

Urban self-organisation? What is it?

Transitions in participatory thinking.
Empirical evidence from Sofia, Bulgaria

UNIVERSITY OF GRONINGEN

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Authored by M.H. Hasanov
Supervised by Dr. J. R. Beaumont

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Acknowledgements

How much does it take to write a thesis?
About 60CDs of Tchaikovsky's finest collection!

It sounds like a joke, and actually, it is one. In fact, a very flat one but leaving the joke aside, this was really the estimated time I spent in writing (only) the first draft of this thesis. One might just guess how much time I needed before starting writing. However, it has been a great time. With some frustration, of course, being lost in the literature I sued and finding my way out of the puzzle. Then, again drowning in empirics and finally outlying the analysis and conclusions. The whole process of writing was just like a piece of classical opera where the protagonist is struggling between the virtues of right and wrong.

This thesis marks the end of my student life, and the period of my RUG masters. The agony of writing this thesis started about a year ago, when I was excessively confused with what I want to do and discovered that I am also experiencing high levels of bipolarity in an eventual research topic. The proposal, which presumably is the most important part of a thesis, changed four times (or at least this is the number I remember). It shifted from urban renewal in The Hague, through extending boundaries of gentrification in Sofia and finally landed in the unidentified fields of urban self-organisation in participatory decision-making, shortly USO (Yes, it does sound like an UFO, but it is slightly different!).

This journey was not easy, but also not very turbulent and would have been impossible without the support and impulses of aspiration I have found in my friends, classmates, colleagues, family and of course little things in life. To start in logical order, first, thanks to my supervisor, for his on the spot and critical comments in the ideas fighting in my mind. Special greetings also to my ReMa mentor, for his advices, recommendations, and catchy jokes during my extraordinary stay in the faculty and for being the coolest mentor ever. A big hug and thanks for all the light-hearted (most of the time) classmates I have met during my stay in Groningen. Some of them turned out to be not just good acquaintances, but also dear friends close to my mind, body, and soul. Bulleting names will be unethical and unprofessional. Therefore, dear friends, thank you very much for being there, for the great shared moments, unpractical jokes, sarcastic machinery and the unforgettable coffee breaks, which are essential part of thesis preparation. Without you, my stay and experience here would not have been the same. Finally, words regarding my family. None of them quite get actually, what I am really studying all those years, but showed some kind of appreciation, and kept asking me "So, what will you become when you graduate?". Honestly, I am not quite sure yet, but only time will show. After all, it all gets better and the best is yet to come!

Once again, thanks and a big time hug for all of you. Thanks, individually and together!

Groningen
January, 2014

Mufty

Abstract

Urban self-organisation? What is it?

It is the way ordinary citizens *participate* in urban governance, but this is not the most important thing about it. Urban self-organisation is not only a very fuzzy and a very complex concept as one might think of it.

In this thesis I outline that urban self-organisation is a mean of civic engagement in planning initiatives, based on evidence in two specific case studies in Sofia, Bulgaria. After almost five decades of various ladders and staircases of participation, we need to enrich the content the term with new intellectual notions and empirical indications. Additionally, after more than two decades of transition towards democratic approaches, the dialectic of citizen participation is yet to become a hot topic in the so-called post-socialist context and not documented sufficiently in the existing bulk of literature. Therefore, in this research I define urban self-organisation as an asset of participatory action which is based on certain **social** and **physical sharedness**, as well as taking roots in the **collective intentionality** of various personalia gained around a certain goal or aim. The process of self-organisation is characterised with low levels of professional control, rise of spontaneous pop-ups and carrying high voltage of civilian energy. Critical analysis of the empirical findings included in this thesis recommends that a **transition towards urban self-organisation** in elucidation of participatory phenomena is far more suitable than the existing conventions of civilian participation as framed and constitutionalised liability. Engaging citizen participation with urban self-organisation may not only grant access of ordinary people to influence decision-making, but also the other way around – to illustrate strict bureaucrats that more creative, innovative, and participatory practices are not so difficult to achieve.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

This thesis will look at the essentially contested concept in decision-making – that of citizen participation. It will constitute also an understanding of another fundamentally appealing thought emerging nowadays in planning that of urban self-organisation, in its role of advocating citizen participation. Citizen participation, in this thesis, relates to the capacities of ordinary citizens, which share common values and collective intentions in given socio-spatial proximity, to address particular issues in everyday life performance and their embodiment in contemporary governance.

Up to date, four major innovative, and radical strings towards appreciating citizen input and participation, have been introduced in order to democratize decision-making and yet locked itself in a vicious cycle, developed mainly in the Anglo-Saxon literature. Those theoretical insights have inspired various researchers, organizations and institutions in enhancing the role of participation not only in modern governance, but also enlightened the role of civic participation as a standard *modus operandi* of the society.

Arnstein, in 1969, coined the participation ladder in argument of shifting responsibilities in power balance. Although her seminal work was not the first one dedicated to participation, it gained widespread support and never went out of date. *Rules for Radicals*, 1971 (printed post-mortem), which is based on Saul Alinsky's personal experience of community organizing is proposing strategies and lessons in empowering low-income marginalized communities which were challenging disproportionate inequalities suppressed by the status quo, experienced in the US during the post-war period. In another major piece of intellectual effort, Robert D. Putnam (1993)¹, looking back on the performance of the regional Italian governance, summarizes that in order to understand civic engagement and institutional performance we should first comprehend the notion of social capital. More recently, Fung (2006) develops the argument of empowered participation in establishing an accountable autonomy that would include deliberation and fairness in decision-making.

These modern perspectives on participation have been developed in a line with building an image of representative democratic approaches, where citizens have been seen as an active part in society – members in sports clubs, charity societies, donating money, volunteering

¹ In later publications, Putnam enriched his thesis on social capital and civic engagement. More on that you can read in the theoretical chapter of the thesis.

initiatives and so on. Yet, mostly their participatory abilities have been reduced to officious democratic voting once in four or five years. Perhaps, the nearest example of real participation, as meant in this thesis, is an emergence of grassroots organizations that occasionally are being *invited* in collaborations or discussions on specific issues. This, if not anything else, is a recipe for facade democracy, if not a disaster.

In the spirit of recent developments in the field of participatory planning and democratizing governance debate combined with the rise of the fruitful terminology of urban self-organisation, this thesis will concentrate on underexplored or, perhaps, even neglected socio-spatial foci of urban research and practice – the one of geopolitically peripheral, and post-socialist context of Sofia, Bulgaria. Two case studies will be examined to illuminate the understanding of self-organisational capacity of the urban in constructing the role of shifting attitudes of urban planning and citizen participation.

This will highlight an opportunity to extend existing conceptual conventions of urban governance in these, difficult to understand post-socialist geographic latitudes. There are several edited collections on evolution of the urban form and socio-spatial structures of post-socialist space (see Andrusz 2006, Czepczyński 2008, Hamilton et al 2005, Tsenkova 2008, Tsenkova et al 2006, Stanilov 2007), which although touching upon social and cultural issues are focusing on the evolution and path dependency of the urban form mainly from an architectural, design and aesthetic viewpoint. Somehow the role of the social engagement and importance of social transitions and spatial transformations in urban processes are not clearly visible or it is just descriptive, rather than constructive. Putman (2002) generalises that the traumatic events in the decades after 1989 in the post-socialistic spaces created mainly negative effect on the notions of social engagement. This might be explained partly with the economic and political shock therapy that countries like Bulgaria experienced, but also with the collapse of state-managed institutions and their quick (and perhaps inadequate) replacement with quasi-democratic structures copying the *good* democracies of the West, without elaborate consideration of the existing context.

Looking at the political map of Europe, now most of those post-socialist cities, including Sofia, are part of the bigger European family and supposedly share the same values, norms and legislative procedures. Unsurprisingly, the pre-accession and accession to the EU imposed synchronization and modernization of certain governance and decision-making tools, for example in relation with conducting public hearings concerning the spatial planning in national and local level. The latest examples of such actions are EU inspired integrated plans for urban redevelopment and regeneration, which claim to combine the three pillars of the urban development – built environment, economic empowerment and

social integration. However, most of these legislative guidelines are mainly in theory but not in practice.

Up to date planning measures in Sofia manage to fail urban dialogue and participatory approaches. As Hirt (2005) summarizes planning approaches in Sofia have increased the capacity for citizen participation in decision-making, but its input is rather limited, if not ignored. Urban self-organisation, as I will illustrate in this project, has the capacity to meet the ups and bottoms of the planning institution and contribute for balanced and sustainable urban development.

Why should one be interested in this research?

The simple answer is to establish an in-depth investigation of the shifting social attitudes in spatial planning in Sofia, which conveniently has been outside the focus of mainstream urban planning. The period of the 1990s was dominated by immature and not well-performed discourses in regard with economic, social, and political scene, which does not seem attractive to publishers and academics, in comparison with much more turbulent fields of economic and political sciences. On the other hand, perhaps, the behavior of various actors and their actions characterized with unwritten rules and regulations have been represented as negative development in the mainstream media. Nevertheless, each action seemed to have no clear start and end-point. Perhaps, this was learning-by-doing and learning by what not to do, or simply because most of the individuals shared the same ideas of constructing the social realm; or it was just the dialectics of the post-socialist transition, which just wanted to be different and escape from the existing boundaries of regulation and control.

The long answer as usual is very complex, and complex is a word we use when the problems are really unclear and unsolvable. Thinking about the focus of this thesis, in a city, that concentrates almost 20% of the population of the country and it is the biggest trigger of the regional and national economy the speed of spatial transformations can be described both with decay and simultaneously with super-luxurious development, which often in the eye of the consumer appear as both thorns and thrones of urban development. In a context where the governmental and social institutions are trying to get rid of the old 'planned' vision of the world and try to democratise, the rationale of finding solution to problems have been often irrational, unclear, perhaps spontaneous or even absurd. Environmentalists, NGO formations, marginalised minorities activist groups, more recently, powerful civil organisations and movements contesting the urban space have been and still are emerging like mushrooms, and this is not limited to the planning aspect of life.

If one re-thinks this processes carefully, it will be evident that they do not have clear starting point neither their future is in certain limits. They are all self-organising and the essence of self-organising is the capacity of residents and citizens to fulfil the urban realm, toward the creation of call it just-revanchist-sustainable-good-smart or whatever else city.

