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Self Governance in the city

The role of citizen initiatives in organic area development

**Master thesis Environmental & Infrastructure Planning
(02-08-2016)**

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Abstract

The concept of self-governance (SG) is gaining more attention as a reaction to traditional central and top-down planning and the need to incorporate the civil society more in the development of their environment. The main idea is that self-governmental networks can cope better with an increasingly complex, uncertain and changing society. In practice, a more participatory cooperation of citizens to the environment is observed. Concrete concepts that emerge from this are citizen initiatives and organic area development. They behave freely within the institutional boundaries and conditions set by the government and collective parties. In this thesis it is investigated how they relate to each other. It is analysed how the government can stimulate citizen initiatives and how they influence organic area development. In turn, the contribution of organic area development to the urban environment is described. It is concluded that citizen initiatives play an important role in redeveloping and improving the liveability. Further on, this development builds up momentum and spread out over an area. The government can stimulate this by stimulating citizens to take action in the spatial environment and by creating triggers to spark citizen initiatives. It is also concluded that organic area development will not substitute traditional planning, but it will only be efficient in situations that call upon the resources on the civil society.

Key words: Self-governance, self-organization, citizen initiatives, organic area development, citizen participation, city acupuncture, shared governance

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List of abbreviations

CAS	Complex Adaptive System
CI	Citizen Initiatives
LSIAD	Large Scale Integral Area Development
OAD	Organic Area Development
SG	Self Governance
SO	Self Organization

1. Introduction

1.1 Cause

In a changing and globalizing world, spatial planning is challenged with a constant pressure on how to make spatial interventions in the environment. An increase in information, an improved accessibility of that information, improved technical means for communication and individualization are motors of processes of globalization that make the society we live in very complex (Boonstra, 2011). Interaction between people, organizations and communities seems to be taking a more important place in the global development every year. Although technical innovations make it possible to interact over great distances, this development also gives rise to a growing consciousness that it is also important to be *physically* close to each other. While one would expect that modern-day information technology would cause a dispersion of human activity across the world, it is exactly the opposite. Information, knowledge and skills that are only transferred through human interaction over a short distance become more valuable. It is expected that by the middle of the twenty-first century 80 percent of the world's population will live in urban areas (UN-Habitat, 2013). In a globalizing world, cities will be the hubs of a global interconnectedness.

Urban planning will also have to evolve with the globalizing world. The growing complex situations in cities ask for a new approach of planning (UN-Habitat, 2009). Classical planning approaches like the 'blueprint planning' are too technical to deal with problems that ask for a more collaborative approach. As the city is evolving rapidly, the need for a fitting planning approach also changes. Issues like sustainable development and financial crises add more dimensions to the complexity in the city (Buitelaar et al., 2012a). To deal with these problems an integrated planning approach is needed. Hajer and Zonneveld (2000) mentioned many years ago that changes in the societal context and institutional context have reduced the power of the Dutch planning system. All in all, there is a need for a change in planning approach for the efficient and sustainable development of cities (UN-Habitat, 2009).

There is however a way in which many cities are the same. Cities can be seen as complex adaptive systems (Batty, 2009). Their behaviour relates to complex systems that develop unpredictable between order and chaos. This means that the development of a city can be understood following the reasoning proposed by complexity theory: a set of principles that describe complex behaviour. So, to understand how to deal with problems in a city it could be beneficial to understand how complex systems work and how we can deal with the uncertain characteristics of such a system. Complex systems are hard to regulate. This implies that a top-down, centralized planning system is not efficient in the development of a city. Shove and Walker (2007) already argued if it is possible to intervene in a complex system that is dominated by global ideologies, global finance, commodity flows and their systemic interaction and interdependencies. In order to develop a sustainable planning approach that fits the needs of a changing city, a shift should be made from top-down, centralized planning to bottom-up, decentralised planning.

1.2 Goal and problem statement

Boonstra and Boelens (2011) mention that a bottom-up approach for planning in the Netherlands is not new. It has already been implemented since the 1960s. This is backed up by several reasons, for example economic, social and spatial reasons. The most relevant reason is however political, since the Dutch government aims to develop a sustainable and supportive society based on self-motivation (Boonstra and Boelens, 2011). Barthelemy et al. (2013) argue that therefore there is the need to create a planning strategy that is applicable in such a society, because a central, top-down planning approach posts limitations in complex issues in the city. One way to develop a planning approach that is applicable to a complex system is to use self-governance. Self-governance was used more and more in the first decade of the 21st century (Ruimtevolk, 2013). There is however a paradox in this. Boonstra and Boelens (2011) state that self-governance in participatory planning does not always have good results because a central government is often still too much involved. However, Karadimitriou (2011) states that for a city it is in many cases still a realistic goal to be a self-governing system, but the role of the government remains present. This means that a new bottom-up planning approach should be created that finds the right balance between governmental

influence and bottom-up development. This raises an interesting question. Where do governance and bottom-up development meet in the planning arena? And how can a government stimulate it? In other words, how is the duality between a government and a self-governing system? Or as Shove and Walker (2007) already mentioned: is it possible to change a system that is already dominated by interventions to a more adaptable approach?

One example of bottom-up development is organic area development. Organic area development is a concept that stimulates the natural development of the spatial environment on a large scale. It is an approach that combines the enabling and constraining power of the government and the flexibility, resources and open-endedness from the local community. It is therefore an interesting subject to research in this thesis. However, organic area development is an abstract concept, and as a result there is not a clear, concrete model that can be applied to other cities. It also means that the focus for the government shifts from goals to conditions.

The goal of this thesis is therefore to find out how organic area development can be conceptualized in a concrete model. This is done by describing and analysing how it is stimulated and facilitated by the government, what the conditions are and what the relevant institutional design is. This will also involve studying the decentralised characteristics, which comes down to studying how bottom-up initiatives influence spatial development and organic area development. The main research question of this thesis will therefore be:

What are the roles of various parties involved in organic area development and can it be a realistic approach to large-scale urban development?

The main research question will be answered based on the four following sub-questions:

- *How are self-governance, citizen initiatives and organic area development connected and in which form do they come?*
- *What is the role of the government and how should they act towards bottom-up development?*

- *In what ways can citizen initiatives stimulate organic area development?*
- *What actions can the government take to shape the conditions for organic area development?*

1.3 Relevance and methods

As mentioned above, self-governance and organic area development in planning is a relevant subject to study since it is a fairly new concept. Although the concept is in line with the development of theories about cities as complex adaptive systems, it has not always proven to be successful (Boonstra and Boelens, 2011). There is therefore the need to go a bit more in-depth in how organic area development works and how it can be used successfully. Moreover, since an increasing globalizing world that aims to stimulate sustainable development asks for an adaptive planning approach, this thesis could add to the scientific knowledge of self-governance and the conditions that shape the actions and actors that are influenced by them.

It was decided to conduct research among several cases in the city of Groningen that have a self-organizational character or are categorized as such by the government. Interviews have been held with initiators of the initiatives and governmental workers. The interviews were typed out to create a clear view of how self-governance is perceived by the actors. Further accounts of the methodology, cases and data collection can be found in the appendix section 6.1, to ensure a smooth passage from the theoretical background to the results.

1.4 Structure

The thesis is structured as follows. First, the theoretical background on self-governance in planning will be described. Consequently, the concepts of citizen initiatives and organic area development are described. Thirdly, the findings of the interviews are presented in the results section. In this section the sub questions are covered. The fourth chapter builds further upon the results. Here, the conclusions of the findings are discussed and sub questions are answered. Subsequently, in this chapter the main research question will be answered. Further on, the conclusions will be discussed and

recommendations for further research are proposed. Lastly, the appendix section holds the methodology chapter, which will explain what methods of data collection are used. In addition, the appendix holds the interview guide that was used for the interviews and an example of a transcript in Dutch.

2. Theory

In this chapter, the theoretical background of the thesis will be explained. It will shed light on what uncertainty causes in planning, how planning developed and how planning can benefit from citizen participation. Firstly, some background on uncertainty and complexity in planning will be explained. It is shown that the acceptance of uncertainty and increased complexity demanded a different approach to planning. After that, critiques on contemporary planning are discussed and why citizen participation and shared governance can resolve these critiques. It takes into account the differences between self-organization and self-governance. Further on, there will be elaborated on methods of citizen participation, principally citizen initiatives and organic area development. Lastly, it will be described how governments can approach organic area development. It will help create a framework for the thesis.

2.1 Acceptation of uncertainty in planning

The unsatisfied search for a clearly defined world has led to the belief that full certainty does not exist. That made it worthwhile to look at uncertainties. Uncertainties are countered by finding collective certainties though collaborative and communicative approaches (Gerrits et al., 2012). This turn in planning is also known as the communicative turn (Allmendinger, 2002). Interest for the communicative approach in planning grew in the 1990s (Rauws and De Roo, 2010). Basically, it implicitly means the acceptance of uncertainty in spatial planning. The planner becomes a mediator, advocate and guide for the actors involved (De Roo, 2010). The process becomes the central point, not the goals. This relates to a shift from 'government' to 'governance' (Hajer and Wagenaar, 2003; De Roo and Porter, 2007). Within governance there is a trend towards shared governance. It is more about the communal responsibilities in respect of planning issues (Rauws and De Roo, 2010). Shared governance can be seen as the dynamic partnership between the government and other parties that promotes collaboration, shared decision making and accountability for improving spatial quality and development. The local context and the responsibilities in turn led to area-oriented approaches that focused on horizontal and vertical cooperation and the involvement of the local community (Gerrits et al., 2012). By accepting diversity and uncertainty, spatial

planning has to incorporate local stakeholders in the planning process and keep in mind their interests but also use their knowledge and skills (Rauws and De Roo, 2010).

2.2 Complexity, time and becoming

Accepting uncertainties in planning means that there is no uniform truth. As a consequence, the truth now has to be determined by finding collective certainties in a shared perspective among actors. It creates a spectrum of planning approaches with multiple actors working towards a consensus over what is the best approach in a specific situation and sharing the responsibilities. This results in a shared governance perspective.

The communicative rationality provides opportunities to deal with increasing complexities in planning issues. For example, complexity is evident in 'wicked problems'. These are ill-structured problems that include multiple actors, multiple perspectives, conflicting interests and key uncertainties (Rosenhead, 1996; Rosenhead and Mingers, 2001; De Roo and Porter, 2007). Wicked problems are not easily tackled by approaches that do not take complexity into account. Therefore they require a less generic approach.

Complexity can be distinguished between static and dynamic complexity. Static complexity is a complex structure of a fixed system or environment. Because these systems are seen as a fixed or frozen state, their degree of is assumed constant (Kaur et al., 2009). Once the degree of complexity of a system is understood, the approach to interfere in the system becomes obvious. However, when time is considered to have an impact on systems, the complexity becomes dynamic. Dynamic complexity takes place between order and chaos. Non-linearity and time make it possible for the system to develop and change behaviour. Time in dynamic complexity makes way for development, progress, adaptation and change.

Furthermore, time is important in planning for another reason. Planners still approach uncertainties with their knowledge of the here and now and not much attention is paid to the dynamics of time and change (De Roo, 2010). As a consequence, these approaches

do not have a valuable meaning outside the 'here and now', since the focus of a rational decision is in the moment. This could mean that some projects lose their value in over time in a changing environment (Rauws and De Roo, 2010). Additionally, the planning process may be posed with unforeseen situations or disappointing results along the way, resulting in a need to adapt to the new situation. Moreover, contemporary planning approaches exist in a state of 'being', but rather should be developing into a state of 'becoming' depending on the complexity of the issue (De Roo, 2010). Planning approaches should therefore recognize the 'fuzzy' grey area on the planning spectrum.

2.3 Complex adaptive systems

Complexity can be a valuable contribution to planning, but it needs to be made understandable to see what it means for planning issues. Complexity can be connected to planning theory through systems theory. Systems theory aims to create general perceptions on structures that underlie planning issues (Rauws and De Roo, 2010). What makes systems theory useful in connecting planning and complexity is that systems theory has evolved in a way much like planning theory, also consisting of a spectrum of certainties and uncertainties, but using different terms. The spectrum of the classical systems theory distinguishes three system classes: classes I, II and III (Kauffman, 1991). The classes range from certain to uncertain, which corresponds to the spectrum in planning theory. The classes are named closed systems, feedback systems and network systems. These three systems are snapshots of a system and therefore represent static complexity in planning. When time is added, a fourth system emerges, namely a complex adaptive system (CAS) (Rauws and De Roo, 2010). A complex adaptive system develops through time, but is also nonlinear and uncertain. They are in a constant state of discontinuous change (Rauws and De Roo, 2010), and open and sensitive to contextual, autonomous changes (Portugali, 2006). Whereas the class I, II and III differ in degree of complexity, a class IV system *"evolves from simple and straightforward conditions to highly complex, chaotic situations that are highly unpredictable and susceptible to intervening interactions that take place continuously at various levels"* (Gleick, 1987; in De Roo, 2010). A CAS therefore represents dynamic complexity. Figure 1 shows the visual representation of adding time to static complexity.

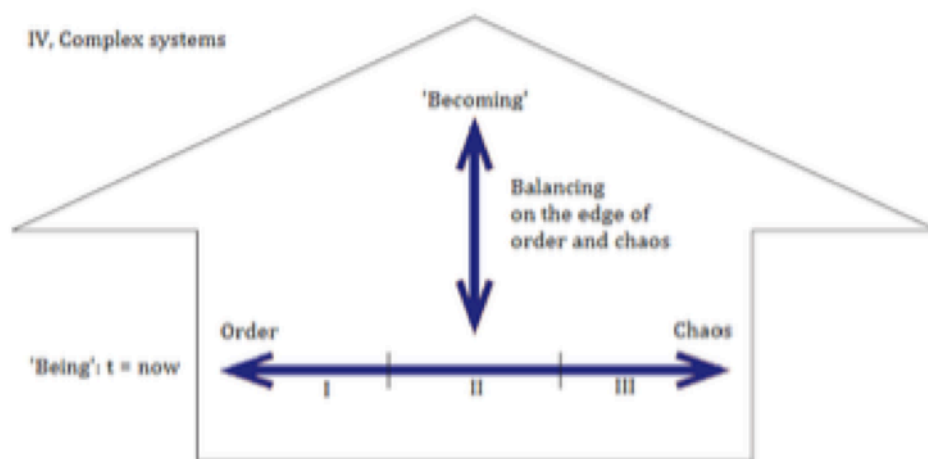


Figure 2: When time is included, a new dimension of complexity emerges. On the bottom spectrum the system classes I, II and III can be distinguished. They range from low complexity (order) to high complexity (chaos). Dynamic complexity is not measurable on this scale, so it is illustrated here that becoming is a different dimension of being (Rauws and De Roo, 2010).

Complex adaptive systems have several characteristics (Heylighen, 2008). First of all, new structures, patterns and behaviour emerge from discontinuous developments. Secondly, they are self-organizing. New structures emerge through spontaneous organization of actors without one of the actors controlling this process. Thirdly, complex systems are path-dependent on previous changes and developments. Future changes can therefore be partially explained, but not predicted, from developments from the past and the conditions that follow from it (Rauws and De Roo, 2010). Fourth, the development is determined by interactions of agents within and between systems. Different systems and subsystems influence each other, working with or against each other (Boonstra and Boelens, 2011; Rauws and De Roo, 2010). Fifth, they behave non-linear. Processes where there is no strict hierarchy between agents, levels of scale and processes. All agents within and between systems can influence each other (Byrne, 2003). Furthermore, complex adaptive systems have a dissipative character. Dissipative structures adapt and self-organize through their interactions with their environment. In open systems, energy, matter and information are exchanged between the system and the environment, which triggers the system to change (De Roo, 2015). Dissipative systems continuously change, reposition and seek their best fits that push them out of equilibrium and out of a stable state. In addition, they are multi-layered. Agents at one level form the building blocks for agents at a higher level. In short, this means that subsystems at one level are made up out of a combination of small bits of subsystems at

a lower level (Baicchi, 2015). Another critical characteristic of complex adaptive systems is self-similarity. It means that a system exhibits the same patterns across multiple scales. In the physical world it is evidenced in fractals, where the parts exhibit the quality of the entity's whole. In an organization, self-similarity can be encouraged by an organizational identity.

2.4 Cities as complex systems

The understanding of complexity provides helps to clarify and comprehend the nature of the world and the organisations we live in (Mitleton-Kelly, 2003). Although complexity science originates from the natural sciences and was later introduced in the social sciences, planning has rarely participated the debate (De Roo, 2010). Since dynamic complexity includes time, it could be a valuable contribution to planning, since planning is a discipline that attempts to grasp societal interaction with the physical environment and to intervene in that environment for the future (De Roo, 2010). Complexity provides ways for a planning approach that does not exclude non-linear development in time. Understanding complexity in planning provides planners with a more reflexive and realistic view on how control, guidance and influence on spatial development is possible. In order to do this, complex adaptive systems should be linked to cities. Multiple scientists have argued that cities themselves can be seen as complex adaptive systems (Portugali, 2000; De Roo, 2010; Rauws and De Roo, 2010). As Rauws and De Roo (2010) put it, a city evolves through time as a consequence of various contextual factors in combination with internal developments and growth. Portugali (2008) adds to this that cities are complex adaptive systems, but in that system are many more smaller complex systems that are all connected to each other and influence the development of the bigger system.

