can speak and act, and as what needs to be explored or come into practice, over and over again.

2. Participation and a Spatial Practice

'*Spatial practice*' is a broad term for architectural, design and other disciplinary and interdisciplinary practices engaged in studying and transforming space (Schalk, et. al., 2017). As argued by Jane Rendell (2006) contemporary challenges of urbanization have necessitated an emerging discourse across geography, anthropology, cultural studies, history, art and architecture. Synergies among disciplines have generated knowledge that reformulate the ways in which space can be understood. This practice responds to existing orders by involving creativity and social critique, which occur in the form of everyday activities and creative practices (Rendell, 2006). Hence, with a spatial practice, we want to refer beyond the discipline of architecture itself, and the logic of spatial projects.

We will now discuss the concept of participation in different bodies of literature close to the discipline of architecture. As the word 'participation' is heavily criticised as well as used abundantly we want to better understand how it was interpreted in our field. Jeremy Till (2005: 25) author of the book *Architecture and Participation* considers literature on spatial planning and participation far more extensive than on architecture and participation. This in itself is not relevant, but as planning is more closely related to policy making and decision making processes, and is taking a perspective that opens towards a larger spatial scale and a longer time frame, we start here. We briefly situate the 'participatory turn' in different planning paradigms (2.1.) and elaborate on strategic planning as a discourse that initially influenced our view on participation (as the framework of many renewal projects) (2.2.). Next we situate similar rounds of participation in architecture focused on engaging 'users' (2.3.) and how participation was interpreted as a political concept (2.4.). Finally we close this chapter with briefly introducing other perspectives on participation coming from architecture (2.5.).

2.1. The participatory turn, different rounds of participation in planning

Worldwide various attempts have been made since the 1960s to involve citizens from the very outset in spatial development processes. Krivy and Kaminer (2013) made an overview² of the *participatory turn*, as how they call it, that is noted by many scholars in spatial planning as a 'return' of sorts of ideas and ideologies of the 1960s, an era in which participatory demands were backed by influential and radical political movements. They trace the origins of participatory planning back to concepts of advocacy (Paul Davidoff), equity (Norman Krumholz), and

transactive (John Friedmann) planning. Within the context of *advocacy planning* (Davidoff, 1965), the planner becomes 'an advocate' of one social group. Mostly founded by young planners and politically engaged architecture students. Critics emphasize the advocate planners to be demographically different from the 'users' they serve. John Friedmann's *transactive planning* encouraged the public to take an active role in the policy setting process, while the planner became a facilitator. Mutual learning, and not the planner but citizens and civic leaders are at the core of planning (Friedmann, 1987). In various ways, the notion of public participation was central to ideas as diverse as the 'Non-Plan' of Reyner Banham et al, Giancarlo di Carlo's 'Urbino', or Jane Jacobs's 'diverse city'.

For Boonstra & Boelens (2011), participation as a practice in spatial planning started with the presentation of a 'ladder of participation' by Sherry Arnstein, originally published in the *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* in 1969. Her article builds heavily on her experience as chief advisor on citizen participation for the US department of housing and urban development, although she was no planner. Jan Steyaert (2016) considers the typology she described as wanting to be provocative, and aiming to get rid of too many misleading euphemisms. To begin she equated citizen participation with citizen power: if participation didn't result in shifting power between haves and have-nots, it was not genuine participation. Arnstein emphasized that despite the simplifying effect of the ladder, it is showing precisely this: the have-nots really do perceive the powerful as monolithic 'system', and powerholders actually do view the have-nots as a sea of 'those people'. This typology does not include an analysis of how to achieve genuine levels of participation, she concludes, both sides of the power fence have their own roadblocks.

Boonstra and Boelens (2011) distinguish different rounds of participatory planning history. The first round of participation merely enabled citizens to criticize and react to spatial proposals made by the government agencies. This form of participation was subsequently incorporated into formal planning procedures, and in certain countries was incorporated in legislation (also in Flanders, cf. supra, the Flemish Municipal Decree making participation obligatory). Nowadays such citizen involvement has come to be regarded as a general right in many Northern European countries. However, according to Boonstra & Boelens this first round of participation in public matters was also criticized, for instance by Judith Innes, David Booher and Patsy Healey (Innes and Booher, 2000; Healey, 2007) Their approach of *Collaborative planning* (Innes, 1996; Healy, 1997) was based on a

communicative approach giving different stakeholders the possibility to become decision-makers using local knowledge to inform projects. The *communicative planning* theory (Forrester, 1998) complemented the technical work of the planner with communicative strategies encouraging community-based planning actions. Boonstra and Boelens (2011) conclude that in the past 45 years citizens' participation in spatial planning has changed profoundly: from consultation, via collaboration towards a sort of delegated management. But they consider participatory planning always as controlled by public government, framed within the regimes and conditions of the government. Therefore Boonstra and Boelens (2011:107) leave the concept of participation as for them it leads to an impasse and locked in of spatial planning and they choose to go beyond path-dependencies of government and even governance to further explore the concept of self-organisation³.

We can relate this critique of Boonstra and Boelens to issues discussed in relation to the increasing focus of policy makers on participation (De Bie et. al., 2012 & Wildermeersch, 2014), turning social and political problems into learning problems (assuming it are the participants who need to learn and expecting participants to define themselves as self-directed agents in an 'active society') and turning participation into a 'sedimented practice' within a formalized and institutionalized setting (cf. 1.1.).

2.2. Strategic planning: vision, policy, projects and 'empowerment'

A last 'movement' or mode of planning that we want to discuss that is focused on involving citizens and stakeholders is *strategic planning* (Vandenbroek, 2004, Vandenbroek, et al. 2010). These ideas of *strategic planning* influenced our initial view on participation. We already referred to the Flemish policy for urban renewal, where the (spatial) renewal project became a focal point of vision and debate. This idea of how project, vision and debate are related, was based on three simultaneous and coinciding tracks defined by *strategic planning*. The first being the development of a long-term vision of the spatial structure of a region; the second referring to short-term actions reacting to sudden opportunities and problems; and the third being about coproduction or how to involve the civil society within this planning process. In strategic planning (Vandenbroek, et al. 2010) a fourth track was added as a continuous process of capacity building or empowerment, allowing all actors, including citizens, to increase their ability to take part. This fourth track is interesting, as an ongoing and continuing process

it is going beyond a project mode or the involvement of actors within the clear borders of legal procedures linked to plans for land designation or building codes for instance. However, it is precisely this ‘empowering’ or ‘emancipatory’ aim of this fourth track that we addressed as challenging in the previous chapter, as a challenge between finding an approach and a normative aim, between improving ‘from within’ while coming ‘from the outside’. We questioned the difficulty to go beyond this paradoxical experience that emancipatory interventions may just as well strengthen polarization and emphasized the importance to have attention for the multiple commitments and different ways of being a participant of everyday practices.

2.3. The participation of ‘users’ in architecture

Architecture as a theoretical discipline knows its search and struggle with the concept of participation starting in the same period. In 1969 Giancarlo de Carlo gave the lecture *Architecture’s public* on the need for the inclusion of users in the design process and the inherently political role of the architect. He was one of the founding members of Team X, a group of architects challenging the modernist doctrines as set out by CIAM and was a key figure in the discourse on participation in architecture. De Carlo mainly questions ‘the public’ architects work for. Where Hans Hollein (1968) stretches the role of the architect in ‘*Alles ist Architektur*’ going from the changing material and physical possibilities, it was John Habraken (1969) who moved the role of the architect towards responsibility and towards ownership. “*It is not about the building you designed it is about the dialogue that makes it possible for others to continue*” pursuing this idea with a building system that allowed residents to adapt their house to fit their needs. For Yona Friedman (2003) this ownership should go beyond the private house as he searched for a communication to stimulate appropriation and trigger people to take care of their environment. ‘*The solutions were not mine, my goal was to stimulate people to find solutions themselves*’ (Obrist & Nesbit, Friedman, 2003).

At the level of building, the participation movement looked for ways to question the balance of power between architect and user. A number of different approaches were developed including methods to involve future users in the design process. Others chose to self-build so that users could be involved not only in the design of their dwellings but also in their construction, and finally there was a move towards more adaptable and customized architecture. For Broome (2005) the pattern language developed by Christopher Alexander in 1977 proved to be a useful concept for

introducing people to ideas about what makes good cities, neighbourhoods and dwellings (Broome, 2005: 69). In the US the participation movement got a face in *Community Design Centres* that emerged in the 1960s, offering technical and design advice to communities who could not afford it. Today some of them are still operating independently but many of these centres are affiliated to universities for example. Both theoreticians and practitioners questioned the role of the architect in a more political and conceptual way but in practice this often lead to a superficial difference in taste (e.g. a limited involvement in only specific aspects of building, for instance the finishing). In their text ‘*In the name of the people*’ Tzonis and Lefaivre (1976) note the participatory movements (going from populism to ‘neo-vernacular’ trends) are indebted to the consumer society and remiss in coming to actual societal changes. According to Hilde Heynen (2003) this is where the participatory movement in architecture ran down, because the experiences were disappointing on an ‘aesthetic’ level and did not lead to the innovation as hoped for. This is similar to many spatial planning processes, where the participation is often related to more superficial details of projects in a formalized and existing planning procedure.

2.4. Participation beyond users: a political concept

‘Participation and architecture’ was of course more than an aesthetic issue but it touches upon discussions on how to use your expertise or to pass on responsibilities. Jeremy Till (2006) writes about ‘stripping’ of expertise:

“The imbalance of power imposed by standard architectural processes was the target of the community activists of the 1960s and 1970s who resolved to strip experts of their authority and reduce them to being technical facilitators, there to deliver the desires of the community without imposing on them”.

As mere facilitators, Till continues, the architects are unable to re-imagine their knowledge from the perspective of the user; their knowledge was not used transformatively, rather their skills were used instrumentally. The technical know-how of the expert is not enough to help users to develop new spatial visions; the user is given nothing to enable them to expand on their nascent but unarticulated desires, and so these remain at the level of the lowest common denominator. Referring to this idea of expertise, Lucien Kroll deliberately states he does not want to escape from the responsibility of deciding, but he does not want to do

this alone, and furthermore he doesn't think everything has to be decided (Kroll, in Blundell Jones, 2005). Hence it is not a merely aesthetic issue as Heynen concluded, it is a matter of sharing expertise, of skills, of power, of a responsibility to make decisions. For Till (2005), most architects want to postpone the messy reality that unavoidably will face their design. There is a tension between the ideals and reality of architectural practice, - a gap that is always there, just like the gap between any ideal and reality of any practice. For Till, it is not this postponing of reality that is so surprising, we should rather be surprised, he continues, that the term participation is so willingly and uncritically accepted as being for the common good.

Till thus addresses the returning issue of power relations, this time in the performance of 'expertise' and professional knowledge. In the introduction of the book *Architecture and Participation* Blundell Jones, Petrescu and Till consider participation as a concept that should be continuously questioned and is inherently political. (Blundell Jones, et.al., 2005).

2.5. Transformative and transversal participation

We conclude with two alternative ideas on participation in architecture, similar to how we concluded exploring the concept of participation with a reflection on the philosophical idea on equality of Rancière. This idea gave us a suggestion or direction to approach participation as an assumption that we will further investigate in the conceptual track. The ideas of 'hope' and 'desire', that are respectively put forward by Till and Petrescu, are ideas to reconsider how to understand participation in relation to architecture.

In his essay *The negotiation of hope* Till (2005) investigates what is making the architectural practice to deny participation as inherently political, and he searches to reformulate the architectural practice. What is needed, Till argues, is another form of participation that is realistic enough to acknowledge the imbalances of power and knowledge but at the same time works with these imbalances in a way that transforms the expectations and futures of the participants. Till calls this type of participation *transformative participation*, referring to the transformative theory developed by John Friedmann (1987) (cf. supra). For Till this is a process that is transformative for all parties – the architect included. Architectural knowledge should not be applied as an abstraction from the outside but developed from within the context of a given situation, facing the concern that in acting normally one

may lose one's professional status. And without leaving out notions of 'authority' and 'otherness', to avoid a too cosy view on participation, Till notes. The key lies in architects being engaged participants, anticipating the future of spatial possibilities in terms of time and occupation rather than forms, understanding and drawing out spatial implications. Participation is the space in which hope is negotiated, Till concludes. This hope does not just refer to a better future for users of the built environment, but also to a better future for architectural practice as it is challenging its boundaries and merits. Participation is not a threat but brings an opportunity that can lead to another form of architecture.

In her contribution *Losing control, keeping desire* Doina Petrescu (2005) considers participation as something that emerges, and (again) as what cannot be reduced to a method.

'Participation is not a liberating technique in itself, (...) and this is one of the problems with compulsory participative programmes. (...) Democratic access to decision-making is not granted by an imposed participation. Participation is performative, it cannot work through preconceived models.' (Petrescu, 2005: 53).

For Petrescu the participation process depends on participants' desire. The challenge then is: how does this desire manifest itself, how can one make it visible? How could different desires coexist and operate together? Petrescu considers a participatory design driven by desire as a 'collective bricolage', in which individuals (clients, users, designers) are able to question the situation and different voices, to acknowledge their own position and then go beyond it, to discover new possibilities and a common project. Petrescu makes a difference between 'organised participation' (which is somehow under control) and 'transversal participation' (which generates unexpected continually evolving reactions). For her, the organisation of such a 'transversal participation' is an architectural question as it is a question to literally create space for discussion and confrontation, for self-organisation. The position from which the architect then operates is not so much a 'bottom-up' approach, but one 'in the middle', as a mediator, as a curator, drawing on others' creativity, as a caretaker, a connector of people, things, desires, stories, opportunities.

The architect should accept losing control, rather than being a master. (Petrescu, 2005: 55)

Summary

Participation has been a subject for architects, theoreticians as well as practitioners from different perspectives and on different scales (from architecture to urbanism and spatial planning). As participation became a necessary part of governmental policies, it has been institutionalized. The idea that participation is happening somewhere between the powerful and the powerless, the haves and have-nots, was at the basis of many planning paradigms and theoretical discourses that we discussed. It are 'those in power' who determine the procedures along which the 'powerless' shall participate. This is what makes Boonstra and Boelens (2011:107) leave the concept of participation as for them it leads to an impasse and locked in of spatial planning. Neither from the perspective of spatial planning nor from architecture there is an agreement on the meaning of participation but - especially in times where participation has become a buzzword -, Blundell Jones et. al. (2005) consider it to be important to question its meaning but just as well to keep the word, and so do we. Till and Petrescu introduce us to other perspectives on participation in architecture, opening it towards 'hope' and 'desire' considering participation as what can or should be *transformative* for all parties, the architect included.

3. How Participation is challenging a Spatial Practice

We addressed how there are instrumental advantages of participation, as well as how participation cannot simply be reduced to a method, it must remain open for emerging aspirations and needs. Beyond instrumental advantages there are other, more open, dynamic and dialogical perspectives that allow to approach participation from a more broad or political understanding. Participation questions power relations and responsibilities, as well as authorship, knowledge and the borders of a practice. With these 'borders' we simply refer to the line that we cross when we (as a practitioner) start to intervene and where we stop. It is also the line that forms a tension between coming 'from the outside' to change a situation 'from within'. It is in interaction with others our role comes about and our values are articulated: the assumptions on which we speak and act.

In the overview of interpretations of participation, two issues were addressed in relation to how to define or search a role as a practitioner. A first issue is related to the distinction between *the powerful and the powerless*, and how aiming to 'shift power' is mostly induced by those in power (Boonstra & Boelens, 2011; Till, 2015). Secondly, closely related but different, there is the depoliticisation effect of participation, as next to the distinction between powerful and powerless, one unavoidably makes a distinction between *the participants and the non-participants*. While it can be meaningful in itself to pay attention to those who do not participate (De Bie, 2003).

We can conclude that this is precisely the challenge, to go beyond the project, the instrumental perspectives, predefined problems, procedures, objectives and participants - and to go beyond distinctions or predefined categories and to work productively with differences. De Bie (2013) argues how the awareness that there are different readings and ways to understand the same situation, comes down to allow different interpretations and contradictions.

An architect can learn from people who disagree. Therefore it is important to leave room for this disagreement, as well as to make room for understanding why one disagrees' (De Bie, quoted by Goethals and Schreurs in Segers et. al. 2013: 145).

Finally we reflected on the philosophical idea on equality of Rancière and learned how for Masschelein (2007) the true challenge is to come with a concrete and valuable practice once one has 'heard' Rancière's lesson of the ignorant schoolmaster, assuming an equality of intelligence. We want to explore how to make a spatial practice going from this lesson. Building on this idea of 'equality of intelligence' (Rancière, 1987) we conclude the challenge is to act upon participation as an assumption, considering this assumption as that statement with which the process begins and that needs to be tested in practice, over and over again. Then participation is something that can never be achieved, as it is not an 'outcome'.

Everyone has a stake in how space will transform going from private interests as well as public needs. If we go beyond the logic of projects or procedures, everybody is affected by how we deal with our space, space is constantly rethought and appropriated, as a physical, as well as a social terrain. In general, architectural and planning practices run through formalised participatory procedures with predefined objectives and a solution focus. If we want to act upon participation as an assumption, we should explore approaches for a spatial practice that go beyond this idea of a professional as *someone with an interest in the existence of problems* (Till, 2005 : 35) and to deliberately make room for disagreement, for conflict and to be attentive for what emerges from the everyday.

We will not further investigate the concept of participation in itself. Hereafter we consider participation, not as a mere instrument nor a goal to be reached, but investigate how to take participation as an assumption to act on in a spatial practice. Hereby we introduced the starting point of this study, of our research question that focusses on searching an approach for spatial practitioners.

CHAPTER 2. VILLAGES

Villages are changing, and will continue to change in future. In policy documents these changes are often perceived from a perspective of 'loss' and they are furthermore hard to describe and steer. We will not go into the causes and effects of these changes, but situate some more general changes typical for Flanders and discuss how also small scale interventions have an impact on the village. Next, we look for how to understand the impact of these changes on the social and spatial structure and the identity of villages. How do villagers perceive these changes and identify with the village? We discuss literature on villages and changing place attachment. We close this chapter reflecting on the challenges that changing villages define, as a democratic challenge, transforming individual wants into collective imaginations.

By investigating how these changes can become points for public debate and future actions, the village is introduced as a particular context to explore a spatial practice that goes beyond a logic of spatial projects and instrumental perspectives.

1. General Changes and Small Scale Interventions

Like cities, villages are transforming because of more general processes (i.e. changing mobility, improved technology, globalising markets, changes in governance). We will describe some changes in Flanders that had an impact on the social and spatial structure of villages. To start, the way housing and agricultural policy for instance, were organised after the second world war, induced a sprawled consumption of space; supporting individual users as well as enlarging agricultural firms. In addition, many small scale and individual decisions caused changes in the village that are more hard to describe and steer.

1.1 Housing and agricultural policy supporting individual users

De Meulder et.al. (1999) described a transformation initiated by the policy of private housing as *'the middle class colonization of the countryside since 1950s'*. The individual user was supported to build his own house, encouraged not only by political decisions but also by the civil society and associations as KVLV (De Decker 2008, De Meulder 1999, Thissen 2017). According to De Meulder the planning mechanisms that made this possible were not only centred around the household problem, but also touched upon personal lifestyle questions.

“The return to nature as a lifestyle, as an environment, plays a role in this, not in the first place in utilitarian terms (agriculture and horticulture) but as gardening for recreational and aesthetic purposes, of open space, of fresh air.”
(De Meulder et.al. 1999, p. 89)

However, these houses paradoxically blocked the view on the surrounding open landscape by hedges, fences, mimicking the open space on the own plot (De Meulder, 1999 and Leinfelder, 2010). The residential dream of a detached house with a private garden became a model as a result of a long process, in which political decisions, economic possibilities and cultural aspects enhanced each other (De Decker, 2008). Next to this residential model also the model of employment was sprawled, based on existing agricultural activities and local entrepreneurship, which lead to a strong connection of living and working on a local level. This lead, just as well, to a high demand for mobility infrastructure, as everything is spread. The planning mechanism that caused this sprawled model of housing and employment, also influenced the relation between public and private property in Flanders, as the government interferes much less on the individual plot than in the Netherlands for example (Thissen, 2017). The consequence of supporting the individual user makes that the public domain is less occupied and Thissen argues how there is less a culture to support the collective. Property rights and building regulations avoid interactions rather than that they support cooperation (e.g. there is an obligatory distance that needs to be taken in account when building a detached house).



Figure 1 and 2 - Pictures (c) Peter Bongaerts, showing how the view on the surrounding landscape is different when high trunk orchards are replaced by low-trunk plantations.

Secondly, the Common Agriculture Policy of Europe focused on productivity in this same post-war period. This led to an enlargement of agricultural holdings that were specializing and intensifying. After the second world war, agriculture was accepted to be the most important user of landscape and producer of food, and there was less attention for the consequences for nature. A lot of the typical landscape elements, like hedges and wooded borders, the lines that farmers created by cultivating the land, disappeared together with valuable species, fauna and flora. Villages were stripped from their natural and diffuse borders (Ceunen, 2011). Since 1990 the *The Common Agriculture Policy of Europe* is countered by a new paradigm with a focus on *rural development* (declaration of Cork; Woods, 2011 : 140; Van der Ploeg et al., 2000). This new cornerstone is not sector oriented but territorial, and oriented on the whole of society. However, consequences of the post-war agricultural policy remain present and visible. The landscape of Haspengouw for instance, became less accessible as it became dominated by low-trunk fruit plantations, focusing on high production (see fig. 1 and 2). This shift in policy is often referred to, as a change from production towards consumption (with increasing demands of consumers for new functions like healthy food, clean water, attractive landscapes, recreation, etc.).

The rural is the place where the ongoing encounter, interaction and mutual transformation (in short: coproduction) of man and living nature is located. This encounter occurs through a wide range of different practices, which are spatially and temporally bounded. (...) In recent decades there have been major shifts within the coproduction of man and living nature. (...) This is reflected in the frequently used statement that the rural has changed from being a place of production towards being a place of consumption. (Vander Ploeg & Marsden, 2008, p. 2, 3)

Rural development aims to reposition the rural within the wider society by making the rural more attractive, more accessible, more valuable for everybody. With this new cornerstone of European policy, different funding programs (e.g. Leader) were initiated. Local authorities were given the autonomy to develop a strategic vision for their regions, and were given the coordination over a group of local actors who can decide on initiatives to be financed (as a bottom-up method). We will further discuss the LEADER program in part IV, situating our fieldwork.

More about Haspengouw:

In the south of Haspengouw, the soil has always been very rich and villages were surrounded by acres, orchards and enough open agricultural land to be self-sustainable. Illustrative for this is how commons disappeared already in the 9th century, because the 'less fertile' ground was good enough to use (Ceunen, 2011). Villages mostly are core- or pile-villages and the 'sprawl of urbanisation' is less strong in this region than in other parts of Flanders. However, the original character of landscape and villages are just as well disturbed by more generic residential subdivisions of low density. The north of Haspengouw is more humid and green as the clay holds the water, flown down in the dense network of streams to the valleys of the rivers Demer and Herk. Long, green strips characterize the landscape, parallel to these streams and rivers. The villages developed parallel and at a certain distance to the valleys. Typical are the oblong street villages with timbered houses and green areas entering the centre. Today, this basic pattern is sprawled and lead to ribbon development on the former agricultural roads (Bongaerts, 2014).



Figure 3 and 4 - Pictures (c) Peter Bongaerts showing how the North of Haspengouw is more humid and green. The south of Haspengouw has a subsurface of chalk and sand, which is more permeable and thus the upper layer of clay is more dry. This is a landscape of sloping open fields, with here and there a forest, a castle with a park, a tumulus and of course villages and farms.

In Haspengouw there already were valuable efforts for an integrated approach in 1970 when the organisation *Streekontwikkeling Zuid-Limburg*, (SZL) started to work on regional development. Their concern was that the south of Limburg (i.e. Haspengouw) has different needs and concerns than the rest of the province (Coemans et.al., 2013). Therefore they made a plea for an integrated and location based approach, not only because of the specific challenges in the region (i.e. lower demographic growth, low administrative power of smaller municipalities) but also because of its very specific and different character and culture. The organisation worked on diverse themes (from spatial policy to nature and tourism) taking initiatives on different levels (from study work to an exhibition on village renewal). In their pamphlet *rural renewal* (referring to the concept of city renewal) SZL emphasized the specific needs and challenges of villages. The different studies and plans that the Flemish government prepared in the early nineties in perspective of 'Flanders - Europe 2002' were perceived by SZL as 'marketing' from an urban view 'not taking in account the open space that urgently needed protection' (Coemans, 2013, p: 41). When in 1994 the Spatial Structure Plan for Flanders was presented, the planners recognised Haspengouw as a rather undamaged region, however for SZL they ignored the concept of a 'rural region'. For SZL the most important point of action was to support this 'regional identity' as well as to contribute to a 'village identity' based on ideas and proposals of villagers and local actors.



Figure 5 - *Streekontwikkeling Zuid-Limburg* organising an exhibition on housing and (village) renewal (source: Coemans et.al., 2013)

1.2. Autonomous transformations: as an interaction between policies and many small decisions

More recent studies show how functions in open space are already more diverse. Dewaelheyns et. al. (2011) describe how the open landscape is affected by a general trend of conversions of farmland to other uses of open space, for instance tourism. Another example of upcoming land use that is privatising open space all over western Europe, is described by Bomans et.al. (2010) as the ‘horsification’ of the landscape and by Verbeek (2010) and Dewaelheyns et.al. (2012) as a ‘garden sprawl’. Verhoeve (2012) addresses the appearance of non-agricultural functions (e.g. building firms, wellness centres) in agricultural buildings that escape the attention of spatial planning strategies. Kerselaers (2012) points out how many of these alterations introduce ‘new’ actors and ‘new’ uses which are neither known nor captured by standard categorizations.

Antrop (1998) already described these shifts as ‘autonomous’ processes of transformation. Just like natural (environmental) changes, he argues, these are processes that are hard to steer and predict. They also correspond to the *‘tyranny of small-decisions’* launched by Kahn (1966, in: Dewaelheyns, 2014), referring to the culmination of uncoordinated (e.g. autonomous and individually-made) decisions that lead to major effects on the environment. Such culminated effects are often neither optimal, desired, intended nor preferred by society (Odum, 1982). In addition, Woods (2005) also refers to the small scale of different changes and how they are often invisible for standard land cover analysis techniques. Verhoeve et. al. (2012) argue for the need to build up knowledge, gather more data, and do more fieldwork to get insight in the impact of and mechanisms behind these hidden and unplanned (and therefore potentially underrated) changes.

Hence, next to policies and related planning mechanisms, there are autonomous changes that are less prominent or even unnoticed. Furthermore the rhythm of these changes seems slow enough to digest, and for most villagers, they pass by almost without notice (Devisch, et. al. 2005). Two examples can illustrate this: the archive of the municipality of Rosmeer counts 143 requests for a building application (for demolition, adaption or new buildings) between 1990 and 2005 on a total of 300 houses. In Horpmaal, a small village of only 200 houses, there were 188 requests for a building application between 1985 and 2005. We could say, theoretically, on 20 years almost all houses of these villages had a make-over, which did not happen on the initiative of the government (Devisch, 2009).

These building applications of course are registered but the impact they have on the physical identity of the village is not planned as such, hence the sum of many individual decisions, made the village change and look different today.

Summary

Next to more general transformations like improved technology and mobility there are changes in policies and planning mechanisms as well as many small-scale decisions that have an impact on the village. We discussed how post war housing policy induced a sprawled consumption of space. The agricultural policy focused on production in the 50s and in this period the landscape of Haspengouw became dominated by low trunk fruit plantations. More recently the agricultural policy focuses on rural development taking in account multi-functional use of open space, and is oriented towards the society as a whole. However there are also several unplanned and underrated uses that are not captured by standard categorisation that continue inducing small scale changes. This ‘autonomous’ character of these changes make them hard to describe, plan and predict.

2. Changing Village Identity

We referred to more general changes (e.g. the increasing individual mobility, technological evolutions, globalising markets, ...) changing policies and small-scale interventions. We will now reflect on how to understand the impact of these changes on the social and spatial structure of the village, and idea of place attachment. How do villagers perceive these changes and identify with the village as their daily living environment? The daily patterns of villagers enlarged (villagers work outside the village, use services on a regional scale and have a social network that goes beyond the village) but at the same time, villagers are more focused on their own house and the immediate environment. The private house became more important and households became smaller. We learned how in Flanders, this individual and personal choice also induced a sprawled pattern of housing that made villages more generic and that cut the open space into bits. The village is no longer the place where one was born, but the emotional connection with the village or village attachment is not disappearing, it is transforming itself and remains meaningful. (Milbourne & Kitchen 2014; Ralph & Staeheli 2011) Altman and Low (1992) broadly define place attachment as the affective, cognitive and behavioural bonds between a person and a place. Contemporary patterns of places

attachment are characterized by selection, based on individual circumstances and interests and desires (Savage et al., 2005).

All the more, as Vermeij & Steenbekkers observe in their research in the Netherlands, the emotional or mental connections are becoming important in choosing a place to live, prior to economical, functional and even social connections to a village (Vermeij & Steenbekkers, 2015). For Storme, the physical space is a crucial precondition for solidarity to arise, as the territory where norms and values count or as a stage to meet (Storme, 2012). What matters is that one shares a place, not how long one uses this place or lives there. In respect to cities Oosterlynck (2012) discussed how principles of density and vicinity can be an asset in searching for new ways of living and working together. Neither in villages, shared values and norms, are longer that obvious as a point of departure. Maybe principles of density and vicinity are of less importance in a village, but the place itself that is shared is just as well the start for all villagers to connect to their immediate living environment.

Thissen (2013) addresses how in policy reports often the wrong causal relations are made between the amount of inhabitants, services and liveability. The loss of services in many villages is not directly related to a decline of inhabitants but is a consequence of increasing mobility and of changing day paths of villagers. Villages transformed from 'a world on their own' to 'places to live in a larger and more regional system', they transformed (successful or not) from 'autonomous villages' to 'residential villages' (Thissen, 2013, Ostendorp & Thissen, 2001). But the image of *'how the village used to be'* is still dominating many studies and policy documents, and is giving the village a pitiful image (e.g. the SWOT analyses of the Province of Limburg addressing the liveability in villages as 'problematic', (Provincie Limburg, 2007, 2013)). Many initiatives focus on services and consider small village shops and local bakeries that close as a problem, wanting to re-enhance the 'autonomy' of the village. Policies and studies often neglect the capital (network but also skills) and certain needs of new groups. Newcomers can bring in valuable new perspectives but also have other expectations (Thissen & Loopmans, 2013).

For Thissen & Loopmans (2013) the village should be no island that, in competition with other villages will search for an answer to current transformations, as these might induce new social differences that cannot be solved on the scale of the village alone (e.g. new groups in search for a specific residential quality will influence the housing market.) These transformations should be interpreted in perspective

of the region, where services are organized to be accessible for more vulnerable groups, prior then offering basic services in every village. (Thissen, Loopmans, 2013). They suggests not to make a generic policy for each village but to start from the individual needs of villagers (e.g. elderly). Policy makers should not be focused on offering services everywhere but on the reach of individual villagers. This is not only more efficient but also more just, Thissen and Loopmans conclude.

Initiatives that contribute to the social and spatial infrastructure of a village can support identification with the village (Thissen, 2001). In order to obtain place attachment and to develop social networks, the presence of places to meet and the possibility to support community initiatives are more relevant than the presence of services (Thissen 2017, Völker, Flap & Lindenberg, 2007). Thissen, et al.(2012) refer to a need for 'third places'. Oldenberg & Brisset (1982) introduced this concept, considering home as a 'first place', while functional spaces like workplace and many facilities are 'second places'. 'Third places' are then spaces where people can meet without many obligations and where there is room for local initiatives, like a market square or a café. Other studies show that villagers do not only rely on local facilities (or second places) to meet other people (Gieling *et al.*, 2017). We believe 'third places' create opportunities to meet other people and play a role as a shared encounter with the village. Spontaneous interactions are believed to contribute to local ties and thus foster social cohesion (Oldenburg, 1991, Haartsen & Van Wissen, 2012).



Figure 6 and 7 - Pictures (c) Peter Bongaerts showing how the position of a tree, of a house, or the way streets bend, enhanced a feeling of enclosure.

We will further discuss the role of these type of ‘third’ places in this study and elaborate on the role of public space; addressing public space in a broad sense and how it is related to the public sphere. In searching for an approach, defining our spatial practice, public space became a valuable subject matter to discuss with villagers. The past decades houses are built at more distance from the street with zones for parking in front, making streets more generic and less attractive to just be there. The houses themselves are also more generic. The way the plot is used, the house situated, the garden is used, changed also the character and use of public space as well as the original structure of the village. A feeling of enclosure used to be enhanced by the way streets bend, or how a tree or house was positioned a bit closer to the street (see fig. 6 and 7), and the unbuilt as well as built spaces were connected together by hedges, little walls, gates, fences and small buildings (Bongaerts, 2014). It is this character that changed, influenced by changes coming from different directions (different day patterns, new villagers that are making other connections with the village, as well as new uses leading to privatisations of open space (e.g. horsification, garden sprawl).

Summary

The way villagers are attached to the village changes but remains meaningful. Villages face the challenge of rethinking solidarity (for instance in rethinking services), social capital (for instance the value of skills and networks of newcomers) and the governmental level of policy (for issues that need to be discussed at a regional level). In other words, villages face a process of redefining their identity and are in need for a new frame of reference, leaving the idea of the once autonomous village. Particular places (third places) can play an important role in social place attachment. It are these type of public places (streets, market squares, playgrounds, in-between and open spaces) that become more generic, that are sometimes underused or privatised. In their ability however to foster informal encounters these places can be a valuable focal point in this process of redefining the village identity.

3. How a Village is challenging a Spatial Practice

Similar to how chapter 1 was closed by defining how participation challenges a spatial practice, we now discuss how the village is a particularly challenging context. The proces of change in villages is driven by many small autonomous actions that have unexpected or unwanted, cumulative effects. There is no frame of reference supporting villagers to understand what is changing on a larger scale or a longer term. Policies and studies continue using a frame of reference of the ‘autonomous village’, often neglecting the current dynamic and potential of villages. Villages are clearly changing, but at the same time there thus are few occasions that trigger a public debate on what is changing.

We concluded the first chapter on participation, the challenge is to look for an approach that is going beyond a logic of projects, and instrumental procedures, as an approach that is open towards different dynamics and to be attentive for what emerges from the everyday. Starting from the specific rhythm of the village, its own hybridity and complexity, the challenge is to better understand how these many, but specific changes can become points for public debate, and future actions.

This asks for a process that is open to all villagers, to collectively reflect and exchange ideas on what disappeared, what stayed and what possibilities there are for a future village. Not so much to redefine the village identity, but to initiate a willingness to accept that identities change and to also discuss and address the unwanted consequences (of privatisation, of fragmentation of open space) of these ‘autonomous changes’. We did not define a village as an urban typology but consider it as a set of public, private, common and third places, like streets, but also small footpaths, a church square or a playgrounds, but also an open field or a shared garden; with a peculiar relation with surrounding open space. It are precisely public places that are often perceived as becoming more generic, underused or privatised. We want to further understand how different places considered as public places can play an important role in this open process of understanding and redefining change in the village, thus considering public space to be a valuable starting point and subject matter for debate.

We believe an openness towards different viewpoints is fundamental in order to debate and translate individual conceptions of local identity and community into collective imaginations (Loopmans et al., 2012). It is a democratic challenge to redefine the village identity from the individual ‘wants’ to the collective ‘needs’ (Biesta, 2014).

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH QUESTION AND AIMS

Participation as well as the context of changing villages challenge us, as spatial practitioners, to go beyond the dominant logic of spatial projects or predefined objectives and goals. We want to explore approaches that allow us to go beyond existing ideas on the role of a spatial practitioner and to deliberately make room for disagreement, for conflict, to be attentive for what emerges, to understand how a place works or not. Villages are changing and face the challenge to set up an open process towards different viewpoints and ways to identify with the village.

We argue that taking part in an open process to reflect, discuss and imagine your daily living environment, is not a matter of getting what you desire, or to be right. But it is a matter of getting confidence and feeling a desire to participate in the village, of understanding what is happening, coming to an idea of how one can contribute. Petrescu (2005) explains how such a process starts with assembling ideas, hopes, people, networks and depends on participants' desire. *'But if this desire does not manifest itself how can one make it visible? And if it is visible then how does one welcome it? How could different desires coexist and operate together?'* (Petrescu, 2005 : 45) These are the question that we want to address in villages. We want to find an approach to define and visualize a frame of reference that enables different actors to collectively reflect on what is changing and support them to come to a perspective for action.

Taking participation as an assumption to act on, we want to foreground the following research question:

“How can spatial practitioners stage an open debate in a village; to understand what is public, to collectively reflect and come to perspectives for action?”

There are different elements in this question:

(1) the object of research: *a spatial practice*

This study starts from the field of architecture. We consider architects as the first audience of this thesis, and in extension every 'spatial practitioner' (possibly a designer, a researcher, a planner, an activist, a member of a civil or nature organisation, etc.; everyone). We define a 'spatial practice' as our object of research, not belonging to one specific domain or field of research, but crossing disciplinary boundaries and merging both conceptual and pragmatic reflections. With a spatial practice, we thus want to refer beyond the discipline of architecture itself, and the logic of spatial projects.

We did not focus on the design of buildings, but on the urban tissue of open space in between (albeit private, public or semi-public spaces) and touching on different disciplinary fields and scales. We related changes in villages to changes on a regional scale and operated within the short time frame of the everyday taking a speculative or aspirational approach on a longer term. We combined fieldwork with more conceptual or theoretical explorations, wanting to contribute to the extension of architecture as a critical discipline through thinking, as well as contribute to the position of architects or other spatial practitioners in practice. We thus want to explore an approach, learn by engagement and add both conceptual as practical findings to a body of literature of architecture.

Sub Question: How to make a spatial practice and what can be the position of a spatial practitioner? (see chapter 14)

(2) the objective: *stage an open debate*

The operational objective of our (research) actions is to set up an open process that allows all actors to take part. The fieldwork track (described in part IV) is focused on how to stage such a process, with what kind of actions, actors, roles, settings etc. We want to investigate an approach that goes beyond a logic of projects and expertise, acting upon participation as an assumption. However, what does this mean in practice? How operational are these ideas on dissensus and democracy; how does a democratic practice work, what does open mean? And what remains of our expertise of giving form to a space, what is the role of space in itself in this debate? The gap in knowledge we seek to address is how to stage a debate investigating what is public, from an open ended approach. We want to question

how to make this openness operational, an openness towards viewpoints, towards multiple sensory and knowledge regimes, an openness in time.

Sub Question: What operational lessons can we draw from staging an open debate questioning what is public? (see chapter 12)

(3) the context: *in a village*

The context of this study is the village. In theory, this research question could be asked in any other spatial context. However, we argue the context of a village is particularly challenging because of autonomous transformations. This are many small actions that are hard to address, but that have unwanted consequences of privatising and fragmenting open space, and a changing perception and use of public space. The image of the once 'autonomous village' remains a dominant frame of reference and there is a lack of more nuanced images of the village that go beyond idyllic ideas of peace and tranquility. We miss a language to talk about the complexity and reality of villages today. Starting from the specific rhythm of the village, its own hybridity and complexity, the challenge is to better understand how these many, but specific changes can become points for public debate, and future actions. It is not a matter of coming to that new image or redefined identity, but to go beyond the fixed notion of identity that people hold and initiate a willingness to accept that identities change. We further explored the village as a set of public, private, common and third places, like streets, but also small footpaths, a church square or a playgrounds, but also an open field or a shared garden; with a peculiar relation with surrounding open space. It are precisely these places that are often perceived as becoming more generic, underused or privatised.

Sub Question: Coming to a better understanding of the particular context of villages, then how to define more nuanced and hybrid images of the village, holding different perceptions and future ideas? And what can be the role of public places in understanding and defining these collective and aspirational imaginations? (see chapter 13)

(4) the aim: *to understand the public value, to collectively reflect and come to perspectives for action*

The general aim of this study is to enable individual actors to take part in an open debate which is touching upon a democratic challenge to enhance ownership and appropriation more than passing on responsibility. Whether this aim will

be achieved, is going beyond the outline of our study. We cannot validate 'an increase of ownership' or 'a shift in power relations'. What we did do, in this study and more particularly in the conceptual track (part III), is unravel aspects of this aim and explore the concepts of the 'public', 'everyday', 'common'; to better understand 'the public value'. Not to define over-arching labels of *why* things happen, but to come to perspectives to understand *how* things happen. As the gap in knowledge we seek to address is how to come to an insightful understanding by experience and by intervening in the everyday reality of villages.

Sub Question: How can an investigation of 'what is public' support us to stage and understand an open debate? (see chapter 11)

In the next part II we will further elaborate on the research design and methodological choices.

This thesis then unfolds in two tracks: the conceptual track (described in part III) and the fieldwork track (part IV), corresponding roughly with the more general aim of our research question on the one hand and more operational objectives on the other hand. In part V we will reflect on the fieldwork track (IV) with concepts explored in the conceptual track (III). We add findings to what we learnt about 'the public' in villages, and more in particular on public space. We define lessons on a methodological level of staging a debate and conclude with reflections towards a spatial practice.

(Endnotes)

1 Chantal Mouffe notes that in ordinary language it is not common to speak of 'the political' but it opens possibilities for reflection to distinguish 'the political' from 'politics' as distinguishing 'the very way in which society is symbolically instituted' from 'the manifold practices of conventional politics'. (Mouffe, 2007: 242)

2 Paul Davidoff, 'Advocacy and Pluralism in Planning', *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, 31, 4 (November 1965), pp. 331-38; Norman Krumholz, 'A Retrospective View of Equity Planning. Cleveland 1969-1979', *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 48, 2 (Spring 1982), pp. 163-74; John Friedman, *Retracking America: A Theory of Transactive Planning* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press, 1973). Reyner Banham, Paul Barker, Peter Hall, Cedric Price, 'Non-plan: An Experiment in Freedom', *New Society*, 13, 338 (20 March 1969), pp. 435-43; Giancarlo De Carlo, 'Architecture's Public', in *Architecture and Participation*, ed. by Peter Blundell Jones, Doina Petrescu and Jeremy Till (London: Spon Press, 2005 [1969]), pp. 3-22; Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1993 [1961]).

3 We will not elaborate on this concept of self-organisation and how it used as a framework by Boonstra and Boelens. The 'spatial agency platform' points at how the concept is challenging authorship, maybe 'one step' further than participation. *'Self-organisation in architectural terms radically challenges many of the tenets of the regulated and controlled profession. It does not simply suggest participation is something that is controlled elsewhere, but actively establishes the desire and need for a transformation in the first instance, before acting on it. This action involves the design of processes that can enable people to transform their own environments meaning that the mechanisms involved are embedded within their own locality and are not external to it. Since self-organised projects emerge from the negotiations of many different actors, they are inherently relational practices, and point towards the collective production of space.'* (From Spatial Agency)

Beyond an instrumental perspective, participation arises when frictions between aspirations and needs can become visible.



How can spatial practitioners stage an open debate in a village; to understand the public value, to collectively reflect and come to perspectives for action?



Redefining a village identity and finding ways to do this is a democratic challenge, transforming individual wants into collective imaginations for a future village.

PART I

METHODOLOGY

PART II

PART II

This part discusses the methodological choices of this study.

We will first outline the coming about of this study and motivate our choice for action research. There are many schools and visions on action research, Next we will therefore first explore some theoretical concepts of action research that we chose to be relevant for this study and argue why. Thirdly we explain our own definition and approach of action research, and elaborate on some questions or struggles we had doing this.

1. INTRODUCTION

As mentioned in the introduction, an occasion for the start of this study was the project *'Mooiste dorpen van Haspengouw'* co-funded by the LEADER program, this program aimed to improve the *'liveability of rural villages'* (see also description of case 1 in Part IV, from page 132). The project that Oswald Devisch proposed, submitted and got funded by LEADER was initially not part of this PhD study. Continuing collaborating on this project within an action research set up seemed a logical choice, as in this way I could continue taking a more practical role, rather than taking a role as 'outsider' researcher.

What makes action research specific according to McNiff & Whitehead (2006), is that action research moves the focus from *'What is going on there'* questions, to *'How do I'* questions. The 'I' should never be understood as in isolation but means working with others at all stages of the process. McNiff & Whitehead (2002) argue that it is essential to action research that you investigate, evaluate and enquire knowledge on your own work. Starting from the 'I perspective', you draw on ideas in literature to incorporate them into an own understanding, and question how to transform these ideas into action. (McNiff & Whitehead: 13)

'Action researchers do not look for a fixed outcome that can be applied everywhere. Instead they produce personal theories to show what they are learning and to invite others to learn with them. They judge their work not in terms of its generalizability or replicability, which are social science criteria but in terms of whether they can show how they are living in the direction of their values, using those values as their standards of judgements.' (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006 : 27)

The LEADER project was thus the occasion for me to step 'in the field'. The initial proposal aimed to build knowledge and insights on the spatial transformations in the region and to raise awareness with actors involved about their role in these spatial transformations. We thus asked a *'What is going on there'* question and wanted to understand *'what others out there are doing'*. The choice to make this study part of an action research project urged us to reflect on our own position and role, actions and reference points for reflection.

2. DEFINITIONS OF ACTION RESEARCH

1. A Pragmatic versus a Participatory Approach of Action Research

We continue with a definition of Roose and De Bie (2014) starting from the idea that action research operates not as a neutral activity, but as a democratic practice: that is a practice that is open to the collaboration of all involved. Such participation needs to emerge from real questions and issues from a situation rather than questions formulated by researchers from the outside. This means, that action research is not primarily focused on the implementation of solutions but rather on challenging and questioning existing interpretations and understanding. This questioning is needed, Roose and De Bie argue, to connect the diversity of the interpretation of the same situation, and the contradictions in these interpretations, in order to then come to the practical change we are, in the end, looking for. Working from this *participatory* approach of action research, Roose & De Bie take a different position than the more direct and solution focused perspective or *pragmatic* approach on action research that Kurt Lewin introduced in 1940 as experimenting in a real context with a certain objective (Greenwood & Levin, 2007). This *pragmatic* approach of action research refers to research where the position of the researcher and societal context of the practice is not questioned. The focus is on effective acting and from a pragmatic view a theory is developed and criteria for effectiveness are formulated external or top-down (Mensink, 2005: 35, in Roose, 2006: 79).

Where Lewin brought research to the field, the participants themselves remained 'a source of information' (Roose, 2006). Roose (2006) refers to a *participatory* approach of action research built on ideas of Paulo Freire (1972) for whom the aim is not so much the learning in itself but the possibility to make a difference, to change basic conditions. For Freire the most important aim is to provide the opportunity for people to learn collaboratively to question the obvious reality and to reflect on their own role and interests through interventions. Freire addresses how different political systems and cultures of fatalism and silence make people behave as objects of history and not as subjects who make history. Furthermore Freire considers action and reflection as not to be separated. It is only through experience that people can grow, through acting, and through a reflection on this action. The interpretation of the researcher is based on how participants interpret the world and both worlds¹ (that of researcher and participants) are not different. This *participatory* approach of action research is not oriented towards

finding methods to improve the situation, but on improving the situation and build knowledge on what this means.

2. Taking a future forming orientation, starting from practice

In his essay *From Mirroring to World-Making: Research as Future Forming*, Gergen (2015) writes on action research, making the difference between research as observing, describing, reporting and *mirroring what is* and research as to create *what has to become*. Any research that describes human behaviour, he continues, also establishes the grounds for possible action (or resistance). Gergen argues that researchers did not yet explore these productive possibilities enough. He considers the vast share of research to remain dedicated to ‘revealing’, ‘illuminating’, ‘understanding’, or ‘reflecting’ a given state of affairs. For Gergen, action research has a transformative potential to change an ‘understanding’ towards a future oriented ‘making’. In this future-forming mode, research unsettles the structure of political power, and Gergen concludes that researchers themselves become agents of social change.