For that reason, the intention of this research is to trace the perception of socio-spatial change in the challenged socially, economically and politically spaces of the edge of Europe, with emphasis on self-organizing capacities of the urban sphere. Perhaps, there are institutional settings in USO, which are particularity tacit and unknown for the bureaucratic machine of governance and vice versa - the citizens might be alert of certain capacity and limitations of their input in intended developments, which can link these two realms and produce improved decision-making.

The question here is what exactly we know about the term self-organisation? How it does get around in the urban environment, in this context, within the case of participatory efforts of the post-socialistic urban milieu? Those, undeniably, are questions described with high level of abstractness and subjectivity in their interpretation.

Translated to the larger scale, such developments resulted in both successful and contested fruits of decision-making and urban planning. Previous perils of the urban landscape fell into decay, new developments flourished in unexpected locations, new actors entered and left the urban scene; new motions of development seized the status-quo. Naturally, this created some challenges and opportunities in implementing new measures and methodologies in urban planning, i.e. outdated legislation and regulations annulled, property and land ownership rights reassigned to their owners.

Aims, Objectives & Questions

The main aim of this project is to assess critically citizen participation and engagement practices in Sofia, within the light of the most recent and mainly EU inspired urban redevelopment projects and programs. Respectively, the objective of this research is to develop recommendations for empowering citizen participation in the exiting decision-making context, by introducing and illustrating the effective role of USO. Such recommendations will help to raise awareness of how aspects of citizen participation can be seen as means of social order and cooperation between different actors, actions, and assets that translates into less contested performance in implementation of policies or plans.

With USO turning to be a 'hot piece' of urban planning and practice in the West, there is a gap in literature about the development of such phenomena in planning context which is

institutionally and structurally self-organizing itself (i.e. unclear regulations, vague interpretation of legislative acts and distorted planning system). Which is also conveniently outside the focus of the performing “excellent” liberal states of the North/West², where the concept has been developed? Additionally, more than 20 years after the wind of change is blowing in the post-socialist cities. Perhaps it is time to invest time and efforts understanding changes in social engagement by using innovative perspectives and touches, rather than blaming the historical context for current pitfalls of governance. Finally, yet importantly this research will utilize empirical knowledge for potential urban governance attitudes in Sofia, where eventually USO might be tool that combines the technocracy of top-down planning and the complexity of bottom-up initiatives.

Following the rhetoric of the research aim and objectives, the main question of investigation in this project is

- ✚ How the concept of USO can be useful for enhancing citizen participation within the changing conditions of urban planning in Sofia, Bulgaria?

This questions addresses the global vision of the thesis, namely to investigate the role of USO in enhancing citizen participation in the dynamic social and spatial transformation in the urban planning and governance approaches between the post-socialist and EU transition.

In order to answer to this question, we must first give answer to several other sub-questions.

- What do we mean by citizen participation in planning? (RQ1)

This question reconnects the current rationale of urban planning, discussed in this thesis, with the importance of citizen participation. This is a nectary step, if we want to see the trends participation debate has been into and what directions it can take for the future.

- What potential does USO offer to urban planning in regard with changing conditions of citizen participation? (RQ2)

This question correspondents with the theoretical aspect of USO and citizen participation in planning processes. The answer of this question will elaborate on the role of USO as effective

² The North-South divide is well-documented political, social and economic divide between, however the East-West dichotomy, although officially destroyed in 1989, still seems to exist as artificial construct of regional division, particularly in Europe.

mean in public participation practices and put the cornerstone of the conceptual framework embedded in the thesis.

- To what extent occurring urban developments in Sofia can be explained by self-organisation? (RQ3)

This question reflects and directly links with the empirical findings of the project. Up to date results in urban planning in Sofia, often do not have rational explanation and are wrapped in a complexity of relationships which perhaps the simplicity of self-organisation can explain. The answer of this query will also provide cognitive content for the next question, underlining the gaps for development and improvement.

- What are the potentials and limits of USO in the context of citizen participation and restructuring of urban governance in Sofia? (RQ4)

This question links with the analysis and the discussion of the empirical finds and addresses the blank spots for recommendation for and about investing the intentional state of participatory measures and their role for empowering citizen participation and diminishing the likelihood of contested planning results.

Citizen participation, respectively, urban planning also has a dark side. This question will also answer an inquiry of the limitations that have been observed during the empirical data collection, the theoretical and empirical discussions of the thesis. This question will also examine and prepare what lessons can be learned and build further recommendations for specific context related approaches.

Theoretical Framework

The aim of this section is to introduce briefly the position of the current research amongst the most relevant scientific debates on participation and self-organisation. Arnstein (1969) introduced the first bold move on participation in planning, with her ladder of citizen participation, which never ceased to be influential during the last half century. Starting from intellectual point, the theoretical chapter of this thesis will follow the importance participation in different planning rationalities. This will help to establish an analytical, critical and constructive baseline of participatory approaches, what they have achieved and how do they achieved that.

To date there has been little agreement on what exactly makes citizen participation essentially desired and contested concept at once. Participation has been illustrated as a ladder (Arnstein 1969, Connor 1989), as a game (Stewart 2007), as a black box (Yang & Padney, 2011), as a tool to improve the institutional capacity of decision making and urban governance (Healey 1996;1998; 2002, etc., Sandercock 2004, Innes & Booher 2004, Hajer & Versteeg 2005, Hajer 2006), as an apple of discord between power and rationality (Flyvbjerg 1998a,b), a dilemma of city and citizen rights (Tennille 2005), and even a wicked problem (Hartmann 2012). Recently, even an online encyclopaedia, based on Fung's ideals of democratic accountable autonomies was developed, which is claiming to be "an open global knowledge community for researchers and practitioners in the field of democratic innovation and public engagement"³. However, research and practice has consistently shown that citizen participation has certain discrepancies in the positionality of the stakeholders and stands for decorating walls with certificates, guidelines for development and pinning administrative citizen participation formations on a digital map.

The second theoretical guest, urban self-organisation, its role in planning practice and design is gaining increasing institutional and academic support in the West as a norm that can enhance the lacking or misinterpreted public participatory procedures in urban planning. Within this thesis, urban self-organisation is loaded with social, spatial, and intimate values of ordinary citizens. It is constructed also as a socially significant asset, which reflects as a mean for citizen participation.

Self-organisation, in the world of sciences and theories, is denoted as a spontaneous emergent process, where order arises out from a random or almost chaotic system – a definition strongly rooted in hard sciences. Respectively, the occurring discourses of self-organisation, in planning terms, have been based mainly on arguments documented in such fields of activity.

In investigating urban self-organisation, it is unethical to avoid the findings documented in the above-mentioned academic literature, but the focus of this thesis is narrowed on the social and tacit importance of the concept, rather than its structural interdependency. Recently, Boelens & Boonstra (2011) emphasise the role of self-organisation in reducing the distance between public authorities and regular citizens and Fuchs (2002) refers to self-organisation as a vivid process, which is based on permanent saturation of social institutions, and associations that communicate through and raise the question of self-involvement and self-participation, as a contribution to the society.

³ Available at <http://www.participedia.net/en/about>. Accessed on 6.11.2013

Self-organisation is also object of investigation in behavioural and social sciences (Bratman, 1993; Fuchs 2002; Searle, 1995), related to the personal embodiment of an individual to the society, his personal network or to the surrounding environment in general. While talking about the role of self-organisation, the role of each individual is related to the overall performance within the context it habituates and structures, and since Hindriks (2012) argues that society is all about structure, this thesis investigates the role of self-organisation on collective performance level resulting in citizen participation.

Methodology

In this research, I engage USO in a phenomenological charge, thus highlighting the citizens' subjective experience, and analytical mean of citizen participation in the planning practice. As such, the research methodology will rely on interpretive theoretical paradigm and related qualitative means of data collection in order to answer the research problem and questions. Qualitative analysis is seen a suitable approach for analysing various input of text, representation of ideas, actions, intentions and other social phenomena (Neuman, 2000). The methodological trinity of this project can be categorized as such:

- **Literature review** – the first step in the study designed that is used to identify and place the current research with ongoing conceptual and theoretical discussions
- **Primary data** from semi-structured interviews with planning professionals, architects, NGO activists, scholars, and residents, recorded and transcribed in the period between May and July 2013
- **Secondary data** in the form of legislative acts, audio-visual broadcasts, periodic newspaper articles, blogosphere and social network publications, which gave valuable input in understanding the obtained results.

Original data contribution

The main qualitative data collection method in this research is obtained by semi-structured interviews. This approach can provide broader understanding of the ongoing issues, which the researcher want to investigate and often step into more reflective data, rather than strictly organized structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews have open-ended an interpretive questions which allow gathering more streams of information and often intervenes are already discussing the next question, without it being asked. Each interview is based on several key questions that gathered the crucial in-depth information and evolved in

a discussion mode, where both the informant and the researcher can establish rapport and ease tension caused by personal unfamiliarity.

Case Studies

Central point in this research is the case study approach, which is a general research method adopted in social sciences. Case study research is suitable for the interest of this thesis because it allows focusing on specific issues and cases, linking theory with practice, within particularly context and as such attempts to explain how the rules of the game work.

However, generalisation based on a case study can result in biased interpretations and altered analysis. Therefore, for the purposes of this project I have selected two different neighbourhoods that are independent from each other and located in different sub-municipalities of Sofia. They also have substantially different dynamics in the built and social environment. One is located within the physical boundaries of the city centre and is subject of urban renewal – Women’s Market. The second case study – Students Town is a campus community where the students from outside the capital reside and it is located in the outskirts of the city. Both case studies are considered as valuable neighbourhoods with public and social importance.

Significance

The research project is of high academic significance because it investigates the attitudes of social and spatial transformations in urban governance placed between the dynamic post-socialist and EU accession transition. It contributes to understanding the interaction between human agencies, residents, local entrepreneurs, policy makers, and institutions in a context of substantial socio-economic and cultural alteration and more specifically a locus of urban development in a not well performing periphery of the EU. The emergence of a new middle class claiming for improved performance of institutions and proactive citizenship outlining the socio-spatial and functional developments of urban space implies that deeper analysis of these interactions is needed. Finally yet importantly, the complexity and self-organising mechanisms of interaction in an urban context form a plethora of creative spontaneous solutions and resolutions that represent a particular research and personal interest of mine.

