UTOPIA UNCOVERED

The role of Utopia in contemporary spatial planning

Research Master Thesis
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Foreword

Dear reader,

In front of you lies my master thesis 'Utopia Uncovered: The role of Utopia in contemporary spatial planning'. I have written this thesis as my final act for the Research Master Spatial Planning program, making it potentially the last effort of my academic career, and likely the most ambitious one too. During the past three years of doing two master programs I started developing a taste for doing research, and consequently, I have slowly started growing more ambitious and more idealistic. Somehow, that makes Utopia as the final topic in that trajectory something that was meant to be.

For the last eight months, I have been pouring all my newly acquired science skills, enthusiasm, attention spans and more time than I care to admit into this project. I have attempted to frame the status of my beloved field of planning and tried looking for ways that could push it forward. Furthermore, I have been able to look into always interesting, often cool and sometimes even famous planning projects from an inside perspective and learn all about grand and revolutionary visions and ideals in planning, something that I wish to spend the rest of my career on, wherever that may be. I even developed this skill of philosophizing, where everything suddenly has to be explained through far-fetched metaphors, something we ridiculed professors of as first years' bachelor students. Throughout this process, I experienced all possible emotions that a thesis can possibly bring: joy when new concepts clicked together, sadness when summarized articles turned out to be irrelevant, pride when people told me how cool my thesis' topic was and fear, constant, nagging, and tiresome fear, for a good end result. It has been both a joyful and tiresome journey, but alas, I have arrived in the promised land. I will not miss the fear.

For this project to get to where it is now, there were a number of people indispensable. On a first spot, by a few miles and then some, comes Terry van Dijk, my supervisor and fellow admirer of cool visions and planners. Through a number of inspiring and very fun meetings, he was able to provide me with new ideas, bigger dreams and a drive to do better. A second group of people I want to thank are all of the interview participants of my research. You not only educated me on your visions and development processes, but you also showed me glimpses of your Utopias and most of the time did that with the greatest enthusiasm and pride. Then on a third spot come all of the friends, family, fellow students, roommates and evens strangers on the train, who not only showed their support in times of trouble, but also -sometimes to an annoying extent- kept asking me what I am doing my thesis about and why in heaven's name I would be looking into a topic like Utopia. Having to explain this dozens of times has helped me in framing the topic and finding the issues in my storyline more than you probably realise. A special spot is reserved for my girlfriend Lydia, who, through thick and thin, remained my ever-supporting cheerleader and supplier of endless amounts of candy. I am very grateful to all of you and will slowly start becoming more sociable again.

I wish you a happy -though long- reading and hope that this thesis somehow inspires you!

Joey Koning
Groningen, 20th of September 2018

Abstract

Whether it is due to population growth, climate change or mass migrations, places have to constantly be rebuilt and react to the many dynamics of this world. Due to a growing pressure on cities, we are entering a stage where urban life and life in general are becoming unsustainable and are causing increasing stress on people and places. Consequently, if cities are developed and redeveloped in the same way as our current cities are being built, then these cities will continue to face their growing issues. Therefore, contemporary planning approaches have to be reconsidered. In the past, spatial planners have tried to come up with the ideal and flawless city, so-called 'Utopias'. Yet, these attempts were produced through the worldview of the planner, limited to his conception of the circumstances of a time and place, which in the era of postmodernism was deemed unacceptable and therefore abandoned. However, despite these failed approaches and attempts, the concept Utopia still offers potential and unique prospects for current-day spatial planning. Consequently, this thesis aims to find out what the impacts of contemporary Utopias are on people, places and plans in order to explore the value of giving a new boost to the concept. It does so by first conceptualising Utopia through a literature review, bringing Utopia back to its core of providing imaginary, yet ideal worlds, while also characterizing Utopias in a way that embraces the diversity of the use of the concept in the world. Next, it identifies visions and persuasive storytelling as primary methods for these imaginary places to bring influence to the real world, which it can do through a number of ways that range from actual physical transformations to the alignment of actors and the generation of new ideas. To explore the concept in a planning practice setting, these elements are researched in twelve Utopian cases throughout the Netherlands, through document analyses and interviews. The results affirm the great diversity in characteristics, key factors and influences of contemporary Utopias. Each case has a unique approach and content, even though the level of radicalism and imagination in these contemporary Utopias was different from expectations based on theory. Moreover, in almost every case the power of persuasive storytelling played a large role in motivating others to support or join the vision. The thesis concludes by arguing that the more Utopian a project is, the more diverse its impacts, often in areas that conventional plans only play a limited role in. Consequently, there is value in looking into the concept as it is already bringing elements to planning practice that are key in overcoming some of the biggest issues of the next century.

Key words: Utopia; Spatial planning; Visions; Persuasive storytelling; Radical planning

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 CONTEXT

A new era with new challenges

While younger generations take the 21st century life for granted, to older generations it must feel as if we are living in a Jetson fantasy. As arguably one of the most famous imaginations of the future till this day, this television show from the 50's and the 60's imagined a society living in skyscrapers, with people being driven around by self-driving vehicles and watching world events occur on large television screens from the comfort of their homes. Since the time of the Jetsons, we have achieved many of the predictions that were made in the show. We now have robots, flat screen TVs and self-driving cars; we can video chat from anywhere on the planet and even print things in 3D. The world of today is changing, more rapidly now than ever before. Elon Musk, for example, recently announced his plans for sending the first humans to Mars by 2024 (Slezak & Solon, 2017). By the end of his lifetime, he strives to have built the first city of a million inhabitants on the Red Planet (SpaceX, 2017). We are living in a time where events such as space travel, which once seemed science-fiction, become reality on a daily basis. A time where the impossible suddenly seems within reach, creating space for new possibilities and dreams.

Embraced by some, while loathed by others, these changes are part of the progressions of this technological era. They occur in all aspects of our lives: our cultures, our houses, jobs, transportation modes, the food we eat, the entertainment we absorb and the education we give to our children. But it is not all rainbows and sunshine, as there are also developments that led us to worry about our future. There are various upcoming crises that threaten our wellbeing, safety and standards of living. Global climate change, for instance, is causing seas to rise, deserts to dry and ice caps to melt, while at the same time economic crises are threatening the welfare of many countries. (Rowe & Koetter, 1978; Levitas, 2013; Gogora, 2016). Meanwhile, cities play and will continue to play a crucial role as a home to a growing number of urban residents in an increasing global population (United Nations, 2014). These cities are facing urban crises as they have a hard time dealing with the global developments and are as a consequence often plagued by traffic congestions, housing shortages, social inequalities, polluted air and water and many other issues (Rowe & Koetter, 1978; Levitas, 2013; Gogora, 2016). A great deal of these self-reinforcing issues will likely worsen as time goes on (Rowe & Koetter, 1978; Levitas, 2013). In short, cities and societies of today are facing greater challenges than ever before.

Due to all these developments, it is getting harder to predict and anticipate on how society, technology and the human race will develop (Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007; Hoch, 2014). At the same time, whether it is due to space colonization, population growth, climate change or mass migrations, it is certain that cities will continue to grow and that new places will have to be build, either on Earth, Mars, or any other planet (Hajer, 2017). This raises concerns, as many of these cities are already facing crises that seem fundamentally unsolvable, leaving little room for new

issues that come with these changes. Issues such as the growing traffic congestions, the increasing gaps between the poor and rich and the harm globalisation is doing to cities' identities have been developing for decades without signs of resolution. Despite all of the technological, social and societal advancements we have made over the last decades, these problems seem to be an inherent part of the current way in which we build cities and organise our societies, and consequently will only grow with the increasing pressure on the planet (Levitas, 2013). To put it shortly, it seems that we are stuck in a negative spiral of growing pressures on cities and places that require us to change the way that we live and build in more fundamental ways. This raises a necessity to have a critical reflection on the way that we build cities and places and to explore other ways of building them in the future.

The urban doctors in search of a remedy

During the past centuries, spatial planners have been responsible for the process of building and maintaining cities and places (Solinís, 2006). Through creative, rational and collaborative approaches, they have been creating or adapting to changes that were occurring in society in an attempt to improve their cities and regions. As shapers of urban visions and futures, the field of planning is most suitable to search for alternatives for contemporary cities and places (Pinder, 2013). For a long time, this happened in a reactive approach, where cities were often compared to the human body and planners to the urban doctors, who analysed the illnesses of the city and prescribed medicines and treatments to get it in better shape (Shipley & Michela, 2006; Gunder & Hillier, 2007). Using such approaches, planners were able to lay the foundation of many contemporary cities and guide them through crises (Doevendans et al., 2007). Later on, more proactive approaches were developed, where planning was not only aimed at fixing the problems of a city, but also at setting ideals and goals for urban developments and including the wishes and needs of people, nature and the environment (Shipley & Michela, 2006). This has created a palette of different approaches and trends that are used in different situations.

Over the last decades, the field of planning started facing several barriers that make it harder now than before to deal with the upcoming urban crises and the search for new ways of building cities. First, the field of planning is nowadays often characterized by slow progress, as planners are continuously demanded to do more. They have to keep up with developments in theory, are entangled in political arenas and have to collaborate with a growing number of actors as a consequence of the participation society and neo-liberalisation (Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007; Ganjavie, 2012; Kasioumi & Kiss, 2016). All the while they have to preserve the past, meet demands of today and prepare for what might happen tomorrow. Whereas in the past these planners have been able to envision the future and shape the environment according to their visions, they are now reliant on other actors, which made spatial plans susceptible to the slow processes of debate and the search for consensus (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2012; Legacy, 2016).

Second, it can be argued that spatial planning in different cities and regions is becoming more similar and are lacking creativity, making it harder to revolutionize the way that they are built (De Cauter, 2014; Oliveira, 2015). This process has been

enabled due to growing global city networks, processes of globalisation and improving digital communication (Barca et al., 2012; Oliveira, 2015). Consequently, city planners often focus on using best practices from elsewhere in hopes of solving recurring problems in their own cities (Ganjavie, 2012). To illustrate, Denise Scott Brown described spatial planning as trying to keep up with fashion trends by using second-hand clothes (Kasioumi & Kiss, 2016). One of the reasons that caused this is a lack of fundamental spatial planning theory; it is a field that is strongly defined by local context and geography, leading to a lack of guiding principles and ideas (Ganjavie, 2012; Kasioumi & Kiss, 2016).

Third, spatial planners are becoming more reactive because of societal developments and therefore take fewer initiatives (UN-Habitat, 2016). Due to the rise of the participation society and the abovementioned pressure on planners, the role of citizens in planning has increased significantly (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2012; Legacy, 2016; Van Dijk, 2017). This has many benefits for planners, such as a more democratic form of planning, more organic civic initiatives that deal with urban developments at the roots and less costs for municipalities (Boonstra, 2015; Horlings, 2017). However, it can also be seen as a risk to the field of planning in light of the issues that cities face today. Citizens are often focused on the short-term consequences of their actions, and are generally conservative when it comes to changes in their living environment (Levitas, 2013; Van Dijk, 2017). This development can also be seen as a form of trend-watching, as planners are being led by these initiatives more and more rather than pursuing an own planning ideal, which often results in a lack of fundamental changes to urban environments.

All of these developments have led the field of planning to focus on short-term, safe decisions that often lack vision and imagination (Hoch, 2014; Levtias, 2013; Pinder, 2013). The role of planners has in many cases recently shifted from a proactive plan-making role to a more reactive facilitative role of civic initiatives (Bakker et al., 2012; UN-Habitat, 2016). Although there are still plenty of planners that continue to make plans for the cities of today in attempts to overcome the problems they face, these plans are mostly fixated on solving the symptoms, but seldom the disease or crisis itself (Bregman, 2016). The number of radically different plans is currently too limited to fundamentally reshape cities (Pinder, 2013; Hoch, 2014). Consequently, despite all the recent developments in knowledge and expertise about planning, planners are often unable to solve the urban issues of today, let alone those of tomorrow (Gunder & Hillier, 2007; Levitas, 2013; Gogora, 2016; Kasioumi & Kiss, 2016). It seems like the urban doctors need a new medicine, as the 21st century city has grown immune to their treatments.

The need for fashionable planning

Cities require a deeper fundamental change to become ‘good’ and to be freed of some of their most consistent issues (Hatuka & D’Hooghe, 2007; Ganjavie, 2012; Levitas, 2013; Bregman, 2016). A change that cannot be expected from uncoordinated bottom-up initiatives (Hajer, 2017). One in which issues are not treated as isolated illnesses, to be solved for a few years before they turn up again, but one that alters the way we live, work or move in order to make the issue irrelevant (Hajer, 2017). Or

perhaps these issues and dynamics should be seen in a different light and be embraced rather than fought back, as they could offer chances for a new way of urban living (Doevendans et al., 2007). In either case, not only do we need to rethink the way that we build cities, but also the way in which we make plans for them (Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007; Ganjavie, 2012; Levitas, 2013; Gogora, 2016).

This new approach should involve creativity, direction and politics again, in order to deal with the dynamics and growing planning arena of today's society (Hajer, 2017). Planners should become more relevant again, take the lead and shift from trend-watchers to trend-setters (Van Dijk, 2017). By battling fundamental problems holistically, thinking outside the existing order and using their imagination, planners could fulfil the role of a central actor that thinks long-term and acts for the greater good, something no other actors are suitable to do (Hajer, 2017). Not alone as in their days as urban doctors, but in a collaborative approach with all these new involved and concerned actors. And for this to happen and take others along in their ideas, planners will need to capture shared values and desires in planning ideals and stories (Shipley & Michela, 2006). This thesis will attempt to find that new approach, to move the field of planning forwards and make it fashionable again.

1.2 STATE OF THE ART

Bringing planning back to its core

In order to rethink the way that cities are built, it is important to bring spatial planning back to its roots. At its core, spatial planning is shaped by ideology (Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007; Ganjavie, 2012; Kasioumi & Kiss, 2016). It is about guiding actions towards an envisioned future in order to make a city better (Hoch, 2014). The word 'better' is key in this definition, as what makes a city 'good' or 'better' has been a topic of discussion since the time of Plato and Aristotle (Gunder & Hillier, 2007; Solinís, 2006; Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007). Since then, many spatial planners have tried to come up with some form of a good city; an ideal city form that would solve the dominating urban and societal issues of their time (Gunder & Hillier, 2007; Ganjavie, 2012). Some of the more renowned visions come from planners such as Ebenezer Howard, Le Corbusier or Frank Lloyd Wright, who all left their marks on the fields of planning and architecture (Ganjavie, 2012). The ideas of what makes a city good have been changing and competing throughout history and strongly depended on the circumstances and ideologies of a time and place (Rowe & Koetter, 1978; Ganjavie, 2012; Doevendans et al., 2007; Bregman, 2016). In this research, I will refer to these ideas of good or ideal cities as 'Utopian', a concept often associated with dreams of an ideal but far-away or impossible place, shaped by radical ideologies and imagination (Doevendans et al., 2007; Ganjavie, 2012).

Developments of Utopia in planning

Utopia is not a new concept in the field of planning. Its influence has experienced ups and downs throughout history (Ganjavie, 2012). It was very influential during the climax of modernism in the middle of the 20th century, but was largely critiqued when

postmodernism arrived shortly after that (Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007). As a concept, Utopias were often used to prescribe panaceas; perfect models that would work virtually everywhere (Gunder & Hillier, 2007; Ganjavie, 2012). Such a tool fit very well in the ideology of modernism, which was all about the faith in science, universality and rationality (Solinís, 2006). During that time, Utopias offered a lot of imagination to the field of planning, allowing for the development of visions that encouraged progress (Ganjavie, 2012). Inspiring and detailed visions were created for cities and societies that promised solutions for urban problems and incorporated urban desires as experienced in a specific location, time, and worldview: that of the planner (Gunder & Hillier, 2007; Ganjavie, 2012).

However, a lot of Utopian projects in that era failed in practice (Ganjavie, 2012). It became clear that a Utopia in this traditional sense that was based on the limited scope of the planner and in search of universal applications could not work, because times change, locations differ and people have varying desires (Gunder & Hillier, 2007). By the time a project was finished, it would no longer be relevant. These conclusions were also drawn by postmodernists, who rejected universality and instead embraced contingency and relativity, believing that places have different meanings and are set in different contexts (Gunder & Hillier, 2007; Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007; Hoch, 2014). These postmodernists argued that the context of places is so widely different over space and time, that there cannot be a universal blueprint or Utopia (Gunder & Hillier, 2007; Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007). As a consequence of this critique and the failing executions in practice, Utopianism has been largely absent from planning in the past decades (Ganjavie, 2012; Pinder, 2013). This absence has shifted the planning debate to a more pragmatist view and caused the abandonment of planning ideals in many cases, which is crucial for a proactive revolution of city-building.

Utopia as the way forward

To a certain extent, Utopian thinking was the foundation of proactive spatial planning (Albrechts, 2010). It triggered planners, architects and the public to think about ideals, to rethink the way that they looked at places and to start looking ahead, all aspects of planning that we need again today. However, similar to the field of planning today, Utopianism could not deal with the dynamics of the world during the past decades and was abandoned because of it (Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007; Kraftl, 2007). Although absent from planning practice, there have been lots of ongoing scientific discussions on the value of Utopias for planning and the different shapes it could take to become relevant again. Finding ways to make a Utopian approach work in practice could bring lessons for spatial planning in the 21st century as well. To name a few of these proposed ways forward, Hoch (2014) comes up with a pragmatic Utopia to move ideas from abstract to concrete; Rowe and Koetter (1978) thought of a collage Utopia, in which ideal cities are shaped not as one whole, but consisting of ideal city blocks (Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007); Levitas (2013) proposes Utopia as a method, rather than a product, in order to make it more dynamic, democratic and adaptive (Gunder & Hillier, 2007; Ganjavie, 2012; Hoch, 2014). All of these proposals were made in reaction to the failing modernist Utopias and could be ways to reshape Utopianism to

fit in the planning systems of the dynamic and political world of today. Taking all of this into account, Utopianism has a lot of potential for overcoming the issues of contemporary planning, but has seen little daylight in planning practice during the past decades.

If Utopianism is to bring a revolution to the field of planning, a few gaps in theory need to be overcome. First, there is a lack of overview and comparison between different Utopias. The concept has been around for centuries and even today new visions of Utopias are created every now and then, creating a large diversity of scales, goals and forms of Utopias (Gunder & Hillier, 2007; Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007; Pinder, 2013). Although there have been some attempts to bring global categorisations to the concept, for example by Ganjavie (2012), these attempts have not been comprehensive and are therefore lacking. Such an overview is important in order to discover what types of Utopias could work in today's society. Second, there is a disconnection between Utopia in theory and practice. Most of the recent theories around Utopias in planning and the proposals for new forms and shapes come from theoretical philosophizing, away from planning practice. In order to bring Utopia to the surface, the connection with the planning practice and everyday life has to be looked into (Ginder & Hillier, 2007; Pinder, 2013). Bringing the perspectives of planning practitioners on the role of Utopia into view could offer valuable information on the way that Utopia plays a role in contemporary planning practice and how this role could be adapted and improved (Healey, 2007; Mommaas, 2018). Moreover, lots of experiments connected to Utopianism are set up in planning practice, which should be indexed better, because they could potentially breath new elements to the theoretical debate (Pinder, 2013). Third, there are still a lot of unknowns about how these Utopias can have an impact; under what circumstances do which elements of a Utopia lead to what effects in plans, places and people? (Gunder & Hillier, 2007; Pinder, 2013). This is again due to the weak link between Utopia in planning practice and the research of contemporary Utopias in planning theory. It is important to look into recent developments of Utopias, as they could provide valuable information about the desires of contemporary society (Pinder, 2013). To conclude, Utopia offers a lot of potential for contemporary spatial planning, but to do so, a number of gaps in theory will have to be looked into, which I will attempt to do in this thesis.

1.3 OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS

Based on the assumption that Utopias as a concept can potentially offer new possibilities and merits for spatial planning, the aim of this research is to explore how Utopias currently play a role in planning practice. This focus on exploration is relevant due to the relative novelty of and lack of (recent) research on the concept of Utopia in relation to planning practice. The main research question is thus:

- *How do contemporary Utopias impact places, plans and people?*

This thesis serves as a first step in discovering what the current status of the concept is in planning theory and practice. Based on these first explorative steps, more can be said in the conclusions about the future potential of Utopia for spatial planning and the next steps that can be taken in the research process on Utopia. In order to answer this main question, there are multiple products that have to be acquired, connected to a number of objectives. First, a strong conceptualisation is needed of Utopia. It knows a long history of usage and has different interpretations and definitions throughout theory and practice. By illustrating how this large range of Utopias differ and relate, a better understanding of the essence, value and diversity of Utopias and Utopian thinking can be developed. Additionally, because the Utopias in this thesis relate specifically to spatial planning, the concept of Utopia should be positioned in regards to relevant spatial planning concepts. The first sub-question is thus:

- *How can Utopia be conceptualised in relationship to spatial planning?*

Once there is a solid theoretical conceptualisation of Utopias and its position with regards to spatial planning, a focus should be put on the second objective: finding out how Utopias and Utopian visions are shaped and how they can have influence on perceptions and decisions. To do so, this objective is about identifying elements that are needed to create a Utopia, as well as discovering ways in which Utopia and visions can empower plans and people. The second sub-question is thus:

- *How do Utopian visions generate influence on people, places and plans?*

To create an understanding of the concept from the perspective of planning practice, a third objective is to identify, characterize and compare contemporary Utopias in planning practice. The goal of this objective is to explore how the diversity of the concept as discussed in the first objective is experienced in practice and to see what types of Utopias can and cannot work in a practical setting. Therefore, the third sub-question reads:

- *What characterizes contemporary Utopias in planning practice?*

Following up on that, the fourth and last objective is to learn how these contemporary Utopias have played a role in local spatial planning systems, and whether they changed anything about what was already happening, in order to find out what the contributions of the Utopias have been. Here, several elements will have to be investigated: how these Utopias were constructed, in what context they were embedded and to what extent they were able to exert power. This is also about connecting the various characteristics of a Utopia and seeing how those lead to a certain outcome. To capture all of this, the fourth sub-question is:

- *What kind of contributions can be observed from contemporary Utopias in planning practice?*

1.4 READING GUIDE

The structure of this thesis is in strong line with the research questions and objectives. Chapter 2 starts of by a literature review which tries to answer the first sub-question by defining the concept of Utopia, both on its own through its historical origins and definition, and in relation to planning. Next, it will attempt to conceptualise the diversity of the use of the concept of Utopia throughout planning history and planning literature. At the end of this chapter, this diversity is embodied in a model of Utopia to help understand the differences and similarities in visions, approaches, content and intentions of Utopias.

Following up, chapter 3 continues the theoretical side of the thesis by diving into the second sub-question. It is occupied with how Utopias are shaped, what kind of impacts they can lead to and how the process between shaping and influencing looks like. To do so, this part starts off with a short overview of the key ingredients of Utopias, which considers the role of context, desires and individual capacities in determining the envisioning of a Utopia. Next, it dives into the vision and storytelling literature by explaining the steps from a Utopian idea to the persuasion of people in order to reach an impact on places and plans. Finally, these different kinds of impacts are described, along with conditions that play a role in achieving them.

Next, chapter 4 is about the methodology in this research. As the next chapters will deal with empirical data collection and analysis, it is important to first describe the general approach and strategy that was taken in the rest of the thesis. This strategy forms the foundation for explaining the selection of the various methods and describing the way that these methods are used and should lead to the desired end result. As case studies are a crucial part of the empirical research, the case study approach along with arguments in case search, selection and descriptions are explained.

Chapter 5 then moves the narrative from theory to practice by analysing the various finding on contemporary Utopias in Dutch planning practice, based on documents and interviews. A total of twelve cases were researched, and each will be described individually through a structured approach. This approach starts off by describing the context, capacities and desires that lead to the development of a case, along with the process that was taken. Next, the Utopian vision will be linked to and described in light of the categorization model from chapter 2. Following up on that, the various contributions of the case on people, places and plans will be described and finally, some key lessons from each case will be given.

Based on the input from all of the previous chapters, the 6th and final chapter will answer all of the research questions in an attempt to fulfil the aim of the research. These answers will be based on findings from both theory and practice and will be described along with their implications for the greater Utopian debate. Furthermore, this chapter will spend attention on some critical reflections of the research process and give recommendations for further research.

2. JOURNEY TO UTOPIA

CHAPTER 2: THE CONCEPT OF UTOPIA

Utopia is one of those concepts that is not used very often in everyday life, yet many people seem to understand what it means. It lives in our dreams, the books that we read and our memories of the beautiful landscapes we once travelled through. It seems to be a drive inherent to human nature, to long for an imaginative place where all your desires come true (Gunder & Hillier, 2007). In order to relate this concept to the field of spatial planning, it is important to dig around the concept and reveal where it starts and ends. Are all dreams, ideologies and imaginations of different ways of living automatically a Utopia? What are Utopias about, what is their goal and in what ways do they appear, and how can these be related to spatial planning? This chapter will try to answer these questions in an attempt to better define the concept of Utopia. It will start off by discussing the origins of the concept, followed a conceptualisation of the concept in relation to spatial planning. Finally, Utopia will be further conceptualised by discussing the diversity in construction approaches, contents, intentions and visions.

2.1 ORIGINS

Although the earliest discussions on what a good city or the good life is were held way before the start of the modern calendar by Plato and Aristotle, or perhaps even earlier than that, the concept of Utopia was first mentioned in 1516 by an English lawyer: Sir Thomas More (Ganjavie, 2012; Kraftl, 2007; Meagher, 2008). The term was originally intended as a play on words, as it had different meanings depending on whether you pronounced it as 'Eutopia' or 'Outopia'. In that sense, the word Utopia consists of three elements: 'eu' (good), 'ou' (no), and 'topos' (place). Thus, Utopia means simultaneously 'good place' and 'no place', indicating that it is a representation of an ideal place that does not exist anywhere (Rowe & Koetter, 1978; Kraftl, 2007).

The reason that More came up with his Utopia was to offer critique on the existing society at the time, as he was opposed to the dominant ideology of the 16th century (Meagher, 2008). By offering concrete and detailed descriptions on how society could be better, he hoped to set a transformation of places and people in motion (Ganjavie, 2012). He did so by describing an imaginative world, where he talked in detail about different elements of life such as how work, family, sex and education should be organised, in ways that could work anywhere and anytime in the real world (Solinís, 2006; Meagher, 2008). To illustrate, his Utopia consists of a large island with 55 cities that lie 24 miles from each other and are all square shaped, fortified by thick walls and surrounded by farmlands (More, 1516) (see also figure 1). In addition to city form, More also describes how people would live in his Utopia: every man and woman would be specialised in a trade, be dressed in similar clothes without

Figure 1: *More's Utopia. Source: Miéville, 2016.*

distinction, work three hours before lunch and three hours after, breed two children in order to keep the population stable, etc (More, 1516). His ideas were focused on values such as order, rationality, the collective and equality in every aspect of life, and were a reaction to the chaotic, dirty and unorderly cities at the end of the Medieval era (Ganjavie, 2012; Graham, 2016). Henceforth, Utopias became a tool to offer critique on dominant ideologies and developments through time.

Although there were likely lots of lesser known Utopias following up on the ideas of More, one of the first well-known ones came from the hands of Fourier, who proposed a Utopia during the Industrial Revolution of the 1800's (Ganjavie, 2012; Graham, 2016). He described ideas that were focused on individualism and diversity, in a time where people lived more densely than ever before (Ganjavie, 2012). This was in stark contrast to More's ideas, who was a strong advocator of uniformity and collective identities (Meagher, 2008). Following up on Fourier, during the 1900's, planners such as Howard and Morris started to critique the industrialisation and the growth of cities by describing Utopias consisting of greenery, communities and small-scale developments (Ganjavie, 2012; Graham, 2016; Van der Cammen & De Klerk, 2003). Skipping forward to the mid-20th century, planners and architects like Le Corbusier and Niemeyer set the foundations for the field of planning by offering large-scale modernist projects as a reaction to the growing cities and the lack of vision among city planners at the time (Ganjavie, 2012; Graham, 2016).

All of these Utopias were created from their context in history, as a critique of what was and a dream of what could be (Ganjavie, 2012). They are always seen from a world where not everything is perfect and as a consequence create a sense of a 'not-yet' state (Gunder & Hillier, 2007). Utopias thus possess a strong quality that people search for and makes them rally behind: hope (Xiaoyi, 2017). Sargisson (2012) describes this process as a form of escapism; people like to dream of a better world in attempts to escape the miseries and the problems of the world that they are living in. This is also why fairy tales and Disney work so well: they are about themes, values and ideals that apply to a large number of people from almost anywhere on earth and tell stories of people from an original bad place that through struggle and perseverance in the end find happiness (Sargisson, 2012; Xiaoyi, 2017). This possibility to find

happiness from any situation and the idea that happiness is just a matter of 'not-yet' has a strong motivational power on people.

In that sense, Utopias have always been about progression, and resulted in many of the milestones in history (Ganjavie, 2012; Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007; Bregman, 2016). Although these ideas often came as shocks and were in many cases initially looked down upon, as they were radically different from what society was familiarised to, they did lead to changes in society in the end (Bregman, 2016). Mankind tends to change slowly or not at all, but with shocks they are forced to. This was the case after 9/11 in America, but also with the invention of the cars, subways, airplanes and the like. These shocks have changed the world in the past and they will do so in the future (Ganjavie, 2012; Bregman, 2016).

2.2 DISTINGUISHING UTOPIA

Throughout the 'origins' section above, several characteristics of Utopias have been described, such as their ability to motivate people, their capacity to critique the status quo in a given context and their possibility to radically change and progress societies. Before going into more depth on some of these characteristics of Utopias, it is important to offer a more profound definition of Utopias for the sake of clarity in this thesis. To do so, the concept will first be described on its own and then be set apart from two connected concepts, that of plans and visions.

In its most basic explanation, **Utopia** is simply an alternative world that symbolises the good life (Kraftl, 2007; Pinder, 2013; Gogora, 2016). It is closely connected to reality and shaped through the ideals, values and circumstances that are part of a given people, place and time (Solinís, 2006). However, Utopia itself is not real and can never physically be achieved, as these ideals, values and circumstances change whenever a Utopia is pursued (Rowe & Koetter, 1978; Gunder & Hillier, 2007; Kraftl, 2007). Utopia therefore contains a paradox: by chasing after that which we want, the things that we want change too (Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007). There is not one Utopia, but a plurality, as people come from different backgrounds, times and circumstances and as a consequence desire different things (Gunder & Hillier, 2007; Hoch, 2014). Some elements of Utopia may be shared among a large group of people, others are limited to a handful (Hoch, 2014). Utopias are placed at some point in the future, since part of its key characteristics is the possibility of pursuing it, but there is no fixed definition of where and when Utopias take place, as will be discussed in the next section. It is a non-physical parallel world that can both resemble reality or be very far apart from it (Kraftl, 2007; Levitas, 2013; Pinder, 2013). This ambiguity of Utopia is both a strength and a weakness, as it opens the door to imagine endless possibilities, but also creates a great divide in how people see it and how it can be realized (Solinís, 2006; Gunder & Hillier, 2007; Kraftl, 2007; Levitas, 2013). Most people will not have a strong grasp on what their Utopia looks like, but elements of it are scattered throughout their daily lives and personal preferences (Ganjavie, 2012; Levitas, 2013).

Because Utopias themselves are invisible and live in the minds of people, the only way to project them to others and communicate and discuss them is through **visions**, which are in this sense representations of circumstances that are different from here and now, such as in a Utopia (Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007). Visions can be expressed through a large number of ways, such as words, pictures, video clips, models, texts, etc. (Ganjavie, 2012). They can be more rational-based, such as in scenarios, or purely based on ideology and fantasy, such as in science-fiction (Hoch, 2014). Basically, visions are imaginations of how Utopia looks like and works from a certain viewpoint, either from that of one person or that of a group of people (Gunder & Hillier, 2007; Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007; Rapoport, 2014; Robinson, 2016). Similar to how Utopias can be very diverse, so too do the visions of Utopias differ greatly, as they can be detailed or abstract, target a specific element of a Utopia or the Utopia as a whole, be very determined or open for interpretation, etc. (Rapoport, 2014). As can be seen in figure 2, visions form the bridge between Utopias and realities as they bring Utopias to live in the real world. As storytelling tools, visions possess the power to persuade other people and make them pursue a Utopian ideal (Shipley & Michela, 2006; Van Dijk, 2011).

Once someone or a group of people are convinced of the worthwhile of pursuing a Utopia, they switch to making **plans** in order to realize their dream (Levitas, 2013). Plans are guidelines for actions to achieve a Utopia. If Utopias represent what we want, plans represent how we want it (Gunder & Hillier, 2007; Van Dijk, 2011). Depending on the circumstances in which they are made, they can include information on the steps that are needed for making a Utopia, the people that should be involved, the resources that should be allocated, etc. (Hoch, 2014). Whereas visions end in the motivation of people and institutes, plans end in the actual transformation of places (Kraftl, 2007; Pinder, 2013). They are therefore also part of the bridge between reality and Utopia, but in the opposite way of visions, as they pursue the realisation of Utopias. Visions can be part of a planning process, as they represent expected outcomes of a plan, which in turn can be the projected Utopia (Van Dijk, 2011). This creates a cycle between reality and Utopia.

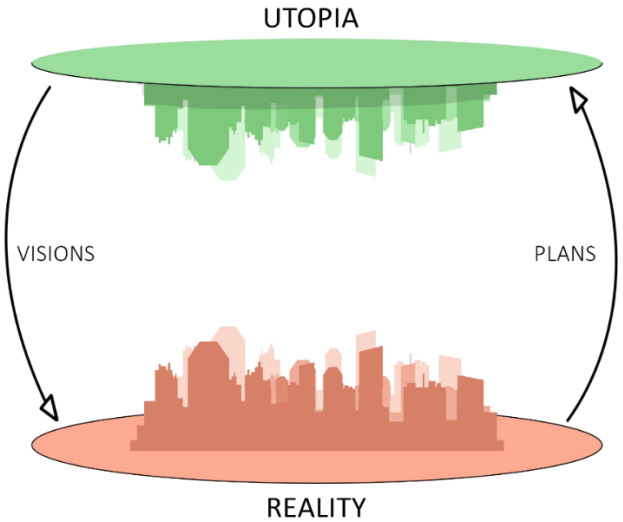


Figure 2: *Representation of the relationship between different concepts related to Utopia. Source: own work.*

The question is how this Utopian planning process differs from any regular planning process, which also consists of making plans to guide actions to a desirable future and using visions to motivate others that the outcomes of those plans are desirable (Van Dijk, 2011). The answer to that question is connected to figure 3, which shows a spectrum ranging from reality to Utopia. Planning processes can be fit into this model, where they can be very closely related to reality, to Utopia or to anything in between those two extremes. As has been argued before in this thesis, many of the current day planning processes are focused on short-term targets: becoming energy neutral in 2030, making a new campus more accessible, or finding a way to house refugees of the Syrian war. Such processes are embedded in circumstances, frames and issues in the here and now and as such would score somewhere on the far left of the spectrum (Gunder & Hillier, 2007; Ganjavie, 2012). More towards the other extreme of the spectrum are planning processes such as the ones by Ebenezer Howard, in which circumstances are entirely different from the here and now and as such have to be theorized and envisioned (Ganjavie, 2012; Levitas, 2013; Pinder, 2013). Then there is a large grey area in between that contains elements of both. Visionary projects that explore other ways of doing things, while still being connected to the way that we do things today.

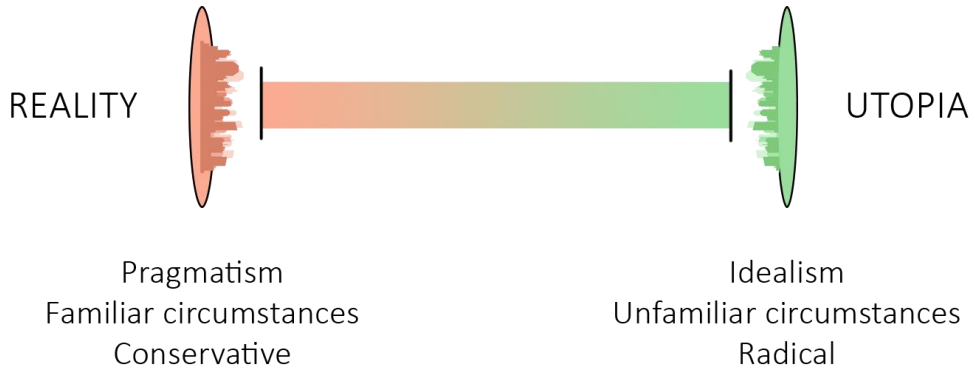


Figure 3: *Representation of the spectrum from reality to Utopia. Source: own work.*

While the Utopian planning process itself contains the same steps and elements as that of a regular planning process, the content and outcome of that process is different. Whereas regular planning processes are usually focused on transformation and efficiency, Utopian planning processes are more about shaking up the status quo and incorporating idealism into visions (Pinder, 2013; Kasioumi & Kiss, 2016). The outcomes of the former are therefore much more conservative and closer to the current reality, whereas the outcomes of Utopian processes are more radical and different from the here and now (Levitas, 2013; Pinder, 2013; Gogora, 2016). Planning processes are not static in nature and can switch along the spectrum as they develop. If regular planning processes become more radical or explore new circumstances they can become more Utopian, whereas if Utopian planning processes become about efficiency and pragmatism, they start to become more like regular planning processes. Both sides have their merits for different situations. There is no

critical reflection without stepping out of reality for a moment and there will not be any change if plans remain stuck in ideals (Kraftl, 2007; Sargisson, 2012; Pinder, 2013; Hoch, 2014; Kasioumi & Kiss, 2016). Therefore, the argument of this thesis is not that every planning process should be fully Utopian, as that would mean that the reality in which we live would be abandoned. Instead, I argue that there should be more plans that consider the Utopian end of the spectrum if we are to overcome the issues of the dynamic 21st century.

2.3 CATEGORIZING UTOPIA

Because the concept of Utopia has been around for so long and is an idea that lots of people relate to, have written and though about and have attempted to achieve in reality, there is a wide range of Utopian cases available. This is due to the fact that anyone who thinks of alternative worlds can be seen as a Utopian (Pinder, 2013). In order to bring some structure to the defining process of Utopia, this section attempts to show how different Utopias relate to and differ from each other. Because of the mentioned range of Utopias that were created in the last centuries, the discussed characteristics of Utopias and their visions are not presented as a list of criteria that Utopian visions should uphold in order to be deemed Utopian, but rather as spectra that can be used to compare between different Utopias. This will also help in dealing with the current ambiguity and subjectivity of the concept, as a Utopia is subject to interpretations by people from different cultures, geographies and backgrounds than the one it was made in (Kraftl, 2007). In response to this ambiguity, the goal of the model is to showcase the diversity in Utopias and to show that there is no right or wrong in imagining alternatives, just observable differences.

To give some structure to the long list of characteristics, functions and approaches to Utopias, the spectra are categorized in four groups. The first is 'Content', and is about the characteristics of the ideas and imaginations that are part of someone's Utopian world itself. The second category is called 'Approach' and is about the characteristics of the construction process of a Utopia. Next is the 'Intent' category, which focusses on the intended functionality or usage of Utopias. The fourth and last category is 'Visions', which is about the characteristics of the way that Utopias are captured and communicated in visions. Each of these four categories consists of four spectra that were created to capture as many of the characteristics of that category as possible.

For the sake of readability, this section will start off by giving a short overview of all the different spectra, together with a summary of what both extremes in these spectra represent. Next, all of these spectra will be brought together in a model in order to create an overview of the concept, which can be used to compare and discuss the various Utopias in practice in the empirical section of this research. The rest of this section that follows concerns the theoretical discussion and explanation of the various spectra in the model, combined with examples from all over the world to illustrate how these spectra or dilemmas work in practice.

Spectra Overview

A | Content

1. Imaginative versus realistic circumstances: whether the Utopian world is closer related to current-day conditions or to conditions in a far-away place and time.
2. Small-scale versus large-scale conception: whether the Utopian world is constructed on a small-scale area, e.g. a house level, or a large-scale area, e.g. a geographic region.
3. Ideals versus solutions: whether the Utopian world is based on the proactive fulfilment of personal or social ideals or on the reactive development of solutions for problems in the here and now.
4. Anthropocentric versus eco-centric: whether the world is focused on values that are important for people or values that are important for nature.

B | Approach

5. Normative versus scientific: whether the approach is based on practical judgements, in line with the senses and intuition or on technical and rationality-based arguments.
6. Evolutionary versus reforming: whether the approach is based on building forth on the here and now or on breaking away from the here and now.
7. Exclusive versus inclusive: whether the approach is very directive and exclusive or open and inclusive.
8. Process versus outcomes: whether the approach is focused on a just and desirable process or a just and desirable outcome.

