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ARTICLE

Actor-Relational Planning in Deprived Areas: Challenges and Opportunities in Luchtbal Antwerpen, Belgium

LUUK BOELENS & TOM COPPENS

Abstract

In this article, we report and discuss our experience with actor-relational approaches (ARA) in the regeneration of a postwar housing estate in Luchtbal, Antwerp, Belgium. ARA are informed by post-structuralist ideas of space, complexity theory, and actor network theory. Although ARA itself is not new, the application of ARA to deprived area's such as Luchtbal is novel. We report how the approach has been elaborated, its process and outcome. We conclude with our evaluation from an insider's perspective.

Introduction

The actor-relational approach (ARA) is a relatively young planning approach based upon post-structural planning theories. It was aimed to break away with more traditional, government-led planning approaches, including approaches such as comprehensive, strategic, communicative, or collaborative planning. At its very core are poststructuralist conceptions of space, self-organization and coevolution, and actor–network theory.

Although AR approaches have already shown merits in the context of regional development (see Boelens, 2009), its added value to urban regeneration of deprived areas has been less explored. This is a particular challenge as the regeneration of postwar housing estates has been a major concern for many European cities over the last decades. Once considered symbols of social and technological progress, most of these areas are today often under severe stress. Almost two decades ago, Hall (1997) identified a number of interrelated problems, such as physical decay, the concentration of social problems, low social and economic capital, the lack of amenities, and a solid economic base. Since then, problems mostly have accumulated, despite the numerous urban regeneration initiatives that have been taken in many European cities. Moreover, a growing pile of evidence showed that traditional approaches based upon physical comprehensive masterplanning are both insufficient as no longer feasible due to cutbacks to tackle the problems these areas face (Ouwehand & Davis, 2004; Kleinhans, 2005; Van Beckhoven & Van Kempen, 2006; Slob et al., 2008; ~~Figure 1~~)

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FIGURE 1. Luchtbal: view on the characteristic Venezuela towers.

Luchtbal is such a problematic high-rise modernist social dwelling area of about 2, 500 families in the northern fringe of Antwerp. Physical decay, growing social unrest, the lack of an economic base urged the city to set up a regeneration project for the area. When in 2007, a physical masterplan was made for the area, it was hoped that through the construction of new homes affluent middle-class families would be attracted to the area, to dilute its social and economic problems. However, the implementation of this plan soon proved unfeasible as there was hardly any interest from private developers and the targeted group to invest in Luchtbal. The failure of this physical approach in Luchtbal Antwerpen was exactly what brought the two authors of this article together and provided an opportunity to experiment with emerging ARA. Whereas the first author acted as a consultant, the second was involved as the responsible public officer (~~Figure 2~~). [AQ5]

We realize that the application of ARA to postwar housing estate is far from self-evident, as self-organization in areas with a low organizational capacity might be a challenge. Therefore, our paper has three aims. First, we want to explain how complex theoretical post-structural ideas have informed a practical workable approach in the case of Luchtbal. Second, to discuss the process and the outcome of the particular case and third, we aim to evaluate the application of ARA in postwar housing estates from our inside perspective as public officer and consultant.

The remainder of this article is therefore organized as followed. First, we will briefly discuss the basic building blocks of ARA, and how they can be