Research Overview

Chapter 1: Introduction

The chapter contains the background, research aim and objectives, research question, introduction to the theoretical framework and research methodology.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

This chapter is building the conceptual framework based on episteme documented in the literature documented in previous research. It is divided in two major sections – the role of public participation in planning and the role of USO as an innovative mean of citizen participation in planning.

Chapter 3 Research Methodology

This chapter engages the methodological and philosophical consistency of the research project. Research methodology underlines the purpose of doing research – to inform action and produce knowledge over particular issue or phenomena.

Chapter 4: Empirical findings

This chapter will outline the result of the collected data and set up the base for further systematic analysis. The gathered data is represented in threefold relationship between the actions, actors and assets of participation.

Chapter 5: Analysis & Discussion

Critically reflecting on the findings by linking the theoretical verdicts with the empirical findings and result in logically defensible and resilient argument.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This section will outline the expectations, results, and the outcome of the investigation. It will also draw limitations and recommendations for further research.

Visualisation of the research overview can be seen in the infographic located in the next page.

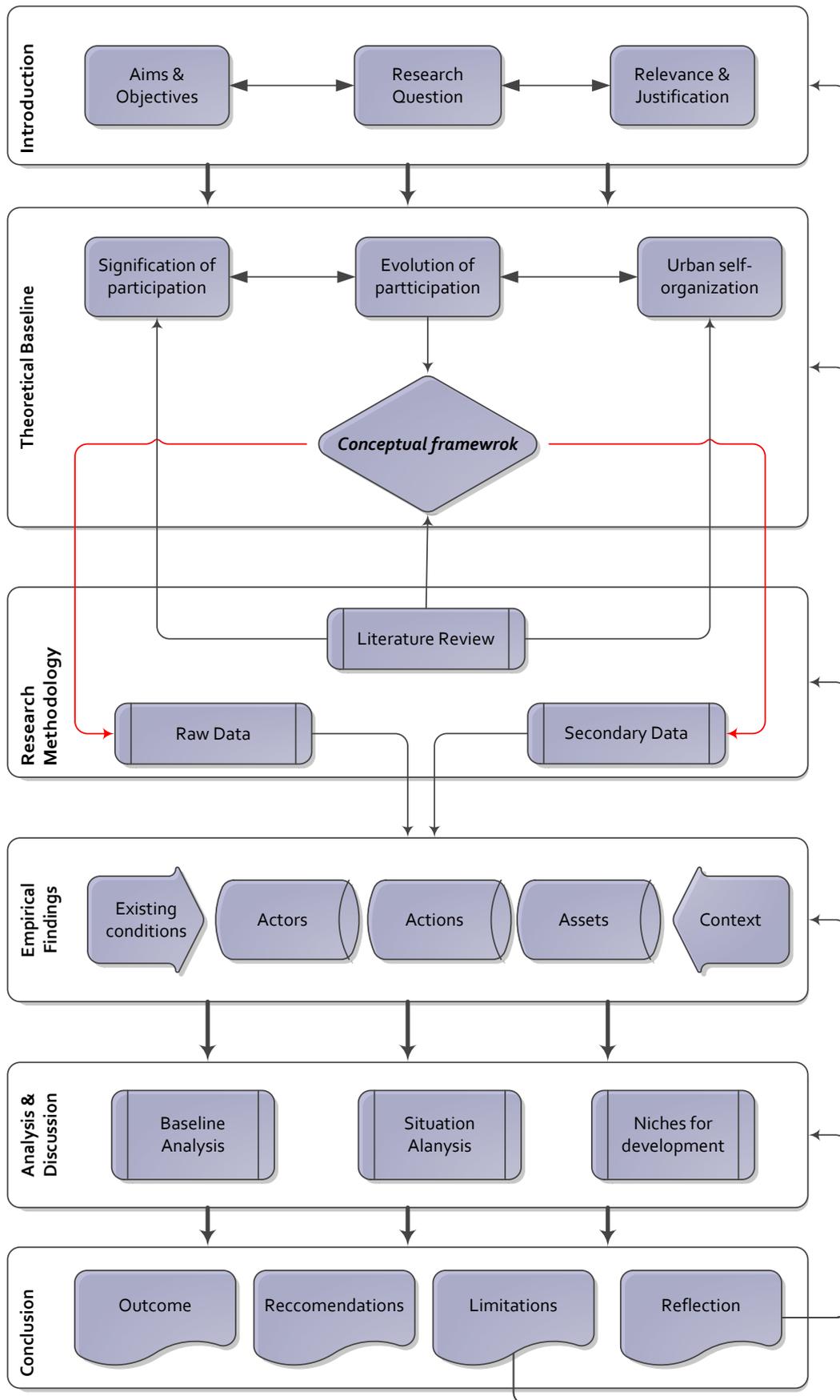


Figure 1 Structure of the thesis (design by the author)

Chapter 2: Theory

Introduction

The previous chapter offered short summary of the current research and briefly discussed the main theoretical propositions on which the thesis stands. In the following pages the complete theoretical and conceptual framework of the current study will be elaborated. The purpose of this chapter is to inform the reader with the intellectual debates of citizen participation and urban self-organisation in planning prospect. It is clear that participatory approaches are pivotal part of contemporary urban planning discourse and are well embedded in planning education, research, and practice (no matter how questionable it is done).

By building the theoretical argument of this thesis, I will first tackle the notion of citizen participation observed in the literature from threefold assumption:

- Where do we come from?
- What have we found (about participation in planning)?
- Where are we going with what we have found?

These three questions will encompass wide array of ideas and practices of citizen participation spread over large temporal and spatial scale, offering not only rich coloratura of issues citizen participation can arise, but also a basis for analytical critique, which will follow in the second section of this chapter.

The second part of this chapter will look at urban self-organisation (USO), a term that recently has become too sexy for planning theory and practice, as a mean that contributes to citizen participation and urban governance theory-practice debate, by tackling the question:

- What can we do to understand better citizen participation?⁴

Hereby, USO is constructed as a term not invested with a dominating view rooted in complexity perspective, but rather taking its stocks in social science perspective and unveiling the social importance of self-organisation as representation of citizen participation and constructing real-life action. By doing this, I will argue that citizen participation should

⁴ These four questions are not implicit or explicit research questions, rather they are set here to help/prepare/navigate the reader with the concepts explained and elaborated in the chapter.

discontinue of being a liability for planning and begin to be considered as an asset contributing for urbanity and well-being of cities.

The chapter will conclude with the conceptual model of this thesis, which will be embedded in the flow of the research and examined through the gained empirical evidence.

From planning theory to practicing participation

This thesis that aims to bring new assets and means to citizen participation, which in my view are, straightforward and real representation of the civil society and real life situations that occur in everyday situations. However, I would like to start my theoretical discussion with setting up a little of distance from the words of concrete actions and try to explain why participatory issues are considered to be important in planning theory and practice.

Planning is a process and phenomena at the same time. Processes of decision-making, spatial development, governance are phenomena commissioned, created, and run by needs of the society. Planning can be considered as a profession, a dramaturgy, a social activity, given set of ideas, a way of living, and so much more. Wider consideration of the environmental, social, cultural, economic, and political issues of participation in modern days marks the increasing intricacy of planning. In this universal field of activity many ideas has been generated, defended, diminished, and continue to arise. Shortly, this can be referred also to the importance of different ends and means of participation when it comes to urban planning.

Historical evolution of urban planning and development is tentatively interconnected with the evolution of society and (for good or evil) with the major economic, political systems and beliefs. This confirms the statement of Almendigner (2009) that planning does not have its own theory but tends to develop an intellectual capacity form the dominating discourses in other sciences. Summing up the last century of planning we can clearly see a pattern. We have moved from object-oriented, observation based on facts, technical rationality, towards the domain of collaborative rationality and currently reaching its edges by embracing the theories of emergence and self-organisation.

For example, nowadays urban planning is not only about “to build a city” but also finding ways for promoting and encouraging wellbeing and sustainability in urban environment, and ensure better and justifiable future for the citizen. All this is to say that planning is not only an instrument for administrators structuring their cities in modernistic way, but it also relies on the virtues of democratic governing and governance of space. Achieving this balance is the main intended goal of collaborative practices. This is made possible with improving

qualities of places through appropriate institutional governance capacity, which necessarily should improve the quality of local policy cultures and more important involvement of partnership and collaboration and their careful consideration (Healey, 2006). However, collaborative rationality comes with essences of consensus and ethics; and it has been criticized for being too much normative and neglecting in its intersubjectivity the array of power relations between the elements of planning (Flyvbjerg 1998). More recently, planning has come in search of its identity in the fields of deliberation (Beaumont & Nichols 2008, Fung 2006, Sager 2002) and terms of assemblage and social complexity (Hillier, 2008).

After all, the theory of planning is an omnipresent, never-ending discussion, about ideas in and out of planning. Some of those thoughts I would like to allocate within a wider frame of reference, because the goal of this thesis is not to review and rediscover planning theory. That is goal of completely different research axis, rather in this research I show the place, role and position citizen participation in the realm of planning theory and practice, both and individually. Therefore, the next section will briefly set out the intellectual reasoning of why participation is such an important, contested and desired function of planning transactions.

Where do we come from (or why do we bother with participation in planning)?

The ideals of civil society, citizenship, and just cities are not only a figure of speech desired by believers and dreamers. Society is a structure that is changing quickly, perhaps even more often than we wish and the planning practice should stick to the turbulent changes occurring in social reality. Take for example the presence of the term “inclusive society” in theoretical, political and practical aspect of planning. Just several decades ago, on the verge of discovering the meaning of the term governance, the basic assumption of inclusive was to consider and mitigate impact for marginalized and minority groups based on racial and ethnic origin. Today’s inclusive society stands for social organization that embodies society with economy, polity, and nature, thus looking beyond the current state of planning. Nevertheless, planners are perceived as alienated administrators, which try to spread justice, mitigate impacts and held meeting where they discuss important city matters. On the contrary, in order to govern their cities planners need to know what a citizen is, how he behaves, what he needs and how everybody can be incorporated in the whole perplex of reality.