C | Intent

9. To comfort versus to unsettle: whether Utopias are used to give hope and desire to people or to cause shock and discomfort.
10. To explore versus to reflect: whether Utopias are used for looking forward and seeking out new possibilities or for looking backwards and critically looking back on our past and current developments.
11. To seek change versus to seek understanding: whether Utopias are used as a way to implement actual physical transformations to places or to learn more about desires, developments and possibilities.
12. To move versus to control: whether Utopias are moved to motivate and engage people or to gain control over places, people and plans.

D | Visions

13. Determined versus flexible: whether the visions of Utopia are closed or open to suggestions for change.
14. Accessible versus restricted: whether the visions of Utopia are free, public and accessible to anyone, or locked away behind paywalls and in private property.
15. Specific versus holistic: whether the visions of a Utopia focus on one or a few specific elements of the Utopian world, or offer a holistic and diverse image.
16. Simple versus detailed: whether the visions of a Utopia are simple and open to interpretation and imagination, or detailed and predetermined.

Dreamcatcher Model

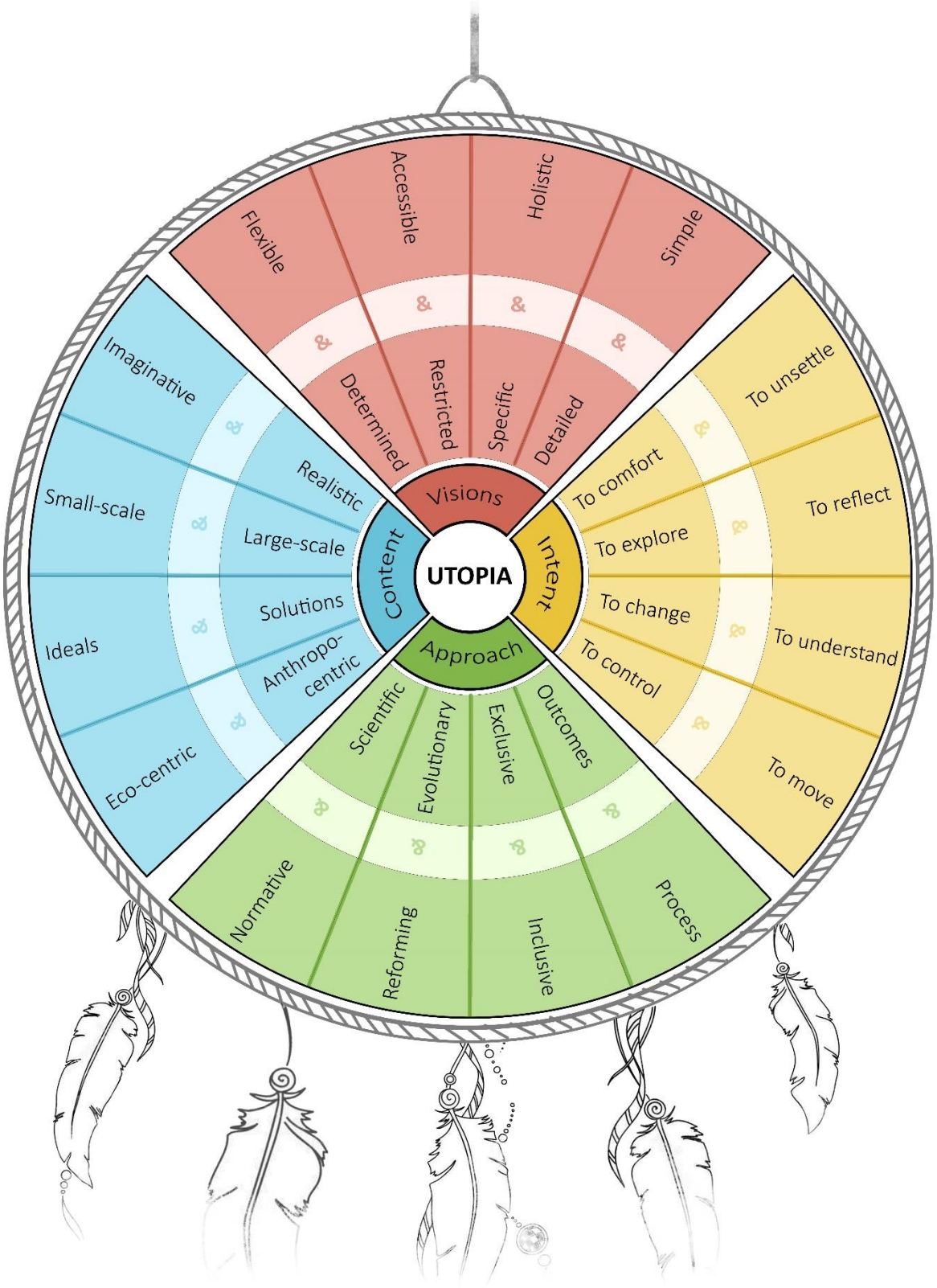


Figure 4: *Model representing the concept of Utopia. Source: Own work.*

All the different characteristics that can be related to Utopias and the envisions thereof can be seen back in the abstract model in figure 4. It represents the extremes to various features, functions and approaches, along with a slider that can illustrate which end of the spectra is more dominant in a given Utopia. With this in mind, the idea behind the model is that different kinds of Utopias can be used as input for the model, and in return the model helps with interpreting them. It can give an overview of how Utopias differ from each other, whether they have similarities and what aspects of the concept are dominant.

The spectra in the model were laid out in a way that tried to capture the essence of the classic planning Utopias from the 20th century near the centre of the model. This means that the extremes that are nearer to the middle are more fitting for those traditional Utopias, although the diversity of these Utopias was already thus large that this generalisation should not be taken too strictly. By making this distinction in the model, it should be easier to compare contemporary Utopias to the traditional ones and to say something about their new (potential) contributions to planning.

The model will be used in multiple ways in the rest of this thesis. First, it helps in creating a strong illustrated overview of the theoretical conception of a vague and diverse concept. Second, it is a strong and useful instrument for comparing Utopias from a specific time and place to that of others. In the empirical chapter, the model will be a useful tool to find differences and similarities between different cases and between the contemporary and past Utopias. Third, it helps in identifying characteristics of Utopias that lead to success or failures in the past and present. Consequently, the model will be used to try and understand the way that contemporary Utopias have been developed and shaped in order to say something about which characteristics should be explored more in planning practice.

Content

1. Imaginative versus realistic circumstances

One of the most important features of Utopias is its search for what lies between the possible and the impossible. For that search, imagination plays a key role in envisioning alternatives and stretching out the possible (Solinís, 2006; Sargisson, 2012; Hoch, 2014; Bregman, 2016; Pinder, 2013; Gogora, 2016). Some Utopias contain ideas and creations that stay relatively close to the possible and are placed in familiar conditions compared to the here and now, while others go way beyond any conditions we currently live in and explore the impossible (Gunder & Hillier, 2007; Sargisson, 2012; Pinder, 2013). Most Utopias, however, operate in between those extremes and some argue that this is where Utopia can be distinguished from other visions or fantasies (Pinder, 2013).

Whether characteristics of a Utopia are considered imaginative or realistic depends on a great deal of factors, but distance in time and geography are some of the most important ones. On the one hand, Meinert (2014) argues that Utopias can focus on far away futures or places, where we know little about and where consequently lots of things are uncertain, which creates room for one his own fantasy

to fill in the gaps. On the other hand, Utopias can be closer related to the present day, as they are built on circumstances and assumptions from the current-day world. Bregman (2016) argues we are in many aspects already living in a Utopia of the past, but often do not realise it. Some people therefore do not seek out far-away places and futures for their ideal world, but find it closer to home.

Historically seen, but also in the current field of planning, plans that stay closer to the possible and are placed in conditions of here and now through careful analyses are more in demand (Ganjavie, 2012). Reasons being that planners have to bring real results to the table to satisfy demands of inhabitants and politicians, operate with public funds and have to take responsibility for expenses and decisions, all of which require a sense of achievability in visions (Hoch, 2014; Savini et al., 2016). However, we are slowly developing a sense that lots of changes in the future are unknown, because they are not imaginable yet (Gunder & Hillier, 2007). This is similar to how someone from the Medieval era would have never imagined developments such as cars or electricity. One of the causes of this is that we are often limited to thinking about the future and developments from the here and now and reason from within what we know to be possible (Hoch, 2014). As a consequence, we currently look at revolutionary plans and ideas with a strong pragmatic or realistic perspective, write off what we deem is not achievable or desirable, and thereby severely limit processes of imagination and creativity (Hoch, 2014; Levitas, 2013).

This is where plans come in that focus more on dealing with the impossible. As we strive to discover these 'unknown unknowns' of the future, we create fantasy and ideology to break out of the constraints of pragmatism (Hoch, 2014; Gunder & Hillier, 2007; Pinder, 2013). Works of science-fiction, for example, can help in imagining places in entirely different conditions, and thereby create room for expanding what we think is possible here and now (Levitas, 2013; Pinder, 2013). Although the predictions in the Jetsons, the stories of Jules Verne, or the inventions by Da Vinci might have seemed unrealistic at the time, there is a good chance that they inspired some of the revolutionary changes that lead to the world of today. However, as these types of Utopias do not immediately result in concrete achievements, they are often dispelled as useless and 'just fiction' (Sargisson, 2012; Pinder, 2013).

A last group argues that Utopia are neither necessarily placed in imaginative and realistic conditions, but are continuously switching between being far away and close by, as we are always in a process of progressing towards a Utopia, without every truly reaching one (Levitas, 2013). Pinder (2013), for example, argues that a Utopia is both part of and more than the conditions of today. According to him, Utopias should stay away from the possibilities of today in order to explore new possibilities, but should still keep the existing world in mind in order to come up with ideas and visions that can have impact (Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007; Pinder, 2013). Although pragmatism can be a killer of imagination, it is also required in order to cause actual change today.

2. Small-scale versus large-scale conception

Another variable in Utopias is about their geographical scale. Arguably, Utopias can range from something very small like a living room to something very big, e.g. a whole

region, country or even planet in some cases (Kraftl, 2007; Ganjavie, 2012; Hoch, 2014; Bregman, 2016). The discussion of possible and impossible is very relevant here, as changes in scale will likely lead to changes in uncertainties about circumstances. Imagining Utopias on a small scale, for instance in the case of a building or a park scale, is much more related to a human scale and to circumstances that someone can imagine in their daily lives, whereas Utopias on a very large scale are hard to lay out for most people. Additionally, with the increase in geographical scale, the content of Utopias also changes, as larger scale Utopias not only focus on buildings, streets and cities, but also landscapes, nature, cultural differences, and many more factors (Solinís, 2006). This leaves many more gaps in a Utopia that have to be filled with imagination.

From a historical perspective, different Utopians have operated on different scales. Le Corbusier, Howard and Wright, for instance, all focused mostly on a larger scale world and made visions and projects of whole alternative cities (Ganjavie, 2012). Others, like Moshe Safdie, attempt to reinvent apartment buildings in order to find a Utopian home (Paiement, 2015). As a reaction on poor apartment buildings, high-density urbanisation and simultaneously a widespread suburbanisation, he proposed affordable apartments surrounded by nature, interesting aesthetics and freedom for individuality. And then there are Utopians who operate on different levels in between extremes. Jacobs (1961), for example, imagined ways for American cities to become more alive again, and did so on scales ranging from the street to entire neighbourhoods. Although she was known as a denier of totalitarian Utopias, she showed lots of symptoms of a Utopian: she came up with alternatives for the urban form, critically reflected on the present from that imagination and expressed hope for the future through her ideas.

3. Ideals versus solutions:

Closely related to the ideals to solution spectrum is the reactive to proactive one. The content of Utopias can either be a reaction on current day circumstances and consist of solutions on how to fix the issues of today's world, or consist of ideas on how to incorporate ideals in an alternative world (Pinder, 2013). The first is closer related to realistic Utopias, as finding solutions to current-day issues means that a Utopia is based on ways of living that are closer to reality (Solinís, 2006; Kraftl, 2007). Imagining a world where we have endless energy, for example, is based on the assumption that an ideal world still requires energy, which means that in that world we would still do a lot of the same things as here and now. The second is much more about breaking away towards the impossible, and creating a world that works on its own, without consideration of the circumstances of the present.

Throughout history people have wanted different things and desired different futures, based on the circumstances they lived in (Bregman, 2016; Gogora, 2016). Therefore, Utopias have had different contents and focuses as society changed. Some of these topics reoccur in many Utopias, no matter how much society changes. Mobility, wealth, equality and happiness, for instance, are all themes that reappear in Utopias throughout the ages (Bregman, 2016). But there are also themes that appear only as society goes through a specific development. For example, since the

awareness on the consequences of climate change and other environmental concerns started to grow, lots of people started dreaming of minimal lives, societies without fossil fuels or alternatives for the consumerist capitalism (Sargisson, 2012). Such themes usually only start playing a role when the urgency for solutions or alternatives started to grow (Pinder, 2013). In short, Utopias throughout history have mostly been about reactions to the circumstances of a time and place and have sought solutions for the issues that were deemed important then and there.

4. Anthropocentric versus eco-centric:

As Utopias are human creations, they are naturally oriented towards human desires, needs and futures. Consequently, a lot of Utopias are focused on anthropocentric themes in which nature is mostly seen as functional (Acosta & Romeva, 2010). As a consequence of the focus on growth and development, this worldview had dominated the Utopias of the past centuries (Doevendans et al., 2007). Le Corbusier, Howard and Wright were all visionaries who mostly focused on creating an alternative world where everything was ideal for human beings and where humans could flourish (Levitas, 2013). Such utilitarian worlds had little regard for the welfare for nature. Although there were Utopias where nature played a bigger role, such as in Howard his Garden City concept, this was always in the interest of people (Ganjavie, 2012).

It was only recently as a consequence of the discussions that arose from the Limits to Growth reports that ecology and the impact of humans on nature became human concerns (Acosta & Romeva, 2010). Following on this development, people started to imagine ideal worlds where there was room for both people and nature, or even worlds where ecological welfare was put above that of humans (Ganjavie, 2012). Along with this more vulnerable view of nature came a reappreciation for natural elements that had value on their own, independent of human interaction (Doevendans et al., 2007). Additionally, natural elements as non-human agents were studied and respected more and more for their creative input in the shaping of Utopias (Kraftl, 2007). Although anthropocentrism is still a dominant factor in Utopias, ecology and the natural world has started playing a bigger role, and is considered more and more as part of an ideal world.

Approach

5. Normative versus scientific

As Utopias can be seen as imaginations of a better place in time and space, it is inherently occupied with a discussion about what is considered good or bad (Gunder & Hillier, 2007). This judgement can be based on either a scientific approach with rationality and efficiency as priorities and/or a normative approach that is all about politics and subjectivity (Rowe & Koetter, 1978). Both approaches have their qualities and issues, and Utopias can take either side or a combination of both.

Artistotle was a strong advocator of the normative approach. He argued that decisions about good or bad are not about expert knowledge or rationality, but about something he called ‘phronesis’: practical wisdom of actors that deal with the subject on a daily basis (Flyvbjerg, 2001; Gunder & Hillier, 2007). For Utopias, that would be

the people who live in places and cities and experience their flaws, treasures and challenges on a daily basis, which involves almost any urban resident. It has been known for a while that knowledge and rationality are bounded and have to be discussed and communicated in order to be collected (Allmendinger, 2009). For cities to be good, they should serve the needs and desires of those that use it, who know best how their lives look like and how they could be improved (Levitas, 2013). Such romantic Utopias are about experiences through the senses, connected to beauty and sensitivity (Solinís, 2006; Doevendans et al., 2007; Kasioumi & Kiss, 2016). A good example of such ideas is the reconstruction of wild forests, which has little rational value but results in positive feelings and experiences (Doevendans et al., 2007). An ideal place would not just serve its inhabitants, but also its visitors, flora, fauna and the wider region it is part of. This results in a problematic situation, since it is hard to deal with such a wide range of different needs and wishes, some dominant and powerful, and others invisible or impossible to know.

Another problem of this normative approach is that when it comes to needs and desires, we often do not know what we want or need. In the 21st century, we are living in such luxury and comfort, that it is hard for many to imagine a world that is better than ours (Bregman, 2016). Moreover, as indicated before, people tend to stick to what they know and they generally do not like sudden changes (Levitas, 2013; Van Dijk, 2017). Asking urban residents or visitors how their Utopia would look like, would thus likely not result in any useable information. They might have wishes or preferences, but do not know about them (Fukuda, 2003). Such wishes are called 'latent'. In order to deal with the number of different needs and wishes in cities, as well as the existence of latent wishes, planners often make assumption on the dominant norms and morals to provide the greatest good for the greatest number of people (Gunder & Hillier, 2007; Hoch, 2014).

Plato was much more involved with the scientific approach of constructing a Utopia. He believed that to create a Utopian city, you needed an à priori perfect city model (Solinís, 2006; Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007). Through that approach he sought to create the greatest good for the greatest number of people through decisions based on rational knowledge and expert decisions (Gunder & Hillier, 2007). There are several benefits to a rational approach: it offers the ability to make defendable choices, it leads to a relatively quick decision-making process and is focused on getting things done (Doevendans et al., 2007; Allmendinger, 2009). Consequently, this blueprint style of designing Utopias experienced popularity during modernity, when faith in the scientific method and rationality was at its peak (Solínis, 2006; Gunder & Hillier, 2007; Ganjavie, 2012). This led to technical Utopias about rational, complete and detailed plans, mainly viewed from the designer table (Solinís, 2006; Doevendans et al., 2007; Ganjavie, 2012; Hoch, 2014; Kasioumi & Kiss, 2016). A good example of this were the plans that were made for a dome over Manhattan in the Seventies, based on rational arguments of preventing heat loss, snow removal costs, reserving water, etc (Doevendans et al., 2007).

However, due to several shortcomings and bad experiences with rational plans, this blind faith and scientific approach made room for a focus on intersubjectivity (Gunder & Hillier, 2007; Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007; Hoch, 2014).

Although scientists kept making universal assumptions for a long time, it became apparent that such assumptions had a narrow scope and were strongly bound to culture (Wynne, 1989; Gunder & Hillier, 2007; Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007; Hoch, 2014). Moreover, scientists slowly built a reputation of having difficulties with communicating their findings and reasoning, giving advise that was inflexible and not connected to reality, context or tacit knowledge, and lacking a consideration of the consequences of their statements, all of which led to a drop in credibility of the scientific approach (Wynne, 1989).

6. Evolutionary versus reforming

There are three different ways that Utopias can be constructed in regards to changing the world. The first is an evolutionary approach, which is concerned with building forth on the current world, adapting it to something better and in the process evolving into a better place (Spencer, 1997). This first approach is about slow and gradual transformations and building forth on changing circumstances in an incremental way (Rapoport, 2014). The second is a reforming approach, which is focused on completely changing the way that the world works in order to move forward, and in the process reforming what we know (Spencer, 1997; Pinder, 2013). This approach is much more radical in nature and tries to break from conventional methods (Bregman, 2016; Gogora, 2016). Such radical approaches are sometimes necessary in order to create new problem statements, involve new actors and consider different pathways than before (Albrechts, 2015). The third way that lies in between evolutionary and reforming sees Utopia as a process of revolution that changes the world, but not so fundamentally that it cannot be recognized (Spencer, 1997; Kraftl, 2007; Pinder, 2013). The choice for such a way of constructing Utopias depends on the topic(s) focused upon in that Utopia and the urgency to change (Pinder, 2013). A great deal of Utopias tend to stay within familiar conditions and simply seek to evolve the world to overcome issues (Kraftl, 2007). This fits the earlier mentioned notion that planning often stays in the practical, possible and proven ideas. When the urgency to change gets bigger and there are fewer possibilities to solve an issue in the current world, Utopias that seek to reform are more likely to offer a way forward.

7. Exclusive versus inclusive approaches

Another distinction in Utopian construction approaches is that between exclusive and inclusive methods (Sargisson, 2012). Exclusive approaches are characterized by a process that is restricted to a limited group of people, whereas inclusive processes are usually open to a wide range of participants. The number of people involved in the construction of a Utopia has a strong influence on the speed and outcomes of the process. More people will lead to a more representative Utopia and a more creative approach, but will also drastically reduce the speed with which a Utopia can be constructed and communicated, as the number of opinions and differences increases as well (Ganjavie, 2012). With less people involved, there is a lower chance at disagreement and decisions and creations can be developed quicker, at the cost of a lower representativeness (Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007; Sargisson, 2012).

A good example of exclusive construction processes is a large share of the top-down planning processes which were popular during the age of modernism (Kraftl, 2007). The plans made with this approach are usually in the hands of elites and people that are highly skilled, making them anti-political, but potentially highly effective (Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007, Gunder & Hillier, 2007, Sargisson, 2012). As mentioned before, a large share of the traditional Utopian construction processes was top-down and made by one person or a small group of people (Gunder & Hillier, 2007).

Prime examples of inclusive approaches are bottom-up initiatives, which are often forms of social experimentations and focus on open-endedness, flexibility and trial-and-error (Sargisson, 2012). They are usually set up by groups of people that are critical of today's society and act on that by attempting to make a Utopia in reality on a small scale (Levitas, 2013). To name an example, co-housing projects such as Transition Towns, where people claim a small amount of land and create a new community-based lifestyle, disconnected from the rest of society. Ganjavie (2012) also discusses the recently upcoming trend of internet participation. Through this method, anyone with internet access can join a Utopian construction process from anywhere in the world. This creates new dynamics, which can lead to universal values being captured, but this internet process is also characterized by a limited quality and depth of discussion (Ganjavie, 2012). This makes such Utopias very political, not very effective (Sargisson, 2012).

8. Process versus outcomes

The oldest distinction of Utopian approaches is that of Utopia as a product versus one as a process (Solinís, 2006). This distinction was made back in ancient Greece, where Plato searched for the perfect city model, a Utopian product. This process of creating a city model is one of the starting points of the field of spatial planning (Solinís, 2006; Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007). However, his student Aristotle did not agree with these ideas, as he believed that the ideal city form could not be made à priori, but should be based on politics, discussions and social co-construction. In his vision, the city is a process of always becoming, without a final state, and thus Utopias should be dynamic and open to changing circumstances (Solinís, 2006, Sargisson, 2012). He believed in Utopia as a method, in which ideal places could only be reached through critical assessment of social and political practices (Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007). A strong process does not always lead to a strong outcome, similar to how a strong outcome does not necessarily represent a strong process. Neither is more important than the other, and their usage depends strongly on the intentions of a Utopia.

Plato his approach resembles a lot of the classic Utopian approaches that sought perfection on a high scale through hierarchical universal solutions. Such approaches were often portable to all kinds of places, and formed a blueprint without context (Gunder & Hillier, 2007; Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007; Grogan, 2013; Levitas, 2013). In practice these Utopias can be seen in planning and architecture in cities such as Masdar or Dubai, where whole neighbourhoods are built in a matter of years based on one masterplan. Thus far, a lot of Utopias had a strong focus on generating outcomes in order to be communicated and implemented. As such, many Utopias were captured in images or narratives that sought to inform, criticize, understand or

change society. This type of Utopia relied on a static imagination of the good place in order to be spread around, gain recognition and support and achieve change (Kraftl, 2007). Most of the grandeur Utopias of the last century were a product too: blueprints that captured the ideal world on paper in a way that is easy to convey and share (Grogan, 2013; Sargisson, 2012).

Utopia as a process is less developed than that of a product, because it has always remained mostly theoretical and has seen almost no use in practice yet. The idea of Utopia as a process or method was proposed as a way to deal with the failures that were seen in the modernist Utopias, when it became clear that static blueprints were not suitable for the changing circumstances in the 20th century (Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007). Using Utopia as a process would allow for the constant adaptation of plans for changes in desire and circumstances (Ganjavie, 2012; Pinder, 2013). It builds forth on the notion of Aristotle that an ideal place is always a process of becoming and can never fully be achieved and instead should be looked for constantly through debates and experimentation (Ganjavie, 2012; Pinder, 2013). This process of always becoming is illustrated by a quote from Eduardo Galeano: "Utopia lies at the horizon. When I draw nearer by two steps, it retreats two steps. If I proceed ten steps forward, it swiftly slips ten steps ahead. No matter how far I go, I can never reach it. What, then, is the purpose of utopia? It is to cause us to advance." (Rowe & Koetter, 1978)

Intent

9. To comfort versus to unsettle

Whenever any form of change is proposed, people react very differently to it. This is not different for Utopias and strongly depends on how conservative people are, what experiences they have with elements of a proposal or what their lives look like in general (Chawla & Kelloway, 2004; Devos et al., 2007). With these contingencies in mind, Utopias can be used to either comfort people or unsettle them, or do a little of both, all potential incentives for change.

With the concept of 'good' as part of its name and core definition, Utopia is often associated with comfort. The concept of 'hope' is important for Utopias. It is about the 'not-yet' and about possibilities for different futures (Solinís, 2006; Gunder & Hillier, 2007; Kraftl, 2007; Ganjavie, 2012). Hope is connected to 'good' and a fundamental part of imagining ideal places and in itself an element of comfort: it makes you feel good. Furthermore, hope is about creativity linked to achieving something new, which is often connected to a sense of euphoria and as such, Utopia is about change filled with potential and happiness (Kraftl, 2007).

In addition to hope, Utopias can be about creating a fuller intensity of life here and now through art and hope (Ganjavie, 2012). Think of images of idyllic communities, safe havens and homely places, which can all be very comforting (Kraftl, 2007). Watching science fiction movies and seeing non-existing places can offer a sense of wonder and marvel and with that comfort. This is similar to when you see impressions of a potential holiday destination and can already see yourself being in that situation. This comforting element is considered a form of escapism and is often

used by companies such as Disney to draw people to amusement parks and theatres (Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007; Sargisson, 2012). However, for a number of people this hope offers an incentive to change and progress, for example in the case of small local communities that attempt to build a Utopia in the here and now (Sargisson, 2012; Levitas, 2013).

On the flipside of Utopias lies the very similar concept of Dystopia, which is about 'bad places'. Whereas Utopias are about hope and comfort, dystopias are often associated with fear and anguish (Sargisson, 2012). However, Kraftl (2007) argues that Utopias themselves can also have a discomforting function through a number of ways. First, the process of pioneering that many Utopias go through results in unsettling feelings, as finding new possibilities and ways of doing things can clash with what you know and believe in the world (Kraftl, 2007). Consequently, such developments make you wonder whether the familiar will come back and where these new developments will lead. This insecurity is also why many people reject that occurrences such as the moon landing ever happened, because it does not fit the way that they see the world.

Second, as powerful storytelling tools, Utopian visions have the potential to gain support and be spread around. However, as such ideas spread, they are interpreted by different people, increasing the chances of such interpretations clashing with the initial intentions of a Utopia (Kraftl, 2007). When people give their own interpretations to such ideas, those ideas can become very unsettling and dystopian if they do not fit the worldview and conceptions of the future as the receiver (Van Dijk, 2011).

Third, Utopias can cause a feeling of homeliness. Once you imagine an ideal place, and see how it is better than the one you live in right now, this can give you a longing feeling for such a state (Kraftl, 2007). This can grow to become unsettling and cause a sense of loss, because you cannot live in such a place right now. Although it can be interpreted as a bad feature of Utopias, unsettling can actually be seen as a positive strength: it confronts people, brings them to discuss and reflect on their core values and can cause them to want to advance (Kraftl, 2007).

10. To explore versus to reflect

The imaginative nature of Utopias allows them to both look into a future that does not exist yet and explore different paths and outcomes, and look backwards at the present with an objective and critical perspective (Gunder & Hillier, 2007; Sargisson, 2012; Levitas, 2013). Utopians are pioneers, in the sense that they go to times and places where no-one else has gone before, because it is often their own creation (Kasioumi & Kiss, 2016). The urge to pioneer comes from the feeling that something is wrong with the present and that things could be better elsewhere (Sargisson, 2012). It tries to envision developments that cannot be seen anywhere yet, in a similar fashion to how scenarios are used in contemporary planning. However, the difference with scenarios is that Utopias tend to look further away from the present in more uncertain futures (Meinert, 2014). Therefore, explorative Utopias can be very helpful in discovering new possibilities and finding goals to progress towards (Ganjavie, 2012). Critical Utopias, of which More's Utopia is a good example, are made to criticize the way that things were done here and now through offering descriptions

of how things could be (Gunder & Hillier, 2007, Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007; Kraftl, 2007; Sargisson, 2012; Levitas, 2013). They offer a sort of golden standard to compare current-day events to, but also help in seeing a bigger picture of cities and places (Ganjavie, 2014). Sometimes, these Utopias are extrapolations of contemporary developments, and described as dystopias in the future (Kraftl, 2007; Sargisson, 2012; Pinder, 2013).

11. To seek change versus to seek understanding

Looking forward and backwards are both forms of collecting information, for which Utopias can be a valuable tool. Some Utopias, however, intent to go beyond that and seek to change the world of today. Although a state of perfection is strongly intersubjectively and therefore per definition not achievable, such Utopias try to bring the world of today a bit closer to what they deem ideal (Rowe & Koetter, 1978; Kraftl, 2007; Ganjavie, 2012).

Utopias that are about understanding try to create mental constructions of a non-existing world through which they can better learn about the current, real world (Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007; Ganjavie, 2012; Hoch, 2014; Gogora, 2016). To clarify, the world in which we live determines the way we think and act, which we use when we think of Utopias through discourses and images (Solinís, 2006). In that way, Utopias get us away from here and now and helps us to judge what we are doing in comparison to what we could be doing (Ganjavie, 2012; Levitas, 2013). Moreover, when Utopias are created with groups of people, the process of creating Utopias can serve as a way to share and understand different worldviews (Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007). Finally, Utopias can offer a narrative that shows how the future will look like if we continue developing in certain ways (Ganjavie, 2012). The learning effects of a Utopia depend on factors such as the number of medias that are used, the familiarity with a Utopia, and the testing of knowledge (Antle et al., 2011).

However, some Utopias try to actively alter the world of today by envisioning and describing a horizon to move towards, which can be seen but not reached, in order to create a drive for social change (Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007; Ganjavie, 2012; Hoch, 2014). These are usually attempts to 'heal' the issues of today's cities (Gogora, 2016). This type of Utopia is about finding incentives for progression and is successful if it influences actions (Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007). In that sense, Utopias are more powerful than visions and plans for instance, because they are more provocative (Solinís, 2006; Ganjavie, 2012). Usually, these times and places are envisioned based on positive human attributes and feelings that are extrapolated, while filtering the negative ones out (Kasioumi & Kiss, 2016). Utopianism is crucial for giving vision to politics in order to limit the impact of routines on planning and adds passion to planning (Sargisson, 2012). In rare cases, Utopians go even further than that and attempt to bring their image of a Utopia to life at a small-scale level (Sargisson, 2012).

12. To move versus to control

In line with the discussion on whether Utopias are open or determined, Utopias can be used to either involve the general public and seek solutions that are supported by a wider group, or to take control over a process and more forward more efficiently. It

can be argued that one of the main goals of Utopias is to fulfil human needs and desires, which it brings into scope through debate and exploration (Ganjavie, 2012). These needs and desires are very place- and time-bound: what we dreamt of 150 years ago is taken for granted today and what we dream of today was inconceivable 150 years ago (Bregman, 2016). An example of this can be seen in the imaginations of Cockaigne: This was the land of milk and honey that Medieval people dreamt of, where anyone was equal, life was easy and food widely available. Life in the western world of the 21st century reached that point, as we have abundances of food and luxury, but we often do not experience it as such. Utopias allow planners to dig up elements of an ideal place from politics, arts, practice, etc. to combine into a whole and offer up to public debate (Levitas, 2013). Additionally, they allow the public to express deeper wishes and desires that otherwise seldom come to light. However, with the rise of the participation society, this focus on public participation and debates has shown that this can result in several drawbacks too. As mentioned before, it has made planners more reactive, it gives more power to a group of people that often think on an individual and short-term basis and has made decision processes slower and more consensus-oriented (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2012; Legacy, 2016).

Engagement is not necessarily focused on the wider public, but can also be about engaging a group of stakeholders in a planning process. A Utopia can be an important tool in aligning the intentions and ambitions of a group of actors and in that process bundle power and resources for achieving a collective goal (Hajer, 2017). Hajer (2017) gives an example of this that is related to the energy transition. A few years back the energy transition was going very slowly and received limited support. By organising an event where a group of important actors showed up, Hajer his organisation IABR (Internationale Architectuur Biennale Rotterdam) was able to show them how an alternative sustainable energy future could look like, which resulted in a collective signing of a declaration to work towards this future by all actors involved.

Utopias that are more about control had seen a large rise and fall during the 20th century. As tools they were on many levels the opposite of an engaging approach, as they were about fast decision-making, rationality and seeking action over debate (Solinís, 2006; Doevendans et al., 2007; Hoch, 2014). Moreover, they were implemented in order to ensure that public spaces function according to desires (Solinís, 2006). However, these controlling Utopias failed too, as they often held little consideration for local contexts, had low public support and were too prone to changes in society (Ganjavie, 2012; Pinder, 2013). As such, most Utopias are somewhere in between the full engagement and full control extremes and try to do both.

Visions

13. Determined versus flexible

As representations of possible futures, Utopias are captured in descriptions, images, debates or thoughts, at which point it becomes clear how flexible or determined a Utopia is. Determined Utopian visions are somewhat static and closed off to any feedback, whereas flexible visions are open to processes of contestation and critique

and willing to rethink certain elements (Gunder & Hillier, 2007). Determined visions are usually the result of Utopias that are aimed at outcomes, where as flexible visions are part of a more process-oriented Utopian planning process.

The determined Utopia has been around for a while and was thriving in the age of blueprint planning. A traditional characteristic of Utopia back then was focused on creating control over society, cities and developments in both (Solinís, 2006; Doevendans et al., 2007; Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007; Kraftl, 2007; Ganjavie, 2012). This often goes hand in hand with the creation of blueprints for a desired world, based on concerns of a time period (Grogan, 2013; Sargisson, 2012). Such blueprints consist of plans for an organised order in space, based on the assumption that changes in space will lead to social reforms as well (Gunder & Hillier, 2007).

A main characteristic of this age of blueprints and determinism was the tendency of plans to become very static (Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007; Kraftl, 2007). Once plans are created and visions of Utopias are drawn, there was little room for change, since what was created was considered ideal. This also meant that inhabitants of such places were not allowed to change, because the vision of the ideal place would not have room to change along with its inhabitants, making them so-called 'prisoners of time' (Ganjavie, 2012). This is one of the reasons that Utopias were never truly achieved or successful, because dreams and circumstances changed (Gunder & Hillier, 2007). An example of this approach is Brasilia, which was planned in the '50's according to Utopian ideas (Bertraud, 2000; Deckker, 2016). It was considered revolutionary and the prime example of what a city could be. However, Brasilia grew faster than its planners anticipated and is now characterized by high poverty, congestions and housing shortages (Bertraud, 2000; Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007; Deckker, 2016). Finally, another drawback of blueprints is that they are limited in the sense that they cannot capture all elements of life (Levitas, 2013)

Another large assumption of this deterministic approach was its totalitarian nature (Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007; Ganjavie, 2012; Pinder, 2013). Partly because of the prisoners of time argument, but also because of locking down a path towards the future, without leaving room for alternatives (Pinder, 2013). This puts a lot of power into the hands of the 'urban elites': politicians, government officials, real estate investors and similar actors, who have relatively much input in such plans (Gunder & Hillier, 2007). Additionally, there were various famous figures throughout history who strived for what they saw as an ideal world, who were very totalitarian in their actions and were portrayed as some of the evilest characters in history. Hitler, Stalin, and Mao are some of the prime examples of such figures. As a consequence, Utopian dreamers lost a lot of credibility.

Flexible Utopias are created on the notion that Utopias cannot be built per definition. That would mean that whatever is considered utopic is already out there and simply has to be realized. But that is not the case, since half the original meaning of the word was about Utopia being in 'no place'. Instead, Utopias are about possibilities and dreams, sometimes called an 'architecture of process, not one of solutions' (Kraftl, 2007). A different and new line of these flexible Utopias focus on intersubjectivity, discussion and keeping plans as much open as possible in order to deal with changing circumstances (Gunder & Hillier, 2007; Kraftl, 2007; Pinder, 2013).

14. Accessible versus restricted

Similar to the construction spectrum of exclusive versus inclusive, with the main difference being that the construction ones were about participation, whereas this spectrum focuses on the accessibility of the visionary outcomes and produced ideas. Throughout the past centuries, there have been lots of planners, dreamers, writers, filmmakers and other creative forces involved in making Utopias. More recently, new groups of people started thinking about alternative futures and new possibilities: companies and the wider public. The involvement of these new groups has led to a large surge in the number of works on science-fiction and the ideas we have about what is possible or not. Additionally, it led to both processes of monetization of Utopias and massive online discussions. There is an underlying layer of accessibility connected to this new surge of Utopian ideas.

Utopias portrayed in science fiction, imagination and fantasy can be seen as forms of escapism, and Sargisson (2012) therefore calls them 'shams'. Humans have an inherent desire for something better, which is targeted in a great deal of mainstream entertainment nowadays, as seen in theme parks, tv, games, virtual reality, etc (Gunder & Hillier, 2007; Sargisson, 2012). This form of escapism is often called 'Disneyfication' and is used by an increasing number of companies who try to make money out of fantasy and imagination (Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007; Sargisson, 2012). Through such processes of monetization, imagination and Utopias become tools to use strategically in order to target the largest number of people, through the most efficient manner, all to make the largest amount of money. Furthermore, this form of Utopia is considered problematic, because it offers an easy way out of reality and stops us from looking for collective solutions for today's issues (Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007, Sargisson, 2012). Although a strong point of such Utopias is that they offer possibilities for reflection on life and society, they do not offer the same capabilities as genuine Utopian thinking (Sargisson, 2012). It makes us reflect from an image of an ideal state that someone else created, which prevents us from thinking and critically reflecting from our own perspectives (Solinís, 2006; Gunder & Hillier, 2007; Kraftl, 2007; Sargisson, 2012; Levitas, 2013; Hoch, 2014).

Most types of monetized Utopias are characterized by intolerance. They are not accessible to anyone because of a threshold of money or other means and are therefore shaped by a limited range of voices (Gunder & Hillier, 2007). Gated communities can be strong examples of such Utopias, where the good life is captured behind gates and walls. Because of both this intolerance and 'sham' effect, monetized Utopias are considered an apolitical form of Utopia (Sargisson, 2012).

On the other side of the spectrum is the growing group of thinkers and dreamers who share their thoughts on Utopia through free online media. The internet in relation to planning practice is a relative new domain, but could offer a way for thousands of voices to add their ideas and opinions to a Utopian discussion (Ganjavie, 2012). A downside of this form of Utopia is that it becomes hard to reach a consensus with so many participants. Additionally, this form of communication is limited and fast-paced, especially in combination with the intersubjectivity of Utopias (Solinís, 2006; Gunder & Hillier, 2007; Kraftl, 2007). Although this form of Utopianism is much

more political, accessible and democratic, it usually leads to very little action and progression (Sargisson, 2012).