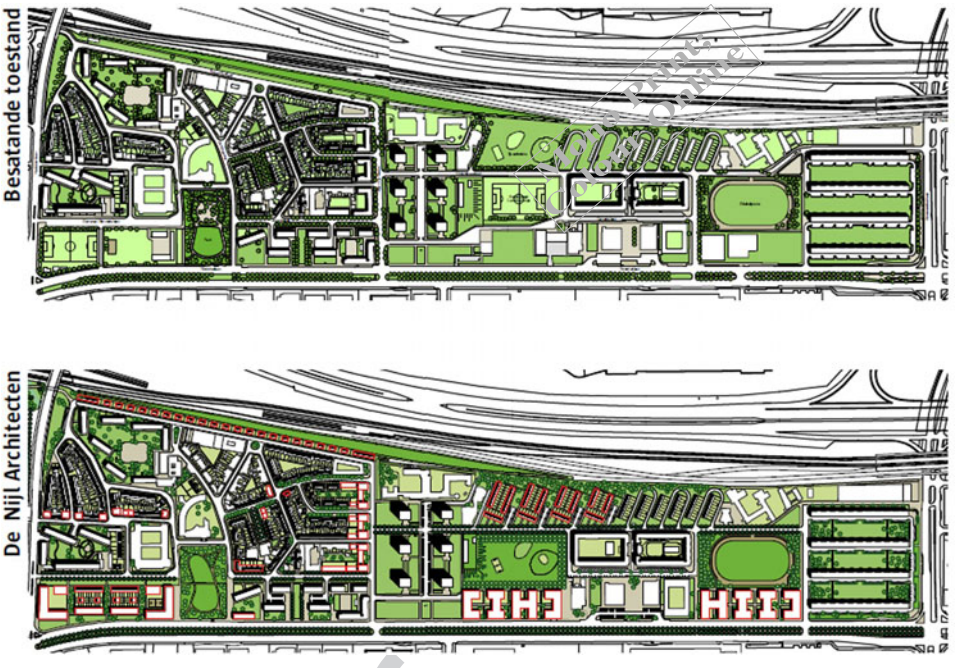

FIGURE 2. Physical masterplan De Nijl. Source: city of Antwerp.

operationalized for planning processes. Next, we will describe the outcomes of the approach. What were the problems we encountered in implementing actor-relational theories on planning? What were the outcomes of the planning process, and to what extend did they have a structural and transformative impact? We will conclude with some remarks on the applicability of ARA to deprived postwar housing estates.

Building Blocks for an Actor Relational Planning

The building blocks of ARA are made from insights from post-structural geography, complexity theory, and actor-network theory. In poststructuralist [AQ6] ideas on geography (Thrift, 1996; Belsey, 2002; Murdoch, 2006), space is not so much seen as a 'container', a prefabricated décor or platform upon which social, economic and/or cultural activities appear, but as an actor itself capable of influencing and stirring other actors, which in turn is stirred and influenced by those actors and other spaces itself. According to Murdoch (2006, p. 21), these kinds of ideas of space are characterized by the following four main features:

- Space is made of heterogenic entities and contingent processes, which combine in relations; thus space is in essence relational.
- Discrete spaces and places are only temporal stabilizations of those relations; these relations are therefore only stabilized provisionally and must be continually remade, as they are remade themselves.

- Moreover, these relations are more and more multiple; therefore there can be conflicts as sets of relations jostle for supremacy; equally there can be consensus as alliances are build and alignments forced.
- Therefore, spaces are always 'open', not closed in a predetermined Cartesian three dimensionality; spaces are dynamic, rather than static, and always in a process of 'becoming'.

According to poststructuralists geographers, spatial planners and urbanists must, therefore, trace the trajectory of change, the line of force and possible alignments, rather than research proposed underlying, generic driven forces for change or come up with of creative vision of how space should develop, such for the sake of society, humanity, or some kind of moral standards (Boelens, 2001, 2006). Spatial policies or planning proposals need therefore be highly situational from within, instead from outside as for instance generic planning methods, external consultants, the city hall, etc. In reference to our study, the possible spatial developments and plans of post war housing estates and its social-cultural practices are very much intertwined, as ~~that~~ they are related to general economic developments and institutional changes. Following these interrelations and intertwining's, working with it from within, could possibly lead to new 'openings', innovations, and more resilient forms of spatial practices.

The second building block comes from coevolutionary planning and the theories of complexity. Since complexity theories are in essence focused on the dynamic,

[AQ18] FIGURE 3.