Action research is generally presented as a systematic, cyclical and disciplined process of observing, reflecting, acting, evaluating and modifying (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006). Often referred to as an action-reflection cycle. Going from the critical or participatory view on action research (cf. supra), Roose et.al. suggest to take a different route and start from the practice itself. The initial question that emerges from practice needs to be analysed in order to connect it with a broader frame of reference. And although for Roose *et. al.* the problem definition nor the research design is further or explicitly defined, they address the importance (just like McNiff and Whitehead) of making explicit the underpinning assumptions and aims as reference points for reflection. One of such assumptions is that social realities have been constructed and created by people and are therefore also changeable. Research can be seen as part of these interactions rather than a neutral activity. The relationship between action research and democracy is part of this viewpoint, questioning if the research contributes to the confrontation of the social order, or to social change. A researcher should be conscious of its position. It is precisely in making explicit these assumptions that knowledge claims can be critically evaluated and it is in making this public that action research differs from what ‘one usually does’. (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006)

‘(...) research cannot be regarded as self-justifying, or justified solely by reference to internal criteria (for example methodological criteria; research is also a social practice, to be evaluated against criteria of the kind we have listed as the aims of action research – that is, in terms of the extent to which it contributes to confronting and overcoming irrationality, injustice, alienation and suffering, both in research setting and more generally in terms of its broader consequences’ (Kemmis and McTaggart 2000: 593)

3. A definition of action research

We choose for a participatory approach on action research and agree with Roose *et al.*, who define action research *as a way of social interaction in response to a problematic situation in order to change a situation in collaboration with people involved, striving for the development of theory* (Roose et al. 2014). They explain this ‘change’ as an awareness of other possible definitions, in interaction with the existing ones. In other words, the validity of action research is not depending on how much or how far the project contributed to actually change a situation, or on the implementation of solutions, but rather on challenging and questioning existing interpretations and understanding. *‘The degree of change is not the measure of validity’*. (Waterman, 1998) Sometimes it is even better not to force a ‘visible’ change with a concrete action, as it may be counterproductive or create so much anxiety that ultimately no change would be possible, Roose notes (2006 : 82). It is this awareness and questioning of these different understandings that can support ‘all people involved’ to relate what is happening to a broader framework. And thus, this improves an understanding of how to relate oneself to what is happening.

“The researcher has to make the action possible and can, more particularly, facilitate the dialogue between the actors, introduce knowledge that prompts the actors to reflect on their actions and develop new theoretical concepts that result from the newly initiated dialogue, which may contribute to a better understanding of the realities at stake.” (Roose *et. al.* 2014 :113)

In action research the problem statement gets clearer throughout the research where researchers have a position to slow down (Bouverne-De Bie & Verhellen, 1995, Roosen, 2006). The procedure of research can be described as a ‘move towards a problem definition’ which is unsettling in itself. This asks for a flexible research design to be able to react on unexpected issues and questions. A rigid research design would determine too much in advance the knowledge we could enquire.

4. Action research and the field of design

Before coming to our own approach of action research (3) we want to close this overview of different approaches and definitions of action research, by reflecting on how it links to the field of design. We did not look into theories and methodology of design research, nor research by design. We chose to start from theoretical concepts on action research discussed above, that are more closely related to the concepts explored in Part I, coming to an understanding of participation.

Design methods are however, part of our discipline and practice. From a perspective of design theory, scholars often refer to the work of Donald Schön. *The reflective practitioners. How Professionals Think in Action* (Schön, 1983). Schön demystifies the technical expertise that professionals use to control power. In line with the aim of action research Schön considers reflection-*in*-action basically as ‘a conversation with a problem’, and aims to gradually reframe the problem through possible solutions. Reflection *on* this action, as a meta-reflection is a way to make design knowledge explicit. (Schön, 1983: 268). Interesting similarities are ‘the move towards a problem definition’ in making sense of a ‘mess’ (ibid.:16). Schön’s concept of *reflection-in-action* in combination with the *reflection on action* is often connected to action research (Groat and Wang, 2002; Swann, 2002). This often and too easily lead to consider all design as action research, referring to the cyclical aspect of action research being similar as that of designing in itself. Swann for instance considers action research as a valid approach for each design activity where the outcome is unclear. However, he ignores the participatory dimension of action research or considers it as limited to the cooperation between professionals². Thus, considering the methodology of action research in relation to the (architectural) design field, the critical remark can be made that too easily and too often design is considered as action research, being practice based (see for instance Schreurs on action research in Boudry *et. al.*, 2007).

We will not elaborate and did not investigate differences between these different fields of knowledge, the question we can take from here is, how to combine the action research approach with concrete methods coming from a design background that we use in our fieldwork. We will more elaborately reflect on this in Part V, discussing to what extent the concrete actions we took supported us to stage an open and public debate. We faced methodological issues, setting up an action research approach and at the same time wanting to improve a concrete situation using design based methods.

3. MY APPROACH OF ACTION RESEARCH

There were two issues I came across setting up our this action research. Firstly, not having a background in social science research, it became a learning process and a question in itself to articulate the underlying assumption of my actions. Secondly, it was a source of doubt whether, next to democratic values about the process, I should also make explicit values and assumptions concerning the case related spatial improvement? Freire (1972) argues it is in improving your situation, you learn. But then, what is this improvement, how to articulate points of reference to reflect on this improvement? What exactly do we want to enhance or why do we want to intervene in this particular context? Is it enough to be explicit about the democratic values of the process or do we also need to be explicit about the direction we want to see the situation changed? And more specifically, can we define ‘spatial’ points of improvement, not only going from ‘political’ values, and if, are there ‘spatial’ values we want to be explicit about?

For me, these questions are related to my education in architecture; that created a bias towards being ‘solution-focused’ on the design itself, the ‘intervention’ to improve a situation. I do not want to dismiss the wide and reflective range within the discipline of architecture, of design-thinking, of being reflective and oriented on asking good questions. But I did experience this bias in my own thinking. Where action research is indeed focused on changing a situation, Freire (1972) also showed us that the focus should *not* be on interventions nor methods, as more important is the knowledge and insights you get on the way. As a professional practitioner you will of course always intervene and question the way, making use of knowledge frameworks and methods you know. However, there is a critical difference in attitude in acting upon a (problematic) situation with a focus to learn collaboratively to question the obvious reality through (any) intervention, - and solving a problem with a focus on ‘the’ intervention.

The aim of action research is then to build a theory of practice, as ‘*knowing what you are doing and why you are doing it*’ (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006). This theory of practice can refer to the improvement of both practical and disciplinary knowledge. In relation to architecture, both are considered as very different: next to a professional practice, architecture is considered as a critical discipline through thinking that can be a valid approach for complex problems (Miessen, 2011). Investigating an approach to intervene in a village, we want to contribute to our

disciplinary knowledge. With Roose et. al. the goal of our approach is open ended (i.e. *contributing to a better understanding of the realities at stake*, moving towards a problem definition). It is the 'undefined' in this open ended approach that is creating space for critical reflection.

Hence, we investigated an approach to intervene in the village and to stage an open debate to understand what is going on, collectively reflect on future images and come to a perspective for action. And in doing this we want to critically reflect on the interventions and contribute to the practical knowledge of our discipline.

Summary

Action research starts from 'How do I' questions, where the idea is that you enquire knowledge from a close perspective of your own work and not from a more distant sociological perspective as in 'What is going on there' questions. We chose for a participatory approach of action research building on the ideas of Paolo Freire for whom it is in changing the situation that people learn, through acting and through reflection on this action, both cannot be separated. Action research has a transformative character, a future forming orientation and a perspective of making, that can put research in a position of creating what has to become beyond reflecting or mirroring what is. We defined action research as a way of social interaction in response to a problematic situation in order to change a situation in collaboration with people involved, striving for the development of theory. 'Change' refers to how actors are supported to relate oneself to what is happening. It is the problem statement that gets more clear throughout the research, the procedure of research can be described as a move towards a problem definition.

(Endnotes)

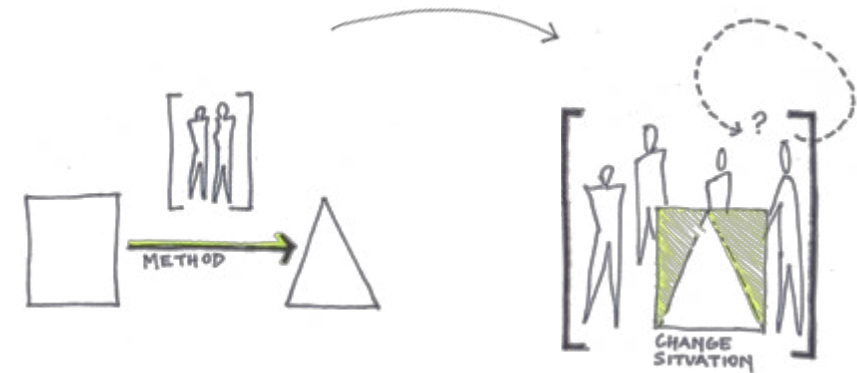
1 We can relate this to what we learned from Rancière about the role of the 'master' to be ignorant and hence not different from his 'students'. The difference, for Masschelein (2007), is that Rancière is oriented on individuals and Freire on a collective. Although, the social emancipation Freire addresses, is also induced by individual movements, Rancière more strongly asserts how equality is not to be institutionalised, it will always be an individual decision and a relation between individuals. The difference between both is that Freire does believe in a dialogical method, where Rancière refuses any method.

2 With practitioner, Shön is in this respect also referring to a professional or expert mind-set. Where we want to broaden the interpretation of the practitioner as we will further define and explore in this study.

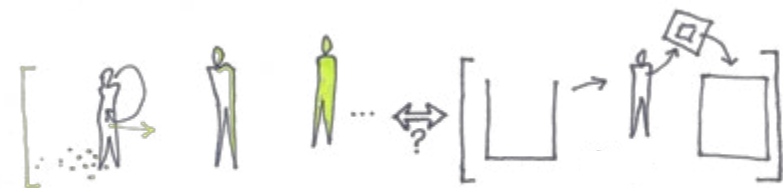
What is going on out there?
What are those people doing?



Challenging, questioning and connecting existing and diverse interpretations of the same situation, in order to come to a better understanding of the reality at stake and the change we are looking for.



No focus on methods or interventions.
It is in improving your situation you learn,
through action and through reflection on
this action, both cannot be separated.



PART II

WHAT IS PUBLIC?
conceptual track

PART III

In this track we will not build a clear cut theoretical framework to be tested or verified in the cases, but explore concepts related to 'the public'. As mentioned, we will not further investigate the concept of participation itself. We defined the objective of this study as *searching for an approach to stage an open debate allowing all actors to take part*. Part IV further discusses actions, roles, settings etc. of how we staged such a process in the fieldwork. This part III further explores the aim of our research question '*to understand the public value, to collectively reflect and come to perspectives for action*'. Roughly chapter 4 further discusses how to understand the public value and continues with public space as the subject matter of this debate we want to stage. Chapter 5 further discusses how to collectively reflect and continues with ideas on staging a dissensus. Chapter 6 elaborates on perspectives for action or how to practice starting from recent ideas on a spatial practice.

This part is further structured as follows:

In **chapter 4** we start from theory on public realm and learn how 'the public' in itself changed and merged with other related ideas like 'relational spheres', 'the everyday' in making our definition of public space.

In **chapter 5** we focus on how 'the public' is related to democracy and ideas on plurality. We define the public in relation to deliberation, to citizenship, and public pedagogy.

In **chapter 6** we discuss how previous ideas on 'the public' are present in a spatial practice. Starting with the relation between social and spatial, the concept of 'spatial agency', and the conception of a problem in a design process.

Each chapter is structured in the same way. We first discuss some main concepts and ideas, roughly based on a different body of literature, chapter 3 goes from literature exploring the public realm and public space (philosophy, sociology, urbanism); chapter 4 goes from literature exploring civic learning (public pedagogy, political theory); and chapter 5 starts from more recent literature on architecture.

Each chapter concludes with three perspectives. These perspectives are written for spatial practitioners in general, hence not specifically for spatial designers, architects or planners. But for everyone contributing or searching for an approach to stage a public debate in a village. We will define perspectives *for public space* (in chapter 4), *for publicness* (in chapter 5) and *for practicing* (in chapter 6).

1. Defining the Public

The public realm¹ can be considered as the base, the platform for many questions and issues of this study. In the field of architecture it is an important concept, it brings a strong spatial dimension to democratic practices and many scholars in architecture theory refer to Hannah Arendt and Jürgen Habermas in defining the public sphere. We further explore different ideas in relation to private realm, and how it shifts from -a more clear distinction from the private versus the public- towards -more dynamic conception of different spheres-. A shifting interpretation of the public to 'publics', furthermore support us to understand the relation between individual identities, how they are able to recognize each other and to act collectively, as this is what we seek to understand, stating we want to stage an open debate supporting individual villagers to understand what is changing and collectively reflect in order to come to perspectives for action.

The public realm

For Arendt the public realm is a space of appearance '*the space where I appear to others as others appear to me*'. She claims that space is precisely what politics brings about, and that action, in its freedom and its power, has the exclusive power to create location. '*Action and speech create a space between the participants which can find its proper location almost anywhere and anytime.*' (Arendt, 1958) Referring to different writers using Arendt's work, Martijn De Waal (2014) concludes that what remains of Arendt's ideas on public realm usually comes down to this: the public realm is the place where city dwellers with different backgrounds meet, are confronted with each other and must come to terms with each other. The spatial aspect that Arendt assigns to the public sphere is of great significance: as those places where citizens with different backgrounds and ideas come together spatially and can look each other in the eye, a common world can develop in which matters concerning the common good can be discussed. And the other way around, public spaces that function well lead to development of a democratic public that is open to people from all backgrounds. Also Hilde Heynen (2001: 105) refers to Hannah Arendt emphasizing the importance of the public sphere as an opportunity to take part in public life in order to be 'complete' as a human being. As for Arendt a society needs both private and public places. Some issues clearly belong to the private sphere, as much as some issues need to be out in the public sphere. We need both spheres and the border between these spheres is permanently under debate (Boomkens, 1999).

Parochialization

In *The structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* Habermas analyses the 17th and 18th century coffee house (Habermas, 1962 translation 1991: 30). At places like this, he argues, a ritual way of debating gradually developed, with visitors discussing matters of general interest (novels and newspapers were discussed) on the basis of equality (there was a particular protocol that connected everyone). Habermas concluded that this led to the emergence of a modern public sphere, a sphere situated between citizens' private world and the state. When people moved out to the pavement cafés on the boulevard by the end of the 19th century, they were still '*en public*', or 'in public space', but they no longer formed a public domain, according to Habermas. Public behaviour became more a matter of observation, of passive participation. For Sennet, the boulevard marks the parochialization of urban life, citizens retreated into parochial domains where they mainly met with like-minded people, which he regrets. '*A city is a place where people can learn to live with strangers, to enter into the experiences and interests of unfamiliar lives. Sameness stultifies the mind; diversity stimulates and expands it.*' (Sennet, 2012)

However, in this respect De Waal (2012) also refers to Marshall Berman (1987) who believes that the boulevard still forces people to react politically. Even if they are experiencing the boulevard in a 'parochial' way, they can be confronted with a situation that triggers a different reaction within the group. Or with a situation that might lead to a collective awareness and collective action. Berman argues that the personal identity revealed by citizens in public spaces is what leads to the development of political awareness. He questions the distinction between the private and public sphere in relation to the idea that identities are formed in the private sphere, and that these fully formed identities could relate to each other in the public sphere. Berman discusses that the public sphere is where we can become part of all sort of publics and it is by making personal life-styles public that identities can develop.

Lofland (1985) considers the public realm as the place where diverse social relations are formed. Her interpretation of relational spheres, further blurs the distinction between private and public space. In her book *The public realm* Lofland writes on 'home territories' and 'urban villages' describing the gradual process of parochializing that occurs when these spheres get attached to a certain location. It thus is a relational sphere that defines the public character of a space, not the other way around. Furthermore, both private, parochial and public relational sphere can occur in different combinations in a same physical space.

The everyday

Where for Arendt and Habermas the public realm was defined in contrast to the private realm, more recently scholars show how different spheres overlap, and one refers to 'publics', rather than 'the public'. A helpful distinction between different discourses on public space is made by Peter Goheen (1998) distinguishing *'a discourse of loss'* and one of *'a dynamic and changing repertoire of public rituals'*. Both respond to the privatization of the public sphere, although giving different importance to the political arena and to the everyday life (Goheen, 1998). Where the public sphere is depicted as a space of democracy that all citizens have the right to inhabit, new discourses start to question this universal and rational arena. Where for Habermas the public sphere is linked to unity and equality as ideal conditions, Nancy Fraser (1993) is very critical of the idea that neutral public sphere can exist where citizens temporarily shed their identities. The public sphere is not only an arena for the formation of discursive opinion, she argues, in addition it is an arena for the formation and enactment of social identities. She questions how social and economic inequalities are temporarily put aside, excluding woman and workers. Fraser calls to encompass these 'counterpublics' and to produce a very different picture of the public sphere, one founded on contestation rather than unity and created through competing interests as much as reasoned debate.

Comparable to how Fraser looked beyond the officially designated public, towards multiple publics, Margaret Crawford (2016a) identifies multiple type of space by looking beyond the culturally defined physical realms of 'home', 'workplace' and 'institution'. Crawford considers this 'everyday space' as the connective tissue that binds daily lives together. In spite of its ubiquity, everyday space is nearly invisible in professional discourses. Everyday spaces are like everyday life: trivial, obvious but invisible, everywhere and nowhere. These spaces are shaped and redefined by the activities they accommodate. Without fixed schedules, they produce their own cycles within the rhythms of everyday life. The materialization of these new public spaces and activities, thus are shaped by lived experience rather than built space. Going from these activities Crawford starts to frame *a new discourse of public space, one no longer preoccupied with loss but instead filled with possibility* (Crawford, 2016a). She refers to the architectural discourse that was introduced at the end of the 20th century as the *'End of Public Space'* Sennet, 1992, Sorkin, 1990, Davis, 1990). Crawford believes it is hard to argue with the symptoms of this 'loss' (referring to the ersatz and privatized places of the city that are marked by consumption, surveillance and control) but she disagrees with the conclusions

of these authors, as they mistake monumental public spaces for the totality of public space and go from extremely narrow and normative definitions of both 'public' and 'space'. In referring to the UN-Habitat and placemaking movement², Crawford (2016b) again points at their narrow interpretation of publics. As, the fundamental question for Crawford is not how places should look like (e.g. placemaking) but how they can be connected with democracy. In relation to theories discussed above, this idea that it comes down to connecting places to democracy seems obvious and not different. But as she sees this connection embodied in the right to access, express differences and livelihood, her idea of a public space is more dynamic and less dominated by a predefined conception of public space, like the coffeehouse or the monumental spaces.

Summary (concepts)

In previous paragraphs we learned how 'the public' is related to space, not to the physical space per se but to the possibility to meet, the café, the boulevard, as *'the place where I can meet the other'*. We discussed how the public is 'there' where different relational spheres are formed and we referred to the process of parochializing when one of those spheres gets too closely connected to a place. The idea of 'the public place' was declared to be lost at the end of the 20th century and transformed to an idea of public space that is not related to one specific place but that is dynamic and happening in the everyday. Beyond unity and equality as ideal conditions, public space is an arena that should encompass 'counterpublics' producing a very different picture of the public sphere. The attention for the 'everyday space' can help us to look beyond the 'universal and rational' public realm that in the last decades led to this discourse of loss. In-between the public realm and private sphere, everyday spaces can be spaces for democracy.

2. Perspectives for public space

A definition of public space

For what further follows in this study we understand public places, with Margaret Crawford, as *places that can be connected with democracy*. She considers this connection embodied in the right to access, express differences and livelihood: trivial places, vacant lots, sidewalks, front yards, that are claimed for new use and meaning. According to Crawford, the materialization of these 'new' public spaces are shaped by lived experience rather than built space (Crawford 2016a, 2016b). We will now describe ideas we found in literature that resonate to this definition of public space and that offer perspectives on how to create conditions or strengthen such public places.

Perspective 1: to connect collective spaces

In a more abstract and philosophical way we discussed in the previous subchapter how the public and private sphere are often defined in balance with one another, and how these definition became more dynamic and hybrid. From a more concrete spatial context, De Sola Morales (1992) illustrates how public, whether private uses in themselves, are becoming more hybrid. Morales suggests to no longer look at public places, but to give attention to 'collective spaces' referring at all places of importance in everyday life. All the more these places are not public nor private, but both (e.g. private activities in public space and public use in commercial space and this is changing throughout the day and week). These 'collective places' offer a sense of anonymity and multifunctionality, but at the same time know specific functional obligations or restrictions (e.g. a library, hospital restaurant, shopping mall). The accessibility of these places is very well, but often invisibly, managed (e.g. who can enter, at what time). A lot of these places are privately developed, although for Lofland (1998) they do fulfil 'the need for public places' as a need for small encounters, albeit for certain groups of society only. Discussing the role of 'third places' in villages and a changing place attachment, we already referred to Lofland discussing the idea of 'trusted strangers' in spaces where people can meet without many obligations (Oldenberg & Brisset, 1982; Thissen, Drooglever Fortuijn, 2012)). We learned from Gielen *et. al.* (2017) how villagers interested in meeting other people do not necessarily rely on local facilities as meeting places. We concluded that the potential or possibility of particular places to function as a 'third place' may be more valuable than the presence of services. Morales further addresses how many of these collective places are no longer part of a system or

a bigger whole, but are often an entity on their own. Therefore, he argues, it is important to spatially connect these private and closed spaces, and re-embed them in a bigger system. Crawford already suggested to value the everyday space as the connective tissue that binds daily lives together.

Thus, the perspective we want to contribute to, is to further explore and learn how **to connect 'collective spaces'**, being both public or private spaces, as spaces where different 'publics' merge, as where collective and future images can emerge, where one can share an experience, and where ideas or opinions can be changed.

Perspective 2: to value open space as public space

We understand public space as *places that can be connected with democracy* (Crawford 2016). This connection is embodied in the right to access, to express differences and livelihood. In this way, trivial places, vacant lots, sidewalks, front yards are claimed for new use and meaning. Leinfelder (2007) argues we can also consider larger bits of open space as public space. Apart from an economic use, a productive landscape can function as a cultural and inspiring public space. In addition, Viganò (2008: 39) emphasizes the potentials of spread pieces of open, unbuilt space, like agricultural land, forests, flood areas in and outside of the built core, as places that can readdress the traditional concept of public space. Despite an upcoming diversity of actors that is operating in open space, Leinfelder considers this open space also as parochialized by the remaining farmers for whom it is a space for production and who have similar expectations and interests. Next to these farmers there are for instance tourists and the combination (agriculture and tourism) is often seen as the only possible and best mixed use for open space. However, for Leinfelder a one-to-one connection between agriculture and recreation will lead to stereotypes and a uniformity of the open space, and he refers to the phenomenon of disneyfication and theming of public places. In other words, this is not how to interpret open space as public space. A productive landscape, Leinfelder continues, should not be remote from village centres but can function as a public place in itself. When the farmer manages to link his economic activities to the local landscape and context, he can contribute to the realisation of a cultural and inspiring public space. In their manifest for *'living landscapes'* Hans Teerds and Johan Van Der Zwart (2012) also explore the perspective to consider the open space, the landscape as being part of the public realm. They refer to Arendt as well, emphasizing it is not just about expressing your opinion (to speak) but it is about the possibility to contribute, to take part, and most importantly to

act. Only what is publicly heard and seen, can be discussed, rejected or confirmed, as action and reaction.

Thus, the perspective we want to contribute to, is **to value open space as public space**, being 'literally' a place where each individual becomes present to others. The possibility to be seen, heard, to act and to take part, are crucial elements of the public realm.

Perspective 3: to rethink ownership and a practice of commoning

De Lange and De Waal further explore this domain between 'collective' and 'for everybody' and refer to the 'common'. Without going into the complexity and history of the commons, they take a pragmatic view on the concept: *as coming into existence when people form collectives around specific issues they consider important*. Next to the mixture of use and property that Morales introduces, De Lange and De Waal introduce a third issue in this hybrid constellation of space, namely that of management. De Lange and de Waal (2012) define commons as resources that are managed and used by multiple parties, that possibly are privately owned.

They challenge the question of designing for 'ownership' as a challenge of reformulating concepts of property, use and management; framing the concept of ownership as an issue of commons. Which has the advantage that commons *offer a possible course of action*, in contrast to the exclusive and passive property rights, commons are all about inclusive and active ownership. (De Lange, De Waal, 2012). In the most concise definition³, Tine De Moor delineates commons as an institution for collective action (De Moor, 2015). The focus shifts from the design of a property to the design of a mechanism to manage a property, assuming an alternative form of management can induce an alternative use. Ownership can be designed in negotiating responsibilities and roles, De Lange and De Waal conclude, and its limits are never fixed but dynamic.

Today, in many of the new spatial commons (e.g. shared maintenance of a neighbourhood park or garden) the 'exit' route is very short. Van der Steeg and Reijndorp (2016) refer to 'light communities' that are formed around common goals and a practical self-interest. One can easily step out of these communities, the involvement is often temporary and the engagement occasional. The meaning of 'common' in Reijndorps 'light communities' is related to the everyday, the ordinary, to common places, common people. Also Avermaete (2016) explains

how the commons seem to engage with smaller communities, within ordinary places and times, whereas the public realm is often considered to address the public at large in exceptional locations and moments. Avermaete understands the commons as a series of concrete architectural and urban figures, that represent an idea of commonality. The past decade there is rising attention to rethink and redraw these architectural figures of commonality. According to Avermaete, the role of an architect in this is more that of a facilitator, a cultivator of what has always been there, the territory, materiality, the technical knowledge, - more than the creator of the spatial forms in itself.

Thus, the perspective we want to contribute to, is **to rethink ownership and a practice of commoning**. Commons as institutions for collective action call to take other roles exploring different relations between property, use and management of spaces.

Summary (perspectives)

We defined public space as dynamic and in relation to the public sphere. The public as an idea goes beyond property structures and mere accessibility. It is a matter of possibility of what can happen in a space, how one can contribute, take part and act. The challenge is to connect these spaces. Open spaces can play a role as public spaces in itself as well as in connecting different sites. In addition, we introduced commons, as being about inclusive and active ownership - in contrast to exclusive and passive property rights. This can be designed in negotiating responsibilities and roles, its limits are never fixed but dynamic.

Taking public space as a focal point of a debate - discussing what is changing in a village - , touches upon issues of ownership, accessibility, connecting and meeting differences.

What I take from this chapter, supporting my reasoning:

In defining the public the importance of space is highlighted. The public realm is first defined towards the private, and secondly towards more dynamic spheres. The public turns into multiple publics; and space into multiple spaces; individual identity being formed in relations to a public or collective actions.

CHAPTER 5. THE PUBLIC AND THE POLITICAL

In all definitions of public spaces, mentioned above there is a returning challenge of dealing with plurality, of democracy and defining citizenship. In this chapter we (1.) elaborate on the political connotations of the concept and how 'the public' is related to this plurality, to deliberation and dissensus. In order to frame the public in relation to citizenship we refer to ideas of Biesta writing on public pedagogy. Next (2.) we will compare these ideas with Latours plea 'to make things public' in order to stage a dissensus and with Stengers' reflections on the relevance of 'slowing down' and how a consensus can be considered as an event. These authors offer perspectives for staging a public debate, however they do not give practical nor concrete clues for *how* to do this.

1. Defining the public, between plurality and common action

Plurality

How to understand plurality, and how can we relate this to the idea of consensus as well as conflict? Habermas and Arendt differently approach the question whether (communicative) action will lead to the reduction of plurality among people. If Habermas imagines the public sphere as a space of consensus, Arendt emphasizes plurality rather than rationality and action rather than language. (Brand, 1984, Teerds 2015) Coming to a common understanding is, with Habermas, always based on arguments and rationality. Where for Arendt the way we appear to others is based on action and on the initiative we take.

Although Arendt (1995) puts great emphasis on human plurality, for Chantal Mouffe (2007) the problem is that Arendt does not acknowledge that this plurality is the origin of '*antagonistic conflicts*'. These are conflicts that '*cannot find a solution through dialogue and that cannot be eliminated*' (Mouffe, 2007). Mouffe herself interprets the public from a perspective of power conflict and antagonism. In search for a perspective that can accept conflict and pluralism without destroying political associations, Mouffe expresses the need for a third type of relation. The relation of *agonism* acknowledges there is no rational solution to a conflict, nevertheless it recognises the legitimacy of the opponents as they see themselves sharing a common symbolic space, within which the conflict takes place. Mouffe is convinced that it is only by recognizing the need for a plural form of intervention, taking place in a variety of public spaces, that a critical (artistic) practice can

contribute to an agonistic public space where a radical an plural conception of democracy can be fostered. Mouffe critically considers the conception of plurality of Arendt, to be excluding conflict. (Mouffe, 2007)

Thus, the idea to leave rationality and language (Habermas) in favour of plurality and action (Arendt) is further stretched by Mouffe to acknowledge conflict and agonism as part of the idea of plurality. Although both Arendt and Mouffe refer to the importance of concrete opportunities and physical spaces to act, their ideas of 'democracy' remain abstract.

Public pedagogy, civic learning

Going from this more philosophical understanding of plurality and deliberation we will now turn to the public pedagogy of Gerd Biesta to give us a more concrete interpretation in search for an approach.

Also Biesta starts from Arendt's understanding of the public sphere as '*a space where freedom can appear*'. This understanding of a space is not so much a physical location but has more to do with a particular quality of human togetherness. Referring to Arendt, Biesta defines public pedagogy as '*an enactment of a concern for the public quality of human togetherness*' (Biesta, 2012). This '*enactment of a concern ...*' should be understood as the possibility for the *becoming public* of spaces. Biesta uses the illustration of an artistic event (the permanent breakfast ⁴) that can serve as a kind of test to what extent the chosen location might indeed function as a public space, that is a space not determined by private agendas. He further distinguishes this pedagogy for publicness from a public pedagogy *for* the public and that of a public pedagogy *of* the public. The main mode of the interpretation of a public pedagogy *for* the public is that of *instruction*. Where in the idea of pedagogy *of* the public the work is not done from the 'outside' but is located within democratic processes and practices. The main mode in this interpretation is that of *learning*. Biesta points out that, unlike what is often assumed, learning is not some kind of an open natural process that can go in any direction. And thus, this pedagogy *for* and *of* the public exposes a

"(...) tendency to turn social and political problems into learning problems, so that through this, they become the responsibility of individuals rather than that they are seen as the concern of the collective." (Biesta, 2012).

According to Biesta, a crisis in democracy should thus not be understood in terms of citizens lacking knowledge, skills and dispositions⁵ but has more to do with a lack of opportunity for citizens to enact their citizenship in an open democratic experience (2014: 7).

For Biesta this democratic experience is characterized by a transformation of 'private troubles' into 'public issues'. It is precisely in the transformation of individual 'wants' into collective 'needs', that our ongoing struggle for democracy gets shape (Biesta, 2014). Against the trend to connect citizenship to communities of sameness or to see citizenship in social terms, that is, in terms of 'good' behaviour, Biesta argues to focus on 'individuals-in-interaction'. In the first place, citizenship has to do with questions of political engagement, of collective decision-making. Citizenship is not a matter of individuals but has to do with collective concerns that need to open towards plurality. On the other hand common action is not possible on the basis of mere plurality. *'Common action requires decisions and hence deliberation and judgement about what is to be done'* (Biesta, 2012: 689) Again, Biesta refers to Arendt for whom the heart of politics is at the constitutive more than at the revolutionary moments of history.

In search for a theoretical 'device' to handle this tension between coming to 'common action' and being open towards 'plurality', Biesta & Cowell (2010) use the distinction between *socialisation* and *subjectification* as two learning regimes. *'Socialisation'* focuses on the role of learning and education in the reproduction of the existing socio-political order and thus on the adjustments of individuals to this existing order. *'Subjectification'* emphasizes that democratic citizenship is not simply an existing identity that individuals just need to adopt but is an ongoing process that is fundamentally open towards the future. Democracy precisely comes about when people ask critical questions and leave the existing order. Biesta suggests to move 'beyond' both learning regimes, so that public pedagogy can work at the intersection of education and politics, as an enactment for publicness.

Summary (concepts)

On the one hand there is the idea that common action is not possible on the basis of mere plurality, - and on the other hand there is the concern to interpret the common or collective not in terms of sameness, but leave it open towards plurality. This plurality acknowledges there are no rational solutions for conflicts, but recognizes different voices as being part of a same (symbolic) space. A theoretical device that Biesta uses and that can be related to this tension, are the concepts 'socialization' and 'subjectification'. Where the first focuses on learning and adjustments of individuals to the existing order, the second emphasizes the permanent adaptation and openness towards a future. Biesta emphasizes it is a not a matter of citizens lacking knowledge and skills, but there is a lack of opportunities for citizens to enact their citizenship in an open democratic experience. 'An enactment for publicness' can be furthermore understood as a test of the possibility of spaces to be public.

2. Perspectives for 'publicness' and staging a dissensus

Similar to chapter 5 where we defined perspectives for spatial practitioners (focusing on *understanding the public value* and more in particular on public space), we will now focus on *collectively reflecting* as balancing between the idea that common action is not possible on the basis of mere plurality, and the idea that 'common' should not be interpreted in terms of sameness, but be open towards plurality. We already referred to the theoretical device that Biesta puts forward to further understand this tension (i.e. between socialization and subjectification), and will now look for three perspectives for 'publicness' and staging a dissensus, building on concepts related to democracy and ideas on plurality.

Perspective 1: To interrupt

Biesta proposes to create opportunities to 'become public' and to search for ways and methods to create this opportunity (as a pedagogy 'for publicness' that we put in contrast to a pedagogy 'for' the public and a pedagogy 'of' the public, cf. supra). Biesta (2014) explains how this is not something you can instruct nor facilitate but what is more a matter of *interrupting*. Such interruption can take the form of what, after Rancière we might think of as a 'dissensus' Biesta continues. Dissensus as such, is not to be understood as the opposition of interests of opinions but is the conflict between different sensory regimes, or different senses. For Rancière politics is not about coming to an agreement but about the ongoing tension or

conflict of many worlds in one⁶ (Rancière, 2003, Rancière, 2008). We can stage a dissensus, or create such an interruption, according to Biesta, by introducing an incommensurable element -an event, an experience or an object.

“It is an element that can act as a ‘test’ of the public quality of particular forms of togetherness and of the extent to which actual spaces and places make such forms of human togetherness possible. The aim of such interruptions is not to teach actors what they should be, nor to demand a particular kind of learning but to keep open the opportunities for becoming public.” (Biesta, 2013, p. 693)

With the example of the permanent breakfast Biesta illustrates how such (artistic) interventions often do very little. At most they have the intention to invite others to join in, once you do, there are rules that stipulate your participation. Most importantly is that they can function as test of the public quality of a certain location where two things happen: they show what is possible, and give the opportunity to discuss how to act and how to be. This coincides with how we defined public spaces as places that can be connected with democracy, and thus to what extent they embody the right to access and the expression of differences (Crawford, 2016).

Thus, the perspective we want to contribute to, is exploring this call ‘**to interrupt**’, to ‘stage a dissensus’, as a test of the public quality of certain location.

Perspective 2: Making things public

This call for opportunities to ‘become public’, resonates to the question ‘*How to make things public?*’ that was put forward by Bruno Latour (2005). People can be concerned about the same ‘things’ but do not necessarily share the same opinion. We might be more connected to each other by our worries, our matters of concern, the issues we care for, than by any other set of values, opinions, attitudes or principles. According to Latour, ‘issues’ and ‘things’ are concrete and not to be limited to one discipline or expertise, they assemble a network⁷ of humans and non-humans and their passion and concerns. What we can try to do, Latour notes, is to make people assemble and debate over their matters of concern, to produce voices and connect people. In the book and exhibition *Making Things Public: atmospheres of democracy* the design of an assembly is explored in such a way that one can compare the different types of representation. Not to build an all-encompassing agora or a new political dome, but to question ‘*How do they assemble around which matters of concern?*’ It is not about correct rules of representativeness (*who* needs

to be involved), Latour continues, nor about a correct and objective collection of facts and data (*what* needs to be examined).

“Each (type of assembly) has its own architecture, its own technology of speech, set of procedures, its definition of freedom and domination, ways of bringing together those who are concerned – and even more important those who are not concerned – and what concerns them, and ways to obtain closure and come to a decision” (Latour, 2005: 31, own addition).

His interest in these assemblies is to visualize the way in how one searched for a procedure to detect relevant parties as well as the object of worry. Latour criticizes to assign too quickly large and over-arching labels of *why* things happen. A politics that assembles heterogenous ‘things’ mediates and changes relationships takes the task to understand *how* things happen. And this is why this question is relevant in relation to Biesta’s proposal to create ‘opportunities for publicness’. Biesta and Latour come with different arguments and probably have a different view on several political concepts, and they are both not clear on how to *interrupt*, on how to stage such a dissensus, or on how to investigate ways to make things public, but they both make a call towards designers, artists, scientists, to do so. To experiment, to test and try, or as Latour phrases we can no longer deny we are all politically handicapped and have to accept prostheses instead.

“We need different prostheses: any small innovation in the practical ways of representing an issue will make a small – that is, huge – difference.” (Latour, 2005: 21)

The work of Latour found a lot of response in theory of architecture (and other design disciplines). Many scholarly writings are questioning ‘how to make things public’. The work of Biesta is maybe less known in these disciplines, but the concept of the public as understood by Arendt and the idea of dissensus of Rancière is discussed by many. Biesta is providing a useful understanding to approach these concepts as a (spatial) practitioner questioning how to intervene.

Thus, the perspective we want to contribute to, is exploring how **to make things public**, to investigate ‘How do they assemble around which matters of concern?’.

Perspective 3: Staging a dissensus as 'slowing down', the voice of an idiot

'Designing a scene is an art of staging (...) it is a matter of distributing roles, of taking a part in the staging of the issue.' (Stengers, 2005: 1002).

In *Making things public: atmospheres of democracy*, Isabelle Stengers reflects on the role and act of slowing down. Furthermore, she defines concrete roles, starting with the 'expert' as the one whose practice is not threatened by the issue under discussion, since what he knows is accepted to be relevant. By contrast, she introduces diplomats as those whose practice, whose mode of existence and whose identity, are threatened by a decision. But the really interesting character that Stengers puts forward is the *idiot*, the one who will always slow down the others. In questioning how to design the political scene in a way that actively protects it from the fiction that '*humans of good will decide in the name of the general interest*' one has to be wary of individual good will; and question to what extent the murmur of the idiot can be heard 'collectively'? The idea is that the construction of a common world has to be slowed down, to create a space for hesitation regarding what it means to say 'good'. The idiot is a presence, or an interstice; there is no point in asking him, 'What is more important?' for he doesn't know. But his role is to slow down, that we not consider ourselves authorized to believe we possess the meaning of what we know.

You should never tell anyone that his or her position is wrong, Stengers argues – everyone is gathered around the problem, and it is in producing and creating the problem that people can also become. It is possible only because of the hope they share in a consensus producing process.

'Such a consensus is what I call an event. (...) Whatever the end result, the hope they create is empowering and is part of the process.' (Zournazi & Stengers, 2002 : 258)

The 'event' is connected to the idea of slowing down, as it is about giving a chance to the event, to the encounters which have you feeling and thinking. An event is '*something [we] can hope for but cannot master nor decide*'. Stengers emphasizes that these questions of how to 'slow down' (or stage a dissensus) only have meaning in concrete situations.

Thus, the perspective we want to contribute to, is **to create an event**, as a consensus we can hope for, but cannot master nor decide. In creating this event, we listen to the voice of the idiot, as giving attention to slow down the construction of a common world, and create space to hesitate regarding what it means to say 'good'.

Summary (perspectives)

We discussed how Biesta and Latour question how to create opportunities that remain open for different voices and possibilities, rather than creating knowledge or the answers on what should be done or how people should learn. Their appeal is to go beyond this tension, -between 'allowing mere plurality' and 'working towards common action'-, or -between 'the freedom to ask critical questions and leave the existing order' and 'those constitutive moments of deliberation and judgement about what is to be done'-, and to interrupt, assemble people, values and opinions, and visualize issues. Stengers' interpretation of how to stage such a dissensus presents the idea to distribute different roles, including listening to the idiot, and slowing down.

In this chapter we unravelled plurality in relation to common action and agonism (where differences can and should emerge) towards the call to create opportunities, 'for publicness', to become and to make public and to create an event. The challenge is not to build a big political dome, another agora, but to search for small and practical ways, to make prostheses that can explore new possibilities.

What I take from this chapter, supporting my reasoning:

A third way, or to go 'beyond' dichotomies is a returning issue, that can be linked to the equality of intelligence that Rancière introduced. Difficult to make concrete in programs and methods, it comes down to develop a concrete and valuable practice from here. Finding out an understanding of how things happen becomes a way to not limit why things happen in overarching labels.

CHAPTER 6 THE PUBLIC AND A SPATIAL PRACTICE

In chapter 5 we defined ‘the public’ as the public realm in relation to space or a concrete and physical context; and in chapter 6 in relation to the idea of citizenship, democracy and deliberation. In this chapter we further explore ‘the public’ in relation to a spatial practice.

Again, we will first (1.) look for concepts (in literature on architecture) that can be connected to ideas discussed in chapter 1 and 2 on ‘the public’, ‘dissensus’ or ‘common action’. Starting with the concept of ‘spatial agency’ and a reflection on the constricting definition of ‘problem’ for a design process. We compare the idea of staging a dissensus with the staging of a design process; and conclude with reflections on ‘practicing’ before we define perspectives *for practicing* in (2.).

1. Defining the public versus space

The spatial mirroring the social and vice versa

We first want to make a comment regarding an underlying dichotomy between people and bricks, the social and the spatial, that is often present in literature on architecture. The social life is often studied as a background to the built environment (and then translated into design strategies), and the built environment is often considered as a background to which social life engenders. This implicates the belief that redesigning the built environment will redefine social life (or the other way around) (See for instance Sacré & De Visscher, 2017 discussing Gehl, 2010, Whyte et. al., 1988; and Schneider, 2017). Sacré and De Visscher argue that there is no doubt that interventions in the built environment will affect social life in one way or another, although the question remains if this could be regarded as a causal relation, and they furthermore question this dichotomy between a social and a material dimension. Sacré and De Visscher argue to investigate how spaces are created as a result of a cultural process, and inspired by Freire (1970) they consider civic learning not as an instrument to adapt people to the existing city, but as a means to (re)read the city and make it susceptible for change.

In other words, in discourses on architecture one often starts from the idea that spatial and social transformations mirror each other, and in educating architects one also tries to understand this relation. However, as addressed by Sacré & De Visscher cultural, political and symbolic meanings are overlooked, in both

understanding and production of space. This cultural turn in urban studies was introduced by Lefebvre (1991) theorising the production of space as a practice that is not exclusive to the profession of policymakers or urban planners, but peculiar to everyone. Indebted to this idea that (social) space is a (social) product, is the concept of ‘spatial agency’ we now want to discuss.

Spatial Agency

To start, the idea of ‘agency’ is to be understood in relation to ‘structure’: in classic social theory one often discusses which of the two has primacy over the other, ‘individual creative actions’ versus ‘societal structures’. According to Awan *et. al.* (2011) it is precisely beyond this dualism that an understanding or use of the concept of agency becomes interesting. They go from Giddens’ take on agency arguing agents are neither completely free as individuals, nor are they completely entrapped by structure. Agents are negotiators of existing conditions in order to partially reform them.

‘Action depends on the capability of the individual to ‘make a difference’ to a pre-existing state of affairs or course of events. (...) agency means being able to intervene in the world, or to refrain from such intervention, with the effect of influencing a specific process or state of affairs’ (Giddens, 1984 : 14).

The idea that ‘withdrawing from a situation might be as appropriate an action as intervening’, is an interesting one. While, the normal *modus operandus* for an architect is to add something physical to the world, this alternative suggests that the addition of a building is not necessarily the best solution to a spatial problem - and that there are other ways of making a spatial difference. Awan *et. al.* (2011) present such practices in the book *Spatial Agency. Other ways of doing Architecture*⁸.

Giddens states clearly that ‘agency presumes the capability of acting otherwise’ (Giddens, 1987: 216). To act ‘otherwise’ is counterintuitive to the professional mindset, which is based on the assumption that stable knowledge will inevitably lead to a certain solution. To accept acting otherwise is to recognize the limits of one’s authority and of fixed and certain knowledge. Knowledge that is brought to the table should be negotiable, flexible and above all shared with others. In this respect Awan *et. al.* also refer to Giddens’ term ‘mutual knowledge’ which is not determined by professional norms and expectations but rather is founded

in exchange, in negotiation, out of intuition. It means abandoning hierarchies, welcoming contributions from everyone. Quoting Lefebvre (1991:26) '*Social space is a (social) product*' is for Awan *et. al.* (2011) the most concise way to summarize how production of space is taken out of the hands of experts and places it in a much broader social context. Spatial production is a shared enterprise and is dynamic, as an evolving sequence, with no fixed start or finish, and with multiple actors contributing at various stages. Everyone has a right to shape society in and through its spaces, phrased as the 'right to the city' as one of the fundamental rights of all citizens that has to be claimed mutually and collectively. In the book *The Social (Re)Production of Architecture* (2017) Petrescu and Trogal consider the social (re)production of architecture today, as part of an 'emancipatory project', material and immaterial, individual and collective. The aspects that become important are not the ones of form, surface, style or even structure but rather demand working upon the ecological, economic, collaborative and processual aspects of making space. As such Petrescu and Trogal break open the role for architecture.

'The politics of the (re)production of architecture suggests we need nuanced and sensitive approaches. In these 'crisis-riddled times', we need to learn how to become paradoxical and contradictory: how to act quickly and at the same time slow down, to be engaged and generous, yet remain vigilant and critical, to (re)produce more and to consume less, to allow the contestation of the many voiceless, and to find ways to construct positively in conflicts.' (Petrescu & Trogal, 2017 : 8)

Awan *et. al.* (2011) argue it is time for architects to step over the self-defined boundaries of the profession (that of designing buildings). In foregrounding the necessity of working with others, agency inevitably exposes the professional to issues of power, and in particular how power might be used, and how it might be abused. They emphasize the notion of shared responsibility rather than the idea of exerting power as insinuated by the dictionary definition of agency.

'A better definition in relation to spatial agency is that the agent is one who effects change through the empowerment of others, allowing them to engage in their spatial environments in ways previously unknown or unavailable to them, opening up new freedoms and potentials as a result of reconfigured social space.' (Awan, Schneider, Till, 2011: 32, emphasis authors)

Looking at architectural practices the issue is not always to come with specific solutions but to fundamentally rethink how space is produced. The question can be pinned down to how architecture operates as a discipline, what are its concerns are and how are these concerns framed?

Staging a design process starts with 'problematizing'

The concept of spatial agency (in debt to the idea of (social) space as a (social) product) opens and broadens the discipline of architecture towards the political issues and challenges discussed in the previous chapters. In addition we find arguments in the book '*All Issues and problems can become objects of design processes*' going from the idea that we should critically reflect on what the concerns are and how they are framed (Fezer, 2016). It is our choice to pick the problem, so who do we want to serve? Whose voice do we want to support? The *public design support*⁹ is an approach that proposes to start with investigating the problem, '*Solutions, or non-solutions come later*'

On the other hand, design is connected – sometimes very closely, sometimes less so – to practical use, to everyday life, to social practice, and to politics in a broad sense. The tension between how things are and how things should be – in other words, a problem – is what motivates design, if we understand design as the attempt to change something about the situation. (...) not believing in a well-defined problem and an unambiguous, correct solution is the basic precondition for a deeper understanding in problems and solutions. This understanding is both theoretical as practical. Investigating problems is a fundamental part of the design process, as important as the development of solutions. (Fezer, 2016: 92, emphasis by Fezer)

For Jesko Fezer (2016) the practice of design starts with the design of the problem itself. Design can only take place as an encounter with problems, and with those who experience, describe and evaluate these problems. Only then, can we begin to work on solutions, he continues. So it might makes more sense, for Fezer, to seek out clients with problems to work on. Fezer proposes an experimental approach that challenges to critically look at one's own position.