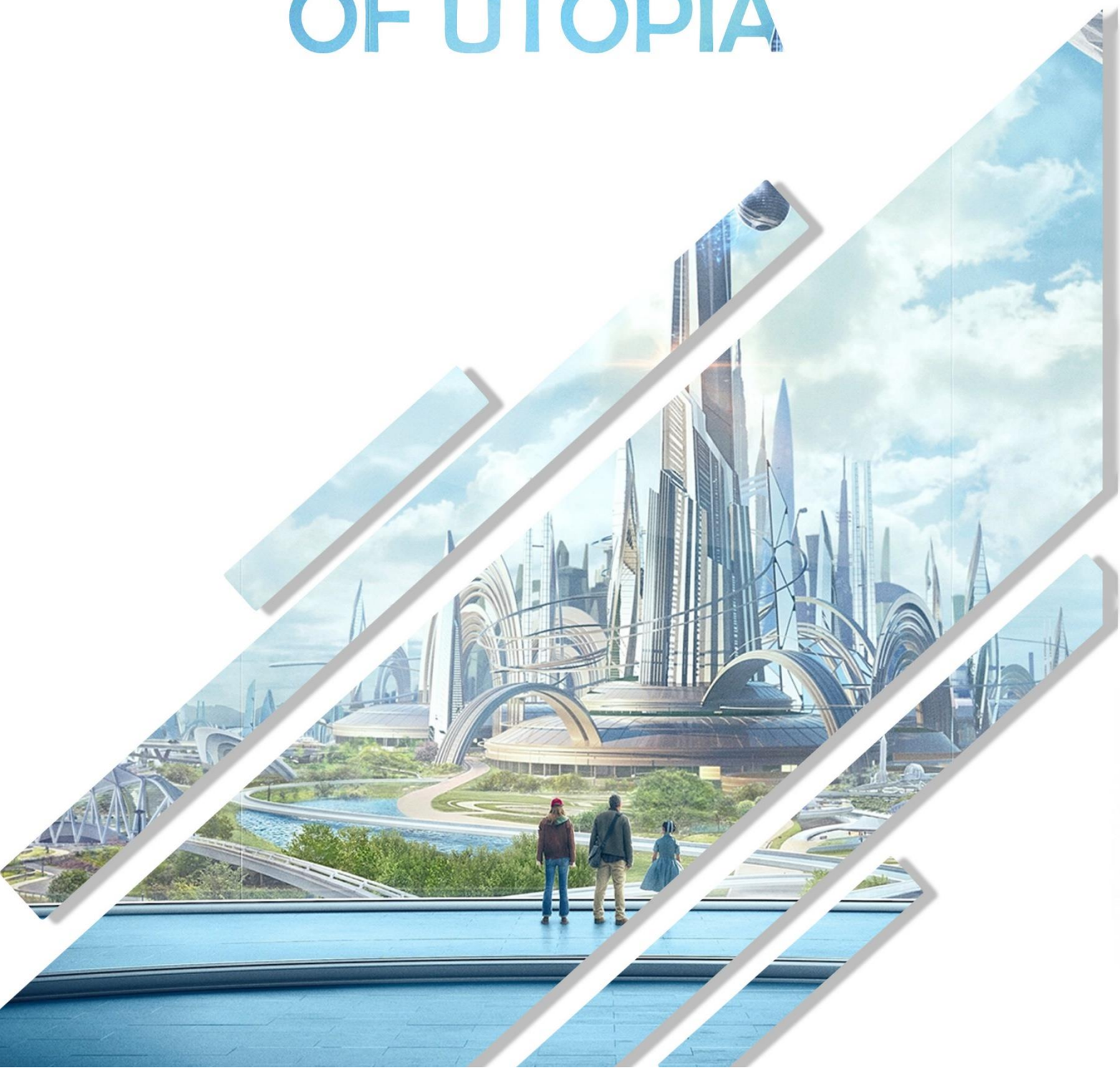
15. Specific versus holistic

Although Utopias can be endlessly big in the unconscious mind, and cover a wide range of topics, cultures, landscapes and people, the decisions made in the visions of these Utopias are often deliberately chosen and scoped (Levitas, 2013). Some Utopias can be about a narrow scope of topics and try to isolate them from other aspects of Utopian life, while others envision alternative futures where all aspects of life are different. An example of a specific Utopia is Velotopia, which focuses on an alternative future that is all about bicycle cities (Fleming, 2017). Although influences of this change on other aspects of life are described, such visions still only focus on one or a few changes. Another example is ecotopia, which puts the main purpose of a city on reducing its impact on the environment (Kraftl, 2007; Sargisson, 2012). Holistic visions of Utopias were often at the core of modernism, and were used to prescribe detailed ways of living that were best for the greater good (Rowe & Koetter, 1978; Ganjavie, 2012; Deckker, 2016). More his own Utopia was a very detailed imagination of a world where every aspect of life was changed to some extent (Spencer, 1998; Ganjavie, 2012). These Utopias are harder to execute and accept, since they change more of the conditions that we know in the present day and are therefore harder to accept for the general public.

16. Simple versus detailed

Detailed Utopian are usually very well thought out and consist of extensive prescriptions and elaborately thought out worlds, whereas flexible Utopias are offered as more open and minimal descriptions and can be considered as guidelines rather than prescriptions (Gunder & Hillier, 2007; Kraftl, 2007; Ganjavie, 2012; Levitas, 2013; Hoch, 2014;). These simple plans are about keeping visions of Utopia comprehensive and about offering possibilities for interpretation to whoever receives those visions without predetermination (Rapoport, 2014). Both simple and detailed visions have received critique in the past. Simple visions were critiqued for trying to capture the extensiveness of life, whether in reality or Utopia, in something as simple as a single image (Levitas, 2013). Detailed visions were critiqued because of their totalitarian nature and static determination in planning history (Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007; Ganjavie, 2012). Because of the extensive descriptions in such works, there is little room for new additions or changes. Detailed descriptions are, however, not always meant to be totalitarian and static, as detailed Utopian worlds can also be meant as purely provocative creations, for example in works of science fiction (Robinson, 2016). As with every spectrum, there is a middle ground consisting of visions that contain a combination of detailed descriptions of some elements and fuzzy open guidelines for others.

3. THE POWER OF UTOPIA



CHAPTER 3: UTOPIA IN THE SPATIAL PLANNING CYCLE

This chapter is focused on linking the concept of Utopia to the spatial planning process. This is a necessary step in addition to the conceptualisation of Utopias themselves, because it approaches the concept from a planning perspective, which is crucial for making conclusions on the contributions of Utopia for planning. As such, this chapter will form a bridge between the concept of Utopia and the data that will be collected from planning practice in the next chapters. It will do so by discussing two major topics: the inputs and the outputs of Utopias. The chapter will start off by discussing the input, in which desires, capacities and context are distinguished as key concepts in the construction and envisioning process of a Utopia. Next, it will discuss the output of Utopias, by distinguishing the way that it can influence different actors in planning systems. This includes a review on the persuasive power that stories and visions can have. Finally, the information and concepts that are part of the input and output of Utopias will be linked, connected to the ideas from chapter 2, and visualised in a conceptual model. Based on the information provided in this chapter, a methodology can be constructed that focuses on how and why Utopias were made and in what ways they lead to changes in the minds of people and in the landscapes that they are shaped in.

3.1 KEY INGREDIENTS FOR UTOPIAS

This input section is based on the assumptions made in 2.2: that Utopias are ever present in one's unconscious mind, and cannot as such be 'constructed', but it can be envisioned. This process of envisioning a Utopia is characterized by a lot of variables that strongly depend on the persons, place and time in which it is constructed. These visions can, for instance, be created by either an individual or a group of people, by people who are experienced in creating places (planners) or by people who have no such experiences. Regardless of these factors, whoever actively thinks of Utopias and envisions alternatives to the everyday world we live in is called an 'agent of change' (Hajer, 2017; Hajer & Pelzer, 2018; Momaas, 2018). These actors act quite literally as agents who bring about change to the world, who look for something better, try to spread their message and implement the improvements that they see. These are artists, citizens, activists or similar actors, who in most cases act outside of the political world, although anyone can potentially be an agent of change (Momaas, 2018). How these actors envision a Utopia depends on three pillars of factors: the **capacities** of the agent of change, the **context** of the world in which the agent of change operates and by which he or she is shaped, and the **desires** of the agent of change for a better world (Sargisson, 2012). Figure 5 gives an overview of how these different concepts relate to Utopia and how they influence each other and the agent of change.

Depending on the intended outcome of a Utopia, it generally goes through two cycles: the creation process by the **agent of change** and the interpretation process by an **interpreter**, someone who wants to or has to do something with this Utopian

vision (Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007; Bossy, 2014; Duncombe & Lambert, 2017). This second group can consist of either a planner, a government official, a member of a movement, an artist, or anyone else with an interest in Utopias. In Utopian visions that seek out active goals such as physical transformation of places or the movement of people, the approval and persuasion of these interpreters is key to a Utopia its success: either as a planner approving Utopian plans, or as a protestor following a Utopian movement. These two groups of actors usually interact with each other in a process, and in some cases these two groups can be the same person or group of persons, for instance in the case of a planning department that both constructs and evaluates visions. Based on the skills, knowledge and power that these agents of change and interpreters have, they can shape a bridge between the 'real world' and the 'wished world' (Collie, 2011; Sargisson, 2012; Mommaas, 2018). With the real world, the local and external context is meant, which both shape a person's desires and capacities and forms a range of **concrete and perceived** possibilities in which that person operates (Healey, 2007; Collie, 2011; Sargisson, 2012). The wished world then stands for the desires someone has for either **individual or collective** interests and desires, based on his or her values, background, norms and sense of efficacy (Sargisson, 2012; Steg et al., 2013; Fernando et al., 2018). Together, these three pillars determine a vision of Utopia, its characteristics and ultimately its impact on the world. In the next part of this section, each of these three pillars will be discussed in more detail.

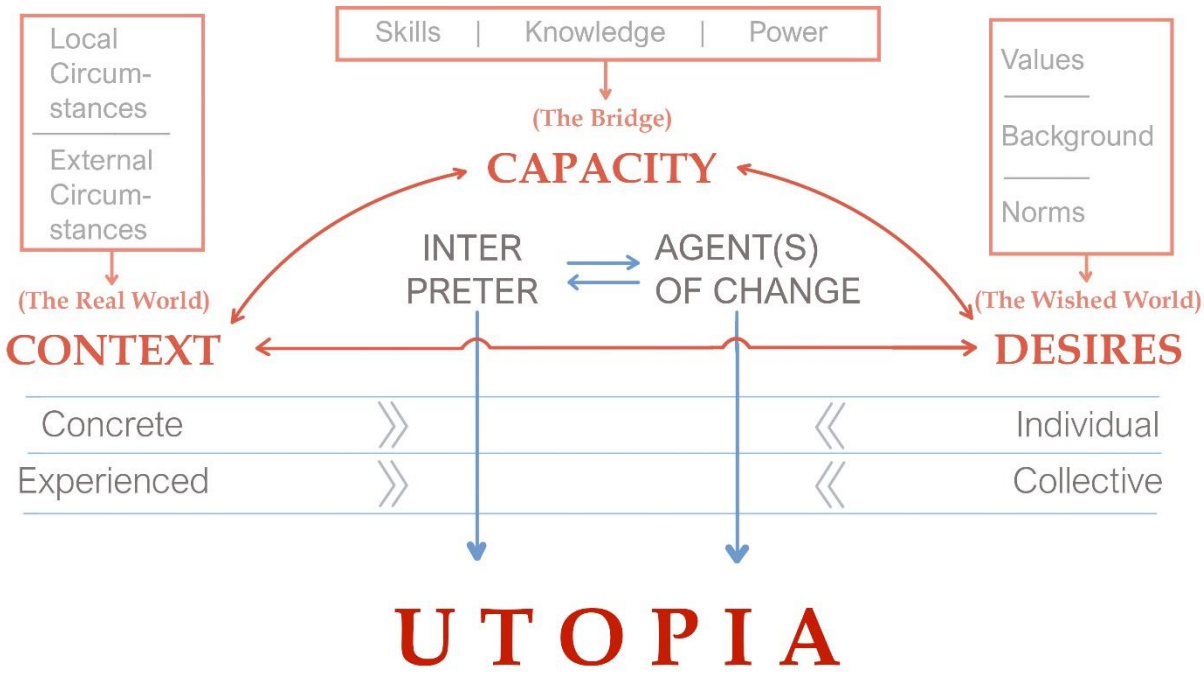


Figure 5: *Model representing the key concepts that are used in the envisioning of Utopias. Source: Own work.*

This section will only discuss the different concepts that are part of the envisioning of Utopias, without detailing how the process itself works. The main reason for this decision is that the envisioning process is just as ambiguous and diverse

as the Utopias themselves, if not more. Meinert (2014), for example, discussed steps for scenario-style visions that include exercises on building forth on trends from here and now and then building pathways towards those extrapolated futures. Duncombe and Lambert (2017) play more into the impossible end of the Utopia spectrum by proposing an envisioning method that is focused on imagining possibilities with limitless funds, power and time. There are many more approaches, which indicates that there is no fixed order of steps, nor are there any rules on which steps to include in the first place. The possibilities for envisioning Utopias are only limited by creativity. Conceptualizing all of these possibilities goes beyond the scope of this research, which is primarily occupied with exploring how Utopias can have an impact in practice. Therefore, the concepts here are presented as ingredients that can be used to base Utopian visions on, in whatever amount and composition as is seen fit in relation to the intentions and content of a specific Utopia.

Context

The context refers to the circumstances of a place, its developments over the past, the present and the probably future, as well as the people that live, work and interact with these places (Sargisson, 2012). In short, it refers to environmental factors that influence the people that act in them. There are two important influences that shape the context of a place: the local circumstances of that place and the wider external circumstances in the region, the country or the world, depending on the context in question. Both forms of context can refer to a great deal of individual factors. Think of local context as the history of a place, its structure, the routines that its users show on a daily basis and the reputation it has built (Healey, 2007; Collie, 2011; Timms et al., 2014; Dixon et al., 2017; Hajer & Pelzer, 2018). External influences can refer to factors such as the level of development in a country, the crises that the world is facing, the laws and rules of a country or the political system that shapes its ideology (Kotter-Grühn et al., 2009; Albrechts, 2010; Gogora, 2016). For instance, a study by Gogora (2016) showed how the level of development of Central European countries played a large role in its visions of Utopia, which barely exist. As these countries are mostly fixated on catching up with Western Europe, they spend little attention to their own unique desire, and are driven by economic incentives. More often than not, these local and external circumstances are heavily influenced by each other. Culture, for instance, can be very similar on a national level, but have numerous variations in different regions within that country.

Contexts are simply representative of what is out there, but can have different meanings to different people, based on interpretations (Doevendans et al., 2007). That interpretation can happen in two ways: the first is through understanding spatial patterns and developing an objective, factual interpretation (Collie, 2011; Hoch, 2014). In the case of Utopian influences for example, these kinds of factors can be the geographic setting of a place, or its economic status (Dixon et al., 2017). The second way of interpreting circumstances is about understanding them subjectively, through a coloured lens: that of an interpreter's worldview, beliefs and knowledge. Here, circumstances have different meanings to different people, which in the case of

Utopias could be about the cultural and spatial narratives of a place, or the feeling of scarcity (Collie, 2011; Dutton & Sargent, 2013; Timms et al., 2014). It is important to make this distinction, because a lot of contextual factors have a different influence on the shaping of a Utopian vision, depending on how someone sees them. For instance, when considering the demography of a place, it may have a high population density on paper, but whether this is considered as crowded and is thus seen as an issue or not depends on how someone experiences that place. It will be important to keep this consideration in mind when investigating cases of Utopias in practice.

Desires

The desires for better places are a very personal manner and refers to characteristics of people as opposed to places. These desires are shaped by both individuals and an external given society. There are three groups of factors that can be seen as relevant here: the background of an individual, his or her ideology and the (perceived) norms of a group or society. The first group of factors, the background, refers to both the history of someone's life and characteristics. Think of factors such as demography, socioeconomic status, identity, work, living circumstances, etc (Kotter-Grühn et al., 2009; Albrechts, 2010; Sargisson, 2012; Steg et al., 2013; Dixon et al., 2017). Such factors strongly influence someone's worldview, as well as desires. For instance, several studies show how different age groups have different lifestyle preferences: younger people prefer a more active lifestyle in the vicinity of city centres, families prefer the space of the suburbs or even the countryside, and elderly prefer a more community-oriented lifestyle (Ruth & Franklin, 2014; Camp, 2017). As such, certain backgrounds and life circumstances can be linked to specific desires.

The second group of factors, the beliefs, are about one's fundamental values that lie at the heart of their behaviour and worldview (Dutton & Sargent, 2013; Momaas, 2018). Steg et al. (2013) distinguished four categories of values: egoistic (own gains), hedonistic (own pleasure), altruistic (other peoples' wellbeing) and biospheric (nature its wellbeing). The dominance of some values over others has a strong influence on someone's reasoning and ultimately their desires for a good life (Albrechts, 2010). They determine, for example, whether a Utopian vision is centred on personal prosperity, or on a community life, or whether they are about urban or natural settings (Hoch, 2014). Such values determine someone's political orientation, their idea of justice and their attitude towards the past, present and future and are therefore an important shaper of the content of many, if not all Utopias (Fainstein, 2005; Albrechts, 2010; Steg et al., 2013).

In the third group, the one about norms, more attention is paid to influences from the groups of people that individuals interact with. As a species, people are evolved to live in groups and have developed patterns of expected and approved upon behaviours to facilitate living together: norms. These norms differ strongly based on factors such as religion, nationality, media and culture (Collie, 2011; Dutton & Sargent, 2013; Steg et al., 2013). They led to the development of various institutional and social conventions that one has to uphold to be accepted (Steg et al., 2013; Hoch, 2014; Hajer & Pelzer, 2018). Such conventions can stand in the way of shaping Utopias,

where breaking apart from the status quo is so important. Desires can be limited by feeling like you are living a correct and approved upon life. However, not all norms are made explicit, and some do not stick as much as others. This led to people having different interpretations of norms and different levels of sensitivity to them. Understanding someone's perceived norms can therefore tell a lot about his Utopian desires.

Capacity

The development of a Utopia mostly depends on the capacity of agents of change to connect the context and desires through visions, ideas, images, stories and other expressions of Utopias. Such an agent of change is what ultimately shapes a Utopia and makes or breaks its success. Whether someone is able to make a successful Utopia depends on a few factors. First, an agent of change needs certain skills to come up with a unique and progressive Utopia and spread it around. Think of skills such as leadership, persuasive storytelling and of course imaginative capacity (Friedman, 2000; Fainstein, 2005; Kraftl, 2007; Van Dijk, 2011; Ortegon-Sanchez & Tyler, 2016; Dixon et al., 2017). In some cases of group processes, skills such as mediating and listening can be necessary as well (Friedman, 2000). Second, depending on the context and desires, some knowledge is needed to make a Utopia work (Friedman, 2000; Albrechts, 2010). This could refer to the content of a Utopia, for instance needing in-depth knowledge of how infrastructure functions in order to make a certain neighbourhood work, but it can also refer to knowledge about a governance system, which is needed to get a Utopia at the right place to take off. On a similar note, a third requirement is a certain level of power to implement a certain idea, or reach a certain audience (Albrechts, 2010; Allison, 2018). Power refers to a sense of influence, which can be obtained through resources, followers, reputation, narratives or several other means (Friedman, 2000; Collie, 2011; Dixon et al., 2017). Having more power, or knowing actors with power, generally leads to bigger chances of success (Friedman, 2000). Last, a key ingredient is a personal drive to see a Utopia succeed (Shipley & Michela, 2006). Even without any of the other ingredients, a sense of ambition or proactiveness can lead to a successful Utopia. Some eco-communities can be seen as examples of such cases, where participants do not necessarily have a lot of power, knowledge or skills, but simply have a longing for a different lifestyle and act on that (Sargisson, 2012).

As actors who can make or break the ideas that are shaped by agents of change, the interpreters and their capacities also play a large role in the success of a Utopia. Interpreters are not always involved in the creation of a Utopia, and thus rely on the narratives that agents of change create (Collie, 2011; Hajer & Pelzer, 2018). Whether they interpret such narratives and promises as positive completely depends on their perceived contexts, backgrounds and values (Bossy, 2014). If these are very different from the ones of the planner, they might not approve of a Utopia and cooperate. There are a few qualities of interpreters distinguished in literature that can lead to a general more accepting stance towards Utopias. The first refers to a suspension of disbelief, or an openness towards alternatives that anyone who

interacts with radical ideas from Utopias needs (Albrechts, 2010). Many people are quite conservative when it comes to new ideas, which can limit their willingness to listen to the rationality of a plan (Albrechts, 2010; Van Dijk, 2017). A second quality is having a high level of trust. This can be very important for planners, who interact with a lot of bottom-up initiatives that come up with Utopian ideas. Having a level of trust towards them encourages them to continue thinking and developing of such ideas (Albrechts, 2010). Lastly, a good quality of interpreters is having something called 'multicultural literacy' (Albrechts, 2010). This refers to understanding different worldviews and cultures. An interpreter having such understanding means that even if his and the agent of change his worldviews differ strongly, he might still understand and appreciate and approve of a Utopia.

3.2 THE UTOPIAN IMPACT

As has been mentioned before, Utopias do not exist in a physical sense, but live in our imagination and subconsciousness (Gunder & Hillier, 2007; Sargisson, 2012; Levitas, 2013). Their only connection to the real world is through visions of Utopias, and consequently the only way that Utopias can have an impact is through visions (Hatuka & D'Hooghe). Additionally, the only way that they can have an impact on places and plans is through people and changes in their perceived contexts, desires and skills. It is important here to distinguish a vision as a product and envisioning as a process, as this distinction is connected to the question on who a Utopia has impact. As shown before, there are two groups of people who are involved in Utopias: agents of change that construct a vision and interpreters that get in touch with these ideas from an outsider perspective. It is important here to make a distinction between a vision as a product and envisioning as a process, which are connected to the question on who Utopias have impact. Since agents of change are the actors that are involved in the envisioning of a Utopia, this process on its own can have an impact on the agents of change without ever having to turn into tangible products. However, as soon as these ideas about a Utopia are captured and communicated to others, they have to be turned into visions as products and interpreted by other people.

To quickly summarize what has been mentioned before: as a form of communication of different circumstances, visions are about capturing the world in imagery, texts, thoughts or other instruments, which always happens within a certain frame, making visions a tool to tell stories with about how the world is and should be (Throgmorton, 2003; Van Dijk, 2011). Because there are an incredible number of different frames with which people see the world and imagine better ones, there are an infinite number of potential stories (Throgmorton, 2003; Rapoport, 2014). Thus, in order for visions of Utopias to have an impact in this web of frames, they require a sense of persuasive storytelling (Throgmorton, 2003; Shipley & Michela, 2006; Van Dijk, 2011). With these stories, visions can shake existing frames up and suggest other frames in with the world would make more sense, thus result in a form of impact (Throgmorton, 2003).

This section will focus on the different ways in which a Utopian vision can have an impact on people, either through the envisioning process itself or the visions that

are an outcome of this process. To do so, it will first describe how a vision of Utopia can lead to changes in and the persuasion of people. Following up on that, it will describe and illustrate what kinds of impacts Utopias can potentially have and to what these impacts relate.

From vision to change

Since most Utopias are about groups of people and since the intentions of most Utopias are about seeking change and movements on a larger scale, the impact of most Utopias depends on the influence it can bring to others through its visions. This causal chain that explains how a vision can lead to actual influence or change deserves more explanation. Based on the descriptions by Shipley and Michela (2006), and further developed based on the works of several other authors, figure 6 illustrates a conceptualisation of this causal chain.

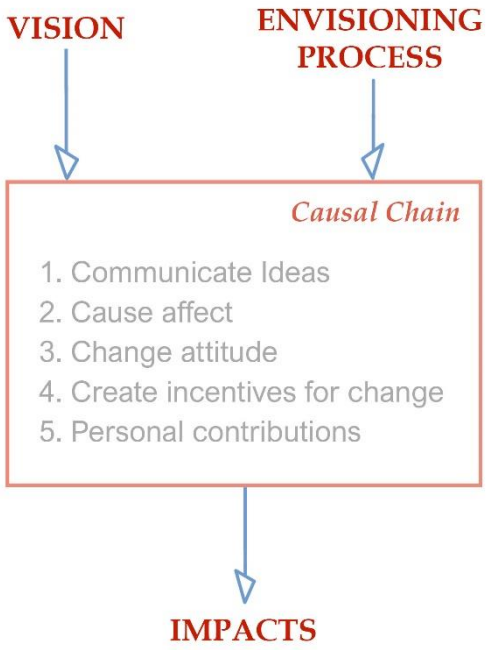


Figure 6: *Conceptualization of causal chain of how visions lead to impact. Source: Own work, based on Shipley & Michela, 2006.*

A first step in the causal chain is to communicate a vision to others through a form of presentation (Shipley & Michela, 2006). The way that these ideas are captured and presented is a key step in persuading others (Van Dijk, 2011). Whether through stunning presentations, convincing narratives or other ways of convincing strategies, they must be attractive (Throgmorton, 2003; Fainstein, 2005; Collie, 2011; Duncombe & Lambert, 2017). There are several factors that should be considered in the communication and presentation of a vision: the content of the message, where the message comes from, the channel through which the message is communicated and the target group along with their characteristics (Shipley & Michela, 2006). The attractiveness of a vision is very subjective and therefore dependent on whether these factors match or not.

Following up on this communication, a second step is about causing affect to an individual or group (Shipley & Michela, 2006). Affect is not the same as emotions, as it concerns a general sense of happiness, which is not based on day-to-day variations and emotions. Whereas the first step was about informing, the second step is about feelings. This step is therefore not only based on rationalism, but also on emotional judgements and practical wisdom (Van Dijk, 2011). It is difficult to get this right, because the vision is interpreted through a large diversity of frames and can thus lead to an unpredictable range of responses. In order for visions to lead to

impact, people have to feel affected by a Utopia and feel that a presented Utopia is better than the current-day world through means of a vision making them feel better (Shipley & Michela, 2006; Fernando et al., 2018).

The third step is more content-oriented and focuses on breaking people away from their current frames and conceptions of the world (Shipley & Michela, 2006). To get people to move towards a new direction, before offering and promoting alternatives, people should be given the feeling that they miss something in current-day life that they can achieve in a Utopia (Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007; Bregman, 2016). There must be something wrong with the way that the world works here and now to make people want to consider other options (Shipley & Michela, 2006). This consideration is part of an evaluative process that depends, again, on practical wisdom and emotional judgements (Shipley & Michela, 2006; Van Dijk, 2011). It is thus strongly based on the communication of a vision and the way it affects people.

A fourth step is about offering alternatives and creating incentives for people to move towards a given vision (Shipley & Michela, 2006). Now that the current circumstances and developments are rejected, the persuasive storytelling kicks in in order to motivate people to embrace a specific vision. This process depends on a range of factors. First, people should be able to comprehend what it is that a Utopia tries to accomplish (Albrechts, 2010). If Utopian texts are too complicated or strange, or if Utopian visuals are confusing, people will not be moved by it (Dutton & Sargent, 2013; Perović & Popović, 2013). This is a matter of communicating a story in a way that fits a target group and developing multi-language stories (Van Dijk, 2011). Second, a Utopia must be about values that are shared by a group of people. If others cannot relate to the ideas presented in a Utopia, it will simply not affect them and they will not be triggered to move (Albrechts, 2010; Collie, 2011; Camp. 2017). Consequently, visions should be flexible and have an open definition, so that they can fit multiple contexts (Van Dijk, 2011). Xiaoyi (2017) and Sargisson (2021) mention fairy tales as fantasies with values that appeal to an enormous amount of people from different time frames and backgrounds. However, the downside of such fantasies is that they do not lead to action because they lack a third factor: self-efficacy (Sargisson, 2012). People should feel that their actions can have actual impact in getting closer towards a Utopia (Throgmorton, 2003; Fernando et al., 2018). A clear goal, specific tasks or the implementation of milestones are all tools that can help in creating a needed sense of progress and to mobilise people (Fainstein, 2005; Albrechts, 2010; Steg et al., 2013; Duncombe & Lambert, 2017; Fernando et al., 2018).

Finally, in the fifth step, people are encouraged to get personally involved in seeing a vision come to live through diverse ways, such as financial support, becoming involved in the envisioning process or helping along in the transformation itself (Shipley & Michela, 2006). In this step, the actual impact itself is achieved. As different Utopias have different intentions and outcomes, the next section will discuss more elaborately in what ways Utopias can have an impact once people are persuaded.

Types of impact

The persuasion process and types of impact of Utopian visions are illustrated in figure 7. What is also shown in this model is how these different impacts relate to the conceptions of context, skills and desires, which can turn the impact on people into impacts on respectively plans and places. The generation of echoes and the change of perception are both linked to impacts on desires, as they are about changing attitudes and frames of people in order to motivate them to either think differently or act (Madanipour, 2006). Setting planning ideals and generating action are both ways to change the context of people, as they are about linking ideals to planning practice and thus change the perception of places and plans (Madanipour, 2006; Van Dijk, 2011). Finally, a more democratic governance and the creation of new understandings are about generating new capacities and knowledge and can thus be linked to peoples' skills (Madanipour, 2006; Rapoport, 2014; Albrechts, 2015).

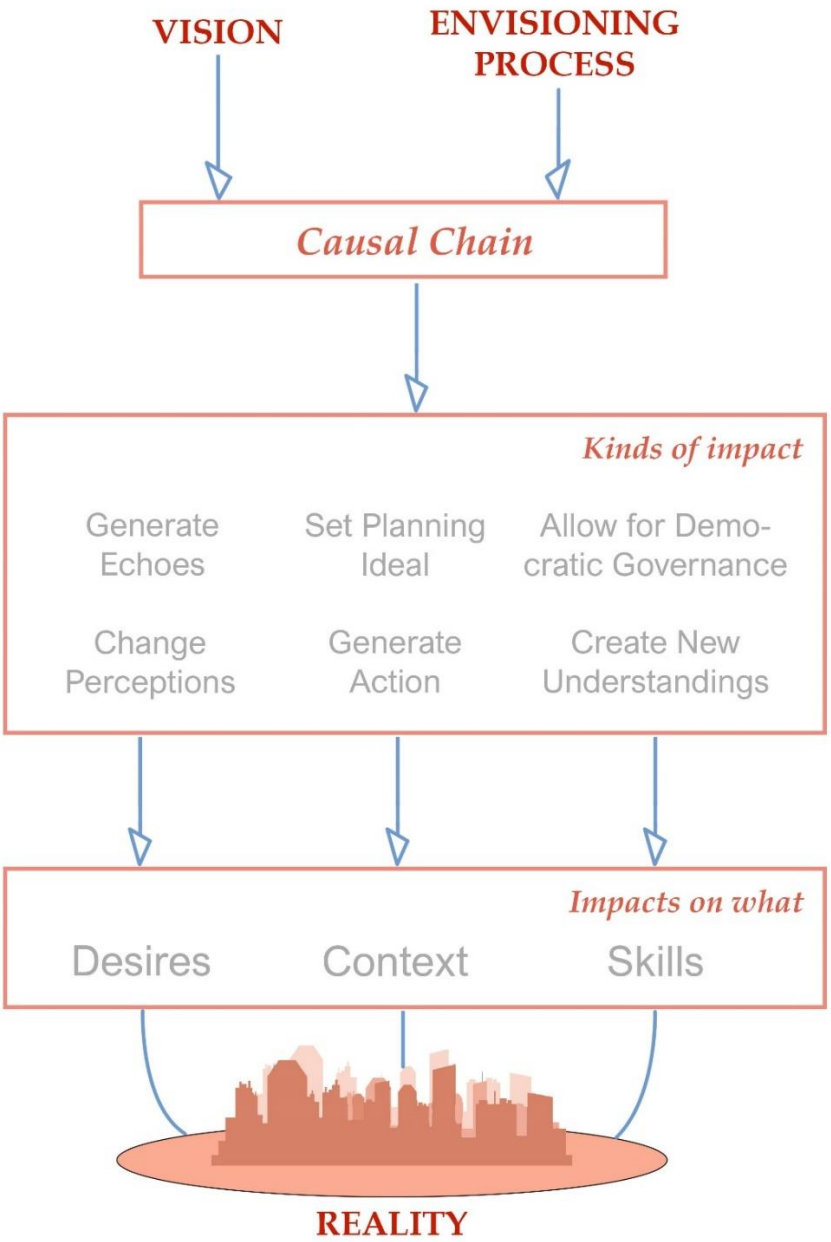


Figure 7: *Model representing the way in which Utopias lead to impact. Source: Own work.*

The impact that either visions or an envisioning process can have are the same for both agents of change and interpreters. The only difference is that impacts for interpreters can lead to outcomes that are different from the intentions of the visions, due to a process of interpretation and judgement. Based on the descriptions of potential impacts of design from Madanipour (2006), which can also be seen as a vision of different circumstances, six types of impacts can be distinguished:

1. **Generate echoes**: Utopian visions can inspire people about possibilities and chances and indirectly result in new developments and ideas, both within the same place or anywhere else on the planet (Madanipour, 2006). They can do so by coming up with new ideas that people have not heard of before. As mentioned before, receiving new

insights and thinking about things you deemed impossible before stretches your sense of possibility, and can in that sense help shape other plans (Pinder, 2013). Utopias can also inspire others through its creative development processes. People that participate in these processes are challenged to actively think about desires and impossibilities that can help them come up with creative new ideas (Dixon et al., 2017; Duncombe & Lambert, 2017). Lastly, Utopias can offer a form escapism from the real world that can sometimes be necessary in order to help thinking outside the box (Collie, 2011; Sargisson, 2012; Fernando et al., 2018). Seeing a movie, going to a theme park or experiencing virtual reality are all tools that help exploring the impossible.

How well Utopias are able to inspire other projects depends on three factors: originality, innovation and ambition. A Utopian vision must be original, or at least be perceived as such, in order to offer new ideas and trigger new thoughts (Duncombe & Lambert, 2017; Vasconcelos et al., 2017). Moreover, original ideas can seem more attractive and desirable as opposed to ideas that have been mentioned before (Bossy, 2014; Vasconcelos et al., 2017). Process-wise, if Utopian visions offer an innovative approach, they are also better able to inspire others (Hajer & Pelzer, 2018). The difference with the originality factor is that innovative processes offer radical different ways of doing things or offer smart solutions for persistent problems (Bossy, 2014; Duncombe & Lambert, 2017). In this sense, a Utopia can be original but not innovative and vice versa. Finally, the more ambitious a Utopian vision is in its goals and ideas, the better able it is to make others enthusiastic about it (Albrechts, 2010).

2. **Change perceptions**: Utopian visions can change peoples' ideas about places, people and plans and change plans through these new perceptions (Madanipour, 2006; Van Dijk, 2011). As shown in the previous section, visions have to make people question their worldviews or think about alternative worldviews in order to be persuasive (Shipley & Michela, 2006). Through such processes of reconsideration, people can change their way of thinking, for instance by adapting a new sense of direction towards the future, or a new pride and emotional attachment to a place (Shipley & Michela, 2006; Hoch, 2014). Such changes in perception can lead to two outcomes. First, they can help visionaries persuade people to support their visions and suggestions for pathways towards the future, and consequently to gain some control over uncertain futures (Shipley & Michela, 2006). However, changing perceptions does not necessarily have to result in gaining support for a proposed vision. This is where this type of impact differs from the other types, which are about generating support and moving towards a given vision of Utopia. The second outcome is thus where perceptions are changed by simply about letting go of the worldview that was already there, without embracing a specific Utopian vision.

3. **Set planning ideal**: Utopian visions can offer a dot on the horizon to work towards, coordinating different processes, actors and plans towards the same goal (Madanipour, 2006; Hajer, 2017; Mommaas, 2018). In this sense, Utopian visions offer a way to proactively think about the direction that local plans should be headed to (Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007; Levitas, 2013). A planning ideal can be used to guide planning efforts and developments on the basis of certain values and desires, so that

these are not solely reactive to changing circumstances, but actively work towards a world that is considered good (Madanipour, 2006). This ideal is not purely based on rational decisions as a form of most effective and efficient solution for the circumstances, but allows for more diversity and thus brings in what Aristotle his 'phronesis', or practical wisdom, to make judgements on decisions and outcome (Van Dijk, 2011; Hoch, 2014). Moreover, Utopian visions allow for thinking about and considering social change and reforms that change the way that places and society works from an outside perspective (Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007). Through an envisioning process, the shaping of a better world does not necessarily have to happen in one go, but can be done through incremental approach, based on changing circumstances and desires (Hoch, 2014).

4. **Generate action**: Closely related to how Utopian visions can offer a planning ideal, they can offer a way for ideals to be generated into actions, by moving them away from vague conceptions and abstract policies into realistic ideas (Van Dijk, 2011). Based on their intentions, visions of Utopias can seek actual short-term transformations, most often in the physical world. Such changes can be small-scale or large-scale, permanent or temporary, or anything in between. As a consequence, transformative visions can be very diverse. An example of a Utopian vision that seeks short-term action is the concept of an eco-village, which is about a small community of people who seek to build up their own alternative society, and in the process transform a place (Sargisson, 2012). These transformative Utopias are closer to the reality spectrum of Utopias, as they seek to be implemented at some point and must thus consider current circumstances, means and desires (Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007; Ganjavie, 2012; Hoch, 2014; Dixon et al., 2017).

The impact of such transformative visions depends on several factors: its desirability, viability, achievability and sustainability (Wright, 2010; Dixon et al., 2017; Momaas, 2018). Desirability refers to whether the vision matches the expectations and desires of a certain group, which are, again, connected to the persuasive power of the Utopian story (Bertraud, 2000; Wright, 2010; Bossy, 2014). This also requires a common understanding of what is happening and what the outcomes will be, as well as a long-term dedication of actors to a project (Albrechts, 2010). Viability is more objective of nature and is about whether a Utopia its outputs and benefits match the inputs and resources that are needed to build it (Wright, 2010; Dixon et al., 2017). The achievability of a Utopia is determined by the presence of required resources, and the limitations of physics (Wright, 2010). The idea of the dome over Manhattan as mention in Doevendans et al. (2007), for example, might simply be impossible to build in reality. If any achievements are made in a process, they should be celebrated in order to keep commitment going (Friedman, 2000; Albrechts, 2010). Finally, the sustainability refers to whether the Utopia is able to perform over a longer period of time and whether it is able to work in changing circumstances once executed and become part of a system (Albrechts, 2010). The ideal Utopian project should check all of the criteria mentioned above.

Additionally, the impact of transformative visions depends on the envisioning process as well. The credibility, viability, sustainability and achievability of visions can

change with developments over time, resulting in different perceptions, possibilities and resources (Bregman, 2016). Plans that were frowned upon 20 years ago might be considered appealing in present day, and the technological advancements during that time might enable certain constructions that were seen as impossible back then. In order to deal with such changing circumstances, another key to having impact through transformations is if processes, people and institutions are transformed, for which reflective skills and openness to change are required (Albrechts, 2010).

5. **Allow for Democratic governance**: Utopias can be used to make people reconsider specific spatial plans, to start critiquing the state of affairs in the form of protests, to fight for a certain vision, or to engage themselves in spatial planning (Friedman, 2000; Collie, 2011; Duncombe & Lambert, 2017; Fernando et al., 2018). As anyone can construct their own Utopian visions, they can be tools to empower citizens to become involved in the direction and processes of planning, making processes of governance more democratic (Madanipour, 2006; Van Dijk, 2011). Through visions of Utopia, a wider public can be involved in the process of thinking outside the box, which allows for the contestation of the status quo of plans, for example through reconsidering problem statements, ideals and the included actors (Rapoport, 2014; Albrechts, 2015). Actual physical transformations are nowadays often democratized through bottom-up initiatives. Recently, citizen initiatives focused on creating temporary Utopias started popping up all over the world, occupied with changing their environments according to their conceptions of ideal places (Curran, 2009). These processes diversify the discussion on what ideal places are, and where planning officials do not include citizens, they can work on them themselves through these visions. A criterion for Utopian visions to become more democratic is that they should encourage accessibility for one or more groups to participate in the envisioning process (Albrechts, 2010; Dixon et al., 2017). Whether this is in the creation phase or in the actual build Utopia depends on the type of Utopia at hand. In order for people to be moved, they should feel like they are fighting for something that they are part of.

6. **Create new understandings**: In some cases, Utopian visions can be used to learn lessons about our past, present or future or to better understand the tacit desires of different groups in society (Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007; Hulme & Dessai, 2008; Collie, 2011; Allison, 2018). These lessons can be learned from visions that are already out there, but also from Utopias that are still in the process of being envisioned. Utopian visions can, for example, be captured in local stories or myths and through that instrument can help understand the culture of a specific place and time (Healey, 2007; Collie, 2011). Additionally, Utopian visions can take on a more scenario-oriented role and help in thinking about the future and learn about certain events that might occur (Hulme & Dessai, 2008; Meinert, 2014). As mentioned before, they can also have an impact as a tool to explore imagination and possibilities, or as a tool to guide processes and help understanding issues and desires (Albrechts, 2010; Collie, 2011; Meinert, 2014; Allison, 2018; Hajer & Pelzer, 2018).

There are several factors that can increase the understanding impact of a vision, connected to its credibility, legitimacy and salience (Hulme & Dessai, 2008). First, it can be more credible if the vision contains a scientific rationality to a certain extent that people can understand (Hulme & Dessai, 2008; Van Dijk, 2011). Although imagination is key to Utopias, a vision and its lessons will be picked up more willingly if it is based on the rational systems of science that people trust and believe (Wynne, 1989). Furthermore, Utopian visions can increase in salience if they allow for different types of people to participate and interact with the development of a Utopia and learn from the envisioning process (Hulme & Dessai, 2008; Dixon et al., 2017). For this to happen, the creation process must be open, understandable and flexible (Albrechts, 2010). Finally, Utopias can become more legitimate if they offer lessons that can lead to better decision-making processes (Van Dijk, 2011). New insights in possible developments, desires of people, or alternatives to current-day practices are all factors that not only build up Utopia, but can also be used by local planners to enhance other plans (Hulme & Dessai, 2008).