contingent, and situational *relations* between the elements (as in a weather system), rather than on the distinct elements themselves put together in an additive way (as in a clockwork) which was and is in essence the main focus of structuralist, functionalists planning, and urbanism until now, complexity is highly in line with [AQ7] poststructuralist thinking (De Roo & Silva, 2010; De Roo et al., 2012). Moreover taking into account that our cross-border networked society has to be regarded as a highly complex system, we need to realize that it is more and more the result of several assemblages, which are partly spatial, but also partly networked ~~related~~ (Castells, 1996, 1997, 1998). These assemblages adapt themselves in a specific space to each other and changing settings; or in other words become a complex adaptive [AQ8] system (Teisman et al., 2009). This is especially also the case in deprived areas. Stake- and shareholders adapt themselves to new and changing circumstances; effects become emergent from a good understanding of these dissipative relations, the causality of input and result is more than elsewhere highly fuzzy and therefore the limits of modeling and strategic planning is especially here highly visible (Rydin, 2015). Instead of generic, long term-strategic solutions, we need especially over here highly situational, adaptive, and strategic approaches with an open eye for unintentional consequences and self-organization (Boonstra, 2015).

In fact that would need a kind of coevolutionary approach of planning, mediating between species and contexts, or evolving subjects and evolving objects, toward possibly a more resilient and innovative assemblage on the long run; robust and strong enough to survive and becoming a base for further explorations and developments in time. Like the evolutionary theories, these ideas of coevolution are rooted in general Darwinism, with its notions of heritage, fitness, survival of the fittest, mutation, and variety. However, it also goes beyond these classic evolutionary concepts in the view that groups of organisms are evolving not only by themselves in specific biotic circumstances, but also and in explicit circumstances through reciprocal selective interaction with other related organisms, contexts, or systems (Ehrlich & Raven, 1964). As such over time and space, subjects and objects dissipatively influence each other continuously, coevolving toward a new, if possible more resilient situation (Durrant & Ward, 2011). As said before, here the dissipative arrangements between the species or elements, and their settings or contexts become more crucial than the evolution of the elements themselves. In other words, within coevolutionary approaches the networks or evolving assemblages between the elements become the main focus point.

The latter brings us also to the Actor Network Theories (ANT) of Callon (1986), Law (1986, 2004) and Latour (2004, 2005), the third theoretical building block of the actor-relational planning approach. A central element in ANT is the network defined by Latour (2005) as 'sets of associations between elements which are always mobile and fuzzy, going everywhere, but are specifically in need to create and maintain'. Thus the network is in ANT never static or given, but always fluid, organic, and multi-dimensional, whereas different elements can be involved in more than one network with different impacts, consequences, and causality. Since no one can oversee all these kinds of fuzzy and changing networks (even not with the vast digital instruments we have got now), ANT proposes to go down to the smallest element itself and to follow the actors themselves, their routines, ambitions, interests, and traces. A key element in ANT is however that actors are

not only human, but also inhuman; not only a politician, business men, or inhabitant, but also infrastructure, available technology, or other things could have a major impact on what is happening or not. Or in other words according to ANT, there exists a 'radical symmetry' between the social and the material, coined with the term actant. Each of these actants could have a specific impact on (spatial) developments depending on their relations with others and fit within a specific time or situation. ANT, it is therefore not focused on being but rather on becoming, not on 'ready made politics', but on 'policies in the making'. ANT-inspired planners are therefore not so much focussed on blueprint plans, but on 'collective spatial becoming' within evolving and always changing actant-networks. According to ANT, this kind of 'becoming' regularly evolves along four phases of translation—problematization-interessement-enrolment-mobilization (Callon, 1986)—or along four stages of 'the collective': wonderment-consultation-hierarchisation-institution (Latour, 2004).

However, as such ANT particularly proves its strength in retrospect; how did it come this way? Since planning is mainly a prospective operation the question comes up how to apply ANT proactively; how to induce future situations of becoming with ANT? Precisely for that purpose the idea of the ARA of planning has been developed (Boelens, 2009). Here, proactive planners could as well serve as intermediaries, bringing actants and settings proactively in association with each other, as well as mediators, mediating the proposed interests of nonhuman actors, self-reliant actors and contexts toward possibly more resilient coevolutions. In reference to the four stages of ANT, ARA has distinguished seven proactive translation steps starting from the identification of the unique features or challenge in question, toward the final formal or informal institutionalisation of undefined becoming.