'To problematize is actually to invite design to take a position in the social field, even if that field is quite opaque. To discuss and to experiment like that

–in other words to critically modify circumstance – that is design. If in doubt, this exactly what we should do, with others, here in the middle of our messy social reality. Because in some circumstances –particularly in the circumstances we find ourselves in– the non-solution of problems is practical and productive. And it often makes the most sense.’ (Fezer, 2016: 95, emphasis by Fezer)

If we turn back to the plea that Biesta and Latour made to ‘interrupt’, to ‘make prostheses’, to make things public or ‘to stage a dissensus’ it is interesting to see how staging a dissensus comes close to staging a design process in itself. Similarly, Keshavarz and Mazé (2013) argue how to interpret the staging of a design process in an open, sensible as well as political way. Like Biesta, they refer to Rancière (2004), linking the concept of dissensus towards *the realm of materiality and sensibility within the design process that may also endure long after*. The staging of a design process, they continue, involves not only the framing of the problem and the social organization for addressing it but it also involves a ‘distribution of the sensible’ in which the visible and invisible, the audible and inaudible, the sayable and unsayable are manifested in the distribution of time, space and experience. Sensible orders reproduce and enforce divisions within society – who is qualified to see, listen or discuss and who is not. (Keshavarz & Mazé, 2013)

Practice to act

We situated the concept of spatial agency in relation to structure. In chapter 5 we discussed the tension between plurality and common action referring to Arendt who argues that the heart of politics is to be found at the constitutive, more than at the revolutionary moments of history. ‘*Common action requires decision and hence deliberation and judgement about what is to be done*’ (Arendt, 1958). For Arendt ‘to act’ first of all means to take an initiative to begin something new, and depends on others to respond. Therefore it is not a private but a public and political experience. In order to act, we need others to respond, we cannot act in isolation. The notion she introduces in this context is that of ‘understanding’ (Arendt, 1994). Understanding is not about ‘correct information and scientific knowledge’ but is characterised by Arendt as ‘an unending activity by which, in constant change and variation, we come to terms with and reconcile ourselves to reality’. Rancière (2008) discusses how politics is not about coming to an agreement, it is not a transfer of knowledge, but about creating an ongoing and dynamic opportunity to

meet the other, to learn, fail, test, practice; to act. It is a matter of crossing borders between observing, reflecting and acting, and of different worlds of sense come into one. Hence, an action is not a consequence nor a result of an understanding or reflection, but just as well a way of, or a part of understanding. With these final thoughts we want to broaden our interpretation of a practice. In relation to this idea of ‘practicing’, interesting questions are also raised by Van Heeswijk (2016) who defines her creative work as a continuous learning field ‘*to practice* how to relate to others and to a concrete context’. She considers the desire to shape our world, in essence to be no individual but a collective project. Van Heeswijk argues the question is how to prepare and practice for a future change, without knowing how this will look like and without a clear objective.

To practice is thus a way to come to an understanding, and understanding is a way to come to terms with reality. We do not need to first understand reality, as knowing the correct information before we can act. It is through acting, through practicing that we can understand.

Summary (concepts)

Going from recent literature on architecture we looked for concepts that can be connected to ideas discussed in chapter 4 and 5 on ‘the public’, ‘dissensus’, ‘plurality’ or ‘common action’.

We situated the concept of ‘agency’ on a tension between the freedom of an individual and the structure of society. Considering agency as the possibility to intervene or to refrain is stretching the boundaries of the professional mindset of architecture. Spatial production is a shared enterprise and is dynamic, as an evolving sequence, with no fixed start or finish, and with multiple actors contributing at various stages. In foregrounding the necessity of working with others, agency inevitably exposes the professional to issues of power and challenges them to critically reflect who to support, as *all* issues and problems *can* become objects of design processes (Fezer, 2016). Finally, we addressed a practice in a more broad interpretation as a way of understanding, where a way of practicing becomes a way to explore and experience in relation to others and in relation to a concrete context.

2. Perspectives for practicing

We will now define perspectives for spatial practitioners ‘to practice’, or to further explore and act upon concepts and ideas that we discussed, coming from literature on architecture. The idea of enhancing or addressing spatial agency has multiple directions starting from the idea that the production of space takes place in a broad social context, where everyone has the right to contribute. In other words, it is oriented towards the ‘practitioner’ as those who is professionally involved, as well as towards ‘everyone’ who has a stake in how space will be transformed or is produced.

Perspective 1: To act transformative

In Part I we already introduced ideas of Petrescu and Till taking a different approach on participation with more attention for what emerges from the everyday, beyond the preconceived ‘building blocks’ of society (in classifications of users, problems, categories and juridical or planning procedures). They both refer to participation as what can or should be *transformative* for all parties, the architect included. Architectural knowledge is not something that can be applied from the outside, but should be developed from within a context of a given situation (Till, 2005) and cannot work through preconceived models (Petrescu, 2005) For Till (2009), the design practice of architecture essentially *depends* on other things.

The introduction of dependency as a defining feature of architectural practice, and in particular the introduction of others into the processes and products of that practice, brings with it political and ethical dimensions. This in turn suggests a reformulation of aspects of practice: a move from the idea of architect as expert problem-solver to that of architect as citizen sense-maker; a move from a reliance on the impulsive imagination of the lone genius to that of the collaborative ethical imagination; from clinging to notions of total control to a relaxed acceptance of letting go. (Till, 2009: 151)

Till considers the role of the architect less as an expert problem solver, and more as a citizen sense-maker. Till relates sense-making to knowledge that is emerging through negotiating, the architect then becomes an engaged participant himself, there are no concrete tools, nor methods.

Schneider (2017) believes that a social understanding of the built environment does create tools and possibilities to question access and rights, to analyse and critique and at the same time propose alternative interventions. Focusing on the social in the production of space, allows to question ownership, management, governance and maintenance as well as politics. Referring to Lefebvre, she argues that if spatial design has to be considered as one aspect of the productive forces of society, then this productive force or ‘intervening’ is what can be used for change (Lefebvre, 1991: 123-124). This change refers to a shift in power relations, not a mere spatial, nor social change but to the wish to redistribute sources of power. Schneider relates this to the collective scale, one of collective effort and cooperation that leads to shared benefits. This link to the collective recalls what we defined to be a democratic challenge, as the transformation of evaluating and reformulating private interests in the light of collective needs and concerns. To act transformative, is not to be interpreted on the level of the object (or the building), but in a system of responsibilities and social relationships. Not taking in account this system, the idea to be ‘transformative’ is stating the obvious, as design is intrinsically considered as an act of change. The idea is, to go beyond building and create practices that allow us to fundamentally rethink how space is produced.

Thus, the perspective we want to contribute to, is how our actions can **be transformative** towards our own ideas, dependant on other ideas, actors, roles, and how they can produce change as reformulating individual interests through a collective effort towards shared benefits.

Perspective 2: To act in relation and in conversation

For Petrescu the question is how to maintain a social structure of projects, or how to support a ‘social sustainability through temporary use’? This means that spaces are being used for certain activities (for instance gardening) by a diversity of users, and these users continue occupying spaces for certain activities, without a specific space being designed for a specific use. In this way there is a continuity of the project without a continuity of space, as this ‘temporary use’ or ‘claiming of a space’ can move to another space. What is been formed like this is a desire to do projects in a different way. In reflecting on the ‘Ecobox’¹⁰ project of *Atelier d’Architectuur Autogeree*, she says *‘It’s not only that we created spaces but we spatialized a process of negotiation through the construction of space’* (Petrescu in Mazé, 2011). What Petrescu calls architecture, both as discipline and profession, is *relational* and not solely physical. Setting up and rethinking an infrastructure of new categories and

new institutions, new forms of management and governance, and new spaces and actors is a relational process (Petrescu, 2017).

“We call our projects ‘relational’ because they create connectivity: they stimulate desire and pleasure but also prompt political and civic responsibility on the local level, giving collectivities of local residents the possibility of appropriating space in the city through daily activities. Rather than objects, we design agencies (Petrescu, 2017: 103, emphasis by Petrescu).

Thus, to act relational (similar as to act transformative) refers to a wider understanding of architecture beyond building. It creates architecture in multiple forms, based on social relationships and new forms of collaboration (for instance different formats of gardening that move and change between different locations, it is not ‘one space designed for that use’). For Petrescu, a relational practice creates the conditions for a liberating experience that changes both the space and the actors, rather than looking for a material value (Petrescu, 2017).

These ideas coming from architecture have a more compassionate tone than the call ‘to stage a dissensus’. In other words, and as phrased by Nel Janssens (2017), the prefix dis- makes place for the prefix con- without diminishing the value of each component, idea, sense or desire. ‘Dis’ indicates some kind of separation and friction, while ‘con’ refers to bringing together. Although less conflict orientated than ‘dis’, ‘con’ does not necessarily means friendlier, harmonious or consensus oriented, Janssens continues. It’s not about reaching an agreement and solving conflicts. Where ‘discussion’ has a greater seriousness, ‘conversation’ is something that belongs to daily life and happens at the kitchen table.

“Conversations are meandering. They are filled with turns and detours. Their pleasure lies in not having a clearly defined objective, It is the very absence of an outlined goal that moves the conversation forward by building it word after word, pause after pause, turn after turn.” (Fior et. al. 2017: 167).

The interesting and helpful idea that Fior et.al. address, is that more than exchanging arguments, it is about sharing experiences. With reference to different sensory regimes (hence, experience), this is already how we interpreted Rancière’s idea of dissensus. For Rancière the heart of politics is no battle of opinions but the ongoing tension of different worlds in one, of experience, emotions, thinking, etc.. Jeremy

Till also refers to the role of ‘making conversations’ as a valid operation of agency. Conversations make social connections and lead to unexpected consequences that are not possible through rational logic (Till, 2009). For Fior *et. al.* a conversation is not only an important resource of knowledge and an import skill to challenge theoretical thoughts, it is just as much as practical thought (Fior et.al., 2017)

Thus, the perspective we want to contribute to, is **to act relational** and create connectivity by sharing experiences **through conversations**, rather than sharing arguments.

Perspective 3: Take on a role (in a practice of commoning)

Continuing on the notion that all citizens have the right to shape their societies (in and through space), Petrescu and Trogal (2017) argue that contemporary conditions demand that we go beyond participatory or ‘socially engaged’ approaches and start to work with more radical forms of politics and values, and that we question our own role.

‘(…) we have a role to play, which will start with re-evaluating our own professional agency through radical politics, value systems and actions.(…) How can we begin to develop different modes of engagement for ourselves? How, through architecture, can we enable a more democratic spatial production within critical conditions? (Petrescu & Trogal, 2017 : 13)

Petrescu and Trogal link these ‘critical conditions’ to a current crisis¹¹ in reproduction (where we can no longer speak of production without speaking about reproduction at the same time). Reading beyond this binary position of production/reproduction, production/consumption and in a context of a built environment that is overproduced, Petrescu and Trogal refer to commons as spaces that are concerned with both production and reproduction, going from reciprocal relations. The practice of commoning is defined as the social process of creating and reproducing the commons (Linebaugh, 2008). Commons can be rethought as new forms of collaboration to develop the active participation of users, and conduct them gradually into stake-holders. We already referred to the rising attention addressed by Avermaete (2016) to rethink and redraw the architectural figures of commonality. Avermaete argues how commons are questioning the role of an architect as a cultivator, a facilitator. With De Lange and De Waal (2011)

we furthermore discussed how ownership comes about in negotiating roles and responsibilities, in this practice of commoning. Borders of ownership are not fixed, but dynamic, defined in reciprocal relations and social contracts. Thinking on roles that are not equal, but of equal value can trigger different actors to benefit from each other's strengths (De Lange, De Waal, 2011).

Thus, the perspective we want to contribute to, is to continuously be critical about **the role we take** and being attentive to re-evaluate our own agency. In a crisis of (re)production and consumption, the practice of commoning is not only about taking care of resources, but also about conducting new roles.

Summary (perspectives)

In Chapter 6 we started considering space as being socially produced and the idea of enhancing spatial agency as to enable a more democratic, spatially just society. A social understanding of the built environment creates tools and possibilities to question access and rights. In search for perspectives for practicing, we mentioned different modes of acting - all addressing a wider understanding of architecture. Whereby conversations are considered as a valuable and performative way to practice an operation of agency. As an act beyond building, the idea is to work transformative, not as a mere social or spatial change but with the wish to redistribute sources of power. It is in a collective effort and in cooperation that shared benefits are found. The idea is to consider architecture as relational and not solely physical. The perspectives to act transformative, in relation and in conversation and to take a role, call for a critical attitude, rather than give concrete manuals or directions for action.

What I take from this chapter, supporting my reasoning:

That third way as a movement going 'beyond' dichotomies, now continues on the dichotomy between the social and the spatial. Where a practice comes from understanding in all directions (social, spatial, relations) and vice versa; understanding creates tools for intervening, distributing, being transformative, making sense, make choices, create agency. It is in the movement that we proceed, that a practice comes about, relating to others and a concrete context.

We concluded Part I foregrounding the following research question:

“How can spatial practitioners stage an open debate in a village; to understand the public value, to collectively reflect and come to a perspective for action?”

We introduced this Part III as an exploration in literature, not to build a clear cut theoretical framework that should be tested in case-studies, but to explore our research question conceptually, discussing different ideas, of ‘the public’ in its ‘spatial’ and ‘political’ connotations (i.e. in relation to deliberation and citizenship). We did not further investigate the concept of participation in itself, but explored other ideas and handles to work and act upon participation as an assumption. We discussed concepts related to ‘the public’ and (1) the public realm; (2) the political; (3) a spatial practice, going from different bodies of literature. Each chapter summarizes interesting ideas that offer a different angle on public space, democracy, privatisation, the everyday, commons and commoning, the production of space, ...; as a rationale supporting why and how we can stage an open debate *to understand the public value, to collectively reflect and come to perspectives for action.*

In chapter 4 we discussed how *to understand the public value* and elaborated on public space as a relevant subject matter of this debate we want to stage. Chapter 5 further discussed how *to collectively reflect* and continued with ideas on staging a dissensus. Chapter 6 started from more recent ideas on a spatial practice in search for *perspectives for action.*

We close this part with a summary of the perspectives explored. All perspectives that we defined in this part III are for ‘spatial practitioners’ (possibly an architect, a researcher, a planner, a designer, an activist, a member of a civil or nature organisation, etc) whose spatial agency is addressed as *allowing them to engage in their spatial environment in ways previously unknown of unavailable (...)* (Awan, et. al., 2011: 32). In chapter 4 we explored perspectives ‘for public space’, in chapter 5 we focused on perspectives ‘for publicness and to stage a dissensus’, and chapter 6 concluded with formulating perspectives ‘for practicing’.

Summary of perspectives that invite us (...)

(...) to further explore how **to connect ‘collective spaces’**, being both public as private, as spaces where different ‘publics’ merge, where collective and future images develop, where one can share an experience and change one’s perspective. (...) **to value open space as public space**, being ‘literally’ a place where each individual becomes present to others. The possibility to be seen, heard, to act and take part, are crucial elements of the public realm. (...) **to rethink ownership and a practice of commoning**, Commons as institutions for collective action call to take other roles exploring different relations between property, use and management of spaces.

(...) to explore how **‘to interrupt’**, to ‘stage a dissensus’, as a test of the public quality of certain location.

(...) **to make things public**, to investigate how people assemble around which matters of concern.

(...) **to create an event**, as a consensus we can hope for, but cannot master nor decide. In creating this event we listen to the voice of the idiot, as giving attention to slow down the construction of a common world, and create space to hesitate regarding what it means to say ‘good’.

(...) to allow our actions to be **transformative** towards our own ideas, dependant on other ideas, actors, roles, and how they can produce change as reformulating individual interests through a collective effort towards shared benefits.

(...) **to act relational** and create connectivity by sharing experiences through conversations, rather than sharing arguments.

(...) to continuously be critical about **the role we take** and being attentive to re-evaluate our own agency. In a crisis of (re)production and consumption, the practice of commoning is not only taking care of resources, but also to conduct new roles.

(Endnotes)

1 The noun realm and sphere are used interchangeable in the texts we refer to. According to the dictionary 'realm' is more abstract and imaginary, where 'sphere' is more three-dimensional. However the difference was hard to sense and more subtle in the (mostly translated) text, so I'll use the words interchangeable, as how they are used in the texts.

2 In a talk on Public Space and Private Life at the conference *Constructing the Commons*, Crawford denounced the '*Ghelification*' of public space (referring to Jan Gehl's influence on public space). Referring to typically designerly activities, ranging from amateur efforts such as yarn bombing to sophisticated professional park designs, this made 'public space advocates' assert that we live in a golden age of public space. Bicycle lanes, upgraded public plazas designed for human comfort, farmers markets and pedestrianized streets all demonstrate growing investments in high-quality urban spaces. Scholars have pointed out that there is no single "public" but a myriad of publics, each with differing identities and interests. There are for example racial implications to approaches that assume a generic public. See also Crawford, 2016b)

3 Elaborating on the term 'commons' Tine De Moor (2013) argues it is currently used for all kinds of commonalities, which leads to confusion. Historically the commons developed in the Middle Ages in England as institutions with a certain exclusivity. With the term *institutions for collective action* De Moor refers to contemporary forms of collaboration that are self-governing and developed bottom-up where one takes the responsibility for the management and use of a resource, service or good on a long term. This term was introduced by Elinor Ostrom (1990) referring to forms of sustainable collaborations based on agreement and rules with a clear goal. It is not a question of property rights but of rights of use which could be applicable on public space as well, according to De Moor. It is an illusion that you have to own something to take care, she continues. There is a cult developed around private property and the individual as a centre of our society. Taking care of the collective is something that you can learn (De Moor, in Van den Berg, 2013). De Moor (2015) describes the conceptual evolution from commons as small-scale, local resource to large-scale global resources (e.g. water, the internet), partly because of the growing visible and tangible consequences of climate change. Secondly another more local evolution towards more self-governance is taking place in many places in northwestern Europe. New forms of institutional collective action are emerging to deal with the vacuum created by the retreating state and the failing markets. Citizens are increasingly uniting in collectivities to provide goods and services that until now have been assumed as public. According to De Moor this emerging *do-it-yourself-society* is building institutions that are very much like the former, historic commons. Although there are some clear differences in the way they function. In the past commons offered solutions to both economic and social, and even ecological problems, today commons are usually focused on solving a single issue, for instance producing renewable energy or providing qualitative care. Linking various benefits together also creates complementary reciprocal behaviour, if it is possible to lose multiple benefits by free riding in only one domain, members will be encouraged to 'behave' in all the domains De Moor concludes.

4 The rules of permanent breakfast are simple: one person organises a breakfast in a public location and invites at least four other people to the breakfast. Those invited commit themselves to organising another public breakfast with different people in a different location, and so on. www.permanentbreakfast.org

5 We can relate this to the idea of 'equality of intelligence' discussed by Rancière in *The ignorant schoolmaster* (1987), see Part I, chapter 1.

6 The idea of an 'equality of intelligence' that we discussed in part I is helpful to interpret this idea of 'many worlds into one'. As the fundamental assumption of Rancière is that there are no borders of knowledge that need to be crossed, but there is a border between those who assume equality, and those who don't. The emancipator will not cross this border, but demonstrates precisely that this border should not be crossed. He should do nothing more than listening and inviting the 'student' to make explicit: What are you seeing? What are you thinking? What are you doing with this? On the same side of this border, there thus are many sensory regimes for the same world, many as valuable understandings and interpretations.

The pedagogical relation is based on the assumption of equality, and not on those who know and those who do not know. Masschelein (2007) addresses how the critical pedagogy may have intended to shift power relations and to be critical towards how these relation were reproduced, the existence of inequality and the border between knowing and not-knowing remained intact. Each time the critical pedagogy described and discovered the inequality again. But as long as you do not act upon it, it cannot be reached. To emancipate, the 'master' should be ignorant and not explain.

7 We can frame these ideas within the *Actor Network Theory*, a theory (or more precisely a method) that enables to reflect on the coming about of knowledge on problems too complex to be dealt by experts only. In short, it wants to open the black box of theories and paradigms hidden by 'facts' and 'knowledge' that lead to the discovery of these facts and develop a vocabulary that is based on as little a priori's as possible. (De Ridder, 2013)

8 The term 'spatial agency' was developed out of a research project, which has resulted in a book and accompanying website. The aim of the project was to uncover an alternative history of architectural praxis, one that had been largely ignored by mainstream architectural histories. There are 130 examples in the book and over 180 on the website, of 'other ways of doing architecture'. Apart from collecting these practices, the aim was to find out what defined them and how they contribute to a different understanding of practice, to articulate their methods of transforming space (activism, pedagogy, publications, networking, making stuff, making policy). The past decade there is an increase of these 'other ways' or other practices (e.g. pop up spaces, participatory food workshops, urban agriculture, etc.) Besides the more fun and good things they possibly do, there is the critical remark to be made that these practices often become solutions by politicians and decision makers for all kind of social problems, not touching the more structural problems underneath. This can be related to the professionalization of participation that we discussed already in part I (and can be linked to (amongst other reasons) for instance the financial crisis and dismantling of the welfare state, neoliberalism). These practices are still marked by a logic of projects, that is limiting the time and space for critical reflection.

9 Public Design Support was developed in 2011 in the St. Pauli area of Hamburg by students of the Studio Experimental Design from the Hamburg University of Fine Arts. It works or can be summarized in eight rules:

1. All issues and problems can become objects of design processes.
2. We work with people who cannot afford professional design.
3. Public Design Support is provided free of charge.
4. Solutions are developed with clients, not for them.
5. Public Design Support does as little design as possible.
6. Our first action is to investigate the problem. Solutions or non-solutions come later.
7. The obvious problems often conceal hidden problems.
8. Individual support also means to consider the structural context.

10 The 'EcoBox' is the initial project within a series of self-managed projects in the La Chapelle area of northern Paris which encourages residents to gain access to and critically transform misused or underused spaces. These projects actively involved municipal stakeholders to emphasize a flexible use of space and aim to preserve urban 'biodiversity' by encouraging the co-existence of a wide range of life-styles and living practices. *aaa* began this process by establishing a temporary garden constructed out of recycled materials. The garden, called ECoBox, has been progressively extended into a platform for urban criticism and creativity, which is curated by the *aaa* members, residents and external collaborators and which catalyses activities at a local and trans-local level.

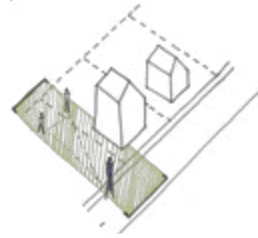
11 Referring to a neoliberal capitalism and a climate crisis.

FOR PUBLIC SPACE



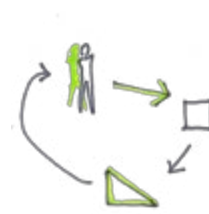
to connect
collective spaces

to value open space
as public space



to rethink ownership and
a practice of commoning

FOR PRACTICING



to act transformative

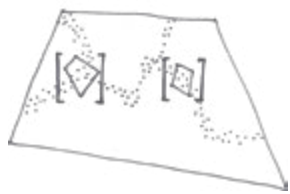


to act relational,
in conversation



to take a role

FOR PUBLICNESS



to interrupt



to make things public

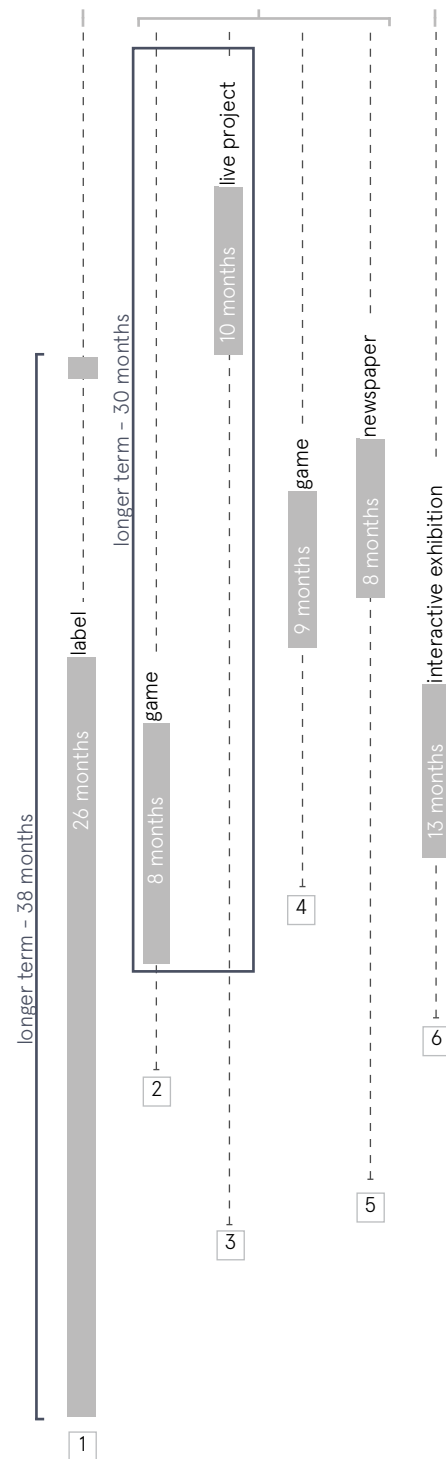


to create an event

Perspectives for spatial practitioners in search
for an approach to stage a public debate in a
village, to collectively reflect and to act upon an
understanding of the issues at stake.

STAGING A DEBATE
fieldwork track

PART IV



- | | | |
|---|---|-----------------|
| 1 | The Most beautiful villages of Haspengouw | Haspengouw |
| 2 | The making of Hoepertingen | Hoepertingen |
| 3 | Hoepert(h)ings | Hoepertingen |
| 4 | What is happening under the church tower? | Guigoven |
| 5 | The future is today | Godsheide |
| 6 | The Neighbourhood. Our Garden | Conflict&Design |



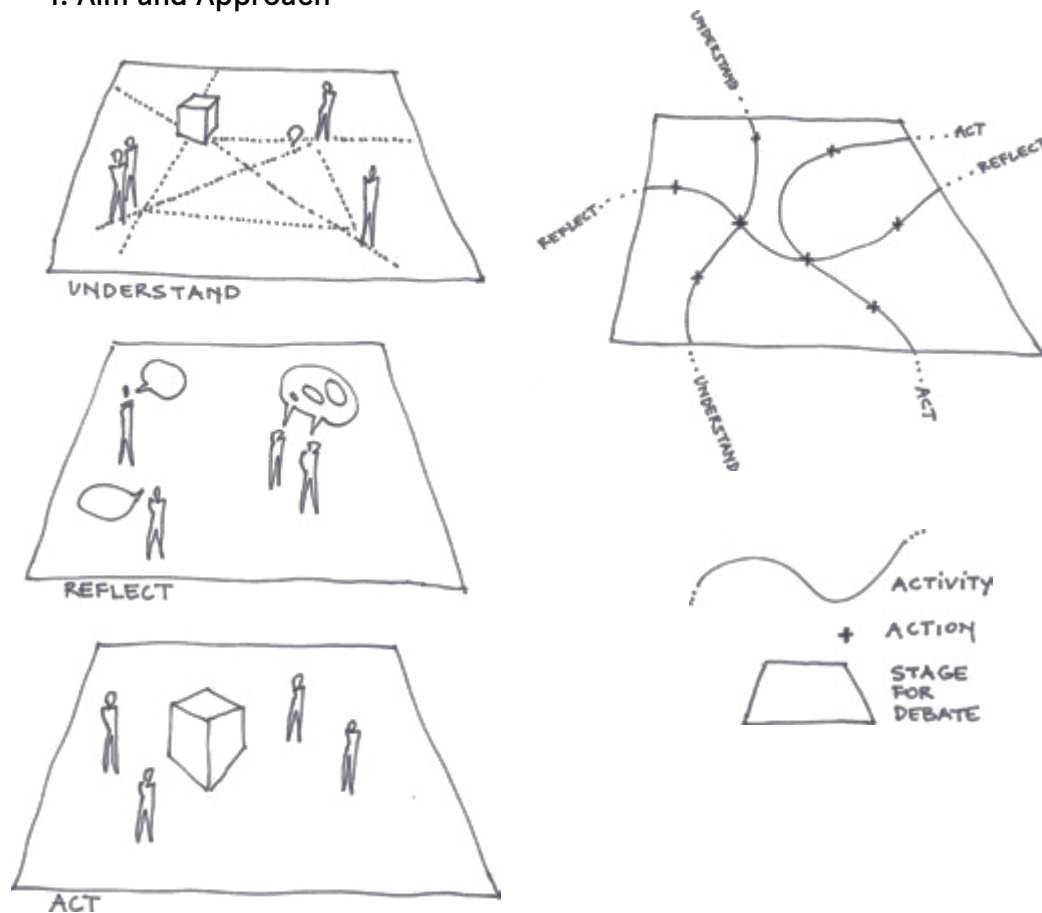
This part describes the fieldwork that was performed in six different cases, both on a longer term as on a short term, on the local scale of the village, as on a larger (or inter-local) scale debating with 'regional actors'. All case studies were set up to stage a debate; to collectively reflect on how villages are changing and will transform in future and to question the role of public space. The case studies were not always performed chronologically (one after the other) but sometimes ran parallel and influenced each other.

In a first introductory chapter the general aim and approach of all case studies is introduced. The subsequent chapters are structured by three (most relevant) cases studies: the label (case 1), the game (case 2), and the live project (case 3). Cases 4, 5 & 6 are a translation of different aspects of the previous cases to other villages or a more generic setting. Each case-chapter discusses briefly the context, the set up and actions that took place, and findings. These findings or results are defined as a better understanding of the context, - of how villages are changing and of how participatory initiatives or co-creative projects are locally organised today-, and secondly as follow-up initiatives that are taken by local actors in response to our actions. For each case a timeline summarizes the main actions, and the team reveals who is 'we', as many actions I did not set up alone.

PART IV

CHAPTER 7. GENERAL AIM AND APPROACH OF ALL CASE STUDIES

1. Aim and Approach



activities (as the 'sub-aims' of staging a debate) versus actions

General and prior remark in relation to the presence of fieldwork material

A Harvard system was used referring to literature, an inventory of fieldwork material complements this reference list (from page 255). In contradiction to books and publications that can be consulted, it is obviously more difficult to refer to objects, material, documents and artefacts of the fieldwork. Therefore 'fiches' are added in an appendix showing pictures of the original material. Throughout this part IV an annotation system will be used to refer to the inventory of fiches to make this fieldwork more present.

The aim of the fieldwork was to enable individual actors to take part in an open debate; to understand what is changing, to collectively reflect on ideas on public value and come to perspectives for action. Each case study was set up acting upon participation as an assumption, exploring an open-ended methodology to: (1) **understand** the context; (2) to **reflect** on the situation and define what is better; and (3) to **act** upon a certain situation to make it work better. These three activities (understand, reflect and act) are ongoing and interrelated, happening in all case studies on different moments and in either order.

In order to perform these three 'activities', 'actions' were set up. Unlike an activity, an action is not ongoing, but defined in space, time and oriented towards a public or audience. Furthermore an action is oriented towards a specific end result and an activity is not. The different actions were performed in a choreography that allowed different participants to take part on different moments. The composition of participants changed; from a diverse and large group of actors with policy makers or regional organizations, to only a few villagers. To further make the distinction between 'activities' and 'actions' we equate the activities as the 'sub-aims' of the general aim to stage a debate. The different actions then support these 'sub-aims' of understanding, reflecting and acting of/on/in the debate. In addition, the 'actions' can be understood as different ways to enter the ongoing and interrelated loop of understanding, reflecting and acting. All actions can support all sub-aims, and all actions were initiated and performed by us. There were only a few occasions, in the context of our case studies, in which I participated in actions initiated by other actors (e.g. the village council meetings, a neighbourhood activity). If I did, I took the role of a participatory observer.

The next subchapter elaborates on the different actions to 'stage a public debate' aiming to (1) understand the debate or to get insight in the diversity of agenda's and opinions; (2) to reflect on this debate, to stimulate partnership and ideas to work together, towards a common aim; (3) to take a position, to act in the debate, to test, by using space differently for instance and as such contribute to the debate.

2. A Set Of Actions

The different actions can be grouped in three types of actions, based on the relation with other actors and on how they are defined by duration and location. We distinguish (1) assembling; (2) knowledge-sharing; and (3) sensitising actions. The first type of actions assemble a diversity actors (both human and non-human actors (i.e. the space itself) creating the possibility to interact face-to-face. The second type of actions distribute information or an understanding. The medium for distribution (e.g. a leaflet, publication) can possibly start to take a life on its own. The third type, the sensitising actions, also produce concrete material (maps, typologies).

These different types have no other role than making more clear how we interpreted the actions, or to add an extra layer to define the actions more in depth. These types are not meant as guiding principles (e.g. if you want to assemble people, you should walk).



(1) Assembling actions bring together specific actors on one particular moment in one space. It are actions in which we gather data, assemble viewpoints, opinions, 'to produce voices and connect people'. In Latourian terms it is not about correct rules of representativeness (who needs to be involved), nor about a correct and objective collection of facts and data (what needs to be examined), but it is about how to assemble people with their passions and concerns. With diversity of actions we aimed to facilitate a process that is open for different voices with different access points for people to join.

(2) Distributing actions are not taking place on one moment in time and space. They are attributed to a specific audience (for instance all members of the LAG (the Local Action Group of Leader), or all residents of Hoepertingen) but there is

no personal interaction. The actions were not set up to document the process but, depending on the media used, they do capture a trace of what was communicated, what happened, who was addressed, and the insights, information or understanding that was shared (see inventory and fiches to sense original material).

(3) Sensitising actions sample different types of information or data to come to an understanding of what is going on. With 'sensitizing' we refer to the idea of sensitizing concepts defined by Blumer (1954). Sensitizing concepts lack specification but give a general sense of reference and guidance, they suggest where to look instead of provide prescriptions of what to see. *Although sensitizing concepts may deepen perception, they provide starting points for building analysis, not ending points for evading it. We may use sensitizing concepts only as points of departure from which to study the data.* (Bowen, 2006)








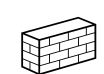

Following diagrams and tables give an overview of this set of actions:





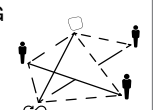




1. The first table gives an overview of all actions and definitions.

2. The second table shows what actions were performed in which case, and who took part. This illustrates the intensity of different actions (some were only performed once or twice, some actions involved many participants, some only two, or a diversity of actors (both residents, policy makers, administrators, ...) or only researchers). The final column lists results as 'products' of the actions, the fiches in the appendix show a selection of this material.

3. The timeline per case illustrates the rhythm and intensity of actions. The timeline is split in two lines: the upper line shows actions that took place in a more isolated or workshop-type setting. The line below shows actions that took place in the everyday reality, or in other words on site (e.g. in the live project Hoepert(h)ings most actions were performed on location.)

4. This final figure shows how all actions can support all activities, or sub-aims of staging a debate; to understand the context, to collectively reflect on the situation and to act, test or try another role, or use of space. This table can be read as a summary of how actions in all case studies supported us to stage a debate, and are again no 'guiding principles'. This summary will become more clear as we will explain the case-studies in more detail in the next chapters.

ACTION	DESCRIPTION
INTERVIEWING 	as a 1 to 1 structured conversation towards a more in depth understanding of the (spatial) transformations going on and how they are perceived and acted upon by the interviewee (which actions, collaborations. Each interview is also oriented towards future perspectives or towards defining ambitions and an agenda.
CHILDRENS GUIDING 	as walking in the village, guided by children who document the route by taking five pictures of what they liked most, what frightened them, surprised them, etc. As observing the children how they walk, what they look at, and having a conversation on how they perceive and use the village.
TALKING 	as random conversations on the pavement, in the shop, in the local pub. As talking on the phone when explaining an activity and inviting people to join. As talking on site when people stop to look at what we are doing.
WALKING 	as a choreography that enters in the daily environment and at the same time takes participants out of their daily behaviour, via hidden pathways to unknown sites, often site without any signs of appropriation. By crossing these 'forgotten spaces' they get appropriated for just a moment. The location plays along: assumptions on what is public, what is accessible, what is underused are not readable on a map but become explicit on the site.
SCENARIO-THINKING 	as responding to situations that combine different challenges and opportunities. The complexity of the spatial transformation process becomes comprehensible by combining trends and uncertainties into tasks. These tasks assign the role of a designer to the participant and trigger to reflect on one's own role and agenda.
DEBATING 	as confronting and integrating all ideas, proposals, in-depth understanding (through preparatory actions) from the daily environment of the participants in a game-like set up. With the aim to generate arguments to debate on the proposals that help to picture the current situation and are inspirational for future projects.
SOURCING 	as assembling material as well as social resources. We participated in a design contest to collect building materials and used informal networks (via neighbours) to collect tools. We spread a 'call for projects' to source concrete ideas as well as local actors as driving force and spread a 'call for ambassadors'.
PROTOTYPING 	as making and building physical constructions or interventions. And as writing and publishing a semi-fictional newspaper based on conversations with villagers and experiences based on the prototyping itself.
ENACTING 	as acting as if the future was today. Thinking through on such a story and taking it to a physical situation brings each person's unspoken assumption about the future to the fore and thus can make these assumptions public or readable. Again the location plays along as its actual presence is a part of the game.

ACTION	DESCRIPTION
MEETING 	as sitting around a table and negotiate on the design brief, the location, the maintenance and responsibilities or roles, each time with a view to come to a concrete agreement.
INVITING 	as opening the debate for all actors to join. By disseminating an invitation, by word of mouth, by using existing networks. By providing different access points for people to join in on different moments.
INFORMING 	as sharing insights, discussions, results. In order to collectively build knowledge and an understanding of the spatial transformations going on. And share ideas, reflections, opinions, proposals.
LOGGING 	as reporting on the 'assembling' actions that took place on one specific moment in time and place to inform all participants on what was said and what happened in the workshops or during the activity. It also offers outsiders an insight in the activities. It is not keeping track of all (research) actions, hence it is not a meticulous logbook, but rather a communication tool to involve a more diverse group of participants.
MAPPING 	as listing actors and organisations, resources and instruments, ideas and proposals, values and ambitions. To understand the existing dynamic and come to shared interests and challenges, approaches of methods.
REVIEWING 	as reading policy documents made on different governmental levels (local, regional) and in different departments (tourism, heritage, spatial planning) as well as reports made by voluntary organisations like the local history club, nature or neighbourhood organisation.
BRIEF MAKING 	as defining an agenda, formulating an ambition for change and agreeing on the problem to act on. Coproducing the design brief implies choosing a location, reflecting on the needs of different actors and coming to a consensus about the issue at stake, the (design)question to be answered.
MAP MAKING 	as drawing information (coming from interviewing, reviewing, ...) on a geographical layer to analyse and understand the village from specific thematic angles (functional use, typology of houses and clusters of houses). Using cartography to reconstruct the spatial (built) evolution of the village and making drawings to illustrate the main changes in the landscape.
ENVISIONING 	as a visual summary of the discussions following on the scenario-tasks. By translating the ideas in spatial and visual terms in one collage, the discussions can be passed on to the next team.

knowledge-sharing

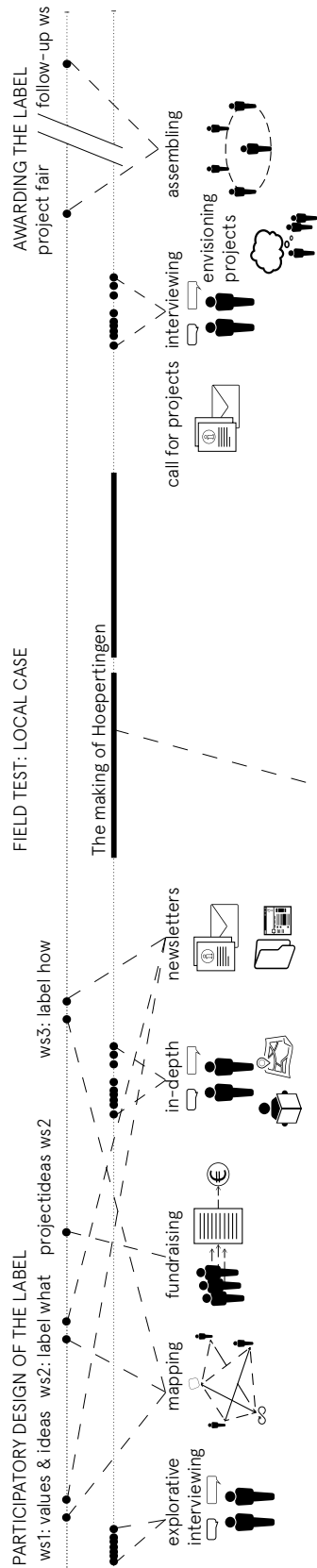
sensitising actions



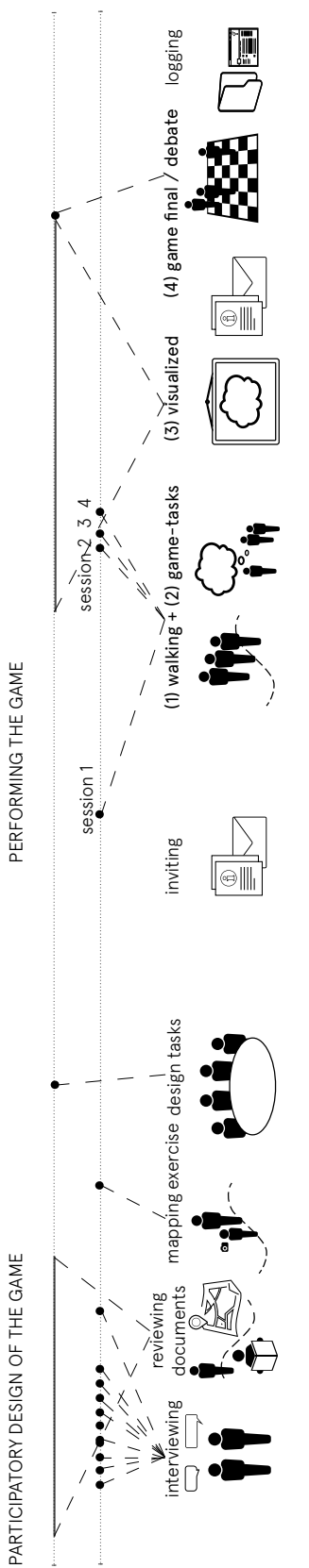
ACTION	1. LABEL HASPENGOUW	2. GAME HOEPERTINGEN	3. LIVE PROJECT HOEPERTINGEN	4. GAME (GUGOVEN)	5. NEWSPAPER GODSHEIDE	6. EXHIBITION	RESULT
INTERVIEWING 	 1 17 8	 1 9 3 3	 1 7 3 1	X	 1 2	X	a story, themes, project details, collaborations
CHILDRENS GUIDING 	X	 1 5	X	X	X	X	pictures, a map and a story
TALKING 	X				X	X	a story
WALKING 	X	 2 27 7 3	 4 4 2 2	 3 9	X	X	a route
SCENARIO- THINKING 	X	 2 27 7 3	X	 3 9	 3 17	 96	an idea, a proposal
DEBATING 	 5 15 7	 3 12 5 2 3	X	X	X	 96	a debate, new arguments, consensus, conflicts
SOURCING 	X	X	 4 4 2	X	X	X	a library of resources (materials and ambassadors)
PROTOTYPING 	X	X	 17 4 9	X	X	X	a prototype
ENACTING 	X	X	 17 5 16 5 2 2	 2 14 2	 3 9 5	X	a performance, new ideas and coalitions

ACTION	1. LABEL HASPENGOUW	2. GAME HOEPERTINGEN	3. LIVE PROJECT HOEPERTINGEN	4. GAME (GUGOVEN)	5. NEWSPAPER GODSHEIDE	6. EXHIBITION	RESULT
MEETING 	 5 15 7	 3 4 1	 1 4 3 2	X	X	 3	agreement, an agenda
INVITING	...	...	...	...	...	X	an invitation
INFORMING	...	...	...	...	...	...	a newsletter, a folder, a booklet
LOGGING	...	...	...	...	...	...	a newsletter, a folder, a booklet
MAPPING 	 2 22 8	X	X	X	X	 3 11 3	an inventory of actions, actors, instruments, ...
REVIEWING 	 1	 2	X	 3	 1	 1	a document, a report
BRIEF MAKING 	 2	 3 4 1	 3 2	X	 2 1 1	X	a (design)brief
MAP MAKING 	 1	 1	 2	X	X	 2 1	maps
ENVISIONING 	 1	 1 2	X	 1	 11 3 7	 1	spatialising ideas, a collage

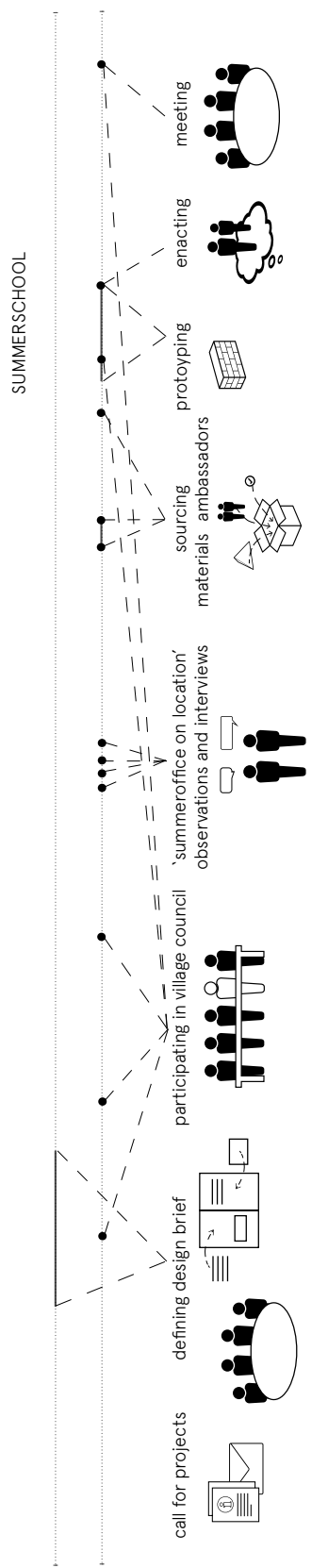
THE MOST BEAUTIFUL VILLAGES OF HASPENGOUW (26 mnths)



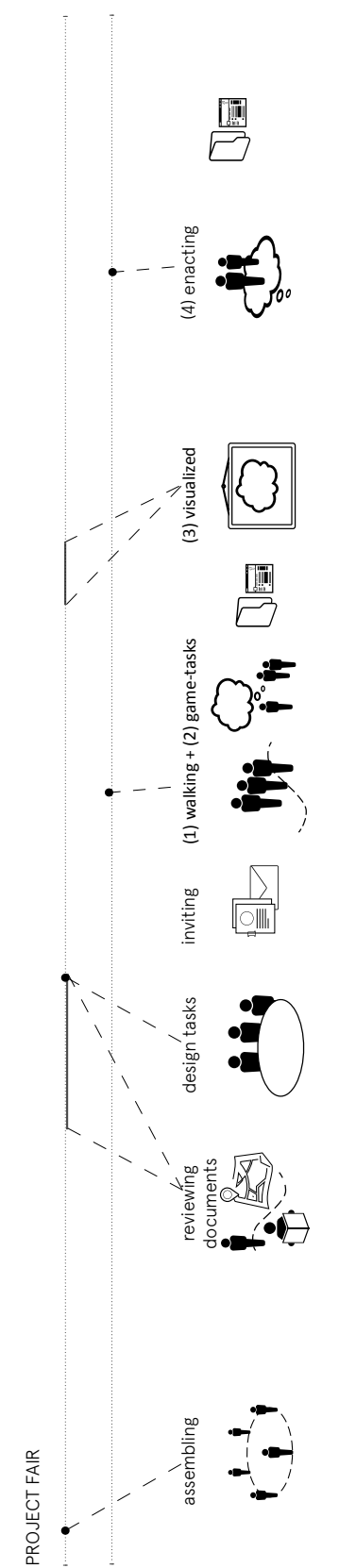
THE MAKING OF HOEPERTINGEN (8 mnths)



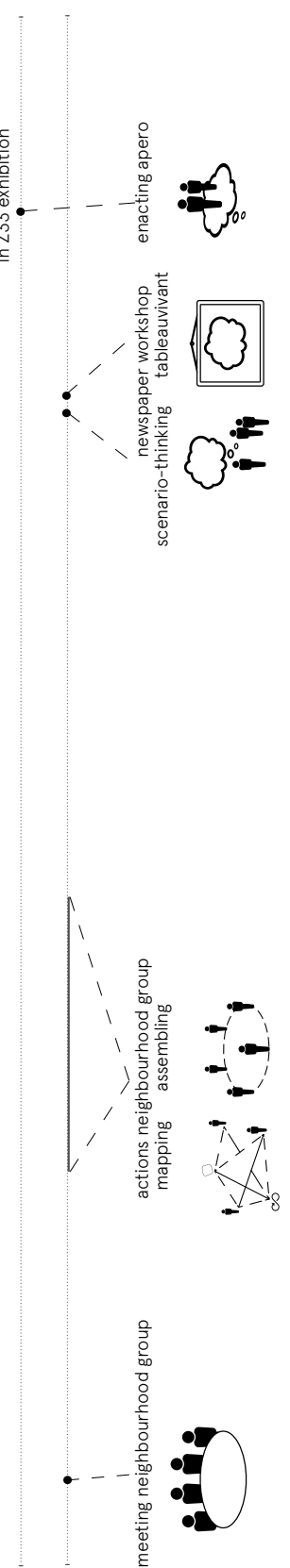
HOEPERT(H)INGS (10 mnths)



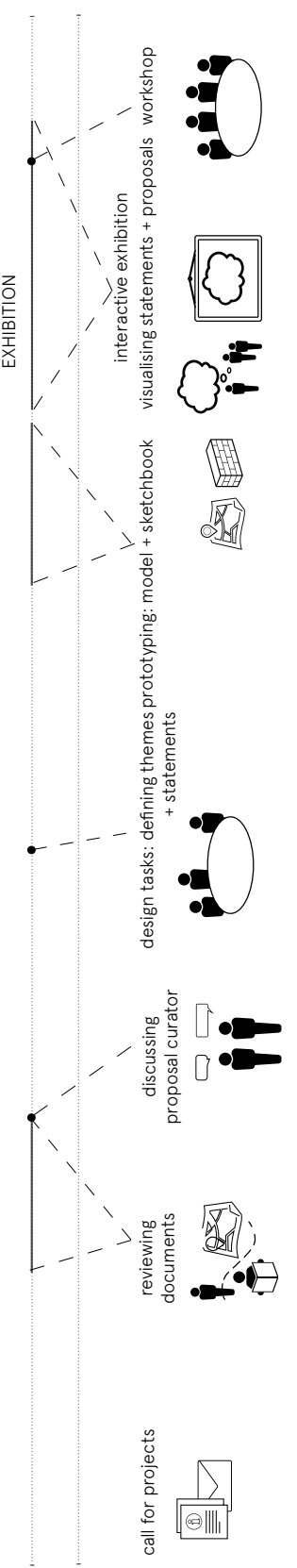
WHAT IS HAPPENING UNDER THE CHURCH TOWER? (9 mnths)












THE FUTURE IS TODAY (8 mnths)







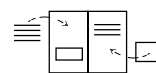




THE NEIGHBOURHOOD, OUR GARDEN (13 mnths)

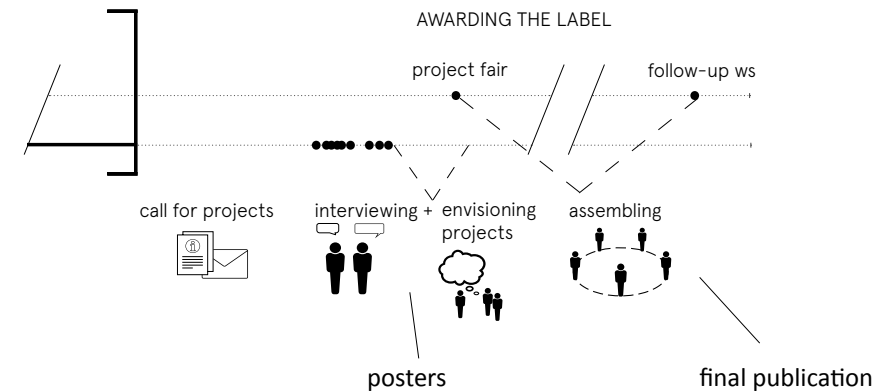
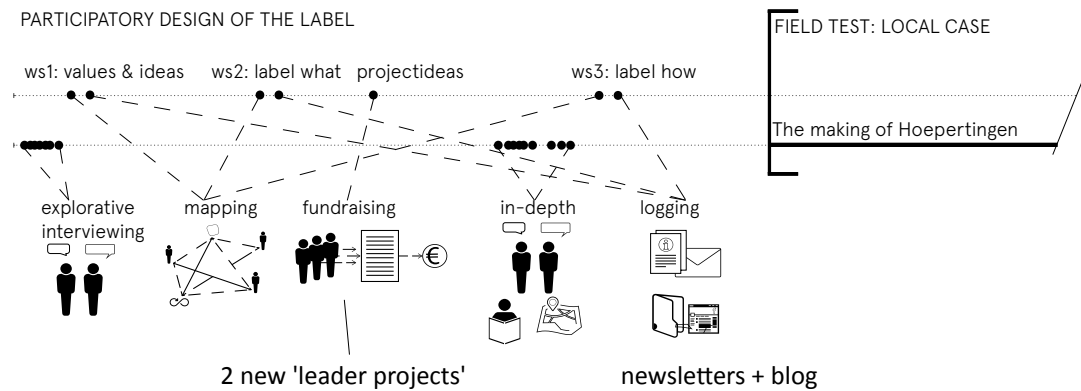


How did different actions support us, villagers and other actors to understand, to collectively reflect and to act on spatial transformations in the village?