3.3 SYNTHESIS OF UTOPIA

In an attempt to summarize the previous theoretical sections and offer a template for the empirical research, this section provides a synthesis of the construction, characteristics and impact of Utopias in the form of a conceptual model (see figure 8). In a short summary of figure 2, Utopia can be conceptualized as an alternative and imaginative version of reality, which does not exist in a physical sense, but in the minds of people. These concepts of reality and Utopia are connected through visions and plans, where visions serve as ways of getting Utopia to the here and now through actively constructing and imagining it, while plans serve as ways of getting closer to Utopia through transformations and changes of perception. Both plans and visions are made within the context of people, places and plans in the here and now, again, because Utopia does not actually exist.

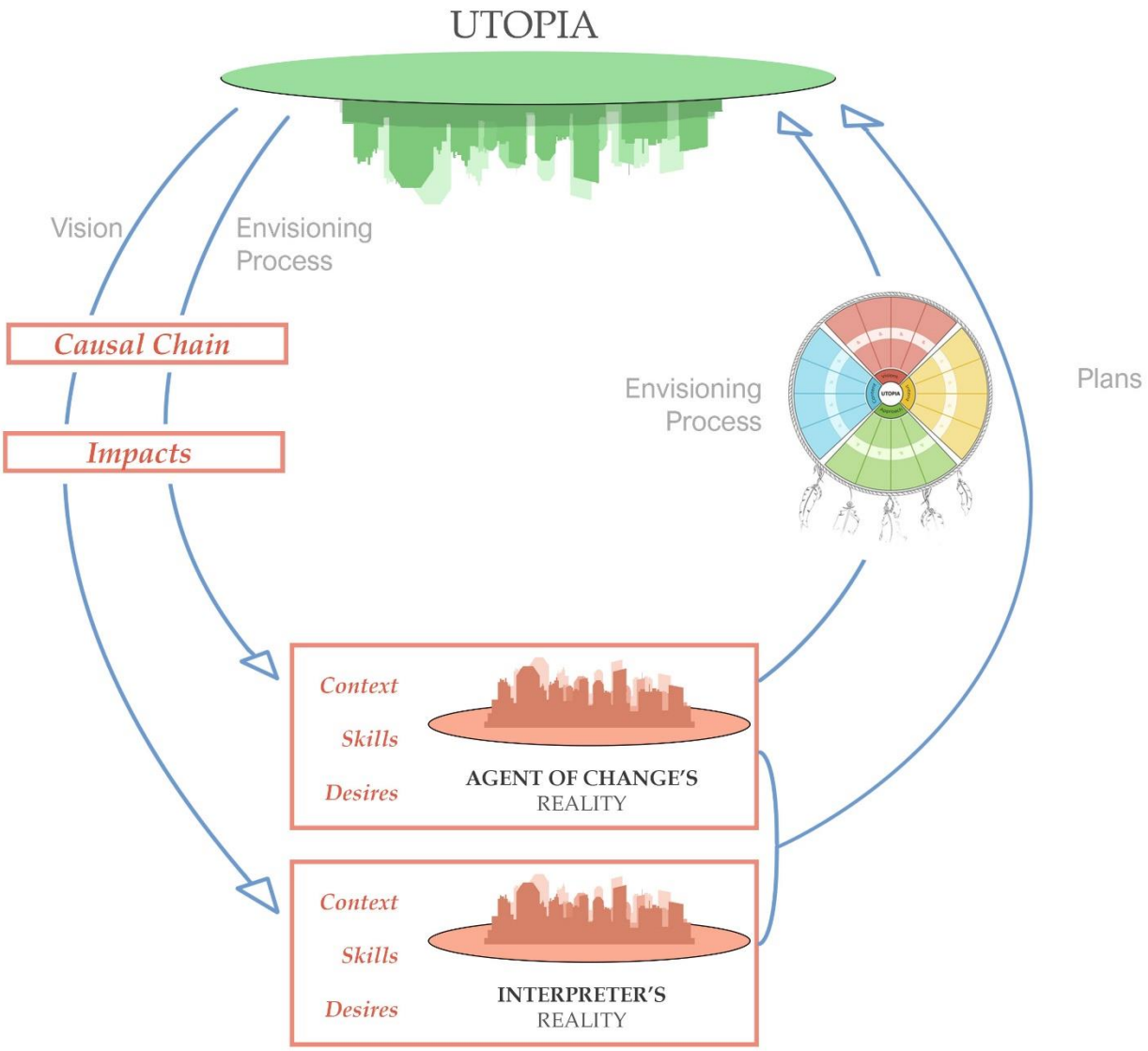


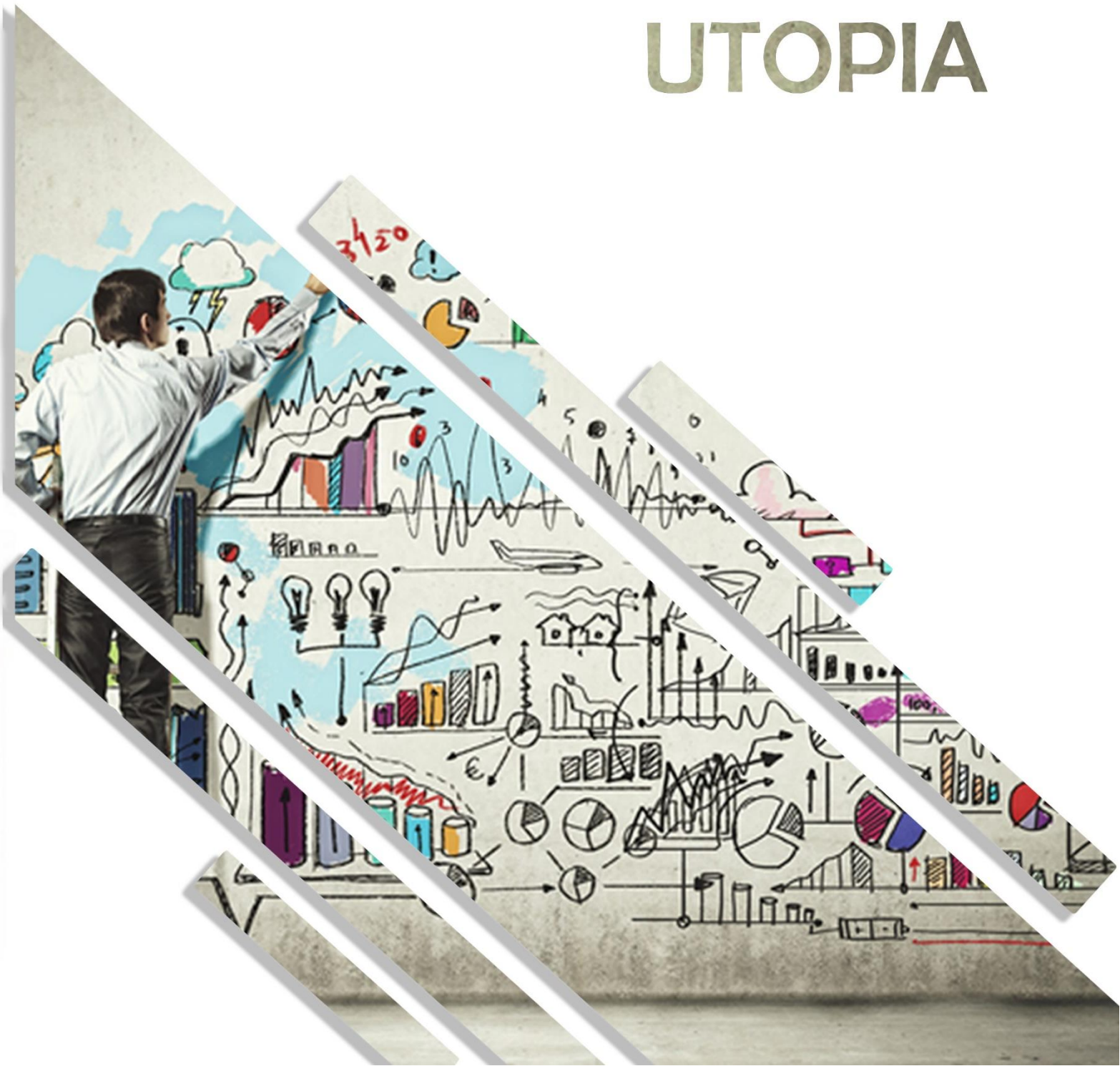
Figure 8: *Conceptual model representing the process of the creation and impact of Utopias. Source: own work.*

The starting point of the Utopian planning cycle is the reality of the agents of change, the actors who actively work on envisioning a Utopia. As discussed in chapter 3.1, these agents of change start a process of envisioning Utopia, based on their context, skills and desires (Sargisson, 2012). This envisioning process passes through the Utopia, generating an alternative ideal world, and can, depending on whether the envisioning process is intended to reach others, also result in a vision through imagery, text, or other communication instruments. A Utopia is thus captured in two ways: an envisioning process for the agents of change themselves, or a vision for a group of interpreting actors (Throgmorton, 2003; Shipley & Michela, 2006). Both the process and vision are shaped by the characteristics of the Utopian world itself, the approach for constructing a Utopia, the characteristics of the envisioning process and the intentions behind the construction of a Utopia, all of which are part of the dreamcatcher model in chapter 2. Additionally, both the Utopian process and product can have a number of impacts, as discussed in 3.2, based on intentions and

circumstances (Shipley & Michela, 2006). Ultimately, the impacts that a Utopia has on either agents of change and/or interpreters can resonate in impacts in plans and places, which can in turn change reality and bring it closer to the envisioned Utopian world. This changes the reality of agents of change, at which point the cycle starts again, making it a dynamic process based on changing circumstances and desires.

The model is primarily created with the intention of functioning as a tool for looking at and interpreting Utopias in practice. By investigating the settings in which a contemporary Utopia is envisioned, the characteristics of both a Utopia and its vision and the influences they had on planning and the world in general, more can be said about how certain combinations of factors lead to one outcome or another. Each case that will be looked into during the empirical research can be used to fill in different spots in the model, which will potentially lead to patterns and lessons on how contemporary Utopias impact people, places and plans. This will be described in more detail in the upcoming methodology chapter.

4. FINDING UTOPIA



CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

Up until this point, Utopias have been discussed from a theoretical and abstract perspective. As the main goal of this thesis is to explore how they can contribute to planning practice, there is a need to focus on the Utopias that are 'out there' as well. Given the explorative nature of the research question (*'How do contemporary Utopias impact places, plans and people?'*), this research was considered a qualitative research (Baarda, 2014; O'Leary, 2010). What do Utopias of today look like, how are they shaped and what has their influence been on the way that planning is done? In order to find answers to these questions, the rest of the thesis will be based on empirical findings, retrieved from Utopian envisioning and projects in practice. This methodology chapter will first discuss the general research approach that was taken, followed by an outline of the different methods that were used for gathering and analysing these findings, as well as an overview of the strategies for this gathering and analysis process. Finally, there is a short discussion of the role of ethics in this thesis process. Based on the empirical findings, the next chapters compare the different cases and draw lessons on how contemporary Utopias have contributed to people, places and plans and what role they could play in future spatial planning.

4.1 RESEARCH STRATEGY

In order to determine the research approach and design the methodology, a number of questions had to be answered first. Yin (2003) describes three questions that are crucial for every explorative process:

1) *What is to be explored through the cases?*
   There were two sub-questions that had to be answered through the case studies:
   - *What characterizes contemporary Utopias in planning practice?*
   - *How do contemporary Utopias contribute to planning practice?*

   The case studies were thus aimed at exploring the ways in which visions of different contemporary Utopias are constructed, characterized and influential. This meant looking into the development process, the different perceptions of the characteristics of a Utopia and its vision and the intended and realised, objective and subjective impacts.

2) *What is the purpose of these explorations?*
   These explorations were done in order to be able to compare the role of Utopia in planning processes from a theoretical and a planning practice perspective. Moreover, they were used to learn lessons about the value of Utopia for plans, people and places in practice. Both could ultimately lead to lessons on the potential role of Utopia in planning practice and potential ways for creating stronger spatial planning approaches.

3) *Which criteria are in place to judge these explorations successful?*

The exploration of a case was considered successful if sufficient data was collected to be able to draw comparisons on the construction process, characteristics and influences of a Utopian vision. This does not mean that every concept that was found in theory had to be discussed in and be part of a Utopian vision, but the conceptual model created in chapter 3.3 should at least to some extent apply to a case. Furthermore, given the interpretive nature of Utopian visions as described in chapter 3, the explorations were considered successful if the findings discussed in this research were recognizable to key participants in each case. This element of validity was important in ensuring the correct interpretation of given information (Yin, 2003).

There was a fourth question, which was missing from this list: *How are these cases to be explored?* This question concerns the strategies of collecting and analysing data and ensuring internal and external validity, and will be answered in the 'Methods', 'Analysis' and 'Ethics' sections. Based on these inputs, criteria for cases could be established and cases were be chosen.

4.2 CASE STUDY APPROACH

Case studies are one of the most important tools for social sciences and are essential for studying phenomena that are embedded in context (Baxter & Jack, 2008). As mentioned before, each Utopian vision is a different construction of a given reality, and thus these visions have to be interpreted from the context of that reality (Throgmorton, 2003). Since the visions of Utopias and their influence on planning practice are strongly dependent on local contexts, case studies were an indispensable tool to explore the large range of different contexts in which these visions played a role. To capture these different contexts, a multiple case study approach was chosen, which allowed for the comparison of circumstances and processes (Yin, 2003).

Within each case study, a Utopian vision or project was chosen as a case. This way, the case study approach allowed for Utopias to be observed in greater detail, and for the gathering of perspectives that different actors had on a vision (Yin, 2003). Yin (2003) distinguishes multiple forms of case studies, based on their functionality in the research: explorative, descriptive, explanatory, illustrative and evaluative case studies. From these options, the explorative variant was the most suitable for this research for a number of reasons. First, given the broad conceptualisation of Utopia, there is no simple set of outcomes to choose from, but an infinite range of possibilities. Within this complexity, explorative case studies are a useful tool for collecting and comparing these possibilities, based on interpretive processes without judgement on whether these processes are right or wrong (Harrison et al., 2017). Second, Utopian ideals as part of planning projects and visions are hard to frame and relatively unexplored within planning practice. Using an explorative approach can be useful here as a tool for capturing these visions from the perspectives and framing of research participants (Yin, 2003). Third and last, based on a 'how' question, this research is aimed at exploring unique ideas and their possible contributions in relation to varying circumstances. Since the cases are meant to find out how these relations work, rather

than judging or simply describing them, an explorative research is more fitting (Yin, 2003; Harrison et al., 2017).

One of the main limitations of a case study approach is its inability to provide universal answers or lessons, simply because these lessons are so strongly embedded in local contexts (Yin, 2003). However, as argued before, Utopian approaches that sought universalism often failed in the 20th century (Ganjavie, 2012; Pinder, 2013). Consequently, Utopias and Utopian visions are constructed from and have an impact on local values, geographies, skills and desires, which puts less focus on the universalism aspect and more focus on the localism aspect (Sargisson, 2012; Hoch, 2014). Another limitation of a multiple case study approach that is important to consider is the hardship of comparing results from different explorative researches (Yin, 2003). Multiple case study approaches are usually built on quantitative methods, so that similarities and differences in findings can be proven and related to specific factors in those findings. Since the cases in this thesis are used to compare unique ideas and developments, based on unique circumstances, these findings are much harder to compare. However, as stated before, the goal of this research is not to place judgement on which vision is better, or to ascribe a relational factor between construction and impact, but simply to explore and map how Utopia lives in visions and plans in planning practice, for which neither of the described limitations are necessarily obstructions.

4.3 COLLECTION METHODS

Given the qualitative explorative nature of this research, the two main data collection methods were interviews and document reviews. Both methods were important for answering both of the empirical research questions, although document analyses were more useful for finding the characteristics of a Utopian vision, whereas interviews were primarily used for exploring the construction and influence processes of these visions. The sections below indicate how these methods were used, what the sources of data were and what kind of information was gathered through each method.

Document analysis

As a method in general, document analysis can be used to gain a better insight into a specific phenomenon, policy or project (Patton & Sawicki, 2013). Documents in relation to visions can cover a wide range of communication instruments: development reports, policy descriptions, textual storylines, imagery, etc. They can serve as a broader source of information that is communicated with certain intentions for an intended audience. One important consideration with document analyses is the credibility and intention of a source (O'Leary, 2010). In case of, for example, governments, the information is often intended for public transparency and produced by government officials, making policy documents a relatively credible source.

Documents were an important source of information that formed the basis of the information given in interviews. Depending on their intentions, Utopias were usually described in extensive details in order to be understood and to be distributed (Kraftl, 2007). These documents offered valuable information on topics that people could forget to mention in interviews or which were not directly related to the questions in the guideline and as a consequence did not come up in an interview. As such, it was worth investigating the documents in which such Utopias were described to find any additional details. Moreover, these documents are often available online and could be used to prepare for interviews and think of additional relevant questions beforehand.

Furthermore, policy documents were used as a source of additional information on the planners' perspective. Documents could be about the Utopian vision themselves, but if there was a lack thereof, at least offer information on important context in which these Utopias were constructed. In line with the archaeology approach described above, diving into these sources of information allows a researcher to link different desires, values and goals that tell something about an underlying Utopia that these policies are working towards (Levitas, 2013; Pinder, 2013). Because the documents were often limited to describing plans or visions, they were mostly useful in interpreting the characteristics of a Utopian vision, according to the dreamcatcher model from chapter 2. Gaps in the model that were left due to a lack of information could then be complemented by developing questions for and receiving new input from interviews.

These documents were mostly retrieved through online search engines, such as Google and government websites. Additionally, if information was not publicly available, governments or organisations of Utopians were contacted to ask for additional information and documents. Similarly, such information was asked for during interviews as well, where sometimes agents of change possessed offline information.

Interviews

Interviews were crucial for retrieving in-depth information about the processes of shaping Utopian visions and the influences that they had. Due to the unique circumstances in each Utopia, finding answers to these questions required a back-and-forth questioning style, time and a mutual understanding to answer, which interviews could provide. They allow for interaction between researcher and subject, which creates the ability to retrieve more information on unique and distinguishing elements, as well as on underlying thoughts and feelings (Clifford et al, 2010; O'Leary, 2010). Additionally, such interactions give space to explain concepts, ambiguities and thoughts (O'Leary, 2010). Furthermore, they allowed for a check-up on the interpretation of certain events and developments, so that the researcher and participant had the same ideas. Because of the strong subjectivity that is often involved with the creation and experience of Utopias, the interviews focused on individual perspectives, prioritizing individual interviews over group methods such as focus groups.

In specific, semi-structured interviews were useful for this research, because these types of interviews are both flexible and allow for comparison between different cases (O'Leary, 2010). These semi-structured interviews required an element of structure in its questions, which meant that most questions would come back in different interviews, allowing the comparison of answers that different people give on Utopias. This was important, because it meant that a) multiple perspectives on one Utopia could be compared, and b) the construction and influences of Utopias could be compared over various cases. However, semi-structured interviews also allow a researcher to step away from questions in case an interesting aspect comes up that was not thought of beforehand (O'Leary, 2010). In line with the explorative nature of this research, and also because of the uniqueness of each Utopia, this was a crucial aspect of the interviews. As indicated before, the literature review served as a first explorative step in finding information about a case its context and vision, and could perform a large portion of the descriptive task of characterizing a Utopia. The interview method, then, was about filling in the gaps, exploring the reasoning behind certain characteristics and exploring the general process of construction and influencing of the Utopian vision.

Questions

As shown in the conceptual model, two groups of people are involved in a Utopian planning process: agents of change and interpreters. In order to get insight into the different meanings of reality and a Utopia, different groups of actors had to be interviewed to reach a form of triangulation (Mertens & Hesse-Biber, 2012). Sometimes the Utopians as the creators and promotors of Utopias, who could say something about the inputs and characteristics of a Utopia, and sometimes also the interpreters as the people that have to work with or give room to those ideas and thus can best say something about the impacts of a Utopia. Who was approached depended on their availability and the necessity of interviewing him or her, which in turn was based on the information that could be retrieved from documents. In some cases, the interview contact person could be both involved in the envisioning process and the transformation process based on a Utopia, which allowed him to say something about both the inputs and the impacts of a Utopia. In other cases, multiple actors were approached to gain a full picture. The questions that were asked during an interview depended strongly on the available information in documentation, the focus of a project and the person that was interviewed. Beforehand, an interview guide was created that broadly covered all topics of the research, which can be found in appendix 1. Then, based on document analyses, this guide was fine-tuned to fit a specific interview and to allow for more in-depth clarifying questions. In general, the document analyses turned out to mainly provide information on the characteristics of the interview, which created a focus on the inputs and impacts of Utopias during the interviews. Below is an overview of the main considerations and focus points of both groups:

Agents of change - For the agents of change, the questions were mostly focused on discovering what the Utopias are about and how the envisioning process was shaped.

As the designers or promotors of Utopian ideas and visions, they were best able to talk about the ideas and elements that are portrayed in the Utopias. They could talk about the various characteristics, intentions, approaches and the general content of their visions. Another important topic was the process of how a Utopia came to be, and the factors that influenced this process. Here, agents of change could talk about the relevant context, skills and desires in creating a Utopian vision.

Interpreter - The interpreters then could talk about their perspective and interpretations on the Utopias and describe how they initially experienced the vision. It was important to discover whether planners were supportive of such ideas or not, whether this was due to the specific Utopia or Utopias in general and what factors lead to this stance. Additionally, an important input from interpreters is aimed at the actual impact that was achieved from the Utopia and whether the ideas from the case lead to any tangible changes. In general, these talks were meant to explore the power and value of Utopias in planning practice.

4.4 OPERATIONALISATION

Utopia is a term that -in practice- is used in the same line as many other planning terms: scenarios, plans, visions, imaginations, and more (Pinder, 2013; Hoch, 2014; Meinert, 2014). Because Utopias have been mostly absent from planning practice for the last few decades and is therefore barely used, planners and Utopians might not consider the visions, plans and ambitions in question as Utopias. To prevent confusion and irrelevant information, it was clarified in both the approaching of interview contacts and in the interviews themselves what was meant with Utopia in this research, in order to ensure a mutual understanding.

Additionally, because of the large diversity in Utopias, as distinguished in chapter 2, the Utopias could appear as very different from the plans that More, Howard and Le Corbusier made. Since the downfall of comprehensive blueprint plans, Utopians have been hesitant to provide detailed and prescriptive plans (Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007; Kraftl, 2007). As a consequence, contemporary Utopias are much more fragmented (Doevendans et al., 2007; Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007). They still exist in many of today's plans and visions for cities, but are not expressed as Utopias, as this term has received a negative association in many places (Sargisson, 2012). Therefore, Utopias of today can in many cases only be acquired through the so-called 'archaeological process'. Similar to how archaeologists search for little pieces of fossils and buildings, try to connect them and find missing elements, so too do planners have to search for elements and imaginations from all kinds of actors, in order to retrieve an underlying Utopia (Levitas, 2013; Pinder, 2013). In that sense, a single spatial plan might not be a Utopian project in itself, but contain elements of a Utopia that it and other plans are working towards. This could be seen back in planning practice in the Netherlands, where the grand and coherent visions such as the one of More could not be found. Instead, there are lots of projects that focus on one or a few elements of that ideal world: ideal ways of transport, living, eating, and so forth. The general

methodology of this research still applies to such partial Utopias (Camp. 2017), but this difference with the ideas described in the theory should be kept in mind.

4.5 ANALYSIS METHODS

In order to learn lessons from the data collected from practice, this empirical data was transcribed and ordered according to a number of codes. These codes were based on the concepts that were central to the theoretical chapters and are listed in appendix 2. Along the interviews, sometimes new key terms would come up, which were later added to the list of codes. As an analysis method, coding is important to bring structure to a large amount of data, of which lots of aspects are often irrelevant (O'Leary, 2010). Furthermore, they can be used to bring reoccurring themes and topics to light, show how different lines or reasoning are laid out through a conversation and help give insight into the most important data for answering the research questions (Clifford et al, 2010). These codes were not only used for the interview transcripts, but were also be valuable for filtering information from the (policy) documents.

Several levels of coding can be distinguished (Strauss, 1987). A first was based on the most important and reoccurring themes throughout the literature research, which concerned a wide range of topics. Next, these topics were connected through several overarching themes, which created a hierarchy of themes. Finally, after connecting text fragments to the list of themes, the rest of the text was considered in finding new codes that were not part of any of the codes that came from literature. Such topics were important because they could offer insight in gaps in theory. The encoded interview transcripts can be found in appendix 3.

Based on these codes, both of the empirical sub-questions could be answered simultaneously as part of the same Utopian story. This is done in the results section, which can be found back in chapter 5. The construction process of these visions, which is not explicitly part of either question, was used as introductions to a case, to describe the context and development steps of a Utopia. Following up on that, the dreamcatcher model was used to capture the essence of Utopias, envisioning processes and visions as part of the third sub-question about the characteristics of a Utopia. The information required for filling in this model was derived from the codes from the documents and interviews. This was a strongly interpretive process, as the stand of a Utopian vision on each spectrum was not discussed explicitly. Next, the various impacts of a Utopian vision that came up in documents and interviews were collected and described to answer the fourth sub-question. These were also based on the related codes and structured according to the 6 impacts that were distinguished in theory in chapter 3.2, to illustrate how planning practice and theory compared. Finally, in each case, a few key elements of each Utopian vision and the potential lessons that can be taken away from that specific case could be shared. This is also not a part of a specific sub-question, but could be interpreted from the available data and would be useful for the conclusions.

4.6 CASE SELECTION

Case criteria

Because of the broad conceptualisation of Utopia and Utopian visions that was made earlier in the thesis, a lot of cases can be considered to be Utopian to some extent. There were therefore a number of decisions that had to be made in order to come to a selection of cases:

Geographic frame

A first concerned the geography of cases, for which the decision was made to pick cases within the country of The Netherlands. This is a very suitable region for this research, for a number of reasons:

First, the familiarity of the researcher with the (cultural and societal) context and planning practices of the country. This pre-existing sense of context has both advantages and disadvantages, as it helps filling in gaps and placing visions in their context, but can also lead to false assumptions of what is happening, similar to the concept of 'double hermeneutics' from Foucault (Flybjerg, 2001). In that same line of thinking, the familiarity of the researcher with the language is also an important argument, as language plays a key role in communicating Utopian visions and expressing culture, imaginations and new thoughts (Shipley & Michela, 2006). Familiarity with a language increases the chance of picking up the meaning behind words and reading between the lines.

Second, the planning history in The Netherlands has largely been in line with the Utopian developments that were described in previous chapters, making the findings in planning practice there relevant for the connection to theory. The Netherlands is a high-density, high developed country, where a lot of modern era issues are occurring, resulting in a higher urgency to find alternatives and using imagination (PBL, 2014). Furthermore, The Netherlands have always put a large emphasis on the makeability of the country. There is a reason that the saying 'God created the world, but the Dutch created The Netherlands' exists: it is a country where human interventions in the landscapes have always played a key role in keeping the country liveable (Doevendans et al., 2007). This mindset created projects like the Delta works, Flevoland and the Afsluitdijk and promises a lot of new interesting Utopias and alternative futures to explore. Additionally, The Netherlands has an active society where several citizens and other actors are developing their idea of Utopias in practice.

A third reason concerns a practical argument: restricting the cases to The Netherlands creates a geographic restriction on a scale that allows for travelling to any potential case for face-to-face contact with interview participants, as well as the exploration of regions and planning sites and possibly visionary materials in person to get to know the contexts and impacts of Utopian visions better. Furthermore, it allows for the use of existing networks of researchers and planners to gather contact persons

and interesting cases and grants the ability to approach them more easily and snowball from there.

Fourth and last, although it may seem like The Netherlands is a limited focus area in the sense of diversities of contexts, it can be argued that the opposite is true. The country has a lot of cultural influences from all over the world and different geographical regions that have to deal with their own regional problems, chances and threats (Duyvendak & Scholten, 2010). This creates different contexts in which Utopian visions can potentially serve different purposes and have varying levels of influence.

Timeframe

A second criterion concerns the date of origin of Utopias. Here, the decision was made to use relatively recent Utopian proposals. In order to say something about how Utopias can contribute to contemporary planning practice, the contexts in which these Utopias are made should be as similar as possible to the developments and planning practice of today. Setting any specific year as a minimum would be arbitrary, but as a general guideline, the Utopian cases should be made within the last fifteen to twenty years, with a preference for those that are more recent.

Goal

Third, the visions, imaginations and plans that will be used for the cases have to envision the good life to some extent, in order to be considered Utopian. However, since the concept of Utopia was shown to be very broad in chapter 2, these cases are very free in the way that they envision Utopias and the extent to which those Utopias differ from today's world. Again, the focus of the research is to explore how Utopias of today look like, and to make a realistic analysis of that, there should be no a priori exclusion.

Spatial focus

Fourth, the Utopian vision have to have a spatial element in them. As mentioned earlier in chapter 2, Utopias have covered a very wide range of topics throughout the years, which can be fully focused on the urban form and planning, or not cover this topic at all. Since this thesis relates to the contribution of Utopias on planning practice, only the Utopias that touch upon the domain of spatial planning are relevant.

Impact

Fifth, an attempt will be made to find Utopian cases with mixed levels of impact. This means that there will be Utopias that range from being implemented to still being a vision, and from being well-known and publicly talked about to ideas that are barely publicly known, and everything in between. With that, there will be varying levels of resonance with these ideas: ideas that can range from being fully implemented in planning practice to ideas that are not touched upon at all. Although the relationship between different characteristics of a Utopia or Utopian vision and their impact are not important for the primary purposes of this research, they can increase the chance

of having cases with different kinds of impacts, which help in the exploration of impacts of contemporary Utopias.

Spreading

Sixth, and similar to the previous criterion, the Utopian cases should be spread out across the country, to maximise the (geographical) contextual differences and consequently the variety in impact. Again, as different parts of the Netherlands are battling different challenges, Utopias that originate in these different places will likely cover different topics and have different outcomes. Geographical variations that can be looked for are for instance the size of cities, the differentiation between urban and rural, and differences in language groups (Shakir, 2002).

Case search

The cases were searched for through several methods:

- Using online search engines such as Google to find the more well-known Utopias that have appeared in, for example, news articles.
- Using knowledge platforms that collect and discuss Utopias or similar imaginative projects. An important example is the 'Places of Hope' festival in Leeuwarden, which enlists various 'landmakers': all kinds of people that are working on ideas of alternative futures to deal with the challenges in their region.
- Using scientific publications to find inspiration from cases and examples from other researches.
- Using social networks such as LinkedIn and Facebook to make an appeal on planners and other relevant professionals to share projects that can be considered Utopian. This way, also the lesser known projects will hopefully come to live.
- Using the snowballing method to gather other examples from the ones that are interviewed and already a case.

Based on the criteria mentioned above, 12 cases have been selected throughout The Netherlands (see also figure 9). These cases are summarized below, along with a short motivation for their selection, and will be described and analysed in more detail in the results chapter:

1. Duurzaam Ameland: an ambition of one of the Dutch Wadden islands to become self-sustainable in terms of energy and water.
2. Holwerd aan Zee: a bottom-up initiative from the Frysian village Holwerd, with the aim to break through the dyke and let the sea come in-land.
3. Blauwestad: a resident project that constructed a lake in the middle of the province of Groningen to create an economic boost in a depriving area.
4. De Peinder Mieden: a bottom-up initiative in Friesland that is collectively developing a large piece of land towards an ideal rural living site.
5. Meerstad: similar to Blauwestad, but in close proximity to the city of Groningen.
6. Zoutmeer Tripscompagnie: a project focused on creating a salt lake in an attempt to draw in more tourism to the region.

7. De Markerwadden: a collaborative project that seeks to create new islands in the IJsselmeer to improve its ecologic status.
8. Floriade 2022 Almere: a world expo in which innovations on sustainable and green cities of the future are bundled.
9. Eco-dorp Bolderburen: a small-scale resident project focused on recreating the ideal Swedish village from the childrens' book series by Astrid Lindgren.
10. Brainport Smart District: a Brainport Eindhoven ambition to create the first smart neighbourhood in the world.
11. Transition Town Movement: an international movement that is focused on radical new ways of sustainable living and communities.
12. The Dutch Mountain: an idea to create a mountain in the Netherlands, mainly meant for recreation purposes.

Figure 9: *Overview of distribution of cases. Source: Own work.*

4.7 ETHICS

The direct ethical concerns in this research applied primarily to the interviews, where matters of confidentiality, consent and openness were important. Openness refers to explaining the intentions for interviewing someone, being truthful about the procedures of the interview and analysis procedures and the treatment of data, and in general expressing a sense of trustworthiness and honesty (Clifford et al, 2010). Taking this into account, part of the interview procedure was to let participants know who has insight into the data and how findings would be presented.

Asking for consent was important because it showed someone knew and accepted the conditions that came with giving away information (O'Leary, 2010). There are generally two moments in which a participant gives consent: right before an interview and after reading the empirical findings of a researcher. The one that applies to the interview is meant to show that a researcher is following specific rules that apply to ethical research. This generally means that a researcher claims to avoid things like briberies, power abuse and dishonesty. Moreover, it is important that a researcher informs a participant about several things: that they have the right to stop whenever they want, that they can erase parts of a recording, that the whole process is voluntarily, etc. If an interview has to be recorded for transparency purposes, this must also be accepted by a participant (O'Leary, 2010). To ensure these things were discussed during the interviews, they were e embedded in the interview guide. The second consent applied to the processing of information that was gathered through the interview. The whole translation process of findings to analyses was strongly subjective. As discussed before, since Utopias are not presented in explicit words, but are embedded implicitly in the language, ideas and preferences of people, an interpretive process was needed to connect these ideas into one. To ensure that the outcomes of these processes represented those of a research participant, the findings were sent back to the respondent as part of a check-up process. In case a respondent did not agree with the way that information was processed, texts would have to be rewritten, or the interview could be withdrawn as a whole.

Finally, the confidentiality aspect came down to treating findings and data carefully. There were numerous ways in which confidentiality could be broken in this research, which had to be avoided for ethical reasons. To do so, no names of participants were mentioned during either the interviews or in the processing of the findings, unless consent was given to do so. Moreover, the treatment of ideas and plans was treated carefully, as Utopians might be afraid of theft of their ideas. Either credits were given, or information was concealed to avoid this.

5. DUTCH UTOPIAS

CHAPTER 5: CONTEMPORARY UTOPIAS

This section shows the results of the document analyses and interviews in the twelve cases. In each of the paragraphs a case is discussed according to four different aspects. First, a description of the case will be given, which will discuss the context, construction process and current status of the Utopian vision. Second, the 'Utopian characteristics' section illustrates what kind of a Utopia a case could be considered as, by filling in and discussing the dreamcatcher model from chapter 2.3. Third, the 'Impacts on people, places and plans' section lists the ways in which a Utopia has had different kinds of direct and indirect influences. Last, the 'Key lessons' sections discuss the most important factors for the success of a case and the ways in which such visions could be stimulated in the future.

5.1 DUURZAAM AMELAND

Case Description

Duurzaam Ameland is the ambition of the Dutch Wadden island Ameland to become completely self-sufficient in terms of energy and water by the year 2020 (Places of Hope, s.d.[a]; Van der Veen, 2017). This puts a focus on both the production of renewable and local sources of energy, as well as finding ways to limit energy usage or make energy usage more effective. The ambition to do so was created collectively by all of the Dutch Wadden Islands back in 2007 (Places of Hope, s.d.[a]). However, out of all the islands, Ameland has developed the most progress, which can mainly be ascribed to the political will to do so. Ameland has a history of being self-sufficient in terms of food and general goods, as it used to be isolated from the rest of the Netherlands for centuries (Duurzaam Ameland, 2018). This might have been one of the factors that led to the now wide-received support of the ambition on the island. The ambition to become self-sufficient was further pushed forward by the island's mayor, who was inspired by solar fields in France and Germany and saw the possibility of making Ameland a frontrunner in the Netherlands in the field of energy (Van der Veen, 2017; Places of Hope, s.d.[a]). Relating back to the theory, the agent of change of Duurzaam Ameland can be identified as the mayor, who mostly acted from a desire for making a name for Ameland, as well as a bit of influence from personal experiences with similar visions and the historical context of the island.

Initially, the project received very few funds from the province or other levels of government, urging them to focus on proving their ideas and concepts before receiving any funds (Interview Luc van Tiggelen). Moreover, the ideas were not fully supported from the very start, as lots of inhabitants did not get why the ambition was needed and what they could gain from it (Interview Luc van Tiggelen). To generate their support, the municipality organised a lot of information and discussion meetings, during which understanding and collaboration opportunities were generated. There, it was explained that investing in new energy sources and performing experimentations at the scale of an island could offer a lot of benefits for the community and economy on the island, as well as for the wallet of local households

(Interview Luc van Tiggelen). These strategies used in persuading the inhabitants are strongly linked to Shipley and Michela (2006) their 4th step: creating incentives for alternatives and change.

Being an island of just 1600 inhabitants, its isolated status and limited population density make Ameland an ideal place to become a closed off energy system (Sensia Media, 2017; Duurzaam Ameland, 2018). Because the island of Ameland does not have the knowledge or capacity to do all of this on its own, they invested a lot in the collaboration with energy companies and knowledge institutions (Duurzaam Ameland, 2018). The ultimate goal was to make the island a playground for these actors to conduct experiments and test out ideas and innovations (Sensia Media, 2017). At the same time, the participation side of the project played a large role, as inhabitants were approached for support and participation in the project (Places of Hope, s.d.[a]), further increasing the persuasion aspect of the vision by aiming for personal contributions (Shipley & Michela, 2006). Both energy and participation are hot topics in the current planning regime in The Netherlands, leading to a lot of interest and funding possibilities for this project that combined both (Interview Luc van Tiggelen).

Figure 10: *An aerial view of the 23.000 solar panel field on Ameland. Source: Duurzaam Ameland, 2018.*

Utopian Characteristics

Duurzaam Ameland is a vision that is very ambitious in its goals, which are also very achievable and realistic since they are closely related to the current circumstances and operate within current possibilities. This ambition is expressed through its large-scale aims and its proactive ideas for realizing an ideal of becoming self-sustainable, which is not based on any actual problems the island is experiencing right now

(Interview Luc van Tiggelen). Furthermore, the vision is relatively open and flexible, which is due to the abstract goal of achieving a goal in the next decade, without specifying how in details (Duurzaam Ameland, 2018). Consequently, a lot of the spectra in figure 11 can be explained through these abstract goals: most of the approach is, for instance, focused on gathering support and involving other actors in setting up experiments and projects by creating open and flexible development processes and interacting a lot with inhabitants (Places of Hope, s.d.[a]; Interview Luc van Tiggelen). At the same time, because of those concrete goals, the project is limited in its radicality and is mostly concerned with technical aspects, rather than normative ones. Although they do break with the status quo in the region and take a lot of risks to reform the way that energy and water are being used and produced in the area, they do not necessarily offer very unique and radical ways of doing so. Overall, this case is different from the traditional Utopian visions that have been described throughout the theoretical chapters, as it is a relatively open process where inhabitants are invited to work along in constructing the vision and where the content of the ideas are not that radical in terms of achievability and imagination.