Within cities, the characteristics of complex adaptive systems can be distinguished. Parts of cities can be self-organizing in the way that it is a product of initiatives of actors, the citizens and organizations, interacting with spatial developments (Portugali, 2000). However, this is largely determined based on the conditions that are composed by the government and other collective parties under which development takes place. In addition, intent plays an important role. For example, the government or collective may

create the conditions for unintentional self-organizational development in an area, but this is still done with the intent to develop. On a collective level it is therefore not called self-organization, but rather a shared governance between the government and other parties. On the actor level, self-organization for example takes place by spontaneous citizen initiatives that create new spatial structures (Boonstra and Boelens, 2011). Cities exhibit non-linear behaviour as they are subject to unpredictable and uncontrollable development as the result of discontinuous interaction between actors. Minor changes in the system's context can result in major changes in time, depending on the instability of and the interference from the context affecting the system (Heylighen, 2008). The development of cities is largely path-dependent. Once the structures of a city have settled, it can develop and attract more and more momentum on the foundations of the city. The next development builds to a large extent on the present situation.

2.5 Planning system and critiques

As mentioned before, the development of communicative rationality and the recognition of uncertainty sparked a diverse set of planning approaches. However, contemporary planning practice is still criticised. The criticism is based on the government who has trouble addressing the increasingly complex and changing society. This is partly because governments attempt to reduce and create order in complexity, which causes a mismatch between what the government wants to control and can control (Teisman, 2015). Buitelaar et al. (2012a) stress that precise planning of large-scale integral area development (LSIAD) proves to be difficult because contextual uncertainties are hard to cope with. In addition, large pre-investments cause big organisational and financial interrelatedness with project developers. The consequence of this integration is that small setbacks can influence and even threaten the progress of a whole project (Buitelaar, 2012; in Buitelaar et al., 2012b). Moreover, it means that large-scale integral area development is not flexible enough to deal with complexities and uncertainties accordingly (Teisman, 2015). Boonstra and Boelens (2011) therefore state that there needs to be called upon the decentralization of spatial policy and simplification of regulations in Dutch planning (Rauws et al., 2010) to aim for a more participatory approach to large area developments. However, Boonstra and Boelens (2011) argue that this participatory approach has not yet lived up to its expectations because planning

proposals remain controlled to a large extent by public government and initiatives from the civil society are not very well conceived. This reinforces the central position of governments and prevents bottom-up initiatives of change (Boonstra and Boelens, 2011). To overcome this problem, multiple authors (Boonstra, 2011; Boonstra and Boelens, 2011; Hua, 2012; Barthelemey et al., 2013; Nederhand, 2014) have opted for a shared governance approach. It involves the engagement of citizens in the contribution to their urban environment and consists of self-governmental networks. Self-governmental networks are comprised of organizations and citizens that behave autonomously under the conditions set by collective parties in a shared governance approach. They often emerge within institutional and legislative contexts and are therefore influenced, enabled and constrained by the government (Boonstra, 2011).

2.6 Self-organization or self-governance

The problem with large-scale integral area development is that traditional planning is not primarily designed to handle different kinds of uncertainties and complexities, like population development. The sheer size of cities goes hand in hand with a great preamble of investments and an interconnectedness of administrative, organisational and financial dimensions (Meerkerk et al., 2011). Too optimistic predictions also happen a lot. Urban development remains large-scale, inflexible and one-sided; the role of citizens is often marginal. Urban planning should therefore shift to an approach that is based on small and decentralised parties to better cope with the complex and changing nature of the urban environment (Urhahn, 2010).

This can be achieved by stimulating a more participatory cooperation between government and the civil society. Boonstra and Boelens (2011) define participation as *“the goals set by government bodies on which citizens can exert influence through procedures set by these government regimes themselves, resulting in processes of thematic, procedural, geographical – and so on – inclusion”*. In another view, participation consists for big part of self-organizational networks, which are “community based networks of citizens, autonomously organized from governmental planning procedures yet part of the urban system, aiming for spatial interventions in their own self-interest and within their own administrations” (Boonstra, 2011). There are, however, a few remarks on this concept of self-organization that give a twist to the definition.

As De Roo (2015) states, the concept of self-organization is made up of two independent words that do not fundamentally relate to each other, but is often misunderstood in common understanding. In the non-linear understanding, 'self' relates to events that begin by itself. In processes of becoming, self is considered as effortless, without intent or spontaneous. According to Herbert (1963) an organization is a whole of parts in relatedness, of things and events in a network of spatial and temporal relationships. It refers to collective intentions that are institutionally prearranged. The understandings of self and organization thus contradict. Put together, the self refers to spontaneous and the organization refers to pattern forming without collective intent (De Roo, 2015). Therefore, self-organization can be defined as a situation of pattern forming without a purposeful behaviour, or without intent. It must therefore be regarded as an autonomous process triggered by and responsive to its environment (De Roo, 2015). Technically, the reference to 'goals set by the government' and 'part of the urban system, aiming for spatial interventions' in the definition of Boonstra (2011) cannot be self-organization since it involves too much intent, while it was just stated that it is all about no intent. Nederhand (2014) states that there are therefore two strands of self-organization in the social sciences: a normative and a functional. The normative strand refers to self-organization as an ideological concept. It encompasses the idea that social and economic issues should be dealt with at the local level by the local communities. The functional strand looks at it as a governance concept. It is identified as the adaptation of behaviour of non-governmental actors and the emergence of collective action without pressure from the government (Nederhand, 2014). This is also known as self-governance (Pierre and Peters, 2000; Fenger and Bekkers, 2007). De Roo (2015) also points out that the way self-organization is used in popular belief is synonymous with what he would describe as self-governance, a term that is different than self-organization: *"Self-governance is intentional and is a generic term which refers to processes of self-regulation and self-management. Self-regulation is intent all over, starting with a joint initiative and with actions in support of this initiative. Self-management, moreover, could be considered as intentional with respect to the action taken and consequently also with respect to its collective result."* In short, it could be summarized as follows. The self in self-organization means 'without organization' and in self-governance it means 'under the responsibility of a collective without interference of a higher body', such as an authority or government (De Roo, 2015). It thus seems that

intent is an important factor that distinguishes self-governance from self-organization. But how is intent integrated in spatial development? Intent relates to the institutional linkages between the government and the organization or project. Moreover, when there is a governance agreement among collective parties, for example in a shared governance model, there is a question of an institutional design. The institutional design ensures that planning issues are dealt with according to the agreement, since institutions shape the projects. It can thus be stated that the institutional design represents intent, therefore concluding that a self-governing organization is in this way 'under the responsibility of a collective' (De Roo, 2015). In contrast to that, self-organization does not take have these institutional links. Intent thus does not play a role in self-organization.

2.7 Citizen initiatives

Citizen participation is characteristic in self-governance. The decentralised organization of citizens and initiatives adjust to changes of the network society faster than governmental organizations. Citizen initiatives are projects of citizens that participate in shaping their neighbourhood and working for the common good (Bakker et al., 2012). In other words, citizen initiatives are a form of collective action in which the participants determine by themselves what the goals and methods are. In addition, they are also actively involved in producing the goods (Bakker et al., 2012). Citizen initiatives originate out of a self-governing environment, where the government decreases its interference in spatial development, but the institutional design stimulates and facilitates that citizens take the lead in taking action. However, it is still a form of collaboration with public authorities (Hurenkamp et al., 2006).

Many have stated (Boonstra, 2011; Boonstra and Boelens, 2011; Hua, 2012; Barthelemey, 2013; Nederhand, 2014) that citizen participation is not only a more efficient way of dealing with local planning issues, but that there are also other arguments in favour of more citizen initiatives and participation. Moreover, VROM (2007a; 2007b) and VROM (2004) summarize them as follows. First, it may contribute to social coherence among the inhabitants to better the integration and cultural diversity that is seen as an obstacle to regeneration. Secondly, it would increase the involvement of residents in their environments. This in turn would lead to the fact that

citizens will feel more accountable to the conditions of their environment and will put more effort in maintaining and improving the spatial quality. Creating this 'sense of belonging' increases the embeddedness of the local community in spatial development. Thirdly, citizen initiatives may have a positive outcome on the economy. Initiatives, self-employment and willingness to invest in the local community strengthen the economic robustness and resilience to changing circumstances. And finally, greater civil participation is compatible in the increasing self-motivated society, aiming to constrict the gap between the government and citizens. As Boonstra and Boelens (2011) state, *"[it] requires democratic renewal and a strategy to improve the democratic legitimacy and the problem-solving capacity of public policies by improving quality of the interaction between government and citizens and broadening support, thereby accelerating the policy process"*. It shows hereby that in a more participatory approach, local planning issues become more of a task and shared responsibility of the public, private and civil actors (Boonstra, 2011). There are however some drawbacks. Governments experience difficulties dealing with the diversity that emerges in the dialogue with the civil society since only the 'professional citizen' or the few citizens that have time to take on the time consuming procedures will participate in planning procedures (Frissen, 2007; Boonstra, 2011). The professional citizen is familiar with governmental procedures and knows how to use and respond to them (De Graaf, 2007). Moreover, there is no democratic distribution of authority and responsibility to local people. Subsequently, there is no guarantee that outcomes of participatory processes are assigned to legit policy actions. Boonstra (2011) outlines that government policies are executed in the way they were outlined beforehand, regardless of the outcome of the participation process.

There are roughly four common characteristics that can be found in most citizen initiatives. First of all, citizen initiatives are flexible in their process (VROM, 2007b; Boonstra, 2011). They are able to quickly respond to changes in context, demand or supply. This is mainly due to the horizontal organizational structure of the initiative. There are no or very little organizational layers, which makes the communication between the initiator and executors easy and direct. In addition to that, there is no bureaucracy. Secondly, temporality plays an important role in citizen initiatives (Boonstra, 2011). A local initiative has no end date. There is no plan, so it is not clear when something is 'done' or when a goal is achieved. And goals can change due to the

flexibility of the initiative. A side effect of this is uncertainty. Initiators do not know when their permit to build will be revoked. Thirdly, there is a focus on process (Boonstra, 2011). As mentioned above, there is no plan that states what the goal is and when it is reached. A local initiative is more of a strategical beacon in the development of an area. Although a local initiative can certainly have a goal, sometimes the only thing that is talked about is success. Lastly, citizen initiatives are independent and to a great extent small-scale (VROM, 2007b). They are often funded with the money of the initiators. This also makes them independent from the government. If the initiative fails to gain viability, they are only responsible for themselves. This also prevents them from growing, since it takes some risk financially to let the initiative grow in something bigger.

Nederhand (2014) states that many authors, among others the definition of Boonstra and Boelens (2011), argue that self-governance is merely the absence of governmental involvement or any form of external control. However, Nederhand (2014) also concludes that the government is unlikely to become obsolete and that it will always find ways to cooperate with citizens. This is in line with the statement of Hurenkamp (2006) that citizen initiatives are often a collaboration with the government. Moreover, citizen initiatives and governmental actors do not exclude or contrast each other, but they exist side by side and influence each other. Boonstra (2011) mentions that there should be a planning approach that links citizen initiatives and their collaboration with collective parties. This can be done based on organic area development.

2.8 Organic area development

As mentioned before, the problem with large-scale area development is that it has difficulties catching different kinds of uncertainties in its grip. To overcome this problem, the concept of organic area development was developed. Organic area development (OAD) is an area development concept as a reaction to shallow, technical and exclusive planning approaches. The main idea is that organic area development should be better able to cope with uncertainty and risks in large scale planning projects (Buitelaar et al., 2012a). It is a network of relatively small-scale developments with an open-ended outcome without blueprints (Buitelaar et al., 2012a). Organic area development thus differs from large-scale integral area development in that the scale of

the project is broken down in multiple smaller projects. Developments and management intertwine. There is a dominant role for the end user and a facilitating role for the government. In this perspective OAD can be seen as a process, instead of a project. It is often not known beforehand where developments will take place and they happen dispersed in space. Figure 2 outlines the contrasts between LSIAD and OAD, although not suggesting that one approach rules out the other. They represent a spectrum and can exist besides each other.

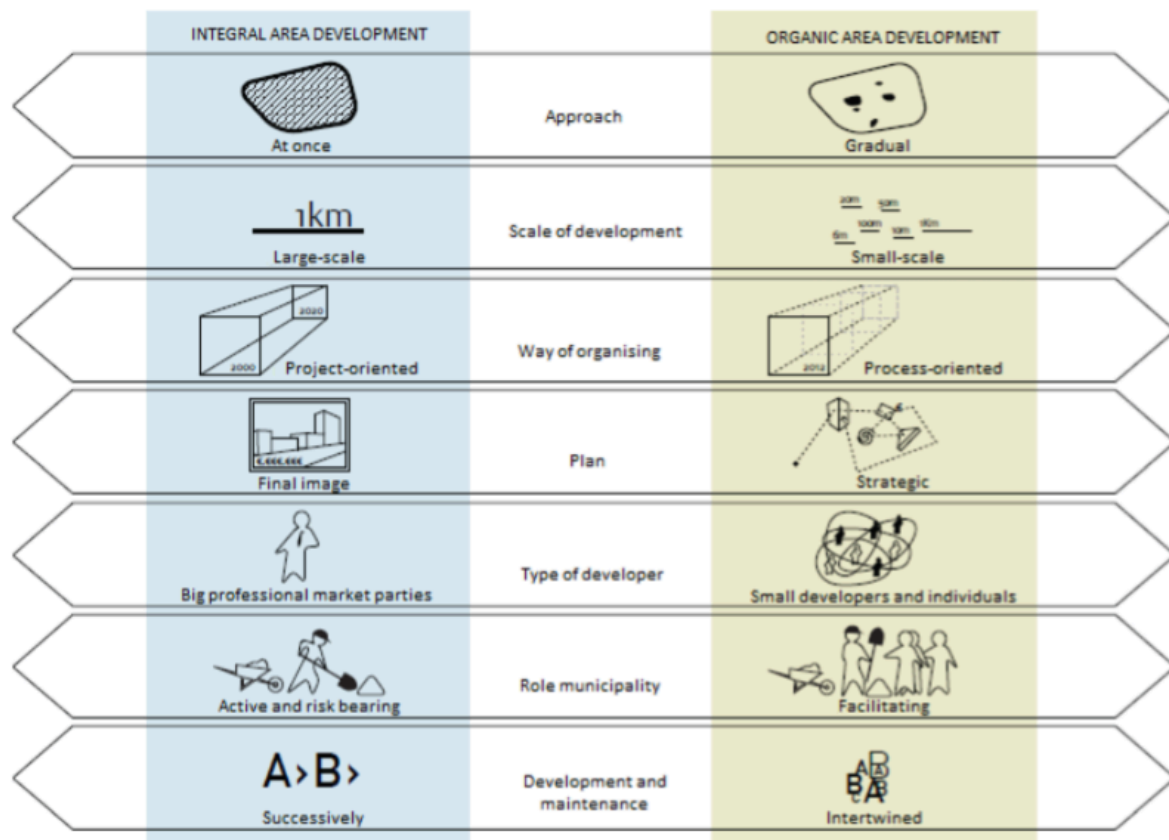


Figure 3: Large Scale Integral Area Development vs. Organic Area Development (Buitelaar et al., 2012a)

Herbert (1963) draws the link of organic area development with other organic theories and concludes that organic theories are concerned with unity and wholeness. An organic system is an interrelated network of actors in all kinds of diversity on all levels, from the smallest to the biggest level. It behaves as a changing, evolving and diverse, interrelated entity that has no destination. This is similar to complex adaptive systems. An area that is organically developed is a more complete and whole version of just a set of self-governing bits. To quote Herbert (1963), an organic city: *“will be designed to facilitate growth, change, and renewal-processes of change will take place in an organic way, so that*

the balance of the city as a whole is not destroyed but, by a process of emergent evolution, is ever recreated [...] is one whose form and structure is consistent with its purpose: and the purpose of the organic city is to create a life - enhancing environment for men living in communities [...] will provide the stimulation of diversity, and a maximum of contrast contained within an overriding unity". Hence, organic area development could be an efficient and decentralised planning approach for large-scale areas.

The unpredictable relationship between the actors makes organic area development a complex process. The more projects and initiatives there are, the more complex and diverse organic area development is (Buitelaar et al., 2012a). In addition, because there are various different starting points and different development courses for various participating actors, such a process is non-linear and is unpredictable. This can, but does not have to, make it successful in adapting to the environment (Plein et al., 1998). Furthermore, organic area development should be citizen-led to promote diversity in structure and participants. Plein et al. (1998) emphasize that citizen initiatives have the resources and motivation to take initiative for economic and communal development and they do not need external help from governments. Besides citizens, OAD also consists of other actors and organizations, mostly venues that are motivated outside and independent of established institutional arrangements and parties that hold collective interests (Plein et al., 1998). These parties are often business initiatives that are restricted because they need to fit in with the economic cluster

Arnstein (1969) Ladder of citizen participation

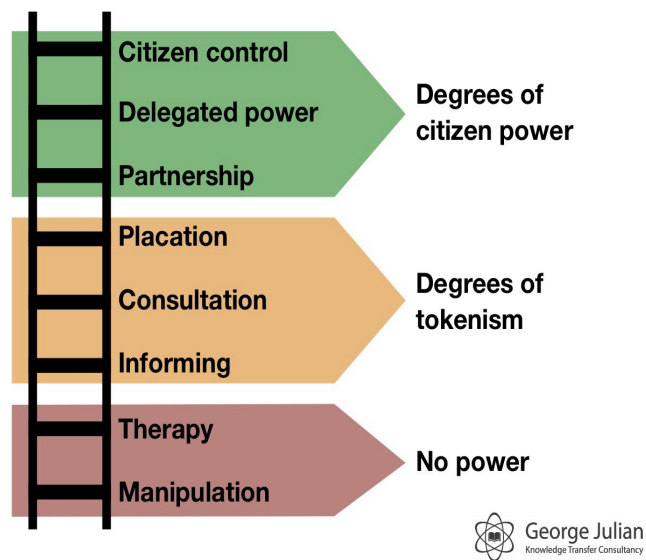


Figure 4: Arnstein's ladder of participation (Arnstein, 1969)

of the area, which is often creative industry (Buitelaar et al., 2012a). Creative industry comprises art, media, creative business services and traditional and artisanal activities.