ACTION	UNDERSTAND	REFLECT	ACT
INTERVIEWING 	in depth understanding of how the (changing) village is perceived	through addressing new themes and topics	
CHILDRENS GUIDING 	understanding of how children use and perceive the vilage		by testing and walking new routes and discover new places
TALKING 	small facts and ideas on how the village changed + meeting new villagers	building up trust before confronting (conflicting) ideas	
WALKING 	learning form different routes (topography, water, views) and from each other	space as an actor, common ground or resource + shared experience supports shared language	spaces are 'appropriated' for a moment
SCENARIO-THINKING 	supporting to understand the complexity of different agenda's and themes	working collabaratively with a solution focus + bring in your own perspective	making a concrete proposal with a slogan, incited actors to take follow-up actions
DEBATING 	all ideas, proposals and knowledge is brought together and confronted	rules are set up to 'defend' proposals with new arguments and further reflect on proposals	
SOURCING 	understanding of informal and social networks new knowlegde and expertise	reflection on local knowledge, expertise and roles	local actors take a role
PROTOTYPING 	legal issues (what needs permission?) new actors	new discussions on why, where, the locations, what, no so much on how (the design)	new engagements as well as resistance
ENACTING 	unspoken assumptions become explicit	plurality of voices are confronted in concrete spatial context	temporary enactements can lead to more permanent proposals

ACTION	UNDERSTAND	REFLECT	ACT
MEETING 	better understanding of different agenda's and viewpoints	the agenda of the meeting is structuring discussion leading to new ideas	
INVITING 	understanding of who interested		by showing up, having an interest to participate in the actions
INFORMING 	better dissemination of an understanding of different spatial transformations, agenda's and projects		the information, the leaflets, publications and maps become actors and prompts in themselves
LOGGING 	new insights (ideas) and connections (actors) via responses	articulating intermediate conclusions, ideas	
MAPPING 	understanding exisiting dynamic and practices (projects, actors, instruments)		
REVIEWING 	understanding of different (historic) transformations, past and future plans		
BRIEF MAKING 	understanding of different agenda's and questions	prioritising questions and selecting locations for a design brief	
MAP MAKING 		selecting information to make from thematic angles	
ENVISIONING 	understanding the 'spatialisation' of ideas and proposals	collages fuel as well as block further discussions and ask for more explanation	

CHAPTER 8. THE MOST BEAUTIFUL VILLAGES OF HASPENGOUW



1. The Context

Haspengouw is a region in the east of Flanders, today known for its fruit cultivation, blossoms, majestic farm, little castles and typical villages. Agriculture is still an important user of space, but we already referred to the general increase of other non-agricultural uses of open space, seen as a transformation from 'production' towards 'consumption' of the rural landscape, marked by the new European policy for agriculture (Van der Ploeg, 2008, declaration of Cork, 1990). With this new cornerstone of European policy, different funding programs (e.g. LEADER) were initiated. Local authorities are given the autonomy to develop a strategic vision for their regions, and coordinate a group of local actors (the Local Action Group, or LAG) who can decide what initiatives will be financed (as a bottom-up method). Local actors are considered to be best suited to find innovative solutions for local problems. Thus, the European policy on rural development, shifted from -an inward investment, top-down planning, focused on financial capital-, towards -a bottom-up innovation giving a central role to Local Action Groups. This decentralisation of power is exceptional for European programs (European Commission, 2006, Woods, 2011). In search for an evaluation mechanism of these programs it became clear that added value is to be found in 'learning' and 'network performance', and thus hard to measure. Mosely (2003) considers the evaluation process of LEADER to be a process of capacity building in itself, as evaluating the value for the region with all actors involved can support these actors in their future role. As an endogenous development it is striving towards the development of local networks and engagement of citizens, this cannot be measured in figures (Shucksmith, 2000).

It is the Local Action Group that writes a strategic vision for the region. For Haspengouw this was done in close collaboration with the Province who defines budgets for key issues and actions. After a call for projects, the LAG decides what projects will be funded. Oswald Devisch submitted a proposal for a project (doc.1.1., page 260-261) in response to a call of the LAG for projects that '(...) enhance and support the liveability of rural villages, and that more precisely would strengthen the physical and social living environment' (Province of Limburg, 2007). The proposal suggested to participatory design a 'label' called '*Mooiste dorpen van Haspengouw*' as a format to collaboratively learn with local actors and inhabitants about (spatial) transformations in the region. By involving existing organisations that are already engaged in the region, we wanted to stage a debate that would stay after we (as researchers) left.

2. The Set-Up: Steps and Actions

Team: Different workshops and actions were set up by me (sometimes in collaboration with students) and in discussion with Oswald Devisch, who wrote the initial proposal and coordinated the project.

With the 'label' we searched for a format to stimulate projects (and questioned what type of projects) or actors (who to involve). In respect to what we explored in the conceptual track, we can consider these projects as Latourian 'things', looking at how these projects assembled actors (cf. chapter 5). *People can be concerned*

about the same 'things' but do not necessarily share the same opinion and we can be more connected by their worries than values or principles. We did not start from ideas on representativeness, nor from correct and objective facts and data. Instead, we searched *how to assemble participants around which matters of concern?* Doing this, we learned more about the existing dynamic of the region (**understand**) and brought different actors together to **reflect** on the regional transformations and changing villages, based on concrete projects, existing or future proposals or collaborations (**act**). In understanding the region, we also learnt more on how participatory initiatives or collaborations are organised today.

Next to the role of projects as 'things', we explored a more visual language to support a dialogue and common understanding of the different actors involved. Reflecting on how to define action research, we referred to Roose et. al. for whom the researcher "(...) can facilitate the dialogue between the actors, introduce knowledge that prompts the actors to reflect on their actions (...) which may contribute to a better understanding of the realities at stake." (Roose et. al. 2014 :113) In this respect, the label supported us to assemble people and to facilitate a dialogue; to question different understandings and to support 'all people involved' to relate what is happening to a broader frame of reference; making use of visual elements like maps, diagrams, posters, In the next paragraphs we will explain the steps and actions taken to develop the label more concrete; in an iterative way individual research actions alternated with collective ones.

2.1. Designing the label

We started from the Local Action Group (LAG) of Haspengouw and invited members to participate in developing and designing the label. We first informed all 36 members (15 municipalities and 21 organisations) by sending a letter and presented the project to a panel of mayors (doc.1.2.). Five municipalities and ten organisations showed interest (cf. table page 137). In preparation of a first workshop I interviewed these interested parties (i.e. representatives of these local and regional organisations, public services, non-profit organisations and social economy enterprises). In each interview I mapped key issues (e.g. *Boerenbond*, an organisation for farmers, addressed difficulties with extending farmbuildings), actions or projects (e.g. a welfare organisation *Rimo* refers to the 'village dinings' they organise) and partners (e.g. *Regional landscape* who collaborates with a social enterprise *De Wroeter* (social-economy) in managing small landscape elements). Together with a student I visualized the existing dynamic in diagrams and showed (via mail) these diagrams back to the interviewees to adapt them with their comments (figure 3 and 4).

We set up three workshops for the same group of participants: 5 civil administrators from the participating municipalities (department of spatial policy, youth and rural development) and 10 participants from the professional organisations (social-cultural, nature, agriculture, etc.). A first workshop introduced the different participants and their organisations and collaboratively, they defined a theme and working area for the next workshop (e.g. liveable agriculture and housing (vis.1.1., e-comm.1.1., p. 262-263). For workshop 2 and 3 we made use of the the Map-it toolkit¹. In workshop 2 participants designed 'project-ideas' that were considered to be eligible to be awarded with 'the label'. All 'project-ideas' should involve local villagers to reflect on the changing identity of the village and the region (e.g. a bongobon-like 'welcome package' for new villagers composed by local entrepreneurs) (see p.264-265). In the third workshop, we thought of how the label could be an instrument to support or facilitate these activities (e.g. do we need rules, a commission, extra funding, a training?). Or in other words: in workshop 2 we thought of *what* the label could award (the object), and in workshop 3 we thought of *how* the label could stimulate this (the format). By discussing potential activities as well as reflecting on how to support these activities with different stakeholders, we continued building an understanding of the existing dynamic as well as started to make new connections for new collaborative projects.



Figure 1 - A picture of workshop 2, designing project ideas for the label, using the Map-it toolkit¹

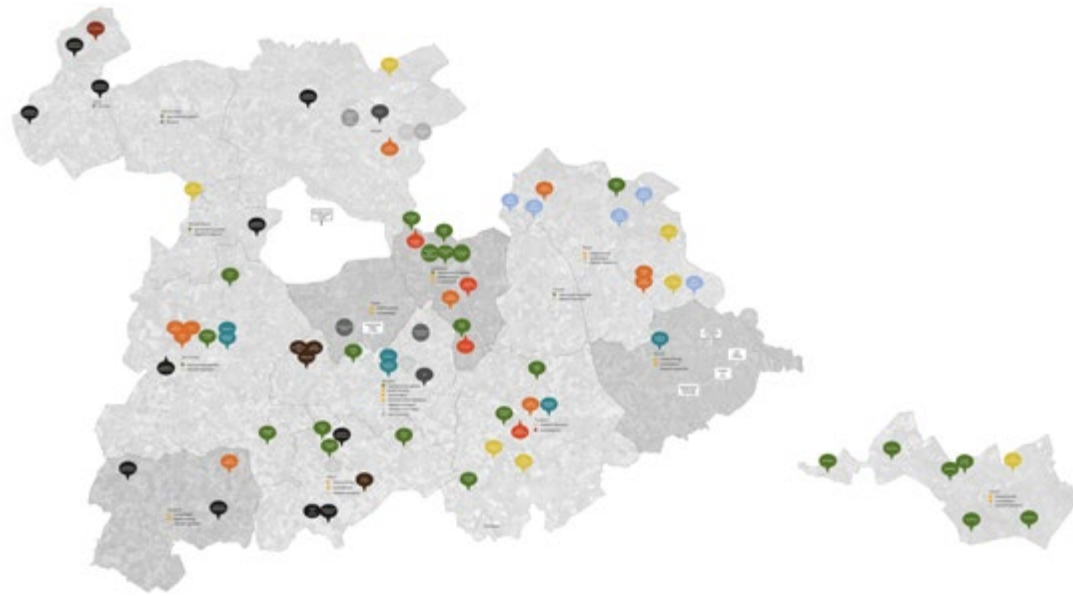


Figure 2 - A map showing projects of different organisations involved



Figure 4 - Diagrams showing how participants positioned their organisation according to the heading of the LAG (i.e. economy, agriculture, social economy, nature, welfare, rural development and culture.)

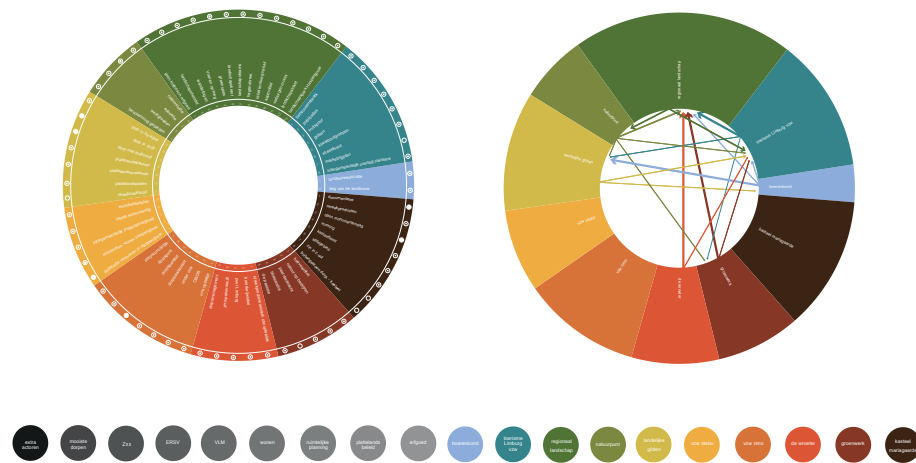


Figure 3 - Diagrams made by student Hannelore Goyens showing the relations between different organisations involved in the workshops based on collaborations in different projects (e.g. a regional quest, a rural academy, an educational package for schools, a 'landscape counter' or a 'housing counter' providing advice for private individuals, a documentary, a shop with regional products, etc.)

members of LAG

(organisations)

- Stebo
- Rimo
- Regionaal Landschap
- Landelijke Gilde
- Toerisme Limburg
- Boerenbond
- Kasteel Mariagaarde
- De Wroeter
- De Winning
- VLM
- PCCE
- Plattelandsloket

(municipalities)

- Voeren
- Riemst
- Kortesse
- Wellen
- Gingelom

new actors

- vzw Aksi
- Haspenwood
- Zolad+
- Ter Heide
- Erfgoedcel Haspengouw
- Centraal kerkbestuur
- Kind & Samenleving
- Natuurpunt
- Steunpunt groene zorg
- Trage Wegen

Table - Responding to a letter send to all members of the LAG, ten organisations and five municipalities showed interest. New actors were involved in course of the projects, based on collaborations with actors or projects.

Together with the participants we agreed that we did not only want to discuss and reflect on the 'label' in abstract terms (like award criteria, leverage effects and impact factors) but also come to actions and learn more about the region through testing. Therefore we worked further on the results of workshop 2 (the 'project-ideas') and in a meeting with actors from the local organisations we translated these ideas into concrete project proposals (i.e. according to the funding template). We then collaboratively proposed these ideas in a meeting with the coordinator of the LAG-secretary of the province. Which was unique, as a normal way of working was to submit individual proposals. We made 5 proposals of which 2 were honoured with a funding of LEADER (doc.1.4.) (i.e. *Ruimte voor Riemst*, a project with the municipality of Riemst and Rimo an organisation of community development; and *sssstilde, Haspengouw spreekt*, a musical organised with the local community of Hoepertingen.) Whithin the frame of the project *Mooiste dorpen van Haspengouw* we also set up a local experiment ourselves; *The making of Hoepertingen* (cf. infra, this is case 2).

2.2. Awarding the label: a project fair

As a final step we organised a 'project fair'. We sent 'a call for projects' to the members of the Local Action Group, as well as to new actors we came across during the project. This 'call' was an invitation to present a project on the project fair; and to take part in a debate with experts based on these projects. In this debate one project would be chosen to be awarded with the label *Mooiste dorpen van Haspengouw*.

In preparation of the project fair, I interviewed the 8 coordinators of the projects submitted. Based on this interview the approach of the project, as well as information on the coordinating organisation was visualized on a poster, again in collaboration with a student. (arte.1.4., see figure 6 and 7)) With these posters, all projects were presented on the fair in a comparable way.

As a second preparation of the project fair, there were bilateral conversations with public administrators of the province of Limburg (rural development, spatial policy, heritage and tourism) the local department of the *Flemish Land Agency* and the organisations working in more than 8 municipalities of Haspengouw (i.e. *Regionaal Landschap Haspengouw & Voeren* and *Stebo vzw*). The goal of these conversations was sounding the willingness or possibility to work further with ideas related to the label, and link them to existing activities of these departments and organisations (e.g. to the inter-local boards organised by Stebo supporting

municipalities to define their housing policy, or the counter for rural development (*plattelandsloket*) supporting organisations with a training offer.) On the project fair we then 'rewarded' a concrete project based on a debate, not based on a list of predefined and limited criteria. As described above, the posters presented the projects in a comparable way that facilitated a discussion on similarities, common goals, difficulties and diverging or likewise approaches (e.g. concerning green connections or empty churches, meetings with villagers, etc.). The project that was chosen, was investigating meeting places in two small villages. Different public, semipublic and private places were discussed (e.g. a courtyard of a school, an open green space, a private swimming pool open for public, etc.). The 'reward' in itself took the form of a concrete support of me as a researcher. This meant that together with the coordinator of the winning project I organised and facilitated participatory actions (in collaboration with students we went walking with villagers (similar to the set up of *The Making of Hoepertingen*, cf. infra) and set up workshop for children).

Finally, we made a publication (arte.1.6.) documenting the design process of the label, the projects presented on the project fair, a description of transformations in the region and a reflection on how to intervene in these transformations. The publication was presented and discussed a year later in a follow-up workshop focussing on how to strengthen collaborations and again to share actions in search for new partnerships.



Figure 5 - Cover of the final publication documenting 'The Most beautiful villages of Haspengouw'

PUUR LIMBURG

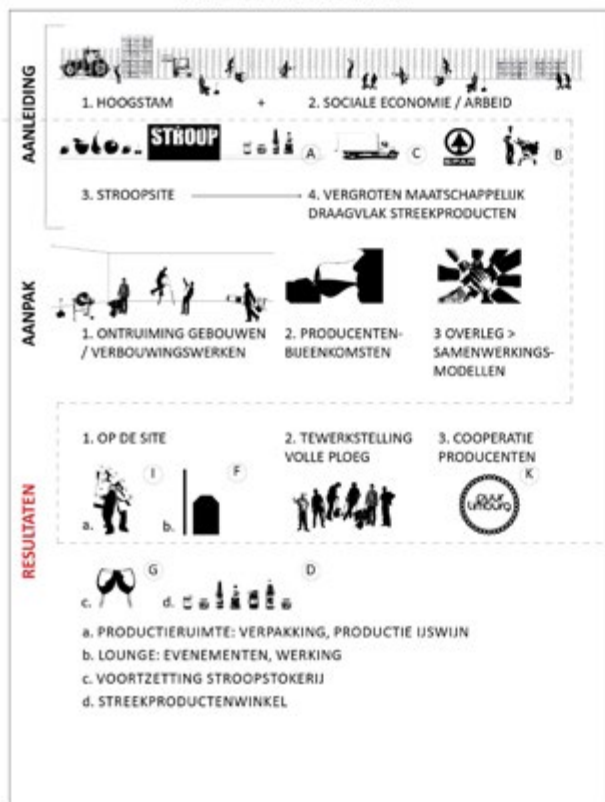
SITUERING TREKKER / PROJECT



TIJDSLIJN PROJECT



PROCES PROJECT



TOEKOMST PROJECT



De renovatie van dit stukje stroopsite, moet een hefboom zijn en zuurstof geven voor de renovatie van de rest van de site.

VERZELFSTANDIGEN PUUR LIMBURG

ACTOREN PROJECT

- A. Producenten (lokale ondernemer, verwerken lokale producten)
- B. Eindgebruiker: u en ik (houden bestaan streekproducten, -producenten mogelijk)
- C. Winkels (verbinding stad en platteland)
- D. Kasteel Mariagaarde (partner in streekproductenwinkel)
- E. Loonse bevolking (aandacht voor Hartenboer-model en lokale producten)
- F. AGB Borgloon (toekomst en exploitatie site)
- G. Jeugthuis Bieke (lounge, evenementen)
- H. Toerisme Borgloon (rondleidingen site, streekwinkel)
- I. Professor Houben (productie (ijs)wijn)
- J. Universiteit Hasselt (samenwerkingsmodellen voor Puur Limburg)
- K. Provincie Limburg (ondersteunen en stimuleren lokaal ondernemerschap)

CULTIVATING COMMUNITIES HASPENGOUW

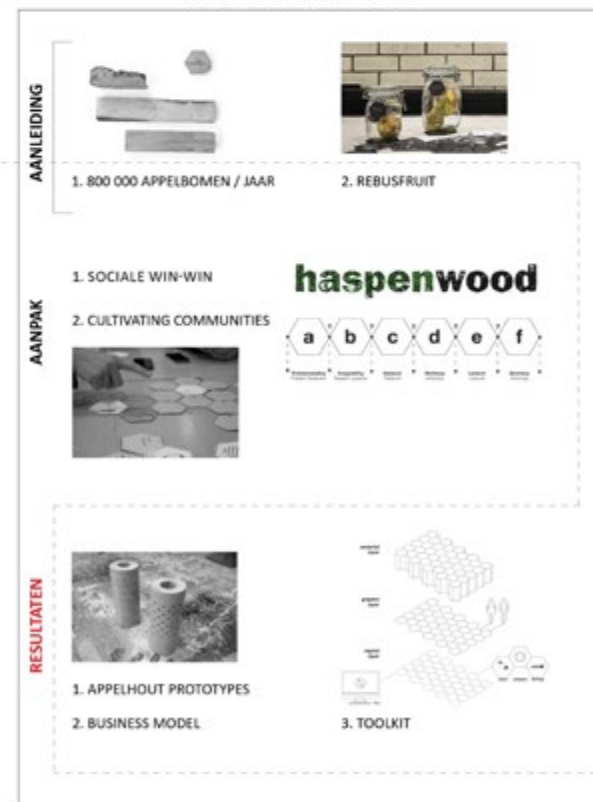
SITUERING TREKKER / PROJECT



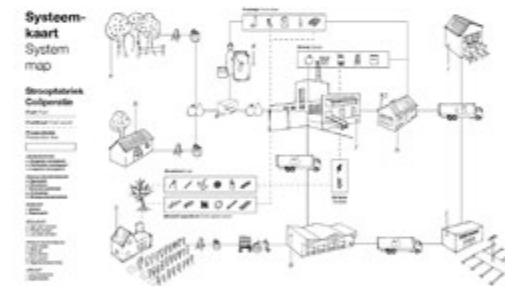
TIJDSLIJN PROJECT



PROCES PROJECT



TOEKOMST PROJECT



ACTOREN PROJECT

- A. MAD-faculty
- B. Social Spaces
- C. Haspenwood
- D. U-hasselt
- E. De Wroeter

Figure 6 and 7 - Posters visualizing the projects 'Puur Limburg' and 'Cultivating Communities'

Puur Limburg, coordinated by 'De Wroeter' is a platform for communication, distribution and development of food products related to the region (because of production, ingredients, or related to traditions). Puur Limburg takes care of logistics to provide all products via a webshop, restaurants, retail and local B&B. They aim to connect the farmer with their clients and claim an authentic and open communication. With the logistic centre they refurbished the former syrup factory, bringing more jobs and social economy to this important heritage site. Puur Limburg combines different challenges of the region related to landscape management (by restoring former high trunk orchards), to heritage, regional branding (via local products) and tourism and by stimulating recreational and touristic mix of use in agricultural enterprises. Puur Limburg also supports services in small villages, by collaborating with small local shops and B&Bs. As a social enterprise the first and main focus of 'De Wroeter' is to provide local jobs. Puur Limburg creates a synergy between different actors operating in multiple policy domains on a regional scale with an innovative product and a spatial impact (e.g. landscape, heritage sites).

More projects are combining landscape management with nature conservation and agriculture or tourism and welfare. 'Regionaal Landschap Haspengouw & Voeren' develops walks that are maintained by the nature organisation 'Natuurpunt' as well as through management agreements with farmers. These walks are then sold as a touristic product by the non-profit organisation 'Toerisme Limburg'. Another interesting project that 'Regionaal Landschap' initiated is the mobile fruit press that can be installed in any village for a day on the church square or the playground of the local school. Villagers can bring their apples and make their own apple juice. Next to a social event, it is a way to stimulate villagers to maintain a high trunk orchard as they can benefit from the yield and as such preserve these orchards typical for the landscape of Haspengouw. In keeping with this example, a young enterprise 'Haspenwood' started from the resource of 800 000 apple trees that are cut every year. They used the expertise of different local actors (like fruit cultivators, wine producers, scientists, designers and nature organisations) to come to a business model and a production system to reuse this apple wood. Apart from developing a product reusing valuable material, Haspenwood is interested in collaborations that can 'brand' the region.

3. Findings

With the label we searched for a way to better understand the existing dynamic in the region and the spatial transformations going on. Involving a diversity of actors, we aimed to include new and other viewpoints, opinions and ideas. We furthermore developed this understanding based on concrete projects as 'things' and aimed to support new collaborations between different actors. The maps, diagrams, use of map-it toolkit, and posters we made, explored a more visual language to support a dialogue and common understanding of the different actors involved. The label became a format to support different actors to assemble, discuss and reflect; and come to new ideas and partnerships.

In summary, themes and issues mostly addressed are: local jobs, working with local resources, combining landscape management with nature conservation and agriculture, tourism or care, and finally the accessibility of heritage not only for tourism but also for the local community. In different actions we asked participants to zoom out and make connections beyond their usual frame of reference. Most participants acknowledged the relevance of connecting projects and sharing approaches as well as the advantage of combining efforts to engage villagers. The importance of 'raising awareness' was often emphasized. Suggestions made in the workshops mainly focus on enhancing partnerships (also across and between municipalities) to collaborate in concrete projects with feasible results.

In our initial proposal (doc.1.1.) we aimed to develop a label as a format to involve local villagers in a debate about the spatial transformations in their village and region. Introducing this case we referred to our initial starting point to involve existing organisations, as they stay after we (as researchers) left. However, the label in itself remained a temporary experiment. The conversations we had with different public administrators of the province of Limburg (rural development, spatial policy, heritage and tourism) and the regional organisations, did not lead to a structure, nor to agreements to support a longer term version of the label. Participants did express their interest in a more permanent structure to support collaborations and learning initiatives, but in the end someone (an organisation) is needed to take an initiating or coordinating role to organise moments to share and learn from each other and the label remains a temporary format.

Apart from these reflections on the viability of the label as a format on a longer term, going from the 'label' as a temporary experiment we learned about the region:

(1) There already are strong partnerships in projects with a focus on nature, landscape, agriculture, tourism and recreation. The role of public space however, was not addressed.

(2) Next to these already existing partnerships, many of the organisations are a member of the LAG. As this group is mainly focused on approving funding, organisations are in competition with each other and learning opportunities are low. Each of these organisations assembles its own network and often involves the same representatives in its executive board. But there is no incentive to organise learning activities beyond these formal assemblies. Regional programs (like LEADER) fund (small) projects and good ideas but offer no structural funding that can facilitate learning initiatives or that support a collaboration on a longer term.

(3) The involved organisations have experience with setting up networks for volunteers, making local products that enhance regional awareness, or engaging private owners in the maintenance of small landscape elements for example. They each involve villagers within their respective agenda and projects. Hence individual villagers can be involved in different aspects but there are no opportunities for them to be involved in a debate on how the village as a place and community is changing, beyond pre-defined projects and programs.

Conclusions Case ONE

The value of the label as a format to stage a debate -to better understand what is happening in the region, to collectively reflect, and to define future ambitions for the region- was endorsed by most participating actors (municipalities and regional organisations). There already are strong partnerships, as well as several initiatives engaging individual villagers within the focus of existing projects and partnerships (i.e. mainly on subject matters with a focus on nature, landscape, recreation) But there are few opportunities to debate on common or shared values, nor is there a framework to assess these projects or to define future visions. The LAG (in Haspengouw) currently does not take a role to create such an opportunity. There are several initiatives engaging individual villagers, but these are mostly framed within the focus of existing projects and partnerships. There are rarely opportunities to address inhabitants as agents of change in their daily living environment, and this was precisely the challenge we addressed and explored in the research question and the conceptual track (part III). In the second case, *The Making of Hoepertingen*, we further explore how to stage a debate in the village itself.

CHAPTER 9. THE MAKING OF HOEPERTINGEN

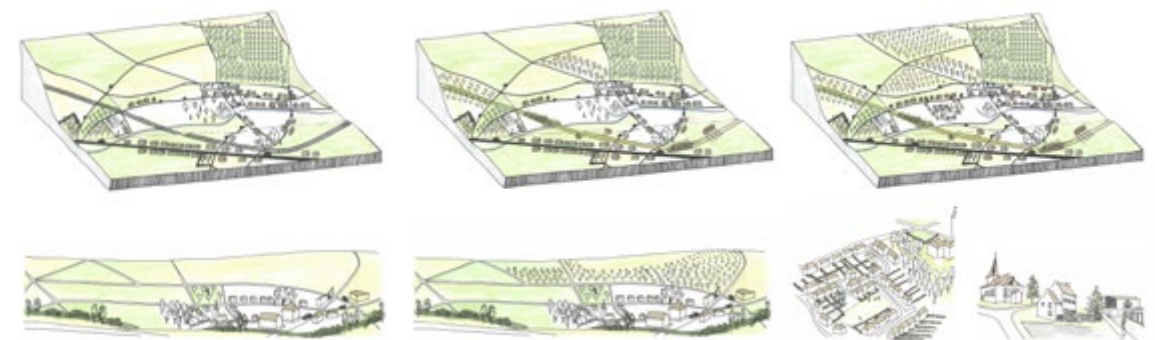
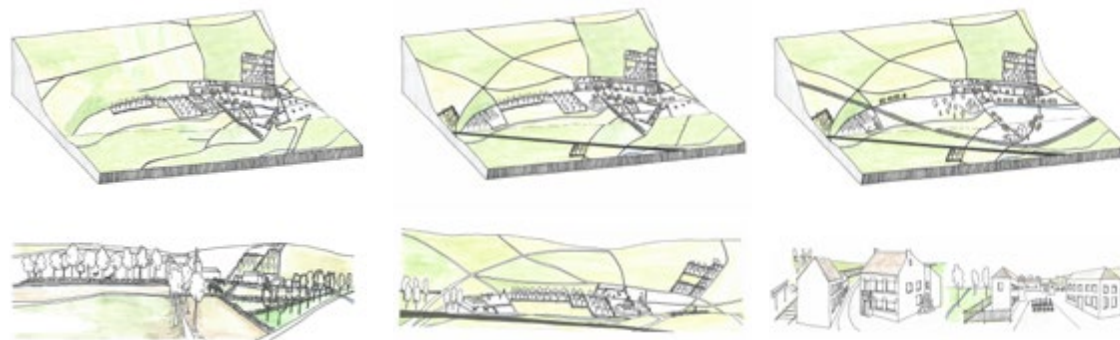
1. The Context

Within the frame and timing (2 years) of the project 'Mooiste dorpen van Haspengouw' (case 1) we set up a test (8 months) in one village: Hoepertingen (case 2). There was no specific agenda, question, nor a project that motivated the choice for this village. As many villages in Haspengouw, Hoepertingen belonged to the working territory of actors involved in the Leader project. For example *Stebo*² was commissioned to develop a policy document on living quality by the municipality of *Borgloon*³. The VLM, the *Flemish Land Agency*⁴ was busy with an exploratory study to see if the area needed a development plan for land consolidation. The local cultural organisation *Kasteel Mariagaarde*⁵ also participated in our workshops designing the label and was a member of the LAG. Thus, there certainly were occasions for cooperation but not specifically more, less or different than in other villages.

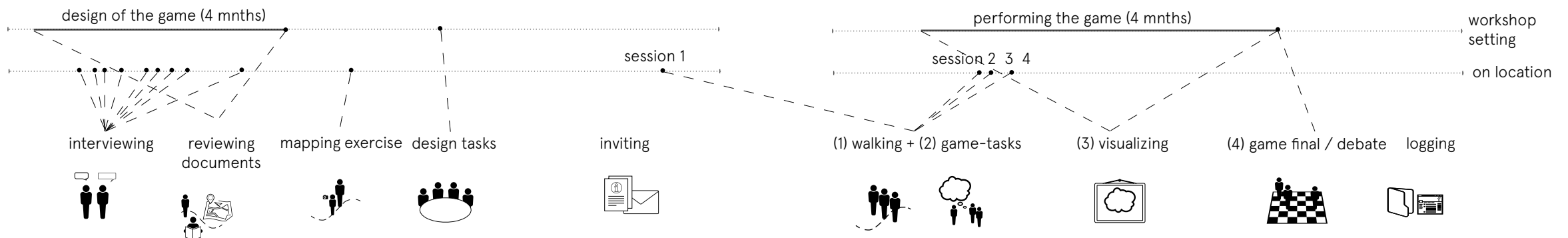
Hoepertingen is an average village with up to 2 000 inhabitants⁶. There is a local shop, a school a bank, etc. The past 10 to 20 years 3 bakeries closed, 2 local shops and the local football club moved outside the village. With a density of 249 inh/km² and 6 % of the village as built space, it can be called a rural village, with mainly pear and apple orchards and acres. Hoepertingen is no exceptional village, there is no big agenda for transformations, nor best-practice examples with bottom-up experiments of self-organization, nor innovative participatory policy initiatives. It is a village in transformation influenced by more general processes of change, as discussed in part I. The castle, the church and some farms form the historical start of the village. Like most villages in Haspengouw, Hoepertingen has no concentric spatial structure,

but these important buildings (church, castle and farms) did form a more enclosed core. This feeling of enclosure was enhanced by the way streets bended, or how a tree or house was positioned a bit closer to the street. Today, this enclosed character is disappearing, as most orchards are gone and many meadows are built over with generic houses, not taking in account the local building traditions. The walls, gates and hedges are removed and most new houses are built at a distance from the street. The old farms are no longer in use and in Hoepertingen only two of them are renovated for housing and an office, the rest is of this rural heritage is abandoned and fell into decay.

Figure 8 - These sketches, made by Tessa Daniels, are based on a reduction of cartographic maps from different time periods (1771-1777, Ferraris, 1847-1853, Vandermaelen, and topographic maps from 1934, 1960, 1976 and 2005); on what villagers told us in interviews and while walking; and based on planning documents and brochures of the local history club. The maps show how the village evolved, starting from a pile-village a church, the first version of the castle and some farms. Most roads that are used in the village today are already visible on the map of Ferraris. Different waves of densification were induced by the construction of larger infrastructures; a big road and a railway. The station opened in 1870 and the last train stopped in Hoepertingen already in 1957. At the end of the 19th century farmers started to cultivate fruit next to their acres for cereals. In 1930 first low trunk plantations arose, and in 1970 and '80 most of the high trunk orchards were felled, even subsidised by the government. The Looza factory opened in 1958 (Comté de Looz: enterprise of the County of Looen) and marked another wave of densification of the housing tissue, as it attracted workers to live in Hoepertingen. In 1980 a large part of the park of the castle was felled to make room for the first planned residential subdivision.



2. The set-up and actions



Team: fieldwork and facilitating the game in collaboration with Barbara Roosen, who is an architect and Phd student in our research group *Spatial Capacity Building*.

With 'the game' we searched for an approach to stage a debate in the village, to better understand the spatial transformations going, to collectively reflect different ideas and opinions and to discuss possible actions. In this way, the game - similar to the label - became a format to explore different actions and a visual language to support 'all people involved' to relate what is happening to a broader frame of reference; hence to support this action research set up. Unlike 'the label' where this learning was based on discussing and connecting different projects as 'things', in the game it were concrete sites and locations that took this role of 'things'; as a common ground. Taking the Latourian perspective, to go beyond ideas on representativeness, or correct and objective facts and data, in order to go from the idea that people *do not necessarily share the same opinion, but can be connected by their worries*, as they are concerned about the same things.

Different actions (like walking, envisioning, mapping, etc.) were clustered in a game that was based on an existing format, *'The Making of'* (Venhuizen, 2010). This game format resembles an often-used design method, 'scenario-thinking' (Van de Weijer and Devisch, 2013), where the first exploratory stage comes down to gathering insights, identifying ambitions and mapping present and future dynamics. In the second stage, this information is divided into 'certainties and uncertainties' and placed on two axes. Each quadrant leads to a specific future scenario. We set up our fieldwork in Hoepertingen over 8 months. After a preparatory stage of four months (explained in 2.1.), we played the game in different iterations in the next four months (explained in 2.2.).

2.1. Designing the game

In parallel to the scenario method, the game was designed in two steps, both set up in a participatory way. As a first step, information was gathered: I reviewed policy documents, interviewed different villagers and set up a mapping exercise with children (arte.2.1.), together with Barbara, I did general field observations, and Barbara reconstructed the historic evolution via cartography (vis.2.1.; 2.2.; 2.3.; and 2.4.). As a second step, we clustered this gathered information into two groups of statements: 'ambition-' and 'phenomena-statements'. The 'ambitions-statements' collected ideas or plans that can initiate future changes (e.g. the decision of the local authorities that housing expansion will take place in Hoepertingen). The 'phenomena-statements' do not initiate, but influence or color the changes, (e.g. a change of mentality, for instance, more attention to recycling). Based on a combination of an ambition and a phenomenon, a specific 'game-task' was formulated. We did not select and formulate these ambitions and phenomena ourselves, but engaged three organizations: *Kasteel Mariagaarde* (a local social cultural organization hosted in the castle) and *Stebo* (a regional organization of community-building focussing on dwelling, employment and energy) to collaboratively define the game-tasks (doc.2.1., and 2.2.). Additionally, we selected specific locations, this were all 'unbuilt' places, sometimes formally public, like a playground or the church square, but also a private park, orchards and more hidden 'leftover spaces'. In this way the village itself became a 'game-board' with game-tasks focussing on particular places (arte.2.2.). For instance, for an open inner area next to the cemetery, the ambition was formulated to think of an event that could be located on this site and to take in account an increasing attention for the impact on small ecosystems or the habitats of fauna and flora.

2.2. Performing the game

After designing the game, it was performed in four sessions that were spread over three months, each time with two different teams of 4 to 5 participants (thus 8 teams and 34 participants in total). In the first three sessions, these were teams with only villagers plus one researcher; in a fourth session, the team consisted of participants of regional organizations and urban administrators and again one researcher within each group. In each session we (1) walked a route between the selected locations, avoiding roads for motorised traffic as much as possible. On location we stopped for 20 minutes to work on the (2) game-tasks. In between each session we (researchers) (3) visualized the different scenarios in a collage (see figure 9, and arte.2.3.). These collages were shown to the next team in the next session. After the four sessions, all participants were invited to join in a ‘game final’: (4) a debate where all opinions, ideas and proposals were collected and further arguments were formulated and discussed (arte.2.4. and 2.5.). Only in this final step, the policymakers participated.

Participants did not always debate in a direct way. There were intense events but also longer pauses. The composition of participants changed; from a one-to-one interview in the preparatory phase to a diverse and large group of actors

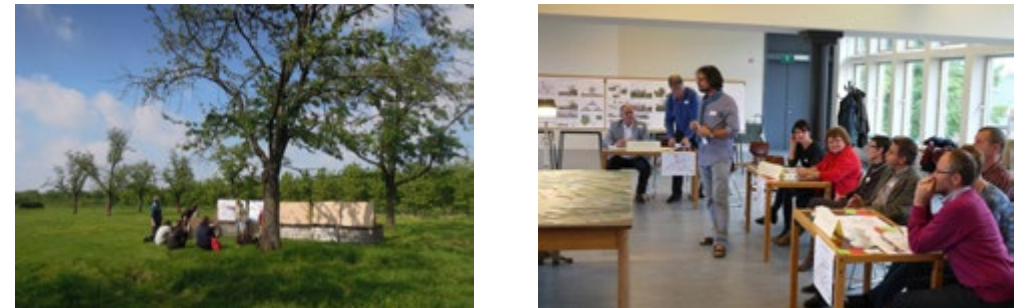


Figure 10 and 11 - pictures taken on a game location and during a final debate
(c) Barbara Roosen and Jente Luts

with policy makers and regional organizations in the final debate. We provided different access points for people to join in, as there were different moments in time, different ways of communication and debate. There were more organised as well as more informal ways in which we met villagers (e.g. walking between different locations some villagers joined who would not take part in a hearing or debate). We searched for diverse ways to reflect on the ideas or scenarios; by letting participants respond to collages (see fig. 9), pictures, and moreover to the space itself. As we chose real on-site game locations, participants had to find and walk their own route between different locations. By crossing these locations, they got appropriated for just a moment. In this way the location played along, as its actual presence was part of the game. Assumptions on what is public, what is accessible, what is underused, are not readable on a map, but become explicit on site, as you can see the hedges, gates, or garden waste, but also children skating on a private parking lot, for instance. We triggered participants to think of how they would act differently, what they would do to change a situation, going from their own habits and environment (e.g. changing daily routines or routes).

Participants were not selected according to specific criteria. In table 2 (on page 126 and 127) we indicate how many villagers, professionals and administrators (mainly in defining the game-tasks and in the fourth game session), policymakers (only in the game final), and researchers (for reviewing policy documents, map making, facilitating and visualizing) took part. We invited villagers to take part via leaflets and a facebookpage, this page was furthermore used to document and inform participants on the progress. (e-comm.2.1.)



Figure 9 - A collage visualizing a proposed scenario, made by Jente Luts

3. Findings

The next paragraphs describe findings on how villagers use and perceive their daily living environment, how they deal with spatial changes and what their visions are for the near future. The game *'The making of Hoepertingen'* triggered a reflection on how particular spaces are used and perceived today. These reflections were sometimes in conflict with future ideas as well as with different perceptions of different villagers.

A first cluster of findings are discussed (in 3.1.) as **different visions for public places**. These visions are a combination of an observation and 'understanding' of what is - how this place is used and perceived today - with new ideas on what might become - how could this place work in the future, referring to the future forming orientation of action research (see, Part II, discussing Gergen, 2015). Hence, these visions include the transformative orientation of action research from an 'understanding' towards 'making'. These findings are based on interviews, walks, observations and maps we made in the preparatory stage, as well as on what participants said in course of the game and on data coming from the documentation of this fieldwork (i.e. field notes, meeting reports, pictures, the scenarios, the collages that envisioned the outcome and the discussions of the final game).

A second cluster of findings are discussed (in 3.2) as **different groups of villagers** based on their **villageview**. These findings are only based on the villagers I met (in both stages, designing as well as performing the game) and on what they told me. Defining these groups and making these views helped me to better understand how different villagers use and perceive the village differently. The groups we defined are no homogenous groups; or in other words, individual villagers can have characteristics of different groups. Next to the data mentioned above, I also worked with a typology of houses and neighbourhoods that Barbara Roosen made (see page 266 and 267), based on how the house is related to the street, the neighbours and bits of open space (e.g., fields, plantations, park, a former railway track, a public playground). Using these data, the groups were defined afterwards (and thus not discussed with villagers), to make sense of what I did and to reflect on the openness of the game as a debate. I am no sociologist nor antropologist, making these groups and defining these villageviews supported my understanding of 'social aspects' (i.e. relations, activities) in a spatial way.

3.1. Different visions for public places

From places for staying to places for connecting

According to the villagers of Hoepertingen, traditional public spaces (e.g. the square in front of the church) are losing their role as common meeting places; and at the same time, these places are used for new types of collective activities (the Sikh community, for example, uses the church square for their parade). More ephemeral places, such as the small roads in the fields, the graveyard, and the park of the castle, are put forward as interesting places to meet. Places that function as points for connection in the villages are precisely the places that villagers came up with, when asked to reflect on the social structure of the village and to think of places to meet. The proposals they made can be understood as ideas to 'thicken' existing routes and crossing points (e.g. to add a bench or natural playing infrastructure). These places for connection were also seen as a starting point or opportunity to make different combinations of use (e.g. a community orchard with a playing



Figure 12 and 13 - Pictures of former railway track where villagers made proposals to 'thicken' crossing points to make these places more valuable as places to meet (c) Barbara Roosen

area). In the proposals they made, villagers furthermore expressed their concern for control. They want the daily living environment to remain a safe environment, with familiar social contacts and room for meetings without many obligations (as characterising for ‘third spaces’). Also described by Lofland (1985) as ‘trusted strangers’: faces we know or people who feel familiar but we don’t actually know. One roughly know who lives where, or who to cross at what time on the street. For Reijndorp (2010) it is more a matter of trust and routines than a matter of knowing each other through social activities and neighbourhood barbeques. It is a matter of knowing how one’s village ‘works’ and feeling comfortable about it. By means of rules, as well as physical infrastructure (e.g. choice for materials) the villagers want to control how these places are used (e.g. in their proposal for the park of the castle they made a connection with the neighbourhood but at the same time thought on how to avoid bikes and strangers).