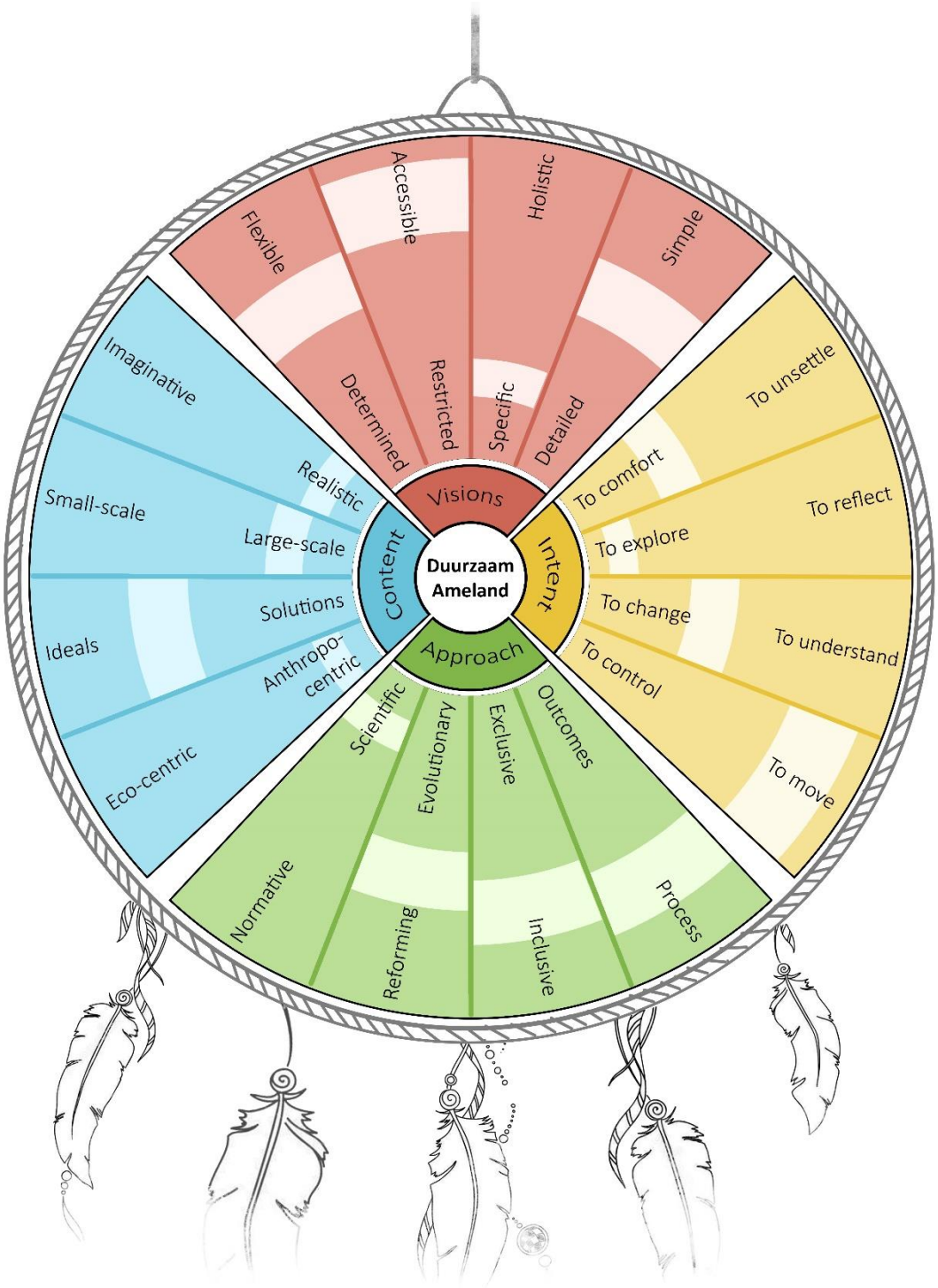


Figure 11: *Overview of Utopian characteristics of Duurzaam Ameland. Source: own work.*

Impacts on people, places and plans

With a focus on moving all kinds of organisations and actors, while simultaneously creating new knowledge in the energy transition, the Duurzaam Ameland initiative led to various types of contributions, most of which relate to people and places (Places of Hope, s.d.[a]). First, having a tangible, yet open goal of achieving self-sufficiency by 2020, the vision offered what Madanipour (2006) framed as a **planning ideal**: a goal based on a desire for something better that guides actions and actors towards a

common goal in the future. This led to both physical changes that are very visible, such as the large solar panel field, but also to changes that are less visible, for instance because they are on individuals their private property or underground (Van der Veen, 2017). In addition to generating energy, inhabitants' customs with regards to energy changed as well in order to lower energy usage on the island (Interview Luc van Tiggelen).

In that sense, the vision also resulted in what resembles a **generation of echoes** (Madanipour, 2006), as all kinds of actors and inhabitants started bringing up initiatives on their own, based on the goals and sharing of knowledge by the agents of change (Interview Luc van Tiggelen). Once the first results became tangible, the ambition was taken more seriously by involved actors, leading to a more serious incorporation of the goals by the municipality. These echoes were not limited to directly involved actors, but appeared in the outside world as well. Because the municipality wanted to become an example and test ground for sustainability innovations, it is being followed closely by interested parties all over the world (Interview Luc van Tiggelen).

Additionally, this testing ground function led to the development of **new understandings** on the energy transition, renewable energy and self-sufficiency for involved agents of change. By focusing on experimentation and innovation, the island has managed to test out new technologies and processes that have not been incorporated in other places. The idea was that the involved companies can practice their technology on the island and if successful can put it into mass-market usage afterwards (Places of Hope, s.d.[a]). Through its vision, the island thus allows for the exploration of new possibilities and imagination (Albrechts, 2010). Additionally, the project has been about combining all these different ideas and solutions into a coherent and functioning system, which is also a very unique opportunity (Interview Luc van Tiggelen).

Finally, a last contribution of the vision is that it forced the agents of change to include inhabitants on the island and through that process created a more **democratic governance** (Madanipour, 2006; Interview Luc van Tiggelen). The main struggle in this project was to generate support from inhabitants on the island. As mentioned before, this was eventually resolved by informing them and showing them the benefits for the liveability of the island and the welfare of individuals. This led to a lot of open discussions with inhabitants on the direction that the island should take and gave inhabitants thus the chance to bring in their wishes and desires into plan-making. Moreover, it allowed inhabitants to become active citizens and come up with their own ideas and initiatives (Duurzaam Ameland, 2018; Interview Luc van Tiggelen). The Utopian element of the vision was crucial in opening up the conception of the island for both agents of change and inhabitants and allowed everyone to rethink the way that (a part of) their island should work (Rapoport, 2014; Albrechts, 2015).

Key Lessons

What sets Duurzaam Ameland apart from other projects is its ambitious and open goals. A first lesson from this is to set goals which can both inspire people to participate and give corporations and governments targets to work towards. This can

be related to the sense of self-efficacy that persuasive stories should give people (Throgmorton, 2003). The ambition in this case has led to a lot of developments and new discoveries that would have happened a lot slower if the ambition did not exist, if they would be made at all. Additionally, one of the more important lessons with regards to innovation is that it requires a certain degree of freedom from rules and other constraints. In this case, established national rules were often standing in the way of achieving or sustaining innovations (Places of Hope, s.d.[a]). A third lesson relates to the networking skills that are required to link all the various actors that are involved in such an innovation and knowledge project. There needs to be some capacity to show empathy and dedication and to align different interests and sectoral cultures in order to combine strengths of different institutions, which was the case in the municipality of Ameland (Interview Luc van Tiggelen). This element of speaking multiple languages and appealing to different actors was also strongly emphasized in literature (Throgmorton, 2003; Van Dijk, 2011; Hajer, 2017).

5.2 HOLWERD AAN ZEE

Case description

Holwerd aan Zee is an initiative that goes up against everything the Dutch planning stands for by trying to break down a section of the dyke and letting the sea run into the land (Holwerd aan Zee, s.d.). The changes in both the land-use and mind-sets of the locals that this process causes make it a literal and figurative breakthrough (Interview Jan Zijlstra). Although this project will lead to drastic transformations of the village, its inhabitants stand by the project because of the openness of the process and the visibility of the issues in the region (Holwerd aan Zee, s.d.; Places of Hope, s.d.[b]; Oomen, 2014)

Holwerd is a small village of around 1500 inhabitants and lies next to the coastline of the province of Friesland (Holwerd aan Zee, s.d.). As part of one of the shrinking regions of the Netherlands, the village is troubled by economic decline, an ageing population and a housing market in bad shape without any prospects of improvements (Holwerd aan Zee, s.d.; Interview Jan Zijlstra). Combined with a lack of initiatives from the involved governments, a small group of villagers from different backgrounds saw reason enough to take matters into their own hands and initiate an idea that had been circulating in the village for decades: breaking through the dyke (Places of Hope, s.d. [b]; Omrop Fryslân 2017). The idea is that by connecting the sea to the various rivers in-land, the town can (once again) fulfil a harbour function, which should eventually attract all kinds of recreation investments and tourism, ultimately leading to the revival of the town and region (Places of Hope, s.d. [b]).

The initial ideas were very romantic and originated from a sense of pride of their village: dreams of the deserted buildings being occupied and repaired, tourists coming to the village, interacting with inhabitants and taking their stories back home, seeing small boats pass by the village, etc. (NARVIC Media, 2015; Interview Jan Zijlstra). The project was focused on these dreams as a ‘dot on the horizon’ and took a very flexible approach as to how to get there (Interview Jan Zijlstra). Relating back to Utopian theory, the agents of change in this vision are the four frontrunners of the

project, who were primarily driven by their perception of a downward spiralling context and later on also their desires for a certain romantic future (Sargisson, 2012. However, now that the project has to be realised in the near future, details concerning the realisation have to come in and involved actors are starting to ask for more certainty (Places of Hope, s.d.[b]; Interview Jan Zijlstra).

The plans for Holwerd aan Zee are still in development and are estimated to become very costly: up to 65 million euros (Interview Jan Zijlstra). To acquire the funds for the implementation of the project, the initiative takers have been lobbying in all kinds of organisations (NARVIC Media, 2015; Omrop Fryslân 2017). Over the past few years, they have given close to 500 presentations about their project, involved and convinced large organisations such as Rijkswaterstaat and the Deltaprogramma to collaborate and have even discussed their ideas with King Willem-Alexander himself (Holwerd aan Zee, s.d.; Interview Jan Zijlstra). Recently, this work paid off as they received their first funds of 10 million euros (Interview Jan Zijlstra). One of the reasons that these organisations want to collaborate with Holwerd aan Zee, is because the initiative takers made it so that the project was very broad and tackled an array of issues at once: climate change, ecology, economy, jobs, monumental recovery, tourism, etc. (Holwerd aan Zee, s.d.). In that sense, their vision ticks a couple of boxes that are related to persuasive stories, such as non-invasiveness, openness to interpretation and a flexibility to relate it to one's own circumstances (Albrechts, 2010; Collie, 2011; Van Dijk, 2011; amp. 2017).

Figure 12: *A rendering of the Holwerd aan Zee project. Source: Holwerd aan Zee, s.d.*

Utopian characteristics

Based on the insights retrieved from the interviews and available documents, a distribution of Utopian characteristics was modelled in figure 13. In a strong generalisation, it can be argued that Holwerd aan Zee is a relatively traditional Utopia

in its contents and a very modern one in its approaches. It seeks to make concrete, large-scale and quite radical changes that are placed in the near future, mostly based on unprovable assumptions that these will improve the current situation, characteristics that can be linked to a lot of the traditional Utopias as well (Holwerd aan Zee, 2015; Gunder & Hillier, 2007). However, coming from a bottom-up initiative, its approach has been very different from the traditional Utopias that were often made in a top-down, directive approach (Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007; Sargisson, 2012; Interview Jan Zijlstra). The approach was aimed at the engagement of diverse sets of actors in order to see the project pull through, whereas in traditional Utopias, planners were often able to implement their ideas without the support of other organisations. In an attempt to appeal to these actors, the ideas of Holwerd aan Zee were very holistic by covering a wide array of topics, based on ideals to offer a way forward from the hardships of today and flexible as to adapt to changing circumstances and opportunities (NARVIC Media, 2015; Interview Jan Zijlstra).

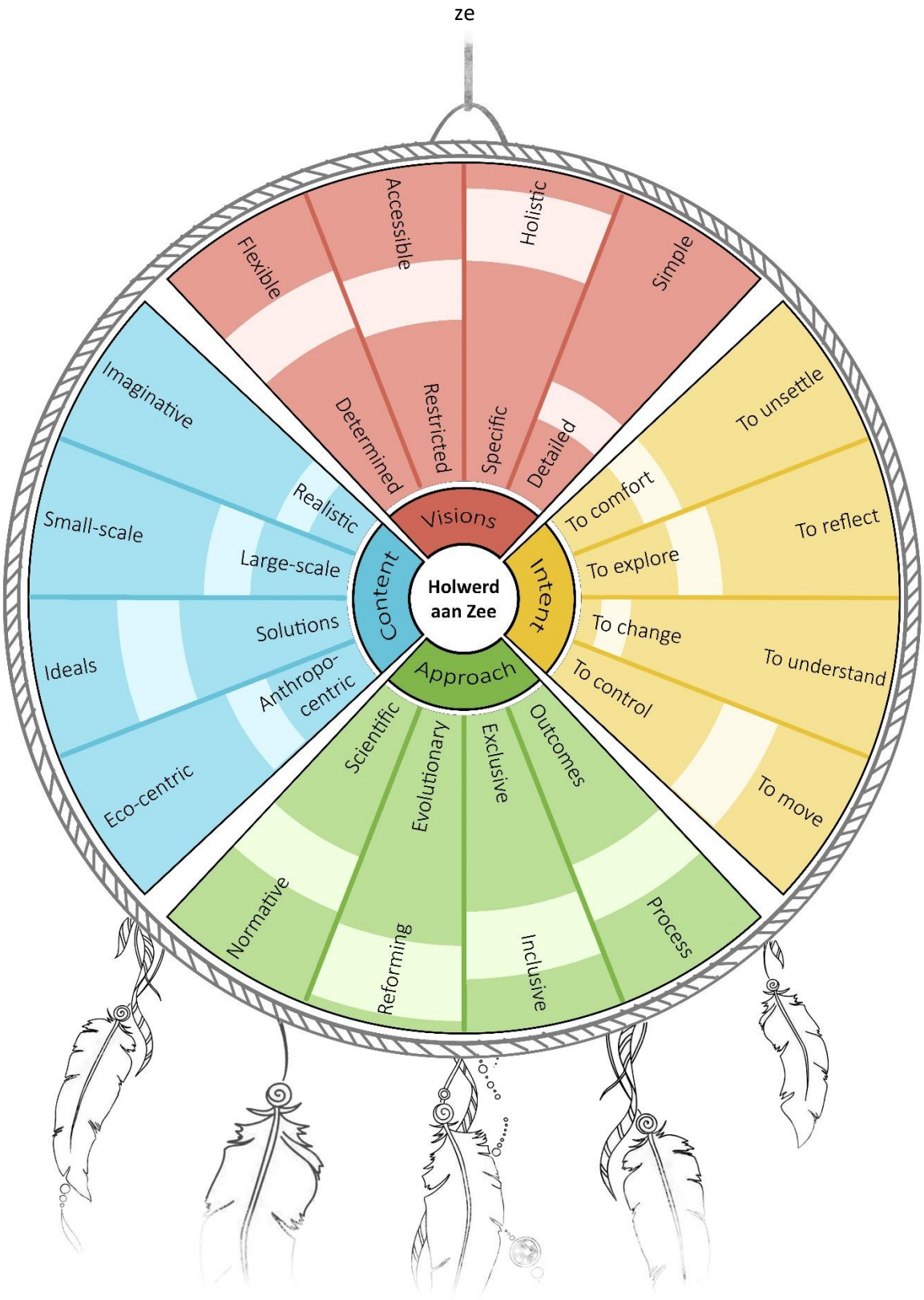


Figure 13: *Overview of Utopian characteristics of Holwerd aan Zee. Source: own work.*

Impacts on people, places and plans

Although the project is very innovative, it has mostly been stuck in development phases, and has until now barely led to any new plans or influenced existing ones by

companies or governments (Holwerd aan Zee, s.d.). With the intention of winning support, most of the efforts of the agents of change have been aimed at winning support from locals and investment partners (Interview Jan Zijlstra). Consequently, one of the biggest contributions of Holwerd aan Zee has been the change of perspective it has brought about. This is partly according to the ideas of Madanipour (2006), who argues that visions can have an impact of rejecting the current without necessarily supporting a specific alternative. The vision has helped the agents of change to frame the circumstances in Holwerd and many similar villages in The Netherlands as problematic and to communicate these to other governments and actors in the country, in some instances resulting in changes of perspective (Holwerd aan Zee, 2015; Interview Jan Zijlstra). Additionally, the project allowed nature organisations to learn how to improve ecology by embracing and displaying it in a region, rather than protecting it by hiding it away, as the visions for Holwerd aan Zee are a showcase on how to do that (Omrop Fryslân 2017). Moreover, making people see the merit of embracing the sea as a chance, rather than a danger, is a radical Utopian idea that required a change of perception for a lot of actors.

To change these perceptions, they set up a **planning ideal** for Holwerd and similar villages in the Northern Netherlands, and communicated this through an enormous amount of presentations (Holwerd aan Zee, s.d.; Ondernemend Noordoost Friesland, 2014). This ideal allowed locals, governments and other relevant actors to start thinking about ways to make use of the changes that the project is introducing. In that sense, it set a common goal that these actors could work towards and collaborate on (Madanipour, 2006). Local farmers, for example, are now working together with knowledge institutes to develop salt agriculture methods that can be introduced once the sea is brought into the land (Omrop Fryslân 2017; Interview Jan Zijlstra). Especially the possibilities for outside actors to participate in the plans has strongly enhanced the achievability of the project (Places of Hope, s.d. [b]).

In that same line of contributions, the project has increased the **democracy of local governance** through a number of ways. In the first place, because the vision comes from inhabitants themselves, causing a movement and reframing of the local circumstances based on perceptions and ideals from local inhabitants. The initiative takers linked their project to local and regional contexts and stories for example by interviewing people who were in dire living situations due to a lack of government repairs (Holwerd aan Zee, s.d.). Moreover, they framed their project as the way out, full of hope and positive consequences for all the villagers, similar to persuasive storytelling and some of the more powerful attributes of Utopias (Shipley & Michela, 2006; Gunder & Hillier, 2007; Kraftl, 2007). As part of the group of villagers, they could use their local networks to involve the village at an early stage and to keep them involved over multiple years through regular meetings, sharing results and discussing ideas openly (Holwerd aan Zee, s.d.; Interview Jan Zijlstra). This allowed people to bring in their conceptions, concerns and dreams in informal ways, all things which were very limited before Holwerd aan Zee. Together with the possibilities for locals to start working on individual projects based on the planning ideal, this strongly democratized the developments of the village.

Key lessons

The most important contribution of the plan so far was its ability to mobilise a lot of actors to feel the struggles of the village and region, but also to find different ways of dealing with the dynamics of this changing world. There were several key factors that made Holwerd aan Zee and its mobilisation process a success. First, it sprung from a real and threatening issue that was widely felt and neglected in the region. By connecting their project to this characteristic context of the region, the initiative takers generated a lot of support and attention (Interview Jan Zijlstra). This is very much in line with the persuasive storytelling mechanism of framing circumstances in a way that resonates with people, as well as appealing to locals' affect (Shipley & Michela, 2006). Second, after gaining this support of the village and the involved partners, the sharing of results and continuous transparency towards participants was important in keeping them involved. Third, the timing of the initiative was great, as it was initiated in an era where participation was a trending topic and bottom-up projects like this one were heavily supported and cheered upon, in hopes of making it an example for other cases (Holwerd aan Zee, s.d.; Interview Jan Zijlstra). Fourth, the initiative takers tried to keep the process as open as possible and postponed talking about details. This has led to the plan being very flexible and prevented actors from nit-picking on specific details, which could have halted the project in an early phase. Instead, the openness now allowed various actors to interpret circumstances and chances according to their own frames, which is in line with Van Dijk (2011), and join in the process, which kept the project going long enough to receive funds (Places of Hope, s.d.[b]; Interview Jan Zijlstra). Fifth and last, because of the speed with which the project gained support and worked towards goals (Interview Jan Zijlstra). Knowing that the local support would disappear if results were not booked regularly, the initiative moved quickly, especially at the start of the project. Later on, the slow pace of governments and their culture of gathering evidence and certainty became an area of conflict with the initiative, because it took out the pace of the process.

5.3 BLAUWESTAD

Case Description

Blauwestad is a residential development project in the eastern parts of the province of Groningen. What made this project unique and a break from the status quo was the development of an enormous lake in an area that was previously agricultural land (Blauwestad, s.d.) (See figure 14). Such a thing had never been done before in The Netherlands and was considered a large risk in an area that was so remote and rural (Andere Tijden, 2012). With that, the scale of the project was very large, and included the development of initially 1500 residential plots, new nature, recreative destinations such as beaches and harbours, and much more (Blauwestad, s.d.; Andere Tijden, 2012).

The initial plans for Blauwestad were made back in the 1980s. Back then, East-Groningen was dealing with lots of developments that were considered problematic, such as high unemployment rates, ageing population, the departure of lots of youth,

closing of facilities and in general a lowering of the liveability in the region (Blauwestad, s.d.). In that sense, the region was dealing with many of the peripheral issues that were also seen in the case of Holwerd. And in a similar fashion to Holwerd, letting water into the region was seen as a solution to all the problems in the region, by drawing in tourists, new inhabitants and in general, change the dynamics of East-Groningen (NRC, 2010). One circumstance that was important at the time was that East-Groningen was a region that national and provincial governments wanted to improve (Andere Tijden, 2012). There were many radical projects being offered at the time to do so, and this political will is one of the reasons why Blauwestad received so much support and funds. The location of Blauwestad was partly based on the low value of agricultural land in the region, as a consequence of European production subsidies (Andere Tijden, 2012; Interview Jan Kleine). Moreover, part of the project area was once a lake and a natural low point in the region, making it a suitable place to store water in the form of a lake (Interview Rene Perton). The initial agents of change were a group consisting of a local architect, and two government officials from the municipality and province (Blauwestad, s.d.). Relating back to theory, the vision of Blauwestad was primarily based on the context (Sargisson, 2012), both the locally negatively perceived economic status and the national political will to improve the region.

Because the project was so radical and unique, part of the strategy to win support and recognition was to sell it as such to press and corporations (Interview Jan Kleine). They did this for instance by having former queen Beatrix stop the drainage system that would make the area submerge (Blauwestad, s.d.). Since the project made it into the New York Times under that description, it can be argued that this strategy succeeded (Simons, 1993). In that sense, the agents of change were able to persuade people that the alternative that they offered was desired (Shipley & Michela, 2006), even though it turned out that local inhabitants were never really convinced that the previous circumstances needed change in the first place (Andere Tijden, 2012). Either way, the visions convinced multiple large Dutch corporations to collaborate in the construction of the project, further strengthening a strong belief in a good outcome (Blauwestad, s.d.).

However, over time it turned out that these initial expectations and hopes would not come true. Although the lake, new natural landscape and residential plots were all developed in one go, the number of resident sales halted relatively quickly after opening (Andere Tijden, 2012). The richer inhabitants that were aimed for were simply not interested in moving to East-Groningen. Additionally, around the time that the first sales were happening, the economic crisis started off, leading to the collapse of the housing market (Interview Rene Perton). Since the project had cost an enormous amount of money, these lacks of result turned into a negative image of the project in the media, further spiralling down the reputation and sales of the project (NRC, 2010; Andere Tijden, 2012). Eventually, this led to participating partners pulling out and leaving the province of Groningen as sole developer and manager of the project (Blauwestad, s.d.).

For a very long time, the project managers held on to the initial ideas, despite the lack of sales and developments (Andere Tijden, 2012). However, recently the

management team was replaced by a new team in hopes of transforming the project to the more current circumstances. This team has been able to change a lot about of the plans for Blauwestad: they started working on connecting the project with the wider region, they lowered ambitions and goals based on the current circumstances with the potential to grow over time, they changed the focus to working in phases and finishing projects, rather than working on the project as a whole, and they opened up the project to a wider mix of income groups and backgrounds (Interview Rene Perton). This new strategy has led to a boost in sales, increasing from the 0-5 sales per year from the previous years to 50-100 sales per year. In search of an explanation through theory, it can be argued that their new strategy worked because they started adapting their visions to better fit the fixed attitudes and values of local inhabitants, and thus changed their message according to their target group (Shipley & Michela, 2006). Overall, this new dynamic approach seems to be more suitable for this time and age, and might bring Blauwestad to its once believed glory.

Figure 14: *One of the neighbourhoods of the Blauwestad project. Source: Blauwestad, s.d.*

Utopian Characteristics

Figure 15 gives an overview of the Utopian characteristics of Blauwestad. As a project from the late '80s, it started out with a very traditional planning approach and can even be seen as being part of the Utopia stream of the 20th century. Being very large-scale, determined, static and top-down, it focused on bringing a grand plan and solution to a deprived region (Andere Tijden, 2012). Being constructed by a restricted group of experts, without including the desires, wishes and perceptions of local people, Blauwestad followed the same route in terms of content and approaches as

the traditional Utopias (Gunder & Hillier, 2007; Ganjavie, 2012). However, the project has shifted in a lot of its approaches and reconstructed part of its content during recent management replacements, moving a lot of the spectra that were initially very traditionally oriented towards more modern ranges (Interview Rene Perton). Because a lot of the content of the project were hard to turn back on, it still contains some traditionally Utopian elements. However, its approach has become a lot more modern by including inhabitants in discussions on future developments, relating the project to local circumstances around the site and opening up the site for recreationists to use (Interview Rene Perton). In that sense, this is also an illustrative case of how the traditional approaches do not work anymore in today's society, and how smaller steps, more collaboration and flexible approaches and goals are becoming more and more important.

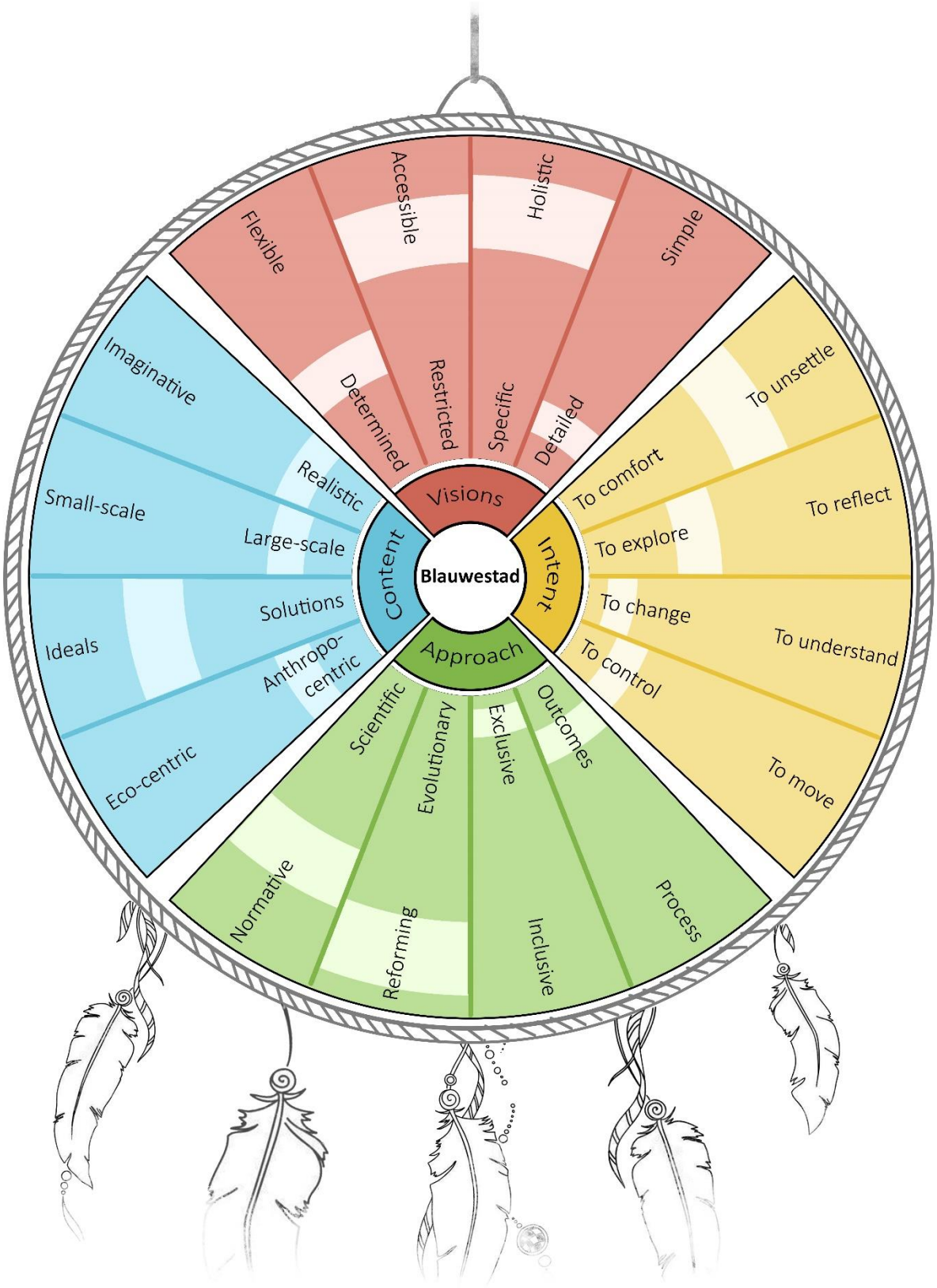


***Figure 15**: Overview of Utopian characteristics of Blauwestad. Source: own work.*

Impacts on people, places and plans

The main contribution of Blauwestad has to be searched for in the transformation of the East-Groningen region. Based on the promises for a better future and the

credibility of the strong stories, the Blauwestad vision was able to **generate actions** by calling for physical changes in the landscape, down to a point where the historical layers can barely be recognized anymore (Interview Rene Perton). But the project has changed its external environment as well, both in the direct vicinity and the wider region. For example, it strongly increased the interconnectedness of the region by introducing waterways, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure (Blauwestad, s.d.).

In that same line of thinking, it has **generated echoes** among actors in the vicinity of the project. It has formed an incentive for municipalities and villages in the vicinity to invest in the quality of their villages' roads, facilities and monuments, in order to attract some of the tourists and inhabitants that are coming to the region due to Blauwestad (Interview Rene Perton). Additionally, former farmers and inhabitants in the region have started developing new businesses that are directly connected to Blauwestad and are growing because of the profit they are generating because of it (Interview Rene Perton). Think of business oriented around boats, sport facilities and recreation. Moreover, the radicalism of the Utopian project has generated worldwide attention, which has potentially influenced spatial plans in other countries (Simons, 1993). Consequently, the project has drawn a lot of tourism into the region, creating more acknowledgement and welfare (Blauwestad, s.d.).

A last contribution of the vision is a recent one and concerns the **creation of new understandings**. Both in order to generate a better image and to keep the radical element a part of the project, Blauwestad is heavily investing in experiments and innovations in the project, for example through solar panels embedded in bicycle paths, the development of 3D printed bridges, and similar developments (Interview Rene Perton). The knowledge they generate with these projects are monitored and picked up by all kinds of businesses and governments, making Blauwestad a continuous interesting project to follow.

Key Lessons

An initial important factor that was crucial in getting the project going was the political will that started Blauwestad. By tackling the negative developments in the region in a grand manor and offering a way out, the project was embraced and fought for during the first years (Andere Tijden, 2012; Interview Rene Perton). Later on, when external circumstances started to change and it became apparent that the ideas of the project did not match these circumstances, it was very important that the project was flexible and could change its trajectory (Gunder & Hillier, 2007; Sargisson, 2012). The will to stick to the plans made on the drawing board turned out to weigh the project down. Only by adjusting plans and intentions to a large extent, by erasing some of the old plans and drawing up some new ones, the project has been able to attract more people and gain more traction (Interview Rene Perton). Additionally, it has been important to connect the project to the surrounding context. This is how Blauwestad was able to offer economic changes and change to entrepreneurs from the wider region and how local inhabitants started to embrace and use the developments (Shipley & Michela, 2006). To a large extent, this process of shifting the dynamics in the region is what made Blauwestad a success and what offers potential for the region in the future. Finally, a last lesson is about the change of management, which was all

about introducing people with a flexible mind-set and more importantly, with a background in the region. Being familiar with the region has in this case led to a more fitting approach, a better understanding of what works and does not work and consequently a better and more persuasive communication of the role of Blauwestad in the region (Shipley & Michela, 2006).

5.4 DE PEINDER MIEDEN

Case Description

De Peinder Mieden is a story of how a group of people came together, acquired a large amount of land from the municipality of Smallingerland and constructed their own personal and collective visions of Utopia. It was initiated by Jentje Steegstra, a local inhabitant and spatial developer, who noticed that the municipality was looking for a new destination for a large amount of rural land (Interview Jentje Steegstra). The municipality had originally intended to build an industrial zone here, but could not afford to do so due to the outbreak of the economic crisis (Places of Hope, s.d. [c]). Because the land was yielding little income for the municipality, they decided to sell it to De Peinder Mieden organisation (Interview Evert Visser).

The main demand from the municipality was to preserve as much as the natural landscape as possible and to increase the biodiversity and potential of a natural buffer between the town of Opeinde and the industrial zone (De Peinder Mieden, s.d.; Bureau Stroming, 2013). De Peinder Mieden played into this by developing the area according to a new development concept, where 95% of the land is destined as natural area, and where only 5% of the surface will be used for building residences and infrastructure (Places of Hope, s.d. [c]). By selling around 45 residences to various people from all over the Netherlands, they would be able to finance the development and maintenance of a more natural landscape (Bureau Stroming, 2013). As such, the main focus was put on the landscape, with the residential aspect being a means to achieve that goal (Bureau Stroming, 2013; Interview Jentje Steegstra).

As a bottom-up initiative, the Peinder Mieden organisation received a lot of freedom to design the region in a way they liked. This included the placement of building plots, the design of houses and any other facilities they might want, such as a fruit tree yard (Interview Jentje Steegstra). Despite this feeling of freedom, a lot of the major final decisions have to be made in collaboration with the municipality (Interview Evert Visser). To ensure a good course for the ecological development of the area, for instance, the municipality will design and maintain the natural landscape for the first 5 years (Places of Hope, s.d. [c]; Kopersvereniging De Peinder Mieden, 2015). The residents have formed a board together, who work on projects and developments in collaboration with the rest of the residents (De Peinder Mieden, s.d.).

This is the only project out of all the cases where most of the process depended on the dedication, skills and knowledge of one person. Apart from the desires of the group, these capacities were the main ingredient for the envisioning process (Sargisson, 2012). From the very first steps to the upcoming construction of the first residences, Jentje has been the agent of change that laid out connections

between the future residents and the municipality (Interview Jentje Steegstra). This included having to win support from the planners and political parties at the municipality, as well as showing results, generating enthusiasm among the residents and making sure that demands from either group were met (Places of Hope, s.d. [c]). Given Jentje his collaboration with the municipality from an early stage, the persuasion process was more due to the envisioning process than the through the vision itself (Interview Evert Visser). This allowed Jentje to adapt parts of the vision to a target group through direct communication and to come to an end result that won support from the municipality (Shipley & Michela, 2006). As a future resident himself, his motivations to see the project come to a success were quite strong, resulting in a lot of dedication, time and energy invested into the project (interview Jentje Steegstra; Interview Evert Visser).

Figure 16: *The plot map of De Peinder Mieden. Source: De Peinder Mieden, s.d.*

Utopian Characteristics

Based on the distribution of Utopian characteristics in figure 17, something that stands out is how most of the characteristics of the visions are on the modern side of the spectra. Given the fact that the group of future inhabitants were given the freedom to construct their own small-scale version of Utopia, the visions that were used to persuade them to join the project could use this element by being open, flexible and simple (Interview Jentje Steegstra). This is different from the traditional Utopias that were usually much more detailed and pre-determined (Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007; Kraftl, 2007). In terms of approach there is no real recognizable

pattern in the different spectra, partly because there was a very predictable clash between the more traditional governments and the more modern resident organisation group. The government wanted more control and to do specific steps in a way that they were used to, while the inhabitants sought freedom and new ways to get things done (Interview Evert Visser). However, most of these process spectra lean more towards a modern than a traditional approach, as the organisation was given a lot of freedom to develop the area as they saw fit. Content-wise, the project is leaning more towards traditional Utopias, as it is a large-scale, short-term and very realistic project that is not necessarily groundbreaking and does not change circumstances in the long run. Similar to some other cases, the focus does not lie on finding new ways for using places, but on building something that fits a personal ideal or dream.

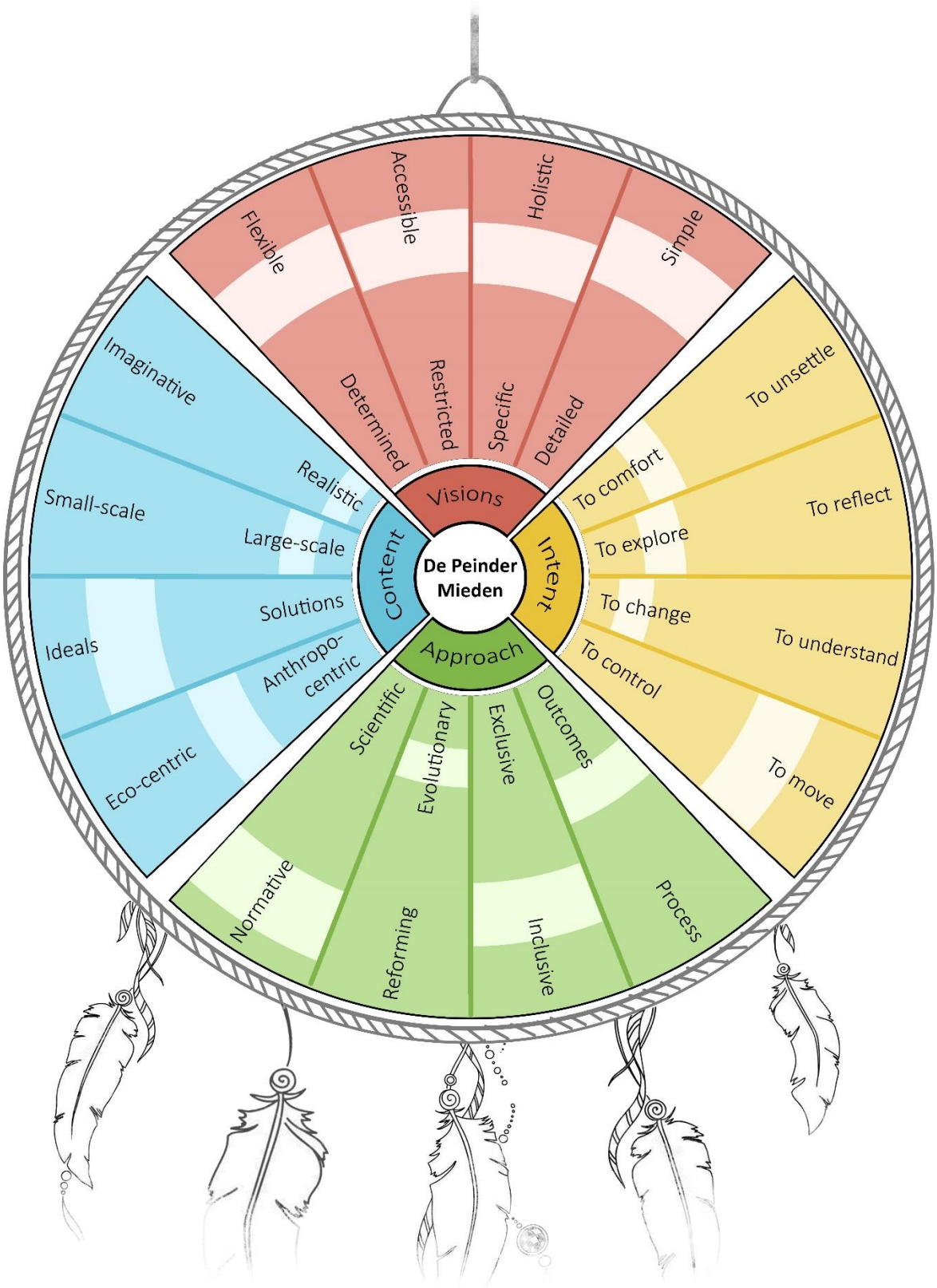


Figure 17: *Overview of Utopian characteristics of De Peinder Mieden. Source: own work.*

Impacts on people, places and plans

Given the strong role for the future residents in developing their own ideal spaces, the largest contribution of De Peinder Mieden was its **democratization of local**

governance. The vision was mostly intended on getting people to join the project, buy one or more of the plots and become part of the community (De Peinder Mieden, s.d.). To do so, Jentje spread several articles and interviews about the project through various media outlets (Interview Jentje Steegstra). This was a first step in democratizing the space, as people from all over The Netherlands were invited to participate in and decide about the future of the development of this place (Madanipour, 2006). As time move on, a challenge lied in keeping everyone involved for the several years it took to complete the project, which was mainly done by keeping in touch, sharing results and creating a community feeling (Places of Hope, s.d.[c]). By regularly discussing new projects within De Peinder Mieden and going back and forth between the municipality and the residential group, Jentje was able to put a lot of the desires and needs of both groups into the development of the place, not only democratizing the place, but also the plans for the future (Madanipour, 2006; Interview Jentje Steegstra). The fact that the organisation was able to sign a buyers' contract with a lot of future residents early on in the development process was enough proof to generate support from the municipality, and was also a key factor in the success in the project (Interview Evert Visser).