In addition, a relatively small portion is occupied for freelancers or renting out of conference space. On Arnstein's ladder of participation (1969) (Figure 3), that illustrates participation as a practice in spatial planning, organic area development can be categorized in the highest degrees of citizen power.

Although organic area development could diminish governmental power in urban development, it is actually the task of the government to promote and stimulate organic area development. In this view, Evans et al. (2009) concludes that the government's task changes from performer of planning to enabler of planning. The planner becomes a mediator, advocate and guide for the actors involved (De Roo, 2010). While it sounds a little contradictory that governments have a role in citizen-led development, governments should perform bottom-up politics. This entails ensuring that there is enough freedom for citizens and organizations to access the planning arena. The governance side of organic area development is thus creating a framework that promotes diversity and freedom of actors and projects, and still coordinating them into the right direction to meet a higher set of goals (Evans et al., 2009). The tasks of the governments change to "facilitating and supportive behaviour, monitoring information and managing incentives".

The government can facilitate organic area development in different ways. Roughly four ways of facilitating are distinguished, namely communicative, organizational, financial and juridical (Buitelaar et al., 2012a). First, communicative facilitating encompasses making plans and visions. Blueprint plans and outcomes do not fit in organic area development. Instead, they are replaced by so-called development plans. A development plan includes inspiration images and abstract development goals, but these goals are not fixed. They serve only as an inspiration source. Although this is beneficial for the flexibility, it may also be problematic smaller initiatives, since they depend on the success of the development plan. Secondly, organizational facilitating is the governmental practice. It involves the actions and practices that the government can take to show supportive behavior. It encompasses for example the skills of the governmental workers. Thirdly, financially facilitating means that the government moves away from being the main exploiter of an area. This stimulates the process way of working, since it gives small initiatives the opportunity to exploit their own ground.

Lastly, juridical facilitating means that within legislation there has to be searched for a more process approach (Buitelaar et al., 2012a). According to Buitelaar et al. (2012a) the current legislation offers a lot of opportunities for governments to practice planning in participation with the society.

2.9 Conditions for organic area development

In this paragraph it is explained what conditions are created by the government. As mentioned before by Evans et al. (2009), it is the government's task to create a framework that promotes and facilitates bottom-up initiatives. A shift towards a more horizontal form of steering and citizen-led action could decrease governmental power, but the government is still able to enable organic growth. In this shift from focus on content to a focus on process, it is the government's task to create conditions (Evans et al., 2009). Plein et al. (1998) emphasize that this entails shifting from prescribing behaviour to supporting and facilitating behaviour by creating initiatives, monitoring information and providing information. This relates to a shared governance approach that is characterized by the focus on processes instead of projects. This approach is characterized by openness, interaction, searching for collective information for shared needs, guiding participants and flexibility to changing circumstances (Buitelaar et al., 2012b). As we will see below, the shared governance approach requires governments to have an active, external oriented and accommodating attitude. From here, several conditions are created wherein organic area development and citizen initiatives can develop.

From the shared governance approach six conditions originate that facilitate citizen initiatives. First, they require strong initiating conditions, or an incentive with a disruptive nature (Bootsma and Lechner, 2002; Meerkerk et al., 2011). Such an imbalance puts existing structures and behaviours under pressure. A disruptive incentive can also be seen as a trigger event (Portugali, 2000; Birkland, 1998). A trigger event can for example be an intervention project in a certain area, which causes friction among actors. To deal with this trigger event, actors have to cooperate with each other. It requires an open attitude that is based on mutual trust (Meerkerk et al., 2011). From then on, a vision is created. It is the identification of common goals that all parts of the

community can agree on. This is essential because it establishes an important common ground for the community to take action on (Nelson, 2000). Diverse backgrounds and interests should be aligned; otherwise they can prevent collective action.

Second, the relationships between the actors should be based on trust. Nederhand (2014) explains that the social capital in a specific constellation may promote cooperation. Social capital can be seen as an overarching concept that entails the features of a group or community that enable actors to take action together more effectively (Putnam, 1995). These features consist of networks, norms and trust. Huygen et al. (2012) adds to this that it also refers to a sense of belonging. Trustworthy relationships are also needed to deal with the triggering events mentioned in the first condition. In summary, social capital of a community can be a good catalyst of self-governance.

The third condition is the exchange and interplay of ideas, information and experiences and the focus, skills and knowledge to exchange them (Nederhand, 2014). Comfort (1994) shows that actors with a lot of interaction were more likely to adjust their behaviour in order to reach a certain shared goal. However, it is important to keep a tight focus, since a too many actors may cause a blurred resolution of the shared goals (Kauffman, 1993; Uzzi and Spirro, 2005). Hence, it may be stated that the development of a clear, shared goal stimulates the quality of the learning process and the ability to make choices (Bootsma and Lechner, 2002; Comfort, 1994; Huygen et al., 2012). It is thought that an engaged and educated public will rouse itself to secure necessary developments for community. With easy access to information they can be trusted to act on their behalf (Nelson, 2000). In addition, transparency is required to ensure that interaction between the government and the actors is efficient. This means that there should be clear and enabling rules and governmental information should be easily accessible (Buitelaar et al., 2012a).

The fourth condition refers to the geographical features of a place, and more importantly the physical and virtual location of the interaction (Nederhand, 2014). In order to make the most effective and the most informed decisions, information should be available at one location or organization. In short, Comfort (1994) states that it is therefore important that there are shared knowledge bases, open communication

channels and clear feedback mechanisms. A physical location of interaction may be a community centre. But if such a physical location may not be present, the ICT, Internet and social media may act as a virtual spot of interaction and help share the necessary information (Bekkers, 2004).

The fifth condition can be defined as a complex form of leadership that promotes boundary-spanning activities (Nederhand, 2014). These are activities of individuals that facilitate and protect the free flows of ideas, people and resources within organizations (Meerkerk et al., 2011). In addition, it refers to the activities that help to protect self-organizing activities within the organization such as acquiring of political and financial support (Van Buuren and Loorbach, 2009; Meerkerk et al., 2011). In short, it means facilitating and ensuring that self-organizing activities take place in protected environments.

Lastly, the mutual adaptation of actor roles involves that existing practices should be altered (Kaufmann, 1993; Comfort, 1994; Meerkerk et al., 2011). This is especially important in a sector where the government played a dominant role before. When governments decide to take their hands off a project, they leave a kind of vacuum where it is unclear what the roles of the actors and legislation are. The actors should then have enough freedom and flexibility to change their individual behaviour to deal with new challenges, positions and conventions. Moreover, they should be able to develop autonomously without authorities telling them what to do (Comfort, 1994; Meerkerk et al., 2011). It could mean that the government turns detailed and restrictive regulations into enabling and constraining rules in which the actors have the space and freedom to develop their own ideas. One way this could be achieved is by framework legislation (Meerkerk, 2011). Framework laws lay down general obligations and principles, but can be filled in locally by situational policy that presumes conditions for specific situations. This way, it is possible that general guidelines can be used to ensure that the developer or actor has room and freedom for developing their own ideas concerning an area, but in order to put those ideas in practice the conditions can be changed.

This section described the six conditions that make up the framework to facilitate organic area development. Summarizing, the conditions are as follows. There should be strong initiating and constraining conditions, the presence of social capital, the

exchanging of ideas and knowledge, geographical advantages, boundary spanning activities and mutual adaptation of roles.

2.10 Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework of the theories and concepts that are used in this thesis is presented in figure 4. It concisely shows the concepts that are used to answer the main research question. It shows that there are multiple developments that cause citizen initiatives. Overall, participation is the cornerstone of citizen initiatives. In turn, the government can facilitate citizen initiatives. Citizen initiatives contribute to conditions that are required for organic area development. The government can also facilitate these conditions. Furthermore, once the conditions are right, organic area development may take place, but it is not certain that it will happen.

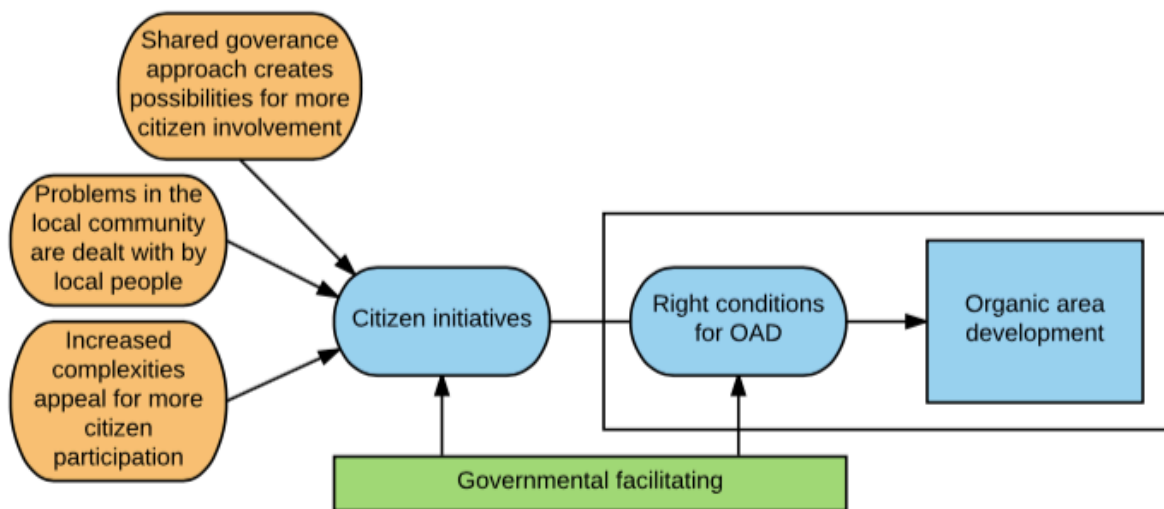


Figure 5: Conceptual framework

3. Results

This chapter will present the results that were derived from the interviews. The findings will help answering the sub questions and eventually the main question. The results are structured as follows. First of all, the context of the cases is explained and why they were chosen. Secondly, this chapter will go more in-depth in how citizen initiatives and organic area development relate to self-governance. It shows how initiatives and organic area development are connected in the governance approach in this research, but also denotes that the differences between the two concepts have to be carefully taken into account to. Subsequently, the role of the government in stimulating citizen initiatives and organic area development is discussed. It will be revealed that the challenge for the government is to put policy into practice. After that, the role of citizen initiatives in spatial development in discussed. It suggests that the government could become more practically involved trough real estate. Consequently, it will be revealed that there is a specific target group and a few real estate characteristics that seem to be important in this process. Concluding, the findings will be combined in the concept of city acupuncture. The results are derived from the own experiences and knowledge of the interviewees. The interviewees have different backgrounds, ranging from government workers to specialized workers on self-governance to initiators of citizen initiatives. Altogether it constructs a viewpoint on organic area development that must not be seen as the hard truth, but as a representation of the involved interviewees.

3.1 Introduction to the cases

The conceptual model in figure 4 reveals how the concepts of citizen initiatives and organic area development relate to each other in self-governmental networks. It is shown that participation stands at the centre of citizen initiatives and organic area development. Together, they represent self-governmental networks or organizations. They act relatively freely and autonomously without pressure from outside. Furthermore, it is clear that all of the action takes place within the institutional boundaries set by the government and collective parties. Initiatives and organizations in organic area development therefore do not fully behave autonomously and freely, but are subject to the situational conditions in which they take place. The government

creates the conditions that enable and constrain citizen initiatives and organic area development.

It is important to realize that the seven cases in this thesis are also influenced by the institutional design of the government. The cases are chosen on the basis of a map (figure 5) that is made in cooperation with the government of Groningen, which was created to map the self-organizational capacity in the city of Groningen. All cases are initiatives that originate bottom-up from the society. The government of Groningen enables the initiatives, and in some cases even helped to set them up since the city had a stake in it or could benefit from it. On the other hand, the initiatives are constrained, mostly by legislation regarding ground, development plans or safety measures in buildings. It constrains the initiatives to behave freely, but the enabling conditions are still created by the government. It indicates that the cases have to be seen as self-governmental initiatives that are institutionally linked to the government.

3.2 Connectedness of self-governance, initiatives and organic area development

To put the findings in perspective this section will first explain what place the initiatives take in organic area development and how the interviewees see their role in their environment.

Among the interviewees there was some confusion about the meaning of the concept self-governance. This was caused by the difference in the popular understanding and scientific meaning of the concept. Interviewee E for example, who works as an expert of self-organization for the government of Groningen, describes how he understands the concept:

“Self-organization in a city is not so much spontaneous pattern forming that you see in nature or physics or something. I define it as something that people plan for themselves, start it up themselves and do for themselves. The government only comes in to the picture if the people run into a barrier. (...) Then the government can cooperate, coproduce, facilitate or think along, but the key is that they act on what is happening there

now. That is then self-organization as we understand it. Something begins there and we do not decide what your role is, you determine that yourself and we relate to that. That is pure self-organization in this sense.” (Interviewee E)

This process illustrates self-governance as it is described earlier in chapter two. However, there are some small deviations. Whereas the definition from the literature emphasizes the collective responsibility, the interviewees seem to focus on what individual people can plan and govern for themselves. Furthermore, the literature refers to only the institutional design that enable and constrain initiatives, while the results from the cases are more focused on the trade-off between the physical location the initiative. Furthermore, it encompasses asking the government for help once the initiatives stall or fail to move forward by themselves. According to the interviewees, this is an important difference in definition since initiatives are not only bound by institutional design, but also by physical design. So, in practice, the physical attributes of a location get a lot more attention than in literature. This originates from the absence of cultivable ground. Buildings and roads in a city prevent that the permanent structure of a city is not easily altered by spatial initiatives. Interviewee J explains that self-governance therefore takes place at other aspects.

“The government says: we retreat and the ball is in the civilians’ court. If you want something, than you have to get to work. But you cannot take your city block down with your shovel and say: I am going to nicely self-organize this place into something else. Your neighbours won’t be happy. It is impossible. Besides, it would take way too much money and time. So, you are bound to the surroundings and it limits spontaneous activities. So, the focus then shifts to self-governing approaches in processes or generating of finances. I would call it self-governance, yeah.” (Interviewee J).

The interviewees are thus aware of the differences between activities that begin spontaneously and self-governing activities. This distinction is important since it implies different roles for the government. For example, the government can have development plans for a piece of ground, which indirectly links them institutionally to the spatial environment. The real estate and activities on it is then under the responsibility of a collective (De Roo, 2015). This makes it self-governance. In contrast, self-organization

mainly focuses on concrete activities that are planned, started up and done by actors themselves. Self-organizational activities thus indicate legislative linkages. Still, it was surprising that most interviewees preferred using the word self-organization to name self-governing processes since it is embedded as a popular concept in everyday life, as was also already exposed in chapter two. All in all however, what can be seen is that the difference between self-organization to self-governance entails that the government takes their hands off activities by the community, but institutional linkages keep them under their responsibility.

By taking their hands off, the government gives an opportunity to the market to develop an area naturally. The development is triggered by an undesirable situation. Multiple initiators mention that because people experienced nuisances and decay in the neighbourhood, this urged for a change. This corresponds with the strong initiating conditions or an incentive with a disruptive nature mentioned by Bootsma and Lechner (2002) and Meerkerk et al. (2011). The initiator then took initiative to overcome the problems. This is called a local initiative or a community based initiative (Boonstra, 2011). The demand for a change in an area may be of different aspects, namely social, spatial, environmental or cultural. There may be the need for a change in the social environment when an area attracts people or criminal activities that aggravate the liveability in that area. Such development radiates its negative energy on neighbouring areas, causing it to create a vicious cycle. Other demands for change may be environmental or spatial. Spatial demand can encompass for example wasteland that has yet to be cultivated or there are no plans for development of the site anytime soon in the future. The initiating situation can also be a combination of social, spatial, environmental and cultural aspects. Interviewee D gives an example of this.

"It did not go well in this area. It was a wasteland of maybe 8 hectares. This whole terrain was dramatic, it was seen as the wretched place in the city. There were problems with the parking spot, nuisance, drugs problems. The people that lived in the neighbourhood saw that this was a horrible development and it radiated on the neighbouring area." (Interviewee D).

This shows that inhabitants of the neighbourhood took initiative to do something against the deteriorating situation. The initiating situation was mainly spatial, the 8 hectares of rough terrain. The area attracted nuisance in the form of drugs abuse and underground cultures. This cultural change over time led to a vicious circle of social decline in the neighbouring area and shopping streets. The shopping area suffered decline, and overall the area became repellent. This shows the non-linear and path-dependent behaviour in a complex adaptive system (Byrne, 2003; Rauws and De Roo, 2010). Furthermore, it shows how it develops through time and it is sensitive to contextual changes (Portugali, 2006). This can be seen as the trigger event or incentive with disruptive nature (Meerkerk et al. (2011), which is one of the six conditions that facilitate organic area development that was mentioned in chapter two. Actors cooperated with each other to deal with this. The government sometimes anticipates these situations by alarming the local people about a certain development, in the hope that the local people react by setting up an initiative. Interviewee H clarifies how a problematic situation is brought under the attention.

“Society and space are intrinsically linked. So, what we see is that if we get signals from the government that there is a bad development going on somewhere, we take a look and almost all of the time the root of the problem is deterioration or the lack of occupancy in buildings. There you have your spatial problem.” (Interviewee H).

An interesting finding can be seen here. It is clear that social and environmental problems are the triggers for action in this example. However, the government does not take responsibility for themselves to solve the problems, as one would expect is a key task for them. Instead, they rather appeal to the local community by drawing attention of the problems to possible initiators. It makes citizen initiatives cooperations with the government (Hurenkamp, 2006). So, the government can easily influence possible points of interest. This means that the government could still steer development, but this also may undermine the interest of the citizens. They report in some cases that they felt comfortable in their environment, but then felt obligated to take action when they were pointed out so-called nuisances. Interviewee C explains the importance of this process.