But what is more, in reference to the four ANT stages, and in reference to [AQ9] Hillier (2007, 2011) contemplations on the work of Deleuze and Guattari, ARA has distinguished four planners' navigation techniques in order to stimulate coevolving socio-material practices (Sanders, 2009):

- *Tracing*, as a kind of *Joint Fact Finding*, by jointly interpreting matters how it has come this way, through systematically following the tracks to the origin of an area, problem, challenge or existing association, in proportion to the framework of the task.
- *Mapping*, as a kind of *Joint Opportunity Seeking,* by jointly looking for new arrangements or possible translations that the traced socio-place assemblages can live up to; open enough to be adapted to new actors, precise enough to genuinely make a resilient match.
- *Diagramming*, as a kind of *Joint Transformation of the Action fields*, by jointly looking for mutual matches of interest and possible added values in changing circumstances, contributing to several solutions for the mapped challenges or opportunities.
- *Agencying*, as a kind of *Joint Institutionalisation of becoming*, by jointly developing formal and informal agencies to facilitate resilient coevolutions, through procedures of self-repairing, which are able to change and adapt itself to complex and altering settings.

Actor Relational Approach in Practice

Back to Luchtbal now. When the city felt the need to try a new approach beyond physical masterplanning or participation and received subsidies from the Flemish government, the consultancy firm proposed to follow the four step-approach for Luchtbal, based on the translation and navigation techniques mentioned above.

- 'Tracing', the historic, existent and evolving actant-networks in the area to understand their situational specifics.
- 'Mapping' possible new and innovative actant-networks form there as an educated matchmaking between the traced potentials and new challenges.
- 'Diagramming' the transformations of actant-networks and their fields of reciprocal and adaptive influence through several bilateral talks and roundtables.
- 'Agencying' through securing these mediated assemblages in more binding and passive institutional settings, such as laws, regulations, contracts, informal arrangements, and so on.

Each of these elements have been developed in an intense interactive process with the residents, interested businesses, politicians and the project group with the consultant, representatives from the city, and the social housing company. But especially the first two elements and, partly, the third one played a prominent role in the application of ARA experiment in Luchtbal.

Tracing the Specific Assemblages of Luchtbal

The first step was to trace the situational specifics of Luchtbal. We used a mix of methods including a historical analysis, in depth interviews with public officers and residents, a spatial morphological analysis and a survey among 375 residents to understand the particularities of the area. On first sight, Luchtbal seemed to be a generic social housing estate. The project group, however, discovered four particularities that differentiate Luchtbal: its relation with the port, its green public spaces, the public facilities, and its infrastructures.

The port. Pivotal in the history of Luchtbal has been its relation to the port and the port-related industries. In fact, Luchtbal owns its existence to the port, as the large scale and labor-intensive port production activities needed laborers nearby. However, over time, industries closed and the link between the social housing estate and the production activities gradually weakened. In their place new large-scaled commercial activities, and facilities such as the fire station, sports and car retail, and a cinema complex (Kinepolis) replaced the production halls. Next to that new, temporal, and informal uses are gradually taking up the new voids. But these facilities attracted not so much employment for the old Luchtbal dock workers, but attracted large crowds of visitors and users from all over the region, even from across the Flemish borders. At the moment the potentials of these vast

numbers of visitors and users are hardly exploited; they come and go without lingering on in the area itself.

Green public space. A second characteristic is the vast amount of green public spaces in Luchtbal. Designed as a modernist city, Luchtbal still has many open- though formal-green spaces. In the history of Luchtbal, these green open spaces and corridors played an important role in the social and urban fabric of the neighborhood, as spaces were collectively used for recreation and farming. But over time, the uses and therefore socio-material intertwining's diminished as the population shifted and ethnic diversity increased. Green spaces are now underused and desolate, and rely heavily on the public sector for their maintenance. Through the network between public maintaince actors and the green spaces, open space has over time coevolved into an object of maintaince rather than an object of public encounter.

Mix of public facilities. Third, unlike many other social housing estates in Western Europe, there is a large supply of public facilities in the area. There are many schools, including a sport and a swimming school, a community and cultural center, a child day-care center, a home for the elderly, a sports hall, and sport fields. From the survey, the project group noticed that many of the existing public facilities are hardly used by the residents, but mainly by neighboring residents or other visitors from outside Luchtbal. As a result, the network of public actors, external users and facilities has coevolved into spaces that support external networks, rather than local networks.