As developments have recently begun and the first residences will be built by the end of this year, the vision of Peinder Mieden has also contributed by **generating action**. So far, a lot of the infrastructure, lakes and plots have been developed, making the area ready for the implementation of the residences. Additionally, according to the ideal of bringing rough nature back into the area, the first developments and phases of this process have begun, turning this ideal into action (Madanipour, 2006; Places of Hope, s.d.[c]).

Finally, given the unique approach of this project, there is a lot of interest from all over The Netherlands to **create new understandings** based on its lessons. Jentje gives a lot of tours and presentations to organisations and municipalities that are interested in the Peinder Mieden (De Peinder Mieden, s.d.). These talks can be about the development process according to the new concept that was used, or the way that bottom-up initiatives similar to the Peinder Mieden can be stimulated (Interview Jentje Steegstra). Moreover, the project offers a lot of lessons on how governments and inhabitants can collaborate. The municipality has had to learn a lot about how to deal with a bottom-up initiative such as The Peinder Mieden, while the future residents organisation had to learn how to win support from the municipality as well (Places of Hope, s.d.[c]). These are all new skills that can be used in the further development of this Utopia in the future (Sargisson, 2012).

Key Lessons

A first key factor was the Importance for bottom-up projects to have a strong degree of dedication and motivation. Worked in this case by having a stake in the outcomes of the project. The initiative taker would later on be a resident of the site, which meant that he had an opinion on everything that would or would not be part of De Peinder Mieden and was willing to fight for his ideals to come true. Given this strong sense of self-efficacy, along with the openness of the vision which allowed for personal resonance of the ideas among future residents, the visions of this case were very

persuasive and therefore very motivating (Throgmorton, 2003; Shipley & Michela, 2006). A second key factor was the communication and openness between the municipality and the Peinder Mieden organisation, which was crucial in finding common ground and advancing the plans. It became clear that there were lots of differences in ambition and intentions for the area that had to be overcome, and both organisations did not always understand each other (Interview Jentje Steegstra). However, a willingness to find solutions that work for both resulted in supported and achievable plans. A final lesson is also aimed at the municipality and is about taking risks. The whole Peinder Mieden project was set up with an unproven development concept, by a group of unexperienced people. Yet, the municipality chose to put trust in the development of the project if certain criteria were met. This was partly based on the shared perception that something had to be done with the area (De Peinder Mieden, s.d.). Whether the project will become successful or not is uncertain yet, but this trust is necessary if such Utopian bottom-up initiatives ever want to see the daylight.

5.5 MEERSTAD

Case Description

Meerstad is in a lot of aspects very similar to Blauwestad. Its first plans being made in the same era and in the same corner of the country, it was dealing with a lot of the issues that Blauwestad was tackling as well. Ageing population, growing unemployment rates and diminishing agricultural land value were all problems that were thought to go away by developing one radical project (Meerstad, 2013; Interview Jan Kleine). Additionally, there were government officials from the province that were involved in both projects. One of the major elements that separates the two projects is that Meerstad lies next to the city of Groningen, the largest city in the northern Netherlands (Meerstad, 2013). This allowed Meerstad to develop more ambitious goals with 6500 residences in comparison to Blauwestad's initial 1500 (Interview Jan Kleine).

This connection to the city has put a lot more focus on the urban life in Meerstad than in Blauwestad, and can be seen back in a few ways. First, Meerstad offers all kinds of recreation facilities and makes use of the popularity of the city (Interview Jan Kleine). Second, being developed in the early stages of the economic crisis, Meerstad focuses a lot more on a wide diversity of income ranges than Blauwestad did (Van Dalen, 2017; Interview Rene Perton). Third, being able to learn from the mistakes Blauwestad has made, Meerstad has developed in stages, focusing first on developing and finishing a specific project before moving on to the next one (Interview Jan Kleine).

During the time that Meerstad was developed, the shock and radicality of developing a lake was mostly gone because of the Blauwestad project that had been developed a few years earlier (Interview Jan Kleine). However, there were still several reasons for wanting to develop a second similar project in the region. First, there was an active request for combining urban living with nature and water in the region,

which the project could handily play into (Meerstad, 2013). Second, there was a growing housing shortage in the city of Groningen, leading to a lot of people moving to smaller towns in the vicinity that could not handle the number of new inhabitants (Interview Jan Kleine). As a consequence, Meerstad was developed as a suburb where people could live more rurally, yet still in the vicinity of the facilities of the city (Meerstad, 2013). With a focus on building more housing, Meerstad was mostly developed based on the context and past developments in the region (Sargisson, 2012).

Being close to the city, Meerstad had to deal with a lot of different actors and stakeholders in the region. To overcome any issues that this might have caused, the involved governments set up a collaboration group in which all the landowners in the region were involved. In order to ensure their support and a suitable area to build Meerstad, they started buying all of the land that was needed for the project before any of the plans were even made, which was considered a risky strategy (Interview Jan Kleine). This public-private collaboration allowed the project to quickly be built and was considered one of the success factors later on. As the province had all of the legislative power, resources and expertise that it required to build Meerstad, and thus also the necessary land to build it on, the number of outside stakeholders that were required was minimal, and thus the visions did not have to be presented in a very persuasive way.

Figure 18: *Aerial view of Meerstad in front of the city of Groningen. Source: Meerstad, 2013.*

Utopian Characteristics

Again, in the overview of Utopian characteristics of the Meerstad project in figure 19, it can be seen that Meerstad is very similar to Blauwestad in the sense that they are both developed using traditional approaches and are aimed towards traditional Utopias. To illustrate, Meerstad is a large-scale developments, that is aimed at finding solutions for several shortcomings in the here and now, making the plans very realistic and within familiar circumstances (Interview Jan Kleine). However, being able to learn from the errors of Blauwestad, Meerstad has implemented a slightly more modern approach, which was focused on more public participation opportunities, openness of planning outcomes and dynamic processes (Van Dalen, 2017). An important part

of this more modern approach is the incremental planning approach with which Meerstad tries to be more flexible and base plans on changing circumstances (Interview Jan Kleine). Additionally, Meerstad was a lot less visionary and a lot more technical and commercially oriented, making it less Utopian and more standard real estate development than Blauwestad had been. A possible explanation for this is a lack of discussions on desires and public participation in the development of Meerstad, or simply a lack of creative input, as this was already part of the Blauwestad developments.

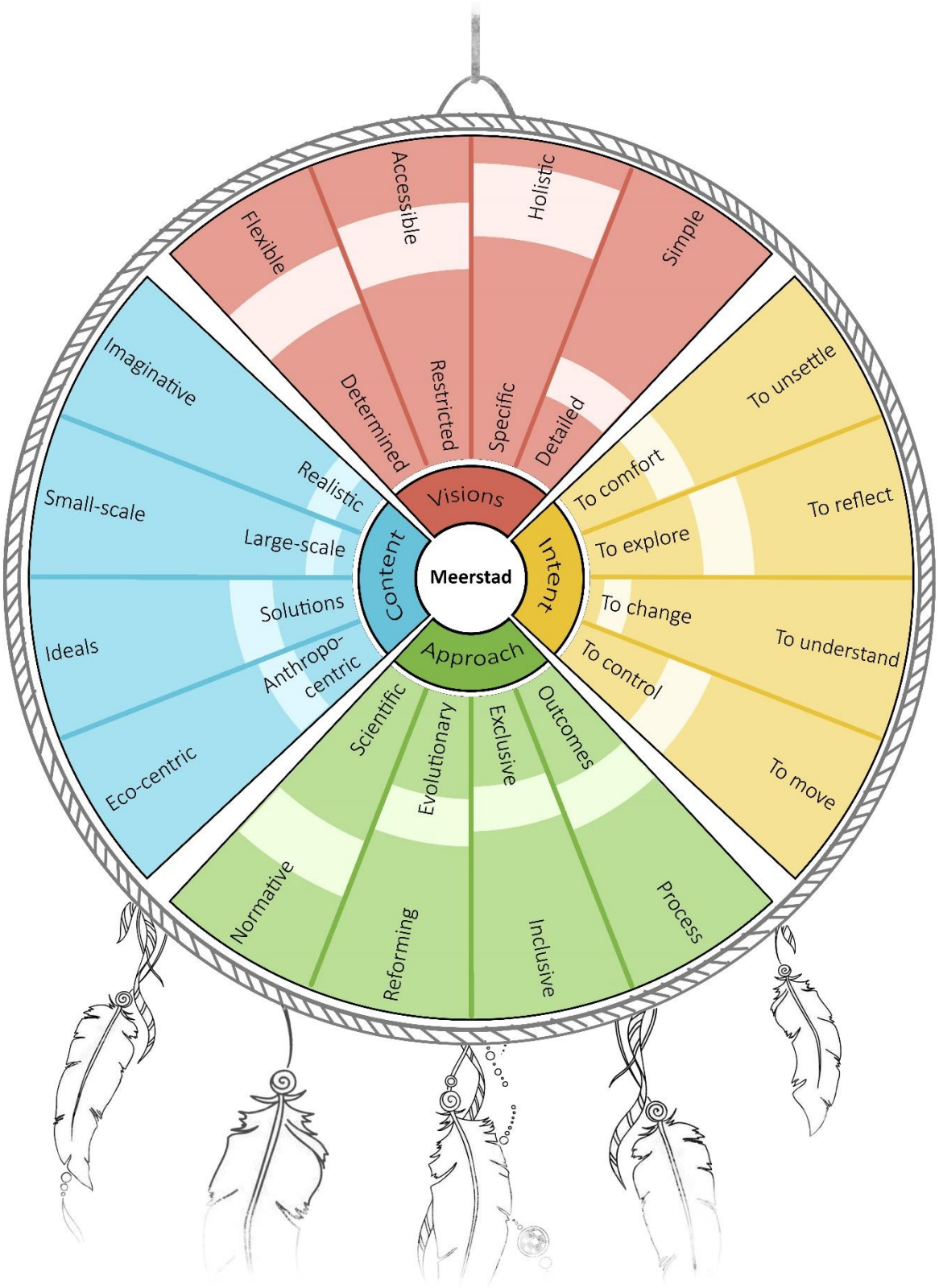


Figure 19: *Overview of Utopian characteristics of Meerstad. Source: own work.*

Impacts on people, places and plans

With a focus on the transformative power of the project, Meerstad has, based on the Utopian ideal to boost the region, primarily led to the **generation of actions**. Similar

to Blauwestad, the region has been transformed beyond recognition in a lot of places (Meerstad, 2013). It has created a lot of infrastructure connections to the city of Groningen and has become an actual suburb within the city limits over time (Interview Jan Kleine). As such, it has impacted the plans of the city of Groningen to limit expansion on other sides of the city, and embrace Meerstad as a focus area for expansion and suburbanisation.

Another contribution can be seen in the creation of **new understandings**. The agents of change behind the project had to adjust the development process due to the results lacking behind expectations (Interview Jan Kleine). This led to changes in strategies for communicating and persuading people to come and live in Meerstad, which were more aimed at the ideals of living in nature, yet being in close proximity to the city. According to persuasive storytelling theory, this was a matter of adapting the vision to values of target groups (Shipley & Michela, 2006). Additionally, there are actors from companies and governments all over The Netherlands that are interested in learning from Meerstad and how it came to be, who visit the site every now and then (Interview Jan Kleine).

As the transformative element was the main intention of the vision, it can still be seen as a success in that regard. However, Meerstad is one of the least Utopian projects of all cases involved in this thesis, which is reflected in the limited number of impacts it had. The project was a lot less innovative, inspiring and idea-generating than Blauwestad, because most of what Meerstad has been doing was already done before (Interview Jan Kleine). Moreover, Meerstad has barely invested in experimentation and innovation as much as Blauwestad has, nor have they spent a lot of investments in the involvement of inhabitants, resulting in a limited movement and offspring of the vision in places and local populations.

Key Lessons

Being so close in content and circumstances to Blauwestad, the lessons learned from Meerstad relate to their differences and similarities a lot. A first lesson is that originality is very important in gaining recognition and traction as a Utopia, which was also mentioned in literature (Duncombe & Lambert, 2017; Vasconcelos et al., 2017). Whereas Blauwestad received national and international media attention and was therefore well-known, Meerstad was mostly developed very quietly (Interview Jan Kleine). Although it's growing recognition by now, it started off slower than its ambitions were aimed at, partly because of this unfamiliarity factor. A second lesson is that having a flexible approach that adapts to changing circumstances seem to be necessary in large-scale development projects nowadays. Not only to withstand shocks such as during the economic crisis, but also to adjust ambitions and plans to results that develop different from expected (Interview Jan Kleine). This is also important in keeping up with and changing a vision's content to changing desires and preferences (Shipley & Michela, 2006), especially if a project is depending on that, for example in the form of attracting inhabitants. A third lesson is to make a vision and project available to a wider range of people (Albrechts, 2010; Van Dijk, 2011). By offering more diversity in houses and aiming for a larger diversity in target populations, the Meerstad project was more openly developed and better able to

draw in people from early on in the project than Blauwestad was. Moreover, similar to other large-scale projects, it was important to generate enough funds to develop Meerstad. To do so, the initiative takers tried incorporating a lot of different elements into their plans in order to appeal to different stakeholders (Interview Jan Kleine). For instance, involving nature in their project to increase the chances of the national government joining in, or the marketing of the project to make sure that real estate investors saw opportunities in the project, which can also be seen as examples of open and flexible visions.

5.6 TRIPS' SALT BEACH

Case Description:

Another case that has tried to bring about change in the East-Groningen region is Trips' Salt Beach, a vision of a large salt lake in the small rural town of Tripscompagnie. Nedmag Indsutries Mining & Manufacturing (Nedmag from here), is one of the main producers of magnesium salt in the world and is located in both the town of Veendam and the small town of Tripscompagnie in close proximity (Gemeente Veendam, 2013). In order to combat the declining status of the peripheries of the Netherlands that was already mentioned in Holwerd aan Zee, Blauwestad and Meerstad (e.g. population decline, unemployment, etc.), the municipality of Veendam proposed the development of a large salt beach resort (Interview Frans Goorman). With the potential to draw in hundreds of thousands of tourists per year, this salt lake project was supposed to boost recreational facilities in the region, along with employment, vitality and a better reputation (Gemeente Veendam, 2013). It was planned in Tripscompagnie, because of the vicinity of the salt retrieval factory. Since the salt that is retrieved from the ground is very warm, it would be more efficient to place the lake nearby in order to prevent heat waste of the water (Interview Frans Goorman). Accordingly, in terms of key ingredients from theory, it was the declining context and desires for change and a boost of the region that drove the envisioning of this case (Sargisson, 2012).

The first ideas and visions of the project were made public in 2009 through newspapers and websites (Middengroninger.nl, 2009). However, close to a decade later, the plans have not moved any further, due to a lack of investors and entrepreneurs in the process (Broesder, 2017; Interview Frans Goorman). The Salt Beach project is a collaboration between the municipality and Nedmag, from which neither has the required expertise to run a tourist destination such as this (Broesder, 2017). To move the project further, the municipality has been actively searching for an interested entrepreneur for years, but has not been able to. A possible explanation for this lack of interest is that the visions that were communicated through these news articles were very limited in size, and thus there was a lack of explanation of why the current situation was lacking and why the vision of the Salt Beach that was proposed should be fought for (Shipley & Michela, 2006). Eventually, the project was put on halt and has not been looked back into for years due to other priorities that arose in both organisations (Interview Frans Goorman).

The project was based on the ambitions by the municipality, but also played into the trend of health care tourism and healthy ageing, which were actively chased after in the region (Middengroninger.nl, 2009; Gemeente Veendam, 2013). The effects of magnesium on skin and health in general have been investigated at various universities for years, and the pureness of the magnesium salt that is retrieved from the ground at Nedmag is very unique in the world, making it a potentially very interesting tourist attraction (Gemeente Veendam, 2013; Interview Frans Goorman). In order to find a wider stakeholder group, the goals of the project have expanded to also include energy saving and water retention (Gemeente Veendam, 2013; Plaatsengids.nl, 2018). In order to increase the achievability of the project, recreational combinations with nearby activities and facilities was searched for, such as a golf course and recreational nature area in Veendam (Gemeente Veendam, 2013).

Inspired by the salt lake project and looking for ways to make it work, Nedmag has worked on a spin-off of the salt lake idea: a much smaller-scale spa resort (Interview Frans Goorman). This resort could work as an experimental model of the salt lake, and could eventually be expanded to become the salt lake that was envisioned in the initial plans. This resort has been worked out more in-depth than the salt lake, and was even modelled to be presented visually, but has not evolved into a development phase yet.

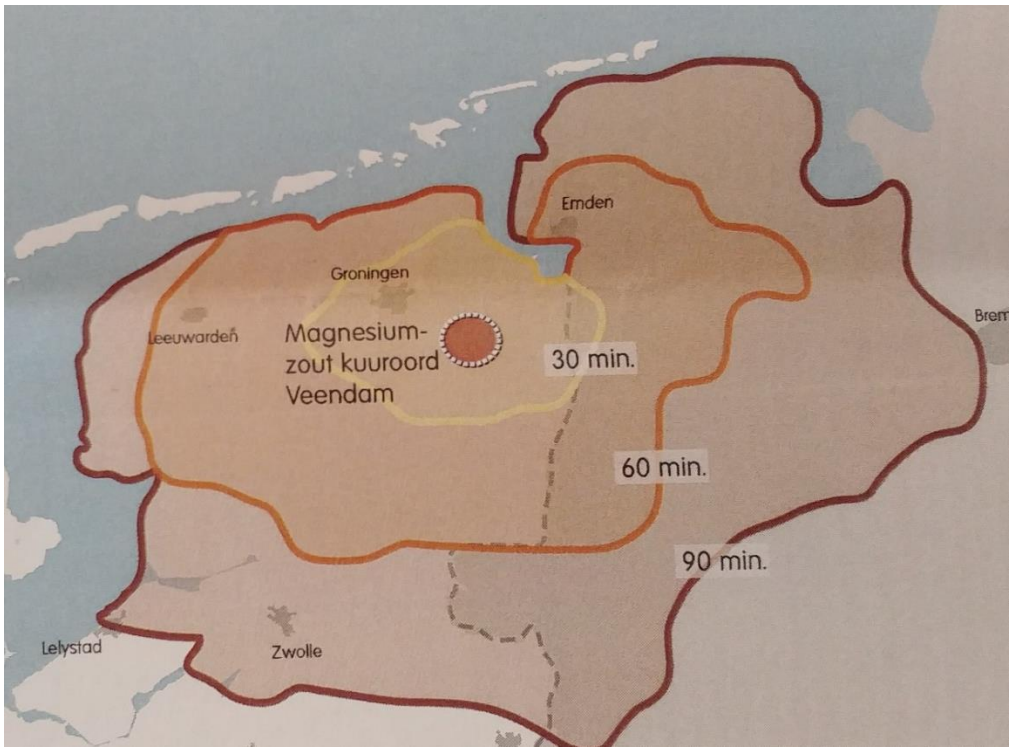


Figure 20: *Overview of the potential attraction range of the Trips' Salt Beach. Source: Gemeente Veendam, 2013.*

Utopian Characteristics

The Utopian characteristics of the Trips' Salt Beach, as dispalyed in figure 21, mostly resemble a traditional Utopia, but in an early development phase and more commercially oriented. As the main priority of the project has for a long while been

to attract and involve investors, the project has been set up with a flexible and open vision (Gemeente Veendam, 2013). This is in line with the criteria of persuasive stories, according to Shipley and Michela (2006). However, at the same time, the development process and envisioning approach are very exclusive, with barely any to no involvement of the public (Interview Frans Goorman). Furthermore, the project is quite technical, focused on realising an end product, rather than the envisioning process itself, and mostly oriented towards physically changing a place in order to establish the resort. Also content-wise, the ideas are quite traditional, as they are very specific, about technical possibilities and made on the assumption of the circumstances of the here and now (Interview Frans Goorman).

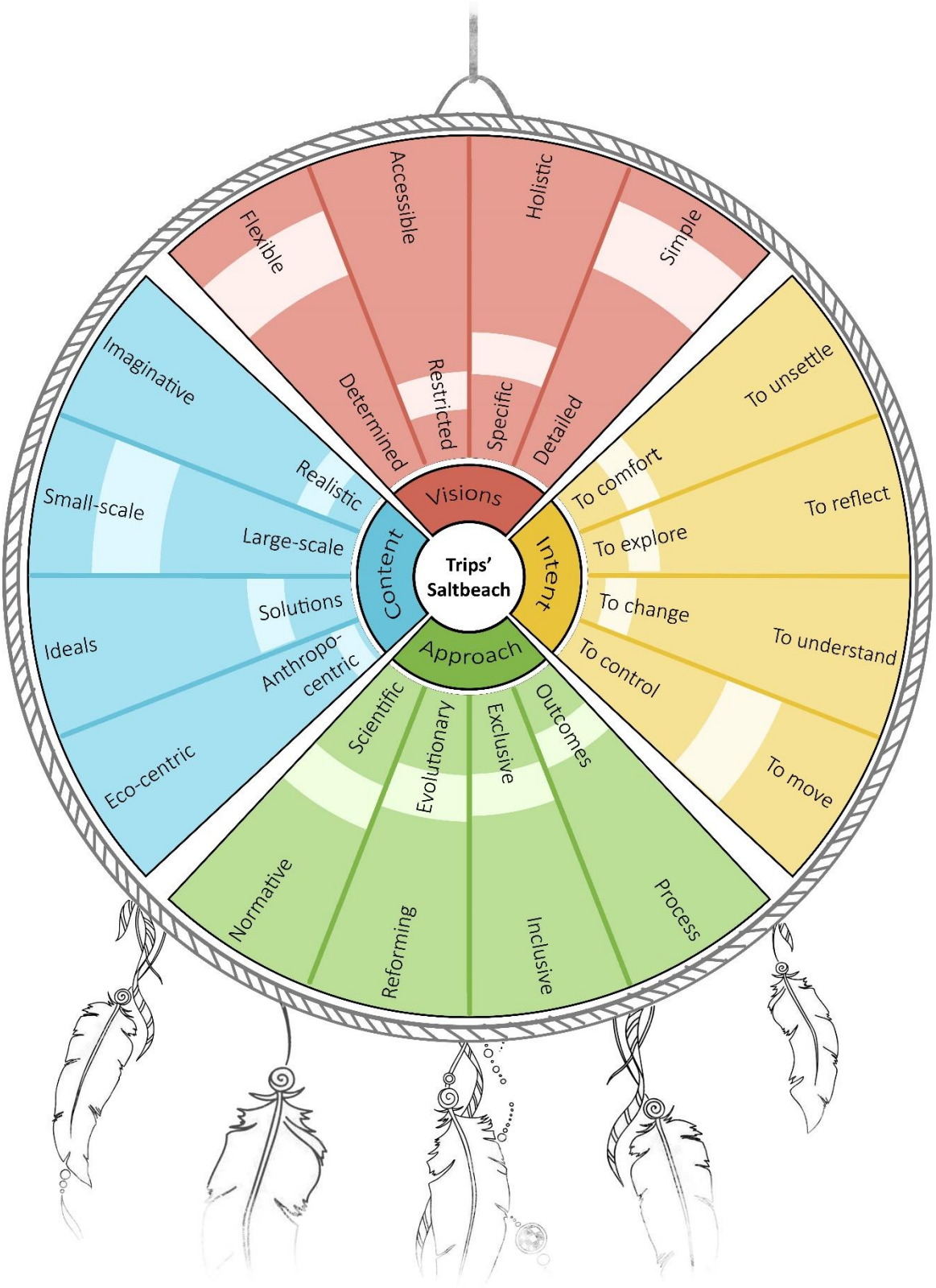


Figure 21: *Overview of Utopian characteristics of Trips' Salt Beach. Source: own work.*

Impacts on people, places and plans

This case is an example of a Utopia that did not offer any tangible contributions, for which there are three main reasons. First, the initiative takers never intended to

implement the vision of the Salt Beach on their own, but to simply offer a first step, contribute to changing the dynamics in the region and let investors take over once there was a lift-off (Interview Frans Goorman). Consequently, the vision did not lead to any direct transformations. Second, most of the process occurred behind closed doors. Although the envisioning process consisted of a wide range of local actors, coming from all kinds of organisations, the results of this process were never published, nor were there any strong visions presented to the public (Interview Frans Goorman). Despite having a lot of potential, a high level of achievability and a likely attraction of tourists, the project was never chased after or promoted enough, leading to a lack of visibility and transparency. Because of this lack of communication, dedication and production of transferrable visions, the ideas barely reached any interpreters who would have been able to pick up the ideas, leading to a lack of spinoff, learning possibilities and external inspiration. Third, the few actors who were approached never committed to the project (Interview Frans Goorman), which was likely the result of a lack of persuasive storytelling. This could be caused by a large amount of possible reasons, such as offering too few incentives for change, because the ideas were not inspiring enough or because the ideas were not clear enough (Shipley & Michela, 2006). Either way, these persuasive strategies were not adapted and eventually stopped.

Key Lessons

Because this is a Utopian vision that had a lot of potential, but did not result in much impact, there are a lot of lessons that can be drawn from the project failing to meet its intentions so far. First, Utopian visions should put a lot of effort into sustained and widespread approaches to outside actors, preferably through more means than flyers and press articles (Interview Frans Goorman). Would the project have gained more renown and popularity among the population and targeted a wider group of people to become enthusiastic about the project, perhaps more potential stakeholders would have seen it and have put faith into the project (Shipley & Michela, 2006). Second, if Utopian visions get stuck, they should move out of the idea phase, and look for some operationalisation. Although this might have been an active choice in order to keep the project flexible and open for an entrepreneur to fill in, which can be a good choice in persuading others (Van Dijk, 2011), it is also what made it difficult to spread the word around about the project, to learn lessons and to inspire other projects. A more general lesson from that is perhaps that in order to resonate among others, a Utopia needs to be defined to a certain extent. A third and related lesson is that if ideas are hard to realize, they need to be at least radical enough to inspire other projects and make it worthwhile for others to look into the ideas. The lack of both radicalism and definition have caused the project to be forgotten by many. A fourth and last lesson is that continuous dedication is key to seeing a large-scale project succeed. Both the municipality of Veendam and Nedmag have at some point years ago actively decided to stop looking into the project, leading to a lack of new input and the disappearance of the project (Interview Frans Goorman).

5.7 DE MARKERWADDEN

Case Description

De Markerwadden arose as a reaction on a very visible and growing issue: the ecological value of the Markermeer was strongly diminishing and something needed to be done to prevent the complete deterioration of the local ecosystems (Zeilmaker, 2017). This downward spiralling problem in the Markermeer arose because the lake is surrounded by hard coasts on all sides, limiting the amount of wildlife that can live there, which in turn creates problems everywhere in the food chains in the lake (Zeilmaker, 2017). In addition to that, a problem recently arose due to the slit that started to stack at the bottom of the lake. This caused the water to become blurry and the fish to have trouble finding food, once again creating issues for the ecosystem as a whole (Boskalis, 2017; Zeilmaker, 2017). In addition, as the Markermeer was not clearly within the borders of a single province, no government felt responsible for the care of the lake and its wildlife, resulting in a lack of measurements (Interview Roel Posthoorn). Moreover, this was in the middle of a time frame in which the active government was pulling back from large projects and left this up to markets. There had been various ideas on how to counteract on the Markermeer issues, but most of these ideas got stuck in the concept phase, and nothing actually happened in several years (Interview Roel Posthoorn).

The idea of the Markerwadden arose from Roel Posthoorn from Natuurmonumenten, a Dutch NGO concerned with the welfare of nature in The Netherlands. Natuurmonumenten had no direct interest in the lake, but was intrinsically motivated to turn the tide in the region and to improve the ecosystem there. As a project manager with a lot of background in building and managing islands, Roel came up with the idea to create artificial islands in the Markermeer, in order to create more soft coasts, which would create a self-enhancing effect for the ecosystems in the lake (Zeilmaker, 2017). The benefit of having an NGO build the islands is that they were able to work around all the slow governmental processes (Interview Roel Posthoorn). As a consequence, the development phase for the Markerwadden went extremely fast. The first ideas for the project were only proposed around 6 years back, and the first phase of islands are being finished around now. To link the project back to the key ingredients for the construction of Utopias from theory, as agent of change, the skills of Roel Posthoorn, together with the concerning developments in the context of the Markermeer led to the construction of The Markerwadden (Sargisson, 2012).

The Markerwadden will be built incrementally. The idea is to eventually build around 10.000 hectares of islands, stretching all the way from one side of the lake to the other (NOS, 2015; Zeilmaker, 2017). Because of this enormous scale, the project has started with building 5 islands of a combined 1000 hectares to kick off the project as a whole (NOS, 2015; Interview Roel Posthoorn). In order to win support and take away any potential doubt in the project from stakeholders, the Markerwadden kicked off by building the first islands at the most challenging spot in the lake, with the strongest current and the deepest bottom (Interview Roel Posthoorn). The idea behind this was that if they are able to build islands here, they will be able to build

them anywhere. This has a strong link with persuasive storytelling, as the sense of achievability was considered a key factor in motivating actors (Throgmorton, 2003; Fernando et al., 2018). Additionally, Natuurmonumenten chose to build the islands with the slit in the lake, which is one of the causes of the degrading ecosystem, in order to clean the lake up (NOS, 2015). This construction of the islands with slit is something that has never been done before, and that a lot of national and international constructors are very interested in learning about (Ecoshape, 2018)

The local circumstances in the lake were very helpful for generating the freedom to develop the Markerwadden how Natuurmonumenten saw most fit. Because no-one is bothered by changes in the exact placement of the islands, they did not have to deal with very hard restrictions concerning the content of their plans (Interview Roel Posthoorn). Moreover, the quality of the lake was so bad, that they could go through all the environmental testing procedures far ahead of schedule, using only their worst-case scenarios, which were already good enough to accept the project (Interview Roel Posthoorn). This ensured that the procedures could be done in a very quick manor.

Although the main focus of the islands is on restoring the ecological value of the Markermeer, the challenge lied in combining multiple societal goals in the project as well (Arcadis, 2015; Boskalis, 2017). The reason for that was to collect more funds and to involve more stakeholders, as could be seen in more projects such as Holwerd and Meerstad, and is also a trait of persuasive stories in theory (Van Dijk, 2011). To do so, the Markermeer is working on, for instance, recreative facilities for people who will visit the island in the future. Think of small camp sites, boat tours, guided trips, restaurants, etc. (Interview Roel Posthoorn). With such goals, Natuurmonumenten has been able to involve a lot of large construction companies (Arcadis, 2015). Additionally, with the societally oriented project and the radicality of it all, the Marker Wadden has been able to acquire funds from the so-called Dreamfund from the Postcode Loterij (Arcadis, 2015; Interview Roel Posthoorn).

Figure 22: *Overview of the first Markerwadden. Source: Natuurmonumenten, s.d.*

Utopian Characteristics

The Markerwadden case is hard to pinpoint, as both the content of this vision and the envisioning process show a mix of traditional and modern elements, which can be seen in figure 23. Perhaps the best description would be that it is a traditionally melagonamous project in a modern coat. The ideas are based on the large-scale, reforming and forward-looking mind-sets of the traditional Utopias, and is based on generating solutions for problems in the here and now (Solinís, 2006; Kraftl, 2007; Natuurmonumenten, s.d.; Interview Roel Posthoorn). At the same time, it took on a relatively innovative approach in order to achieve quick results, as the project as a whole would be hard to get supported, and quick successes were necessary in generating furhter support (Interview Roel Posthoorn). This approach is much more modern as it allows them to involve the public, learn through experimentation and adapt to changing circumstances. At the same time, it is still able to make decisions in a top-down manner, while working on technical and scientific-oriented developments, making the approach a mix of old and new planning elements. These elements did not seem to clash in any way during the process and fit very well in the environmental and institutional context of the project (Interview Roel Posthoorn). Although the idea of building an island is not as radical as some other projects, in many ways the Markerwadden seem to be an ideal way of building the radical projects of the early 21st century with very few hardships along the way.

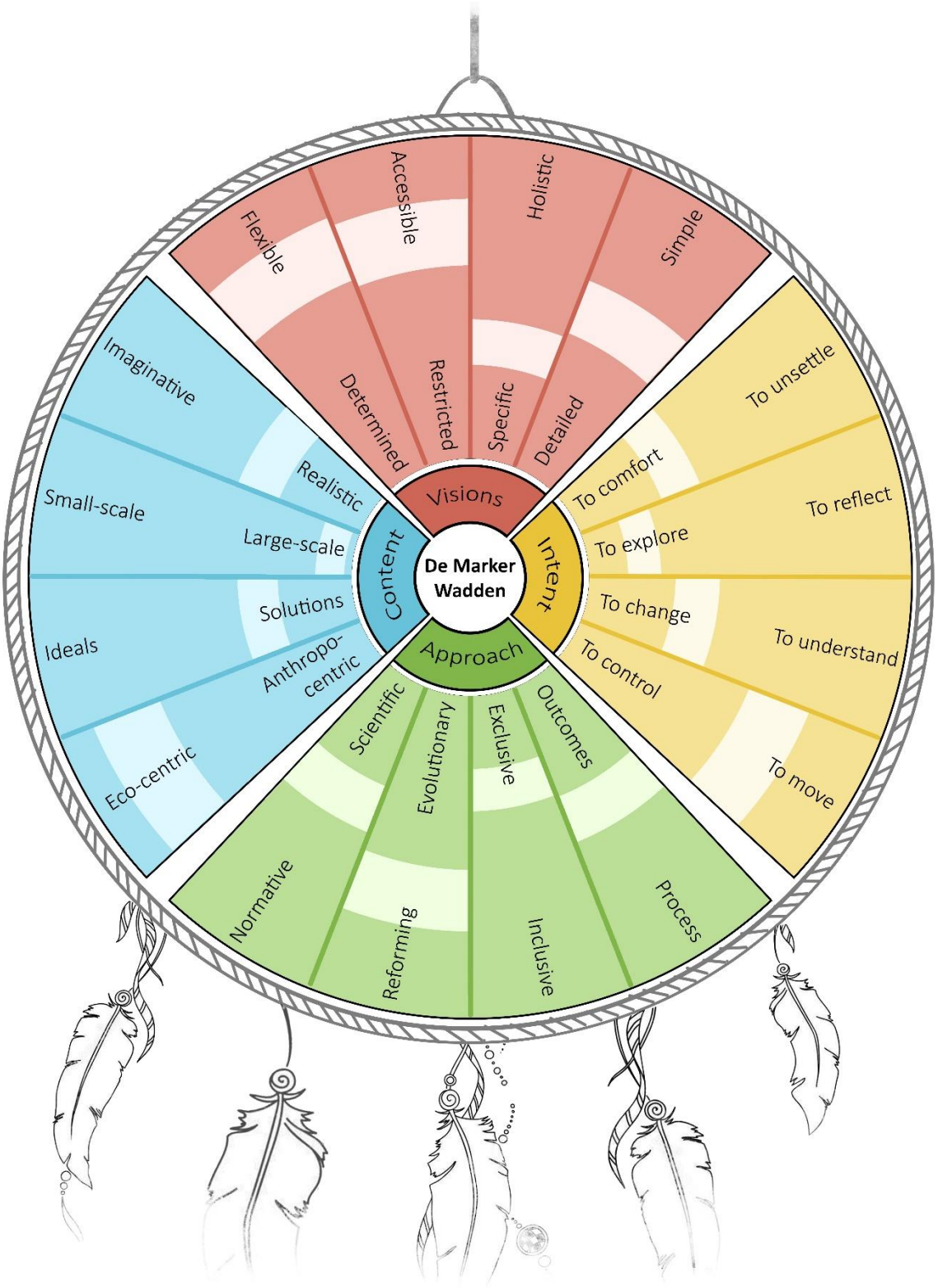


Figure 23: *Overview of Utopian characteristics of the Markerwadden. Source: own work.*

Impacts on people, places and plans

With the ambition, scale and approach of the Markerwadden, it has had a large impact on a lot of different fronts. The most visible impact is the **generation of action**, as the vision has so far led to the development of the first 5 islands, together accounting for

1000 hectares of new Dutch nature (Zeilmaker, 2017). Although the islands are still barren and do not show a directly visible benefit for the lake ecosystem, the quality of the water has improved, as well as the smaller species in the ecosystem, such as plankton (Omroep Friesland, 2018; Interview Roel Posthoorn). The vision has thus led to the incorporation of ecological values in actual physical transformations (Sargisson, 2012).

Similarly, the vision has led to actions by others, **generating echoes** of the vision in the direct vicinity of the plan site. Not only the Markermeer itself, but also tourism around the edges of the lake is starting to visibly grow because of the developments on the islands. Entrepreneurs are setting up businesses and creating new opportunities to make use of the upcoming tourists and visitors as a consequence of the vision (Interview Roel Posthoorn).

A more invisible impact is the **change of perceptions** that the Markerwadden has resulted in. Natuurmonumenten has for a long while tried to collaborate with many stakeholders in order to raise awareness on the diminishing ecological value and find alternatives (Interview Roel Posthoorn). Eventually, they developed their own ideas and storylines through visions in order to acquire the needed funds to finance and execute the development (Zeilmaker, 2017). Through this persuasion process, they were able to change peoples' perceptions of how the Markerwadden is doing and that it is not fine in the way it is currently developing (Interview Roel Posthoorn), which is similar to the rejection of the status quo in persuasive storytelling (Shipley & Micehal, 2006). Similarly, they have been communicating with the public in the development process in order to raise awareness, change perceptions and gain public support. For instance, by organising public hearings, where they started discussions with local inhabitants on their thoughts and ideas for the islands and the future of the Markermeer in general (Interview Roel Posthoorn). Or by organising events, such as setting up a voting poll for the national Dutch elections on one of the islands (NOS, 2015). With such events, they gather a lot of media attention, recognition and support (Interview Roel Posthoorn).

Finally, the project has worked on **building new understandings**. Because of the novelty of the project, Natuurmonumenten has been heavily experimenting with building smaller-scale islands before setting them up for real (Natuurmonumenten, s.d.). In addition, the development process as a whole is set up as one large learning process in which they can learn from previous steps and developments in every new set of islands they are building (Interview Roel Posthoorn). Moreover, as mentioned before, the fact that Natuurmonumenten is building the islands with slit is very unique and something that places around the world that are dealing with slit-invested lakes are inspired by (NOS, 2015; Ecoshape, 2018).

Key Lessons

An overarching key lesson was that radical ideas, either because of their scale, content or context, require radical approaches. As an outside actor, Natuurmonumenten, who were intrinsically motivated to change something about the project, were able to develop the Markerwadden plans in radically different way than is expected and that governments were accustomed to (Interview Roel Posthoorn). This has allowed a lot

of the important steps that led to the success of the case. Furthermore, it was important to connect the project to both societal and ecological goals, again to improve the scope of incentives to participate for outside actors (Van Dijk, 2011). In many cases, ecological values alone are hard to invest in because they yield few results, but by combining it with societal goals, they have been able to guarantee more returns for investors (Interview Roel Posthoorn). Moreover, the fact that people can visit the islands and become involved in the project and development process is something that has generated a lot of public support, which Natuurmonumenten has needed to keep the project going. This is likely due to the fact that this leads to more personal affect for people, as the possibility to visit the islands brings them closer to personal lives (Shipley & Michela, 2006). Another key lesson from this case is that keeping a planning process open during a longer time period, allows actors to adjust if circumstances change, which is according to findings from literature (Gunder & Hillier, 2007). This seemed to be a problem in a lot of other large-scale projects, and is something that The Markermeer has picked up well. Additionally, by showing that they are able to perform the hardest step first, they generated a lot of support and faith for the rest of the future steps (Interview Roel Posthoorn). A last key lesson is to build up a lot of speed in a large-scale project such as this. Natuurmonumenten knew that the development process would take many years and that by speeding up the planning process, they would be able to maintain the support that they generated until they had visible results to rely on.

5.8 FLORIADE 2022 ALMERE

Case Description

The Floriade is a world exposition held in a different Dutch city once every 10 years (Gemeente Almere, 2015). This exposition is organised by the horticulture sector, which is currently heavily focused on sustainability and the connection between society and food (Gemeente Almere, 2015; Interview Joe van der Veen). The Floriade is all about showing the latest developments and experiments in terms of food, nature and horticulture, and forms a strong driver for involved governments, bottom-up initiatives and corporations to invest in revolutionizing on these topics (Interview Joe van der Veen). Drawing in millions of visitors from all around the world, it is a serious event that involved actors and places put a lot of effort into.