Figure 15 - Picture of a public playground (c) Iwert Bernakiewicz

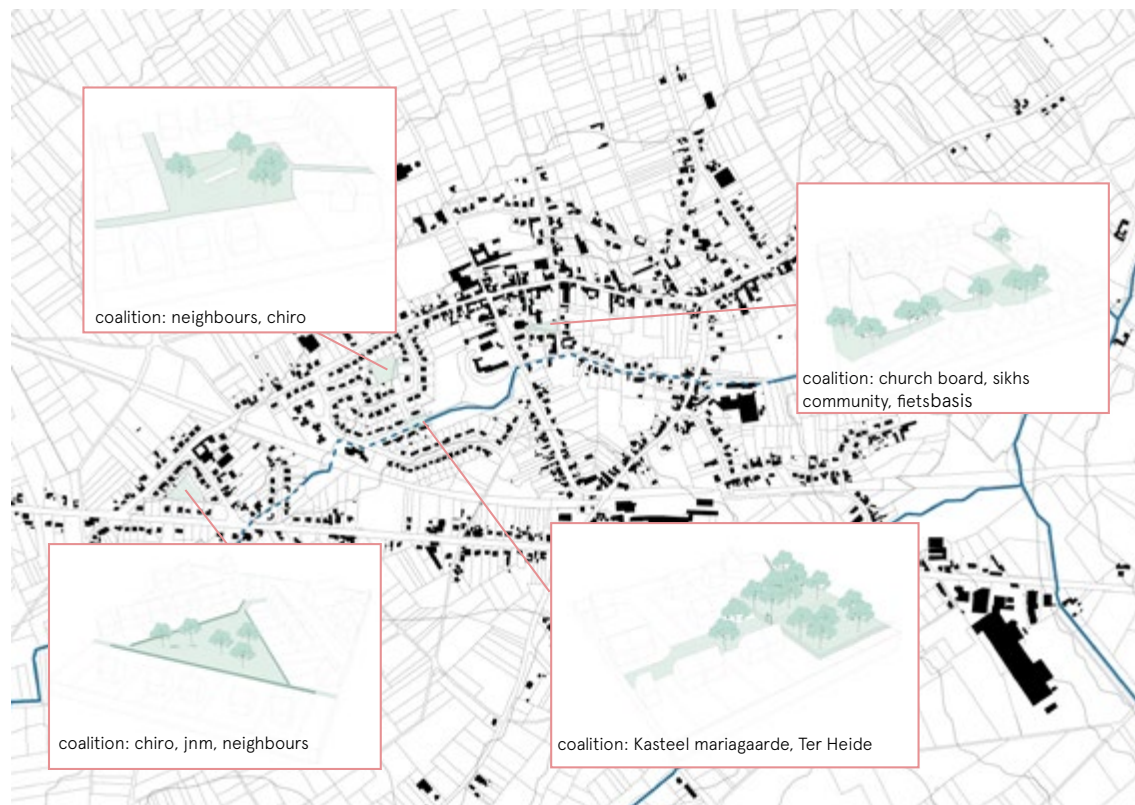


Figure 14 - Different proposals for coalitions for use and management of sites.

From property-rights to management

Public places like the church square, a public park or playground, are places where property as well as management are controlled by the local authority. Although these places are well maintained, villagers of Hoepertingen consider them as underused. In discussing how a public playground could regain a social meaning, villagers reflect on forms of private management. They suggest the community should be involved in maintaining the public space by offering them the opportunity to use it for private purposes (e.g. using shared facilities for parties). Villagers came up with scenarios for use and maintenance, starting from the abilities and needs of the immediate neighbours. They proposed coalitions between these neighbours and other local actors (e.g. with different roles for the youth movement, a local nature organisation, a centre for care), rather than pronouncing design ideas. The proposals were open and flexible, reflecting the different coalitions of actors, and often privileged certain groups or favoured certain activities, pragmatically going from those who have interest and are willing to engage in using and taking care of a place. Their reflections were not oriented towards how to facilitate the use of these places for ‘everybody’, but chose to start from those who have a sense of ownership for the place.

From consuming open space to connecting fragments of open space

Villagers started reflecting on the size and shape of the village when we asked them where new housing should be located. The image of ‘the rural village completely surrounded by open landscape’ appeared to be a strong image. They wanted new houses to be built within the borders of the village. This image was strengthened by an expectation of a compact village with services and meaningful public spaces in the centre. Villagers realized that this has the unavoidable consequence that new houses should be built in the remaining open areas (the former meadows or orchards). When we asked them to rethink these open inner areas, villagers expressed how they value these open spaces because of their characteristic views and their sense of topography, and this therefore came in conflict with the aforementioned image of ‘compact village’. It made villagers propose more dense and compact typologies of housing. In order to maintain a bit of open space, they suggested to minimize private outdoor space and to make gardens collective. Furthermore, they proposed to make it possible to cross these inner areas. This would increase the permeability of the village and also regain the importance of views and typical elements (e.g. the topography, some older fruit trees) to characterize the village.



Figure 16 - Map showing different bits of (mostly private) open space, villagers made proposals to connect fragments of open space, map made by Frank Vanden Ecker

While walking, participants observed and started to value a network of different, often small pieces of remaining open spaces, and made proposals to connect them with small paths and views.

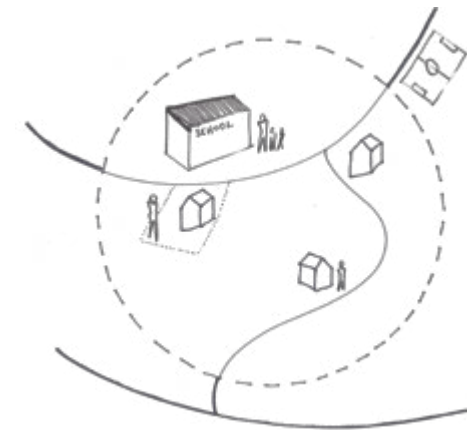
A final interesting point of discussion that came to the fore in almost each game session is where children can or are allowed to play. The possibility to play in the fields, orchards, in open space is considered as an advantage of living in a village. However, villagers assert that this rarely happens today. The current agricultural landscape, with its low trunk plantations that are focused on high production, closes the landscape visually but also makes it less accessible. One group made a proposal for an open high trunk ‘village orchard’ immediately outside the village, inviting youth movement, local school and ‘just children’. Also remarkable is that in this proposal, in contrast to the expectations towards a compact centre with the meaningful public places and services we saw before, villagers showed an interest to meet, play and recreate ‘outside’ the village (or the built borders). It shows how these open spaces are considered as meaningful public space where a diversity of users can cross (along with strangers, walkers-by and cycle tourists). In the ‘game final’ this was the ‘winning’ proposal.

3.2. Different groups of villagers based on their villageview

Hoepertingen is hosting different newcomers, having their own reasons and motivations to come and live in Hoepertingen. The different groups of villagers in the next paragraphs illustrate a diversity in perception, expectation or use of spaces. As mentioned, the groups are defined in retrospect, as a way to make sense of who was involved in the game. Defining these groups was furthermore a way to understand what to consider as an action. Talking on the pavement, for instance, made me meet new villagers not ‘taking part’ in the game. Defining these groups supported me to include their perceptions and ideas as findings. The sketches are based on both social and spatial aspects, and illustrate the strength of relations within and outside the village. Making these groups can furthermore be considered as a sensitising action, referring to the *sensitising concepts* defined by Blumer (1954). Sensitising concepts lack specification but give a general sense of guidance, they suggest where to look instead of provide prescription of what to see.

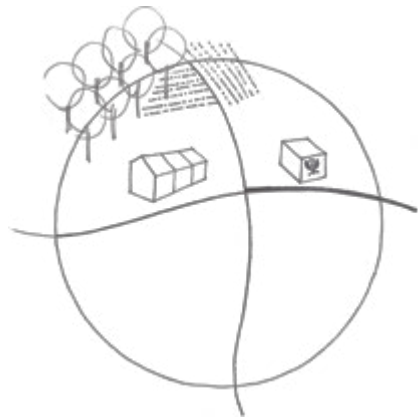
The natives

These villagers are often born and bred in Hoepertingen and have a strong connection with the village, and a 'productive' relation with the surrounding open landscape. Many of the current agriculturists can be considered as natives. Often, the older and retired villagers still maintain a small orchard or a vegetable garden. *"Hoepertingen used to be a village of entrepreneurs, of hard workers; everybody was a farmer or maintained an orchard, either full-time or they had two jobs."* (quote from interview). This productive relationship with the landscape is no longer evident. In every interview, the natives refer to the transforming landscape: where this used to be diverse, with different acres and crops, today it is dominated by low trunk plantations. Surprisingly they rarely mention the new houses as a change. Instead, they mostly refer to the arrival of new inhabitants, and that they don't know everybody anymore. They still consider the pavement and the street as important place for interactions but miss the moments where one would put a chair in front of the house to chat, or on a palox in the field at summer evenings, like they used to do. Next to small roads, they also refer to the cemetery as place for light encounters. Just like many other villagers, they also have a social network outside the village and are oriented towards the wider region for shopping.



The natives 2.0. (next generation)

The children of the natives are also born in Hoepertingen but have a different relationship with the village. They often have built their own detached houses with a garden in newly developed meadows or on buildable land of their parents. They rarely buy the older terraced houses in the village centre, where their parents live, or used to live. These houses are now often bought by the Sikhs, (cf. infra). The natives 2.0 work outside the village and for shopping, sports and cultural activities they are focused on a wider region, just like the newcomers. Hence, most of them refer to a wider social network outside the village. The village is the place where they grew up, and they still have a social connection with it. Unlike their parents, they don't maintain an orchard, nor a vegetable garden. The changes they refer to are the new houses that have been built and the transformations in public space; for instance, playgrounds that are underused or streets that became more anonymous and dominated by cars. The house and plot of the people I interviewed seems more 'enclosed'. The garden is often completely surrounded by hedges or fences, where children can play in their own private playground. Although the backside of their garden often faces orchards and fields, they only sometimes make a physical connection to this landscape. The transition from their private plot to the public street is not diffuse either, but often abruptly; designed for entering by car and minimizing interactions with passers-by.

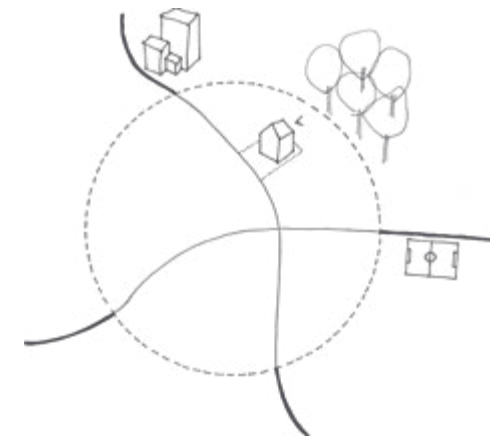


The foreign workers: the Sikhs community

Due to general processes in agricultural systems, fruit companies enlarged, and attracted an increasing number of Polish and Sikh⁷ immigrants who work as fruit pickers. The Polish migrants are seasonal workers and go back to their families regularly. I don't know much about them as I have not spoken to them, and villagers rarely referred to their presence. The Sikh community also did not take part in any of our activities but were often referred to. In all interviews and conversations, villagers expressed their respect for the Sikh-community, although they rarely interact with them. When local associations (e.g. youth movement, the fanfare, school or sports club) organize activities, they rarely participate. The Sikhs community has its own temple and children join the local school. Once a week, the church square and streets around the temple are occupied by cars from Sikhs visiting the temple, coming from all over the region. Once a year they make use of the streets as a stage for a parade. They bought the older terraced houses in the village centre and live there. They use the houses in a different way than the natives do. For instance, in contrast to many of the natives, they do not reserve the 'front room' for special occasions, but use it every day. The natives don't know what to think of this different 'culture of dwelling'. It might be a small difference in use (for instance, the Sikhs often don't use curtains) but from the perspective of the natives, they change the image or façade of the village. What they do share with the natives is their relation to the open space; as for both Sikhs as well as the natives it is mainly a space of (fruit) production.

The newcomers

Newcomers have been attracted by the green and rurally environment of Hoepertingen. They have no family bounds in the village but some of the participants joining in the game have a social network within the village via their children. Many of them build a new detached house with a garden and a direct view on the open landscape. However, just like the natives 2.0, their detached houses often paradoxically block this view by hedges and fences. Like the natives 2.0 they rarely contribute to the maintenance of the landscape, nor have a 'productive' relation with the landscape. They do like to go walking and running in the fields, and 'consume' the landscape in a recreational way together with tourists and visitors. As they only came to live in the village more recently they do not refer so much to transformations. They expect the more formal public places, like the church square to be attractive for people to meet, with activities like a café or small shop. On the other hand they do not use the street or the space in front of their house as a place for interaction, like some of the natives do.



The super-locals

Within each group of villagers, there are super-locals. I met villagers of this group while walking or performing on location, or during preparatory observations. It are older villagers or people with sometimes a very small social network, who often rely on others to take part in any activity outside the village. Also children can be considered to be part of this group. They did not agree nor volunteered to participate in the game, as they doubted their ability to contribute. On site, they sometimes spontaneously started talking on their needs and dreams for the village. Their expectations for public space is closely connected to the need for a place where you can (informally) meet people without needing an alibi, agenda or membership to be there. They long for a place where you can watch people, listen, and maybe start a little conversation, like a walking route, a bench with a view. Where the high trunk orchards were a favourite place to play in their memory, today the low trunk plantations not only visually but often literally close the landscape. The surrounding landscape became a forbidden zone to play for many children and older villagers told me that the increase of cycle tourists in blossom season makes them uncertain to cycle themselves.



The strong local actors

Finally, there is a group of 'villagers' that do not always live in the village, they sometimes only work in Hoepertingen. But they share a strong sense of initiative, professionally or personally. Responding on the game these actors acted concretely, for instance the local construction company started to allow people to pass and use a green zone of their private terrain. Or the local centre for care invited children to use their open garden to play. Both are no residents but strong actors working in local organisations. As there are super-locals in each group, I also met residents in each group taking different roles. One example are two newcomers who actively participated in the game. In their professional role they were both working for a nature organisation. They only recently moved to the village but were very motivated to work further with scenario's made in the game for an overgrown and former railway track. A second example is a villager born in the village (like his parents) who was working for a youth organisation. In response to scenario's made in the game, in his professional role he made new connections between regional and local initiatives in the village and translated ideas in project proposals. A final example is a professional that joined in the last session of the game. In his professional role he was working for the municipality of Borgloon. In his role as a villager, he translated ideas of the game to his own village.



(c) Barbara Roosen

Conclusions Case TWO

As a temporary experiment, the game made it possible to engage a diversity of actors in the local context of a village, exploring different actions to stage a debate. The game facilitated villagers to better understand what is changing in their village, to reflect on different ideas and agendas for change and to collectively define a future image. Concrete, physical sites were the common ground, the starting point for discussion and reflection. Being on site and exploring a visual language supported an approach of action research by making present another frame of reference to understand the changes, ideas and visions discussed, making it possible for 'all involved' to relate to what is happening.

Findings show how villagers perceive an increasing privatisation of space, as well as how more hybrid constellations of private and public property can function and be collectively used and managed. Places in transition to the surrounding landscape as well as a connecting network of small roads came to the fore as interesting public spaces. The game improved my understanding of the context of changing villages, as well as lead to a reflection on 'who' this villager is we wanted to and were able to engage.

INTERMEZZO - THE CHRONOLOGY AND RELATIONS BETWEEN THE 6 CASES

All 6 cases are related to each other in a practical way. We will now briefly situate these relations, explaining how one case sometimes induced another. Case 2 '*The Making of Hoepertingen*' became a main case as it has a link to all other cases. Case 1 is a regional, longer term case, case 2 and 3 are cases in the same village (together they form a local, longer term case). Case 4, 5 and 6 are cases we will discuss more briefly in this intermezzo. These cases gave us the opportunity to 'multiply' lessons learnt by repeating different actions in other villages.

Case 2 as part of case 1

The first case *The most beautiful villages of Haspengouw* (case 1) was the occasion for this Phd to start, funded by the LEADER program. As explained *The making of Hoepertingen* (case 2) was also part of this LEADER program, but we consider it as a case in itself.

Case 1 + 2 lead to Case 4

Closing the LEADER project with the project fair (case 1), we decided to repeat the game (case 2) in an adapted and 'light' version in Guigoven, as '*What is happening under the church tower?*' (case 4)

Case 2 lead to case 5 with inspiration from case 4, The Future is Today

In Hoepertingen one of the local administrators that took part in the game approached us as a resident of another village: Godsheide. He asked us to like-wise stage a debate on the recent spatial developments in his village.

Case 2 was translated to an abstract setting in Case 6, The Neighbourhood, Our Garden

The game was also translated in an interactive installation for an exhibition Conflict & Design⁸. This time we aimed to stage a debate without being present as a facilitator.

How case 4, 5 and 6 influenced case 3. The sequel of case 2 (discussed in Chapter 4)

These three cases (the light version of the game in *What is happening under the church tower*, the fictional newspaper made in *The Future is Today* in Godsheide, and the translation of the game in the installation *The Neighbourhood, Our Garden*) all had their impact and initiated experiments with new actions that also were used in the final case described in chapter 4. Throughout these cases we built confidence taking the debate literally to outdoor space and visualising through enactment.

Case 4: What is happening under the church tower?

Team: actions in Guigoven were set up in collaboration with Roel De Ridder and Karen Lens, both involved in the village going from their own research interests.

In Guigoven there were several occasions and initiatives: (1) the municipality was working on a vision for its churches and initiated a study involving local residents; (2) in cooperation with Stebo, there was a studio exercise with students designing scenarios for three underused heritage sites in the region (including the church of Guigoven); (3) a project was funded engaging children to map their movements in Guigoven. This initiative was taken because of new housing development on the grasslands next to the church, currently the favourite spot to play for most children.

We designed a new game board, ambitions and phenomena were formulated in collaboration with the two researchers with input on the running initiatives. We selected locations and invited villagers to walk a route, stopping on the game-locations to reflect on the game-tasks. This time walked the route only once, and we did not visualise the proposals in a collage, but we invited villagers to enact their future proposals. We skipped the final debate, and invited villagers to play the future they envisioned for one afternoon. One of the residents chose to mow a path through the forest at the edge of the village. As a pre-enactment of how his future image would look like. He invited us and other villagers to walk this path while discussing the future of the little forest and how it could be used and managed. There were members of the local youth movement and a local administrator who agreed to submit a proposal to have the forest designated as an area for playing. The action of the mowing triggered another action on a longer term, the path itself was soon overgrown again. It was a valuable first experiment with a new form of interaction, that like walking involves the space as a 'non-human actor' in the game.



Figure 17 and 18 -

Pictures made when villagers 'envisioned' or 'enacted' their ideas for a future village for one afternoon.

Case 5: The Future is Today

Team: the workshop was set up in collaboration with FoAM framed in an exhibition of Z33 'Future Fictions', the newspaper was made and edited in collaboration with Liesbeth Huybrechts.

Residents of Godsheide got lost in the chaos of plans that were made for their village by the local as well as regional government in different departments, and they got disappointed by the confusing communication. Again we used an adapted version of the 'scenario-thinking' method, although the 'certainties and uncertainties' were not defined based on a review of policy documents but based on a workshop discussion with residents facilitated by FoAM. The scenarios were this time not related to specific tasks and locations but used to imagine (1) an ordinary day in 2024 and (2) an event that could take place in 2024 and that would be reported on in the newspaper. In different groups (and with support of master students of architecture) we visualized moodboards for newsarticles. The next day we set up a small redaction team in the local bar to make a newspaper called *The future is today* written and edited from the perspective of the same day, ten years later. To illustrate the newspaper, participants chose specific locations in the village to take a newspaper picture. These pictures were framed as a 'tableau vivant'. Where a 'tableau vivant' usually re-enacts historical facts, this time we pre-enacted future ideas. For instance for the newspaper picture in the article of figure 19, participants used a beam of a gate nearby and visualised a cycle track with two white lines. The participant standing on the bank of the canal, pre-enacted coming across the canal with his bike. We rewrote the original articles, based on the additional experience coming from making the pictures. The newspaper was presented on an event to policy makers and other interested parties and picked up by local residents and displayed as a poster in front windows.



Figure 19 and 20 - One page of the fictional newspaper and a picture taken on the 'apero' event presenting the newspaper (c) Rasa Alksnyte

Case 6 The Neighbourhood, Our Garden

Team: the installation was designed and made by and in collaboration with Barbara Roosen

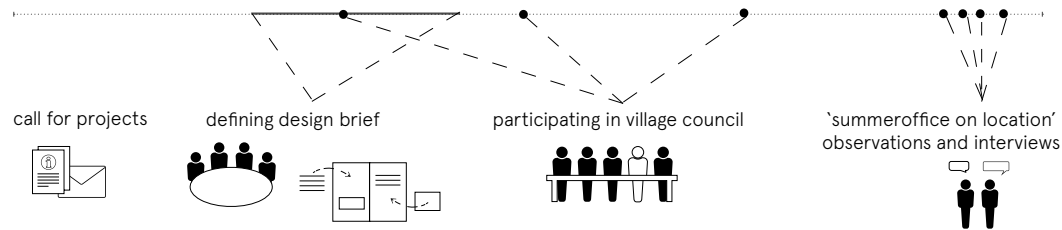
The installation *The Neighbourhood, Our Garden* questioned societal and ecological challenges of the detached single-family house in green surroundings, i.e. the most common and desired type of living in peri-urban Flanders. We articulated five specific themes and challenges from literature, policy and other documents (e.g. newspaper articles, a neighbourhood pamphlet), interviews and a workshop (similar to the way we defined certainties and uncertainties in designing the game). Each theme was placed in relation to one specific urban typology (cf. specific game locations) and a concrete challenge (cf. the game tasks). For example, 'dwelling' was linked to an upper class residential subdivision built in the 70s and questions on how to densify this neighbourhood. We chose for recognisable neighbourhoods to engage visitors in the debate and we made a model to make it more tangible, as there was this time no real context to serve as a gameboard. The model was built out of simple materials like clay, sand, fine gravel, moss and weeds, aligning a random sample of Flanders of 2 by 2 kms (cf. the walking distance between the different game locations). Next to the model there was a table with a sketchbook introducing the five themes more in-depth (adding pictures and narrative descriptions of existing situations) and encouraging visitors to add their own ideas, to take part in the debate. Every two weeks the visitors' responses and ideas were translated in a simple drawing and footnote, similar to how we visualized proposals in the game. These responses were displayed on a screen.

The installation was set-up as an experiment to sound a diversity of opinions, ideas, and resistance. Just like the other cases, the installation had no intention to round off with clear results that can be translated to recommendations for urban practice and policy. With the experiment we wanted to further explore how to stage a debate and to make things public.



Figure 21 and 22 - Picture of the model and set-up in the exhibit, and sketchbook (c) Barbara Roosen

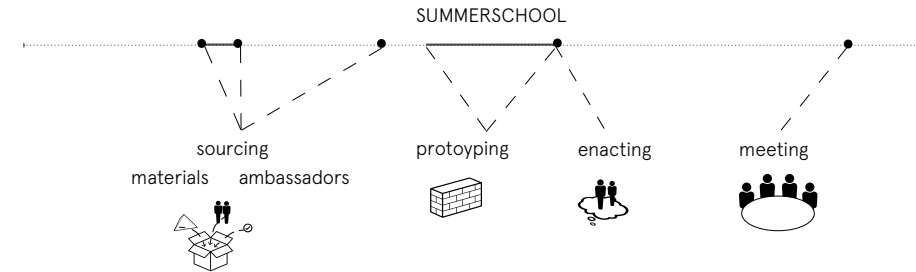
1. The Set-Up and Actions



Team: summerschool in collaboration with Liesbeth Huybrechts (overall coordination), Peter Princen and Frank Vanden Ecker (both are architects and tutor in design studio, they also took the role of design tutor in the summerschool).

The context of this case study is already introduced in chapter 9 (the local context of the village Hoepertingen, as well as how different cases are related). After experimenting with a label, a game, a newspaper and an exhibition; and after a pause of 14 months we went back to Hoepertingen to set up a live project. A live project is a teaching program that takes master students of architecture out of the studio into the 'real world'.

We distributed a 'call for projects' (doc.3.1.) in the region to search for local actors who want to mentor and host a live project. Next to other responses to this call coming from neighbouring villages (e.g. a primary school or the local red cross doc.3.2.) two organisations of Hoepertingen (*Kasteel Mariagaarde* and *Ter Heide*) combined their agenda's and made a proposal for a green route throughout the village connecting people and places. In collaboration we defined a design brief (doc.3.4.) to make this route visible and to design and construct two meeting places. These meeting places were located on a former railway track. This track got designated as a 'zone for nature' in regional zoning plans, but the past 30 years there were no management measures and it got overgrown by trees. Bits and pieces were sold to private owners, but a large part of this track was and still is public property. It was treated and considered as a leftover space, leading to messy back sides, but this also made it into an interesting for children to play. Parts of the track are informally appropriated for own use, e.g. as an extension of the garden, or as a private parking lot for a truck for instance. This privatisation by



neighbouring residents made it hard to discuss the possibilities of this zone. After co-designing the design brief we assembled material as well as social resources. We participated in a design contest⁹ for building materials (cobble stones, bricks and heavy granite cover stones). By competing in this contest, external expertise was brought in with lectures of the producers and the design firm *Rotor*¹⁰ who invited us to reflect on material flows. Secondly, we used informal networks (via neighbours) to collect tools and spread a 'call for ambassadors' to engage villagers wanting to be a contact person for the students. I stayed in a 'summeroffice' in the village preparing the live project and to familiarize again with the context, walking around and having informal conversations and interviews with key-actors.



Figure 23 and 24 - Picture of the Rotor materials and a camp made by children on the fruit track.

Students prototyped constructions in an intensive summer school of two weeks. The more permanent characteristics of the building materials (literally heavy stones) did not allow the constructions to be fast and temporary. A first construction was a viewing platform that ‘reconnected’ (although only visually) a missing link between a nature reserve and an orchard. A second construction was built on and next to the cemetery. On a crossing point with a local footpath used by many different groups, a ‘roof’ was built that invited passers-by and visitors of the cemetery to pause. The natural and overgrown site became a green shelter for a bench that the students made together with one of the neighbours.

Students were performing physically on site; where they were building and interacting with local villagers. Thus there were many informal, not planned or organised interactions, like ‘talking’ (with passers-by) or ‘walking’ (between the different locations). There were also more formal or organised iterations where we invited villagers to discuss with students the design of the constructions and the green route. On the final day, villagers, local actors, and policymakers were brought together as a hand-over of the live project, and we all walked this route (with donkeys). This was an important moment for coalitions to be made in support of follow-up actions after the live project. The route can be considered as another meeting place in itself. Only after the final event we set formal arrangements (on management of the constructions for instance) in meetings with local policy makers, villagers and the local actors. A local non-profit association made a plan to store the materials that were not used, and to make a bank of recuperated materials for the village. The progress of the project was documented in a semi-fictional newspaper *‘t Hoepert(h)ingske* (arte.3.2.)

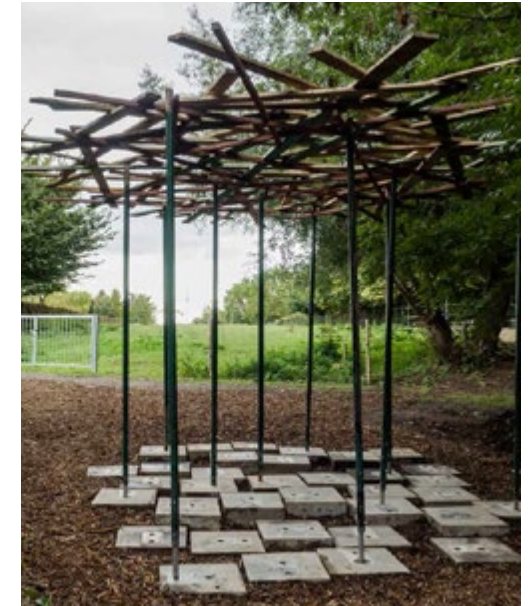


Figure 25, 26 and 27 - Materials of the local construction company and students working on site (location 2) (c) Frank Vanden Ecker - Aerial picture showing site 1 and 2.





Figure 28 - 33 - Pictures showing working on site, the constructions, and walking the route with donkeys (c) Frank Vanden Ecker, Liesbeth Driessen and Iwert Bernakiewicz



2. FINDINGS

In chapter 9, describing case 2 *The Making of Hoepertingen* we clustered results of the game as different visions for public places and as different groups of villagers based on different villageviews, - as an understanding of how villagers use and perceive their daily environment, how they deal with (spatial) changes and what their ideas are for a near future. In this chapter we will add aspects that thicken or question these findings.

2.1. Different visions for public places – and making them real

From places for staying to places for connecting

In chapter 9 we described how villagers perceive traditional public places that are designed as places to stay and to meet other people, as underused. Proposals were made to ‘thicken’ existing routes and crossing points, in order to allow these points to function as places to meet. The brief for the live project, formulated in collaboration with *Kasteel Mariagaarde* and *Ter Heide*, focused on designing and visualizing a route throughout the village and to prototype two meeting places. Most of the villagers responded very positive on these *Hoepert(h)ings*, inviting passers-by to pause. The constructions showed possibilities of these locations that were previously hidden or unnoticed; e.g. the visual connections of the nature area was revealed when building the platform, and sitting under the preliminary roof that was built (on what was considered as a leftover space) gave an insight in the frequency and diversity of passers-by on the small road next to the cemetery.

By working on site and talking with villagers about their favourite places to informally and randomly meet other people, we tested the ‘public quality’ of these locations; and involved a new group of villagers (who did not participate in the game). On site we discussed the constructions as meeting places, as well as the possible routes that the constructions connect. Villagers started to make new proposals for different routes, going from daily routines as well as new possibilities they discovered or other valuable places they wanted to connect. A group of residents sat together and made a map themselves, outlining a route, partly on the former railway track, but also on historic trails that are no longer accessible today. Walking this route with donkeys on the final day (of the two week - live project) did not only bring different stakeholders together but also made them perform as a group in space and time, enacting a possible future. We learned how not only Ter Heide and Kasteel Mariagaarde showed an interest in a route as a way

to connect places and people, but also the local youth movement and individual villagers were interested in routes for running, or just as an occasion to go outside. Hence, in addition to a shift of focus on ‘designed places to stay and meet’ to ‘places for connecting’ we observed in the game and discussed in chapter 9, in the live-project we also observed an interest for the outline or design of routes to walk, run, play and meet.



Figure 34 - On the final day of the summerschool we walked a route with donkeys (c) Liesbeth Driessen

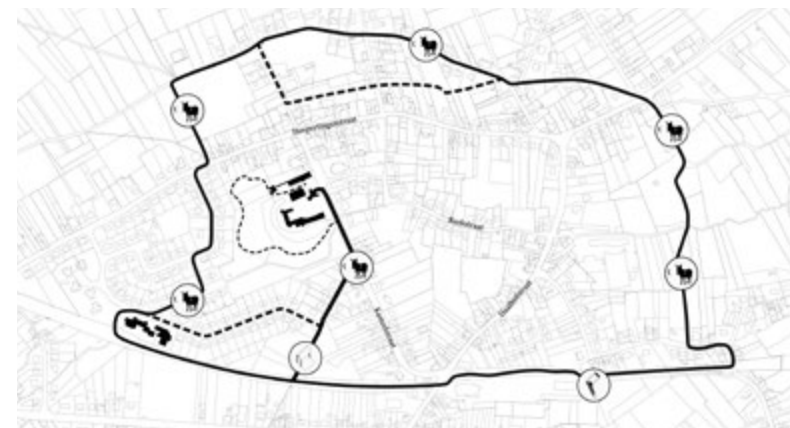


Figure 35 - Map with a route made by villagers, drawn by Frank Vanden Ecker

From property-rights to management

Discussing findings of the game in chapter 9, we secondly addressed how participants were more concerned about how places would be managed, then how to design for a specific use. Proposals they made in the game, privileged certain groups or favoured certain activities, pragmatically going from those who have interest to use and take care of a place. They searched for hybrid and flexible constellations with both private and public actors.

In the live project villagers were hard to engage in discussions with students concerning the design of the constructions. Although we created the opportunity by inviting villagers in evening design-sessions or with a coffee in the morning, they did not interfere in the how or what of the design of the constructions itself. But they did reflect on maintenance and on agreements and searched how to connect or embed these interventions into other funding or more regional projects. These discussions already took place during the live project and especially on the event on the final day when we invited also actors from other organisations. For instance: after the live project, an orchard -that was planted on the former railway track next to the construction company where students built the platform- was restored within a rural development project by the organisation *Regionaal Landschap*. This initiative was supported by two villagers and the local construction company. In this way they wanted to re-value this zone as a semi-public orchard. As a next step different actors, villagers, the construction company, *Regionaal Landschap* and the municipality, made agreements to formally designate a part of the route on the former railway track (which was private property of the construction company) as a public footpath.

Thus, in addition to a shift from property-rights to management that we observed in the game and discussed in chapter 9, we observed how in response to our actions in the live project, local actors took a leading role working towards agreements to make collaborations more concrete.

From consuming open space to connecting fragments of open space

Thirdly, we observed in the game how residents made connections between fragments of open space. As remaining open meadows are slowly built over, and for instance, the possibility for children to play in an open 'shared space' was repeatedly discussed. In the live project we connected different pieces of open space. To start, both *Ter Heide* and *Kasteel Mariagaarde* considered their private green space as an asset to engage villagers in their organisation. This is something that became clear when discussing the design brief for the live project. Secondly, both 'Hoepert(h)ings', that we asked students to design, were located next to the railway track. Although the track itself was considered as a left-over space, the whole zone was contested and hard to discuss, as bits and pieces were privatised and used by neighbours. The track was furthermore mentioned as a favourite place to play and we found traces of treehouses and camps. In different conversations we had with villagers on site, - discussing the constructions as meeting places -, a specific zone of the track did come into the picture. We discussed the potentials of this zone as a long and small valuable green area, that will probably remain open and green; despite spatial policy to densify the housing tissue.

After the live project the director of *Ter Heide* and I organised a meeting with direct neighbours, and two other villagers that were also working for *Regionaal Landschap* and the *Flemish Agency for Nature and Forests*, and the alderman for spatial policy. They agreed to organise a clean-up campaign with support of the 'park-rangers' (i.e. a team of *Regionaal Landschap*), I was not further involved in this action. After this action there were no follow-up initiatives, and the clean-up itself remained contested, many neighbours remained worried about privacy and a lot of the waste that was cleaned, was garden waste; illustrative for how the track was privatised as an extension of gardens.

Thus, the importance to connect and value remaining bits of open space was further discussed in the live project, starting from the potentials of the former railway track as an open and green corridor that will remain open and green. However, it remained difficult to discuss the shared or common value of this corridor, as neighbours privatise bits and pieces and resist to initiatives of maintenance.

2.2. Different groups of villagers, with different villageviews and taking different roles

In retrospect to the game, I defined different groups of villagers based on different villageviews to make sense of who was involved. We already addressed these groups are not homogeneous, in a sense that individual villagers can belong to different groups. In the live project we more clearly learned how some villagers also took different or more roles, or sometimes switched position. For instance villagers that are professionally engaged in a nature organisation or working for the municipality. Some villagers changed their position or attitude towards different actions and throughout the process (from cooperative to resistant). After a positive cooperation in the game (for instance as an interviewee or participant), some villagers did not consider it to be meaningful to further discuss and debate on these ideas. In a one-to-one conversation in preparation of the live project, a villager told me how he considered the collective reflections we did in the game, taking a perspective on a future village, as interesting, but also as unnecessary and intrusive. He considered it to be useful for newcomers to build an understanding of the village, but not for him. However, at the same time he and other villagers told me how they want to regain an understanding of what is happening, addressing



Figure 36 - Picture showing passers-by talking to students on site 2 of the Hoepert(h)ings. (c) Oswald Devisch

how in their perception the village became less comprehensible as a social place. Today there are more inhabitants coming from outside the village. In the village council (where I participated in the role of an observer) one also discussed how different villagers perceived the way the village changed differently.

In response to the game follow-up actions were taken by villagers and ‘strong local actors’. In response to the live project follow-up action were taken by the same as well as other villagers, continuing on the interventions students made. However, when I came back to the village in the summer before the live project (I invited people in a small summer office and walked around to talk to people) some villagers did respond more reluctant, perceiving our actions more as an interference coming from the outside. Two of these villagers agreed to become a contact person for the students. Hence, I observed how roles, attitudes (or sometimes doubts) shifted and changed throughout the fieldwork, but I did not discuss these changes with participants involved. As again, these observations became more clear for me in retrospect. The way villagers responded or took part, but also what they told us about changes in the village, was sometimes ambiguous to interpret, as illustrated by this quote, ‘*a lot has been changing, but everything stayed the same*’. Native villagers often referred to the changing agricultural use, where it used to be a mixture of acres with different crops and orchards, today there is a dominant use of low trunk plantations. While the newcomers and tourist on the other hand perceive this ‘fruit landscape’ as ‘typical’ or even ‘authentic’.

The different actions taken in preparation, during and after the live project changed perceptions and understanding of how the village ‘works’: not only by reflecting on what is changing but also by making proposals, as well as being physically in the village, working on site and walking between different locations. Not only my understanding of the village changed, but also that of villagers born in Hoepertingen. Furthermore, the *Hoepert(h)ings* triggered different groups of villagers cooperating (for instance to map a route merging different ideas and perceptions, learning from each other and changing ideas). The prototyping of the interventions also integrated different perspectives and motivated participants to be more concrete (what do you see exactly on location from different viewpoints, how are locations related, how can they be connected, literally by cutting a hedge for instance, or by emphasizing a sheltered feeling thinking how to position a bench exactly?) and invited new actors to join in the debate.



Figure 37 - Picture of the final event of the summerschool, we invited a diverse group of villagers, local organisations, administrators (c) Liesbeth Driessen

Conclusions Case THREE (and case TWO and ONE)

Constructing the Hoepert(h)ings, the ideas and visions that were formulated earlier (in response to the game) evolved, they became more concrete, complemented or further questioned. Returning to the village and physically working on site triggered resistance and doubt with some, but also engaged new and different actors. If we conclude on both cases together (the game and the live project), as two clusters of actions or interventions that were spread over a longer period of time, there simply were more opportunities to talk to villagers in different situations, to trust each other, or better understand how this understanding, perceptions and roles change.

Discussing and visualizing future expectations with different groups, or with individual actors separately, supported me to organise meetings with actors that did not meet before. More diverse settings made it possible for different 'coalitions' of actors to meet. In response to the live project, follow-up actions were taken because connections were also made with professionals from regional organizations that participated in designing the label (case 1, 'The most beautiful villages of Haspengouw') and that took part in the closing event of the live project. Hence, if we look at the three cases (the label, the game and the live project) it is a choreography of several settings and groups of actors over a longer period of time, building and distributing an understanding of both particular places, as the village and the region, and of different ideas, plans and imaginations.

We explored a more visual language to support a dialogue and a common understanding of 'all people involved'. Within the format of the 'label', 'game' and 'live project' we searched for opportunities, both on the regional as on the local scale, to debate on common or shared values. Existing practices, projects and concrete physical sites were the common ground, the starting point for discussion and reflection.

BORGLOON

“Overall schoppen gaan lenen”

Architectuurstudenten ontwerpen ontmoetingsplekken in Hoepertingen

“Het leeft echt bij de bewoners. Wel meer dan ik gedacht had. Elke dag komen er meer mensen een babbeltje slaan”, zeggen architectuurstudenten Judith Driessen (22) uit Dinik en Hasselt en Michiel Vanreppelen (21), die met 14 medestudenten van UHasselt ‘ontmoetingsplekken’ in Hoepertingen uit de grond gestampt hebben. De bedoeling: eens niet in een steriel klaslokaal ontwerpen, maar met echte stenen, op een echte plek, voor echte mensen.

Caroline VANDELREYDT

Architectuurstudenten Judith en Michiel bouwen een kappelletje als ontmoetingsplek in Hoepertingen. 10/10 2018

“Samenwerken met de bewoners. Dat was het opzet. Niet in de beschermde omgeving van de universiteit, maar ter plekke ontwerpen. Wat het uiteraard wel spannend maakte voor de studenten. Ze moesten ook leren communiceren met de buurt, de aanwoners, verenigingen die hun steentje willen bijdragen. Hun opdracht: creëer plekken waar mensen uit het dorp elkaar informeel, toevallig kunnen ontmoeten. Zonder dat ze bijvoorbeeld bij een voetbalclub of een vereniging zijn”, zegt UHasselt-ouderdocent Sarah Mariens. “De ontwerpen moesten bewoners uitnodigen, het moesten plaatsen zijn waar je rustig tijd kan en wil doorbrengen”, vindt doctor Liesbeth Heybrechts aan.

Landen
Maar ze wilden niet zomaar als onaf ‘landen’ in een dorp. “Daarom hebben we in heel Haspengouw een opspieg gedaan, voor lokale trekkers. En die hebben we gewonnen hadden in een architectuurwedstrijd. “Zoals het Zwolse graniet van een afgebroken fietsbrug. Alleen maar materiaal uit de buurt. Wie voor het project betaald? Niemand. De studenten moesten heel inventief zijn. Schoppen en kranswagens zijn ze bijvoorbeeld bij de bewoners gaan lenen, die plaatselijke samsamer heeft ook gel geholpen.”

Bezinningsruimte
“We hadden nochtans nog nooit

We hadden nog nooit gemerkt, maar dit gaan we zeker eens aan familie tonen
Judith Driessen
Michiel Vanreppelen

Het is een fijn idee dat iets van jou

BORGLOON

Verdachte figuur blijkt wetenschapster te zijn

Bij de politie zijn er donderdagavond ongeruste telefoontjes binnengekomen vanuit het Brikhof in Hoepertingen. Een Spaanse dame was er gekleurde bolletjes op het trottoir aan het verven. Bewoners dachten dat het om merktekens van een dievenbende ging. Ter plaatse bleek dat de vrouw meewerkte aan een project van de Universiteit Hasselt. (11/11)

aangepakt en aan het einde van het doellopende pad prijkt nu hun uitwijkplaatsen dat bikt over het subijgelegen natuurgebied.

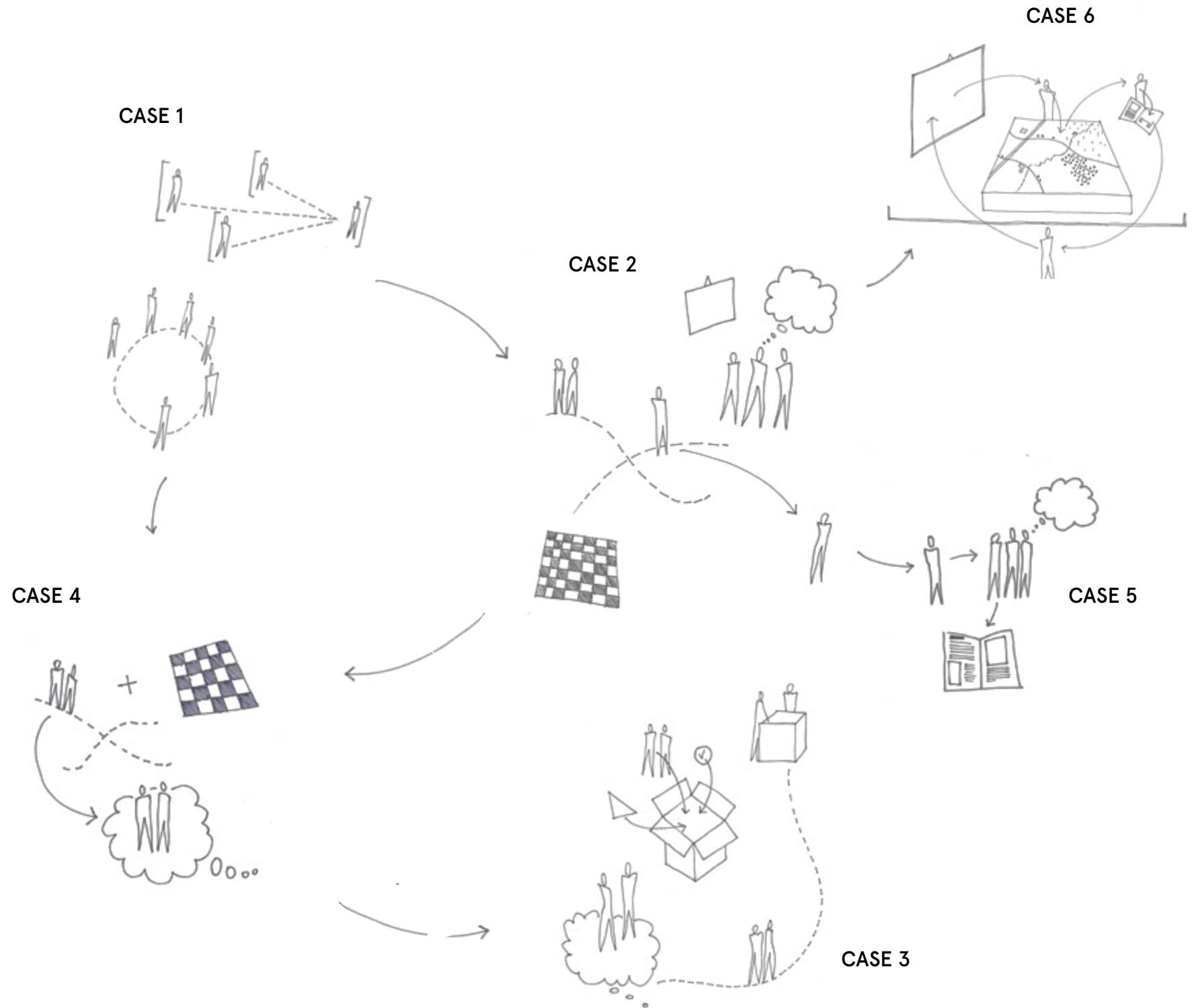
Trouzelpad
“Naast die twee opdrachten is er nog een derde bijgekomen: het trouzelpad van het kasteel - waar kinderen leren over lokale landbouw - wordt doorgetrokken naar het hele dorp. Omdat in de gesprekken met de buurtbewoners was gebleken dat mensen nood

Figure 38 - Newspaper articles in the local press about the live project

(Endnotes)

- 1 Map-it is a low-tech mapping system with an open and extendible set of icons representing people, things, relations and also a series of 'critical' and playful things. It allows participants to visualise a creation process (Huybrechts, 2011)
- 2 Stebo vzw is a non-profit organization developing projects concerning community building, dwelling, employment, energy, etc. Stebo vzw mission is to start from everyone's capacities and strengths, and the social capital present in groups and neighbourhoods. In the local group of Leader they represent the sector of welfare-organizations.
- 3 Hoepertingen is one of 12 'church villages' that in 1977 merged to become municipality of Borgloon (in total about 10 000 inhabitants, with a density of 208 inh/km).
- 4 The Flemish Land Agency, a Flemish government agency, is responsible for the organisation and management of the open space in Flanders, and contributes to rural policy in Flanders. In execution of the manure policy, the agency works on a better water quality. Its field of activity comprises the rural areas and the peri-urban open space in Flanders.
- 5 Kasteel Mariagaarde is a non-profit organization that is in charge of the exploitation of the domain of the castle convent of Hoepertingen and its park. The site is a recognized site of silence and the organization mainly welcomes contemplative activities. They aim to strengthen their connection with the local neighborhood with numerous initiatives. In the local group of Leader they represent the sector of socio-cultural organizations.
- 6 An average municipality in Flanders has about 20 000 inhabitants. The average density is 462 inh/km². As these averages include cities, Hoepertingen as a village is not that small.
- 7 The first wave of Sikh migrants arrived already in the seventies as political refugees. The 'second generation' of Sikh community members started their own enterprises and became a new group of fruit cultivators. Sikhs do have very characterising clothing, especially the men, whose beards and turbans stand out. In a study on Sikh community in Haspengouw, Cosemans (2012) mentions that how people dress and express themselves does not indicate how well they are integrated, how they behave, what their interaction is with the Belgian society.
- 8 7th Design triennial of Flanders, held on the C-mine site in Genk, from 15 December 2013 until 9 March 2014.
- 9 The call: Start on designing with one out of the 5 specific types of materials that need to be incorporated and re-used in your design proposal. The competition thrives to challenge designers, craftsmen and individuals to get into working and realizing projects with re-useable building materials. The jury review, see: <https://www.vai.be/nl/nieuws/de-winnaars-van-de-opalis-challenge-zijn-gekend>
- 10 In their own words: Rotor is a group of people with a common interest in the material flows in industry and construction. On a practical level, Rotor handles the conception and realization of design and architectural projects. On a theoretical level, Rotor develops critical positions on design, material resources, and waste through research, exhibitions, writings and conferences. (www.rotordb.org)

The fieldwork consists of six different cases that were all related, for instance by actions that were repeated or translated, actors that took a different role, or by performing in the same location.



**MAKING A SPATIAL
PRACTICE**
lessons learnt

PART V

In Part I we discussed how participation can challenge and question authorship, responsibilities, knowledge, and the borders of a practice. With these 'borders' we referred to the line that we cross when we (as spatial practitioners) start to intervene and where we stop. It is also the line that forms a tension between coming 'from the outside' to change a situation 'from within': where distinctions are made (e.g. between participants and non-participants) and where problems are defined. It is through interaction with others that our role comes about and our values are articulated, the assumptions on which we speak and act. We explored participation from social and spatial perspectives beyond a policy- and project driven focus. Starting from the awareness that there are different readings and ways to understand the same situation, participation can be a way to make a design more democratic. We concluded Part I understanding participation as an assumption to act upon.

Next, we discussed in Part I, how villages are continuously changing; besides the more general changes, there are many individual decisions, both having unplanned and sometimes unwanted effects. The question is how to intervene and work with these changes as spatial practitioners, and in particular how to enhance people's spatial agency, supporting them to engage in their spatial environment in ways previously unknown, opening new potentials and freedoms. Participating in such a process is not a matter of getting what you desire, or to be right. But it is a matter of gaining confidence and feeling a desire to participate in the village, of understanding what is happening, coming to an idea of how one can contribute.