“It is a bit like throwing a rock in a pond, especially when you are in the middle of a city. You also influence people. It is not just one thing, like cheering up a street. You make people more aware of their neighbourhood. It is a bit of social development. A whole spectrum is put in motion.” (Interviewee C).

Thus, social aspects are important for spatial development. Boonstra and Boelens (2011) stated that citizen initiatives could increase social coherence, local economy and self-motivation of the society. However, it was found that this is not unconditional. This has to do with the fact that initiatives may take many forms. For example, they can be ‘open laboratories’, like the Open Lab Ebbinge, where a piece of land is temporarily issued to a group of exploiters to experiment with small projects. Initiatives can be the building of a playground or vegetable garden in a neighbourhood. Citizen initiatives can also be creative breeding grounds, where artists or social workers produce local products or provide a safe workplace for underprivileged people. Or they can be living-and-working communities that thrive solely on the involvement of the inhabitants. But they can also be sustainable energy projects that are not locally organized but dispersed across a bigger area. These initiatives add little to the local social coherence or local economy, since they are boundary-spanning and often are not linked by the local community. Interviewees at the government of Groningen state that initiatives can be practically everything, but not all initiatives have equal positive influence on the local community.

Citizen initiatives are a pretty straightforward phenomenon. In contrast, organic area development proves to be harder to define. Initiators of citizen initiatives are not really aware of the role they take in organic area development. They admit that it is out of their scope and therefore not really know how to see it. This is mainly because organic area development is an abstract concept and there are few practical actions that actors can take. The desired development is often only showed in development plans, but how these goals should be reached is not clear. In addition, initiators admit that the development plans are not easily accessible for citizens. This falls under communicative facilitating (Buitelaar et al., 2012a). Moreover, the development plans could be seen as a visual framework from the government that indicates that areas should develop. However, the government mentions that organic area development should not be seen

as a policy or design goal, but that it is more just an appearance or state of multiple open ended, bottom-up initiatives that are connected with each other.

"I do not think that it must be the purpose of policy to state that organic development must take place at this and this place. Look, I believe in looking at a place and see what the possibilities are and hitch on to that. And then, multiple initiatives may form a system that holds more than the sum of the parts. But I cannot say exactly what that is. It cannot be 'we are organically developing that place and not that place'. It is an open characteristic" (Interviewee D).

Organic area development should thus not be seen as a concrete approach that can be applied to planning issues. It should rather be seen as a possible outcome if an area has multiple initiatives that build on the local resources and possibilities. If the conditions are right and the initiatives start to form a greater whole, it may cause an area to develop organically, but it does not happen per se. This is in accordance with the opinion of Plein et al. (1998) that states that it is unpredictable if organic area development starts. According to policy workers at the government of Groningen, this is logical since it would not be organic if it would be otherwise. It requires above all that the conditions are right. In addition, successful factors from other areas cannot easily be copied to be used elsewhere, because organic development is bound to area specific characteristics. Every place has different characteristics and the development is driven by local sentiments.

There is one drawback to organic area development. It seems sensitive to changes in the economy. The government and a few initiators notice that large project developers start to regain their interest to invest in big projects. For the government, it is often hard to prevent this trend. It therefore seems that traditional planning methods will regain popularity when the economy and the housing market improve. Interviewee E explains how money can be the driving force of spatial development.

"At the same time, I notice that because of the recovering housing market, especially in Groningen, that people very quickly fall back in the traditional way of thinking that we had 15 or 20 years ago. "It was nice, this little trick, but now we quit the drive. All

those actors that you have to work with, it is too complicated and the uncertainty that you do not know how something will develop and look like, just take us back 20 years.” They knew then what the starting and endpoint was, just the project, not a process. We notice that it comes back.” (Interviewee E).

Summarizing, self-governing initiatives originate when the existent physical environment of a location plays a role in the initiative. The absence of freely cultivable land makes them more susceptible to fall under the institutional design and responsibility of the collective. Particularly because they are bound to the legislation of the place they are residing, and partly because their focus shifts to activities that are more constrained by institutions. Ultimately, citizen initiatives originate when the government takes their hand off spatial development. The local community may start to notice problems themselves, or the government may bring the problems under attention to the local people. This means that the government is more actively involved than what is described in the literature, where legislation only passively enables and constrains initiatives. This also may undermine interests of involved citizens. Furthermore, organic area development is by no means a certain development, but it depends on the conditions and the state of the local resources.

3.3 Government

This paragraph will go further in-depth in what role the government takes in organic area development. The role of the government is theoretically clear but in practice it is anything but. The retreat of the government that was mentioned in the previous paragraph creates a void in the planning arena where local initiators are not used to the freedom. This may interfere with organic area development, since the local initiatives and resources are an important driving force. However, without guidance from the government initiators often do not know what to do. The interviewees mentioned that they sometimes wish that the government behaved more active. It shows that the role of the government as a facilitator has two dimensions. The first one is creating legislation and conditions that enable and constrain bottom-up activities. The second one is not yet clearly described in literature. It encompasses the concrete actions the government can take to make sure that the conditions and legislation is used optimally. There is room for

improvement in the latter. Initiators notice that the government helps to get the initiatives off the ground, but on the other side they feel that they are dealing with a ponderous organization. This has to do with the fact that for the government it is easy to say in policies that civilians get more participation, but the organization and people that work in it are not yet adjusted to this relatively new policy strand. This corresponds with the sixth condition mentioned in chapter two. It states that existing practices should be altered (Meerkerk et al., 2011). Especially in this case, where the government played a dominant role before. It entails that the government should change its approach to give the actors the optimal opportunity to make use of their freedom. But the government is not eager to change the way of working. Interviewee C and D emphasize this.

“The government used to be a very slow moving organization. There was a lot of bureaucracy and of course the organization; it was hardwired for traditional planning. A lot of ‘islands’ and no cooperation between them. The rules and laws are not really the problem. You can work with them. But especially the workmen in the government, that is the problem. All they do is sit behind their desk and grip themselves to legislation. (Interviewee C).”

“It is a ponderous organization with a lot of compartmentalization still. That is what it is in “government-land”. There are a lot of islands that do not communicate with each other. That is frustrating.” (Interviewee D).

Thus, legislation is not really the problem. It is for example easy to state in policy that the government thinks it is a good initiative if civilians interfere in spatial development. However, the practical implementation is the biggest obstacle in the facilitating role. This way of working is not embedded well in the culture of the government and practical procedures are still lacking. It leaves an ambiguous space prone to interpretation and susceptible to trial and error. Of the four categories of facilitating described by Buitelaar et al. (2012a), this corresponds with organizational facilitating. It involves for example an open mindset among workers. Initiators feel that the process is still too much rooted in traditional planning. Organic area development requires different skills of the policy makers. For example, the government still assigns project

managers, while organic area development is focused on a process approach. Interviewee J explains how governmental workers are precarious in the role of process managers.

“Inhabitants of this neighbourhood wanted to paint their lampposts more frivolous. So, I asked a colleague who is in charge of street view if it was possible. He answered like this, and this is typical for a government: “Sure, I will have to make a maintenance project to have these painted”. But that was not the question; he was evading it because he did not know how to handle it. This went on for three weeks, until he came with the solution to place led-lights. Totally different! If he just said no it would be fine.” (Interviewee J).

Organizational facilitating thus proves to be problematic. However, it includes not only the skills of governmental workers. It also includes actions that are taken by the government to stimulate the local community. The previous paragraph already mentioned bringing problems under the attention of the local community. Furthermore, one of the most mentioned by the interviewees are ‘proposal gatherings’. It is a non-obligational meeting where the government invites people to come together and discuss what kind of ideas they see for their neighbourhood or their city. A proposal meeting is often staged at a gathering in a neighbourhood. Interviewee E says these meetings can be effective in creating ideas, but it is not a new thing.

“Actually, it is taking a step back and stimulating self-organization and the government is doing this for years already, but it is not qualified as self-organization.” (Interviewee E).

This is an interesting finding. It could mean that the government actually already harbours the right skills and actions, but they just went largely unnoticed before. In that case, organic area development may also be unwittingly present for a longer period of time, and subsequently it should not be hard to adjust the right skills and actions.

Another way that the government facilitates initiatives is through the acquiring of real estate. The government buys strategical real estate, which is real estate that is bound to be demolished or be sold, to make space for future projects. Until that happens, the

government may want to make the space available to initiatives, for different kinds of reasons, but mostly to maintain the quality and liveability of the building. It means that the government permanently or temporarily moves away from being the main exploiter of the real estate. According to Buitelaar et al. (2012a) this is financial facilitating. The government can outsource the management to a company who keeps the building in management. This often goes hand in hand with other parties, such as housing corporations or real estate companies, since they are often in close contact with the government. In addition, ownership of real estate is sometimes shared between the government and other parties. Initiators and governmental workers mention that the government often acts as a mediator in such cases. As a consequence, it is not always visible who is the real owner of real estate. However, initiators state that they only have to do with the government. Interviewee H explains that this is a good way to redevelop real estate.

“The government gives us the responsibility of the maintenance. We fix the building up to the appropriate standards and we get to choose who can use the space. It is a great way to stimulate the creative industry.” (Interviewee H).

This again shows that providing the initiative the opportunity and trigger to develop is a powerful action the government can undertake to facilitate organic development. It also clarifies that initiators need the practical involvement from the government.

The government of Groningen is fairly receptive towards citizen initiatives, and the findings indicate that the skills and knowledge to facilitate organic development are already more present than originally thought. There however still are some bottlenecks in the transition towards the right mindset for organic area development. First of all, organic area development in the Netherlands is still in its infancy. Generally spoken, Groningen is progressive in its policy towards citizen initiatives, but there are few cities nearby that can be learned from. Apart from that, it is mostly a process of discovering and trial and error what the city and government suits best and adapting to that. Interviewee B endorses this.

“There happen a lot of things in the Netherlands. There is not much oversight on everything that is happening but we are definitely not behind. We can see a movement in Rotterdam and Amsterdam because of the scale of the cities, but the problem is that everyone has to find out by themselves what suits them best. That is intrinsically organic development. (Interviewee B).

The second bottleneck is the mindset in the people involved. As we noticed before, Groningen is receptive for citizen initiatives. The government takes citizen initiatives seriously. However, the government consists not only of different sectors, but also of different levels. This means for example that the council may be receptive for an experiment but that the commission of aldermen object. Issues are easily politicized at a higher level in the organization, which may cause the process to stall. In addition, initiators complain about departments not cooperating well together. In a reaction to that, the government of Groningen developed the concept of ‘area teams’.

“Area teams are delegates from across the whole governmental organization, from different domains like economic affairs, social affairs, real estate, city management. They are put together to form a team for a specific part of the city. In this way procedures are shortened and the only time they can really be stopped is at the highest of the highest level.” (Interviewee E).

The purpose of such an area team is that it is geographically bounded and that different departments work together on a specific area. One could say that each part of a city has its own contact within the government. Area teams make the government more involved in the neighbourhood. This should help making the government more practically involved in the neighbourhood. This corresponds to the fifth condition mentioned in chapter two. Area teams make sure that free flows of ideas, people and resources are protected for specific areas (Nederhand, 2014). Moreover, it means that there is one contact person, which prevents that actors or initiators have to deal with a lot of unnecessary people within the governmental organization. A result of this is the proposal meetings that were discussed earlier. The area teams have coordinators working for them that organize such meetings. Interviewee I emphasizes the importance of the coordinators.

“The coordinators do a very good job in involving the local people. They prepare proposal meetings, neighbourhood office hours, they make sure the government is accessible outside office hours. They start co-creation sessions. It is not just about investing money, but you have to invest time and make sure transfer of knowledge takes place.” (Interviewee I).

Summarizing, the retreating government sometimes creates so much freedom for initiators that they do not know what to do with it. Policies and legislation are clear that initiatives should get the opportunity to develop freely, but the government also plays a vital role by being practically involved. This active involvement is a part that is not yet fully acknowledged, since the focus in participation has been mainly on only legislation. This also feeds the idea that the governmental culture is stuck in traditional planning methods and shifting to facilitating organic development requires a lot of experimenting. However, the skills and knowledge for that may already be present, but they went unnoticed because they were not qualified as such. Furthermore, area teams are a way of making cooperation between the local community and the government easier.

3.4 Citizen initiatives and spatial development

This paragraph will explain how citizen initiatives influence spatial development. The literature in chapter two indicates that citizen initiatives particularly have a positive influence on a societal level, namely through social coherence and involvement in the community. Yet, the findings from the interviews reveal that the role of initiatives is above all rooted on a deeper level. This entails two types of land, namely cultivable and uncultivable land. Cultivable land is affected mainly on a physical level and uncultivable land is then mainly affected on a societal level.

Firstly, citizen initiatives play an important role in the development of cultivated land by the patching, redeveloping, managing and giving a different function to vacant real estate. This builds further upon the mechanism that the government contracts out the management of a vacant building mentioned in the previous paragraph. A vacant building that is out-dated or does not have a destination yet can be carried over by the

owner to a corporation that takes the building in management for a definite or indefinite period of time. The corporation then develops and patches up the building to living or working standards. The space is then rented out for low fares to groups who are in demand of temporary and flexible housing. The corporation may want to choose the tenants based on their willingness to contribute to the quality of the building. After the corporation management contract expires or the owner sells the building, the corporation leaves. A transformed place stays and is then exploitable for other functions. Interviewee H describes this with two examples.

“One example was an old chemistry lab from the university. We managed it for a couple of years. Some artists had their atelier there. You then see that the building works very well with artists and it becomes a hotspot for culture. From then on, the artists that are housed there created plans to develop the building. They found investors and the government approved. And now it is neat and tight office building that houses small businesses. That appearance gives the place a neat feeling.” (Interviewee H).

“Another example is an old state prison in Leeuwarden. A huge building, more than a hundred years old. We got it in management and created shops in the whole jail section. We gave out ateliers, a hospitality company started there and a concert-room. Four years later it is the hotspot of Leeuwarden and it is sold by the government to a corporation that will develop it further. The opinion towards the building changes positively and the market takes over immediately.” (Interviewee H).

The second way citizen initiatives develop the environment is by developing uncultivated land. As mentioned, uncultivated land is scarce in the urban environment. This is therefore a subject that is not given much attention in the literature in chapter two. However, a good example is set by the Open Lab Ebbinge case. An open laboratory was placed on a large undeveloped site. The open laboratory was a small, mobile office that is easy to make. The Open Lab Ebbinge experimented with different activities, for example a festival terrain, a city beach and a big playground. In addition, more pop-up mobile spaces were placed there like a temporary classroom for the local university, a meeting room and again a creative space for artists and expositions. The government invested in a small bicycle lane and it now connects two busy parts of the city. It created

more activity along the open laboratory and this in turn led to a decline of nuisances like drugs abuse and criminality. From then on the area got a good name, the nearby shopping street was stimulated again and that sparked attention in developers to make concrete plans to build on the terrain. This again shows how agents in complex adaptive systems influence each other and can cause a non-linear reaction (Byrne, 2003). Bit by bit the terrain is now transformed into a site with permanent construction. Subsequently, the task of the open laboratory is fulfilled and the mobile spaces leave after five years of development. This emphasizes the temporality of initiatives, but it is important to notice that the open laboratory actually has permanent results. Interviewee D and E explain this.

“There is the discussion here that people find it a pity that we leave because we invested so much. But our goal was to brighten up this area and make sure there would be permanent development so this could be a nice place again, and we accomplished that goal. There are now permanent building blocks, so that means we can go on to the next place”. (Interviewee D).

“I think if the open laboratory were not there, then the place would not be as nice as it is now and there would not be real estate developments. It got its flair back, especially in the summer with the festivals. But the development is now no longer organic. It is permanent. Organic area development as the government sees it, is really temporary. And after that, development continues in the old way.” (Interviewee E).

The way temporality has permanent results is characterizing how spatial development is affected by citizen initiatives. Building upon the characteristics of citizen initiatives in chapter two, it could be important to acknowledge that temporality in initiatives plays a less prominent role than was thought before, since eventually most of the development ends up permanent. This might be a useful insight for a project in a different area in Groningen. An area formerly used by a sugar company is subject of debate. It is comparable to that of the Open Lab Ebbinge. At the moment it is wasteland, but there have been brainstorm sessions on possible options to develop the area. Basically, it was agreed to develop the area organically with the help of small initiatives. The government balances between keeping the risks low and development pace high, and on the other

side wanting to give initiatives the time and space to flourish and organically develop the area. One of the success factors at the Open Lab, the bicycle lane, has been named repeatedly to implement in the Suikerunie area, but this will probably not work because this area attracts different groups of people than at the Open Lab Ebbinge. Interviewee J explains this.

“It just does not work that way. The area lies much more peripheral and it attracts a whole different kind of target group. And it is not as close to the city centre as we are here now. (...) Also, the area specific features are different and this will probably spark different developments” (Interviewee J).

Developing wasteland could thus prove to be more chaotic than redeveloping areas with existing buildings and structures. In comparison to each other, a wasteland could resemble a complex system without existing structures. New agents are still to be added to the system, which could make the system more susceptible to changing structures and chaos. New structures emerge easily since there have been few previous developments. In addition, more agents should stimulate more interaction, and in turn more interaction between subsystems. Areas that are cultivated already have existing structures that do not easily change, which could make the system less likely to move between order and chaos. The degree of path-dependency is higher in these systems. Furthermore, these systems already have an established hierarchy between agents, level of scale and processes. It could mean that the degree of non-linearity is lower in cultivated areas than in uncultivated areas. Although both systems can be seen as complex systems, it should be taken into account that there are differences in characteristics.