This is easier said than done, since there is not one citizen, but many and in great diversity. Hence for long time we have assumed that collaborative planning approaches might hold the key to unlock the difference between various social groups and form the ‘public sphere’ as described by Habermas. However, recently we are witnessing that planning has created

capacity to encompass solutions for such groups, driven by consensus and morality and yet simultaneously created tension between state and society.

The tension in such aspect is actually hidden behind the curtains of the philosophical inquiries of Habermas, Foucault, Giddens, Deluze and many more embodied in the bulk of the planning literature. Hereby, I will offer a small summary of the some major philosophical inquiries observed in the planning literature, which might help the reader with the positioning the term of citizen participation in this research. It shall be clear that the overall presumption of the main philosophical debates gravitates around the notion of objectivity and subjectivity of planning. Whereas this is not a question that can be answered with one or two lines, the message embedded in this section is that objectivity is important for planning to intellectualise and set up goals, but planning cannot exist without critical amount of subjective thinking.

Opening with the most obvious philosophical drama in collaborative planning, let me first summarize in a sentence what is the essence of the Foucault–Habermas debate and why supporters of each team constantly accuse each other in being too narrow minded. Simply, Habermas (1964) supports the thesis that achieving democratic governance and equal entrée to the public sphere can be secured by access of all citizens who participate in ideal speech situation of dialogue and communicative action. On the other shore, Foucault goes contrary and defines that ideal speech situations fail to understand exercise of power and surveillance and therefore cannot explain adequately questions of democracy, civil society, and social action.

Flyvbjerg (1998b) points out that the central argument both thinkers is about highlighting the issues of democratic thinking and understanding the turbulences of civil society. The consensus and discourse seeking normativity of Habermas versus the critical and proactive relativist society of Foucault. If there is something rotten in the state of planning, so this dilemma is trying to assess it. They are both political thinkers and are discussing the same problematic, but the way they dissect it is their apple of discord.

The theory of communicative action by Habermas is surrounded by the idea that “the unconstrained, unifying, consensus-bringing force of argumentative speech is a central experience in the life of human being (Habermas, 1983 in Flyvbjerg 1998b). Society and the public domain can be explained through participation in a debate, where everyone would have the ability to express option and contribute to the common goods of the rationality.

Contributions to society by using discursive tactics, however, are seen to construct instrumental-technical reasoning and constitutions as the main devices for uniting citizens in pluralistic society (Flyvbjerg, 1998b; Healy, 2003). The theoretical assumption of collaborative rationality thus is that when rules are designed to ensure equality for deliberating parties, there is a greater likelihood that participants can find a rational consensus. In a way that such constitutions will contribute for creating idealistic democratic processes and capacities.

The intellectual thought around the team of Foucault seem to be on the contrary of Habermasian ideal world situations. Central point to Foucauldian analysis is based on real evidence from historical and personal context, explained in terms of conflict, power and norms that are not universally true. This philosophical stream is trying to understand the path and dynamics of power, because power is the prerequisite of action in the social domain. Whereas with Habermas there is a lack of critical agreement between ideal and reality because such debate occurs in no specific context, here we are witness of constant struggle of conditionality and relativistic understanding of how reality works in contextual way (Flyvbjerg. 1998b). Foucauldian views on planning highlight the importance on specific and realistic contextual matters, but are keen to avoid the overall generalized conditions of planning that are also important for intellectualization and operationalization of concrete actions (Alexander 2001; Flyvbjerg. 1998b).

In series of publications, Healey (1996, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2008) defends the thesis that consensus seeking and dialogue between variety of actors and situations are the central feature of collaborative rationality. One of the main arguments of collaborative rationality is in the effort to encapsulate this notion of consensus and build new institutional capacity of/in planning. Relying on importance of local knowledge, social capital and sense of being and belonging to place collaborative turn in planning “emphasize the importance of building new policy discourses about the qualities of places, developing collaboration amongst stakeholders” (Healey 1998: 1531).

About what is then exactly collaborative paradigm in planning and participation? Integrative imagination of a place, collaborating on policy, broad stakeholder involvement, multiple local knowledge, build relational resource? Maybe all together. By these assets, we can build a stable institutional capital, where institutional capital is a collective term of intellectual, social, and political capital, because “the existence rich institutional capital allows rapid mobilization to new circumstances and enables flexible responses to be designed and developed” (Healey 1998: 1541). Therefore, collaborative planning via institutional design

stands for accumulation and circulation for knowledge, social resources, capacity for mobilization and mutual learning in collective performances and practices.

The starting point of the collective resource and creating the city is that the recognition of the complexity and diversity in urban life and its multiple time-space horizons should be embedded in urban governance context. Healey (2002) argues that cities always and continuously are mobilized and challenged:

“Their physical forms and cultural milieu are being continuously reshaped by the way people and other life forms live in them, use collectively available resources, relate to each other and generate images of what the city is and could be” (Healey 2002: 1780)

Important moment in contouring the city realm as a collective effort is the element of constant “colliding” and confrontation of actors that results in “episodes of collective action” (Healey, 2002: 1778). Although, here the claim is that such collective action is mainly imagined rather than performed, here I agree with Healey, that arguments and conflicts should not be used only in a negative meaning within a collective action context, after all, the truth is born, maintained and sustained of conflicts and diversity, rather than in equality.

The imaginative term in collaborative ideas of planning is also grasped by Sandercock (2004) who denotes that planning should be imaginative and inclusive in terms of political, audacious, creative and therapeutic potentials of the ones involved. By developing these new persuasive arrays of planning the author, departs from the standardized notion of collaboratively created cities and sails to find the “new planning imagination, a new planning culture” that would represent the new state of art in planning. Perhaps, this also means that this new imagination of planning will be based on developments based on a local level in real life experience, rather than ambiguous institutional ambiguity and constitutionalisation.

However, this is very idealistic representation of planning reality which just have decided to be in pace with democratic approaches. Not that something is wrong with that, but when planning practice is represent within a new groove of collaborative, collective and active social processes, such as mobilization of ideas and systems, without critical reality check, then there are high chances that the efforts of planning will fall in the situation of The Emperor and his new clothes. Healey (2002: 1788) replies to this concern arguing that collaborative planning is about to “hold together long enough to develop a collective imagination” in governance context, which can teach and guide different actors. However, retraining to the little allegory I sued, there is needed much more than an agency that

educates and directs to explain to the kid that the King is still naked and advised by tailors who cut invisible blueprints in the air.

Practically, communicative rationality brings in the intersubjectivity of public realm in planning, by simply saying that there are much more psychological relations and bonds between the people that we should be aware of when we are practicing or planning, and include it in our institutional design or frameworks. Such estimation of citizen participation as a collective action is party within the overall target of this research, as far as intellectual and social capital is concerned. Nevertheless, considering collective efforts as a part of new institutional designs and precondition of representative government, without clearly disentangling them, hides the same threats for citizen participation which can make it fail - namely the tragedy of commons.

On the contrary, the basic dilemma of planning and critique over collaborative rationality is that it does not takes in account power relations, although it is about sharing power. This is all related to underlying philosophes of different planning schools and to certain extent the positionality of the researcher itself. This relationship is clarified, underlined, studied, examined and re-examined in the fabulous Aalborg case, which Flyvbjerg uses as metaphor for the 10 Challenges of planning facing the asymmetry between the rationality of power and the power of rationality as follows:

- Power defines reality
- Rationality is context-dependent; the context of rationality is power; and power blurs the dividing line between rationality and rationalization
- Rationalization presented as rationality is a principal strategy in the exercise of power
- The greater the power, the less the rationality
- Stable power relations are more typical of politics, administration and planning than antagonistic confrontations
- Power relations are constantly being produced and reproduced
- The rationality of power has deeper historical roots than the power of rationality
- In open confrontation, rationality yields to power
- Rationality-power relations are more characteristic of stable power relations than of confrontations
- The power of rationality is embedded in stable power relations rather than in confrontations.

(As seen in Flyvbjerg, 1998a)

His analysis of democratic decision-making in a collaborative setting lights out the complex trade-offs and interrelations of different stakeholders, who also have different weight. Not just because simply “power has a clear tendency to dominate rationality in the dynamic and overlapping relationship between the two” (Flyvbjerg. 1998a: 325), but also because this analysis underlined for the first time the empirical importance of transparency and democratic values in collaborative decision-making context. In a lesser extent, the failure of collaborative approach is discussed in variety of other publications discussed in this thesis (see Innes & Booher, 2004; Tennille, 2005; Healy 2009; Yang & Padney, 2011; Hartmann, 2012). Nevertheless, it is Flyvbjerg who clearly illustrated, based on logically strong argumentation, that collaborative urban planning lacks issues of power, knowledge and the battlefields between the two, or if not lacking at least not paying enough attention.

Unravelling the rationality-power interdependence is rooted in understanding Habermas-Foucault debate and goes behind the standard elaborations given in planning theory by various authors before. In a reaction to commentaries to his critically acclaimed book *Rationality and Power: Democracy in Practice*, Flyvbjerg (2001b: 286) marks that “planning is too important to be left to planning theorists” and that engaging deeper philosophical notions about planning and how planning works should be explored additional and central to planning research. Closing planning theory with the limits of methodology and narrative of the hard sciences, might help the image of planning per se to be more “scientific”, but even considered normatively, planning deals with social and spatial reality where the laws and axioms of technocratic sciences have limited validity (Flyvbjerg, 2001a; 2006).

Alexander (2001) summarizes that communicative theory is nothing more than a theory with a high level of abstraction, which involves wide understanding of ethics, mutual consensus, and ideal speech situations. Both Alexander (2001) and Flyvbjerg (1998b) blame communicative rationality for just being analyser of specific situations but not active facilitator of change.

However, it should not be seen that those two arrays of intellectual theory are opposing each other for dominance in explaining how modernity works. It shall be understood that both are vital elements of explaining decisions and actions. At points where one of them is weak, the other one is strong. Such balance of philosophical battlefields is where the public life is cultivated (Flyvbjerg. 1998b; 2000). Because balance involves existence of fairness and equilibrium of multiple subjects, it is important to acknowledge that of the philosophical paradigms is neither correct nor wrong.