In part III we explored conceptual handles (i.e. public realm, plurality, privatisation, everyday life, third and public space, commons and commoning). This search led to a rationale defining the aim to stage a debate. In Part IV we investigated how to create an opportunity with multiple actions to support different actors going from different understandings and perception of change, seeking for how these can become points for public debate, and future actions.

In **this part V**, findings of all cases are related to the body of literature discussed in part III. We take the four sub-questions introduced in Part I to structure four concluding chapters:

Chapter 11 starts with reflecting on how an investigation of 'what is public' supported us to stage *and* understand a debate. We furthermore relate this to the issues we already addressed outlining our approach of action research.

Chapter 12 discusses the operational lessons we can draw from staging an 'open' debate, including multiple publics and places. What actions in our fieldwork supported us to make this debate open?

Chapter 13 discusses these matters in relation to the context of our research, and define lessons learnt about 'the public' in relation to villages.

Chapter 14 concludes with reflections on making a spatial practice and defining a position for spatial practitioners.

PART V

CHAPTER 11. IN SEARCH FOR AN OPEN ENDED APPROACH

In this chapter we start discussing issues we addressed outlining an approach of action research; as an approach to change a situation and then learn on what this means, not focussing on the method, nor on the way how to do this. This tension touches upon a tension between how *and* why, between -staging and searching for an approach to intervene- *and* -understanding and reflecting- that we also addressed outlining the 'aim' of our research question (see p. 58-59). We defined this aim as *to understand the public value, collectively reflect and come to perspectives for action*. We oriented this 'open' and general aim towards questioning how an investigation of 'what is public' can support us to stage as well as understand such a debate. Not to explain in over-arching labels why things happen but to come to an understanding of how changes are perceived and understood, reflected on and become points for future action.

1. Learning to action research, change through learning

What makes action research specific, according to McNiff & Whitehead (2006), is that it moves the focus from '*what is going on out there*' questions, towards '*how do I*' questions. In other words, it is a way to investigate, evaluate and enquire knowledge on one's own work or practice. The initial idea of our first case, *The most beautiful villages of Haspengouw*, was to work towards a longer term and involve local actors and existing organisations to engage villagers in a debate, to strengthen 'a regional identity', that would remain after we left. However, by including this perspective on the long term, we positioned ourselves 'as researchers looking from the outside', aiming to enhance the awareness of local actors and assuming these actors are already involved in the region and will continue to do so. The choice for action research urged us to reflect on this starting point, as well as on the idea to enhance a 'regional identity' by facilitating a process to collaboratively define this regional identity. The initial proposal did not question the LEADER framework, nor made explicit our understanding of 'regional identity'. It was only throughout the fieldwork we became more aware of this framework we were acting upon. We will not discuss the value of the framework and paradigmatic positions coming from the LEADER program. The points of reference of our normative framework came from understanding the process of change in villages, that is driven by many, small autonomous actions, as a democratic challenge. From there we questioned how to organise a democratic process by staging a debate with many distributed actions. Starting from how these many, but specific changes can become points for public debate, and future actions.

We chose for a critical and participatory approach on action research, which is already implying certain assumptions, being: (1) *research is not a neutral activity* and (2) *action research operates as a democratic practice that aims to improve this situation in cooperation with all actors involved*. We remained puzzled whether, next to the democratic values about the process, we should also make explicit values and assumptions concerning the case related spatial improvement, or the direction we want to see this situation changed spatially. In the definition of participatory action research ‘change’ is interpreted by Roose et. al. (2014) as an awareness of possible other definitions, in interaction with the existing. It is this awareness and questioning of different understandings that can support ‘all people involved’ to relate to what is happening. They argue that the validity of action research does not depend on how much or how far the research contributes to actually change a situation, but rather on challenging and questioning existing interpretations and understandings. Freire furthermore emphasized how we should not be oriented on finding methods to improve the situation, but on the situation itself – it is in and through improving a situation that we build knowledge on what this means. The most important aim is then to provide the opportunity for people to learn collaboratively (Freire, 1972). Hence, summarizing these authors: the idea is to focus on the situation, as that is what needs to change. But at the same time, the idea is to not end up with concretely measuring how far this situation *actually* changed, but learn through improving and questioning a situation.

To define this learning in the fieldwork in Part IV, we did refer to initiatives that participants took in response to the game, in order to actually or spatially change a situation; for instance, the local construction company made agreements with a regional nature organisation to restore a private orchard and invited neighbours to use this area to play. We thus consider these changes not as solutions that can or should be applied elsewhere, nor to be translated in spatial criteria, but as a result of an approach supporting different actors to relate to what is happening and coming to a better understanding. However, these changes also indicate a direction of how we want to see the situation be improved. Beside the democratic values for the process, aiming it to be open to a plurality of voices, these initiatives indicate how we want to counter certain effects we see in the villages, coming from many autonomous transformations; privatisation, fragmentation of open space, disappearing landscape elements like orchards and their ecosystems, but also more general changes (e.g. the societal and environmental cost of spread housing). These points of reference were not clearly made explicit from start, but in different cases

we did define and discuss these kind of values. For instance in the first workshop of case 1, in discussing ambitions for the village with local actors in Hoepertingen as a preparation to define game tasks (case 2), or in defining the brief for the live project (case 3).

In relation to changes in the village, we argued how it is a matter of initiating a willingness to accept that identities change, more than articulating or redefining this village identity, as a clear direction of change. There thus were many layers in this interpretation of ‘change’. Theoreticians argue how you learn through changing a situation, and that this learning is not to be measured by how far the situation factually changed, it is more a matter of changing an understanding and connect different interpretations. In order to learn you need to make explicit some points of reference to interpret what you have been learning. We did not articulate these point clearly, but defined values on the way, concerning the democratic values of the process, as well as concerning spatial points of improvement. Next we will discuss how design methods interfered in our search to set up an action research approach.

2. Understanding **and** staging a debate, reflecting **and** intervening moving beyond **why and** how

Where action research is generally classified as immersive research, asking participants to critically reflect with the purpose of understanding a specific situation, design methods are broadly deployed towards a set goal or target, to intervene in a situation (Foth, Axup, 2006). In this study, both approaches were combined. The concepts that we explored in relation to ‘the public’, can be summarized as a plea ‘to stage a dissensus’, ‘to interrupt’ and ‘to make things public’. We addressed how these ideas remain very abstract and their ‘openness’ sometimes slipped into a vagueness, wanting to start from a very open perspective. We ended up using known methods, like visualising, scenario-thinking, game-tasks, walking, etc.) that supported us to make ideas more tangible and to develop (intermediate) answers.

In Part II we discussed how spatial design is too easily considered as action research in itself, being practice-based. Action research is not an approach to design a solution for a particular situation, but to question the situation, changing an understanding, and to relate and act upon what occurs. This ‘move towards a

problem definition' is considered to be unsettling in itself. We already discussed how it was hard to define the meaning of this 'move towards a problem situation', in relation to how to define spatial qualities for improvement. More implicitly, we did question how spatial aspects in concrete situations could activate the debate. By choosing specific locations for our actions, or for instance by using visualizing skills to translate game proposals in collages, as this helped villagers to understand the spatial implications of their proposals, but also triggered new and different discussions. Towards and in the live project, we became more explicit about values or directions in which we want spatial changes to enhance, steer or improve (e.g. shared spaces for children to play, value of nature and green, etc.) and this triggered more voices, responses and ways of engagement, and thus supported us in our intent to keep the dialogue open.

Hence, in practice, we responded on this call for staging a dissensus, moving between an openness -and- articulating or visualizing a direction including spatial aspects. At several points in the conceptual track, theoreticians suggested to go beyond dichotomies (between socialization *and* subjectification, between common action *and* plurality, between participants *and* non-participants, etc.). It is by investigating, intervening and taking actions that we moved to an understanding of the concrete context on the one hand, -and- this understanding as well as a theoretical exploration induced a way of practicing, on the other hand. Action and reflection are not to be separated. We defined the activities of understanding, reflecting and acting as sub-aims of staging a debate, and considered these activities as interrelated, happening in all case studies on different moments and in either order.

Action research is generally presented as a systematic, cyclical and disciplined process of observing, reflecting, acting, evaluating and modifying (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006). Often referred to as an action-reflection cycle. Starting from a participatory approach of action research we went from the suggestion of Roose et.al. (2014) to take a different route, and to start from practice itself. Our approach, combining immersive aspects of action research with design methods, lead into a more distributed process, working across scales, and making different kinds of relations visible. We will further discuss these matters, drawing operational lessons on staging an open debate in the next chapter.

Summary chapter 11

'Change', when defined for action research, is questioning existing interpretations and making it possible to relate what is happening to a broader frame of reference. In response to our fieldwork actions, participants took initiatives that are not to be generalized or should be applied elsewhere, but that indicate directions in which we want changes to be improved. Making use of design methods did support us, as well as participants, to visualize ideas or intermediate answers and allowed us to search for diverse way to invite and engage participants in the debate.

What I take from this, supporting me to answer the Sub Question:

How can an investigation of 'what is public' support us to stage an open debate, understand, and reflect and come to perspectives for action?

Starting from the process of change in villages we questioned how these many, but specific changes can become points for debate. Not focusing on methods of intervention, theoretical concepts offered perspectives to open this process towards a plurality of voices, to interrupt and stage a dissensus. Both aims: wanting to stage a debate as well as come to an understanding and improvement of the concrete situation worked together. As understanding and practicing, reflecting and acting, both are not to be separated.

As a first experience with action research this study was my first action-reflection loop. Only after finishing a first loop, in other words, only in writing this thesis, it became more clear how to set up an action research in combination with methods I practice. For now, I would define points of reference in relation to the case related spatial improvement more strongly nested in a spatial knowledge structure and use design methods more deliberately as part of my practice. Not to focus on these methods as object of research, but to use them to describe an understanding.

CHAPTER 12 ACTIONS TO STAGE A DEBATE

In this chapter we discuss to what extent our 'actions' supported us to stage an open debate. The idea of agency further defined the aim of staging a debate; as empowering different actors to understand what is changing, collectively and critically reflect on alternative imaginations, and come to other perspectives to contribute. We introduced the idea of 'spatial agency' *as supporting people to engage in their spatial environment in ways previously unknown, opening new freedoms and potentials*. For Awan et al. (2011), in the first place, this questions professional boundaries of spatial designers; addressing other ways of 'making a spatial difference'. We will now discuss how our actions did not lead to a spatial plan, nor a spatial project, but did open up other possibilities, or lead to other actions. We believe the following three actions were important:

- (1) To create a collective. The stage for debate should also be an opportunity for different actors to get to know each other, to build up trust and respect each other's role.
- (2) To make sense. Articulating agenda's or values and making and testing ideas for the future, opens the debate for more diverging voices, as defining a 'sense' incites a reflection leading to other responses (resistance as well as engagement).
- (3) To interrupt, create an event or opportunity for publicness. On location we tested what is possible; as giving an opportunity to discuss how to act and how to be.

1. Create a collective

Time and opportunity

In Hoepertingen ideas became more concrete, when actions (or follow-up initiatives) were linked to ambitions on a larger scale. We referred to a private orchard that was restored after the live project within the frame of a project of *Regionaal Landschap*. Staff members of this organisations joined in the final event of the live project, when we walked a route with donkeys throughout the village. We also referred to a cleaning campaign on the track, that was a follow-up action of a meeting organised with neighbours, aldermen, and local actors after the live project. From these initiatives we can conclude that without connections between different actors (e.g. a villager who is also a representative in a nature organisation)

and different roles (e.g. between who initiated the action, and who will use it or passers-by) these follow-up initiatives have little chance to be sustainable. As it are people (neighbours, volunteers, property-owners) that need to come to an agreement of how to use and maintain particular spaces. At several points these initiatives ran into resistance (for instance the direct neighbours of a the green zone that got cleaned, were worried about their privacy, as they considered this green space as an extension or buffer to their garden) or lack a follow-up by administrators, and proofed to be very fragile. We learned how it were strong local actors that took actions in response to the game, translating ideas and proposals to their daily environment. As likely there are dominant voices who resist to these ideas or obstruct making these ideas concrete.

It takes time for different voices to articulate what they think, how they understand what is changing, or what they want to change in future. There is time needed to set up actions (label, game, live-project), all actors need time to articulate opinions and ideas, and there is time needed to create a collective (of neighbours, volunteers, property owners). We deliberately integrated actions to formulate ideas collectively, but people also need to get to know each other, build up trust and respect each other's role as well as the initiative. Creating this 'collective' is an important asset of our approach that needs attention in respect to what happens after and in response to our actions. These follow up initiatives are again individual initiatives and dominant voices easily take over.

Openness and representation

With a diversity of actions, we facilitated a process that is open for different voices, but we did not invite a 'representative' diversity of people. Participants were not selected but responded on our invitation to join in. In different actions, power or a voice was given to those who are capable and willing to participate. All findings thus are based solely on their opinions and ideas. However, in this respect, Roose (2006) argues that an organised participation which formally involves representatives from different groups neither can avoid to strengthen or reproduce existing differences (Roose, 2006: 72). Within the framework of a 'participatory action research' it is not an issue of representation (as it is not a matter of generalizing findings on the village as true for all villages), but a matter of how open the process can be. We aimed to stage an 'open debate', creating the possibility to step in at any point, and leaving it open how the debate continues when we leave the stage. We searched for diverse ways to reflect and

discuss ideas or scenarios, by letting participants respond to drawings (made by other participants), pictures (of a more dense housing typology for instance, see arte.2.2., 2.3.), and moreover to the space itself (by pausing on location), and by creating prompts of what we discussed (by making collages). In this sense, defining groups of participants after the game in Hoepertingen, was a way to make sense of what I did and to reflect on the openness of the actions, as well as what to consider as an action. By listing who was involved, including people who I talked to on the pavement, for instance, although they were not 'taking part' in the game. Hence, more than a way to measure or validate representativeness of these groups, it was a way to understand what actions were performed.

2. Make sense

Throughout the fieldwork in Hoepertingen some themes and values became more prominent, for instance: (1) the importance for children to play in a shared or common space; or (2) the value of space for nature, or green open areas; or (3) the value of characterizing physical elements and specific heritage elements (e.g. a high trunk orchard, small chapels, etc.). As we continued, we articulated these values and themes more clearly and linked them to challenges on a larger scale (societal costs, ecological challenges, regional ambitions, ...). We did this by integrating these ideas in game-tasks, using these themes to present the collages in the game-final, and addressing these values as topics in interviews (in preparation of the live project) and different talks during the live project, on site or walking throughout the village, and in meetings we had after the live project.

By taking different actions over a longer time frame, values became more articulated on the way, which triggered resistance (for instance villagers asking why we came back and preferred *'to leave things as they are'*) as well as new coalitions and cooperation (for instance villagers who did not participate before, became more involved in the live project and prototyping). We already addressed that the question to make explicit a normative framework, became an issue in itself that we needed to learn by doing 'in the field' and 'on the way'. Also villagers practiced different roles that changed over time. Reluctant towards the initiative or doubting their own knowledge, towards becoming an enthusiast contact person, or lending shovels to the students building; or critically doubting and asking questions, towards continuing the initiative and taking part in a meeting with municipality, etc.

We experienced the relevance of articulating an agenda. Not as a well-defined or 'targeted' objective, but as learning to define directions in an open way (i.e. allowing these directions to evolve and change). During the live project for instance, a group of residents sat together and made a map themselves, outlining a route to walk. We used this map to make a leaflet locating the constructions that students built (vis.3.3.). The route that was shown, visualized an ambition and triggered a discussion on the final event, and made some local actors (*Ter Heide* and other villagers) to organise a meeting. Hence, it were different actions (assembling people, making this leaflet, walking together, organising a meeting) that supported different actors to collaboratively articulate ideas, triggering other responses and different directions.

3. To interrupt, create an event or opportunity for publicness.

We already addressed the relevance of creating a collective and articulating directions. Together with Biesta's suggestion 'to interrupt' to create an opportunity to 'become' public we can furthermore interpret our actions as 'interruptions' 'to make things public' (Biesta, 2012, Latour, 2005). The examples that Biesta refers to, often do very little, at most they have the intention to invite others to join in. They function as a test of what is possible, of the public quality of a certain location; as giving the opportunity to discuss how to act and how to be (Biesta, 2012). Reflecting on our fieldwork from this perspective, we 'tested the public quality' of particular locations, of the sites for prototyping, of the routes we walked. We consider this public quality as connected to democratic values; the right to access, the possibility to express differences, as well as to what happens in a space, what is possible.

In all cases we chose specific locations for our actions. The workshops organised in case 1 (*The Most Beautiful villages of Haspengouw*) were hosted by organisations that participated (for instance *De Wroeter*, *Stebo* or *Regionaal Landschap*). In case 2, we asked participants to search a route between 'game-locations', this could be not well-known sites with little signs of appropriations but also public playgrounds, orchards, dead-end streets, small pathways. By crossing these places they got appropriated for just a moment. Assumptions on what is public, what is accessible, what is underused are not readable on a map, but they became explicit on location. In case 3, in the live project, students worked on site and in a studio that was set up in the castle (*Kasteel Mariagaarde*), they furthermore had lunch every day at *Ter Heide* and each day two students went walking with residents of *Ter Heide*.

We can consider the spatial locations we chose, as a (non-human) actor, that we wanted to include in this 'open' process, oriented towards a plurality of voices. We thus did not only want to include different human voices, but also searched for ways to include spaces. These locations can furthermore be considered as a 'common ground', supportive to come to a shared language, as walking between these different locations furthermore created a shared experience in space and time.

Stengers (2005) gave us the perspective to create an event, as the consensus we hope for, but we cannot master nor decide. Whatever the end result will be, it is this hope that is empowering and that is part of the process, she argues. The event is about slowing down, about giving a chance to something to happen, to encounters, and to be transformed by what we encounter. *'Designing a scene is an art of staging (...) it is a matter of distributing roles, of taking a part in the staging of the issue.'* (Stengers, 2005: 1002). Taking a role in this staging' we practiced to create 'an event' by asking new questions, by going back, by staging different actions to understand (interviewing, collecting viewpoints, walking), reflect (in meetings, by making game proposals), as well as to articulate future directions (envisioning ideas, by making a design brief).

We created a collective, tried to make sense and distributed an understanding engaging multiple actors and multiple places. This is giving a deeper understanding to the assembling, knowledge-sharing and sensitising actions we defined outlining our fieldwork.

Summary chapter 12

And what to take from this, answering the Sub Question:

What operational lessons can we draw from staging an open debate questioning what is public?

We emphasized the importance of creating an opportunity for actors to connect, to respect each other's role or initiative and to take time to create a collective ownership. We started questioning how to stage a 'dissensus', how to interrupt and make public a plurality of voices, and experienced how being more clear in articulating values supported us to make more sense of the debate; in a way that there were other responses, new ideas or other actors who got engaged. The different actions created situations on location that were a test for publicness, as a test of what is possible, of the public quality of that location and creating an opportunity to debate. Thus concrete spaces supported us to create a collective and to make sense. These actions give a deeper understanding to the different actions of 'assembling', 'knowledge sharing' and 'sensitising' we used to set up our fieldwork. We assembled participants on different types of locations and in different ways (in smaller conversations and bigger groups) on different moments. The actions we performed, exploring a more visual language and including the role of concrete spaces, offer operational lessons to stage an open debate.

In the next chapter we will further discuss these lessons in relation to the specific context of villages.

CHAPTER 13. THE PUBLIC IN VILLAGES

In this chapter we elaborate on lessons learnt in relation to a better understanding of the particular context of villages. In relation to this context we seek to contribute to more nuanced and hybrid images of villages, holding different perceptions and future ideas. A second part of this sub-question, was oriented to the role of public places, in understanding and defining these collective and aspirational imaginations. Issues with public space are not to be answered on a spatial level alone, but should start from the everyday, supporting individuals to relate to their environment. Literature on public space that we discussed is mostly referring to an urban context, when giving concrete examples. Cities have access to other and more policy instruments, and have a different governmental capacity. The challenge for public space in villages is however not less complex nor less ambiguous, then in cities. If we go beyond idyllic ideas of peace and tranquility and strong social connections (where everybody knows everybody), a village has always been hybrid, dynamic and rough, a place people sometimes chose to live because of its space (literally) to find their way (Herngreen, 2004).

We discussed how villages change because of more global processes of transformation, as well as many individual decisions. New houses built at more distance from the street make villages become more generic. Together with other changes concerning the use of open spaces; like ‘horsification’ and a ‘garden sprawl’ these small changes mark trends of privatisation (Bomans et.al., 2010, Dewaelheyns et.al., 2011). These issues with privatisation and parochialisation come down to debate the common good and balance private, parochial and public spheres.

We will now elaborate (1.) on how our start on a more regional perspective (in case 1, *The most beautiful village of Haspengouw*) allowed us to bring in a longer time frame and another frame of reference to reflect and discuss what is changing with villagers in the subsequent more local cases. Secondly (2.) we discuss how all cases contributed to our understanding of public space in a village, and how these insights nuance and add findings to literature on public space.

1. Understanding a village, to network and to multiply

We connected different scales in space and time (local and regional, shorter and longer term); by first designing the label on a regional scale (case 1), before working on a more local scale of a village (case 2), then taking time to ‘multiply’ lessons learnt by repeating different actions in other villages (case 4 and 5) and choosing to go back to the same village (case 3). Petrescu et. al. (2010) emphasize the relevance and importance of both the very local scale of practicing as well as the intermediate trans-local scale of multiplying. Local practices benefit through trans-local networks, and vice versa. The knowledge of trans-local networks benefits from sharing a practice- and locally-based understanding.

‘The local scale tends to isolate you and minimize what you are doing (...) [and has to do] with a modus operandi that is more effective and closer to the user. The fact that your actions are ‘micro’ doesn’t mean that they are small. (...) it is very important to open up something that could be understood as a local practice to a larger scale and a wider collaborative condition. (Petrescu in Mazé, 2011: 90-91)

Our initial aim in starting the LEADER project was to better understand different changes in the region and to collaboratively map ideas with different actors. We wanted to understand how the sum of many (individual and unplanned) initiatives can have an impact on (regional) transformation processes and vice versa, how (regional) transformations can have an impact on the local identity of the village, on the daily living environment. Understanding how these changes in this daily environment are perceived by villagers was only addressed in the subsequent, more local cases.

We learned how there already are strong partnerships between different organisations in the region, but there are little opportunities for these organisations or professionals to debate on common or shared values. Individual villagers are addressed within existing projects and programs, but there are few opportunities to discuss different aspects that cross these separate projects or policy domains. Most projects we came across are linked to the policy domain of nature, tourism and social economy, but there are few to no initiatives that focus on how the village is changing as a social and spatial place.

In the next cases in Hoepertingen (but also in Guigoven and Godsheide, see case 4 and 5 in intermezzo) we then focused on the village itself. Petrescu (2011) considers the small and local scale as important, precisely because it is accessible to everybody. The local, is a scale of operation; it is a way of being active through networks and multiplication. In response to the different actions that we staged in these villages, ideas became more concrete when they were connected to ambitions on a larger scale (e.g. an existing rural development project). Hence, in these follow-up initiatives often connections were made with regional organisations. Both approaches on both scales did strengthen each other.

Connecting different scales is a valid strategy to understand and collectively learn about small scale changes, as well as more regional themes and projects or actions taken by regional organisations or authorities. In Haspengouw, these organisations each question how to engage individual villagers, and designing the label created an opportunity to collectively learn. This network remained important, and in each local case in the village, we organised a moment where we invited actors from this network. All actors participating in *The Most beautiful villages of Haspengouw*, expressed their interest in a more permanent structure to support collaborations and learning initiatives. There is a greater potential to learn, considering the different projects as part of ongoing practices. Meaning, by not limiting an understanding of these projects to the initiating organisation but by conceiving these projects as part of ongoing practices, with different relations and actors involved, collaborating, strengthening each other, considering the bigger system they work in.

2. Lessons learnt on public space

In general, ideas on public space that we discussed, come down to the possibility to meet the other in *a space created by action and speech* (Arendt, 1958). As where *city dwellers* are confronted with each other, and where matters concerning the common good can be discussed. From there all ideas and concepts are situated between a public realm and a private sphere, in different balances, and between more 'rational and universal' - or - more 'hybrid and dynamic' conceptions of 'the public' or 'publics'. Reflecting and making proposals for concrete places in the game supported villagers to understand what is changing in their daily living environment. We will now discuss these reflections and proposals and what we learnt, taking the perspectives we defined for public space in Part III.

Publics

The public domain is perceived to be privatizing and the challenge is to work with different relational spheres (public, parochial and private). What is needed are occasions or initiatives for different groups to meet and cooperate, and places that combine different spheres.

Villagers do not consider it to be evident that people become 'trusted strangers', nor that it is necessary that 'everybody knows everybody'. The decline or lack of third places or possibilities for light encounters that villagers perceive is not just a lack of physical places, but also a matter of opportunities to collaborate, to organise things together in an open way, allowing others to join in. The different groups of villagers we defined, supported us to better understand their use and different perceptions of public space. We did not observe these differences as visible conflicts, but they are an illustration of diverse needs, expectations and groups living next to each other, not meeting *the other in a space created by action and speech*. Or at least not in the formal public spaces. Soenen (2016) addresses how a better understanding of diverse profiles can support us to contribute and intervene in the 'everyday community', as different profiles are needed, all having their strengths and weaknesses, just like the possibility to meet as well as avoid each other.

Lofland considers spaces to privatise or parochialize when these relational spheres get attached to a specific (publicly owned) place (Lofland 1998, Soenen, 2006). De Sola-Morales (1992:6) emphasized the relevance of spaces that are not public nor private, but both. For example, public spaces that are used for private activities, or private spaces that are open to be collectively used. In Hoepertingen we learned how neighbours used the gym of the local centre for care together with friends coming from outside the village. We saw different examples of privatisation, like a public footpath that was used to store wood, or a part of the former railway track that became an extension of the garden, etc. On the other hand, the private park of the castle is used by different groups, each conducting their activity with like-minded people in their own area. By making small 'invitations' in each other's area, different groups of people enter the diverse areas of the park; for instance, a bee hotel built by school children in cooperation with a nature organisation, or an intervention of an artist. Hence, many ideas formulated in an urban context (by Morales, Reijndorp and Hajer, Soenen and Lofland) are also interesting and valuable in the village.

Commons

Another perspective for public space we discussed in Part III is how commons challenge us to rethink ownership and the relation between property, use and management. In response to the live project, hybrid coalitions were made on private as well as a public property in order to make it possible to be collectively used and managed with villagers combining and taking different roles. It were private actors, villagers, a regional organisation and the municipality, making agreements to formally designate a route as a public footpath on the private property of the construction company. De Moor argues that it is an illusion that you have to own something to take care (De Moor, in: Van den Berg, 2013). There is a cult developed around private property and the individual as a centre of our society. Taking care of the collective is something that you can learn. De Moor refers to the ideas of Elinor Ostrom (1990) who investigated forms of sustainable collaborations based on agreement and rules with a clear goal. It is not a question of property rights but of rights of use. Proposals made by villagers in the game and follow-up actions illustrate these ideas.

There was an idea for a meeting place in a 'village orchard' just outside the built border of the village, situated in transition to the open landscape. Here the natives (like the farmer) can meet the passer-by more often than, for instance, on the church square. By combining different semi-public and private activities (e.g. composting, school garden, meadow with sheep, etc.) these places invite people to pause, observe and meet, and support an encounter between different groups. A good network of small roads can make these places valuable as a public space; i.e. as relevant for the everyday life, by combining passage and a parochial sphere. In the conceptual track we discussed ideas of Leinfelder (2007) and Vigano (2008) considering open space as public space and emphasizing the potentials of spread pieces of agricultural land, forests, flood areas in and outside of the built core, as places that can readdress the traditional concept of public space. We did not investigate the role of open space theoretically nor conceptually, nor did we further discuss the rich and hybrid concept that landscape is. It was only in our fieldwork, walking in the village, interviewing villagers, the importance of open space, of landscape elements and the changes in agricultural use (from acres with different crops and high trunk orchards to large low trunk plantations) became obvious and were repeatedly addressed by villagers.

Sites that triggered most discussions and ideas in the game, were the more 'open' spaces. Villagers often started with clear ideas on what needed to be changed in the centre of the village, but these ideas changed when we started to walk. We asked

them to walk on roads for non-motorized traffic as much as possible, and this made participants choose for different routes (e.g. ignoring signs of privatization on a public footpath or passing through their own gardens with villagers they did not know). They made proposals to connect different pieces of open space with small paths and vistas and reflected on the role of their own gardens within this network of open spaces. It were these open spaces (meadows, orchards, open inner areas) that participants now identified as typical for the village (not the empty church square). More importantly, proposals explored how these open spaces could be considered as public, making it possible to meet the other and to play. Concluding, open spaces in transitions to the surrounding landscape came to the fore as valuable public places. We did not further explore the concept and role of landscape as such, neither did we work through on the idea of commons or theories and practices of commoning. However, both concepts have rich potentials to further nuance an understanding of what is public in a village.

Summary of chapter 13

Connecting local scales is a valid strategy to understand and collectively learn about small scale changes as well as more regional themes. By working on different scales, we could learn from individual villagers as well as from projects or actions taken by regional organisations or local authorities. On a regional scale many projects focus on nature, tourism or heritage. On a local scale the focus was on public space to discuss integrated aspects of how the village is changing.

Public space is a valuable entry point to stage a debate, to collectively reflect, articulate different agendas, and to define future images. Public space is hybridly balancing between private and public spheres to tackle issues coming with privatisation and how to make a diverse society, supporting villagers to identify with their daily living environment. In the villages of our cases, the decline of 'third places' or possibilities for light encounters, is not a matter of a lack of (physical) places to meet, but it is more a matter of creating opportunities and occasions to meet, to collaborate, to learn. In discussing possibilities for such places and opportunities, more open and hybrid spaces (private but collectively used) came to the fore. These open spaces, next to theories and practices of commoning have greater potential to further understand the dynamic of a village.

CHAPTER 14. MAKING A SPATIAL PRACTICE

In Part I we defined a *spatial practice* as a broad term for architectural, design and other disciplinary and interdisciplinary practices engaged in studying and transforming space (Schalk, et. al., 2017). As argued by Jane Rendell (2006) contemporary challenges of urbanization have necessitated an emerging discourse across geography, anthropology, cultural studies, history, art and architecture. Synergies among disciplines have generated knowledge that reformulate the ways in which space can be understood. This practice responds to existing orders by involving creativity and social critique, which occur in the form of everyday activities and creative practices' (Rendell, 2006).

In this Part V, defining operational lessons and searching for an approach to stage an open debate, we repeatedly addressed how it is a matter of *practicing*. In chapter 6 we already introduced different ideas to broaden an interpretation of 'practicing'. To start, we referred to Arendt for whom 'to act' first of all means to take an initiative to begin something new, and depends on others to respond. Therefore it is not a private but a public and political experience. In order to act, we need others to respond, we cannot act in isolation. The notion she introduces in this context is that of 'understanding' (Arendt, 1994). Understanding is not about 'correct information and scientific knowledge' but is characterized by Arendt as '*an unending activity by which, in constant change and variation, we come to terms with and reconcile ourselves to reality*'. Next, we linked the concept of 'practicing' to the idea of Van Heeswijk, who defines her work as a continuous learning field to practice how to relate to others and a concrete context. The question is, she argues, how to practice for a future change without knowing how this will look like, and without a clear objective. For Rancière, the way to go from not-knowing to knowing is through testing, failing, adapting, by acting. Combining these ideas, 'practicing' refers to a continuous learning field, creating opportunities to meet the other, to learn, to fail, to test; to act. Hence, rather than referring to a field of expertise, with spatial practice we refer to a field of understanding, and furthermore we want to refer beyond the discipline of architecture itself, and the logic of spatial projects.

In this chapter we will start (1.) to further delineate a spatial practice, based on what we explored in the fieldwork and conceptual track. Next we reflect on how to make a practice (enhancing our own agency as spatial practitioners), (2.) by sharing, multiplying what we learn, and (3.) question what the role of architecture education can be in making a spatial practice.

1. Delineating a spatial practice

(1) Who is involved?

Endorsing Rancière, Keshaverz and Mazé (2013) argue how design can reproduce divisions in society; who is qualified to see, listen or discuss, and who is not. There furthermore exists a dominant dichotomy between 'the social' and 'the spatial'. Not to doubt that spatial interventions affect social life in one way or another, but it is too easily considered that both are mirroring each other. This is not taking in account political, cultural, symbolic meanings that complicate this binary relation between people and bricks. In reference to Lefebvre we acknowledged how the social and spatial are inextricably intermingled and cannot be separated. Spatial production in itself is a shared enterprise and a dynamic and evolving sequence, with no fixed start nor finish and with multiple actors contributing at various stages. It is no clear-cut practice, it has no starting point, nor an end result and the right to take part is a right to be claimed mutually and collectively. It is in this complexity of relations, domains and disciplines that we further want to delineate a practice.

Thus, leaning on these ideas, the question '*who is involved*' could or should be answered with 'everyone', considering it to be a fundamental right to shape society in and through its spaces. The nuance is however made that these rights should be claimed mutually. What we take from this, is that a spatial practice goes beyond professional boundaries, addressing other ways of making a spatial difference, and thus includes 'other' spatial practitioners then spatial designers. The challenge is then to open this process of spatial production and to distribute an enhancement of spatial agency.

In the fieldwork actions, different voices were absent, for instance the Sikhs community or Polish workers, but certainly also the younger generation of natives. In different actions a power or voice was given to those who were willing and capable to participate. But also the reluctance of some villagers towards the live project, could in this sense be understood as an illustration of how villagers want to retain the status quo, by choosing not to take part. Discussing their reluctance with them, made clear they do not want 'new changes' and 'interference', and at the same time want to regain an understanding of what is happening. From this perspective, they agreed to take part. In discussing the fieldwork we emphasized the importance of creating an opportunity for actors to connect, to respect each other's role or initiative and to take time to create a collective ownership, in response to

dominant voices that easily take over. Hence, reflecting on who is involved and how different voices are brought together is part of making a spatial practice, searching for different ways to make a spatial difference.

(2) A position for a spatial practitioner, reflecting on my role

Not starting from a clear problem, that is definable towards a project, means, instruments, actors, it was difficult to define my role. I experienced my own role and position as very vague at start, and this shifted throughout the research. In *The Making of Hoepertingen* (case 2) the fieldwork started with just being and walking around in the village. I started talking on the street with passers-by, with a focus to understand how one perceives the daily living environment, what changed, where one would go to wanting to meet somebody 'by coincidence'. Apart from being a researcher from the faculty of architecture from the local and nearby university, I took position as a resident myself, growing up in a residential subdivision, moving to a small village and now living closer to a town. It was a position that supported me to practice a role, without a clear question or 'problem' to start from. Gergen (2015) explains how in an action research there are no neutral positions, because - when reversing the traditional claim that science is concerned with *what is*, to *what might become* -, one fundamentally addresses issues of value. The question of what '*might become*' is a personal one, namely: '*what future do I value?*'. In practice, I was an observer (mirroring, and describing what is there), an expert (reviewing policy documents and making a historic construction of the village via cartographic maps for instance), a resident/visitor (walking through the village with my children), a facilitator, organizer, moderator, etc. Furthermore, my own experiences obviously influenced many conversations, as people also asked me questions (and for instance being member of cooperative self-harvesting farm influenced discussions on proposals for commoning practices in the village).

We discussed how reflecting on who is involved, is a part of making a spatial practice. In the same way, the position of a spatial practitioner is defined through practicing. In the fieldwork, the dispersed actions gave me an insight in different perspectives and supported me in a role to distribute this understanding. Not looking for a method for how to intervene, I did not focus on the specific role of settings, spaces, materials. Not to say, these were not important. They supported me to create an opportunity to question the existing situation and to learn. I did lean on spatial knowledge, language and skills, but as these were no object

of research, they were just practiced. For now, I want to conclude that there is a knowledge framework and set of design methods that is part of me, and that supported me in a role to create this opportunity to learn, to assemble actors and places, to make sense and distribute an understanding; as a role for a spatial practitioner.

(3) The actions that are practiced?

Till (2009) refers to the role of conversations to make social connections that lead to unexpected consequences that are not possible through rational logic. I believe having conversations while walking can even strengthen these effects, as in addition it makes visible unexpected assumptions on what is public, what is accessible, what is underused. I practiced to create conversations in more formal (interviews) and informal ways (on the pavement), using maps, looking at pictures, walking in a garden, at a (kitchen)table. In conversations I experienced most clearly my lack of confidence, not having a clear role. At the same time, having conversations was a performative action, as I built confidence and trust while discussing other ways of how space is produced. I believe this confidence is an asset for all other actions (moderating, facilitating, visualizing, as well as prototyping, enacting) but at the same time, it is -again- only built up through practicing. In addition, I experienced how one-to-one conversations supported different actors to trust me as well as each other.

This energy generated through people acting out in their own environment should lead to a network of support, a critical reading of one's own surroundings and an involvement within the changes taking place. (Petrescu, 2005)

For Till, the key lies in the process being transformative for all parties, the architect included. To act transformative is to be understood in a system of responsibilities and social relations, not on a spatial level, as this would state the obvious. It is about changing ideas on how space is produced. Hence, the meeting places constructed in the live project and the orchard that was restored are 'transformative' in a way that actors took a different role and discussed responsibilities about use and maintenance. Actions were transformative for different actors in a different way. By prototyping, for instance, students brought in new skills that made villagers feel unqualified to take part, while students, on their part, felt uncertain themselves as they were asked not to make a plan but to start from tangible building materials.

2. Sharing and multiplying spatial practices

In chapter 12 we addressed the importance of making connections and to create a collective within the village and community. In addition, we now want to address the importance to network and create a collective in another direction, augmenting our own agency. As we believe the question *how to make a spatial practice*, should be a shared challenge for different spatial practitioners who can empower and learn from each other, by multiplying, sharing. This sharing and learning can support practices to be defined, roles to be explored, actions to be transformative and conversation to make connections.

Schneider (2016) addresses how the actions themselves, as well as reflections on roles, are elaborately described in literature, several handbooks and toolboxes describe protocols, attitudes, actions, roles, tools What still needs investigation as well as exploration, she continues, is a critical reflection towards the framework of ‘professional practices’ in itself, as what is the direction we are aiming at as a society, and then how will we, or a professional practice of architecture, get there? We still need to find ways to collectively define a more ‘useful’ position for architects or other spatial practitioners, Schneider concludes.

I learned about making a practice by experience, but created few opportunities to share my learning with other spatial practitioners. With ‘*The most beautiful villages of Haspengouw*’ we did set up a learning network. This network remained important and in each following case, we organized a moment to invite actors of this network. In this way we shared and tried to multiply the small and local experiences of the villages. We discussed how follow-up initiatives were more sustainable when local actors were able to connect the smaller actions to ambitions on a larger (more regional) scale. Regional projects and programs became less abstract through the concrete translations in a local context, and local initiatives become less fragile within the framework of a larger project.

In a way, there was also a multiplication of actions and approaches between the different cases, for instance we translated and repeated the game, or first experimented with pre-enacting future ideas before setting up the live project. These cases were only briefly discussed in part IV. Repeating, or multiplying these actions did not only implied more opportunities to practice, but also enriched findings on use and perceptions of public space.

3. The role of architecture education in making a spatial practice

Coming to our final reflections, based on my own experience being trained as an architect, my interactions with the architecture education and students in the past years, the live project *Hoepert(h)ings*, and a research stay during the live projects studio in the School of Architecture of the University of Sheffield. We want to address the potential of creating an opportunity to practice in architecture education; and reflect on the agency of live projects.

Live projects create real constraints and expectations towards and from a ‘real public’, but for Cerulli et.al. (2010) they can also question whether architectural education can take the form of a cultural practice, and if new forms of pedagogy can be a vehicle for trans-local production and exchange. To start, live projects push students into the world, so that they become agents acting both within and between fields of research, practice, education and real life. During the live projects, students do not only experience or learn from, but also contribute to the local community. Sometimes they themselves become agents of change, sometimes they only prepare the ground for others to become agents of change. Sometimes this is challenged through their presence: prompting a necessity or question for transparency, means or goals for instance.

“We are impressed by the open and participatory way you, as young student take on these questions. And the way you delegate responsibility. It is challenging towards our own way of decision making. This gives us a solid foundation to take this further and it is in general inspiring for us as a community.” (quote from member Somali Trust giving feedback on a students live project in Sheffield.)

Despite the temporal nature of the group’s engagement, common to the live project format is how they remain a small, but productive moment in a larger discussion. The critical attitude or awareness that is needed towards the (sometimes invisible) narratives and agendas of this larger discussion is for Schneider (personal communication, October 11, 2016) crucial, however often lacking. Cerulli (personal communication, November 2, 2016) argues how live projects can get easily disconnected with the point where and why projects are initiated, – as well as to how they will continue. In respect to what we investigated, the question is to what extent live projects can go beyond a logic of projects and market, and be a practice, considering the bigger system they work in.

These questions can be opposed to how, on the other hand, live projects are also characterized with aspects of ‘professionalism’, ‘enhancing (soft) skills’ and ‘employability’ (Butterworth, 2013). Live projects trigger practice, mimic practice, challenge practice, What we consider to be valuable is how live projects support an opportunity to practice a role and to build confidence. This was emphasized by many students taking part in Sheffield live projects. They furthermore note how live projects are nothing like practice (where the regular studio is much more ‘mimicking’ practice focusing on projects), but precisely allow them to question and explore new skills and roles. Live projects can be considered as opportunities to enact ‘publicness’ and besides being a valuable educational method, they have a potential to investigate new roles and practices as well as a better understanding of local issues.

Concluding these reflections on education in architecture, we want to refer to Masschelein (2016) who considers academic activities (research and education) as to be done in public, with a public and in relation with students. He emphasizes there are no predefined nor sociological categories of ‘students’, ‘professors’, ‘researchers’, these categories only emerge by what you do and say. Academic activities, he continues, should reclaim ‘sites’, ‘situations’ as a particular way that bring people and things together in a gathering where we try to be attentive for what we say-do-think. Being on site it is *the gaze of a stranger that will bring a certain insight*. Masschelein phrases Rancière to assert the importance to first see and then think about what you see, and hence to not see what you think, and thus to bring ‘your thinking to the test’. “*This gaze is not depending on method, but relying on discipline, it does not require a rich methodology, but practices which allow to expose ourselves. One example of such practice is walking. (...)*” (Masschelein, 2010) It is not enough to say you want to take a role, you have to create those conditions that make you uncertain. As then you take risks and are losing control, not knowing what is going to happen. As then you are receptive and attentive for what is going to happen. If you know what is going to happen, nothing ever happens. You can always start, you can always begin, you can always make statement, Masschelein concludes.

We balanced between - searching how to define democratic values about the process -, and - wanting to spatially improve the situation -, experiencing this as a source of doubt. This doubt created space, and was valuable for my own agency to enhance. In reflecting on my own role, I experienced how through practicing (in conversation, by walking) I built confidence. Confidence is something you only gain through practicing, it is not something you can pass on. It is what you

need to facilitate a complex process of decision making with multiple voices where there is not one certainty to be defined, but where different actors can be critically supported to collectively define a future image to which they want to contribute. We can consider this confidence as an important asset for all other actions, to articulate values and define directions. We started from an unclear or uncertain position, without a clear question or ‘problem’ definable towards a project, means, instruments, actors. But we started, and continued to practice.

Summary Chapter 14

The relevance of ‘our approach to stage a debate’ is to be found in practicing. We practiced an attitude and actions that are not unique, nor require a specific expertise, and can be performed by everybody. We did not define lessons learnt on how to stage a debate, as how to set up specific actions, with particular methods or tools and in a certain order or with a specific protocol. We concluded on how to create space for this learning, for this kind of practice, by sharing, multiplying, - creating a collective for spatial practitioners and defining directions we collaboratively aim at, exploring ways and practices (of architecture) to get there; enhancing our own spatial agency. Through a theoretical exploration as well as practical experiments we contributed to the extension of architecture as a critical ‘discipline through thinking’ and ‘practicing’.

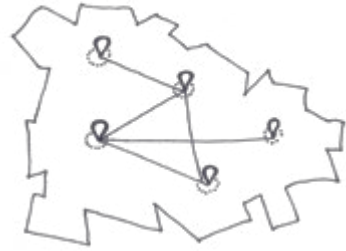
Not only the professional discipline is dominated by a logic of projects, with policy makers and clients that are pre-defining objectives, also in architecture education we should create more space for this learning and practicing. A learning that requires an attention and susceptibility to first see and then think about what you see; that requires space, time, attention, a critical attitude and trust to test, learn, fail and experiment; and to find your role as a professional. There is no right position to start from. You can always begin, there is no correct order, nor cycle, more important is to continuously connect action and reflection and find ways to do this.

(Endnotes)

1 Besides observing and participating in the Live project studio, the approach was to do a 'participatory literature review'. This meant I would discuss concepts and themes (e.g. spatial agency and transversal participation or the idea of 'desire') and how I could relate these concepts to my own fieldwork, with authors of these ideas (e.g. Doina Petrescu and Tatjana Schneider), assuming that on that moment, in that discussion these authors already had a different perspective on these ideas and new thoughts could emerge.

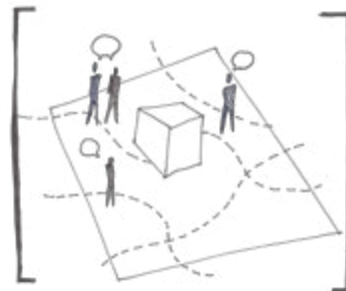
2 An European funded project and a collaboration of AAA (F), Brave New Alps (I), APTNV (RO), Myvillages (NL), University of Sheffield School of Architecture (UK). In the Eco Nomadic School for instance, different local practices form a school where the curriculum is organized around topics, needs and ambitions of these local projects. Böhm et. al. (2017) explain how the school reflects the projects that comprise it. It's informal, self-organised, de-centralised and geographically dispersed; non-hierarchical, peer-led and multi-lingual. Crucially, the roles of learner and teacher are interchangeable. The same applies to the roles of specialists and amateurs, locals and newcomers, doers and speakers, researchers and makers. The trans-local focus in this is essential. The Eco Nomadic School is about the near future, about how to act, and how to support each other, investigating the learning that gives agency to cope, resist and change current conditions. The idea that pedagogy and education do not exist solely in schools and in institutions, but also within the public realm is one of the starting points (Böhm, James and Petrescu, 2017).

to connect collective spaces
to value open space as public space
to rethink ownership and a practice of
commoning



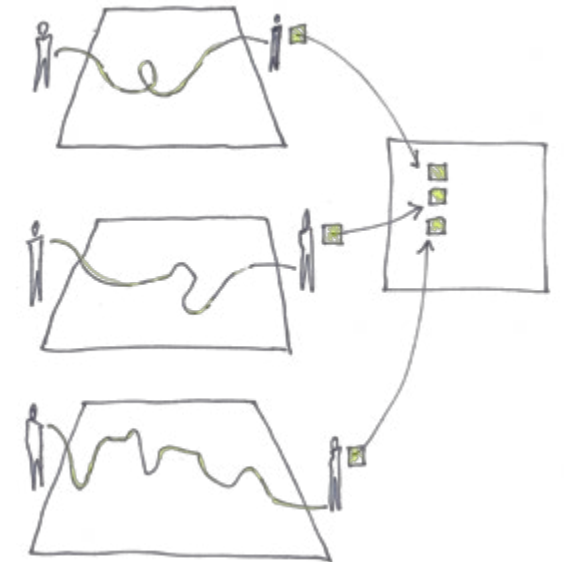
to connect local and
regional scales

to interrupt
to make things public
to create an event



to create a collective and
to make sense

to act transformative
to act relational, in conversation
to take a role



to share, multiply practices and
collectively define a frame of
reference

PART V

CONCLUSION

Epilogue

Throughout the fieldwork and while writing this thesis, it became clear how much this study was about investigating a position of architects, and by extension, exploring the role of spatial practitioners. We initially aimed to contribute to a better understanding of villages in Haspengouw, but the analysis in Part V is mainly guided by reflections on our role as spatial practitioners. We do not want to dismiss the challenges that villages face, nor the peculiarity of the context. We considered the need for nuanced images, ideas and approaches to counter certain effects: those of autonomous transformations, privatisation, fragmentation of open space, and increasing social diversity. The additional value is to be defined in terms of what we learned, the experience and approaches we explored, and not in terms of what we might hope would remain of our work in the village, or from drawing conclusions on what is generally changing in villages.

With reference to ideas on action research, the validity of our actions is thus not to be found in generalizability or replicability of findings. Our initial aim, to investigate how to create something that would remain when we leave the stage, reversed into a critical view towards our understanding of the situation that we want to change. It is not so much a matter of what you contribute when you leave the stage, but of what you learn by engagement: how to collaborate, be confident and take a role, and challenge the production of space and ideas of privatisation - making a practice in collaboration with all involved.