Because development of physical structures and buildings is harder in uncultivable land, the influence of initiatives shifts to societal aspects. For example, relatively small interventions in the spatial environment can be the catalyst in social cohesion in an area. Interventions can be the development of playgrounds, public participation of inhabitants on their living environment, a shared investment in sustainable energy infrastructure or a public food garden that is used and maintained by a couple of neighbours. According to interviewees I and J, it sparks a consciousness that people are

responsible for each other and the environment they live in. This is in accordance with the views of Boonstra (2011) and VROM (2007a; 2007b). It ensures that they attach more value to their surrounding and automatically keep the environment up to standards.

“It can definitely be a positive catalyst for area development. We can see neighbourhoods competing with each other to become the most sustainable and neat. People take their neighbours with them because they see something has to be done and they do not want depend on others.” (Interviewee I).

“The greater goal is, that if we start doing more with each other, then we will take more care of each other. Civic participation is not only between people, but also between people and their environment. Civilians can take a big role in taking care of their surroundings.” (Interviewee J).

Social coherence, increased involvement of people in the local community and economic improvement are developments that are found in all cases. However, the relation between them seems somewhat different than stated in literature in chapter two. Rather than separate developments, more involvement in the local community is at the basis. It in turn improves social coherence, and that often goes hand in hand with economic improvement.

Summarizing, the role of initiatives is different on cultivable and uncultivable land. Cultivable land is affected physically, and uncultivable land is affected socially. The development of uncultivable land seems to overbear that of cultivable land because of the societal improvements it harbours.

3.5 Vacancy of real estate and creative industry in relation to citizen initiatives

This paragraph builds further on the findings of the previous paragraph of how redeveloping existing structures and societal development has a positive influence on the environment. An important role is reserved for real estate. Real estate gives citizen

initiatives the space to develop and for the government it is a way of facilitating citizen initiatives. This means that real estate can be a catalyst in organic area development. Buitelaar et al. (2012a) also stresses the importance of real estate in spatial development, stating that economic and societal developments in the city are causing a decline in the demand of residential and working space. The economic crisis also caused that corporations wanted to be less bound to long-lasting and expensive contracts. This causes a growing vacancy in office buildings, out-dated business sites and a supply in residential supply that does not fit the current demand (Buitelaar et al., 2012a). The vacancy of such space offers great opportunities to redevelop buildings and facilitate citizen initiatives, since vacant real estate is often looking for short-term inhabitants and initiatives need flexible housing. Interviewee D underpins this.

“It would be very nice indeed if we could open up vacant space for little experiments and see what happens. There are a lot of vacant buildings in Groningen. It already happens. If you look what happened (here) when there was a temporary implementation of artists or small commercial functions, an open function in vacant buildings in out-dated streets. It really patched up the streets!” (Interviewee D).

The findings reveal that many initiators and policy makers from the government classify citizen initiatives as a perfect match to be housed at vacant real estate. Characteristics of vacant real estate are that it is often temporary and it is uncertain what is going to happen to the space. This would indeed fit citizen initiatives. Boonstra (2011) stated that citizen initiatives are also often temporary. In addition, initiatives are flexible. This could be a good characteristic when dealing with the uncertainty of not knowing how long the real estate is available and possibly moving often to different vacant spaces. Furthermore, their independence and small-scale make them attractive to house in vacant space, since the provider of the space is only bound to a single or couple initiatives, instead of for example larger businesses.

The interviewees also name two main groups of initiatives that would make a perfect fit, namely small initiatives and artists. Small initiatives also consist newly or small businesses. The reason these two groups are named is because the needs and characteristics of small initiatives and artists fit the supply and characteristics of vacant

building. This has to do with the fact that small initiatives are often short of money or have different priorities in the beginning stages of their business.

“If you have to classify it there are a lot of entrepreneurs that start a business and do not have a lot of money yet because they just graduated. It is better for them to invest in the business rather than in renting office space. They come to us and we house them in vacant building for a fraction of the normal price. It is the same with artists, the creative industry or special businesses like social working places or breeding places.” (Interviewee G).

The interviewees also recognize the advantages. Especially the temporality stands out as a huge advantage as explained by interviewee G.

“We are there for the special group. We are talking about people that live in a certain way. Let’s say, people that do not need certainty in their lives and do not need to know how long they will live somewhere. More open-minded people, more adventurous or they just like it to move every two years. And sometimes people that are acutely in search of space for a short term. Artists, for example, are often in need for a cheap space for their atelier and they do not make high demands. It is ideal to give them a temporal space in a vacant office building” (Interviewee G).

The target groups that interviewee G mentions encompasses mostly people that can be classed as people from the creative industry. Besides the fact that the creative industry is a target group for housing in vacant real estate, the creative industry is also a sector where a lot of initiatives originate. The sector is characterized by artists, intellectual ownership, innovative labour, designers and other knowledge workers. The importance of the creative industry was acknowledged before by the concept of the creative class (Florida, 2002). Although citizen initiatives do not require that they can only be developed by creative industry, there is a trend that people from the creative industry tend to commit themselves more for the society. This corresponds to condition three mentioned in chapter two. The creative industry has the focus, skills and knowledge to exchange ideas, information and experiences (Nederhand, 2014). Starters and small businesses are for example seen as an engaged and educated public. They are likely to

take necessary actions for the environment. Overall, citizen initiatives often tend to start in the creative industry. Interviewees D and J underpin this.

“If you want to start an initiative you have to be creative and adaptive. It requires knowledge and imagination, but also entrepreneurship. Look at our initiative. It is so big here, and there are many creative businesses here. Theoretically everyone can start an initiative, but my experience is that mostly creative people succeed.” (Interviewee D).

“I call it creative tasks, because the creative people are often well-educated and they can sort things out for themselves.” (Interviewee J).

Summarizing, vacant real estate plays an important role in spatial development. The characteristics of flexible, temporary and small-scale initiatives fit perfectly with vacant real estate. More precisely, it is because new businesses and people from the creative industry often cannot afford a fixed office space yet and therefore choose to reside in low cost and temporary spaces. In addition, the creative industry harbours an essential condition in stimulating organic development, namely the skills and knowledge to exchange ideas and information.

3.6 City acupuncture

This paragraph will show that city acupuncture is a concrete concept of organic area development. According to most interviewees, the development of one project that sets off a sequence of activities and initiatives in the neighbourhood is recognized as crucial in organic area development. This process involves a small, targeted quality injection in an area and one specific point is cured carefully. The effect of the treatment spreads out and causes a whole area to develop. This shows resemblance with acupuncture, which is used as a healing method on the human body. Interviewee D explains this process.

“It is a small quality injection at a very specific point and subsequently it behaves like an oil spill. It can, but does not have to, cause a whole area to heal. It kindles other people and initiatives to work for their environment.” (Interviewee D).

Consequently, this process can be called city acupuncture. Although most interviewees think that this is a very natural process that has always happened, there is importance in conceptualizing it in city acupuncture. City acupuncture could play a role for the government to be able to trigger organic area development to a certain degree. Organic area development is an outcome of multiple small and open-ended projects. In addition, there is little control over the results of an area due to the process-oriented scope and open-ended processes. City acupuncture aims to exert more control over where organic development takes place by making interventions. This can be for example a bicycle trail. The intervention then acts as the trigger events, in the hope that the local community hitches on to the activity it brings about (Portugali, 2000). The purpose of this is to increase the activity and information between the community and the environment to trigger a change. It should push the system out of equilibrium, which then repositions itself and searches for a new best fit. This way, the government is still able to spark and steer development, but the actual development is still in the hands of the civilians. Interviewee H and J think this could help citizen initiatives and organic area development.

“The translation from policy to practice has to be there. If the government say they want more organic development, they have to initiate it actively in some way. But freedom for the civilians is also important. It could be something small like helping us take the first step or make the first step themselves.” (Interviewee H).

“The answer is to initiate in the neighbourhood to engage the civilians. We placed play equipment and vegetable gardens here, and soon it became a co-creation. So you could say a small investment of us started the organic process here.” (Interviewee J).

This could help deal with another problem that is noticed by the government. It is mostly the same group of civilians that are devoted to the development of the environment. This means that when there are citizen initiatives or brainstorm meetings, it is the same civilians that put their head out and take responsibility for the community. This group of people often are high educated or have experience in governmental functions. According to the views of De Graaf (2007), this is the professional citizen. Although they can be valuable in participation because they are familiar with

governmental procedures and have the time to be involved, it is not a good representation of the local community. The professional citizen does not take responsibility for the local community. Interviewee E explains this.

“Between the government and civilians, a group arises. A group of people that decide for the rest of the civilians what has to be done, when and where. I think that is not what we wanted in the first place. You have to be able to channel something like that, because without it, it is out of our control.” (Interviewee E).

City acupuncture could prevent this. The idea is that instead of inviting possibly the wrong target group to brainstorm meetings, a small project is realized in the neighbourhood. It should ensure that area-specific issues are faced by the local people, because it would improve social coherence among the local community. The locality of the process is thus important. This corresponds with the fourth condition stated in chapter two. A small project can for example be seen as a community meeting point that acts as a physical beacon. It may be a spot of interaction and helps share information (Bekkers, 2004).

3.7 Summary

In relation to the literature and the findings, the following can be said. The government is already performing the role as mediator in planning issues and is more involved than thought beforehand. The government retreats and possibilities for citizen initiatives arise. However, not everyone knows what to do with the freedom, and this may stall developments. The active involvement of the government is not yet fully acknowledged, since the main focus is on legislation. However, the right practices and skills may already be present.

Citizen initiatives particularly influence uncultivable land on the societal aspects. Social coherence, increased involvement from the local community and economic improvements is what drives spatial development. Herein, real estate plays an important role. Uncultivable land can be redeveloped by providing vacant real estate to people and parties that do not mind living in a temporal space or do not have much money. Their flexibility makes them a perfect match for vacant real estate.

Consequently, keeping the real estate populated prevents buildings from deteriorating and often they are redeveloped for newer functions. This improves the liveability in an area, which in turn could be a driver for organic area development.

However, organic area development is still for a great deal only named in policy, but actual supportive behaviour is lacking. The government is able to raise attention of problems to the local community, but is having a hard time to determine how and where organic area development originates in practice and what the implications are. Consequently, it is unclear how they should deal with the question how they could actively stimulate organic development. For the most part it comes down to the following. The government is able to stimulate participation and citizen initiatives by creating the conditions that could result in the organic development of areas. Several practical actions were identified to create five of the six conditions that were stated in chapter two. First of all, strong initiating conditions with a disruptive nature are present. The government anticipates this by alarming the local people about a certain problem in the hope that this triggers the local community to take action. Secondly, moving away from traditional planning requires that existing governmental practices should be altered. It is clear that the contemporary government of Groningen is still stuck in traditional practices and employees are not adjusted to the new way of working. For example, project managers often do not know what to do when they are working on process-oriented projects. However, the skills and practices may already be present, but they are not qualified as such. The government may for example already organize brainstorm meetings to give new initiatives a bit more guidance, but this is not regarded as actively stimulating organic development. Thirdly, a complex form of leadership that promotes boundary-spanning activities is already present in the form of area teams. The area teams ensure that area specific issues are addressed as a whole. This makes sure that the local community has the possibility to unfolding local initiatives and is informed by a single contact person that protects the process. This prevents compartmentalization. Fourth, the exchange and interplay of ideas, information and experiences and the focus, skills and knowledge to exchange them is mainly present in the creative industry. The government anticipates this by providing vacant real estate for beginning artists, small businesses or other knowledge workers. In this way, they are stimulating the free flow of information and knowledge. Lastly, the geographical

features are crucial. Organic area development is likely only to take place in areas that hold a communal meeting place or another attraction point. The government could stimulate this by making a small intervention, like a bicycle trail or playground. This should trigger initiatives in the environment, hereby organically developing the area.

By taking these practical actions, the government can improve the conditions that stimulate and facilitate initiatives. A concrete concept of organic area development that results from this is city acupuncture. However, it should be noted that spatial development is for a big part driven by money, which means that it is likely that governments and projects developers switch back to traditional planning.

4. Conclusion

This chapter presents the conclusions of the research questions and the results that have been found. First of all, the research questions are answered. The subsequent paragraph, the discussion, will elaborate on the conclusion. Thereafter, limitations of this research are pointed out and recommendations for further research are made. Concluding, a reflection of this research is given.

4.1 Conclusions

The goal of this thesis was to find out what role citizen initiatives play in organic area development and self-governance in the city. This was translated in the following research question:

What are the roles of various parties involved in organic area development and can it be a realistic approach to large-scale urban development?

From the results can be concluded that organic area development is above all a possible outcome of development that takes place under the right conditions and is a participation of the government with the local community, with a small role for real estate companies. The framework of organic area development therefore focuses on how the conditions can be shaped and stimulated. The government enables and constrains organic area development mainly by the institutional design. The government decreases influence by taking their hands off spatial development, thereby increasing the opportunities for the local community to take care of and get more involved in their own environment. The local community can participate in spatial development by citizen initiatives, which are often intended to resolve a local problem. Although the government is seen as a fairly passive actor in this process, stimulating initiatives often require an active governmental involvement since initiators often do not know how to behave or set up an initiative. The government may therefore draw attention of problems to the local community, which leads to the citizens feel obligated to take action. This means that the government is still able to influence development in a certain direction. However, it can undermine the interests of citizens because it is

possible that they feel already feel comfortable in their environment and therefore do not feel the urge to change something. Stimulating a citizen initiative may therefore go against the principles of an initiative, namely that it is a movement that comes purely from within the society.

The government experiences difficulties in the transition to a more participational society. The organization tends to stay functioning in traditional ways, while policy is more progressive towards organic area development. As a consequence, there is a lot of compartmentalization and politicizing of issues at higher levels in the organization. The government already recognizes these problems and counteracts by creating area teams. Area teams ensure that area-specific issues are dealt with one contact person. However, how active the government's role is in organic development does not necessarily depend on the structure of the organization, but it depends on the conditions for organic development. The government of Groningen faces challenges in improving organizational and communicative facilitating. Organizational facilitating is the most obvious way for the government to shape these conditions. Organizational facilitating is not really present in the government of Groningen, which prevents the government from taking the right actions. However, the role of the government is often already more active than what is thought. Actions that shape the conditions for organic area development are often already practiced unknowingly, but are not qualified as such or differ on small aspects. This means that it could be a lot easier for the government to improve their role as a facilitator of organic area development. Communicative facilitating is also subject for improvement. Development plans are present but are not easily accessible. Furthermore, financial facilitating is already present by contracting out the management of real estate to other exploiters. This already happens on a significant scale, but is not always visible because there are often more parties involved.

Organic area development is for a big part driven by citizen initiatives. In a city, this often comes down to the redevelopment of real estate or small interventions. These developments have an influence on the social level, meaning that social coherence and involvement from citizens in the environment is increased as a result of the initiative. The social development radiates over a bigger area, automatically setting off more development. Redeveloping real estate is a good way to start this process. The creative

industry and small businesses can be housed perfectly in vacant real estate due to their flexible demands and characteristics. Their presence often plays as a catalyst for developing the building for other purposes in the future. Furthermore, small interventions can act as a trigger in city acupuncture. Real estate and city acupuncture show that the physical characteristics of an area are essential in organic area development. This is because organic area development needs the local sentiments and resources to be successful. The local characteristics give organic area development a unique composition. Overall, it can be concluded that it cannot be predicted how organic area development will turn out. There is no general concept that can be applied to other areas. In turn this means that other cities or areas might have a hard time learning how organic development can be stimulated best. This means that every city needs to find out separately what fits them best. This requires an active role from the government particularly on an organizational level.

4.2 Discussion

The previous paragraph provided an overview of the conclusions of the findings in this thesis. This section will elaborate on the conclusion and address points that influenced the findings. Overall, the results from the research were in accordance with the literature. However, there were a few points in the research that may have had an influence on the outcome.

First of all, in this thesis was chosen to research multiple initiatives in the city of Groningen. According to the literature, it was expected that all initiatives have the same impact on the environment. However, there was a division in the results between initiators that focus on the physical environment and initiators that focus on the social environment. This difference might be explained on the basis of different kinds of initiatives. The cases were comprised of a wide variety of initiatives with different backgrounds, designs and goals. In general, two kinds of initiatives could be distinguished, namely citizen initiatives and local initiatives. Citizen initiatives define a broad group of initiatives that originate by citizens. These initiatives are not necessarily bound by geographical areas. Therefore, they may exceed administrative boundaries and affect different areas that do not relate to each other. An example of this was the case of Grunneger Power, which is a sustainable energy initiative that pops up at

multiple areas in the city of Groningen. In addition, they are now spreading in other cities of the country. In contrast, local initiatives are tied to one specific area. These initiatives encompass a clear area or neighbourhood and have a limited range. In addition, local initiatives are often created by citizens that live in that area. Hence, the physical environment is often more important in local initiatives than in citizen initiatives.

Secondly, interviews were held with a couple of people from the government of Groningen that deal with initiatives on a regular basis. It was expected that these people also could provide information about the rest of the organization or policy. However, the tasks and knowledge is dispersed over a much greater part, and it was not always clear who was doing what task. It was thus found that compartmentalization is also a problem within the organization itself. It resulted in data that might be a bit biased towards contact persons, and lacking in knowledge about the policies. The data would be a lot more reliable and diverse if more people were interviewed from other departments.

4.3 Recommendations for future research

The initiatives that were studied for this thesis were a mix of local initiatives and citizen initiatives. As mentioned in the discussion, these could both have different influences on spatial development. Future research could focus on studying only citizen initiatives that have a direct and practical influence on the local environment. Citizen initiatives that exceed geographical and administrative boundaries should be left out. By leaving the fuzziness of formalities out it is clear to see how initiatives work the environment directly. In addition, governmental workers and initiators can reflect on how they work together straightforward since many actors are left out of the research.

Furthermore, the area teams are a great solution to integrate more people of the government in matters of a specific area and shortening procedures. However, this research studied only a couple of people in the government, from different departments. Although this gave a good view of how the government works and how the department look at the subject, it limited the possibility to compare. For future research it could therefore be recommended to study the area teams more closely. Consequently,

comparing the area teams could reveal what strengths and weaknesses there are. Furthermore, focus groups could be a great way to discuss data between multiple people from the organization that do not interact with each other often.