Infrastructures. Last but not least and as mentioned before Luchtbal is surrounded by large infrastructures. These large infrastructures decrease in many ways the environmental qualities of Luchtbal, but also provide many opportunities. Luchtbal is highly accessible by various modes of transport: it has two railway stations, it is a main entrance point of the city by car and in the near future, a new tram connection with the city and the northern village of Eekeren will improve the (public) accessibility even further. However, until now the car has always been the main mode of transport. Therefore within Luchtbal, an over-abundance of asphalt is apparent, while at present an increasing number of inhabitants do not even own a car.

Although these characteristics have been found essential for the history and evolution of Luchtbal, these four characteristics are only loosely coupled with actors living in Luchtbal. Moreover, strong relations exist only with external actors and actants. The project group taught that—meditated by them—precisely these factors could play an important role in activating various latent (human) actors within and around the area. As such the focus turned to the ambitions, interests, needs, and wishes of those local actors.

In addition to nonhuman factors, also human factors were traced. This was done via focus groups and a survey among residents. Three types of actors were addressed: civic, business, and public. Moreover, the project group was mainly interested in identifying 'leading' actors—defined as those actors who are willing

to invest (with money, time, legislation, expertise, etc.) in their (physical, social, economic, etc.) surroundings.

Civic actors. In this respect, actors within the civic society proved to have a highly multiple and divers background in Luchtbal. Some residents lived there from the beginning for more than 50 or even 60 years, while others are newcomers and immigrants. From the survey, we found that most residents were generally stratified with living conditions in Luchtbal. The availability of green spaces is considered the most positive characteristic, whereas traffic noise is the most problematic one. Generally immigrants did live in Belgium already for several years before they moved to Luchtbal. Moreover residents dont want to move out again because of the apparent bad reputation of the neighborhood itself. However, some were indeed worried about a possible negative spiral of the neighborhood and others had the perception that they were discriminated. But the vast majority throughout the neighborhood (natives and ethics, young and old) only experienced a lack of good communication between the various groups and wanted better opportunities to live together. Surprisingly (in reference to the large number of potential transnational communities), the residents were in this respect also highly focused on the neighborhood; only with regard to work, shopping, and other non-daily activities they orient themselves to (the greater region of) Antwerp as a whole. Accordingly, the respondents were mainly focused on improving the public, communal spaces; first with regard to better and more appropriate shops in reference to the changing population and needs, and furthermore in better sport facilities, economic activities and small business opportunities, activities for the elderly, young people, and investments in the maintenance and security of the public domain. Approximately one-third respondents of the survey would be willing to contribute (their spare time, experience, and knowledge) to this program. So the project group labeled them as possible 'leading actors'.

Business actors. Parallel to the resident survey, the project group explored the ambitions of leading actors in the business communities as well. It was executed by the consultant, first, through an extensive actor-analysis on Internet (investigating year reports, investment strategies, news items, etc., on possible involved actors within and around Luchtbal in reference to the unique selling points of the area) and second, in primordial bilateral interviews with some 20 of those leading actors. From these explorations the project group concluded that there were hardly any (leading) business actors within the neighborhood itself. Nevertheless they also concluded that in the (direct) surroundings of the neighborhood, several leading business actors could be identified, which could possibly become involved in a coevolutionary 'investment strategy' for Luchtbal, also for their sake.

Public actors. In the third place, the project group organized several brainstorms with the main servants and officials of the involved departments of the public society: the Housing department, the Economic and Shopping department,

Mobility and Infrastructure, Youth and Education, Sports and the department of the Public Domain. The main objective of these brainstorms was to inform and to be informed. Second, the project group opted for an open mind, discussing possible new and/or innovative solutions. Especially with regard to the public domain and the youth and education workshop new ideas evolved with regard to a so-called 'green Luchtbal carpet', including ideas on self-management, block-wise urban farming experiments, community schools, additional sporting facilities and a more informal use ~~by the growing number of adolescences of~~ temporarily left-over spaces. The same kind of dynamics and new commitment occurred at the brainstorm with the economic and shopping department, with regard to for instance the realization of a container park for start-ups and incubators, new financial models for self-producing neighborhood retail, a weekly Mediterranean market, repair stores in combination with ideas for a recycling shop. Next to that, extra emphasis was put on an integrated event programming in combination with a green image branding of the neighborhood.