“Whether the communicative or rhetorical position is correct is not important here. What is decisive, rather, is that a non-idealistic point of departure must take of the fact that both positions are possible and even simultaneously possible” (Flyvbjerg, 1998b: 216)

Naturally, the radicalization of the debate in theory and practice seems to contribute to the idea that both philosophical flows are opposite of each other, but as Silver et al (2010: 454) argue “distinctions between consensus and conflict do not constitute mutually exclusive categories”. Alexander (2001) who supports the idea that contemporary planning theory and practice is an expression of the complementary duality of this debate also underlines the mutual inclusiveness of the concepts in real life situations:

“Planning never really involves independent, autonomous action: it is always in social context where interdependence, between individuals, within and between groups and every kind of societal unit, is ubiquitous and universal” (Alexander, 2001: 320)

To wrap up, supporters of Habermas believe that reality, including planning, is about morality, achieving consensus through talking through problems and basing decisions on open normative democratic values. Views of Foucault are based on experienced power relations and inequality in civil society, if we know how power works then we also know how democracy works. When Habermasian theory promotes collaborative participation, Foucauldian debates imply strategic action and sober rationality for effective planning.

In order to find exodus of this everlasting dilemma of placing planning in a wider philosophical discourse, some planning scholars have tried to place issues of participation in slightly modified or different logical inquires of deliberation. Deliberation have emerged as a thoughtful process of waiving different options and practical reasoning, in the fields of political philosophies and it addresses the overall human capacity for resolving problems through reflection and self-determination in the context of power struggle and normativity (Wallace, 2009). Therefore, retranslated to the air of planning transactions deliberation argues that it

“makes decisions through a process of structured reasoning in which they [actors] offer proposals and arguments to one another” (Fung 2006: 4)

or it is a chain of events where:

“plural actors are given equal opportunities to exchange views on a particular subject...and the likelihood that different values are exchanged and interests included in decision-making areas, but it also provides greater legitimacy for decisions taken” (Beaumont and Nichols 2008; 90)

In other words, deliberation stands for long lasting and careful thoughts, discussions, and consideration of multiple causes and effects of an intended action or development. Whereas this can be seen as a critical upgrade of the Habermas- Foucault problematic by defending the thesis that deliberation simultaneously ensures consensus and power exercise (Sager 2002) it still very much focused on educating content and technique, rather than constructing planning as a process.

Entering the deep waters of theoretical turbulences in planning theory, Hillier (2008, 2011) extends the frontiers of intellectual thought in planning with the notions of assemblages and consistencies based on Gilles Deleuze’s intellectual inquiry. Such perspective emerges from the social complexities and uncertainties that modern planning has ended up with. Therefore, placing planning in such framework ought to ensure that future long-term objectives of planning are consistent in short-term more specific and robust plans that should be based on performance rather on measurement and assessment of planning actions. This view of decision-making approaches is based mainly on experimental and conditional analyses of participatory planning strategies (Hillier 2011) and applies in terms of strategic planning on with high level of abstractness rather than producing sound empirical examples and narratives of how does planning works.

The issues of participation are too important to be left in domination of one philosophical doctrine and its equivalent in planning narrative. This is why in the previous paragraphs, I tried to point out in which directions the body of planning theory have emerged in the last decades. Issues of participation were, are, and will be relevant for the future just because they are simultaneously collaborative, rational, deliberative, consistent, strategic and so on. Then, what important is that the interdependence which is omnipresent in citizen participation, can be seen both as normative rationality of global ideas of consensus building and challenging the existing status quo by enacting citizens which not always have rational reasoning and pattern of actions. Establishing, such connection is important, because the essence of modernity is to object traditional elitism and populism, but also assumes wide spectrum for experimentation, innovation, and outreach on multiple levels in theory and in practice.

Why was this section necessary? As seen above transaction of citizen participation are not new for planning discourses. However, validation of participation in planning is a field which has been rapidly changing in the last decades. Observing with critical perspective of the major theoretical strings spotted in making planning more collaborative it can be summarised that philosophical understanding of participation have been cramming on the same spot for many years. There is definite need for philosophical underpinnings that will extend the frontiers of civic participation beyond the comfort and standard borders of planning theory.

First step into extending the field will be a thoughtful and deliberate review of the existing academic research on citizen participation in planning. Therefore, in the following section, I will systematize the emergence and evolution of citizen participation as a crucial aspect of planning and decision-making culture.

What have we found (about participation in planning)?

Hardly, there exists a scholar, student, or perhaps even a pupil who is not aware that citizen participation is not a central issue of contemporary urban planning. As it was outlined above, issues of citizen participation are central if not essential to collaborative and post-communicative approaches in planning. In this section, I will follow the concept of citizen/public participation as it comes to its operationalization and emergence in planning and governance perspective. What will follow is theoretically chronological resume of citizen participation since the ladder of citizen participation coined by Arnstein (1969).

Generically, it is an everlasting effort to sum up chronologically the whole development of citizen participation over the last decades; this is why in the following review is constructed on theoretically resilient picks on participation research. Although, chronological structuring of facts can be difficult to fully comprehend the general strengths and qualities of participation debate in comparison with functional review, it emphasizes the most recent employment and (d)evolutional growth of the problem.

Of ladders and citizens

It would be a discourtesy if a research on public participation fails to employ the ladder of participation introduced by Arnstein (1969). It has been the most influential piece of paper that has inspired both the public and the private domain, if not to participate, at least to think about implications of participation in decision-making. The ladder defines participation as representation of citizen's power, which until that time has been excluded in public decision-making arena. The ladder trills the status quo; it asks it and tries to establish

new citizen-government relation. Namely, by empowering citizen and letting them into the dark corridors of planning.

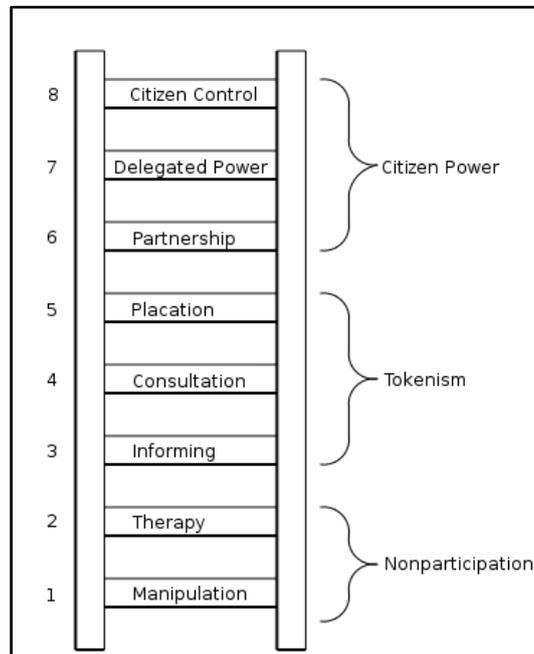


Figure 2 The Ladder of Citizen Participation (Source: Arnstein 1969: 217)

The ladder consists of three dimensions (nonparticipation, tokenism, and citizen power) and eight stages (manipulation, therapy, informing, consultation, placation, partnership, and delegated power and citizen control). Each dimension and rung has its theoretical and practical substance, operating in autonomous but in hierarchical order. The first levels are directed toward education and curation of the citizens. Tokenism implies that citizens can raise a voice and directly approach the administrators. Quite interestingly, placation is considered to be upgraded tokenism and although it implies that decision-makers consider citizen's demands it is still not a real citizen power. The top of the ladder is where citizens can negotiate and engage in trade-offs with traditional power holders. Somehow, the ladder seems to allow affected citizen to climb upwards and administrators still stay on top and supervise.

I question this ladder, with analogy to the biblical ladder of Jacob's, where he believed that at the end of the ladder is the ultimate bliss and heaven. As seen, in this case the ultimate heaven for a citizen would be the "citizen control" where involved personalia, which already gained control, are guiding what is good and not good for their existence in the social hierarchies. This is the moment where the ladder starts cracking; it is based on (re)transformation of power relation, and with each rung citizens attains more and more power until the moment they are not anymore "have-nots" in decision-making. The ladder

claims more rights to have-not citizens but does not say anything about applying power accordingly. Illustrated in allegorical terms the citizens in this ladder transform from plebeians to princes, where if we follow Machiavellian discourse, citizen participation is no more ideal to be attained, but just an effective truth, and power redistribution is not an ultimate bliss but devil's advocate.

Arnstein's ladder is based in empowering marginalised citizens in deteriorated US neighbourhoods and set up the agenda for the following several decades. In 1978, Weismann published a paper in which he described the limitations of citizen participation in familiar foci, based on the San Francisco Model cities program. He outlined that the attention of existing by that time citizen participation has gone in a direction, where only the citizen ideally can reap successes and was missing critical opposition. His research, based in political sciences, demonstrated that participation strategies that took form in mobilisation minded community approaches for social change often fail to take in account the relevance of the surrounding urban environment.

Here, we see two opposing ideas of participatory approaches. Whereas Arnstein is talking about change and re-balancing of power, Weismann (1978) provides evidence that participatory strategies have been dominant by the political side of the equation. In order to understand the differences between the objectives, techniques and various designs of participation in planning, Glass (1979) identifies that citizen participation is a common element in planning efforts, but both planners and citizens see participatory efforts as unsatisfactory. To support this thesis, he proposes five objectives that citizen participation should be built in – information exchange, education support, building supplemental decision-making and representational unit. By adopting this settings citizen participation could have the capacity to avoid the trap of choosing participatory techniques that are selected a priori to identification of the anticipated objective.

Challenging the existing conventions of citizen participation, Glass writes:

“Participation is not a zero-sum game where a choice has to be made between creating trusting citizens or improving plans and services. A participatory program is more likely to be judged as successful by both planers and citizens when a balance between the two purposes is achieved.” (Glass 1979: 182)

Here is the moment to remind that here, we are discussing citizen participation in the last decades of the 20th century, when participatory approaches in the West are still in their adolescent and need steering from a planning agency. Glass (1979) proposes various

techniques to meet the five objectives listed above, such as neighbourhood meetings and advisory committees initiated by planner that can be seen rather top-down designing approaches in planning, allowing one-way steering of participation. Undoubtedly, he argues that there is no single technique that can address adequately citizen participation or to satisfy what he proposed with the five objectives, but rather the best technique is to embrace context specific and situational approaches to solve problems. In this way he considers participation not something that should have boundaries and specific techniques, but more to develop a “continuous, multifaceted system” (Glass, 1979: 188)

This is why maybe we need a new ladder that offers a “systematic approach to preventing and resolving public controversy about specific policies, programs and projects” (Connor 1988: 250) in whatever context. Connor (1988) points two critical sides of the existing ladder. First, it relies heavily on specific urban ghettos, facing problems in ethnic and racial contingent but not on wide range of urban situations. Second, citizen participation on a ladder analogy suggests to logical progression from one level to another, one building to another, but not jumping over the rungs as it often happens in practice.