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6. Appendix

6.1 Methodology

This chapter will elaborate more on the methodology and research methods that are used in this research. First, the research method of this research will be explained. Further on, the data collection methods that are used will be explained. Lastly, ethical questions relating to the research will be discussed.

6.1.1 Research method

Due to the fact that this research mainly focuses on the perceptions and opinions of the actors about self-governance it was proposed to do a qualitative research. According to Ritchie and Lewis (2003) qualitative research is all about interpretation and the understanding of opinions people create in different situations. In order to get a as clear view as possible to answer the research questions different research methods are used. First of all, primary data collection will take place in the form of in-depth interviews with actors that are involved. Besides that, secondary data will be collected through the study of literature.

This is based research on the analysis of several citizen initiatives and the government. Due to the fact that this research aims to gain insight in how self-governance is institutionalised and how it is actually perceived by the actors that are involved, it is also proposed to include governmental policy makers in the research.

6.1.2 Data collection

Study of literature

First of all there has been a thorough study of literature in relevant underlying theories to get to a theoretical framework that is the basis of this research. The goal of this study of literature was to gain insight in the origins of planning theory, the development of complexity in planning theory and ultimately to understand self-organization in planning.

In-depth interviews

In this research interviews will provide the biggest source of information. An interview is a good way to detect personal experiences and learn what the actors find important. It is also a good way to find different realities and interpretations. In-depth interviews are a good method to acquire knowledge of perceptions that are not represented well by other research methods, for example questionnaires (Dunn, 2010). Through interviews, the researcher gets a lot more and more specific information about opinions, experiences and perceptions of the interviewee. To summarize, this qualitative approach goes in to great depth in social complexity to explore and understand the interactions, processes, experiences and beliefs that constitute for persons, institutions, cultural groups and the commonplace (O'Leary, 2010). For a clear view it is important to interview different actors that have different roles in the situation. In addition to that, interviews are one of the most important sources of information for a case study (Yin, 2003). This is because an interview related to a case study is more of a conversation than a list of questions that is finished off.

Furthermore, this research uses so-called semi structured interview. This method entails that a list of subjects is formulated that is to be discussed during the interview. A great advantage of this method is its flexible character. It offers the interviewer the chance to go deeper in to specific subjects or to ask for more clarity when it is needed (Dunn, 2010). On the contrary, the data that is collected from this method is harder to code in comparison to structured interviews (Thomas, 2011). In addition, it is harder to draw general conclusion in this method. The goal of this research is then again not to draw general conclusions but to get an as clear image of factors and processes that influence SO and how it can be optimized in urban planning.

Analysis of documents

Lastly, various documents and reports regarding self-organization have been studied. Most documents are reports of studies that have been conducted in urban areas that test the effect of citizen initiatives. For example, the report 'Leren van zelforganisatie' is a good way to learn about how self-organization in institutionalised and how it can be promoted among citizens. Also, the reports give a clear view on what the roles of the government and the citizens are.

It was decided to interview three kinds of data sources, divided in to nine interviews. First of all, four initiators of small citizen initiatives were interviewed. This was done to find out how initiators experienced starting up and managing the initiative, how the collaboration with the government is and what they noticed what the influence of the initiative was on the environment. Secondly, three interviews were done with larger initiatives that work closely with the government on projects to redevelop derelict real estate and areas. The purpose of this was to find out how the initiatives started, how the government facilitated and stimulated their development and how they noticed the projects helped in patching up de buildings and areas. Thirdly, two interviews were conducted with governmental workers. This was mainly to learn how OAD, CIs and SG is viewed upon in the government, what bottlenecks are in cooperation between departments and how they experience working with legislation for spatial planning. The characteristics of the interviewees are shown in table 1.

Interviewee	Organization	Position	Date	Duration	Place
Interviewee A	Moustache Meubelen	Initiator	23-02-2016	31.50 min.	Groningen
Interviewee B	MiesLab	Initiator	25-02-2016	50.09 min.	Groningen
Interviewee C	Toentje	Initiator	01-03-2016	31.52 min.	Groningen
Interviewee D	Open Lab Ebbinge	Manager of initiative	02-03-2016	58.19 min.	Groningen
Interviewee E	Government of Groningen	Specialist in self-organization	03-03-2016	51.28 min.	Groningen
Interviewee F	CareX	Head of independent department	07-03-2016	53.58 min.	Haren
Interviewee G	Grunneger Power	Initiator	10-03-2016	48.31 min.	Groningen
Interviewee H	CareX	Manager at head office	15-03-2016	1.01.51 hrs.	Groningen
Interviewee I	Government of Groningen	Coordinator citizen initiatives	22-03-2016	51.50 min.	Groningen

Table 1: Characteristics of interviewees and interviews

The initiatives that were approached are based on the map of 'Zelf doen! Groningen', which translates to 'Do it yourself! Groningen'. It is a map created in cooperation of the government of Groningen and Van Zilte Bodem, a group enthusiastic people with different backgrounds, but all concerned with self-organization (Van Zilte Bodem, 2016). The map shows 41 special initiatives that originated not from an existing framework, but purely from own needs (Van Zilte Bodem, 2016). This way it shows the power of self-organization in Groningen and how initiatives of citizens contribute positively to the community that they are part of. The map is part of the Community Lover's Guide, which is also made by Van Zilte Bodem. It is a guide of the city of Groningen that tells the story about several initiatives. An excerpt of the map is shown in figure 5.

The interviews were conducted face-to-face in quiet rooms at the offices of the initiatives or government of Groningen. The interviewees were informed about the subject and objective of the interview and the thesis. They were asked beforehand if they were ok with publishing their name, initiative and personal information. One interviewee was not ok with this, so to stay consistent it was chosen to let all personal information of the interviewees out of this thesis. However, since this research could be a good way to promote certain initiatives, all interviewees agreed to name the initiatives.



Figure 5: Map of initiatives in the city of Groningen, part of the Community Lover's Guide (Van Zilte Bodem, 2016)

6.1.3 Data analysis

The interviews were recorded and transcribed so that they can be analysed in a structured way. Unnecessary words, expressions and sounds when the interviewee is thinking are left out of the transcript. In this way the transcript becomes an easy readable text that is easier to analyse than a transcript that typed out literally. The interview is transcribed fully so that the data forms a representative, readable and accurate source of information. Besides that, Flowerdew and Martin (2005) view the transcribing of interviews as valuable for the continuation of the research because the researcher gets familiar with the collected data. Furthermore, the transcription cuts out any personal interpretations from the researcher (Flowerdew and Martin, 2005).

After the interviews were transcribed, they were coded and analysed using the software ATLAS.ti. The goal of the analysis is reducing the complexity of the gathered data to get to a better understanding of the data (Wester and Peters, 2004). The qualitative analysis is focused on drawing up the field of concepts that answer the definition of the problem. The analysis took place by manually coding the information. For example, when an interviewee talked about how the CIs affected liveability of the environment, the text was coded with the code 'citizen initiatives influence liveability'. This is called open coding. This kind of coding comes forth from ideas that arise during the interview (Flowerdew and Martin, 2005). After all the coding was done, this resulted in a list of about 50 codes. Groups of codes were then organised into bigger groups. Sometimes one sentence was coded multiple times under different codes. This ensured that it was also easy to detect links between codes.

6.1.4 Ethics

In this last paragraph the position of the researcher will be discussed. Hennink et al. (2010) mention that awareness of your own position and reflexivity as a researcher is crucial because this leads to a better understanding between the participants of the research and the researchers. Furthermore, the job of the researcher is to make clear that information will be dealt with confidentially and only will be used with accordance of the participant (Clifford and Valentine, 2003). Further limitations conducting interviews is that they are highly susceptible to own interpretations. As a consequence, it was tried to keep the questions in the interviews as open as possible to show no opinions or interests from the interviewer.

6.2 Example questions semi-structured interview with initiator

Algemeen:

- Zou je jezelf kunnen voorstellen?
- Zou je het initiatief kunnen omschrijven?
- Hoe zit het initiatief in elkaar?

Totstandkoming:

- Waarvandaan en van wie komt dit initiatief?
- Wat was de intentie achter dit initiatief?
- Hoe is dit initiatief uiteindelijk daadwerkelijk tot stand gekomen? Hoe is het opgezet?
- Met welke actoren zijn samengewerkt?
- Wat waren positieve en negatieve invloeden bij het opstarten van het initiatief?
- Hoe ervaarde u het opzetten van dit initiatief met betrekking tot regels en wetgeving?

Resultaat:

- In hoeverre dat het succesvol is als je kijkt naar het doel van het initiatief?
- Wat is het belang/waarde/nut van dit initiatief voor Groningen?
- Wat haalt de gemeenschap uit uw initiatief?
- Voelt u dat het een belangrijke rol vervuld? Voelt u verantwoordelijkheid voor het probleem?
- Hoe is de wisselwerking met de actoren en omgeving?
- Wat hoopt u zelf hiermee te bereiken in te toekomst? Hoe ziet u de ontwikkeling voor u? Hoe schat u de kansen van het initiatief in?

Relatie gemeente:

- Wat was de rol van de gemeente bij de totstandkoming?
- Kan de gemeente dit verbeteren?
- Als u in gesprek bent met de gemeente, hoe gaat dat en waar gaat dat dan over?
- In hoeverre kun je zeggen dat dat geholpen of tegen gewerkt heeft?
- Welke rol heeft de gemeente nu?

- Op wat voor manieren stimuleert de gemeente uw initiatief? Heeft dat in uw geval ook zo gewerkt?
- Kan dit proces volgens u verbeterd worden? Zo ja, hoe?

Zelf-organisatie:

- Hoe ervaart u zelforganisatie?

Reflectie:

- Wat heeft u geleerd in de loop van het proces?
- Heeft u tips voor mensen die een vergelijkbaar initiatief willen opzetten? Of voor de gemeente?

6.3 Example of transcript in Dutch

03-02 Open Lab Ebbinge - Mark Sekuur

Laten we maar van voor af aan beginnen. Zou je jezelf voor kunnen stellen?

Ik ben Mark Sekuur. Als zelfstandig ondernemer onder andere betrokken bij het Open Lab Ebbinge. En waar we nu zitten hou ik me aan de ene kant bezig met een beetje kennisontwikkeling en ook verspreiding, marketing omtrent het initiatief en dan vooral wat meer binnen de vakgenoten. Ook wel facebook en dergelijke doe ik. Ilse, die beneden zit die doet daar eigenlijk de praktische uitvoering van. Ik hou me wat meer bezig met het abstracte niveau. Ik ben sociaal en cultureel geograaf van huis uit, ik heb mijn roots in de architectuur en ik hou me bezig met allerlei sociaal-ruimtelijke projecten. Vooral in de stad. Die community lover's guide van Groningen is daar het resultaat van. Mijn interesse in initiatieven van onderop die plekken leuker, beter en mooier maken, daar onderzoek naar doen om eens te kijken wat er nou eigenlijk gebeurt en hoe we daar van kunnen leren. Dat sluit heel erg op dit initiatief aan. Alhoewel de community lover's guide Groningen hebben we wel geschreven met, daar hebben we de selectie gemaakt van initiatieven die eigenlijk niet gebaseerd zijn op alleen maar subsidies, maar die ook andere verdien- of werkmodellen er naast hebben. Daarom is het Open Lab Ebbinge ook niet in het boek gekomen, maar wel op de stadsplattegrond.

Waarom is dit niet in het boek gekomen?

Omdat het Open Lab Ebbinge is opgezet dankzij een aantal grote subsidies, subsidies van VROM, de gemeente Groningen, dat was een soort startsubsidie om de boel op gang te krijgen en een grote subsidie van een Europees fonds. Verdienmodel-technisch was de basis waarop het is opgebouwd en vervolgens nu het verdienmodel wat we hebben gaat wel wat breder dan subsidies, ook met cofinanciering. Bijvoorbeeld door lezingen te geven of door andere projecten binnen te slepen waarmee we dan weer extra gelden los krijgen, maar de basis van dit initiatief, daar heeft een behoorlijke pot subsidie aan te grondslag gelegen. Die subsidie is deels naar de Stichting Open Lab Ebbinge gegaan, een onafhankelijke stichting waar we nu zitten, maar een deel van de subsidie is ook naar de

gemeente Groningen gegaan om een aantal infrastructurele ingrepen naar voren te halen. Want het was braakliggend en door daar subsidie voor te krijgen, bijvoorbeeld het aanleggen van zo'n fietspad en wat andere ingrepen te doen was het mogelijk om het terrein bouwrijp te krijgen voor dit tijdelijk initiatief. Zonder die subsidies was dat niet gelukt, dan waren wij hier gestart en dan hadden we zelf een fietspad aan moeten leggen. Dat is zo'n grote kostenpost, dat was ons niet gelukt. Zeker niet omdat heel veel van grond niet goedkoop is, het is tijdelijk, omdat het een creatief kwartier is, er staan veel creatieve bedrijfjes, dus die hebben een voordelig aanbod gekregen om hier te mogen staan, maar dat betekent wel dat je niet zo veel inkomsten genereert om ook de infrastructuur aan te pakken, dus daarvoor was die subsidie wel heel erg nodig.

Is het vanuit de gemeente een experiment geweest? Hebben jullie daar hulp bij gehad?

Ja, het plan, het idee is in 2008 of 2009 ontstaan hier vanuit de buurt. Wilma Naaijer, initiatiefneemster, die zit hier om de hoek met een woninginrichtingwinkel, Bert Kempinga, die zit een stuk verderop, creatieve ondernemer en Christophe de Jongh, architect en ontwikkelaar, die hier ook in de buurt heel erg actief is. Dat waren drie mensen die de koppen bij elkaar hebben gestoken toen bleek dat het hier niet zo lekker ging. Tegelijkertijd kwam Florida met de 'rise of the creative class' heel erg op, dat werd heel erg gehypet en op aangehaakt en dit zou dan het creatieve kwartier van Groningen moeten worden, met het paleis als eerste initiatief.

Wat was er dan wat er niet lekker liep?

Dit was een braakliggend terrein van misschien wel 8 hectare. Van waar we nu zitten tot aan de grens van het paleis. Jumbo Beren was ontwikkeld, dat was al een moeizame ontwikkeling. Een prijsvraag was daar al voor uitgeschreven. Maar dit hele terrein was drama, dat liep gewoon niet en CiBoGa werd in de hoofden van de mensen in één woord genoemd met de rotte kies. Een dikke bende, een groot braakliggend terrein, een drama. Problemen met de parkeerkelder, overlast, er gebeurden hier dingen die gewoon niet goed waren, ook met drugsgebruik enzo. De mensen die hier in de buurt actief waren en die betrokken waren bij de buurt, die zagen dat en die vonden dat een heel vervelende ontwikkeling, want dat straalde heel erg uit op de omgeving. Wilma Naaijer, die hier op

een steenworp afstand zit, die zag dat in de Nieuwe Ebbingestraat zag zij het verslechteren, en het Boterdiep nog veel erger. Dat was gewoon één rotzooi. Dus zij is toen met het initiatief gekomen; wij moeten hier gewoon wat tegen doen, aangehaakt op dat moment van de creatieve klasse. En vervolgens een bidbook geschreven. En in dat bidbook stond het verhaal, het concept van wat het Open Laboratorium in het Ebbingekwartier kon zijn. Daarmee een startsubsidie van de gemeente Groningen gekregen om het verder uit te werken. Ze hadden één wethouder achter zich staan, Jaap Dijkstra was dat destijds, die is daar voor gaan liggen en die zei: 'dit moeten we doen, mensen'. En ook bij de gemeente, waar in eerste instantie in 2008 en 2009 veel weerstand was bij de directeurs en de ambtenaren, die mensen vonden het lastig. Organische gebiedsontwikkeling was gewoon niet een ding op dat moment, het speelde gewoon niet. En tijdelijkheid al helemaal niet, je bouwde vanuit het VINEX denken en dat soort grootschalige planontwikkelingen voor de eeuwigheid. Maar braakligging, de problemen, coldspots en daar tijdelijk iets mee doen, dat was nieuw. Jaap Dijkstra zag dat gelukkig, die zag de mogelijkheden daar van in en die heeft er voor gezorgd dat die initiatiefnemers die hier zaten het verder hebben kunnen brengen. Zo is het balletje langzaam gaan rollen, er zijn subsidies aangevraagd en steeds meer mensen raakten overtuigd. Dat was heel erg trekken en slepen maar uiteindelijk, toen hier gebouwd werd zag je op een gegeven moment wel dat de mensen omgingen, dat ze zagen dat het hier wel tof aan het worden was en dat het een enorme vooruitgang was met wat het was. Dat is een beetje het beginstadium geweest.

Wat wordt er dan precies organisch ontwikkeld?