Mapping

With these challenges in mind the project group turned to the tool of 'opportunity mapping'. Here the focus turned especially to new, promising crossovers not only in technical – physical sense, but also in the sense of new, surprising alliances. Because on the one hand, there is a real threat for a further physical isolation of the neighborhood as a result of its main infrastructure plans and restrictive planning measures in the direct surroundings, which would further isolate Luchtbal. On the other hand, there were also promising opportunities to come up with proposals, which could serve the needs, ambitions, and interests of various (leading) actors as well.

First the *Social Green Carpet Luchtbal opportunity map* concentrated on a reuse and a collective appropriation of the public space in the area, to initiate a new dynamic outdoor daily live in the neighborhood again. It focused on resident's (instead of public) maintenance of the courtyards in the ~~G~~arden city and the formal green areas in high-rise Luchtbal. Temporarily self-management of a green agora by the adolescent youth, the development of a green (car free) bike/run course through the neighborhood, including adjacent amenities, allotments, and the refurbishment of the green areas according to the principle of participatory budgeting, could improve social control and (mutual socio-material) 'belonging-ness' of the neighborhood itself.

Second the *Luchtbal FOYER* concentrated on the existing, but down run athletic course in the South of Luchtbal, in cooperation with the Sports retailer Decathlon, Kinepolis, the Luchtbal Theater, and the International Seaman House. [AQ10] ~~Intention was~~ to revitalize and upgrade the athletic course for multipurpose sport activities for the neighborhood, but also as a test-zone for the customers of Decathlon, play grounds for the adjacent schools, show off area for semi-pro African soccer teams. It was flanked by an upgrade of the indoor sport hall, a yearly street Olympics event, 24-h leisure program with Kinepolis, including the physical connections in between, as a reciprocal adaptive part of the existent isolating infrastructure plans.

Third the *Luchtbal Central opportunity* map focused on the development of new retail functions and low-cost space for the informal economy. New retail functions were sought that are adapted to local needs, such as a thrift shop, a fresh market and a low cost supermarket.

Finally, *the Luchtbal School campus* grouped a set of opportunities that aimed to share space between schools, public, and private actors in order to stimulate a multifunctional use of existing infrastructure.

Each of these opportunity maps have been discussed in three roundtables of some 12–15 leading actors, roughly divided into one-third of the business society, one-third of the civic society, and one-third of the involved public society. Invitation criterion was their potential 'involved and/or leading actor status', proved by the first investigations mentioned earlier. And although these 'leading actors' hardly knew each other, each of the roundtables resulted into a lively debate about the projects and spatial opportunities presented. It resulted in a list of some 50 possible cases on the short (<2015), mid (2015–2020), and long term (>2020) in which each of the involved actors could perform its own role in a communal investment program with regard to finance, time, expertise, law, institutional arrangements and the like. One became aware of each other's potentials. Although some of the presented proposals could only count on little support, others were firmly embraced, or even extended and/or elaborated according to individual and/or communal views.

Diagramming

After the mapping phase, extensive and long discussions were needed to develop self-organizing new collectives around these opportunities toward real business cases. The project group advised the municipal administration to facilitate a coevolutionary implementation of the most promising cases. However during this diagramming process, the project group met some important challenges with regard to the different actor groups.

- Mobilization of civic actors: Although the survey had indicated sufficient willingness to participate, and the project group had done additional efforts to outreach to different groups, participation in activities and certainly engagement of private actors remained low. Moreover, those that participated were often the same local leading actors that already participated in past participation activities of the cities, and whose stakes and interests were already clearly articulated. As the Luchtbal area has had a history of failed masterplans, there was some distrust about the intention of the city and scepticism about the ARA among these actors. Furthermore, the city administration did not really want to invest in building new relations with civic actors. It was argued that the social workers in the neighborhood were sufficiently aware of the problems and interest of the inhabitants, so there was no need to set up new links.
- Mobilization of business actors: Initially the business actors showed considerable interest to participate and to invest in some of the projects that

have been mapped. However, it soon also emerged that some actors tried to settle ongoing conflicts over building permits with the city administration via the project group. Therefore, the city administration soon blocked initiatives taken from the project group to engage business actors within new business cases.