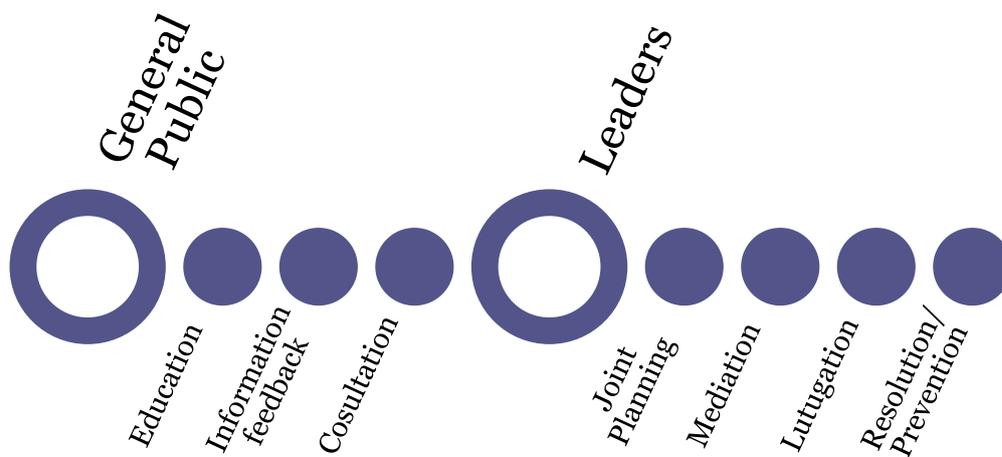


Figure 3 The new ladder of citizen participation (Source: Connor 1988; design by the author)

Thereof, Connor develops new ladder that has several layers serving various stakeholders and it is divided in “rungs” for specific users- general public (education, information feedback, consultation) and for leaders (joint planning, mediation, litigation, and prevention/resolution). Besides being simply rooted in conditional clauses and if functions, which explains how citizen participation can directly teleport form redistributing knowledge and education to directly resolving an issue, the new ladder hints that citizen participation should be based on consensus building and “sense of equity about the solution (i.e. that it is

basically citizen participation should be fair to those involved)” (Connor 1988: 256), rather than just redistributing power.

The new ladder agrees tentatively with Glass (1979) that there is no single right approach in citizen participation. It is also cumulative and residual in regard with the levels of participation experienced on each step – one-step can take to the next, but also it can directly propose resolution or solution to the problem definition. On the far side of such ladder metamorphosis, just the term “citizen participation” and vigorous techniques whit no clear output, such as public meeting, or neighbourhood complain-point, will not resolve the complex issues of economic, social and political character in planning. As Connor concludes participation needs a “systematic process appropriate for the specific situation” (1988: 257) that can apply in multiple cases and yet address complex issues in explanatory way to the citizens.

Participation, collaboration and the following

Going back to the point where in the beginning of this chapter I wrote that planning paradigm follows the overall political and socio-economic broom, the discourse on public participation slightly changes its expression in the years following 1989. Ironically, when Times Magazine, published the book *The Year that Defined Today's World*, hardly someone would have guess that it will apply to planning practise, but as the following paragraphs will illustrate, some major changes occurred. If until now the discussion on citizen participation has been around measures how to include the public in decision making, the collaborative turn that become more and more obvious in the early 90s. In a search for more democratic practices, participation debate approached the problem in its in ethics, virtues and values, but mainly looked how to incorporate it in policies and white papers, rather than looking for the core of the problem.

The relationship between philosophical debates, collaborative rationality in planning and participation has been explained in the previous section, but here it would be nice to provide some examples of it. In 1997, Day, in a comprehensive by its time review on citizen participation, proclaims that is an essentially contested problem and has complicated relationship with planning.

“It is untidy because with respect to the empirical literature, there is considerable confusion about what participation looks like in practice, and little consensus about what exactly citizen participation is supposed to accomplish”
(Day 1997: 422)

Furthermore, the state of participation is contested because its institutional embodiment creates opportunities for different inputs and preference of citizens but in practice, only few people seem to make use of participatory tools. In other words, advancing participation in legacy and policy might relate to foul-weather friend with administration, where the administration calls you when they are in trouble and citizens participate only in form of alarming, problem reporting or objections. In the rest of the time, citizen participation would be buried in soft peat and wait passively for a very long time, before someone realizes that participation is not a liability but an asset.

Based in different perceptive, Healy (2003) discusses citizen participation as performance of nature. Rooted in actor-network analysis his definition of participation involves collective practices and behaviours that engage with and act to perform the local environment. In such way participation is a matter of fundamental significance, not only to the educated and empowered citizen, but also to the one with limited knowledge of participation. Healy criticizes participation literature for being too much Habermas, and employing too much talking and too less action. Citizen participation is about what citizens are going to achieve and not what they want might ideally to achieve. Participants must be able and willing to learn something or unlearn something they do not need to know. Participation is not a solitary exercise, because people live in networks. Epistemologically, culturally and rationally citizens are shaped and shaping their own environment by various small rituals and performances.

Practically, this is also, what Innes & Booher (2004) have found in analysing participatory strategies in the recent decades. The study conclusively is showing that the traditions of incorporating citizen participation in constitutions (one of the goals of communicative rationality) is not working in favour of the citizens, reversely it is contra attacking and resulting in mistrust and social tension. This, thereof, result in a nothing more than but a dissatisfaction with the whole machine of democratic decision-making and planning in particular.

The bulk of the speech on participation in planning literature just assumes that the right methodology is not in use. Instead fostering top-down participation should be approached through individual and collective practices, emerging on the ground levels. The criticism on the constitutionalized participation is that, although politically correct, it does not involve collaboration, dialogue, and interaction. It imposes such actions per se, but does not create it. According to Innes and Booher (2004) instead of searching for new capacities of citizen participation we should refer to such capacities as “self-organizing both in content and

membership” (422). This re-categorisation of participation is used in the agenda of collaborative decision-making based on five major purposes:

- Incorporating citizens knowledge
- Getting legitimacy for decisions
- Advancing fairness and justice
- The laws says to participate

These purposes assume the hegemony of the planner over the decision-making process and shadowing the essential meaning of citizen participation. On the contrary, participation should incorporate as many as possible interfaces where citizens, dwellers and other actors can communicate an action in informal way and seek for its virtualization at the public sphere (Innes & Booher, 2004: 429).

However, this statement seems to be partially mistreated when it comes to the activities of public administration. Critically, Irvin & Stansbury (2004) question whether citizen participation is worth all the efforts. They agree, positively that citizen participation leads to good incomes or benefits and further – prepare a list of conditions under which citizen participation can bring certain advantages to government decision making but also articulates the social and economic rates of participation. Relying on evidence from public administration and managerial approach related to environmental management the authors depict certain advantages (political suasion, empowerment, breaking gridlocks, avoiding litigation costs) and disadvantages of citizen participation (cost, time, complacency, representation of the society, wrong decisions and selfishness.). However, in this enquiry citizen participation is heavily load with the balance of cost-benefit indicators and analysis, and seen as a burden to the administration and the government. Thus, failing to explain whether participation is worth the effort or not, given its social importance.

When the government fails, Hajer & Versteeg (2005) argue, to address issues in a solving way, and then it is time to move towards performativity governance. The importance of governance is to be found in the multiplicity of both formal and informal institutions, which engage in common performance.

“Governance networks provide arenas in which actors argue, explain and justify themselves and reinterpret history, thereby creating frameworks for a continuity of argument and an interaction of competing identities and loyalties”(Hajer & Versteeg 2005: 324)

Governance is performed and experienced: because the only way to find out how actors join in collaboration are the manners of sharing knowledge, trust and understanding how each

actor should and ought to operate. Moreover, in order to analyse events that government officials are failing to explain we should try to asses

“The dynamics of governance networks, consider them a form of improvisation theatre in which participants have to watch each other closely because the rules of the game are made and can change on the spot.” (Hajer & Versteeg 2005: 346)

Governance after all is to inform about the sensibility of changing conditions based on context, learning capacities and informal practices, which is also crucially important to understand participatory approaches within the contemporary intellectual history of collaborative planning.

The relation between participation and governance is in a double bind. As Lane (2005) summarizes participation is central argument of collaborative governance practices and sensible not only to context but also relies on dominating planning paradigms. This assumes that if we want to understand the role of public participation we first should understand the role of dominating planning discourses.

“It makes little sense to evaluate public participation in terms that are not shared by the planning model itself” (Lane 2005: 297)

Thus, public participation is considered as a shape-shifting concept that can be understood only in its specific planning rationale and local context. Lane (2005) offers wide elaboration of citizen participation in relation with different schools of planning, models and sociological traditions occurred since participation is in the planners’ web.

Table 1 Concepts of planning and the role for public participation (Source Lane 2005: 286)

Level of participation	Planning tradition	Planning school	Planning models
Citizen control Delegated power Partnership	Societal transformation	Pluralism	Communicative Bargaining Marxist Advocacy Transactive
Placation Consultation Informing	Societal guidance	Synoptic	Mixed scanning Incrementalism Synoptic planning
Therapy Manipulation	Societal guidance	Blueprint	Blueprint planning Geddes, Howard Precinct planners

Public participation evolved as concept and strategy since Arnstein (1969) coined the term into the planning debate and metamorphosed through different theories and implication. As

seen in the table above, the transition from blueprint modelling to synoptic model and later to pluralistic approaches in planning, involved different tools and techniques to address participation and yet it seems to be problematic concept. It seems that the long way from the formal and bureaucratic tools until the informal means of collaboration continuously was leading to a dead end.