Our practice was rooted in the intention to intervene and to improve a situation, and as a practitioner we searched for ways how to do this. As a practice in examining inhibition, as an exercise to actively suspend a solution and being open towards a 'plurality of voices, whilst also trying, visualizing, prototyping. This appeared to be effective in coming to new insights and an understanding of what works and how to make this stronger. The themes and issues addressed, the follow-up initiatives, indicate directions in which we want changes to be enhanced, and in this way contribute to knowledge on what is happening in villages.

Concluding this epilogue, I want to refer to one of the interviews with a villager of Hoepertingen in preparation for the live project. As mentioned, there were villagers reluctant for different reasons, but there were also villagers who were enthusiastic. Some of the members of the nature organisation, for instance, were

opposed to the idea that students would work on or near the former railway track; others were in favor. I wanted to better understand their reasons and interviewed different villagers.

Marc was a member of the local nature organisation as a volunteer and working for the Flemish Agency for Nature and Forests. He asked me if he could choose the place for the interview. In a nearby natural park he showed me a small plant that was only there for a few years. Ten years previous, he read about a rare plant that was growing in this region but that disappeared decades ago. He then decided to take away some decimetres of the surface layer in a small area in the park, perhaps to expose deeper roots. For eight years nothing was growing there; today this plant is back. It is a small anecdote, and maybe an example of creating opportunity and hoping for what will happen. It was this hope that made him act, as well as the belief that giving the opportunity to what is already present and alive can make it stronger.

In aiming to contribute to a more democratic and equal society, discussing the public value, we use big words. We did not change very much, nor did things so differently, but intended to be critical towards who is sitting at the table and who is able or desires to tell the story, to question whose voices we are supporting, as a neutral position does not exist. We searched to create space, to investigate underlying assumptions and resistance, not in the least our own. In this way, we learned that the confidence that is gained through practicing allows you to start from your values instead of from the authority of your expertise, and this invites others to do the same.

(...)Your playing small does not serve the world. There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. (...) As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.'
(Marianne Williamson, 1992)

Reflections for future research

We will now define reflections on three aspects of what we learned about: (1) villages, and the public; (2) learning, sharing and making a spatial practice; and finally, on (3) an open-ended approach of action research in a field of architecture. We will formulate these reflections as perspectives for spatial practitioners, who can be (1) 'everyone' who has a stake in how space will be transformed or is produced in villages (an administrator, villager, policy-maker); (2) those who are or want to be professionally involved (like students), crossing disciplinary and interdisciplinary practices engaged in studying and transforming space; and finally (3) researchers.

In this way we hope to complement different aspect of our research question with perspectives for future research. We define these perspectives *to create (...)*

(1) The public in villages

(...) hybrid and nuanced images on the public in villages.

(...) opportunities for people to collectively understand and reflect what is changing and imagine a near future, and further explore the role of open, informal space in a practice of commoning.

We did not make concluding statements on what is generally changing in villages. Obviously, a village is spatially different than a city or a suburban residential subdivision, as they are differently governed (with other instruments and capacities for spatial policy) and there are less inhabitants. It remains hard to define how this affects the production of space. In relation to *what is public*, we argue that challenges are equally complex in tackling issues of privatisation and making a diverse society. Literature on public space is dominated by an urban perspective and refers to urban examples. What is needed are more hybrid and nuanced images that go beyond idyllic ideas of peace and tranquility and a dominant frame of reference of the once autonomous village and other hardwired assumptions on how a village works or should work (e.g. in respect to social relations and ideas of anonymity, social interference). In relation to public space, we learned how it were not the formal publicly owned spaces, but the more informal and open spaces, in transition to surrounding fields connected by small roads, that are interesting sites for villagers to meet and to create a sense of ownership, to practice new types of commoning. There is no scarcity of potentially public spaces, and they do not need

to be programmed or formally designed. What is needed are opportunities to take ownership, allowing others to join in, strengthening existing collaborations, using different resources. Staging a debate, we started from an understanding of what is there, from small actions, addressing a desire to change, assembling a collective to define a future image, and already contributed to 'another image of villages'. The way that landscape is a valuable key for villagers to identify with their daily environment, as well as how it is a potential asset in exploring other approaches for villages, is something to be further explored in future practices. In addition theories and practices of commoning have greater potential to understand the dynamic of a village.

(2) Making a spatial practice

(...) moments and ways to multiply, share, and collaboratively make sense.

More than making concrete statements based on our understanding of what is changing and happening in villages, and defining solutions that can or should be applied elsewhere, we consider these outcomes as a result of augmented spatial agency. Making a spatial practice engages with the idea of spatial agency in two ways: (1) as enhancing everyone's spatial agency, empowering villagers to engage in their spatial environment in ways previously unknown; and (2) as empowering spatial practitioners, whose role, practice or own 'agency' can be enhanced by working together, by creating space to question roles, and sharing knowledge and ideas. We addressed how people do not lack knowledge, skills, nor dispositions, but often lack the opportunity to enact their citizenship in an open democratic experience. Furthermore, it is a matter of creating an opportunity to practice an attitude, skills and roles, of crossing disciplinary boundaries and fields of research, practice, education and real life. What still needs investigation and exploration is a critical reflection towards the frame of reference of spatial practices itself. We need ways to collectively define our position and create moments for learning and multiply our practices. Exploring this can makes us more resilient and confident, to act in an open process with multiple voices, where there is not one certainty to be defined, but where different actors can be critically supported to collectively define a future image to which they want to contribute. By rethinking the role of spatial practitioners, beyond a logic of projects and markets, we can add knowledge to architecture as a critical discipline, not only 'through thinking', but also through testing and acting.

(3) Open ended approach

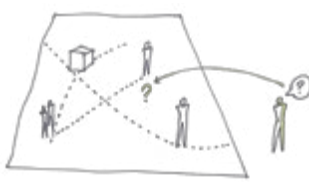
(...) an open-ended methodology combining action research with design-based methods.

The methodology of action research urged us to be explicit about underlying assumptions; this was a learning process in itself. The choice for participatory action research provided a frame of reference related to democratic values about the process. The challenge is to further explore and learn how to define a 'spatial frame of reference' in order to learn from an understanding that emerges from the situation, for instance in respect to ecological or societal values in relation to a densification of housing tissues, or defragmentation of open space. Connecting different understandings of the same situation to these points of reference, can support us to come to a contribution of knowledge on this matter. In this study, I experienced an internal resistance to define these points of reference, as I thought, these points came from a bias in my thinking, being too solution focused and wanting to 'fix' something. For now, after finishing this first action-reflection loop, I would define these points of reference more strongly nested in a knowledge structure on commons for instance, and related to values in respect to ecology and open space. In addition, I would more explicitly describe the situation using the (design) methods and language that is part of my practice. Not to focus on these methods as object of research, but to use them more deliberately to describe an understanding.

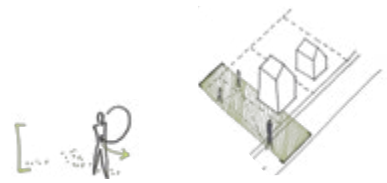
Where action research is more 'immersive and descriptive' and design-based methods are more 'targeted' (Foth, Axup, 2006), we wanted our practice to be 'transformative'. Acting for transformation refers to the possibility to reconsider all 'building blocks'; roles, actions, tools, problems as well as solutions. We further want to practice these skills of making generative images and asking generative questions, as images and questions that are transformative in themselves, including a future-forming orientation. It is this practice itself that entails the long term, meaning it is in this engagement and practicing that we continuously learn. It is in this open-ended approach that we need to further explore our role, defining strategies to enter and leave this continuous flow of action and reflection.



I. problem statement & research question



II. methodology

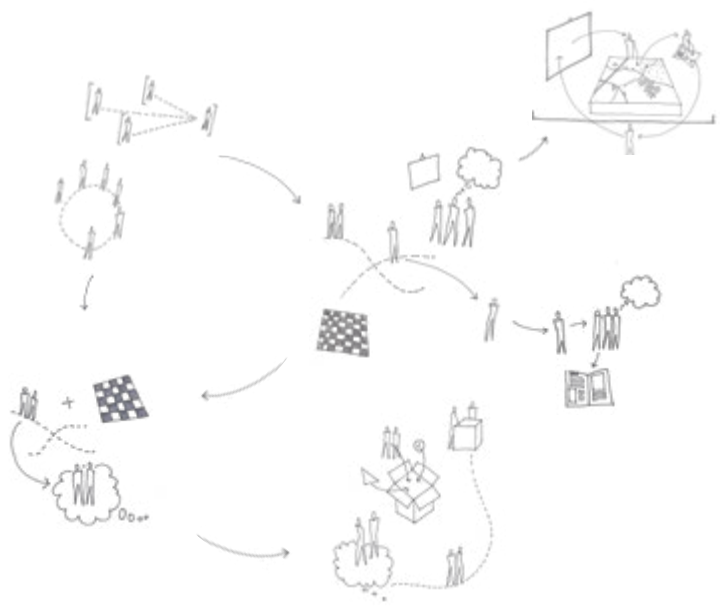


III. conceptual track

IV. fieldwork track

V. lessons learnt

What is public? How to make a spatial practice in changing villages?



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INVENTORY

Inventory of working material

This inventory lists different types of working material that was produced in order to support the actions performed in the three main cases. This inventory does not list the material produced in reflecting and writing on the fieldwork, in other words, the material produced when making this thesis. This latter material is included as illustrations throughout the text. This list resembles the system and principle of a list of references; as a list of ingredients. In order to better sense the flavor, the following fiches show pictures of the original material.

The material is thus divided in different types:

- Documents (Doc.): e.g. original application, reports with strategic statements or planned scenario, design or project briefs, management contract, etc.
- Visualizations (Vis.): maps, diagrams, drawings, etc.
- Artefacts and conversation pieces (Arte.): e.g. gameboard, model, collages, posters, etc.
- Online communication (e-comm.): e.g. facebookpage, blog, newsletters, etc.

Case 1. The most beautiful village of Haspengouw

Doc.1.1. initial application, Projectfiche Mooiste dorpen van Haspengouw.

Doc.1.2. Letter to mayors and members of the Local Action Group (LAG) Leader.

Doc.1.3. reports of workshops and map-it sessions shared with all participants.

Doc.1.4. project fiches submitted for Leaderfunding based on different ideas that were the result of workshop 2.

Doc.1.5. reports for financial and substantive declaration submitted at the Leader secretariat.

Vis.1.1. map of projects and table of themes listed based on the bilateral conversations with local administrators and organisations preparing workshop 1

Vis.1.2. diagram showing connections between different actors in Haspengouw based on projects

Vis.1.3. diagram clustering organisations and actors we met in Haspengouw in different governmental levels and policy domains

Vis.1.4. map locating different projects of the participating organisations and municipalities or collaborations that were mentioned

Vis.1.5. diagram illustrating the policy domains that organisations address (based on their interpretation) and their VTE capacity

Vis.1.6. diagrams visualising the situation, approach and results of de 9 different projects submitted for the project fair

Vis.1.7. diagrams visualising the impact the project will have on landscape and built space; on involvement of professionals and volunteers; on meetings between villagers and visitors; and finally on sustainability in relation to production and resources. Based on questionnaire answered by the project coordinator

Vis.1.8. collages visualising an aspirational result of the project, and how the project will change its environment spatially.

e-comm.1.1. four newsletters send to all members of the LAG and new actors and stakeholders we met or were referred to in the project.

e-comm.1.2. blog reporting on the project, informing and documenting the project <http://mooiste-dorpen-haspengouw.blogspot.com/>

arte.1.1. diagrams of the bilateral conversation round and wordclouds based on the mission statements of different organisations taking part used in workshop 1.

arte.1.2. background maps with results of map-it session and ideas mapped in workshop 2 of projects or actors that could be awarded with the label.

arte.1.3. background maps with results of map-it session and ideas mapped in workshop 3 of how the label can be an instrument to support different projects or actors.

arte.1.4. posters visualizing different projects participating in the project fair to be awarded with the label

arte.1.5. background maps with result of final map-it session in two groups on the project fair, co-organised by the Leader-coordinator, questioning how to take this further

arte.1.6. final publication documenting the project De Mooiste dorpen van Haspengouw https://issuu.com/sarahmartensz/docs/haspengouw_publicatie_preview

Case 2. The Making of Hoepertingen

Doc.2.1. discussion note reporting results of observational fieldwork and formulating a starting question for ‘The Making of Hoepertingen’

Doc.2.2. scenarios of the game discussed with colleagues (researchers)

Doc.2.3. invitation letter and flyer informing residents on the project and inviting them to participate in the game

Vis.2.1. drawings with sections and notes summarizing the observational fieldwork and conversations on the pavement

Vis.2.2. maps visualizing (1) a functional analysis of the village; (2) remaining open buildable plots; (3) orchards and meadows; and (4) remaining and closed footpaths (based on the atlas of neighbourhood roads (atlas der buurtwegen, 1841) (made by Barbara Roosen)

Vis.2.3. diagrams visualising a typology of neighbourhoods and uses of plot (position of house, relation with neighbours or surrounding open space (made by Barbara Roosen)

Vis.2.4. a reduction of cartographic maps from different time periods (1771-1777, Ferraris, 1847-1853, Vandermaelen, and topographic maps from 1934, 1960, 1976 and 2005)

Vis.2.5. gps-track of the route each team followed with pictures taken by the participants

Vis.2.6. sketches based on a reduction of cartographic maps; on what villagers told us in interviews and while walking; and based on planning documents and brochures of the local history club.

e-comm.2.1. facebookpage ‘Maak het dorp, Hoepertingen’ <https://www.facebook.com/MaakHetDorpHoepertingen>

e-comm.2.2. blogposts on <http://mooiste-dorpen-haspengouw.blogspot.com/>

arte.2.1. model with aerial picture to indicate locations children chose after guiding me through the village showing the places they like, that scare them, or that they avoid.

arte.2.2. gameboards with a map with game-locations and 'game tasks' set up as flowcharts with questions and space for a drawing

arte.2.3. collages made by students visualizing the proposal that participants discussed on site in response to a game-task

arte.2.4. model used in the final debate indicating all game locations

arte.2.5. summarizing posters clustering all collages for the different game locations and showing background analyses

Case 3. Hoepert(h)ings

Doc.3.1. Call for projects spread via members of the LAG and all participants of the 'Mooiste dorpen van Haspengouw, and spread via their communication platforms

Doc.3.2. Proposals from different organisations to be a live project client

Doc.3.3. submission for the opalis challenge, a design contest for recuperated building materials, (see also the jury report <https://www.vai.be/nl/nieuws/de-winnaars-van-de-opalis-challenge-zijn-gekend>)

Doc.3.4. Design brief for the live projects outlining set-up and practical agreements for the live project

Doc.3.5. Management contract between the municipality of Borgloon and Hasselt University agreeing on creative property and management measures

Vis.3.1. flyer and leaflets informing residents on the project and inviting them to participate in design sessions

Vis.3.2. leaflet explaining the 'Hoepert(h)ings' (the live project constructions) located on a map made by villagers outlining a route for walking

Vis.3.3. map showing different sites of the live project and articulating different viewpoints and ideas for the fruit track

vis.3.4. visualising and keeping track of who was involved

e-comm.3.1. facebookpage 'Maak het dorp, Hoepertingen' <https://www.facebook.com/MaakHetDorpHoepertingen>

e-comm.3.2. <http://www.future-is-today.be/category/t-hoepertingske/>

arte.3.1. folder with the walking route and situating the different interventions

arte.3.2. fictional newspaper made as an instrument for documenting, critically reflecting and writing stories on future ideas, also used as billboards on site, informing passers-by

arte.3.3. built constructions on site

arte.3.4. a visible 'donkeyroute' continuing the graphics of painted donkeys on the site of the castle in the streets of Hoepertingen



AANMELDINGSFORMULIER PROJECTCONCEPT

(Verdere richtlijnen: zie handleiding)

1. Projectnaam: **De mooiste dorpen van Haspengouw**

2. Aanvrager (promotor): **Provinciale Hogeschool Limburg (PHL)**
Partners: **Stebo vzw**

3. Situering van het project: **het volledige Leadergebied Haspengouw**

4. Projectperiode:

Vermoedelijke startdatum: **01.02.2011**

fase 1: voorbereiding: start 01.02.2011;

fase 2: workshops: start 01.05.2011;

fase 3: uitwerking: start 01.07.2011;

fase 4: verspreiding: start 01.02.2012;

Vermoedelijke einddatum: **30.06.2012**

5. Maatregelen ontwikkelingsplan:

HOOFDMAATREGEL (Nr.): **2: Het verhogen en versterken van de leefbaarheid van plattelandsdorpen**

Submaatregelen (Nr.): **1: Het versterken van het fysieke en sociale woonklimaat**

6. Projectbeschrijving:

Het Plattelandsbeleidsplan van de provincie Limburg stelt o.a. dat 'de leefbaarheid van het platteland achteruit gaat door de teloorgang van de identiteit van dit platteland'. M.a.w. landelijke dorpen (in Limburg) lijken alsmaar meer op elkaar en dit heeft een negatieve invloed op de (sociale en economische) dynamiek van deze dorpen. In het PDPO project 'Naar interactieve dorpsontwikkelingsvisies voor Haspengouw', dat liep van 2007 tot 2009, hebben we bewoners van landelijke dorpen (Horpmaal en Rosmeer) van deze teloorgang proberen bewust te maken door

samen met hen richtlijnen op te stellen over hoe er in de toekomst in hun dorp gebouwd zou moeten worden. Het resultaat van dit project was een draaiboek voor het participatief uitwerken van dorpsontwikkelingsvisies. Eens deze visies opgesteld waren, bleek de bewustwording echter stil te vallen. Het opzet van dit voorstel is dan ook het stimuleren van een langdurig engagement bij bewoners voor het bewaken van de ruimtelijke eigenheid van hun streek.

Om dit te bereiken wil het project drie zaken doen: een Haspengouw-netwerk uitbouwen, beeldkwaliteitsplannen introduceren en een 'mooiste dorpen van Haspengouw'-label uitwerken. Allemaal geïnspireerd op internationale voorbeelden. Het opzet van het netwerk is kijken hoe bestaande verenigingen omgaan met ruimtelijke identiteit om dan op basis van gemeenschappelijke interesses een overkoepelende netwerkstructuur uit te bouwen en een gezamenlijke activiteitenagenda op te stellen. Eens operationeel zal het netwerk kennis (over ruimtelijke eigenheid) verzamelen en verspreiden, knelpunten in kaart brengen en antwoorden op deze knelpunten trachten te formuleren. Het opzet van de beeldkwaliteitsplannen is het aanreiken van een instrument aan ambtenaren ruimtelijke ordening om met bewoners over ruimtelijke eigenheid van hun dorp na te kunnen denken en hen te kunnen stimuleren om op een bewuste manier te bouwen / verbouwen. Het opzet van het label, ten slotte, is het vinden van een stimulans om zowel bewoners als ambtenaren te stimuleren om in het netwerk te stappen en beeldkwaliteitsplannen op te stellen.

Het project zal over 4 fases lopen. Tijdens fase 1, voorbereiding, zullen op basis van gesprekken met een 20-tal Haspengouw deskundigen krijtlijnen afgebakend worden voor de invulling van het netwerk en label. Tijdens fase 2, workshops, zullen een drietal workshops georganiseerd worden, verspreid over Haspengouw, waarin op basis van deze krijtlijnen, het netwerk en het label verder uitgewerkt zullen worden. Deze workshops zullen gericht zijn op verenigingen en ambtenaren. Tijdens fase 3, uitwerking, zal dit netwerk en label operationeel gemaakt worden en zal het draaiboek uit het eerder vermelde PDPO project herschreven worden in functie van het participatief uitwerken van beeldkwaliteitsplannen. Opnieuw zullen de deskundigen een cruciale rol spelen. Tijdens fase 4, verspreiding, zullen het netwerk en het label aan het brede publiek voorgesteld worden.

7. Kostenraming – Financieel plan

Vul onderstaande tabel in met de jaarlijkse en totale kosten.

→ Promotoren die BTW plichtig zijn voor dit project (en de BTW dus kunnen recupereren) vullen de projectkosten exclusief BTW in.

→ Publiekrechtelijke promotoren (gemeente, provincie, gewest, andere) vullen de projectkosten exclusief BTW in.

→ Alle andere promotoren vullen de projectkost **inclusief BTW** in.





Uitnodiging aan alle Haspengouwse dorpen: leren, reflectie en netwerk



In Haspengouw worden allerlei initiatieven genomen die het streekgebonden karakter versterken. Er wordt gewandeld, gekookt, erfgoed verzorgd, natuur onderhouden, ... en in tal van deze activiteiten spelen bewoners en vrijwilligers een rol.

We willen de diversiteit en dynamiek van deze initiatieven in de kijker zetten om van elkaar te leren. Stel je kandidaat en kom je meest geslaagde initiatief voorstellen op onze projectmarktdag. Je project kan er rekenen op een boeiende reflectie van experts, academici, en andere enthousiaste trekkers. De verschillende projecten worden door ons in posters samengevat, belicht vanuit een aantal criteria (vb. duurzaamheid, betrokkenheid, meervoudig gebruik, ...) en gebundeld in een publicatie.

Met je deelname word je bovendien lid van het lerend netwerk 'De Mooiste Dorpen van Haspengouw' en kan het 'mooiste' project rekenen op onze ondersteuning tot aan de volgende projectmarktdag (februari 2016).

Voor wie, welke projecten en hoe deelnemen?

Zowel organisaties, verenigingen, bureaus, als lokale ambtenaren mogen zich kandidaat stellen met een initiatief dat op elke mogelijke manier bijdraagt aan de streekgebondenheid van hun dorp. Waarbij het in de eerste plaats gaat om het creëren van een platform waar ideeën worden uitgewisseld over wat mensen bezig houdt. Over wat verloren ging en behouden bleef, over wat er bij kwam en welke mogelijkheden er nu zijn voor het dorp als plek en lokale samenleving.

- Dus:
1. stel je kandidaat voor 31 december 2013 via mail
 2. in de loop van januari, nemen we contact op en brengen we je project in beeld
 3. stel je project voor op de projectmarktdag op 28 februari 2014

blog <http://mooiste-dorpen-haspengouw.blogspot.com/>
 contact Sarah Martens: sarah.martens@uhasselt.be, Tel. 0479 93 54 22



met steun van



Europees Landbouwfonds voor Plattelandsontwikkeling: "Europa investeert in zijn platteland"

Doc.1.6 Call for projects spread via members of the LAG and all participants of workshops or other actors we met in course of the project

e-comm.1.1. four newsletters sent to all members of the LAG and new actors and stakeholders we met or were referred to in the project.

workshop 2

Op 14 maart waren we te gast in het Kasteel Mariagaarde voor een tweede stap in het workshoptraject. Rond een topografische kaart van de twee gekozen casegebieden; Riemst en de regio Tongeren-Borgloon, gingen we aan de slag met de MAP-it toolkit. De toolkit bestaat uit een open en uitbreidbare set van iconen en 'spelregels' die deelnemers ondersteunt om hun ideeën visueel in kaart te brengen. Vooraleer na te denken over concrete, collectieve acties; het doel van deze sessie, zochten we naar kernwaarden of vertrekposities van waaruit we verder aan de slag konden.

vertrekwaarden



Landelijke regio's ondergaan heel wat veranderingen en staan voor allerlei uitdagingen. In Haspengouw willen we **bewoners betrekken** om het karakter van deze bijzondere streek in die veranderingen te versterken en op een **duurzame** manier de uitdagingen aan te gaan. Hierbij staat de leefbaarheid van de dorpen centraal. En vertrekken we van het authentieke patrimonium; niet enkel de gebouwen, maar evenzeer de boomgaarden, de dorpszichten, de open ruimte, ... Het **'verruimde erfgoed'** zoals het door deelnemers werd benoemd. Het versterken of behoud van dit erfgoed mag een **dynamiek** niet in de weg staan en moet ruimte laten aan ondernemen en initiatief. Met aandacht voor het zoeken naar een **harmonie** tussen actoren, tussen sectoren en beleidsdomeinen, tussen behoud en vernieuwing. Open ruimte kent veel claims en belangen. Willen we acties nemen die de 'leefbaarheid' ten goede komen, dan wordt deze bepaald door de kwaliteiten van mensen onder elkaar. Acties moeten geborgen zijn, gedragen in een duurzaam perspectief.

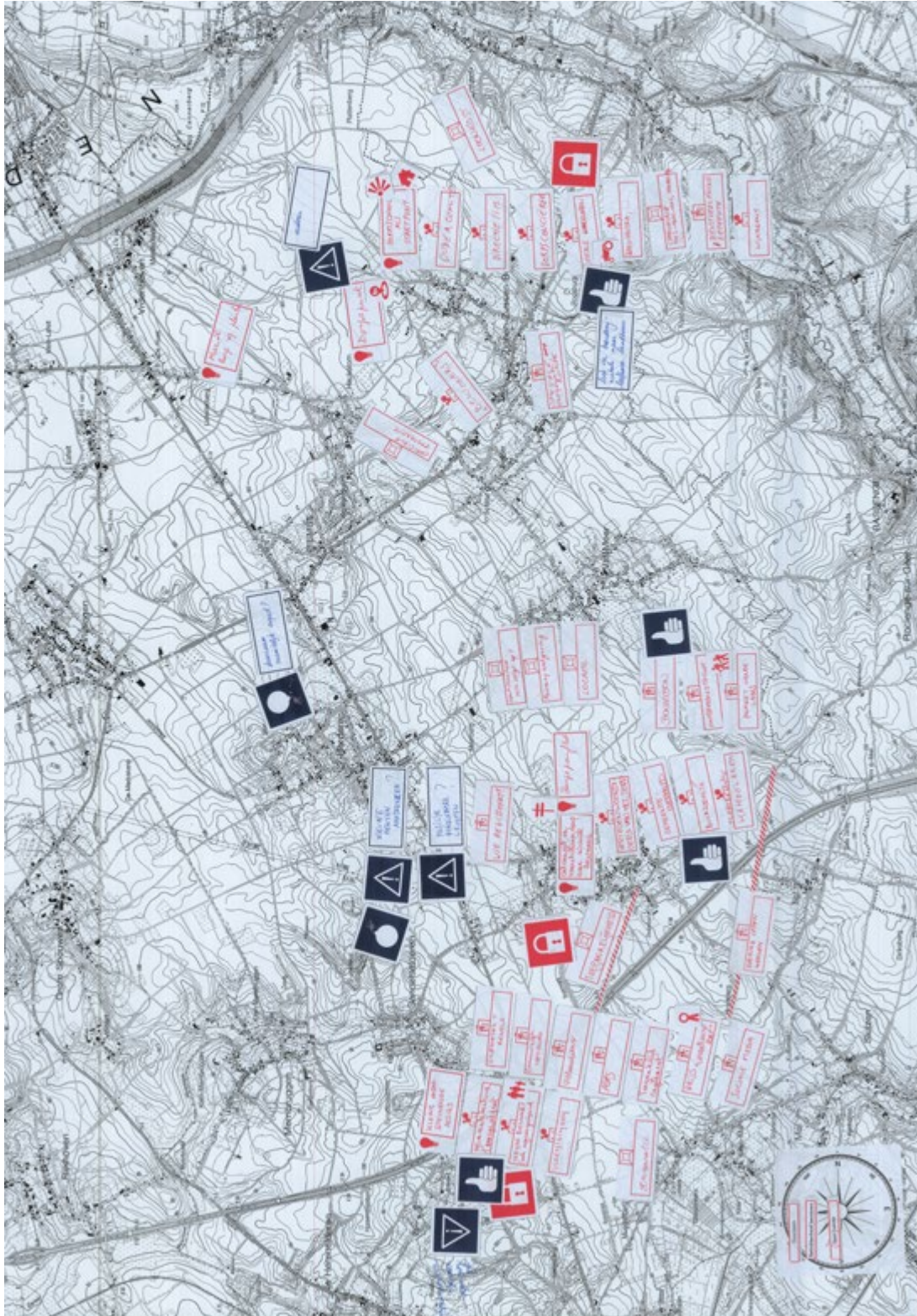
acties

Vervolgens verzamelden we ideeën rond mogelijke acties om het label **'Mooiste dorpen van Haspengouw'** te behalen. Welke initiatieven kan je nemen om bewoners te betrekken en te werken aan 'leefbare landbouw' en 'leefbaar wonen' in een landelijke dorp, in een landelijke omgeving en in de streek Haspengouw? Als eerste manier om deze acties te stimuleren willen we ze laten aansluiten op de eigen ambities en speerpunten van de verschillende organisaties aan de tafel. We willen ze dus samen bedenken en niet ontwerpen binnen vastomlijnde of aangereikte (beleids)instrumenten.

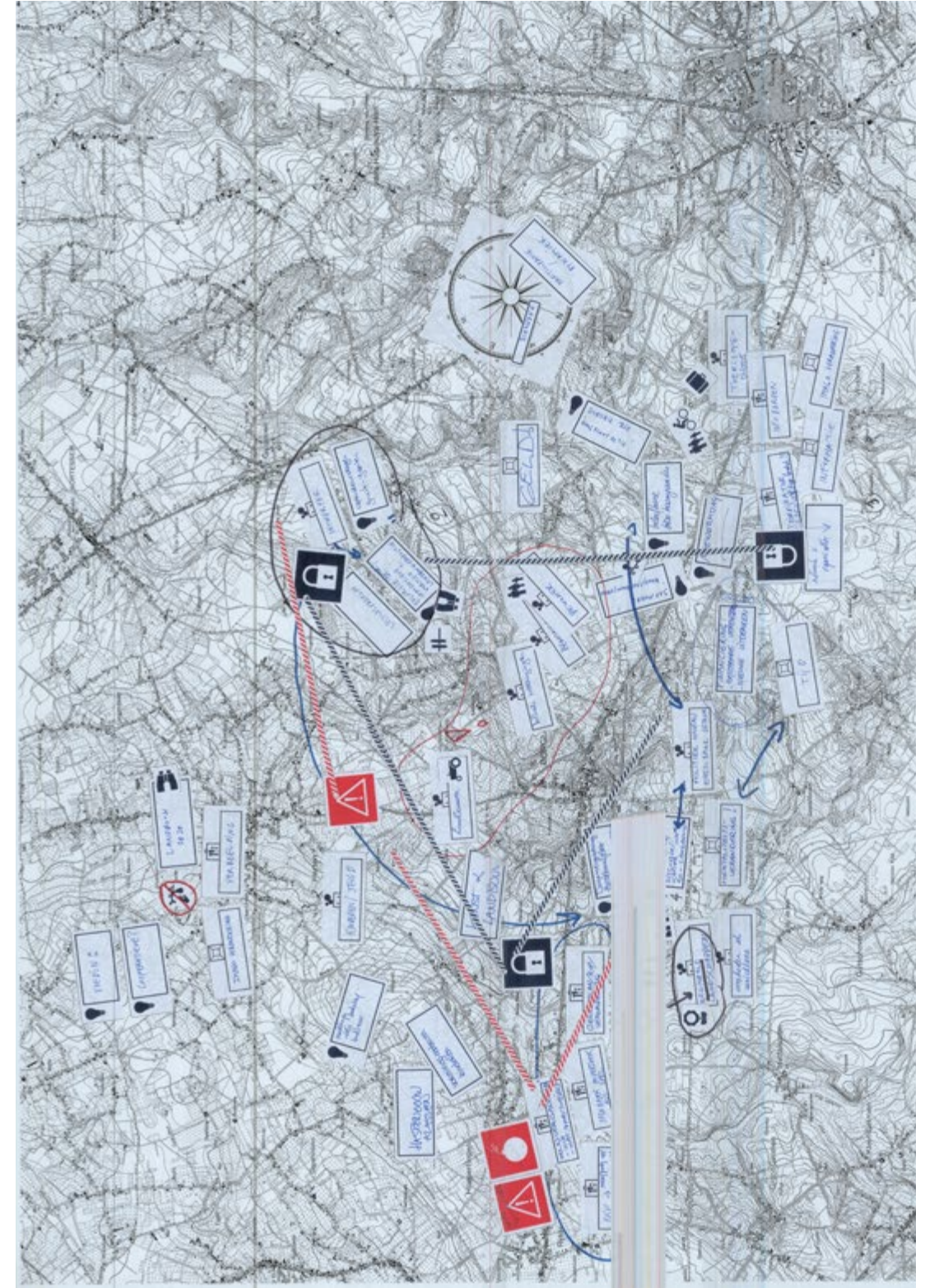
...ren samen willen aanpakken. ... op 'leefbare landbouw' en ... of veranderingsprocessen die ... rond de tafel zijn vooral in de ... u actief. Als casegebied werd ... garen, Gingelom.



Case 1 The Most Beautiful Villages of Haspengouw



arte.1.2. background maps with results of map-it session and ideas mapped in workshop 2 of projects or actors that could be awarded with the label



Case 2 The Making of Hoepertingen

LOCATIE BINNENGEBIED

Hoe kunnen we de kwaliteiten van dit binnengebied bewaren en versterken?

We vragen spelers na te denken over:

- Wat zijn eigenlijk de kwaliteiten van deze plek?
- Hoe kunnen we die kwaliteiten dan bewaren of versterken in verschillende scenario's (volledig verkaveld, gedeeltelijk verkaveld, andere collectieve woonvorm) Hoe kan er in de verschillende scenario's omgegaan worden met privé en collectieve tuin, water, parkeren, composteren, ...?
- Op welke manier kan de inrichting van het binnengebied toch meerwaarde blijven geven aan bestaande woningen tuinen. (bv. extra toegang) Relatie privé-tuin, wandelweg, speelzone, ...



LOCATIE HOOGSTAMBOOMGAARD



Hoe kunnen we deze hoogstamboomgaard inrichten als speel- en ontmoetingsplek?

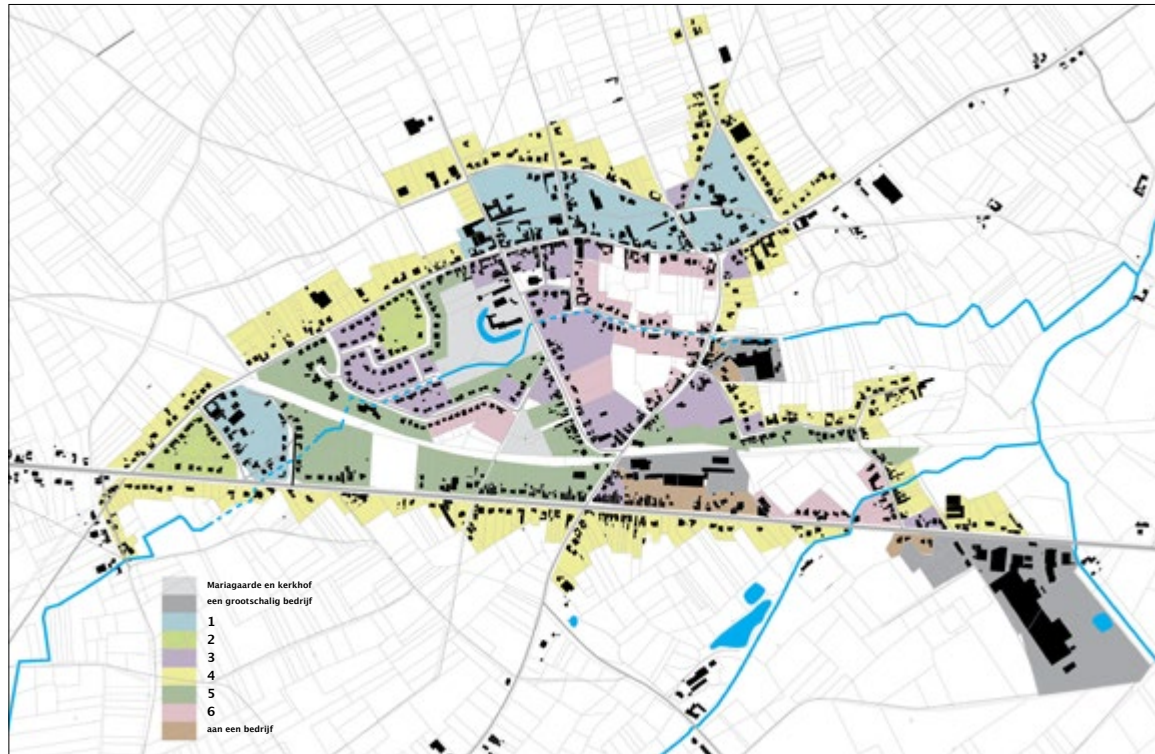
We vragen spelers na te denken over:

- Wat er kan gebeuren op deze plek? Relatie met het fietrouthenetwerk/toerisme. Andere speelplekken. Kan het ook een ontmoetingsruimte worden voor oudere Hoepertingenaren. (gebruik)
- Wat wil je zelf komen doen op deze plek. Hoe zou je er aan willen bijdragen? (beheer) (bv. in samenwerking met RL: sapmobiel, hagendorser)
- Hoe deze plek verbonden is met de rest van het dorp? Hoe kan je er naar toe fietsen, wandelen. (weefsel) (+ stilstaan bij grenzen van het dorp?)
- Hoe kunnen we deze plek inrichten? (ontwerp) (met behulp van opdrachten, attributen, ...)

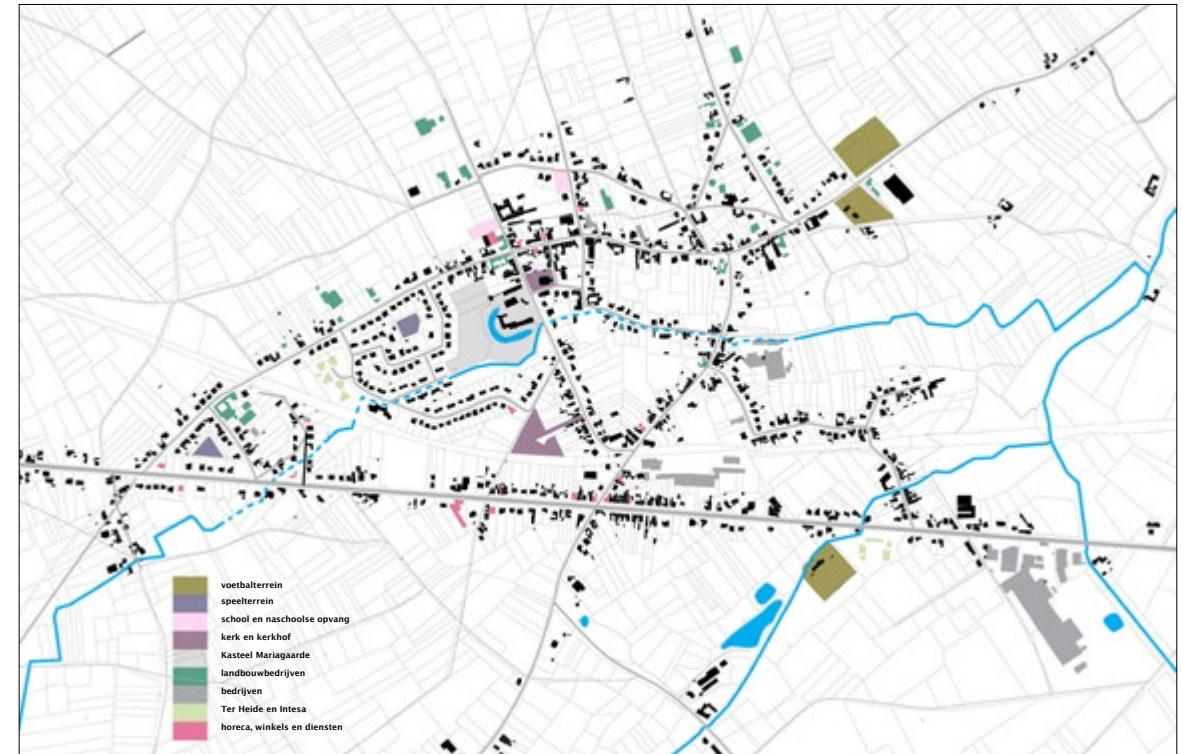


Doc.2.1. two pages of the discussion note reporting results of observational fieldwork, made by Barbara Roosen and discussed with Stebo, VLM and city of Borgloon, before defining the gametasks.

type omgeving

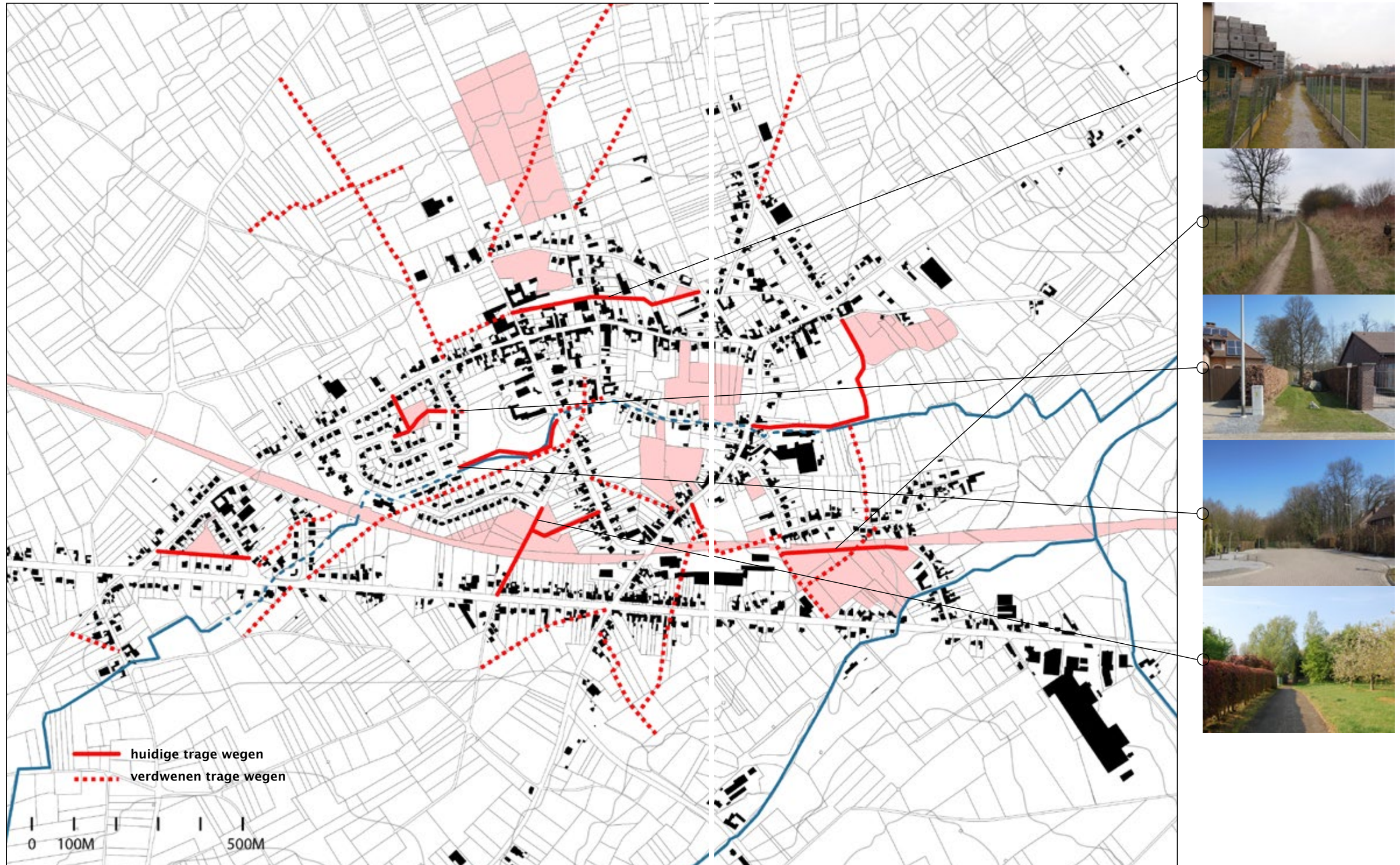


voorzieningen



<p>1 Een gemengde buurt: De buurt is een langzaam gegroeid. Er staan zowel nieuwe als oude woningen. Naast woningen zijn er ook lokale bedrijven, een boerderij, enkele kleine landbouwpercelen, enz. De percelen hebben verschillende formaten.</p> <p>type omgeving</p>	<p>2 Een verkaveling rond een buurtpleintje: De percelen grenzen achteraan aan een gemeenschappelijke (publieke) ruimte. De percelen hebben ongeveer dezelfde grootte.</p>	<p>3 Huisje - Tuintje: De buurt is een verkavelingswijk. De achterzijde en zijkantten grenzen aan een woonperceel. Alle percelen zijn ongeveer even groot.</p>	<p>4 Aan de rand van een woongebied: De achterzijde van mijn perceel grenst aan landbouw of natuurgebied.</p>	<p>5 Aan een groene structuur, gemeenschapsvoorzieningen of een recreatiegebied: Het perceel ligt midden in een woongebied en grenst aan een publieke of semi-private ruimte.</p>	<p>6 Aan potentieel verkavelingsgebied: De buurt bestaat uit woningen die een binnengebied omranden. De percelen grenzen achteraan aan een open gebied, vaak een weiland, boomgaard of akker.</p>	
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<p>a Een vierkantshoeve</p> <p>type kavels</p>	<p>b Smal en diep perceel De voorgevel staat (bijna) tegen de rooilijn. Achteraan zijn er koteertjes of een uitbreiding.</p>	<p>c Woon-werk perceel Een groot perceel met een vrijstaande woning. Achteraan staat een loods, kleine onderneming of stal. Achter de loods bevindt zich eventueel een veld, boomgaard,</p>	<p>d Diep en breed perceel - vrijstaande villa. De tuin is onderverdeeld in verschillende zones (terras, gazon en boomgaard, etc.)</p>	<p>e Groot perceel - vrijstaande villa. De achtertuin is één grote gazon.</p>	<p>f 6. Dubbel perceel - vrijstaande villa. De tuin is uitgebreid met een naastliggend perceel</p>	<p>g Verkavelingsperceel: relatief klein perceel - vrijstaande of halpopen bebouwing</p>
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Case 2 The Making of Hoepertingen



arte.2.1. model with aerial picture to indicate locations children chose after guiding me through the village showing the places they like, that scare them, or that they avoid

arte.2.2. gameboards with a map with game-locations and 'game tasks' set up as flowcharts with questions and space for a drawing

doc.2.3. invitation letter and flyer spread by *Kasteel Mariagaarde* informing residents on the project and inviting them to participate in the game



MAAK HET DORP HOEPERTINGEN

fenomenen

- a In het uitwerken van je voorstel mag je er van uit gaan dat mensen nog meer in de baan zijn van een recycling-, voor- of afvalmarkt, lokale productie, zelf doen, delen van dingen en energie, repareren en herbruik, ...
- b Hou in het uitwerken van je voorstel rekening met de invloed op habitats van dieren en planten.
- c Geef in het uitwerken van je opdracht ook ruimte aan water. Gebruik je ambitie om schade door regen-, grond- en rivierwater te voorkomen.
- d Hou in het uitwerken van je voorstel rekening met 'fouf gebuik' of overlast. Ga creatief om met regen, control, bomen, gras, ... Denk ook aan de mogelijkheid om door middel van verlichting een bepaald soort gebruik te veroorzaken of juist te voorkomen.
- e Maak in het vervullen van je opdracht gebruik van het groeiende toerisme en de mogelijkheden die het kan bieden. Hou ook rekening met de conflicten die hiermee gepaard kunnen gaan.
- f Hou rekening met de topografie en natuurlijke dynamieken. Gebruik je ambitie om historische identiteit van Hoepertingen te versterken.
- g Denk bij het uitwerken van je voorstel aan 'verrukte wonen' in je dorp. Probeer om flexibel rekening te houden met uiteenlopende behoeftes van bewoners naar zorg: van groot naar klein, jong naar oud, ...
- h Zoek een manier om ook nieuwe Hoepertingseigenaars in je voorstel te betrekken. De typische identiteit en eigen cultuur van een dorp groeit en verandert met haar inwoners; met leders achtergrond, interesse en bezorgdheden.

1									
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perceus 1 01.06.13

perceus 2 01.06.13

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perceus 2 01.09.13

AMBITIES

Het karakter van Hoepertingen wordt sterk bepaald door een uitgestrektheid, mooie zichten en de aanwezigheid van streekeigen landschapselementen (boomgaarden, weilanden, het oude fruitspoor, ...). Het landschap ontwaakt zich voortdurend onder invloed van het milieu, landbouw en andere activiteiten. De omgeving verandert snel en deze landschapselementen staan onder druk. Op welke manier kan dit landschappelijk erfgoed nog steeds een betekenis hebben? Hoe kan het worden vernieuwd, met welke functies kan het worden verzoend?