- Mobilization of the public actors: Mobilization of public actors proved to be most successful. New networks between the mobility planners, spatial and social planners, cultural actors and social workers have formed around a considerable number of projects from the project list. However, the successful mobilization of public actors proved to be a barrier for the mobilization of the two other groups. Public actors and local social workers were very sceptical on the capacity of local residents and business actors to take initiatives, and there was thus little openness to stimulate the formation of arrangements.

Outcome

Two years after the implementation of the ARA, mainly the green carpet and the Luchtbal Foyer have been successful. The central park, including the self-management area for the elderly youth, has been realized. Furthermore, the city and several citizen associations have taken initiatives to realize a temporary playground, community gardening, sport infrastructure, and a wooden bicycle track on an unbuilt plot of the social housing company, respectively the old run-course. Moreover, there are several periodic festivals and community meetings organized in the area, resulting in a new vibe physically as well as socially.

Discussion: Practising Theories, Theorizing Practice

We would like to end with some reflections on the practising of post structural theories towards possibly new theorizing of ~~practicalities~~. The ARA in Luchtbal was organised as an experimental application ~~of an ARA~~ for urban regeneration of post war housing estates. Based upon our own experience, the outcome of this planning process has been only partially been successful. We will discuss step by step.

The theoretical lens of ~~the~~ ARA ~~approach~~ allowed us to see particular places as the coevolution of actors and actans in actor-networks. This lens allowed us to come up with a specific diagnosis. In Luchtbal we have found only assemblages with almost exclusive external actors: the network between port actors and port infrastructure, the network between the oversupply of green spaces and amenities and public actors who maintain and program them, economic actors and the warehouses and shops along the Noorderlaan and the network between (external) car users, public infrastructure providers, and Luchtbal's extensive car infrastructure. The story of Luchtbal rather reads as a process of degenerating networks than a coevolution of networks. So from the tracing exercise, the ambition rose to restore and to create local assemblages that could contribute to a more resilient and robust area.

The process of mapping could activate some of the residual potential of actors and the roundtables created a stimulating momentum. The executed approach showed that below the apparent surface, also within these deprived, mono-functionalistic, modernist neighborhoods, high levels of self-organization and self-determination can evolve. Furthermore the approach showed that self-organization could contribute importantly to the ambitions and plans of other (leading) actors in and around the neighborhood. As such the deprived and poor people in these neighborhoods could play a major role in a coevolution of the area, which would not only improve their self-esteem, but could also lead to actual physical improvements and to new socio-economic opportunities.

The subsequent steps of the ARA, namely diagramming and agencying proved to be more difficult steps. We observed that especially the position of the public authority formed a main obstacle in the valorization of the identified opportunities and the formation of new assemblages. When losing control over planning outcomes, old bureaucratic and technocratic routines take over again; Moreover, when initiatives were taken by non-governmental actors, these were easily hijacked by public officers from the city or from supra-local governments and integrated in governmental routines. As a result the process turned into a classic path dependent, public coproduction process, guided by the main concerns of one actor, the public authority. This gave rise to frustrations with several leading actors.

According to ARA, the governments is not so much a neutral arbiter, nor an objective investor for the interest of the general welfare, but it should be regarded as an actor itself with its own interests, goals, and ambitions; challenging or possibly coevolving with other ambitions. Planners and civil servants should indeed serve; not directing developments in prefixed directions, but just facilitating as intermediates between various leading (f)actors of importance, in order to attain resilient assemblages. Within the present multi-dimensional and multi-actor complexities, fragmentations and volatilities, it is more than ever their duty to look these multi-actors, dimensions up in all their volatilities, trying to engage them within and through more relational modes of spatial developments And this needs a major reset toward truly coevolutionary processing.

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