Lane (2005) defines that in analysing of public participation in decision-making context we should engage both the formal and the informal capacities of the planning style, which can only be done after embracing the dominating rationale of planning. If one fails to recognize the ideological and political role of both formal and informal, planning measures, it will fail to evaluate the success of participation as well. The same apply also to the assumptions, functions, and purposes of public participation. For example, it makes no sense to evaluate blueprint participatory techniques out of their context and perhaps this is one of the reasons why participation often is depicted as a failure in planning processes.

The adaptive capacity of practitioners to learn new things and perhaps unlearn outdated participatory means might be seen as a failure form intellectual point of view, but in practice as Tennille, points out participation might be seen form a different angle. In 2005, she addresses limitations of public participation found in transactions of public management, policy, and organizational behaviour and depicts participation as a bilateral agreement between the public sector to foster intended action and citizen's prospects to be part of that action.

“Public participation is the citizens’ opportunity and right to inform, question, agree, or disagree with a government decision, rule, regulation or procedure”
(Tennille 2005: 264)

It seems that a decade after Day (1997) argued that limiting participation to highly sophisticate bureaucratic, officious, and callous liabilities is essentially missing the role of citizens; this view is still particularly strong in public administration review. Despite the advance of technology and new means of communication, when it comes to public administration, the locus of citizen participation seems to be still untouched.

In order to narrow the gap between the theory and practice of participation, Steward (2007) offers a new categorization to understand participation, based on extensive review of more contemporary participatory mechanisms found in public administration. He summarizes that citizen participation should be the link between the state and the society and underlines that direct mechanisms, offering citizens chance to involve directly, are likely to be used when

citizens have no experience with such issues or they are disorganized, whereas experts will likely be overreacting before the problems reaches more attention. In Steward's view, participation is a method of distribution, redistribution and projection of expertise, but not in a sense that increased citizen participation is wanted or not, but rather to understand and explain the existing interaction in decision-making, if such interaction of expertise in citizens is observed after all.

However, careful investigation on the importance of expertise illustrates why participation is considered to be misunderstood or seen as contaminated. Instead of accusing planners in limited opportunities for participation outcomes, one should start assessing the success of participation by doing baseline analysis of the existing preconditions of specific decision-making situations. Such analysis can be applied for the complete decision-making process and outline where citizen participation collides and advocates interaction between people with substantial knowledge about the problem definition and individuals who are curiosity driven, but with a limited knowledge of the subject.

This argument leads to the importance of contemporary epistemology and importance of knowledge in public participation discussed within the planning debate. Recently, Healy (2008) suggests that expertise and knowledge are central part of public participation, but not function of it. They recreate their meaning in participatory approaches and "knowledge is constructed through processes including those of participation, rather than existing autonomously of them" (Healy 2008:1644). Citizen participation thus is about representationality in practice and imposing knowledge and power. Therefore, the problem of participation of ordinary citizens, who lacks expertise and strong representation, is that their opinion often is misplaced between the simple fact and context.

From that point of view, lay knowledge, namely represented as the knowledge of a subject held by a person unqualified in that subject, is biased with context and facts and avoids expressing its practical value and operationalization in representation of public participation. As representation in this view relates to power, citizen participation can be seen as:

"The practices involved in the generation/or application of knowledge that configure and reconfigure networks or relations in ways that enable and constrain people's options and choices." (Healy 2008:1648).

However, Healy's paper would have been far more persuasive if it would have considered knowledge as mean and not end of participation. In a study which to determine the role of volunteering as seminal for participation Ohmer (2008) argues that:

“Citizen participation is a vehicle through which residents can influence external social systems and strengthen social relationships that contribute to improved individual and community functioning” (Ohmer 2008: 42)

The author relates participation to individual and collective psychological assets, such as self-efficacy and sense of community amongst the citizens. The study is set out to determine the role of self-efficacy of the volunteers and the likelihood of problem solving and achieving specific goals. The results shows that increased self-efficacy is related to higher expectations of benefit and there should be strategies to engage residents in strengthening capacities of the neighbourhood, relying on belief and expectation in order to achieve positive community change.

Participation in a foreign context

In recent years, there has been an increasing amount of literature on participation and health behaviour and neighbourhood/community health. For example, Tritter and McCallum (2006) evaluate the good old ladder of Arnstein and argue that it shall be stored for display in the cellar. Their argument is that the ladder is concentrating too much on representative inclusion and/or exclusion, rather than effective user involvement in participation. Authors suggest that citizen participation should involve not only one, but also several ladders reflecting the multiplicity of actors on different scales – local, regional, national. The world has changed since the late 1960s and instead of praising Arnstein’s ladder; we must acknowledge the importance of different actors, and deal with issues that both expert and lay participant bring into participation discourse.

In another study, Foster-Fisherman et al (2009) found that building healthy communities is related to empowering citizen who can influence decision making greater in collective manner and by the same time gain equal access to available resources. Their study investigates the factors associated with citizen participation by exploring who gets involved and under what circumstances, because such framework might aid practitioners to improve their operational capacity. They discuss two basic conditions of citizen participation based on neighbourhood capacity and readiness for change. The former relates to the neighbourhood social infrastructure in its function to create, utilize, and maintain place specific characteristics and opportunities such as sense of community. Readiness for change, relates to positive and proactive means of emotional and intellectual capacities of citizens, such as collective efficacy and hope for change than communities can foster through citizen participation.

It has been argued that citizen participation is an issue, which has been alarming since the last decades, mainly in the liberal democracies of the North (Connely 2010). If we aim that citizen participation is inseparable part of the existing communicative rationale in planning, thus examples in international planning aspect and culture are equally important to understand the importance of being involved with participation. Sintomer et al (2008) discuss the importance of deliberative participatory budgeting; a technique that has evolved entirely in South American context, that allows participation form non-elected citizens in discussion of public finances. Their research develop a methodological framework, on which if participatory budgeting rely will achieve greater transparency of decision-making. Although, developed in a left wing political consortia, the model seems to be successful in many European cities. The success of participatory budgeting is seen in its deliberate openness for applying more than one model while practicing participation. Most intriguingly, deliberative participation asserts certain levels of self-interest and self-commitment towards engagement by citizens but unclear about how that should be addressed (Fung 2006).

Transactions of deliberation are not new to governance approaches. Deliberation is central to Fung's argument of empowered participation in an accountable autonomy for deliberative democracy. The call for empowered participation suggests extending the limits of currently explored standpoints of civic engagement, pragmatism, and deliberation by critical perspectives from social theoretical perspective. The verdict here is that incorporation of empowered participation and deliberation in public agencies can result in "responsive, fair, innovative, and effective" (Fung 2006: 4) institutional approaches in democratic governance illustrated with examples from participatory practises in Chicago during the late 1990s.

Fung (2006) develops five main distinct characteristics of empowered participation and deliberative democracy: rational choice, egalitarianism, social-capital, cultural difference and the issue of expertise. These perspectives on participation look beyond the norms of classical administrative participatory approaches and seek for The Five Ws (who, what, when, where, why) of civic engagement. Consideration of these questions also leads to the argument that participation is some kind of a knowledge exchange and educative process, where trust bonds are created and therefore, justifying collective action. However, empowered participation is indeed empowered and is activated when particular social problems are on stake.

Recently, the relationship between participation and deliberation has been widely investigated in two of special issues of the International Journal of Urban and Regional Research (Beaumont & Nichols 2008, Silver *et al* 2010). The importance of deliberation in participation discussion is that it allows existing of multiple participatory identities in planning. Silver *et al* (2010) suggests that "democratic participation can be theorized as

different moments in the democratic process” and deliberative participation of ordinary citizens or direct democracy has the potential to be the saviour of participation and provides three benefits in planning. It promotes social inclusion, it setups the notion of community empowerment and third, it aims redistribution of social justice.

One question that needs to be asked, however, is whether participation aims indeed redistribution of social justice or serves to justify already made decisions, which have to be declared publicly, because the law requires it. Despite this minor but considerate drawback the role of deliberation in the participation dilemma suggests sensitivity to the content, context, scale and the process of participation but not of the legislative or procedural body of it (Lombard 2013, Silver et al 2010, Rosol2010), and also of the multiple identities that citizens can play (Becher 2010). Nevertheless, the

Several attempts have been made to take the participation talk outside the typical problems of the Anglo-Saxon north and introduce it to new geographical areas. For example Rosol (2010) and Lombard (2013) discuss public participation in the changing roles and relationships between the public and private stakeholders in neoliberal urban paradigm. Rosol argues that the dynamics of neoliberal governance have substantially altered the meaning of participation and concludes that what was a reason for militant activism and fight in the 1980s, now is mitigated, widely discussed and encouraged activates in urban governance. In other words, citizen participation has become a logical part of the city administration in Berlin. On the other side of the world Lombard (2010) and Connelly (2010) in independent investigation of case studies in Mexico and Egypt/South Africa trace the development of citizen participation in existing practices and interaction of ordinary people. Such research, ironically, outside the mainstream debate of participation in planning is important to understand that the participation and engagement are performance and not representational based concepts.

As Yang & Padney (2011) reminds us citizen participation is a black box and it is unclear how if citizen participation is a strategy, or just a concept that can improve decision making. The authors argue that citizen involvement has the capacity to improve decision-making if only calls for integration of quantitative administrative approaches and qualitative action research in city management. On the other hand, Hartmann (2012) illustrates that citizen participation in planning debate has not caused anything but just clumsy solution for a wicked problem. What is exactly a wicked problem? “It cannot be definitely formulated, has no stopping rule and it is always unique” summarizes Hartman (2012:243), rooted in Rittel and Webber's 1973 formulation of wicked problems. Thus, the normative, narrow-minded,

operational memory of collaborative planning design does not have the sufficient capacity to think beyond its frontiers. Therefore, Hartmann concludes (2012: 252):

“Participation as a tool to get rationalities involved in a planning process requires managing different rationalities and its expectations beyond such single dimensional approaches to participation” (Hartmann 2012:252).

The advance and attractiveness of deliberative participation in empowering communities and ordinary citizens is impossible to ignore. Such approach eases justification and transparency of decisions. The slogan “Real Democracy Now”, which is the best way to describe deliberative participation, however, opens room for questions. It implies that there is certain uneasiness in particular locus and existing modus of failing participation. Certainly, it emphasizes the role of civic empowerment but also builds on existing features of community organising. This concept builds participation as reactionist procedure recognised by managers and still stands as a residual-claimant argument where each side of the participatory equation have receive received contribution and compensation to their desired outcome. It does not say much about rooting participation form the grass or simply creating active citizens.