For every edition of the Floriade, there is a bidding competition in which multiple cities compete. Almere won the bid for 2022 and has for the last couple of years been exploring and designing the Floriade (Interview Joe van der Veen). Almere is a relatively new city, build in the second half of the 20th century and rapidly growing since (Gemeente Almere, 2014; Gemeente Almere, 2015). Since the start it has had a lot of experimental urban developments and is therefore used to innovating and experimenting, which is shown in projects like Oosterwold (Interview Joe van der Veen). Additionally, food, sustainability and urban greenery are all topics that have been put into the focus of urban policy of the city for the last decade (Gemeente Almere, 2015). Combined, the context of the city of Almere and the Floriade along

with the desires to change and innovate can be considered as the key ingredients for the development of this Utopian vision (Sargisson, 2012).

Since winning the bid, Almere has developed 4 themes that it will showcase and work on for the Floriade: food, energy, health and greenery (Expo 2022, s.d.). The Floriade will take place on the outskirts of the city, where an enormous facility will be built that showcases dozens of small experiments and innovations (Gemeente Almere, 2014). Together, these serve as glimpses into radically different ways of building cities and urban living. Additionally, the municipality has decided to not only develop the Floriade exposition, but to develop a Floriade neighbourhood in the same area after the exposition has taken place (Gemeente Almere, 2014). That way, lots of elements from the exposition can be used for the neighbourhood, and it gives the municipality the support to do something different with this new neighbourhood (Gemeente Almere, 2015; Interview Joe van der Veen).

In terms of process, the municipality of Almere is the official host and therefore strongly involved in the design, development and content of the Floriade (Gemeente Almere, 2015). However, it is an exposition by the national horticulture organisation, and so there are all kinds of other organisations involved in these steps. MVRDV is a famous international architecture bureau that designed the exhibition of the Floriade, a constructing company has been chosen recently to see to the development of this exhibition and all kinds of knowledge institutions, corporations, bottom-up initiatives and local entrepreneurs have been working on developing innovations and experiments for in the Floriade (Interview Joe van der Veen). This process of persuasion is relatively easy compared to other projects, as there is a lot of political and societal support for the Floriade, as well as a lot of incentives for initiatives to participate in the event. Joe van der Veen, a planner from the municipality of Almere, is strongly involved in searching for projects that produce food or innovate on one of the other themes in radically new ways, for which certain networks and coordination skills are considered important capacities (Sargisson, 2012; Interview Joe van der Veen). He is also involved in the development of the Floriade neighbourhood, which is much more a project that is in the hands of the municipality (Gemeente Almere, 2015; Interview Joe van der Veen).

Figure 24: *Impression of what the Floriade 2022 will look like. Source: Expo 2022, s.d.*

Utopian Characteristics

The Floriade project is, according to the distribution in figure 25, both a bit traditional and modern in its content and approach. Although it is open towards ideas and initiatives and does search for collaboration due to its need to innovate, the process around the exposition itself was mostly top-down, with a focus on quickly developing and designing a project and executing it on a short term (Interview Joe van der Veen). Because the funds and support was already there due to the Floriade being such a large event, there was little need to make it a bottom-up project and generate a lot of public support, which can be considered as a non-inclusive approach for designing and developing the Floriade (Ganjavie, 2012; Levitas, 2013). Furthermore, the ideas themselve have traditional Utopian elements as well, as the project is developed on a very large-scale, includes a lot of technical and scientific elements and is mostly focused on looking into the future (Interview Joe van der Veen). At the same time, it offers a very unique ambition that drives innovation and encourages out of the box thinking that is not necessarily restricted to possibilities of here and now (Gemeente Almere, 2015). Again, this is all caused by the quick time-scale for the development, as well as the focus of the Floriade in general. What is interesting, is that the Floriade is not necessarily built on 1 Utopia, but on dozens of Utopias, envisioned in different intiatives and showcased in the Floriade (Interview Joe van der Veen). Together, they show the different ideas, desires and conceptions of the future of a lot of different people.

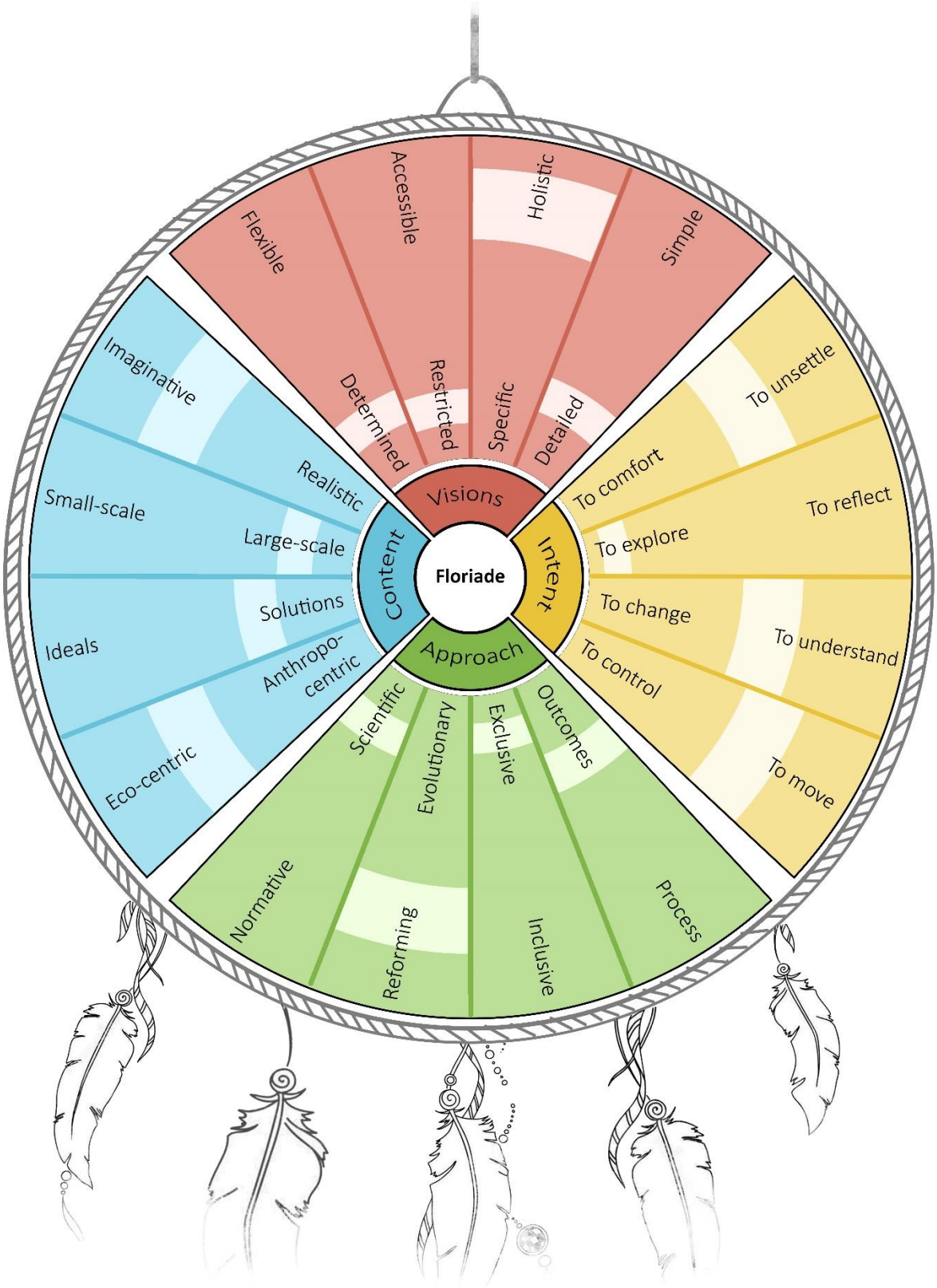


Figure 25: *Overview of Utopian characteristics of the Floriade 2022. Source: own work.*

Impacts on people, places and plans

Organising an exposition about different ways of urban development is bound to have contributions that go beyond solely transforming a place. The Floriade offers both

benefits for the city and visitors from all over the world. With that, a primary contribution was the **creation of new understandings** and to experiment, learn and share new discoveries about the included themes (Gemeente Almere, 2015). The Floriade is filled with all kinds of actors that are actively innovating with alternative energy, food, waste and production systems that, for example, include edible algae, recyclable concrete, food-producing refrigerators, urban lightning by plants, and many more radically different ideas (Gemeente Almere, 2014). These new understandings will be shared with stakeholders, visitors and media during the Floriade event and thus benefit the rest of the world.

Second, although limited through its restricted inclusiveness, the Floriade allows for a form of **democratic governance**. By showcasing developments and the mini-Utopian visions that are part of the Floriade, they capture all kinds of perceptions of the world and possibilities for the future (Gemeente Almere, 2014; Interview Joe van der Veen). This includes a wide variety of actors and thus an event like the Floriade allows for a more democratic representation of envisioning the future (Curran, 2009).

A large event such as the Floriade can offer a region a **planning ideal**: a common goal to work towards and combine efforts for (Madanipour, 2006). The organisation of the Floriade has so far put a lot of emphasis on involving initiatives, corporations, knowledge institutions and governments for both financial support and innovative ideas for the Floriade (Gemeente Almere, 2015; Interview Joe van der Veen). The market is let go as much as possible in order to stimulate this innovative mindset. Actors and ideas are connected, initiatives are challenged and experiments are organised with for example a youth Floriade edition, in order to move more people to become involved in the event (Interview Joe van der Veen). Recently they even set up a competition in one of the Dutch newsletters for entrepreneurs to come up with ideas for the Floriade, making it more inclusive by opening it up to the wider public (Interview Joe van der Veen).

A last contribution concerns the **generation of echoes** as a result of the Floriade project. The main focus of the Floriade is to stimulate the progression of cities around the world in terms of sustainability, food and urban greenery (Gemeente Almere, 2014). As such, with close to 2 million expected visitors, one of the most important influences of the Floriade is to inspire people from all over the world to start thinking differently about their cities (Expo 2022, s.d.). With so many different experiments and innovations, people are bound to be appealed to some of them (Gemeente Almere, 2014). Moreover, the project gave room for lots of initiatives and corporations to start actively thinking about different ways of organising a city or different systems in these cities (Interview Joe van der Veen).

Key Lessons

A first important lesson from the approach of Almere was that Utopias do not have to be build one by one, but can be envisioned by different people at the same time, show similarities and differences and be presented together as an exploration of the future. As the Floriade needs to showcase a lot of new developments, it has to put a lot of effort into gathering these. This depended a lot on the capacities and networks of a few involved organisers (Interview Joe van der Veen). However, this participation

process has been critiqued for not being very transparent or open to participation (Gemeente Almere, 2014; Bureau Início, 2018). If it approached this in a more inclusive way, there might have been many more initiative-takers that wanted to become involved in the Floriade. Another lesson concerns the power of an event like the Floriade. Because of the reputation and large number of visitors it generates, an event like the Floriade can be a means to drastically change an environment, generate support and finances and to stimulate creativity (Interview Joe van der Veen). It gives actors that are involved a predetermined sense of need for change, leading to an easier persuasion process (Shipley & Michela, 2006). Because of the deadline of 2022, these transformations occurred a lot quicker than would have been the case without a Floriade. By making use of these developments for a more permanent new neighbourhood, this neighbourhood can be a lot different from the standard ones, since most of the required infrastructure, ideas and reputation is around already.

5.9 ECO-VILLAGE BOLDERBUREN

Case Description

Eco-village Bolderburen is named after the childrens' book series by the famous Swedish author Astrid Lindgren (Bolderburen, s.d.). In the books, the very small village of Bolderburen is described as consisting of 3 houses, which together form the nicest village in the world. For the initiators of the project, who are of Swedish origins, this book recalls a sentiment to what the Swedish lifestyle is all about to them: trust in your neighbours, living with nature, space and rest (Corstius, 2015). Because there was a lack of similar housing types in the Netherlands, they started developing typically Swedish wooden houses for several years (Bolderburen, s.d.; Kvist, s.d.). At some point they ran into the chance to build a whole village in the Oosterwold neighbourhood in the city of Almere, which they decided to take: the idea for Eco-village Bolderburen was born (Interview Jessika Kersting).

The city of Almere lies about half an hour of driving by car from the city of Amsterdam, where a large shortage of affordable housing is starting to show (Duurzaam Nieuws, 2017). The eco-village Bolderburen tried playing into this by offering affordable houses in a natural and enjoyable place, in the hopes of drawing in people who work in Amsterdam but want to live in a more spacious place (Bolderburen, s.d.). However, this is not the only target group, as the initiative takers sought a more diverse community by offering different types of houses for different price ranges (Bolderburen, s.d.; Interview Jessika Kersting).

The neighbourhood Oosterwold is a recently started experimental urban development zone at the outer edge of the city of Almere. This zone is all about stimulating bottom-up initiatives such as Bolderburen to try their ideas and ambitions out in a designated area (Bolderburen, s.d.). To facilitate such initiatives, the municipality has taken most of the rules that normally apply to urban developments away, and limited this to around 10 guidelines that each initiative has to follow (Interview Jessika Kersting). An example of such a rule is that each initiative needs to

spend 50% of its plot on urban agriculture, for which the soil in the zone is very suitable.

The village is developed by Jessika Kersting and her husband, who both had experience with building and designing Swedish houses, but not with urban developments or building villages (Bolderburen, s.d.). They are building the village through their company and are on paper simply a business that develops and sells residences. In reality, however, they are much more involved than a standard real estate developer, and are collaborating intensely with the future inhabitants of the village to establish an ideal community (Bolderburen, s.d.; Interview Jessika Kersting). However, it was emphasized that Jessika and her husband make all the major decisions, and that they do so in their image of what their dream village looks like (Interview Jessika Kersting). As such, the inhabitants can give input and their opinions on developments, but do not have the final say in this, making it mostly the Utopia of the initiative takers. These inhabitants were made aware of the project through a national newspaper, which was mostly focused on persuading people to join the project by appealing to their affect through describing the idealistic Scandinavian life (Shipley & Michela, 2006; Interview Jessika Kersting).

The project focuses on two major elements in the village: creating enjoyable residences and a supportive and comforting community. For the first, the project tries to develop houses that are all about sustainability, light, cosiness and building as small as possible (Bolderburen, s.d.). The second is about selecting people who are looking for an active community life, designing community facilities and creating an openness between different houses, with shared equipment (Bolderburen, s.d.; Interview Jessika Kersting). To conclude, the Bolderburen vision was constructed based on all three ingredients that were distinguished from theory, with desires based on the Bolderburen book series being the dominant factor (Sargisson, 2012).

Figure 26: *Impression of how the village will look like. Source: Paradijsvogels Magazine, s.d.*

Utopian Characteristics

Given that the Bolderburen project is simply a slightly more idealistic version of a real estate developer on paper, a lot of its Utopian characteristics in figure 27 relate to the more traditional planning systems, which are about efficiency, achievability and top-

down decision-making (Gunder & Hillier, 2007; Ganjavie, 2012). However, Bolderburen is a bit different from these traditional real estate developer roles in a number of ways. For starters, the scale is relatively small and limited to 20 to 30 residences (Interview Jessika Kersting). But more importantly, it is very idealistic in what it wants to achieve, in the sense that everything has to be about values such as comfort, a connection with nature and a sense of community (Bolderburen, s.d.). There is no large regional problem that it is trying to resolve, nor does it offer a radically different way of using places. Out of all the Utopian cases in this research, Bolderburen is the most down to earth and idealistic one. At the same time, everything about the plan is realizable, has been done before and can be achieved on a short timescale (Interview Jessika Kersting). What makes this case Utopian then, is that it embraces a very strong idea of how living should be, in a way that cannot be done much in The Netherlands now. Finally, the process is a form of real estate development that is much more inclusive and participative than traditional ones, with a more flexible approach that is open to contestation and change (Interview Jessika Kersting). Everything in the project is designed and decided based on what feels right and that is something that is not often the case in planning in the Netherlands.

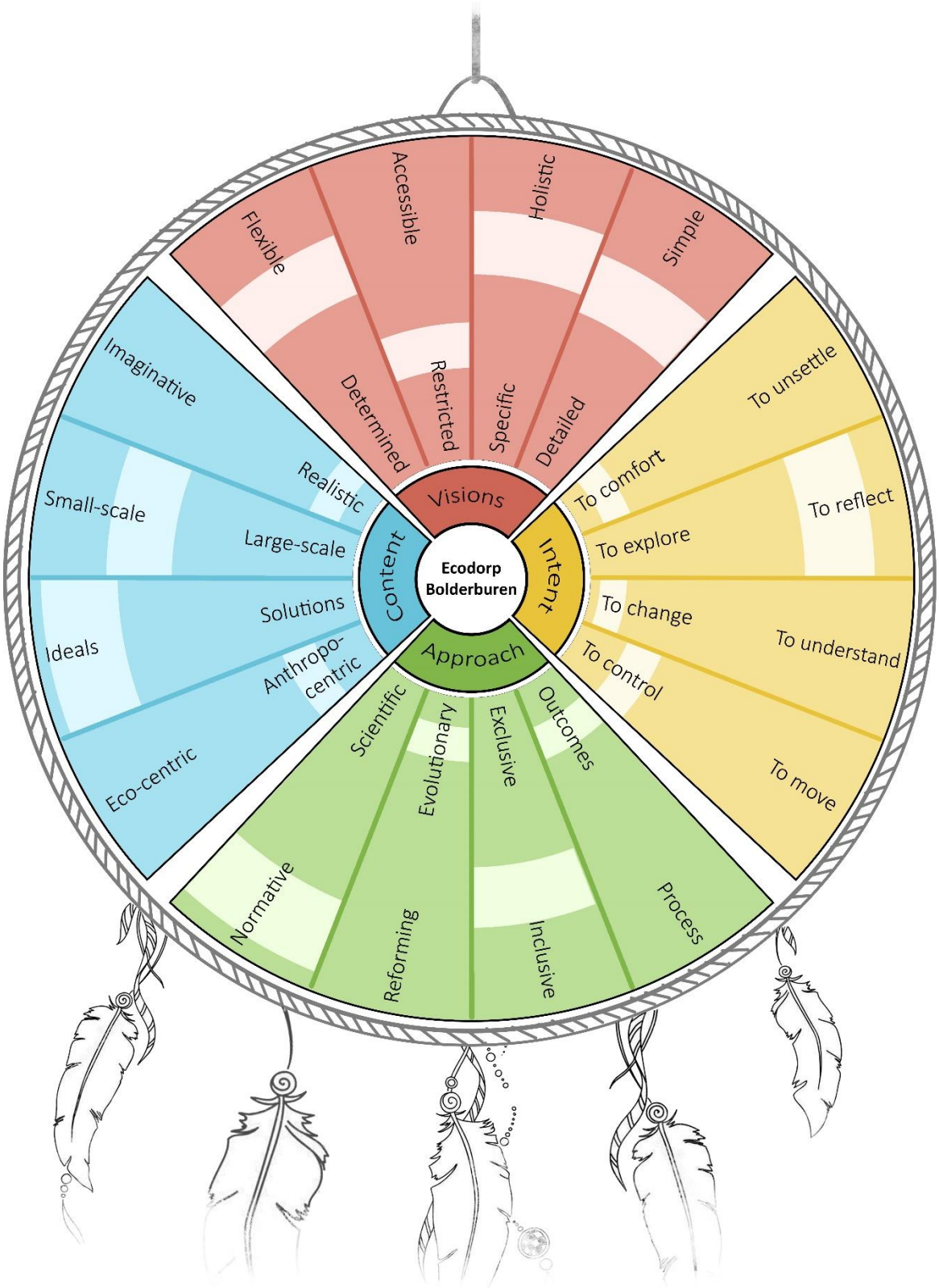


Figure 27: *Overview of Utopian characteristics of Eco-village Bolderburen. Source: own work.*

Impacts on people, places and plans

As a type of real estate development, most of the focus of the project has been put on impacts for the people and place involved in the development process. As such,

the project did not have any real contributions to the outside world so far. It did not visibly lead to any new ideas or boosts in creativity of other projects or people, which could be caused by the lack of radicality or by a lack of storytelling, but was not a focus point of the initiative takers (Interview Jessika Kersting).

The first internal contribution of the vision is the **generation of action**, based on ideals. Although the village has not been established yet, and no houses have been constructed, all of the houses have been sold and the construction process will start shortly (Interview Jessika Kersting). The village has been so successful in their sales, that the initiative takers are looking into plans for making a second village in the same region, which is also called a book series by Astrid Lindgren, named Hazelhoeve (Bolderburen, s.d.). In an attempt to bring the community closer together and provide facilities that are currently missing in Oosterwold, Jessika is working on developing events, new facilities and choir meetings (Interview Jessika Kersting). These are in the first place aimed at the inhabitants of Bolderburen, but will offer benefits for other people in the vicinity as well. Finally, they also try to change the mindsets of people involved, for instance by introducing the sharing of facilities which is a new and more sustainable way of living (Interview Jessika Kersting).

A second contribution is the **improvement of democratic governance** in the region. The initiative takers used a couple of strategies and promotional activities to ensure that people would participate in the project development and become interested in buying on of the houses in the village (Bolderburen, s.d.). Initially, this was done through putting messages in newspapers and using Facebook advertising, but later on also by using the descriptions of people and what they liked about the village on their website (Bolderburen, s.d.; Interview Jessika Kersting). This ensured that people from all over The Netherlands could join the project. By becoming a future inhabitant, people were given the right to participate in discussions about future developments and to a certain extent the direction that the village should take, especially with regards to community life (Interview Jessika Kersting). In that sense, people were given the possibility to express their desires and ideas on personal Utopias in ways they could not previously do (Madanipour, 2006).

Key Lessons

One of the most important lessons for planners that comes back in a lot of cases, including Bolderburen, is to give room for projects such as Bolderburen to act on what feels right, which can be related to Aristotle's concept of phronesis (Flyvbjerg, 2001; Gunder & Hillier, 2007; Van Dijk, 2011). The region of Oosterwold has a lot of advantages for giving projects this room, because of its freedom and lack of rules, which has allowed the initiative takers to give the project a unique spin (Bolderburen, s.d.). Another lesson for planners specifically is to give a personalized approach to projects like Bolderburen. The initiative takers were relatively unexperienced with urban developments and were actively looking for tips and support throughout the project, which they did not find in the municipality of Almere (Interview Jessika Kersting). Bottom-up Utopias such as this one are going to pop up more often in the near future and will be developed by a lot of people who have little experience too. It will be important to develop planning systems in which these developers can receive

support and confirmation. Finally, this case offers a Utopia that is quite unique compared to the rest and which shows that a Utopia can be successful on its own without having very much to offer for the outside world. Sometimes Utopias can be all about achieving a dream for a small group of people without having to involve the outside world.

5.10 BRAINPORT SMART DISTRICT

Case Description

Brainport Smart District is a collaborative development project in the southern Netherlands to create the first smart neighbourhood in the world (Eindhoven University of Technology, 2017). The smart city concept is aimed at incorporating state-of-the-art technology to facilitate every aspect of urban life and urban development (Brainport Smart District, 2018[a]). The idea is to build a neighbourhood of around 1500 residences that excels on a broad range of themes, such as circularity, mobility, inclusiveness, energy, health, safety and many more (Brainport Smart District, 2017[a]; Brainport Smart District, 2018[a]; Brainport Smart District, 2018[c]; Brainport Smart District, 2018[d]). With that in mind, the project is both oriented towards very technical topics such as sustainability and normative ones, such as safety and inclusiveness (Brainport Smart District, 2018[c]). The project arose from an ambition of the municipality of Helmond to deal with issues such as climate change and the necessity to find different ways of living to deal with those (Doe Maar Duurzaam, 2017). Additionally, Helmond wanted to become a frontrunner in the world on this topic (Brainport Smart District, 2018[d]). In that sense, the most important Utopian ingredient as distinguished by Sargisson (2012) was the desires based on ambition.

The project will be developed in the town of Helmond, which is one of the suburbs of the city of Eindhoven (Eindhoven University of Technology, 2017; Brainport Smart District, 2018[a]). Famous by being the hometown of the company Philips, Eindhoven and its suburbs have developed into one of the strongest knowledge regions in the world, with a strong drive for innovation and experimentation (Brainport Smart District, 2017a). These mindsets and expertises are very influential in the development of the smart neighbourhood, and various knowledge institutions and companies are involved in the development process (Doe Maar Duurzaam, 2017). It was chosen to build the smart neighbourhood in Helmond because of the availability of suitable land, the proximity of Eindhoven and important facilities, the scale of Helmond and the availability of necessary infrastructure (Brainport Regio Eindhoven, s.d.)

Although the overall goal of the project is to build an actual physical neighbourhood, there are also sub goals that are aimed at learning about technologies and innovations (Brainport Smart District, 2018[a]). There is an experimental mindset to find ways of living of the future and many of the ideas from this project are followed closely by other projects all over the Netherlands (Brainport Smart District, 2017[b]).

There is not necessarily an endpoint to the project, but rather it is set up to continuously innovate and be an innovation lab for new technologies and urban developments (Brainport Smart District, 2018[b]). A main focus in the project because of that is to remain flexible and to be able to adapt to changing circumstances (Doe Maar Duurzaam, 2017). They do so by constructing houses in a circular way, which allows the developers to break apart houses and reuse every part if the need to arises.

The development process has been very collaborative and participative thus far. The whole project started off by organising a so-called 'syntegration': a very intense 4-day brainstorm session during which all kinds of actors, varying from knowledge institutes to governments, inhabitants, entrepreneurs and corporations, thought about the scope and possibilities of the project (Interview Thijs Nooijen). The envisioning process of this Utopia was thus undertaken by a large group of agents of change, making Brainport Smart District one of the few cases to do so. Based on this exploration, project themes and collaborations were set up. While the project was initiated by the municipality of Helmond, an independent executory organisation was established for the development of Brainport Smart District (Brainport Smart District, 2017[a]). This organisation connects all involved actors and oversees the technical developments of the neighbourhood (Interview Thijs Nooijen). There is a combination of strong bottom-up and top-down moments, as the project encourages and uses all kinds of ideas from locals, while still overseeing the general course of the project and integration between different themes and subprojects (Brainport Smart District, 2017[a]; Eindhoven University of Technology, 2017; Brainport Smart District, 2018a; Brainport Smart District, 2018[c]; Interview Thijs Nooijen)

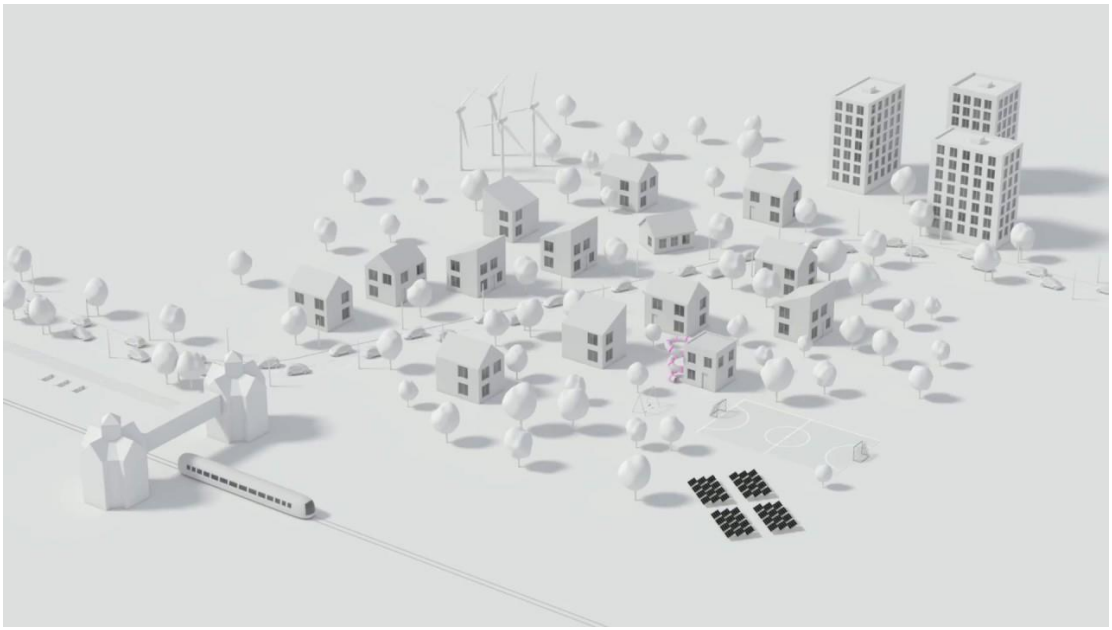


***Figure 28**: Still from animation of Brainport Smart District. Source: Eindhoven University of Technology, 2017.*

Utopian Characteristics

The Brainport Smart District ambition is very different from the traditional Utopias in a lot of aspects. The content, for instance, is left much more open, vague and hollistic

in order to stimulate the creativity and innovation of the project, which is also according to the persuasion theory (Albrechts, 2010; Van Dijk, 2011). Additionally, the focus on a continuous and strong collaborative and participative processes makes it very widely supported and open for changing circumstances (Interview Thijs Nooijen). In that sense, the Brainport Smart District is much more about making use of and facilitating collective brainpower and ideas, such as in the syntegration phase, while traditional Utopias were all about implementing the ideas of one or a few planners (Gunder & Hillier, 2007). Open ambitions like this one seem to be the way to go in the 21st century planning to achieve innovation and support (Kraftl, 2007). Something that can be noticed from figure 29 is that compared to the distribution of spectra in other cases, Brainport Smart District has a lot of middle values, meaning that both sides of the spectra are relatively strong. For instance, it has elements of both top-down and bottom-up, technical and romantic and imaginative and realistic ideas (Interview Thijs Nooijen). This combination of elements from different approaches is relatively unique.

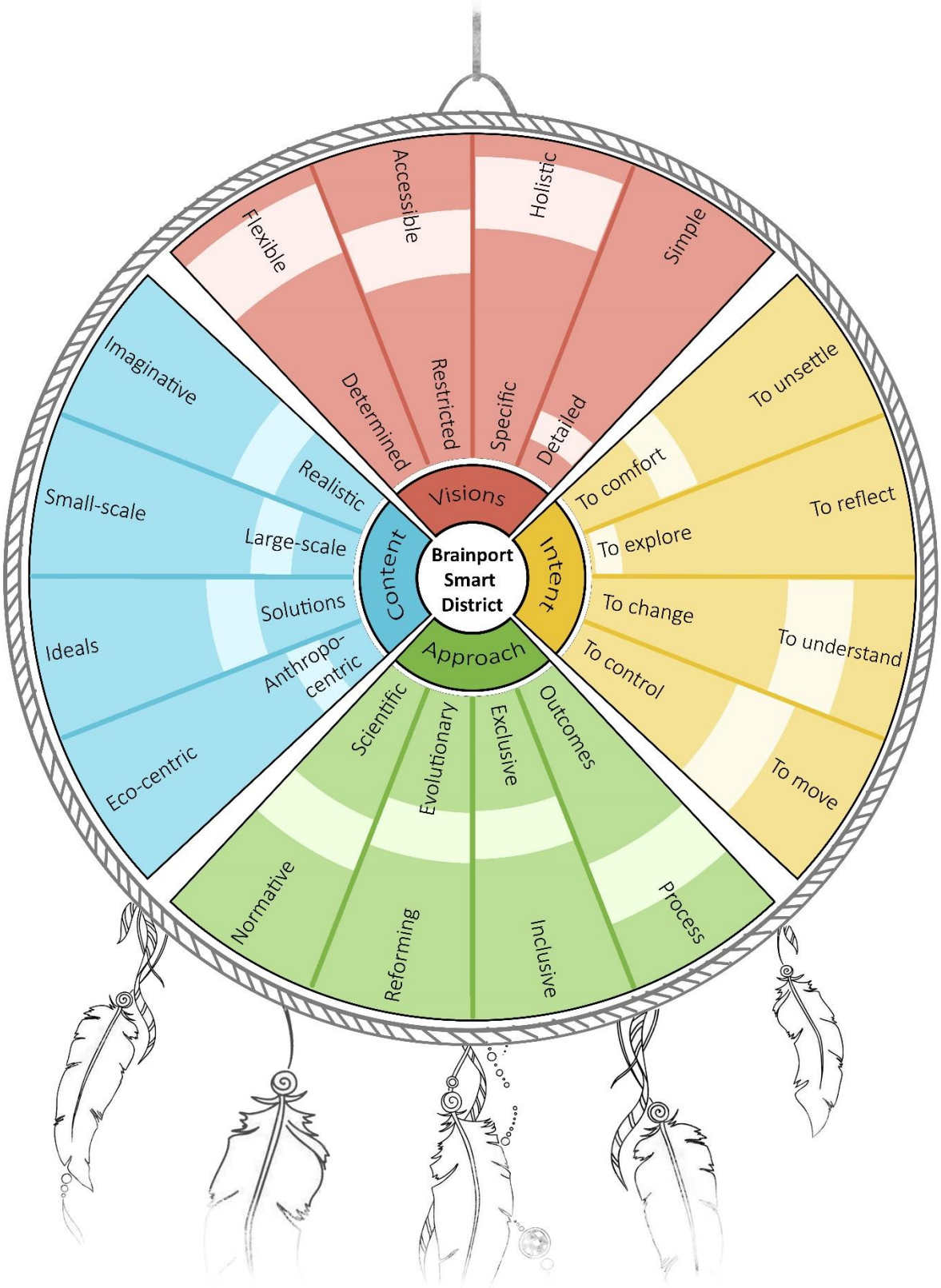


Figure 29: *Overview of Utopian characteristics of Brainport Smart District. Source: own work.*

Impacts on people, places and plans

As a project that is supposed to become the neighbourhood of the future, the most important contribution of the project is the **creation of new understandings**. The

whole project is created as one large learning process, in which knowledge institutes, corporations and governments can learn all about the newest technologies and urban developments and even reach a few steps farther into things that are not around yet (Brainport Smart District, 2018[c]). To do ensure an optimal learning experience, experiments start out on a very small-scale in Brainport Smart District, and are only fully implemented if deemed successful (Doe Maar Duurzaam, 2017). Additionally, one of the design principles of the project is to ensure that every aspect of the project is reproducible in any context (Brainport Smart District, 2018[b]; Brainport Smart District, 2018[d]). This allows other cities and towns to pick up elements to improve their own plans.

Another important contribution is the development of a **planning ideal** for the region. Because of the quite radical, ambitious, yet open Utopian goals, all kinds of actors in the region are connected to the project and collaborate in order to reach the same goal (Madanipour, 2006). Embedded in a sense of regional pride, these corporations, governments, knowledge institutes and bottom-up initiatives develop their own projects that they link to the Brainport Smart District (Interview Thijs Nooijen).

This involvement of actors has also led to a more **democratic governance** mode. Using both top-down and bottom-up methods to generate and collect ideas, future inhabitants and in general locals with innovative ideas are able to include their ideas into the project, diversifying the kinds of plans that are implemented (Madanipour, 2006). This democratic process started early on during the organisation of the syntegration, which gave a lot of stakeholders and local actors a feeling of empowerment, involvement and responsibility in the process (Interview Thijs Nooijen). In the wake of this brainstorm, inhabitants are constantly asked to think along about the direction of the project, giving room for their conceptions and desires alongside those of the agents of change (Madanipour, 2006; Albrechts, 2010). Moreover, initiative takers are constantly actively seeking new input and ideas of businesses and inhabitants, for example through the recently started business challenge (Brainport Smart District, 2017a; Brainport Smart District, 2018[a]).

To a lesser degree, the vision has also led to the **generation of echoes**. Not only are a lot of governments and corporations watching along to learn from the project, but knowledge institutes are actively challenged to think about the content of the project. The case offers an inspiring experimental exercise for many different knowledge institutes, ranging from elementary schools to technical universities (Brainport Smart District, 2017[a]). Thinking about the neighbourhood of the future is such an open challenge, that a lot of different study programs have been able to use it for classes and workshops. The ideas that are generated there are then offered to the project developers, who make thankful use of this creative input (Interview Thijs Nooijen).

Key Lessons

Because of the openness and innovative mindset of the project, it has been important to start the development off with the syntegration: the large brainstorm session, where all kinds of actors with different backgrounds could contribute and be aligned

behind a common goal (Interview Thijs Nooijen). This allowed for a strong interactive persuasion process, where ideas could be targeted at diverse groups, based on their inputs throughout the brainstorms (Shipley & Michela, 2006). This early involvement of actors has ensured their participation in the later stages of the development process, as well as their support and the likelihood of success of the project. In that same spirit, having an openminded process from the start has been important in ensuring participation and adjustments to changing circumstances (Interview Thijs Nooijen). Encouraging and accepting ideas from anywhere and being able to adapt the neighbourhood to new developments when they arise is something that makes the project future-proof and more believable. Finally, what has been really important for an innovative project like this one is to receive a certain degree of freedom to act outside of the conventional planning system (Interview Thijs Nooijen). There are a lot of urban development rules in place to guide developments in desirable ways, but these get in the way of finding new ways of living in a project like this one (Brainport Smart District, 2017[a]; Brainport Smart District, 2018[c]). However, such rules serve an obvious function: to provide certainty and avoid conflicts with the surroundings, which is in this case the city of Helmond. But if the status quo is to be broken in a case like this, then the standard rules need to become flexible as well.

5.11 TRANSITION TOWN MOVEMENT

Case Description

One case that is very different from the others is the Transition Town Nederland movement. This vision came from an international Transition Town movement, and is focused on engaging people all over the country with starting up a transition towards other ways of living. The movement originated from England, at the start of the 21st century. It arose from the feeling that climate change, the end of the oil era and the rise of sustainability were not picked up seriously enough (TEDx, 2012). The movement started with a focus on the need to start change from the bottom up and to fundamentally change the way people live and build places (TED, 2009; Transition Towns, 2013). The main concept of the movement was resilience: the ability to deal with any changes or shocks in a way that is collectively agreeable (TED, 2009; Transition Towns Nederland, s.d.[a]). Resilience with regards to climate change, resilience with regards to economic crises, resilience with regards to the end of finite sources, and so on.

The initiative takers in the Netherlands were inspired by the story and decided to pick it up here (Interview Paul Hendriksen). The British Transition Town team had developed a handbook, which served as a sort of guideline for how to transition places and activate people (Hopkins, 2008; Transition Towns Nederland, s.d.[a]). The first task of the Dutch team was to translate this handbook and adapt its content to a Dutch context (Interview Paul Hendriksen). The first Transition Towns that arose from this were initially strong pioneers in bottom-up initiatives, as well as on physically working on sustainability in towns and cities (Transition Towns Nederland, s.d.[b]). Because the circumstances in each city and town in The Netherlands are unique, it was very much

left to groups of people in each Transition Town to make inventory of what they had, wanted and needed in their project (Transition Towns, 2013). Based on that, they would focus on developing projects and processes to perform goals that they set up for themselves (TEDx, 2012). Over the course of a few years, the movement got a lot of traction in the Netherlands and eventually led to the development of around 90 Transition Towns all over the Netherlands at its peak (Transition Towns Nederland, s.d.[b]). To recap from the construction ingredients of Sargisson (2012), the vision started primarily from a desire to cause transition in the world, and was to a lesser degree based on the capacities of the Dutch group who brought in the movement and the global context of a degrading world.

The role of the central Transition Town organisation was focused on making sure these initiatives or groups that were interested could start up and had all the knowledge and capacities they required to make their Transition Town a success. On the one hand this meant setting up trainings across the country, which were focused on inspiring, teaching groups to start, teaching them to dream, build and connect their projects to local circumstances (Transition Towns Nederland, s.d.[a]; Interview Paul Hendriksen). These steps likely helped in persuading people to contribute, as it increased their sense of self-efficacy and the scope of actions that they felt they could do (Throgmorton, 2003; Shipley & Michela, 2006). However, their role was bigger than that, as they also became a network organisation. This meant they started working on mapping out where all the initiatives were, organising events where everyone could come together and share their stories and ideas, and connecting people with an interest to their local Transition Town (Transition Towns Nederland, s.d.[b]; Interview Paul Hendriksen).