Concreet kun je in dit geval stellen dat het bestemmingsplan, de oorspronkelijke ontwerpen die in 1995 al zijn voorgesteld en in 2000/2005 de definitieve ontwerpen voor dit hele gebied gemaakt door een Engelse architect. Dat ging over een bepaalde manier van wonen, hele dure woningen, hoog segment, een halve parkeerplek per woning en dat voor dit hele gebied van 10 hectare groot, vanaf de Jumbo tot en met hier. Dat sloot niet aan bij de wensen van de stadje. Groningen was toen ook nog veel kleiner. De appartementenmarkt was niet zo groot, dus dat sloot niet aan. Vervolgens is dit initiatief gekomen en heeft het laten zien wat dit voor mogelijkheden biedt. Wat meer gemixt gebruik, wat meer openbare ruimte waar je kunt recreëren, niet heel erg

besloten met alleen maar appartementenblokken. Door de organische ontwikkeling, een soort groeiend beeld van wat hier mogelijk is, is onder andere het bestemmingsplan aangepast. Dat is dus wel een stapsgewijze ontwikkeling geweest. Het oude bestemmingsplan, wat totaal niet voorzag in de vraag die er in de stad lag, naar nieuw bestemmingsplan, naar waar er geleerd is van dit initiatief, en natuurlijk ook een nieuwe werkelijkheid met de economische crisis die er over heen is gegaan en alles, dat heeft er voor gezorgd dat het stapsgewijs die organische, natuurlijke ontwikkeling zich langzamerhand heeft ontwikkeld. En dan zie je ook, bijvoorbeeld hier komt een gebouw, het studenthotel met een plint, de onderste laag met veel openbare functies. In eerste instantie was het, zoals ik het heb begrepen, in het oorspronkelijke plan helemaal niet het geval. Net zoals gewoon hoe hier de infrastructuur ligt en hoe je wat meer openbare ruimte creëert waar mensen kunnen verblijven buiten of recreëren zelfs, dat is in de loop van tijd ontwikkeld. dat concept, en daar heeft het Open Lab Ebbinge wel bij geholpen, omdat je kunt zien met alle events die hier zijn geweest, dat het hier ontzettend tof is, dat de stad dat nodig heeft en dat gemixte functies voor zo'n plek, op 500 meter afstand van de martinitoren heel goed is eigenlijk. Dit moet je niet ontwikkelen als een VINEX locatie, daarmee doe je de plek tekort. Dat inzicht is er gelukkig gekomen. Dat noem ik ook wel een organische ontwikkeling.

Je zegt dat het tijdelijk is hier. Maar wat dan precies? Want die gebouwen lijken mij niet tijdelijk.

In 2011 zijn ze hier gestart met bouwen. In 2011 is het contract in gegaan voor een periode van 5 jaar. 5 jaar mogen wij als Stichting Open Lab Ebbinge dit gebied aan deze kant van het fietspad exploiteren, want we zijn officieel een exploitatiemaatschappij, voor al deze paviljoens die hier staan. Dat is gewoon keihard op papier gezet, 5 jaar. Inmiddels is dat met een half jaar verlengd, omdat er nog geen concrete plannen voor dit gebied zijn. De school die hier zou komen laat ook nog even op zich wachten. Er is toen ook gezegd 'jullie hebben ook nog die andere 3 terreinen', en dan ga ik even een jaartje terug in de tijd. Dit is dus voor een periode van 5 jaar, de paviljoen tot en met juni 2016, maar dat is dus nu verlengd. Daarnaast hebben we nog een drietal andere terreinen. Hier hadden we een evenemententerrein oorspronkelijk, met gravel bekleed, hier stadsstrand en hier een grote speeltuin van gras. In het begin werd gezegd dat deze drie

terreinen opgegeten kunnen worden mochten er concrete nieuwe plannen zijn voor deze terreinen. Dat is dus hier gebeurd, het student hotel is een partij die goed doorpakte en dus hier voor definitief gaat bouwen, in ieder geval voor een lange periode. Deze heeft gewoon een permanente vergunning gekregen. Daarom hebben wij ook destijds het festivalterrein van gravel hier naar toe verplaatst. Dit is wat meer gefragmenteerd geworden, dus de speelweide wat opgegeten en het stadsstrand, daar ligt nu gravel. Hier zijn nu ook concrete bouwplannen voor om daar wat te gaan realiseren. Dit laat nog even op zich wachten, maar dit zat niet in de afspraak van tijdelijk gebruik voor 5 jaar, maar tegelijkertijd in 2011 zagen wij ook wel in dat dit never, nooit niet in de komende jaren ontwikkeld worden. Er zijn soms wel eens wat plannen geweest, wat luchtballonnetjes. Maar ja, de economie lag op zijn gat, de ontwikkelaars durfden eigenlijk helemaal niks meer en sinds het afgelopen jaar ontstaat er weer een momentum bij ons. Dus dat is even que verdeling van het terrein.

Je zei net dat het bestemmingsplan aangepast was zodat dit organisch ontwikkeld kon worden. Hoe faciliteert de gemeente in het bestemmingsplan dat dit organisch is? Hoe wordt dat gestimuleerd?

Ja, nou ik durf niet te zeggen dat het bestemmingsplan op dit moment niet direct een tijdelijke en organische bestemming faciliteren, maar ja, ik weet überhaupt niet of een bestemmingsplan iets over tijdelijkheid zegt. Ik denk het ook niet eens, bij geen enkel bestemmingsplan. Het is wel zo dat het oorspronkelijke bestemmingsplan wat hier lag, dat ging over wonen en over het bouwen van schotsen, zoals hier verderop gerealiseerd is met de bouw van de appartementen met een binnentuintje, de gemeente heeft op een gegeven moment dus wel gefaciliteerd dat wij hier mochten zitten in de tijdelijkheid, dat hier een evenemententerrein mocht komen. Dat stond niet in het oorspronkelijk bestemmingsplan. Hoe ze dat hebben gedaan juridisch, dat durf ik niet te zeggen, ik denk dat er een ontheffing is aangevraagd en verleend, dat weet Gerrit wel en bij de gemeente hoe ze dat exact hebben gedaan. Ik wel ook wel bijvoorbeeld dat voor al deze paviljoens we in één keer een grote vergunning hebben aangevraagd, ook een ontheffing dat we hier mogen staan, en zelfs een welstandcheck waarmee we niet elke keer voor elk paviljoentje het traject opnieuw hoeven te doen. Want die paviljoentjes staan er nu 5 jaar en het is wel gebleken dat die 5 jaar heel erg kort is om de exploitatie rond te

krijgen, eigenlijk te kort. Dat zagen we ook wel een beetje aankomen, dus we hebben direct in het begin al gezegd dat we deze hele straat in één keer willen doorhebben ondanks dat we nog niet weten wat voor paviljoentjes er komen. Die hiernaast, die is afgebrand, die heeft er maar 2 jaar gestaan. Dus het was niet zo dat in 2010/2011 panklaar voor het hele terrein het beeld van alle paviljoentjes hadden, inclusief hoe het er uit zou zien, wat het gebruik zou zijn. Dus daarin heeft de gemeente wel heel erg in gefaciliteerd, dat we in het begin wel een vergunningaanvraag hebben gedaan, dat is doorgekomen, de mogelijkheid dat we hier tijdelijk mogen zitten en niet elke keer opnieuw voor elk paviljoentje een traject doorlopen.

Betekent dat dan dat de gemeente kan stimuleren door de procedures en aanvragen korter te maken?

Ja, dat denk ik wel. En misschien aan de andere kant ook er voor te zorgen dat je in een bestemmingsplan niet alles heel erg streng en strak vastlegt, maar dat je ook een stukje ruimte laat in het plan voor net even wat andere ontwikkelingen. En dat is volgens mij ook wel een trend die gaande is in het vaststellen van een bestemmingsplan, niet meer alles tot op de vierkante centimeter nauwkeuring wat de bestemming is, wat de vorm moet zijn, dat zelfs materiaal of bouwwijze, wat ook wel eens is gebeurd met beeldkwaliteitsplan, dat vast te leggen, maar wat meer de ruimte laten voor net wat andere initiatieven. Plek-specifiek en moment-specifiek kijken of dit een logische ontwikkeling is, biedt dit mogelijkheden. De regels zijn wat minder extreem en streng, dus dat klopt.

Op wat voor manieren hebben jullie hier nog meer met de gemeente te maken?

Nou, de gemeente heeft er natuurlijk heel erg voor gezorgd dat in dit gebied de infrastructuur is aangelegd. Dus in nauwe overeenstemming hebben we dat gedaan, wij hadden het idee maar de gemeente hielp bij de uitwerking er van. Heel praktisch, dus letterlijk de ondergrond, de grondplaten, het fietspad. Zij kwamen in het begin met het idee dat ze er een groot hek omheen wilden hebben, zodat de beheersbaarheid wat beter blijft voor stadsbeheer. Toen zeiden wij dat ons dat niet verstandig leek want daarmee creëer je eigenlijk niet een openbare plek, dus dan gaan wij in overleg met de

gemeente en zeggen we dat het ons verstandiger lijkt om het zo en zo te doen. Dus in het beginstadium hebben we heel veel en heel intensief overleg gehad over de mogelijkheden, hoe gaan we het opbouwen, hoe gaan we het doen. Er is ook een stedenbouwkundige ontwerper vanuit de gemeente Groningen die de inrichting van die 3 terreinen heeft gemaakt. Dit was een kruis bijvoorbeeld, dit evenemententerrein, dat komt vanuit zijn hand, maar wij geven wel aan dat het handiger is dat je het zo en zo doet. De buiteninrichting hebben wij dan ook wel mede met die persoon bepaald. Dus dat is een heel mooie samenwerking geweest, en op het moment dat het gebied er lag, het was aangelegd, het was open, hebben we ook regelmatig, eens per twee weken of eens per maand, gebruikersoverleg gehad met de gemeente, met stadsbeheer. Heel praktisch overlegd, hoe gaat het hier nu, moeten we sturen op bepaalde vlakken. Het gaat ook om de rotzooi die je hebt na een bepaald event op een warme zomerse dag. Wij hebben namelijk niet de verantwoordelijkheid om dat op te ruimen, maar wij voelen wel de verantwoordelijkheid om een oogje in het zeil te houden. Graffiti bijvoorbeeld, wat daar werd gespoten, hebben we met een paar jongens van verderop bij Moby een afspraak gemaakt, we kwamen zelf ook met dat idee, van goh, kunnen we die lelijke toekomstige uitgangen van de parkeergarage niet bespuiten met onze graffiti vrienden. Nou dat vonden wij een harstikke tof idee, want die dingen zagen er niet uit, die waren vies bruin. Vervolgens gaan wij met de gemeente in gesprek van goh, kunnen we hier niet de eerste legale graffiti plek van Groningen van maken. En dat is gelukt. En dat lukt alleen maar als je warme bandjes hebt en als je regelmatig met elkaar overlegt. Het mooie van Stichting Open Lab Ebbinge is ook dat het onafhankelijk is en dat je wat betreft ook met dat soort ideeën kan komen. Dat is voor een willekeuring ambtenaar, die ROEZ, wat lastiger omdat die toch in een hiërarchisch model zit en Gerrit als zakelijk leider weet hoe die spelletjes werken, die snapt de politiek, die snapt hoe je bestuurlijk moet werken.

Ik heb toevallig met een aantal mensen gesproken die zeiden dat er vanuit de gemeente nog best wel veel verzuiling was en best wel veel gepolitiseerd wordt. Hebben jullie ook die ervaring?

Ja, natuurlijk. Je hebt verschillende eilandjes en die eilandjes communiceren niet met elkaar, dat is frustrerend. Maar dat is tegelijkertijd ook weer een mooie rol voor Gerrit

om dat te doorbreken. We hebben hier ook te maken met centraal meldpunt voor evenementen, omdat wij een tijdlang een evenemententerrein zijn geweest. Dit jaar niet meer omdat de tijdelijkheid hier teneinde komt, dus dan is het niet handig om als evenementenlocatie zelf aan te prijzen omdat je niet meer dingen kunt toezeggen, maar die hadden niet altijd even goed overleg met stadsbeheer en bijvoorbeeld met economische zaken en ruimtelijke ontwikkeling, dus dat betekent ook dat je daartussen door moet zwemmen of heen en weer moet switchen. Gerrit kan dat goed, Gerrit gaat niet zwemmen maar die weet hoe dat werkt, die bereikt de mensen ook, die heeft ook zijn contacten. Maar als je dat niet hebt, als je dat niet leuk vindt en daar geen uitdaging in ziet, dan is het ontzettend frustrerend die eilandjes en dan schiet het gewoon niet op. Dus klopt, dat is nog steeds hoe het gaat bij de gemeente.

Op wat voor manier zou dat verbeterd kunnen worden vanuit de gemeente?

Je hebt natuurlijk wel het gebiedsgericht-werken, daar zijn ze nu ook mee bezig, ook vanuit stadsdeelcoördinatie om te kijken; wat nou als je gebied hebt en je zet alle partijen die over dat gebied gaan aan tafel, en dan heb je heel makkelijk cross-overs die ontstaan. Niet meer je eigen domein over de hele stad, maar meer gericht. Ik denk wel dat dat een mooie manier van werken kan zijn. Maar tegelijkertijd merk je ook dat mensen gewend zijn, de cultuur is ook om in je eigen domein te blijven, om de oogkleppen op te hebben en het soms ook af te schuiven van je bordje. Dat is een cultuur die veranderd moet worden en daar gaat nog best wat tijd overheen maar ik denk dat gebiedsgericht-werken een mooie voorzet daarvoor is. En voor de rest gewoon een kleinere organisatie bij de gemeente en wat meer ondernemendheid en daarmee ook wat meer vrijheid, dus als ambtenaar niet meteen worden afgerekend op initiatieven die je neemt, maar de vrijheid daarvoor krijgen en kom zelf met een gezond boerenverstand. Dus wat meer verantwoordelijkheid geven en nemen. Maar dat gaat echt om een mindset verandering, dus dat is nog wel even een dingetje.

Zijn er bij de ontwikkelingen van die Open Lab meerdere actoren, meerdere organisaties betrokken geweest?

Nou, een kenmerk van organische gebiedsontwikkeling is dat je veel meer partijen betrokken hebt dan in een wat meer traditionele ontwikkeling. Daar had je de overheid, de ontwikkelaar en nog eens een architect, maar ja eigenlijk misschien maar twee partijen. Als je hier kijkt naar deze organische gebiedsontwikkeling, dan zie je bijvoorbeeld dat hiernaast, Wilma Naaijer met haar initiatief in de Ebbingestraat waar zij ook voorzitter is van de winkeliersvereniging, dat is opeens een actor die erbij betrokken wordt. De gebruikers die hier zitten, ook de toekomstige gebruikers, die zijn een actor geworden. Toekomstige gebruikers waren in een traditionele gebiedsontwikkeling vaak niet eens een issue. Natuurlijk ook de gemeente en de eigenaren van het gebied, en waar de creatieve partijen er door heen zitten, het creatieve kwartier, daar zitten een aantal partijen in, waaronder van het paleis en andere actoren, die zijn ook betrokken geweest en nog steeds betrokken bij de ontwikkeling van dit gebied. Er is ook een kernteam overleg van het Ebbingekwartier, daarin zit het Open Lab, de winkeliersvereniging, iemand van het paleis, inmiddels ook bewoners, de gemeente en ik vergeet er vast nog een aantal. Allerlei verschillende partijen, ook vanuit de culturele sector die daar op aanhaken, die regulier en frequent overleg hebben, dus dat maakt wel dat je steeds bij zo'n organische ontwikkeling steeds meer actoren er bij hebt en wij zien onszelf ook op dit specifieke stukje als een spil in het web. We hebben dus, ik liet het woord net al vallen, we hebben ook regelmatig gebruikersoverleg met de gebruikers en met toekomstige gebruikers, al speelt dat nu niet meer. Daar zit de gemeente ook bij. De gemeente praat dus direct met de gebruikers hier, wij zitten daar ook als spil in het web om tafel.

Zorgt dat ervoor dat het ontwikkelen van deze plek makkelijker of moeilijker wordt ten opzichte van top-down sturing?

Natuurlijk zullen traditionele ontwikkelaars zeggen: doe maar top-down, lekker makkelijk, dan heb je dat geneuzel niet met al die mensen. Ik begrijp wat ze zeggen, maar je ziet dat het resultaat van zo'n ontwikkeling niet altijd even goed is, dus ik denk dat op het moment dat je met al die partijen en actoren in gesprek gaat, dat maakt het complexer, en dat betekent ook dat je andere kwaliteiten moet hebben als ontwikkelaar, als gemeente, als betrokkene er bij. Je moet gesprek aan kunnen gaan, je moet kunnen luisteren, dat is al best wel lastig. Het proces is zou de één zeggen wat lastiger, loopt wat

langer, maar de ander zal zeggen dat hij er veel meer energie van krijgt omdat je veel plek-specifieker aan het ontwikkelen bent. Dat laatste, daar geloof ik wel in. Ik denk dat er verschillende meningen zijn over deze manier van ontwikkelen. Heel erg afhankelijk van het perspectief waar je vandaan komt.

Is het mogelijk dat deze soort van ontwikkelen op grotere schaal kan worden uitgevoerd binnen de stad?

Wat is een grotere schaal?

Ik bedoel beleid-specifiek binnen de gemeente, dat die zich op lange termijn organisch gaat ontwikkelen.

Nou, dat denk ik wel. Dat kun je natuurlijk in een beleidsdocument meenemen. Wat daarbij wel belangrijk en relevant is, is dat niet iedere plek daar geschikt voor is. Kijk, Suikerunie terrein is een prachtig gebied om ook organisch te ontwikkelen, maar andere wijken en buurten die zullen dat niet hebben of minder, dus ik denk dat je daar dan ook niet heel erg veel beleidstechnisch op in moeten zetten dat dat op die plekken moet. Kijk, waar ik heel erg in geloof is kijken naar wat een plek voor mogelijkheden biedt en haak daar op aan. En de ene plek kan perfect organisch ontwikkel worden en andere plekken hebben dat gewoon wat minder nodig. Dus dat betekent dat je dat per plek moet bekijken of het ook in fysieke zin grootschaliger kan zijn. Ik denk ook wel dat er een maximum maat aan zit. Wat we hier hebben gedaan is voor Nederlandse begrippen best wel groot, qua omvang. De Suikerunie kan nog groter zijn, maar voor de rest in Nederland is het allemaal heel erg kleinschalig, en dat is ook een kenmerk van organische gebiedsontwikkeling, dat het minder grootschalig zoals de VINEX en wat meer kleinschaliger en gericht op de plek en de mogelijkheden. Ik hoop dat dat een antwoord op je vraag is.