I. VERSTERKEN LANDSCHAPSELEMENTEN

Zoek uit hoe het fruitspoor een nieuwe rol kan spelen in het dorp. Hoe kan het de streekeigen identiteit van Hoepertingen versterken? Denk hierbij aan overgangen en grenzen: tussen tuinen, tussen tuin en trage weg, tussen fruitspoor en ontmoetingsplek, tussen ...

Zoek uit hoe deze boomgaard een nieuwe rol kan spelen in het dorp. Bedenk een manier waarop meerdere mensen bij deze plek kunnen worden betrokken. Wat kan er gebeuren? Bedenk een manier om de duurzaamheid van deze plek te bevorderen.

Het karakter van Hoepertingen wordt bepaald door het sterke verenigingsleven, het sociaal weefsel en de typische dorpsfiguren. Toch ontbreken er plekken om elkaar 'somaar' tegen te komen of te leren kennen. Een plek zoals de kerk dat vroeger was; een plek waar je niet echt een reden nodig hebt om er te zijn. Een plek waar je de anderen kan observeren, misschien meeluisteren, of -als je dat wilt- een gesprek aanknopen. We zoeken naar zo een plekken in Hoepertingen. Hoe zien die er uit? Wat zou er kunnen gebeuren, wie ze kan beheren, hoe kunnen ze 'werken'?

II. VERSTERKEN SOCIALE STRUCTUUR

Bedenk voor deze plek een evenement waar Hoepertingen behoefte aan heeft en waar bewoners zeker naar toe zullen komen.

Als deze plek een 'knoop' is in het weefsel van het dorp; wat voor 'knoop' is het dan: een overgang, doorgang of grens? En voor wie: voor omwonenden, andere dorpsbewoners, passanten, ... ? Kijk naar de buitenruimtes en richt deze helemaal opnieuw in. Kijk naar de overgangen, grenzen of zones die er nu zijn. Zijn ze privé, gemeenschappelijk, open, collectief, publiek, ... ?

Hoepertingen wordt door de gemeente Borgloon, ten opzichte van de andere kerkdorpen (bv. Kerniel, Götém, Gors-op-leeuw, ...) naar voorgeschoven als 'kerndorp'. Dat wil zeggen dat bijkomende woningen bij voorkeur hier gebouwd worden. Ook het aanbod van woningen moet aangepast worden aan meer diverse noden en wensen: voor verschillende doelgroepen, sociale woningen, ouderen, alleenstaande ouders, ... Bij deze uitdaging willen we het open omringende landschap zo veel mogelijk behouden: dus niet verder verlichten. Hoe kunnen we dit woningaanbod verder uitbreiden en uitbreiden, rekening houdend met streekeigen woonvormen en bouwstijlen.

III. WONINGVERDICHTING

Hoe kunnen we op deze plek met verschillende mensen wonen? Van welke bestaande of typische kwaliteiten kunnen we vertrekken? Op welke manier kunnen we die kwaliteiten versterken? Kijk naar enkele alternatieve woonvormen. Wat gebeurt in eventueel vrijgekomen ruimte, zijn er andere dingen die hier dan nog kunnen gebeuren?

Deze plek is woongebied, hoe kunnen we hier woningen bijplaatsen en toch rekening houden met de streekeigen en typische kenmerken en landschapselementen van Hoepertingen. Werk ideeën uit voor de buitenruimtes (straten, pleinen, steegjes, tuinen) en ga in op de grenzen en overgangen tussen deze verschillende ruimtes, tussen privé en publiek.

In Hoepertingen worden een aantal steegjes nog erg intensief gebruikt, bv. tussen de twee afdelingen van de school. In de dorpskern werden er echter ook verschillende kleine wegen geprivatiseerd of afgesloten. Hiernaast worden (boventokale) fietsroutes gestimuleerd zoals het fietsroute netwerk (2) inrichten van het fruitspoor. Hoe kunnen, rekening houdend met verschillende snelheden en gebruikers, trage wegen worden ingericht opdat de doorwaadbaarheid van Hoepertingen verbetert.

IV. VERBETEREN DOORWAADBAARHEID

Zoek en volg een route doorheen Hoepertingen door zo veel mogelijk trage wegen te volgen. Bedenk een slimme overgang bij eventueel moeilijke barrières die je tegenkomt.

arte.2.2. one page of game-folder with an example of a 'game-task' set up as a flowchart with questions and space for a drawing. Pictures taken by this group on location.



MAAK HET DORP HOEPERTINGEN

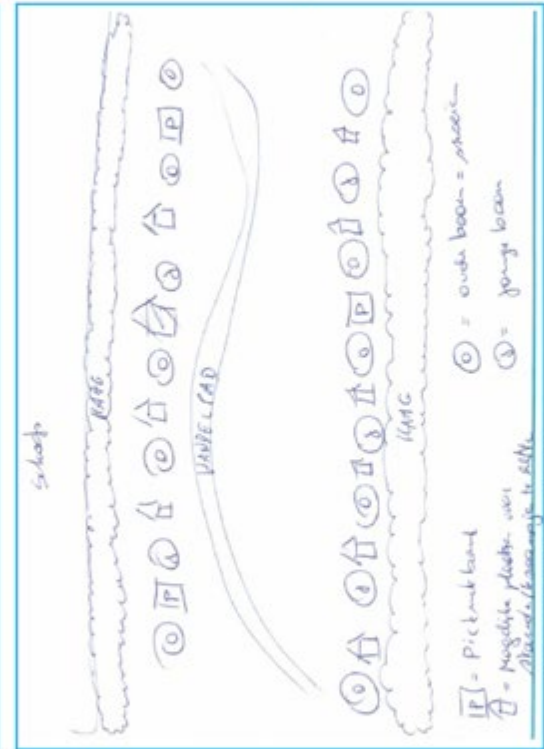
datum:
team 2, locatie 2

9 Slogan voor je voorstel
FRUIT OP HET SPOOR

8 Werk je voorstel uit en omschrijf het in enkele zinnen.
Twee keer per jaar wordt een seizoenmarkt georganiseerd met streekproducten. Zowel boeren, lokale bedrijven als particulieren kunnen producten aanbieden. Een haag scheidt de plek van Schoofs en de verkaveling. Tussen de bomen worden kleine standjes geplaatst. De plek wordt niet verhard en wordt als weiland behouden. De rest van het jaar is het een picnic wei met een gemaaid pad dat van bank naar bank gaat. Ook het onderhoud van de plek kan een evenement worden. De bomen worden beheerd zoals een boer dat vroeger zou doen. Dvz snoeien en verjongen waar nodig. Een keer per jaar wordt er gehooïd.

7 Geef aan hoe haalbaar je voorstel is.

1 context
Het karakter van Hoepertingen wordt bepaald door het sterke verenigingsleven, het sociaal weefsel en de typische dorpsfiguren. Toch ontbreken er plekken om mekaar "zomaar" tegen te komen of te leren kennen. Een plek zoals de kerk, dat vroeger was: een plek waar je niet echt een reden nodig hebt om er te zijn. Een plek waar je de anderen kan observeren, misschien meeluisteren, of -als je dat wilt- een gesprek aanknopen. We zoeken naar zo een plekken in Hoepertingen. Hoe zien die er uit? Wat zou er kunnen gebeuren, wie ze kan beheren, hoe kunnen ze 'werken'?

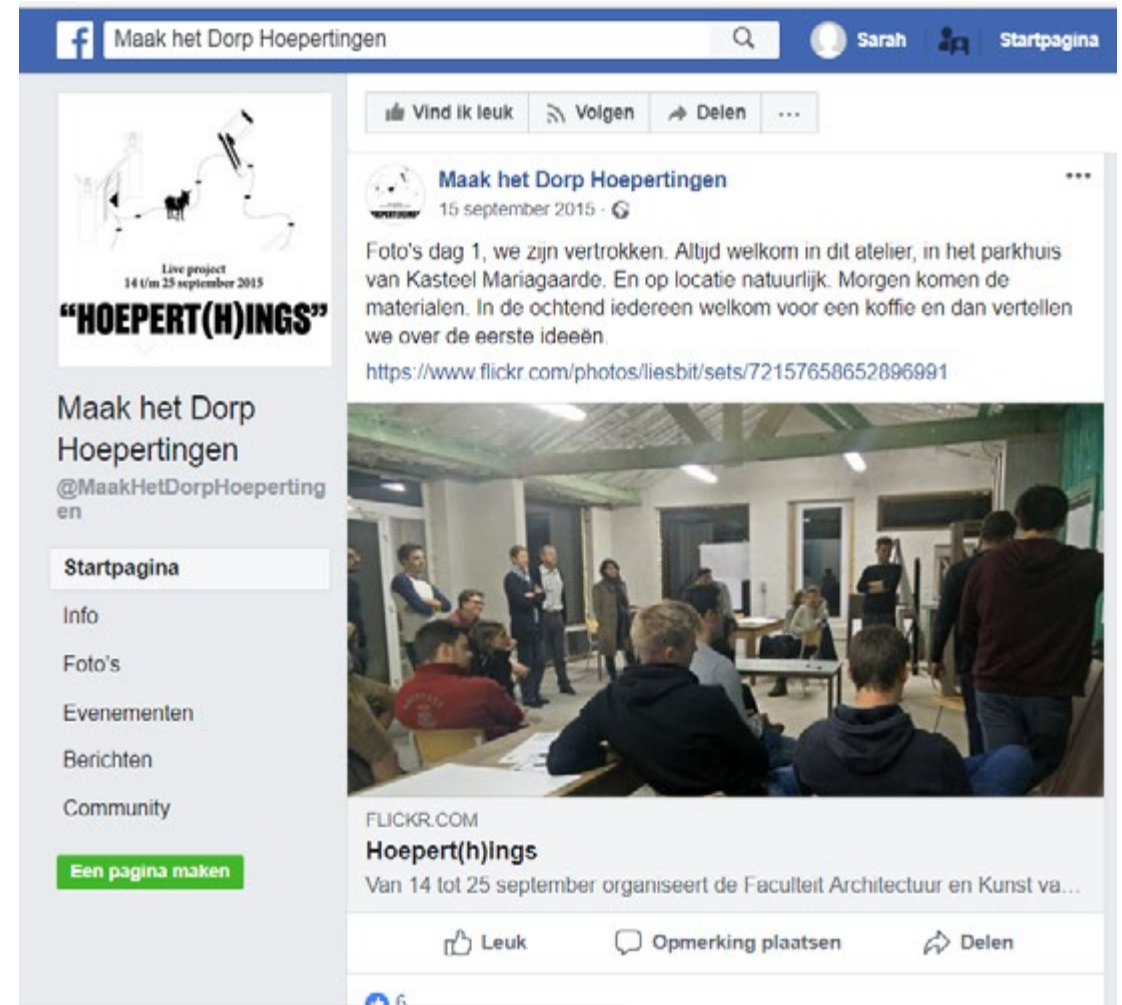
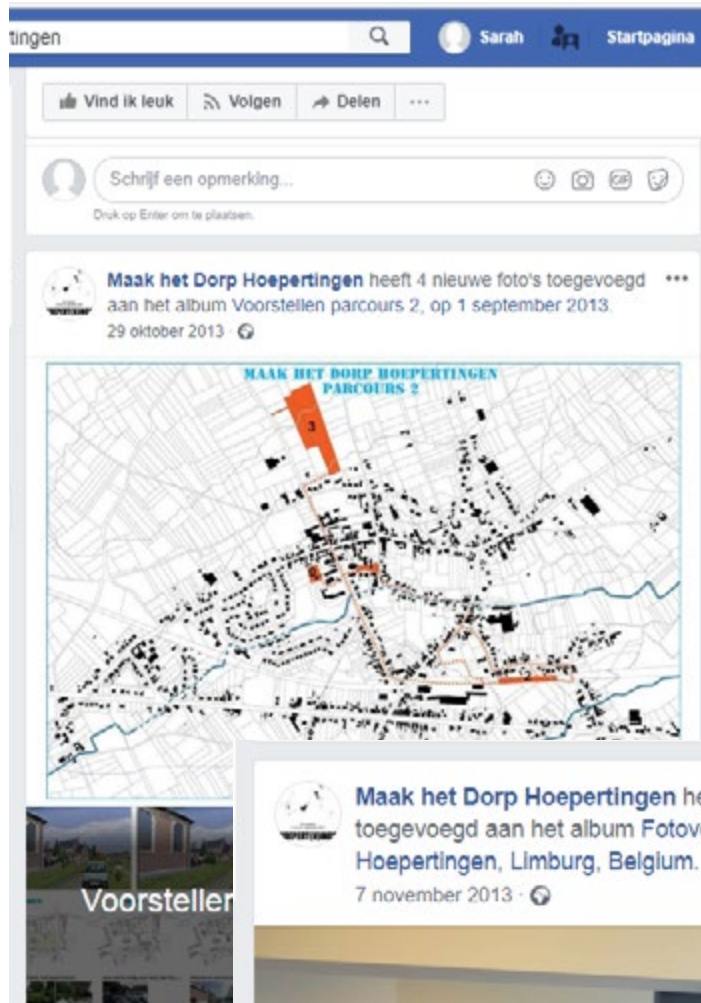


5 Schrijf een paar ideeën op die de ambitie en het fenomeen met elkaar verbinden?
Een markt met streekproducten is zowel interessant voor bewoners als toeristen. Hoepertingen heeft momenteel geen markt. En bewoners kunnen zowel kopen als verkopen.

2 ambitie
Bedenk voor deze plek een evenement waar Hoepertingen behoefte aan heeft en waar bewoners zeker naar toe zullen komen.
fenomeen
Maak in het vervullen van je opdracht gebruik van het groeiende toerisme en de mogelijkheden die het kan bieden. Houd ook rekening met de conflicten die hiermee gepaard kunnen gaan.

3 Waar denk je aan bij deze ambitie?
streekproducten
rommelmarkt
onderhoudsday
kersenbomen
picnic

4 Herken je het fenomeen?
Tijdens de bloesem zijn er veel toeristen. Sommigen houden geen rekening met privacy en privacy. Daarom wordt er best een haag geplaatst tussen het fruitspoor. Schuifs en de verkaveling. Dat maakt de plek ook gezelliger.



VOORSTEL

Life project – 2015

HOEPERTINGEN (*maakbaar* in leefbaarheid)

Kasteel Mariagaarde Hoepertingen / Ter Heide Campuswerking Zuid Limburg

De afgelopen jaren werd er in Hoepertingen heel wat “geïnvesteerd” om van Hoepertingen een dorp te maken waarin de betrokkenheid van de bewoners geactiveerd wordt.

Maak het dorp, als onderdeel van een Leaderproject U-Hasselt, i.s.m. KMH (Kasteel Mariagaarde Hoepertingen) en andere lokale actoren, is een bijzondere aanzet geworden om een dialoog over wonen in Hoepertingen en het reflecteren over de ‘ruimtelijke omgeving’ op gang te brengen.

Samen met particuliere bewoners, wijken, verenigingen en actief betrokken partners (Ter Heide, Kasteel Mariagaarde, ...) bouwt Hoepertingen voort en wil daarbij inzetten op concrete zichtbare acties om de omgeving zelf ‘actor’ te laten zijn voor het versterken van het sociale weefsel van de lokale gemeenschap.

Met het voorstel voor dit Life project 2015, bieden KMH en Ter Heide de gelegenheid om toegankelijkheid in Hoepertingen als metafoor in te zetten voor het verduurzamen van de verbinding tussen de verschillende gelaagdheden van bewoners uit dit dorp (lees hierin ook: diversiteit).

Het mooiste dorp, is het dorp waarin de betrokkenheid van mensen met elkaar vanuit hun reële leefruimte ‘groot’ is, mooi krijgt dan de betekenis van ‘goed-om-wonen’.

Vorbij onderzoek maken mogelijk om een ploeg/team aan het werk te zetten om enerzijds de concrete haalbaarheid te toetsen van onderstaande voorstellen, en anderzijds de exemplarische aanzet te geven tot een zichtbaar ‘artefact’ (in haar oorspronkelijke betekenis) dat de ‘nieuwe’ ruimte markeert. Nieuw draag hier de betekenis van ‘versterkte verbondenheid’.

Hierbij een aantal daad-werkelijke mogelijkheden of ‘pistes’ (-zoals een piste ook een ‘pad’ is).

- Mogelijkheid van toegankelijk maken van het pad tussen kerkhof en Hoepertingenstraat via het Fruitspoor
- Noodzaak van opstap ter hoogte van de Hoepertingenstraat met liefst een helling (of trap)
- Voor Ter Heide een opstapmogelijkheid tot het spoor met idem een helling (of trap)
- Een ontmoetingsruimte achter het kerkhof
- Een start van wandelroute, waarbij delen van het fruitspoor ontsloten worden in een permanente route
- Verbinding onderzoeken tussen dorp en VLM-weide aan de lange gracht
- Landschapselementen implementeren in dito weide om dorp als geheel te ‘overschouwen’ en op die manier begin van ‘spel-element’ inbrengen
- Uitbreiding van treuzelpad naar ‘treuzel-elementen’ in de dorpsgemeenschap
- Enz.

De projectpromotoren, Ter Heide en Kasteel Mariagaarde Hoepertingen, willen zich engageren in het faciliteren van verblijfsmogelijkheden.

De inzet van de voorbije jaren in het betrekken van de lokale bevolking en de bijzondere dynamiek van Hoepertingen waarin op dit ogenblik een dorpsraad tot leven komt, bieden dit Lifeproject de rijke voedingsgrond voor een heel concreet LIFE-project.

Het lifeproject kan geënt worden op een verdere integratie van Hoepertingen met vb. de gemeenschap van Ter Heide (mensen met beperking) [en evengoed Intesa], de manifest aanwezige Sikhgemeenschap, de groeiende verjonging van het dorp nav inplanting nieuwe wijken, ...

Het bestaande project van 10.000 jaar Hoepertingen kan betrokken worden in het opzet. Het zomerterras op het kasteel is een de facto ontmoetingsruimte. De uitdaging om van de oude parochiezaal een vernieuwd ontmoetingscentrum te maken, is eveneens een zinvol element in de evaluatie en reflectie op het verbinden van leefbaarheid en leef-ruimte.

In vele opzichten is Hoepertingen een bijzondere plek in Haspengouw waarin de streekeigen kenmerken niet als beperking, maar vooral als troef ingezet kunnen worden.

Graag dit project ter overweging!

Hoepertingen, 27 februari 2015

Guido Massonnet
Voor Ter Heide (Hoepertingen)

Márnix Vanlangenaeker
voor Kasteel Mariagaarde Hoepertingen



Kasteel ■ □ ■
Mariagaarde

Correspondentieadres:

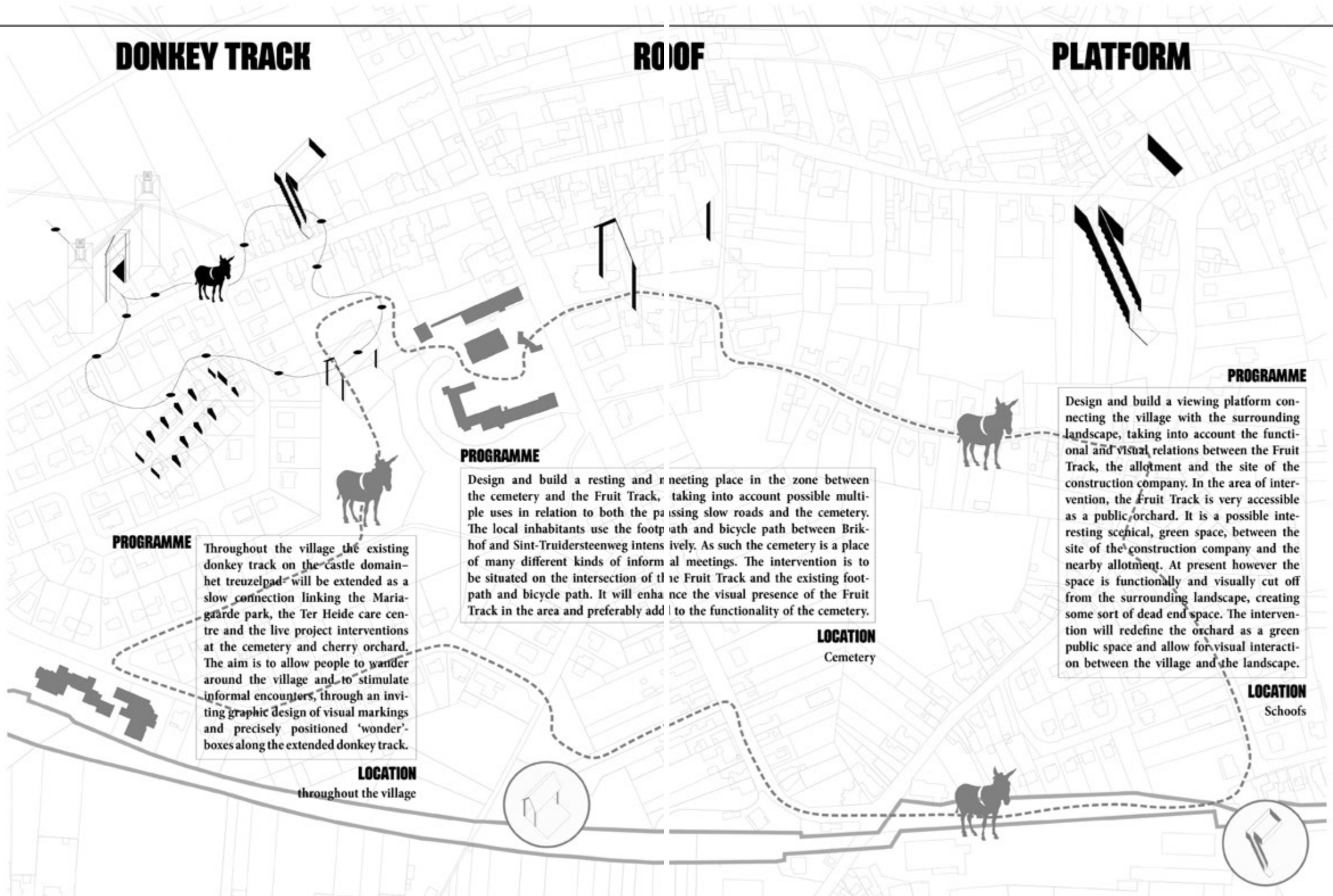
Kasteel Mariagaarde Hoepertingen
Kasteelstraat 10
3840 Hoepertingen
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Contacten (bovengenoemden)
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DONKEY TRACK

ROOF

PLATFORM



PROGRAMME

Throughout the village the existing donkey track on the castle domain - het treuzelpad - will be extended as a slow connection linking the Mariagaarde park, the Ter Heide care centre and the live project interventions at the cemetery and cherry orchard. The aim is to allow people to wander around the village and to stimulate informal encounters, through an inviting graphic design of visual markings and precisely positioned 'wonder'-boxes along the extended donkey track.

LOCATION
throughout the village

PROGRAMME

Design and build a resting and meeting place in the zone between the cemetery and the Fruit Track, taking into account possible multiple uses in relation to both the passing slow roads and the cemetery. The local inhabitants use the footpath and bicycle path between Brikhof and Sint-Truidersteenweg intensively. As such the cemetery is a place of many different kinds of informal meetings. The intervention is to be situated on the intersection of the Fruit Track and the existing footpath and bicycle path. It will enhance the visual presence of the Fruit Track in the area and preferably add to the functionality of the cemetery.

LOCATION
Cemetery

PROGRAMME

Design and build a viewing platform connecting the village with the surrounding landscape, taking into account the functional and visual relations between the Fruit Track, the allotment and the site of the construction company. In the area of intervention, the Fruit Track is very accessible as a public orchard. It is a possible interesting scenical, green space, between the site of the construction company and the nearby allotment. At present however the space is functionally and visually cut off from the surrounding landscape, creating some sort of dead end space. The intervention will redefine the orchard as a green public space and allow for visual interaction between the village and the landscape.

LOCATION
Schools

Overeenkomst

Tussen

Universiteit Hasselt, een autonome openbare instelling met maatschappelijke zetel te Martenlarenlaan 42, 3500 Hasselt, en met ondernemingsnummer BE0 208.359.859, hierna genoemd "**UHASSELT**"

en

de stad Borgloon, vertegenwoordigd door dhr. Danny Deneuker, Burgemeester en mevrouw Vera Leemans, Secretaris, hierna genoemd "**BORGLOON**"

voormelde partijen, waar en wanneer toepasselijk in deze overeenkomst verder individueel "Partij" en gezamenlijk "Partijen" genoemd,

wordt uiteengezet

- Dat UHASSELT, met name haar faculteit Architectuur en Kunst, studenten de kans biedt om in het kader van hun opleiding deel te nemen aan een "Live Project" waarbij de studenten op verplaatsing bepaalde constructies realiseren, in nauwe samenwerking met de lokale bevolking en actoren;
- Dat BORGLOON als lokale trekker heeft opgetreden in een "Live Project", tijdens dewelke constructies werden opgezet door UHASSELT studenten;
- Dat Partijen de eigendomsrechten en gebruiksrechten op voormelde constructies wensen vast te leggen;

en wordt daarom als volgt overeengekomen :

Artikel 1 – Definities

Indien en zoals gebruikt in deze Overeenkomst hebben de hierna bepaalde termen de volgende betekenis :

- 1.1. **OVEREENKOMST**: deze overeenkomst, inclusief alle daaraan gehechte door de Partijen ondertekende bijlagen.
- 1.2. **PROJECT**: het Live Project dat UHASSELT in september 2015 organiseerde voor studenten in de architectuur, en waarbij werd samengewerkt met diverse (lokale) partners, waaronder ook BORGLOON.
- 1.3. **PARTIJ(EN)**: UHASSELT en BORGLOON.
- 1.4. **CONSTRUCTIES**: de volgende constructies die werden gerealiseerd in het kader van het PROJECT: (i) de ronde constructie als bezinningsplek in Beerse steen op het kerkhof, en (ii) de lichte dakconstructie met dekstenen uit blauwe hardsteen als vloer en fundering op de voormalige spoorwegbedding.

Artikel 2 – Voorwerp van de Overeenkomst

Het voorwerp van de Overeenkomst is het regelen van de eigendomsrechten en gebruiksrechten op de Constructies.

Artikel 3 – Eigendomsrechten en gebruiksrechten

EIGENDOMSRECHTEN

- 3.1. Partijen komen uitdrukkelijk overeen dat alle (intellectuele) eigendomsrechten op de Constructies toebehoren aan BORGLOON. BORGLOON heeft op eender welk moment het recht om de Constructies af te breken of te laten afbreken, op voorwaarde dat UHASSELT hierover voorafgaandelijk schriftelijk wordt geïnformeerd. In voorkomend geval vervallen de bepalingen van artikel 3.2 (met uitzondering van het recht om afbeeldingen van de Constructies te blijven aanwenden) en 4.2 van deze Overeenkomst.
- 3.2. BORGLOON vermeldt in eender welke vorm van communicatie over de Constructies – met inbegrip van het gebruik van foto's daarvan – steeds UHASSELT.

GEBRUIKSRECHTEN

- 3.3. UHASSELT verwerft een kosteloos gebruiksrecht op de Constructies voor academische doeleinden. In het bijzonder, zonder daartoe beperkt te zijn, heeft UHASSELT het recht om afbeeldingen van de Constructies te maken en deze aan te wenden voor academische doeleinden, met inbegrip van wetenschappelijke publicaties.
- 3.4. UHASSELT vermeldt in eender welke vorm van communicatie over de Constructies – met inbegrip van het gebruik van foto's daarvan – steeds BORGLOON.

Artikel 4 – Garanties, verzekeringen en aansprakelijkheden

- 4.1. UHASSELT verklaart zich met gepaste zorg en nauwgezetheid te hebben toegelegd op het PROJECT, zonder evenwel enige garantie te verstrekken met betrekking tot de aard van de Constructies. Zo garandeert UHASSELT in het bijzonder, zonder daartoe beperkt te zijn, in geen geval de stevigheid van de Constructies of de geschiktheid ervan voor enig doel.
- 4.2. BORGLOON erkent en aanvaardt uitdrukkelijk in te staan voor het onderhoud en het technisch beheer van de Constructies. BORGLOON sluit daartoe tevens alle verzekeringen af die nodig en/of opportuun zijn.
- 4.3. BORGLOON erkent en aanvaardt dat UHASSELT niet aansprakelijk is voor om het even welke schade die aan BORGLOON of aan derden wordt toegebracht ten gevolge van enigerlei gebruik van de Constructies. BORGLOON vrijwaart UHASSELT tegen mogelijke aanspraken van derden die daarmee verband zouden kunnen houden.

Artikel 5 – Toepasselijk recht en Rechtsmacht

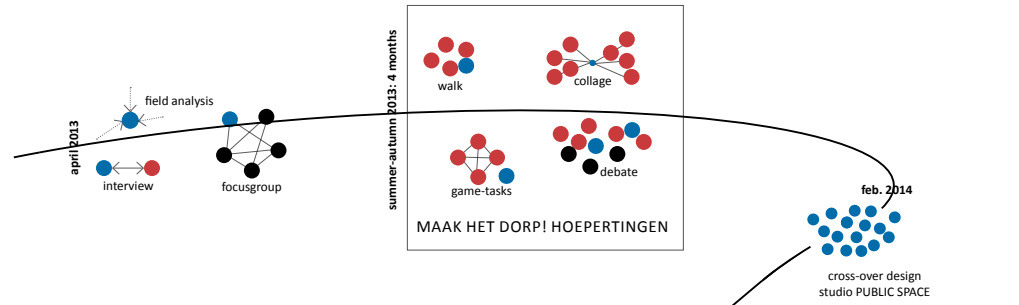
De rechtsverhouding tussen Partijen is onderworpen aan het Belgische recht. Alleen de rechtbanken van het gerechtelijk arrondissement Hasselt zijn bevoegd in geval van geschillen over de geldigheid, de uitlegging of de uitvoering van de Overeenkomst, of van welke aard dan ook, die tussen Partijen zouden ontstaan.

Artikel 6 – Algemene bepalingen

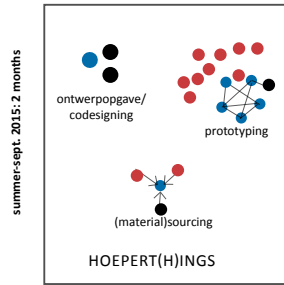
- 6.1. Deze Overeenkomst creëert op geen enkele wijze een partnerschap of joint venture tussen Partijen. Tenzij op die wijze uitgedrukt in deze Overeenkomst, zal geen enkele Partij het recht hebben om een verbintenis aan te gaan, een garantie te verlenen of zich te presenteren namens de andere Partij.

Case 3 Hoepert(h)ings

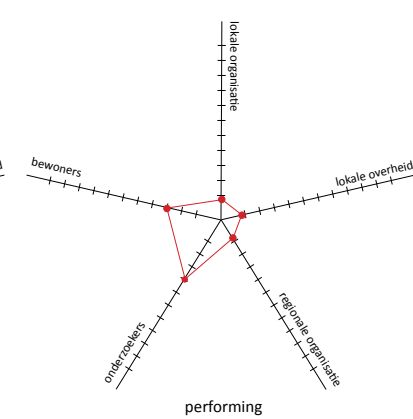
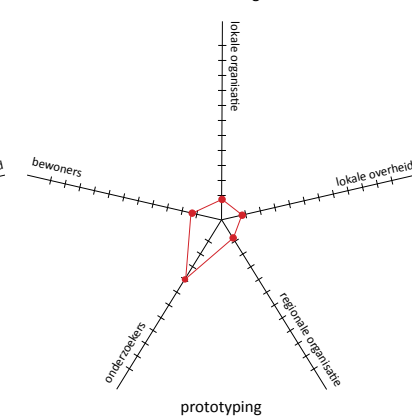
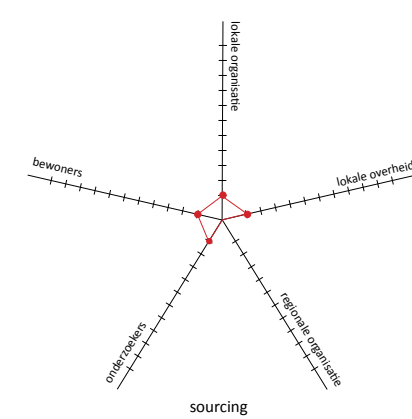
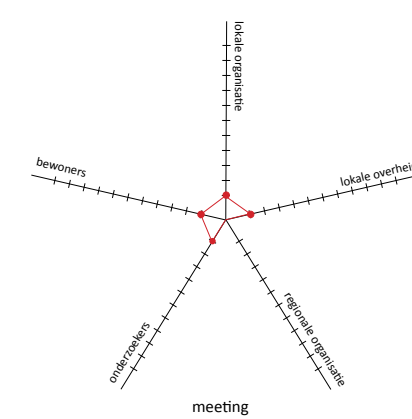
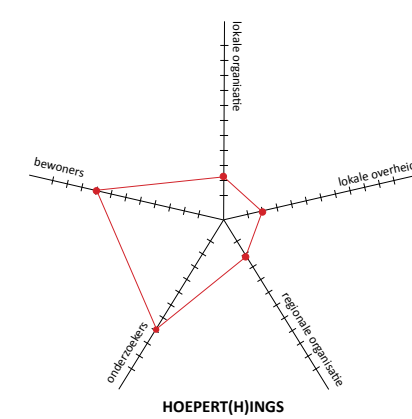
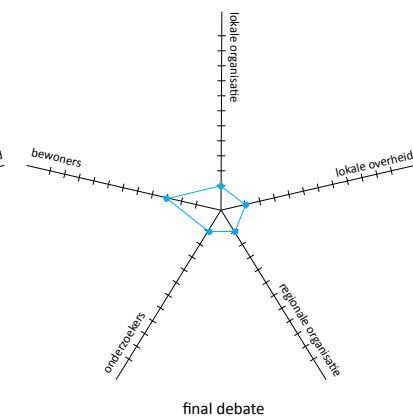
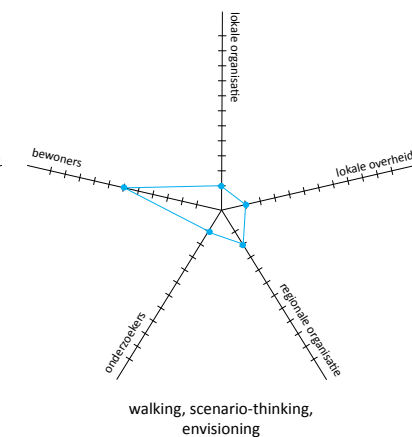
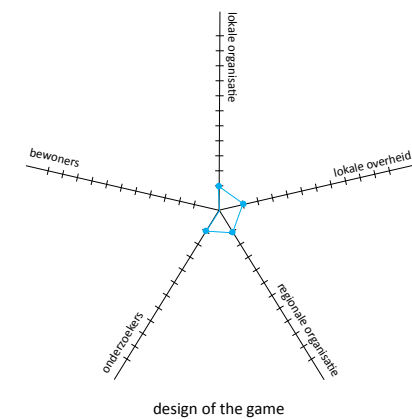
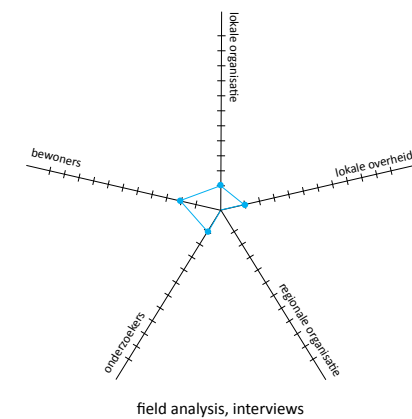
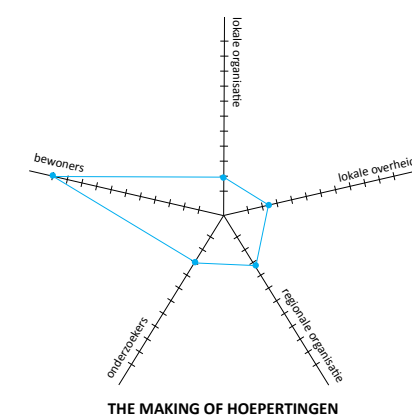
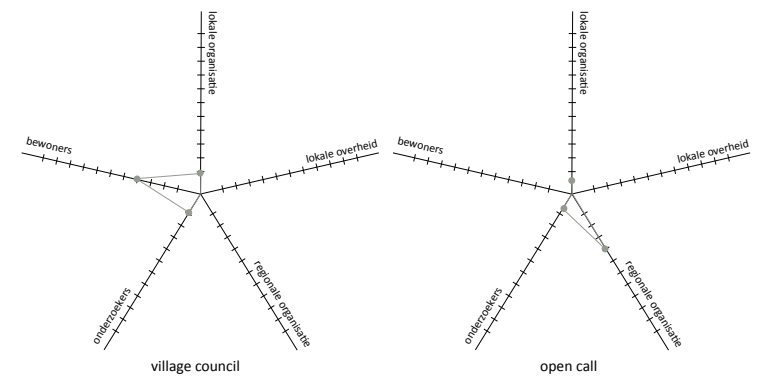
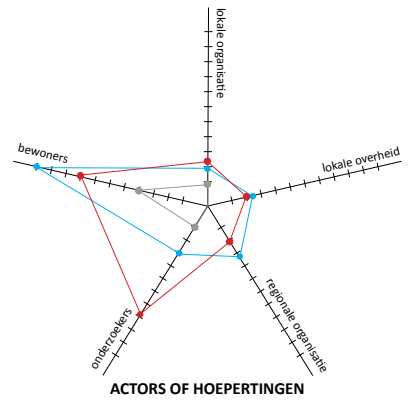
vis.3.4. visualising and keeping track of who was involved



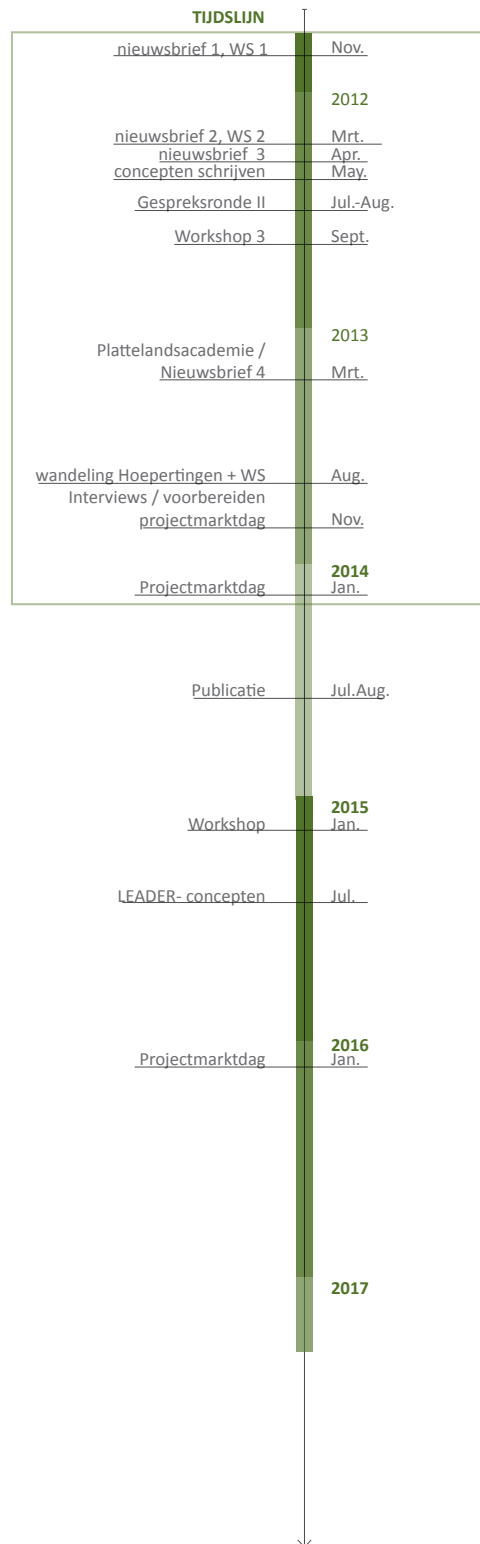
- onderzoeker
- regionale actor
- bewoner



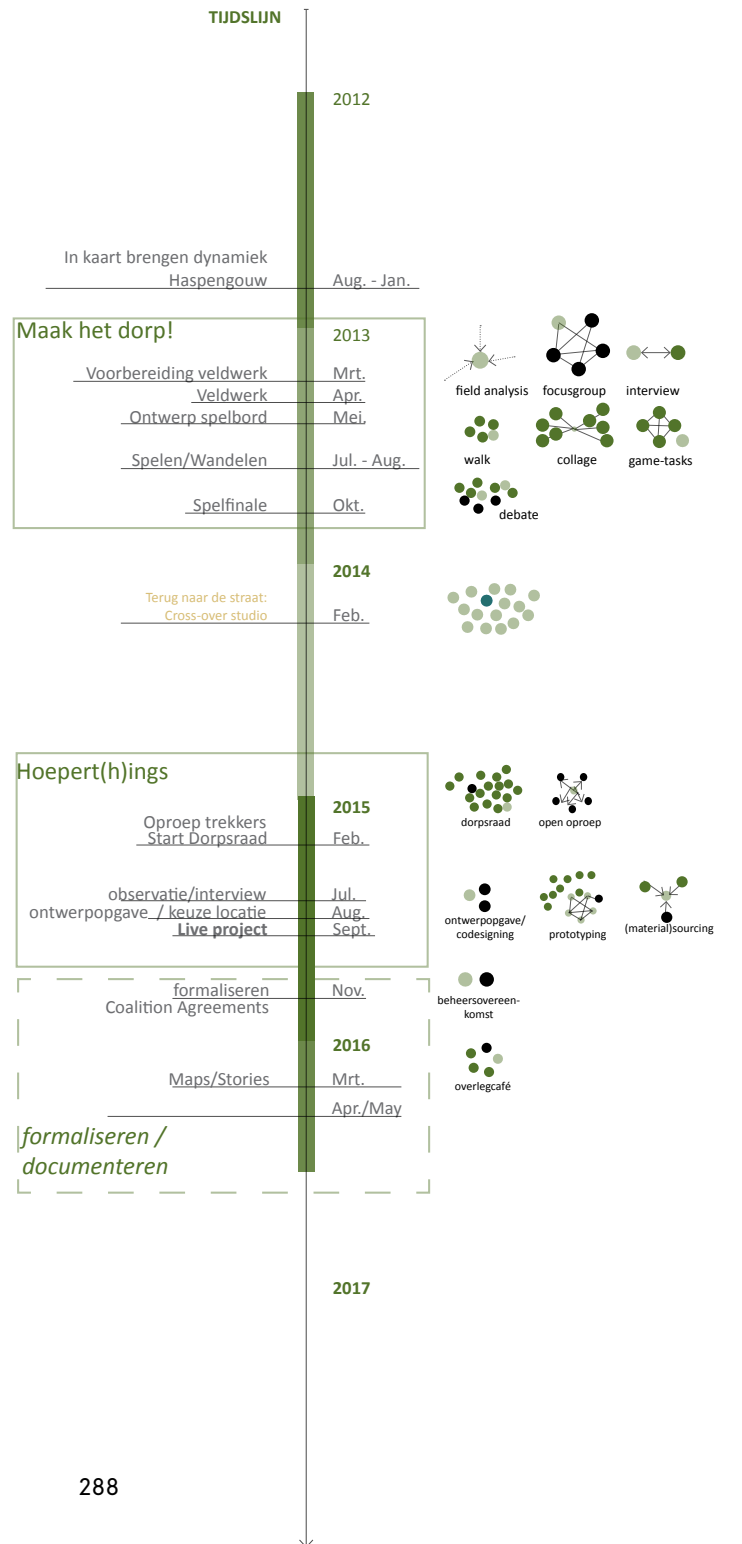
- ● beheersovereenkomst
- ● overlegcafé



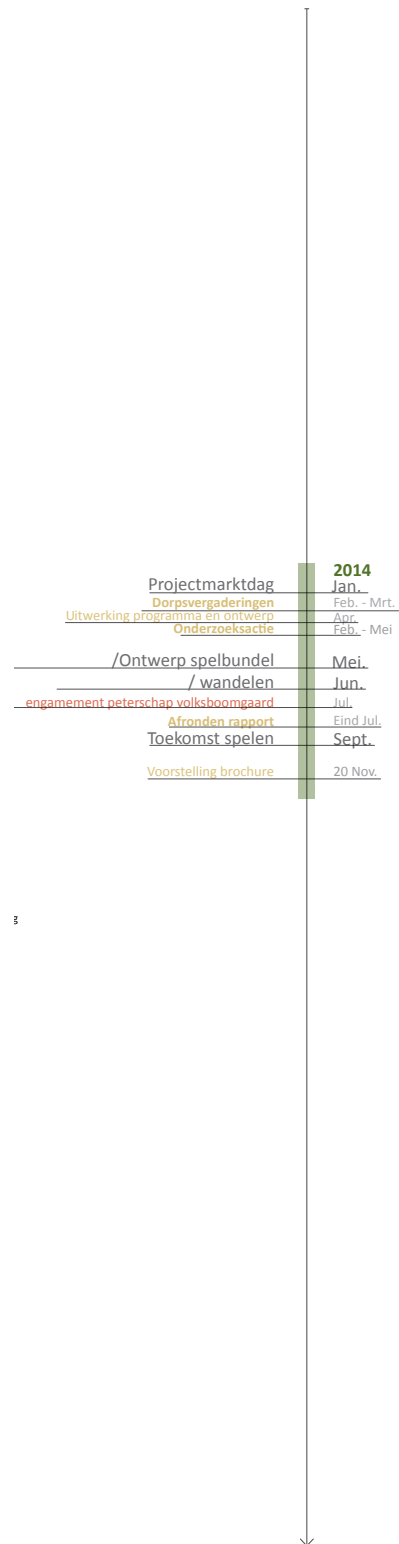
(1) MOOISTE DORPEN VAN HASPENGOUW



(2) HOEPERTINGEN/BORGLOON



GUIGOVEN/KORTESSEM



NEIGHBOURHOOD, OUR GARDEN



Had de uitkijk niet het begin kunnen zijn van meer?



Foto: Peter Gubbels, november 2019. Foto: © J. van der Velden, november 2019.

"De uitkijk" is momenteel het grootste gebied dat ooit is ontworpen voor de toekomst. Het is een gebied dat wordt ontwikkeld op de manier waarop we willen leven in 2025. Het is een gebied dat wordt ontwikkeld op de manier waarop we willen leven in 2025. Het is een gebied dat wordt ontwikkeld op de manier waarop we willen leven in 2025.

"DE UITKIJK", OPEN ZICHT OP HET LANDSCHAP

JONG EN OUD WERKEN SAMEN AAN GROEN

BEHEER VAN GROEN BLIJFT DE GROOTSTE UITDAGING

Zorg dragen voor groen is belangrijk, maar het is niet altijd makkelijk. Het is belangrijk om te zorgen voor groen op de manier waarop we willen leven in 2025. Het is belangrijk om te zorgen voor groen op de manier waarop we willen leven in 2025.



Foto: Hoepert(h)ings, november 2019. Foto: © J. van der Velden, november 2019.

GROENE PAREL OF KUNSTDORP?



Foto: Hoepert(h)ings, november 2019. Foto: © J. van der Velden, november 2019.

Deze week werd al weer een nieuw Hoepert(h)ing ingehuldigd. Het is een gebied dat wordt ontwikkeld op de manier waarop we willen leven in 2025. Het is een gebied dat wordt ontwikkeld op de manier waarop we willen leven in 2025.

DEZE WEEK WERD AL WEER EEN NIEUW HOEPERT(H)ING INGEHULDIGD

2025 IS VANDAAG!

Exact 10 jaar geleden, op een koude zaterdag in september, maakten bewoners van Hoepert(h)ings kennis met de architecten van de toekomst. Het is een gebied dat wordt ontwikkeld op de manier waarop we willen leven in 2025. Het is een gebied dat wordt ontwikkeld op de manier waarop we willen leven in 2025.

Deze week werd al weer een nieuw Hoepert(h)ing ingehuldigd. Het is een gebied dat wordt ontwikkeld op de manier waarop we willen leven in 2025. Het is een gebied dat wordt ontwikkeld op de manier waarop we willen leven in 2025.

Hoepert(h)ings is een gebied dat wordt ontwikkeld op de manier waarop we willen leven in 2025. Het is een gebied dat wordt ontwikkeld op de manier waarop we willen leven in 2025.

universiteit huyssent
Kasteel Mariagaarde
Ter Heide
WAAR EDELIJKE BIZONDERIS