The Transition Town movement started ahead of the modern participation wave (Transition Towns Nederland, s.d.[a]; Interview Paul Hendriksen). This meant that at the time that it started, bottom-up initiatives were relatively new and that a lot of the network organisations focused on learning lessons on how to shape and stimulate these. Over time, climate change, sustainability and bottom-up initiatives became much more mainstream topics and were picked up all over the world (Transition Towns Nederland, s.d.[b]). This meant that the Transition Towns became one of the many initiatives that tried to improve the sustainability of the world. The initial pioneering role was taken away from them, and the organisation needed to shift roles if it wanted to remain relevant (Interview Paul Hendriksen). To play into the trend that caused their shift, they decided to put more focus on telling stories about successful initiatives and stimulating people to change, as well as connecting people and initiatives (Transition Towns Nederland, s.d.[b]).

Figure 30: *Transition Town Nederland meeting in the town of Boxtel. Source: Transition Towns Nederland, s.d.a.*

Utopian Characteristics

As can be seen in figure 31, the Transition Town Movement is on almost every single spectrum oriented towards the more modern extreme. The initiative is much more focused on the constant process of transitioning and changing peoples' mindsets than on working towards a products and the physical transformation of places (Interview Paul Hendriksen), making it rather different from the traditional Utopias (Gunder & Hillier, 2007). On many aspects it is quite the opposite of the traditional approach, as it is all about empowering people and achieving a goal together, rather than building a plan alone and remaining in control over it (Transition Towns, 2013). Both the content and process are shaped in very modern ways, with concepts as bottom-up and sustainability as core elements in a time where these were completely new topics. This Utopia is quite unique in a number of ways: first, given its intentions to bring about change throughout the world, the movement itself takes place on a much higher schale than the other visions, even though the movement focuses on small-scale changes (Interview Paul Hendriksen). Related to that, this vision is not about realising an own Utopia, but moving people throughout The Netherlands to do that for themselves in their own circumstances. Following the line of persuasive storytelling by Shipley and Michela (2006), they provided very open and flexible visions that allowed local initiatives to do just that.

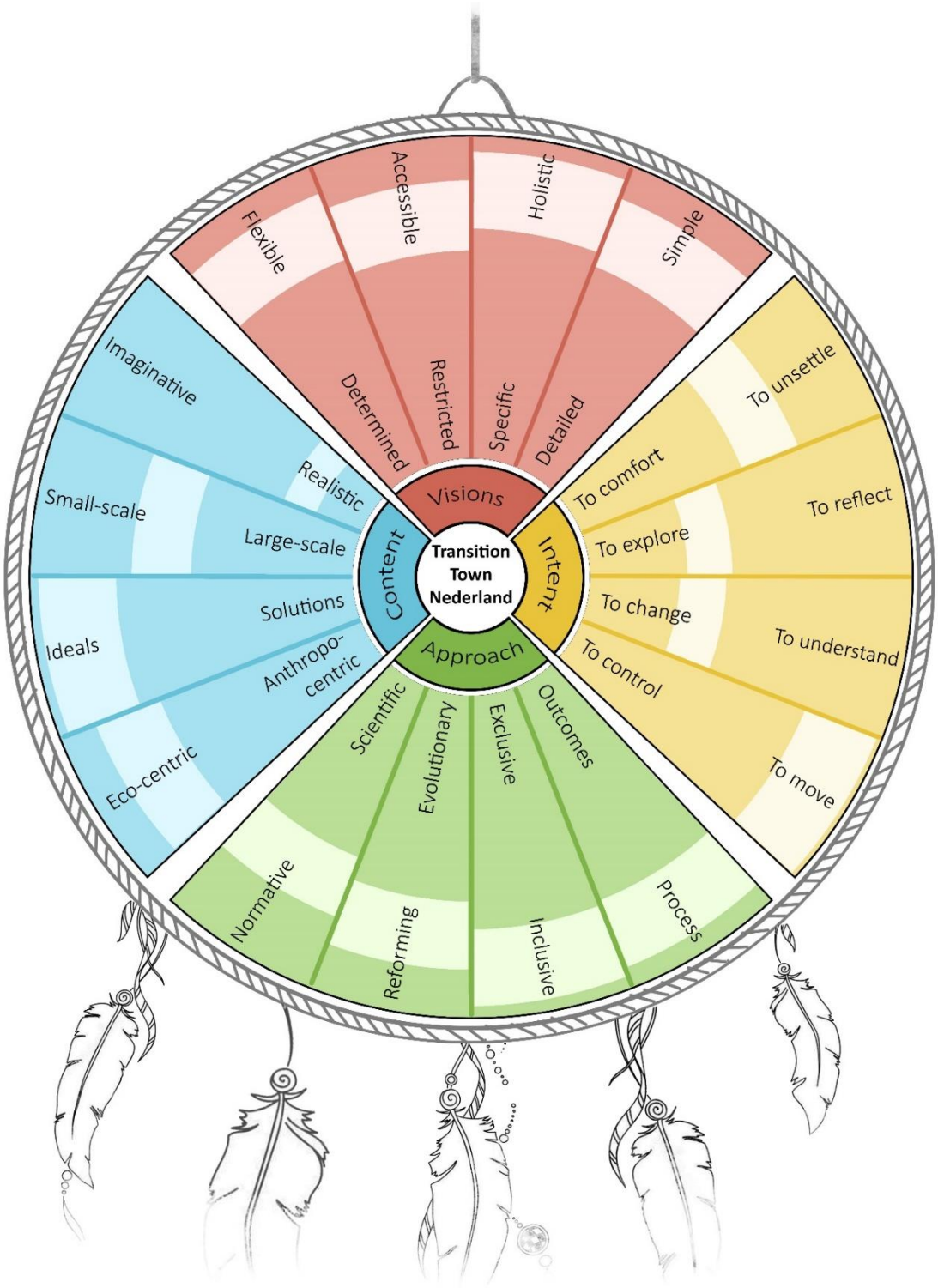


Figure 31: *Overview of Utopian characteristics of Transition Town Nederland. Source: own work.*

Impacts on people, places and plans

With such a network of Transition Towns, the movement has had considerable and very diverse contributions to all kinds of places. One of the first and most important ones has been to **change the perceptions** of a lot of people with regards to the world running in an unsustainable way and the need for something to change (Transition Towns, 2013). By communicating to both participants of Transition Towns and all

kinds of people that visited their events, they were able to raise a critical reflection on the current systems, without specifying one specific way out, which is often done in the other Utopian cases (Interview Paul Hendriksen). This allows people to reject the status quo and to come up with solutions that they see fit (Shipley & Michela, 2006).

Building forth on this, the movement has led to processes of **democratization of governance** throughout The Netherlands. Based on the development of a critical perspective, they actively challenged people to start working on futures that they wanted and to design social systems, economic systems and places that they wanted, based on their own values (Transition Towns, 2013; Interview Paul Hendriksen). To achieve that, they set up training procedures, in which new participants were actively triggered to think about their Utopias and dreams in live as a way to set goals for their local Transition Towns (Interview Paul Hendriksen). This process creates room for desires and fundamental values in relation to places that people can hardly ever express.

As a movement, obviously moving people has been the main focus of the project over the past decade. With over 900 initiatives worldwide, the movement has set a goal for a lot of people to work towards (TEDx, 2012; Transition Towns, 2013). The initiative connected people and efforts into shared goals through a **planning ideal** (Madanipour, 2006). They have tried to actively stimulate the growth and maintenance of each Transition Towns, for example by sharing results, initiating information sessions or posting in the media (Transition Towns, 2013; Interview Paul Hendriksen). Additionally, with the new focus of the national network organisation, telling stories is all about inspiring people and triggering them to think outside of the box (Transition Towns Nederland, s.d.[b]). Thus, without having undertaken physical transformations themselves, they have indirectly caused and guided such transformations all over The Netherlands.

Similarly, their efforts have **generated echoes** all over The Netherlands. It can be argued that the Transition Town movement had a role in the participation wave that developed in The Netherlands over the last decade, as many of these Transition Towns had worked on setting the tone and exploring the possibilities of bottom-up transitions (Interview Paul Hendriksen). Since there have been around 90 active Transition Towns, it is very likely that the movement has had at least a small impact in a lot of different places. But the movement has also inspired projects outside of its own scope, as Transition Towns are quite visible in their cities and have led to various projects to become stand-alones and spread out on their own, e.g. the Repair Café (TEDx, 2012).

Finally, the movement has led to the **development of new understandings.** Something that the international Transition Town movement has been emphasizing, is that the movement has become a form of social experiment on a large international scale, on how to activate people and achieve a radical actual change to the way that people live (Transition Towns, 2013). Moreover, teaching both participants and people with an interest in transitioning on the knowledge and skills that are needed to set up a Transition Town is a large understanding contribution, which is not only aimed at insiders but also outsiders (Interview Paul Hendriksen).

Key Lessons

Something that has been really important in the Transition Town Movement is that it was able to change its course drastically to remain relevant (Transition Towns Nederland, s.d.[a]). It became clear that circumstances changed over time and that the goals that were initially set up were not as relevant anymore as time moved on. The Transition Town movement thus changed from a role of setting the first steps towards sustainability in various cities and towns towards telling stories and stimulating people to participate in local initiatives (Interview Paul Hendriksen). Another key lesson of the project is to have an ambition that people in all kinds of circumstances can relate to and feel compelled to participate in, similar to the characteristics of persuasive stories (Van Dijk, 2011). The freedom to tackle such issues in a way that fits the local circumstances and appeals to the participants that are involved was a quality of the vision that ensured that people from different places and statuses wanted to support the movement (Interview Paul Hendriksen). A last lesson relates to the limitations of the role of the network organisation. A lot of the Transition Towns fell apart in the last few years, and the network has not been very active in gathering data and sharing stories due to a lack of time and the search for a new role. Perhaps more energy could have been preserved in the Transition Towns had the network organisation found a new role quicker.

5.12 THE DUTCH MOUNTAIN

Case Description

Close to a decade ago, a Dutch professional bicyclist by the name of Thijs Zonneveld came up with the idea to build an artificial mountain in the Netherlands, where the highest natural 'mountain' is a little over 300 meters (Zonneveld, 2011[a]). This idea was originally not meant in a serious manner, but was posted by Zonneveld as a joke in one of his sport columns. It arose from a frustration because of a lack of training possibilities for Dutch bicycle racers (Zonneveld, 2011[a]; Interview Thijs Zonneveld). The construction of the vision was thus primarily based on the capacities of the agent of change: his creativity, personal network and visionary capacity (Sargisson, 2012). The column was read by a lot of people and due to Thijs' reach and the radicalism of the idea it received a lot of media attention (Brown, 2011; Zonneveld, 2011[b]). Among the reactions that followed on this initial message, there were a lot of entrepreneurs and corporations who offered Thijs to collaborate on the project and research the possibilities of building a Dutch mountain (Brown, 2011). In this sense, persuasiveness of the story that Thijs told is quite surprising, as it was very small in size and thus not able to build on all necessary steps from persuasive storytelling theory. What likely made it so persuasive was its radicalism and the affect that this caused among people (Shipley & Michela, 2006; Interview Thijs Zonneveld).

Over the next years, the abstract idea was developed into a real plan. All the involved actors organised themselves in a task group and actively limited the involvement of governments in order to be able to work fast and independently (Zonneveld, 2018). The ideas were initially very vague, which left a lot of room to

create a dynamic development process that adapted to preferences and ideas over the years (Oranjewoud, 2013). The original intention of making it a sport facility was broadened to include functions related to sustainability, offices, recreation and even residences (Zonneveld, 2011[b]). There have been lots of researches on different aspects of the mountain and functions that could fit within this mountain (Oranjewoud, 2013; Interview Thijs Zonneveld). With a planned 2 kilometres height, an artificial building of this scale had never been looked into before, resulting in a lot of innovative engineering research (Oranjewoud, 2013; Roumeliotis, 2013).

It quickly became clear that a construction of the original size would not be doable, but creating a mountain of a smaller size would be. However, this would cost an immense amount of money, which was not realizable in the current time and place (Interview Thijs Zonneveld). As a consequence, the development of the project has been halted, with hopes of picking it up somewhere in the future. To still be able to do something with the plans, the organisation of the project attempted to build smaller experimental models of 40 to 50 meters high, for example in the Floriade of 2022, but received no support from those events to do so (Oranjewoud, 2013).

It is a project that fits in the Dutch mindset of large-scale engineering, as the Dutch are renowned for the creation of large dykes, bridges, roads, and even completely new land (Andrade Serra et al., 2012; Roumeliotis, 2013). With the disappearance of large government involvement and investments, these ideas have been lacking for the last couple of decades (Oranjewoud, 2013). Moreover, more radical projects such as this one have received less and less support over the years, as a sense of NIMBY-ism and conservative mindset kicked in (Zonneveld, 2011[b]). The idea of the mountain also had a lot of protestors who did not understand or believe in the positive outcomes of the project (Oranjewoud, 2013).

Figure 32: *Artist impression of the mountain. Source: AD, 2012.*

Utopian Characteristics

The content of That Mountain Comes resembles a lot of the old Dutch megaloman engineering projects, but arguably on a much larger scale and challenge level (see also figure 33). Although initially set up as a very romantic and intriguing idea, it had to become more technical over time in order to get in to a realisation phase (Oranjewoud, 2013; Interview Thijs Zonneveld). Among all the Utopian cases in this research, this is the one that breaks away from the status quo the most, which is somewhat indicated by the highest 'imagniray' score as well. The external circumstances are not elaborated on in the vision, but the mountain itself is something that cannot be seen anywhere in the world right now (Interview Thijs Zonneveld). While the content resembles a lot of the more traditional elements, such as being technical, large-scale and reforming, the approach is quite the opposite and resembles much more modern processes. By opening up the development to anyone who was interested and had input, it became a very explorative bottom-up approach, with a focus on learning and generating energy (Oranjewoud, 2013; Interview Thijs Zonneveld). This opening up process also led to the persuasion of a lot of actors, as it allowed them to envision the mountain in their own way, based on their own frame of the world (Van Dijk, 2011). As a consequence of this, a lot of actors were able to learn and do something with the project despite it not being realised in the end.

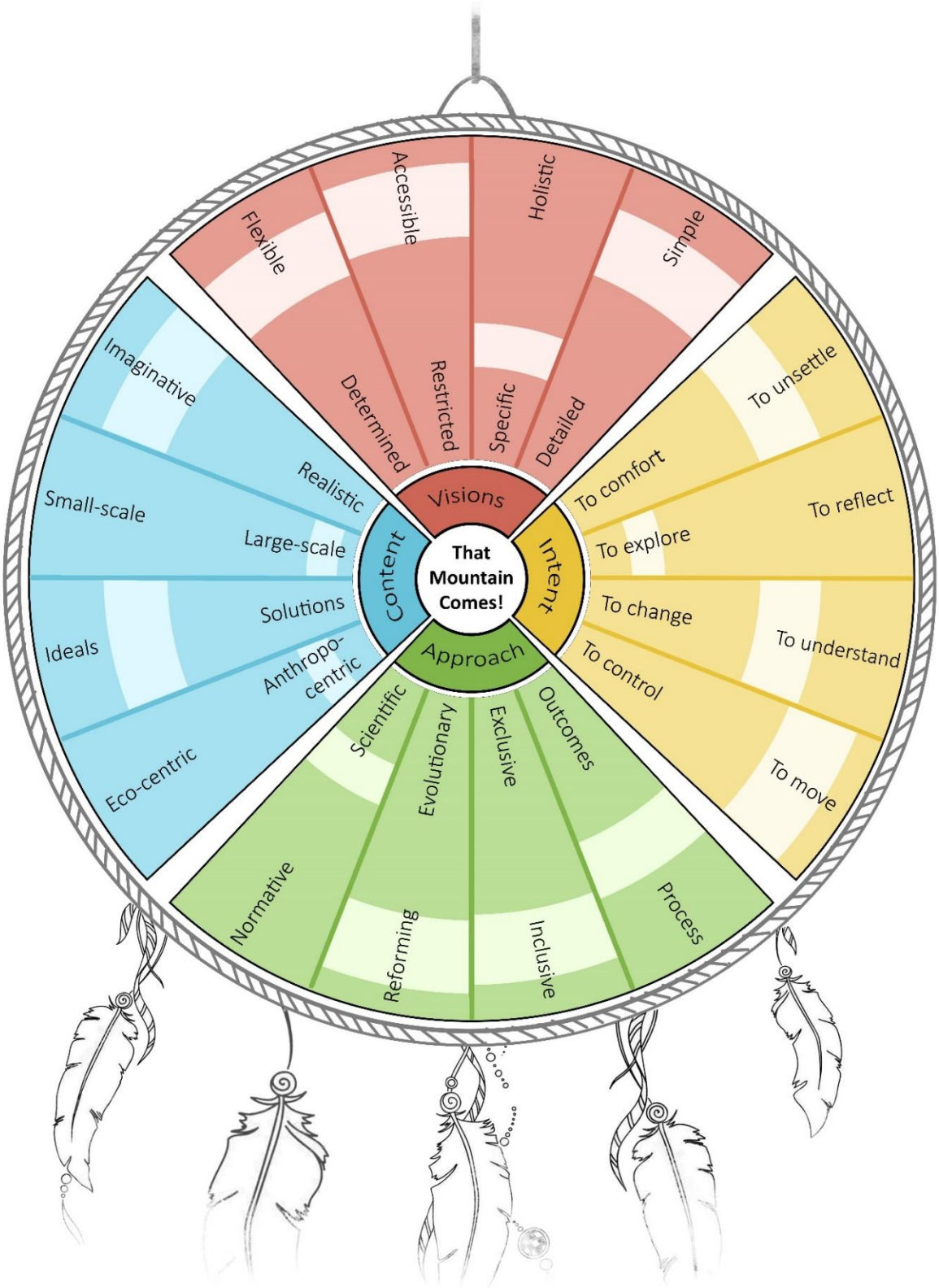


Figure 33: *Overview of Utopian characteristics of That Mountain Comes! Source: own work.*

Impacts on people, places and plans

This is a clear example of a Utopia that can have an immense impact without ever coming to realisation. The mountain has never been developed in reality because of the limited construction capacities of modern-day technologies and the immense

amount of finance that would be needed because of that (AD, 2012; Interview Thijs Zonneveld). Finding implementation does not have to be the main impact of a vision, however, as it can also lead to indirect change through the **generation of echoes** (Madanipour, 2006). The project brought about a sense of inspiration and creativity to both the involved stakeholders and the wider public (Brown, 2011). The ideas were picked up by both Dutch and foreign media, and Thijs and the rest of the organisation were asked regularly to come talk at conferences and lectures (Zonneveld, 2011[b]; Oranjewoud, 2013). Ultimately, it led to a lot of spin-offs and ideas for other projects (Oranjewoud, 2013).

Moreover, it **set a planning ideal** that led to the inspiration of a wider public and activation of several companies and entrepreneurs, who decided to become involved in the whole project (Brown, 2011; Zonneveld, 2018). This was due to the network of Thijs and his outreach for help later on in his columns, in combination with the rise of the internet around that time (Oranjewoud, 2013). By having a common goal to work towards, these actors from different backgrounds, who were normally competitors of each other, started working together and combine their resources and efforts in attempts to make this project a success (Interview Thijs Zonneveld). This is similar to the 'Energy Odyssee' as described by Hajer (2017), where an open ambition was able to align all kinds of actors behind a common goal. Additionally, to gain support from a wider audience and to acquire more involvement and funds of different actors, the content of the mountain was broadened over time to fit more functions (Brown, 2011; Andrade Serra et al., 2012; Oranjewoud, 2013; Zonneveld, 2018). Again, this element of being able to interpret stories according to one's own frame and interests is very relevant in producing persuasive stories (Shipley & Michela, 2006; Van Dijk, 2011).

Finally, the project led to a lot of research and **new understandings** of engineering capacities and experiments (Oranjewoud, 2013). The project was all about experimentation, finding new ways to build things that would fit in the context of a mountain and thought experiments with new possibilities, where the sky would be literally the limit (Andrade Serra et al., 2012; Oranjewoud, 2013). There have been several schools that made contact with the organisation to pick the case up as a research project in class (Interview Thijs Zonneveld).

Key Lessons

For this idea to grow so big, there were two key ingredients: having an idea that is very radical, and which breaks away from the status quo, as well as having a certain reach and audience and communicating the idea to people. The Dutch Mountain and Thijs Zonneveld had both of those characteristics, leading to an immense amount of attention and support (Interview Thijs Zonneveld). Another related key lesson of this case is that networking skills are much more important than knowledge and expertise in moving a Utopia from idea to realisation. Thijs had no experience in either engineering, business or spatial planning, but did have the capacity to shout out to companies that did have this experience, connect them and trigger them to work together (Oranjewoud, 2013; Interview Thijs Zonneveld). Finally, something that has been mentioned in other cases as well is the openness and flexibility of the envisioning

phase as a crucial factor (Gunder & Hillier, 2007; Kraftl, 2007; Pinder, 2013). This allowed the project to change shapes based on what different actors came up with or were interested in looking into. Eventually, this was important in aligning all the different actors and strongly increased the achievability of the mountain development.

6. UTOPIAN CONTRIBUTIONS

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis has focused on the concept of Utopia in an attempt to find a way to deal with the dynamics and unsustainable developments of the current-day world. With contemporary planning often being characterized by reactive, short-term and conventional plans, there is a need to rethink approaches for making and shaping places (Levitas, 2013; Pinder, 2013; Hoch, 2014). Visions of Utopia have been around for centuries and have led to various radical transformations of places and systems (Ganjavie, 2012). These visions are embedded in imagination, creativity, long-term thinking and hope and with that, have showed a potential to break society out of its current trajectory and move the field of planning forward. Looking at its history, Utopia and the plans that sought to recreate it have experienced a golden era during the late 19th and 20th century, after which they crashed and burned when postmodernism grew. Considering their potential for solving modern-day issues and revolutionizing planning systems, this thesis set out to explore the way in which contemporary Utopias have an impact on people, places and plans in an attempt to learn about modern variants of Utopian visions and their value for planning. The research questions that are crucial to this aim will be answered in sections 6.2 to 6.4, in which the implications of these answers will also be discussed, followed by a series of reflections on the research process of this thesis in 6.5 and finally a number of recommendations for further research on the topic in 6.6.

6.2 CONCEPTUALIZING UTOPIA

Given the wide diversity of Utopias throughout the years, the first research question '*How can Utopia be conceptualised in relationship to spatial planning?*' was designed to bring clarity and structure to the concept. Based on a theoretical literature review, the concept of Utopia was defined as consisting of two concepts that can be related to its translation: ideal places and no places (Kraftl, 2007; Ganjavie, 2012). In other words, Utopias are a representation of places that do not yet exist, but are filled with elements that people desire and consider 'good'. Utopias do not exist in a physical sense, but are shaped by and have effect on people (Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007). This connection between Utopia and reality is shaped by visions as attempts to capture and bring Utopia to the here and now, and plans, as the process of developing places towards a desired Utopian state (Levitas, 2013). What separates Utopian planning processes from regular planning processes then, is that Utopias tend to break with the status quo of places and plans and are embedded in ideals (Pinder, 2013; Kasioumi & Kiss, 2016).

Based on the before-mentioned diversity of Utopias in both planning history and planning literature, a wide range of characteristics of the Utopian world, vision, construction approach and intentions can be distinguished, which illustrate the wide interpretation and application of the concept. Being embedded in unique contexts, desires and coming from agents of change with unique capacities, as distinguished by

Sargisson (2012), Utopias should not be brought back to simple categorizations, but be embraced for their diversity and the possibilities that they bring. This diversity offers a few implications for planning and can be both the concept its strength and weakness. Strength, because it means that there is no right and wrong and that Utopias are therefore instruments that can be used by anyone for whatever purpose. Weakness, because this also means that people are guaranteed to have different and potentially conflicting views on what is considered ideal, which makes it hard to ever reach a common dream. Regardless, the diversity exists today, as can be seen in the cases discussed in this thesis, and will continue to do so, simply because people have different hopes and dreams.

6.3 INFLUENCE THROUGH STORIES

In order to say something about the way that Utopias can mean anything to plans, people or places, the second research question '*How do Utopian visions generate influence on people, places and plans?*' had to be answered using theory on visions and stories. As mentioned before, Utopias can only interact with the real world through visions. People have to envision Utopias through a process or communicate it to others through illustrations, texts or other means in order to make the Utopia part of reality and cause any impact (Hatuka & D'Hooghe, 2007). The first group only depends on the people that are involved in the envisioning process, who can directly cause an impact on places and plans. But to reach the second group and cause a wider impact that way, a vision first has to go through a process of interpretation. This is where the three factors from Sargisson (2012) come in again: Utopias are constructed by people who come from and perceive a context in a certain way, have personal and collective desires about the future and work with different personal capacities. However, these factors are guaranteed to be different for both people that envision a Utopia and people that interpret a Utopia. This implies that instruments are needed for bridging these different frames, which is where stories come in (Van Dijk, 2011).

Storytelling is a tool often used in visions and designs and can be used to change peoples' attitudes, move them away from accepting the status quo of a given situation and ultimately make them embrace certain alternatives (Shipley & Michela, 2006). Whether or not that alternative, in this case a vision of Utopia, is appealing depends on factors such as shared values, interpretable meaning, the comprehensiveness of a vision and the sense of self-efficacy that it generates (Throgmorton, 2003; Van Dijk, 2011). A danger in this storytelling process is that it can be subject to what Sargisson (2012) calls 'shams'. Since the construction of a story is a conscious process, based on intentions (Throgmorton, 2003), it can be used for intentions that are different from the idealistic ones that they seem to be aimed at, such as in the case of Disney. These shams can still have an impact on people, places and plans, but they do not bring them closer towards an ideal.

Through stories, Utopias can alter peoples' perceptions of places and future, which in turn can lead to an impact on plans and places. In short, Utopias can have 6 different kinds of impact, based on Madanipour (2006): generating echoes, changing perceptions, setting planning ideals, generating actions, democratizing governance and

creating new understandings. Together, these impacts can lead to either physical transformations, movement of people and/or inspiration for plans. An implication of these mechanics related to visions is that Utopias can both have an impact through being captured in communication tools, with which it can be distributed to and picked up by more people, but also through a process of envisioning, where it does not have to be put into words and pictures, but can have an impact on a more subconscious level. Moreover, their impact always runs through people, who subsequently choose to adapt places directly, draw out plans to do so, spread the visions around, learn from it, or are influenced by it in different ways. The impacts can be just as diverse as the Utopias themselves.

6.4 CONTEMPORARY UTOPIAS

To better understand these processes from theory and to relate them back to a planning practice, both research question 3 '*What characterizes contemporary Utopias in planning practice?*' and research question 4 '*What kind of contributions can be observed from contemporary Utopias in planning practice?*' relate to contemporary Utopian visions from Dutch planning practice.

Characteristics

The cases that were researched in this thesis came in all sizes and shapes, and were just as diverse as the conceptualisation phase from theory suggested. Relating these cases to the key ingredients of Sargisson (2012), most cases arose out of a discontent with the present context (like the traditional Utopias), which was for example the case in Holwerd aan Zee, Blauwestad, Meerstad and Trips' Salt Beach. All of those cases were created from a similar context of economic and population decline. Other cases arose from a desire for something better or an ambition to distinguish a place, which was the case in, for example, Duurzaam Ameland, Brainport Smart District, Bolderburen, Transition Towns Nederland and the Floriade. Some of these cases sought to change places to better incorporate ideals, others to become a leading figure in terms of innovation. Then there were also cases that came from the visionary capacity, experiences or networking skills from a single agent of change, for instance in Peinder Mieden, Markerwadden and That Mountain Comes! There is not one driver that is necessarily better than the others, but it can be noticed that they lead to different results. Generally, the cases that were based on desires were more future-oriented as they could break free more easily from the here and now, whereas Utopias based on contexts tended to be about realistic ideas in order to find solutions to problems in the here and now. The implication that can be suggested from this is that for plans to become more radical, they should be more considerate of desires and ideals. This can be related to Albrechts (2015), who argued that desire is linked to actively wanting to change systems to get to a better state, whereas finding solutions is more about taking away a negative factor, while wanting to keep the rest of the circumstances the same. Another generalisation that could be noticed was that the cases based on context as a driving factor were more traditional and static in approach, whereas the ones that were based on skills, and to a lesser extent desires,

were more modern in their approach. This implies that circumstances and intentions play an important role in shaping the envisioning process of a Utopia and should be considered in interpreting a vision.

In term of the content of these Utopias, it is hard to find generalisations, as literally every end of each spectrum was touched upon by one case. One of the characteristics that was often the same in cases was the radicalism of a Utopia. Most of the visions remained relatively realistic, in the sense that they stayed relatively close to the circumstances of the here and now. A few exceptions to this were That Mountain Comes! and the Floriade. This tendency to make Utopian visions based on ideals and hope so realistic can be explained by the negativity perception of the concept that arose during the 20th century, and the pragmatism that characterizes modern-day planning (Hoch, 2014). Furthermore, most ideas were anthropocentric, which was in line with literature (Acosta & Romeva, 2010). However, eco-centric Utopias received relative more attention in modern Utopias than they did in literature.

Given the diversity of Utopias in the cases, there were also a lot of different approaches. What became clear is that since the Utopian ideas are quite unconventional, they often required tailor-made processes that work around barriers, for example in The Markerwadden, where they skipped entire formal processes, Brainport Smart District, where they used a strong mixture of top-down and bottom-up and Transition Town Nederland, which applied fluid approaches of coordination and support. Something that was noticeable is that most of the approaches that were taken in the cases were relatively inclusive and modern. As most of the projects were depending on support by some or more actors, and using standard, more traditional approaches hardly worked in persuading people to follow a vision (Meerstad, Blauwestad). One of the main implications therefore, is that Utopian ideas need more open and modern planning processes that involve participants in the process in order to learn how to persuade them and how to adapt a project in order to become appealing (Shipley & Michela, 2006; Van Dijk, 2011). This fits the argument made at the start of the paper, that Utopia offers potential for planning practice of today in renewed approaches.

Influences

Since most of the visions relied on other actors to become involved in the project, almost all of the initiatives followed, to some extent, the necessary steps for persuasive storytelling. These processes of persuasion were mentioned as some of the biggest obstacles for most cases, either to win support, motivate other stakeholders or involve investors. The role of persuasive storytelling can therefore be considered as very important in Utopian planning and determines to a large extent a vision its impact. What was suggested in theory and reaffirmed by the cases is that there is a power to having open and ambiguous Utopias, for they can allow the interpretation of a project through peoples' own frames, which was expressed as a powerful persuasion tool (Van Dijk, 2011). This was the case in for example Transition Town Nederland, Peinder Mieden and Floriade, where people were invited to bring their own vision to the table. Having a process that is too open, however, can lead to weak

communication and unconvincing ideas, which was the case in Trips' Salt Beach, which was never picked up by participants. This process of balancing communication was also mentioned as a key criterion by Shipley and Michela (2006).

Throughout the diverse set of cases, every single impact that was suggested by Madanipour (2006) came back in planning practice. Overall, almost every case lead to the generation of new knowledge and the democratization of governance, which can be explained by the relative inclusive planning processes that were used. The change of perception was a less appearing impact, because most visions were aimed at persuading people towards a certain alternative (their vision), rather than simply offering a critique of the present, as suggested by Hatuka and D'Hooghe (2007). It can be argued that there was a distinction between some of the more realistic Utopias that mostly focused on transformative changes, and idealistic Utopias that were focused on moving and involving people. Additionally, the more radical projects generally showed more diverse kinds of impact and were more focused on generating support and involving other actors. The more Utopian a case, the more impact it had on people, as well as places and plans. The Transition Town movement, for example, indirectly caused a lot of changes to both places and people by offering an ideal and making people think about their own Utopias. Utopian ideas, if told right, can inspire, generate new ideas, motivate reformations and be more experimental in approach, all of which happened much less with the more conventional projects.

Finally, some attention should be spent on the suggested requirements for impact that can be taken from practice. First, visions should to some extent be made concrete to turn if it is to lead to contributions to the outside world. If it remains too vague, it does not appeal to people, similarly to what Shipley and Michela (2006) argued, or it should at least be radical enough to inspire others if it is vague, similarly to what happened in That Mountain Comes! Second, in order to gain required support and funds, it is very helpful to combine a number of goals into one project, as to serve the interests of multiple parties. Again, this is in line with persuasive storytelling literature by Van Dijk (2011), who argued that visions should be interpretable based on one's own frame. Third, the visions that have an open, dynamic or organic planning process generated more impact, in line with Kraftl (2007), as this is very important in being able to change ideas to fit either changing circumstances, wishes and desires of certain actors or fit multiple goals. In most cases it became clear that this is what caused the project to move from idea to physical transformation, despite the world changing in the meantime and the original idea no longer being a fit. Fourth and last, having a combination of changes that go hand in hand, rather than just a change in a physical sense resulted in more impact. In many cases, not only the physical status quo in a region was changed, but also the involved organisation, peoples' perception of a place and the standard procedures of planning systems. Utopian projects may eventually change places, but in order to do that, it first needs to change people and plans.

6.6 REFLECTION

This section will focus on various reflection points on the research process and outcomes as a whole, combined in groups of related points.

Interpretive methodology

The first group relates to the interpretive process of the case selection, data collection and data analysis. Interpretive processes have to be considered in judging the outcomes of a research process, since they are strongly connected to matters of reproducibility. To increase the validity of this research, some of these interpretive concerns and choices in these processes are described and explained.

The empirical research started off with the process of finding cases, which was biased by my background and the location of my network. Utopian projects are usually not communicated as such, and because of my time spent in the province of Groningen, I knew about a lot of local plans that fit the criteria that were established in the methodology chapter, resulting in a distribution of cases that was less geographically spread than was intended. Furthermore, this selection process was based on somewhat subjective judgement of what was considered Utopian or not, based on elements of idealism and radicalism that came up in news articles or website descriptions. Moreover, the process of approaching cases did not work out as envisioned in every case. Some cases were unreachable throughout multiple attempts, leading to the rejection of these cases for the research, despite being a good fit. These limitations to the selection of cases do not by any means suggest that the cases that are used in this research are unsuitable, as all of them worked fine for the explorative aim of this thesis. However, they should be kept in mind in the interpretation of the outcomes of this research, as they are not ideally represented.

This interpretive element continued in the collection of data. The topics that were discussed during interviews were semi-structured and therefore all relevant concepts were included. However, as interviews went on, certain topics started to reappear and were implicitly included during the rest of the interviews. This meant that as time progressed, the interviews were more and more based on the ones that came before. This is not necessarily a bad thing, as it means that the topics shifted away from theory and were more embedded on what was relevant in practice. However, it does make it harder to replicate the methodology, and also lead to a more suggestive and predetermined interview style later on in the empirical part of the research.

Finally, the analysis process was based on interpretations of information from a lot of different sources, that implicitly discussed the Utopian worlds behind presented visions. The process of picking these implicit elements up and connecting them together based on assumptions of relations was strongly interpretive. A good example of this process is illustrating the distributions of spectra throughout the cases, which was all based on the judgement of the information from my point of view. These potential interpretive issues were eventually resolved by validating the results.

Interpretive theory

Similar to the interpretive nature of the methodology and used methods, there was also a strong element of interpretation in the construction of the theoretical chapters. As Utopia in relation to planning is an under researched topic, there was a lack of established relations between different concepts and ideas about Utopia. The categorization process in the dreamcatcher model was, for example, based on implicit spectra that were discussed in literature and put together through interpretive processes. Moreover, the conceptions of the relations between Utopia and planning concepts throughout the various figures in the theoretical chapters were strongly based on assumptions derived from literature, as these are rarely explicitly discussed in existing literature. This lack of existing literature required me to make assumptions, based on how, for example, concepts such as designs and visions in general are constructed lead to an impact. The Utopian element is usually not discussed in such literature, and had to be connected through interpretive processes.

Context dependency of cases

As every case in this research concerned a unique Utopia, embedded in unique circumstances, shaped by unique (groups of) people with unique outcomes, there are a few points of reflection related to the dependency of the context. First, since the cases were so unique and strongly depended on specific circumstances and intentions, they were hard to compare. Every case showed similarities and differences, but there was not one line in Utopias, which made it hard to make generalisations. Moreover, the analysis was based on a strong explorative and open theoretical framework, making it hard to reflect critically on the findings during the analysis of the findings, as there are no rights or wrongs in the Utopias and their approaches. However, it was possible to reflect on what worked and did not work in specific cases and how this related to theoretical criteria. Finally, because of the uniqueness of the cases and their circumstances, the results are dependent on certain worldviews from the current time and age. Ideas on what Utopias look like will be very different again in 20 years from now and so these desires and developments should be considered in interpreting the outcomes.

Other methodological limitations

Finally, there were several smaller limitations that appeared throughout the methodology that lead to different outcomes than initially anticipated. For example, due to time constraints and difficulties in finding participants in some cases, I was not able to find multiple interview participants in each case, and as a consequence, decided to stop looking for them halfway through, even though the initial idea was to interview at least one agent of change and one interpreter per case. Again, due to the strongly explorative nature of this thesis and the widely available documentation in each case, this was not a large problem, but it did lead to a skewed representation of Utopian visions, which should be kept in mind in contemplating the outcomes of this research.

Similar to how it was difficult to find multiple perspectives in each case, it was also difficult to find the right person for an interview. Consequently, not every case was discussed with the most ideal interview contact person. For example, in the case of the Trips' Salt Beach, the findings from the interview revealed that I should have talked to a

different organisation to get better insights into the development and impact steps. Due to time constraints, I was not able to do so, which lead to a limited amount of empirical data in that case and a potentially skewed representation of the development process and ideas of that Utopia.

Finally, there were smaller errors in the data collection process. The biggest one, for example, consisted of technical issues in the interview for the Duurzaam Ameland case. This interview was conducted by telephone and in the transcription process it became clear that the conversation was not recorded correctly. This issue was eventually resolved by working out notes and coming back to contact person, but still resolved in a skewed representation of the original data.

6.7 FURTHER RESEARCH

In an attempt to perform a first exploration of the concept of Utopia, this research has focused on a number of demarcated topics that are related to Utopia and planning. During the research process new topics came up that were also considered relevant, but that were not part of the scope of this research. These topics are recommended for further research on the topic of Utopia in planning, in order to get a better understanding of this relationship and its potentials.

An example of such a topic is a temporary Utopia. The plans that were taken into consideration in this thesis were mostly connected to large-scale, radical plans. There was less focus on the smaller scale idealistic bottom-up Utopias, with the exception of projects like Transition Towns and De Peinder Mieden, and no attention at all on temporary variants of these initiatives, so-called 'pop-up initiatives'. Think of guerrilla gardening, community buildings, etc. as forms of empowering people to fight for their own Utopia (Curran, 2009). Although such plans are usually not very radical, they are cornerstones of a deeper desire for a different use of public spaces that has to be considered and is strongly connected to the democratizing of governance, which was attributed as one of the potential impacts of Utopias and visions (Madanipour, 2006).

Another topic that was touched upon in this thesis but which still requires more attention is the exploration and envisioning of Utopian worlds themselves. Despite looking into the Utopian visions, their construction processes and impacts, it was hard to get a coherent picture of the Utopian worlds that were behind these visions. Through the used methodology, only small elements of these worlds were captured in the interpretation of process descriptions and visions, while there is much more to explore about these worlds. Part of this is due to subconscious level in which these Utopias play a role in peoples' minds and the difficulty of formulating and expressing these ideas (Camp, 2017). One of the initial ideas for this research was to find out ways to bring that world to live through processes of serious gaming and group discussions, similar to what Levitas (2013) proposes, but it was eventually decided to focus this research on exploration in relation to planning instead. This capturing process of Utopias, however, is still relevant for finding out more about the Utopian worlds themselves.

In addition to these specific topics that deserve more attention in future research, there are also possibilities to learn more about the concept of Utopia through a general elaboration on methods used in this research. First a broader range of cases can be looked into that are better distributed across the Netherlands, and later on also the world. Due to the difficulties in Utopic criteria, the selection of cases was mostly based on well-known examples that were discussed in the media. This means that a lot of 'hidden gems' were unused, while they could still be very interesting. Moreover, given the strong historical role of Utopia in Dutch planning and the transition that the Dutch planning system it is making to collaborative and flexible planning, Utopia will likely play a different role in other systems and contexts. It is thus worthwhile to investigate the role of Utopias in other countries and regions in order to learn more about its potential. Finally, there is a lot to gain through the exploration and incorporation of the perspective of other actors on Utopias. The current focus was mostly put on the 'agents of change', or initiative takers and developers of a Utopia, in order to find out where these ideas came from and how they were developed. To better understand the impact of Utopias, however, it would be very useful to talk with the 'interpreters', people from the direct vicinity of the plan sites, and many more different groups that are impacted by a vision of a Utopia. This could reveal information about the persuasion process, the translation of ideas into actions and the general appreciation of Utopian ideas.

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