Ja, zeker. Het spreekt ook wel voor zich dat je dat niet zomaar over een hele stad kan inplannen. Ik heb toevallig een interview gehad met iemand die zei dat je eigenlijk in een dorp die er om vraagt, bijvoorbeeld een krimp-dorp, helemaal de macht te geven om

zich organisch te ontwikkelen en dan gewoon te kijken wat er gebeurt. Dat kun je natuurlijk niet overal doen, maar bijvoorbeeld op een plek waar niets te verliezen valt.

Dat klinkt natuurlijk wel een beetje negatief, maar ik snap het wel, kracht richting de burger enzo, dat soort verhalen. Kijk, uiteindelijk is het zo dat we afgelopen tientallen jaren alles heel nauwkeurig geprobeerd vast te leggen in regeltjes en wat mij betreft mogen we daar wel het gesprek over voeren; welke regels zijn er nodig, ook in de ruimtelijke ordening en economische ontwikkelingen. Heel veel regels zijn misschien niet meer zo nodig. En alles heel strak vastleggen, levert dat wel het gewenste resultaat op. Dus als je vanuit die kan redeneert, dat je daarmee wat meer mogelijkheden biedt voor de plek-specifieke ontwikkelingen en organische ontwikkelingen, dan geldt het wat mij betreft voor heel Nederland, met uitzondering van enkele heel specifieke ontwikkelgebieden, bijvoorbeeld met petrochemische industrie enzo. Dus minder strak alles inkaderen en inbakken en wat meer ruimte bieden. En dat betekent ook ruimte voor initiatieven van onderop. Of dat ook leidt tot organische gebiedsontwikkeling, dat kan maar dat moet blijken in het proces natuurlijk want anders is het niet organisch meer.

Wat is het nut van het Open Lab op Groningen?

Dit was natuurlijk een coldspot, en het lag hier braak. Dat straalde een hele hoop negatieve energie uit naar de omgeving. Dat zag je aan het Boterdiep, de Ebbingestraat, die kant op. Je ziet nu dat op wijkniveau dat dat omgeslagen is, dat het hele Ebbingekwartier toch wel de vruchten plukt van de energie die hier in is gepompt. Het is geen rotte kies meer. Het Boterdiep is nu fantastisch aangepakt, ook door een initiatief van onderop als reactie op plannen van de gemeente waarbij mensen uit de buurt er niet van overtuigd waren, Nieuwe Ebbingestraat is heel erg opgefleurd, de hele omgeving hier omheen, er wordt weer gebouwd, er willen hier weer mensen wonen, er willen hier weer mensen komen. Voorheen was het zo; CiBoGa, daar wil je niet heen, daar wil je niet wonen. Dat is helemaal omgeslagen maar een trend dat mensen hier weer graag willen wonen. Dat sijpelt ook wel door naar wat het betekent voor de stad en daarnaast is het ook een evenementenplek geweest voor de stad. Eurosonic is hier geweest, daarmee is ook aan placemaking gedaan, mensen hebben de plek weer in de harten gesloten. Zo heeft het ook zeker wel wat voor de stad betekend. Maar bijvoorbeeld ook heel

praktisch, zo'n fietspad, wat er voor zorgt dat de ontsluiting van het wat meer oostelijke, noordoostelijke deel met de binnenstad opeens een heel stuk verbeterd is, dat heeft ook op wijkniveau natuurlijk weer gevolgen. Dus verschillende ingrepen hebben op verschillende schaalniveaus betekenis gehad.

Dat is interessant dat je het zegt. Dat zo'n klein gebied zo'n vliegwiel kan zijn voor een veel grotere schaal. Dat je het als een tijdelijke trigger gebruikt wat op een veel langere termijn effect kan hebben.

Ja, ik noem het ook wel stadsacupunctuur. Oftewel, met zo'n prikkaartje op een heel gerichte plek een beetje energie er in brengen en wat vervolgens als een olievlek kan gaan werken, hoeft niet, en er voor kan zorgen dat heel zo'n gebied geneest. Het zijn wel heel grote woorden, maar als je kijkt waar het vandaan komt, het is van een coldspot naar een hotspot gegaan, en natuurlijk zitten we nu in de transitie van tijdelijkheid naar wat meer de definitieve bebouwing. Dit is wel even een lastig moment, ook wel de brand van dat paviljoentje, daardoor is de uitstraling ook gelijk een heel stuk minder. Het evenemententerrein of speeltuin wat weg is, dat is wel iets voor de volgende keer. Deze overgang wat de tijdelijke naar de wat meer permanente bebouwing, die is wel lastig, dus dat is ook wel iets waar we de volgende keer meer rekening mee gaan houden.

Zou dat dan op grotere schaal een beleid kunnen zijn dat je af en toe een klein gedeelte ter experiment open stelt en dan kijken wat er gebeurt? Dan ben je niet zoveel tijd en energie er aan kwijt, terwijl het wel uitstraal over de ontwikkeling van de rest van de stad.

Ja, absoluut. Dat zou heel mooi zijn als je dat zou kunnen doen, want er zijn heel veel verschillende plekken in Groningen, of leegstaande panden. Kijk, Karina Bax met JOP heeft ook aan stadsacupunctuur gedaan als je kijkt naar die tijdelijke invulling van de leegstaande panden, waar dan kunstenaars in konden en een kleine commerciële functie ook, een open functie, die heeft er voor gezorgd dat hele straten zijn opgekalefaterd. De Carolieweg is dat geloof ik, die zijstraat van de Herestraat was op een gegeven moment drama, daar stond zo veel leeg, toen heeft Karina het voor elkaar weten te krijgen een stuk of vijf panden te mogen hergebruiken. Daar was eerst best wel veel weerstand

tegen, ook vanuit de winkeliers die er naast zaten, maar dat ging als een speer, en die Carolieweg is nu een supertof straatje geworden. Die winkeliers die daar zaten zien ook dat het zoveel oplevert dus die zijn ook met die flow meegegaan, er is een momentum ontstaan. Vervolgens worden die panden voor wat meer marktconforme huurprijzen verhuurd aan definitievere partijen en gaan de kunstenaars er uit, maar die wisten dat ook. Je zit er tijdelijk. Die discussie wordt hier ook wel eens over het Open Lab Ebbinge gevoerd, 'goh, wat zonde, nou moeten jullie hier weg, hebben jullie er zoveel in geïnvesteerd', kijk ons doel was om dit gebied weer te laten opfleuren en dat er nieuwe permanente bebouwing zou komen, zodat het weer een fijne plek zou worden, en dat resultaat hebben we bereikt. Het gebied is opgefleurd, ten eerste permanente bebouwing, dus dat betekent dat we verder kunnen naar de volgende plek.

Daar wilde ik net op terugkomen. Ligt het in de lijn der verwachting dat de gemeente zegt: 'jullie hebben het goed gedaan, we willen jullie graag op een of andere manier op een andere plek, en begin daar maar'?

Ja, die kans is aanwezig inderdaad. Welke plek dat zou kunnen zijn, daar zijn we nog niet over uit, maar die kans is zeker aanwezig. We hebben natuurlijk heel veel expertise ook opgedaan. We zijn überhaupt een eigenwijs groepje mensen die in een heel klein team samenwerkt die momentum hebben weten te creëren. De gemeente heeft dat inmiddels ook wel ingezien en die willen daar ook wel graag gebruik van maken. Tegelijkertijd merk ik ook wel dat er door de aantrekkende woningmarkt, zeker in Groningen, dat het snel gebeurt, mensen die uit de traditionele ontwikkeling komen heel snel ook weer in de modus schieten die we 10, 15 jaar geleden hadden. Het was heel leuk, zo'n trucje, maar we houden op met dat geneuzel, al die actoren waar we mee moeten praten, het is veel te ingewikkeld en we gaan niet weten hoe het er uit gaan zien, lastig, laat ons maar weer gewoon ontwikkelen zoals we 20 jaar geleden deden, we wisten wat het uitgangbeeld was, gewoon een project, niet een proces, bam. Dus dat merken we wel bij bepaalde partijen en dat die houding langzamerhand weer een beetje terugkomt. Dus we hopen heel erg dat Groningen in zijn algemeenheid daar niet aan toegeeft.

Hoe zien jullie de algemene organische gebiedsontwikkeling dan over 10, 15 jaar?

10, 15 jaar, dat is op een heel lange termijn. Ik weet niet hoe de wereld er over 10, 15 jaar uit ziet. En dat is tegelijkertijd ook het antwoord op je vraag, indirect. Want dat betekent dat je als wereld en als Open Lab Ebbinge heel creatief en adaptief moet zijn, inspelen op de veranderende wereld. Wat ook veel plek-specifieke gevolgen heeft. Ik zie wel in dat de bestemmingsplannen meer ruimte bieden voor alternatieve mogelijkheden, dat ook meer partijen zich er bewust van zijn dat placemaking en tijdelijkheid samengaan en dat je daarmee heel andere dingen ineens voor elkaar kunt krijgen. Ik hoop dat dat bewustzijn er blijft en dat wij als Open Lab onze bijdrage daar aan kunnen leveren in Groningen, of een andere plek.

Je zei net dat je ook een soort verantwoordelijkheid hebt voor de plek. Kun je daar verder op ingaan? Hoe voel je dat?

Als Stichting Open Lab Ebbinge officieel houden we ons bezig met dit deel van het fietspad, dus de exploitatie van de paviljoens. We hebben de verantwoordelijkheid er bij genomen om ook dat deel, de andere drie terreinen, met de omgeving er omheen ook te beheren, of beter, om ons druk over te maken. Het infoversum, wat officieel failliet is gegaan, zat niet op het terrein van het Open Lab Ebbinge, maar we hebben er wel een grote rol in gespeeld. Er kwam iemand met leuk plan en een professor met een leuk idee, die hebben we aan elkaar gekoppeld en zodoende is het infoversum er uit gekomen. Maar ook het andere project daar, dat nu ook even gesloten is, is officieel ook geen onderdeel van het lab, maar we hebben wel verantwoordelijkheid genomen. Het is een mooie plek, we gaan ons er hard voor maken om er voor te zorgen dat er een goede uitwatering komt met het terrein en die zich open stelt naar de stadsrand en strandstoeltjes aanschaf met hulp van ons om er voor te zorgen dat we dit gebied met elkaar leuker maken. Onze juridische verantwoordelijkheid houdt op bij het fietspad, maar eigenlijk het hele beheer op het hele gebied eigenen we ons wel toe, omdat we zien dat we die verantwoordelijkheid hebben en dat het ook een toegevoegde waarde heeft als wij dat doen. Dus de grens is juridisch misschien strak gelegd, maar daar maken we ons niet heel erg druk om. We zien ook dat in de loop van de tijd de gemeente jou er ook steeds meer bij betreft. We hebben ook nog wel eens gehad dat het verkeerd ging, dat er een event geprogrammeerd stond terwijl we eigenlijk met ze hadden afgesproken: 'overleg het even met ons om te kijken of dat past binnen het totaalbeeld wat we hier

voor ogen hebben en of het praktisch gaat lukken', en het is ook zo dat voor de evenementen mensen die daar wat willen organiseren, die kunnen ook bij ons terecht en dan leggen we het een en ander uit, vertellen we hoe het werkt. Gewoon heel praktisch. Bij ons in het team zit ook iemand die heel veel evenementen organiseert, bijvoorbeeld ook Eurosonic en Noorderzon, dus die weet helemaal hoe dat werkt, dus die zetten we dan in als persoon, zo van 'help ze en dan maken we er samen wat moois van'. Dus die verantwoordelijkheid nemen we, en soms ging dat ook wel een beetje tegen in bij de gemeente, maar in de loop van de tijd is dat wel een heel goede samenwerking geworden.

Zou je zeggen dat het Open Lab succesvol is?

Als je kijkt naar wat wij als doelstelling hadden, dat het op 1 juni 2016 geen rotte kies meer zou zijn, dat er initiatieven zouden zijn die hier voor de permanente periode te bouwen. Die zijn gehaald, dus wat dat betreft hebben we succes gehad. Natuurlijk wilden we ook een showcase zijn voor tijdelijke bouw, dat is maar deels gelukt. Want we hebben hier veel staalbouw en een klein beetje piepschuim, maar we wilden ook houtbouw en betonbouw hier neer zetten. Dat is helaas niet gelukt, maar desalniettemin denk ik dat het paviljoen een mooi palet is aan dingen in de tijdelijke bouwput. In zijn algemeenheid denk ik dat het een succes is geweest en dat de gemiddelde stadjer ook met veel plezier terugkijkt op het initiatief wat hier is geweest.

Wat hebben jullie hier zelf van geleerd?

Heel veel dingen, bijvoorbeeld hoe je samenwerkt met verschillende actoren, hoe je communiceert, dat zo'n fietspad bijvoorbeeld heel belangrijk is geweest. Hoe je met zo'n gemeente samenwerkt, verschillende eilandjes, hoe je dat voor elkaar krijgt, dat je team heel veelzijdig moet zijn, dus een bestuurs-/organisatiedeskundige, een sociaal geograaf, eventmanager, dat dat gewoon heel goed werkt. Verschillende ondernemende mensen met verschillende achtergronden. Dat 5 jaar te kort is om de exploitatie van de paviljoens rond te krijgen. Leren relativeren. Eigenlijk allemaal dat soort dingetjes.

Als je het op een andere plek overnieuw zou doen, wat zou je anders doen?

Sowieso kijken naar de kansen van de plek. Met de Suikerunie stond laatst een stuk in de krant en daarbij noemden ze dit fietspad als een van de succesfactoren, daar ben ik het mee eens, hier fietsen duizenden mensen per dag over heen, die zien dat hier iets gebeurt, dus die eigenen het gebied zich mentaal weer toe, dus toen werd er daar gezegd dat zij ook een fietspad moeten hebben. Zo werkt het helaas niet, want dat terrein ligt veel meer perifeer, van Hoogkerk naar de stad, ik weet niet hoeveel mensen daar over heen zouden kunnen rijden, maar het is een heel ander publiek wat je dan hebt. En het is een binnenstedelijke omgeving waar we hier zitten. We zitten 500 meter afstand van de Martinitoren, dus op een andere plek zouden we eerst moeten kijken wat voor mogelijkheden het biedt. Dat doe je niet alleen door zelf te kijken maar ook door met mensen in overleg te gaan, die het DNA snappen van die plek. Aan de hand daarvan zou je plannen kunnen maken.

Heb je tips voor andere initiatieven die op eenzelfde manier willen beginnen?

Ja, zorg voor een veelzijdig team, iemand die er van houdt zich in zo'n ambtelijke organisatie vast te bijten, die dat snapt. Gerrit is directeur van de KOA geweest en in de politiek actief geweest dus die snap dat soort lijntjes. Dat is heel erg handig. Ik zie heel veel initiatieven, dat de teams die er achter zitten niet divers genoeg zijn, dat het mensen zijn die graag initiatief willen nemen, graag willen scheppen bij wijze van spreken, maar niet de veelzijdigheid van een team hebben met iemand die ook het gesprek met de gemeente aan wil gaan. We hebben hier ook iemand in ons team die planeconoom is, dus die kan alles perfect doornemen, superhandig. En in zo'n geval ook een eventmanager, want we doen hier wat met events. We organiseren het zelf niet, we faciliteren ze wel. Het is handig om iemand in huis te hebben die dat snapt. Voor een groenproject heb je heel andere kwaliteiten in een team nodig, ook wellicht iemand die zich vast kan bijten in zo'n organisatie, maar ook iemand die wat meer verstand van zaken heeft van groen. Iemand die het leuk vindt om te communiceren en daar momentum mee te creëren. Dat is belangrijk, je moet je aan de buitenwereld laten zien, je moet momentum creëren zodat er meer partijen aanhaken, dat werkt vaak goed, dan zetten meer mensen hun schouders er onder en ontstaat er ook meer draagvlak en draagvlak betekent duurzaamheid. Je moet mensen hebben die dat kunnen en leuk

vinden. Dat is een tip. Daarnaast, wees ook adaptief. Wees sterk in je verhaal, sta daarvoor, maar durf ook in te spelen op veranderende situaties. Hou niet altijd te veel met de kop in het zand vast aan het oorspronkelijke idee, maar praat ook met mensen, stel je open. Draagvlak creëren, duurzaamheid, betekent ook je open stelt voor andere ideeën. Er is een TedEx filmpje, How to start a movement, die legt heel goed uit wat er dan ontstaat. Je hebt dan 1 iemand op een veld, er wordt muziek gedraaid en 1 iemand staat op, die gaat dansen. Vervolgens slaat hij daar een tweede persoon mee aan en een derde. En na die derde persoon ontstaat er een groep, een movement. En dan staan er opeens meer mensen op die gaan meedansen. Die eerste danser is niet eens zo heel belangrijk, maar de tweede en derde zijn het belangrijkste, want dan heb je een groep, dan ontstaat er een movement, dus zorg er vooral voor dat je die tweede en derde persoon mee hebt. Leiderschap is overschat. Wees je daar als initiatiefnemer van bewust.

Heb je voor de gemeente een tip?

Toch ook beter afstemmen tussen de verschillende eilandjes. Ook in de organisatie de mindset creëren dat je wat meer ondernemender mag zijn. Durf soms een beetje risico's te nemen. Durf partijen, plekken, initiatieven de ruimte te geven. Wees niet bang dat je gelijk weer afgestraft wordt. Kleine initiatieven zijn niet duurzaam genoeg omdat ze niet genoeg een organisatie zijn. Als je ziek wordt ben je meteen niet meer bereikbaar. Dat gaat met ons niet gebeuren. Terwijl je aan de andere kant ook kunt stellen dat de tijd is geweest, en dat er weer ruimte komt voor andere dingen. Niet te veel met kop in het zand vast houden aan wat we altijd hebben gedaan, dus dit werkt, dus zo gaan we het de komende 100 jaar doen. We weten niet hoe de wereld is over 10/15 jaar.