What happen to the ladder?

The good old ladder of participation was coined in times of the political contestation and social revolution at the late 1960s, and by looking back at the context it was established it mainly aimed to bring power to citizens (who did not have it before) which should reach a critical mass in the way cities and societies were constructed. The course of the ladder continued in blurry waters of the 1970s and 1980s where the ladder was flourished and sun-kissed with the planners’ perception of how city life should be. As this research showed, the ladder as such was questioned by Connor (1988), which created new symbiosis between the sides affected by citizen participation. Emerging in the 1990s discourse on collaborative rationality the ladder dissolved in ethically considerate and normative statements of ideal speech situations and institutionalisations.

However, dissatisfaction of the side effects on this ladder never ceases to amaze the literature circles in academia interested in planning. Discussion that is more recent or actually, a criticism of the classical ladder by Tritter and McCallum (2006), argue that the ladder must be revisited in order to accommodate the demand of multiple actors that are available nowadays. Looking behind the ladder and focusing on the philosophy of participation, and why collaborative approaches give contested results, new approach emerged, that of reactive and deliberative planning (Sager 2002), where the ladder could not be recognised directly.

However, it remains hidden in the short and long-term opportunities of affected parties to exchange information and engage in consensus-balanced conflicts.

An intellectual reflection over public participation simply cannot ignore the core values for participation, developed by the IAP2 (International Association for Public Participation) in 2007. IAP2 also developed a spectrum of public participation to which I will refer only as the multidimensional ladder of participation in 21st century that instead of power shift is based on increasing level of public impact, which can be simply illustrated in Figure 4.

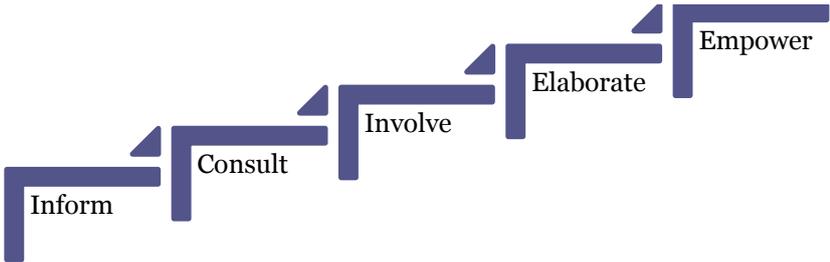


Figure 4 The multidimensional range of citizen participation of IAP2 (Design by the author)⁵

Although it illustrates some techniques for participation and the goals of each step of the ladder, the spectrum is unclear about the role of lobbying, transparency of participation as such and remains as a complimentary of façade democracy. In addendum, this spectrum again looks at participation as one way legal technique, which is most obvious in the transitive terminology used: from “inform” to “empower”. Instead, participation ladders, spectrums, snakes and ropes should engage in dynamic language that indicates an action, process, or sensation. Some critiques over the participation spectrum summarize that it may recommend that participations should be incorporated in policy actions and a legitimate is presence but on the levels of practice participation meets the “severely hampered hegemony of traditional concepts of knowledge and rationality” (Healy, 2009).

Main limitation of all these ladders, scales, spectrums and frameworks of participation is that they seek for a design that would be acceptable for all stakeholders, suitable in all situations and answering all wicked questions, without contesting the outcomes. Ladders imply strengthening and developing of vertical relationship between citizens and governors, also emphasise on growth and development, no matter the cost. However, the scientific evidence of that as we noticed in the review above is showing that this is not always the case. Perhaps,

⁵ The scale is developed and designed after the IAP2 guidelines regarding the “[Code of Ethics for Public Participation Practitioners](#)”, “[IAP2 Core Values of Public Participation](#)” and IAP2’s “[Public Participation Spectrum](#)”, which can be found [here](#). (Last accessed: 17-01-2014)

it is time to look beyond the ladders and focus on the horizontal interaction, which makes participation questions important both for every day ordinary situations and planning.

Where are we going with what we have found?

Looking back at the timeline of participation and assessing all the models and designs, considered in this thesis, there is no winner or loser of construing participatory approach. There are, however, certain foundations that can be constituted.

- ✚ Whether a top-down, or a bottom up approach participation remains something that challenges the status quo.

Citizens accuse planners because they hold too much power and planners are afraid of citizens who claim power and attack its foundations. Instead of focusing on participation as power games, we should look for intellectual baseline of bothering ourselves with participation. Participation is not about sweeping what is intended or defeating public opinion. It is neither bliss nor a curse. What we need to acknowledge is that:

- ✚ Participation has not changed, but the social reality is.

In its essence, participation has not changed, however, the social reality and conditions of society have changed. The multiplicity of actors is nothing more, but a result of participation itself. This relates to the third global conclusion:

- ✚ Participation is the chameleon of modernity.

Participation is omnipresent and actual, due to the differences of political, economic, and social progress of different states. States and sometimes-even cities within a state are dominant to different philosophical and political entities. Those sometimes collide and sometimes emerge within the wishes of their citizens. Participation in one form or another can be noticed everywhere from China to Chile, Russia to South America and so on. Nevertheless, participation takes different forms but still

- ✚ Participation is considered as a pure liability, where it is not.

Participation is not going to occur because it is written that it has to happen or because citizens need to participate. Citizen participation is besides that also an asset and a process also. Having a white paper or adopting a regulation will not justify participation per se. It needs additional intrinsic motivation of each citizen and extrinsic characteristic of the environment. Therefore

- ✚ Participation is about citizens committing their self into a cause.

Citizen participation is not something that should be considered when the push comes to the shove, due to one or another reason. Participation suggests that citizens invest certain value, effort, qualities and intentions in their actions.

✚ Participation is an individual virtue and a collective asset.

It is a building block for healthy communities, liveable neighbourhoods, and sites. Therefore, it has to be disseminated carefully in order to be effective and constructive mean of urban planning. Hence

✚ Participation is not a magic balm that could be applied when unrest is in stake.

In the public opinion, citizen participation is often associated with images of social unrest, continuous spaces of contention and unsatisfied reactionists images. Instead, citizen participation should be an asset with a proactive reasoning and values, invested in certain localities. This is why

✚ Participation is not and cannot be universal.

It is always local and pledge to existing situations. Citizen participation is an asset that is vulnerable to social and spatial context, scale of development, path dependency, content value, and planning output.

Building upon these departure points that are based on the findings in the literature reviews, in the next section, I will offer a new narrative of citizen participation, which crosses the current boundaries of participation debate, and questions why the existing accounts fail to resolve the contradiction between the public and the ordinary citizens. I defend the thesis that the notion of urban self-origination that has become exclusively attractive topic to theory and practice when complex and contested issues are on stake. However, we should be aware that complex is a word, which is used when things are gone really badly and pragmatic solutions are not effective.

New frontiers for participation

Introduction

A serious weakness of the participation argument is that for a long time it has been designed, executed, and planned as a tool that an administrator or other official should consider as a particular action. Instead, limited amount of literature has approached participation looking at the ordinary life of ordinary citizens and their commitment to a cause, without a judgment or supressing particular groups or ideas. In the following pages I will argue that urban self-

organisation, can play crucial role in understanding and intellectualising citizen participation in contemporary post-collaborative society.

In a particular context, I will argue that USO is a reliable tool to understand citizen participation on limited spatial scale, such as a neighbourhood or a specifically distinguished district. The existing conventions of planning theory refer to urban self-organisation as an emergent, and taken for granted concept, which is widely alleged in innovative collaborative practices. However, in this thesis the interpretation of urban self-organisation is close to a sense, which it is as a mean to consider citizen expertise in planning practise. How is that possible? I argue that urban self-organisation can be seen as an innovative approach interwoven with notions of community organising, spatial and social proximity and collective intentionality as effective means of public participation.

Invested with themes and topics actual in the domain of social sciences, I will defend the idea that in order to disentangle citizen participation, we need to rediscover and reassemble the meaning of self-organisation in urban planning, not from mathematical but phenomenological perspective. In a way, that citizen participation first occurs in the minds of individuals and then project in collective social performance. Nonetheless, before landing on the talk of urban self-organisation itself, I would like to offer a brief morphology of the term itself.

Urban

What is meant by urban in this term is not only the context and the scale wherein social processes are on-going, but also considered as a critical point where the *urban* is understood as the melting pot where the societal and solid processes of urban formation occur. The sensory experience, where the individual action meets social assertion and in the context of everyday practices creates the social reality. Such view of the urban can be linked with the body of critical urban theory (see Marcuse 2009)

Self

By self, I imply the social and spatial qualities, essential or particular of a person that are asserted in the actions of ordinary citizens, which happen to be proactive and the specific personality trait, which can be characterised as patterns of actions, thoughts, and intellectualisation of assets.

Organisation

Organisation refers to a socially constructed entity that has a particular aims, collective goals and is embedded within the surrounding wider framework of operation. Organisation in the meaning of this term also relies on understanding that it is only socially conducted, with no administrative or legislative bonded strings.

Self-organisation and planning

Self-organisation is a spontaneous emergent process, where order arises out from a random or almost chaotic system – a definition strongly rooted in hard sciences. Contemporary appreciations of self-organisation, in planning, have been based mainly on evidence documented in the realm of hard sciences. While investigating the concept of self-organisation within an urban context, the domain of complexity and non-linearity in planning should be acknowledged (Portugali, 2011). However, the complexity perspective on system dynamics and networks are difficult to translate in everyday practices of the individuals. The issue of adopting manners from the field of exactly sciences has been criticized by Flybjerg (2001) who argues that adopting such methodologies and assumptions in social science, including planning, is erroneous, does not address social sciences matter adequately. Instead social sciences should do what they are best at – namely to research the relationships between the individuals in the society.

Of course, it is not to say that the complexity perspective in planning is wrong or not. It is perfectly OK to claim ground on theoretically salient models and arguments, and this section holds esteem in such findings, but it goes with one step further and argues that the social and intimate importance of urban self-organisation is not explored sufficiently. The existing literature is focused on taking self-organisations for granted instead of trying to investigating its occurrence. This suggests that to a certain extent the organizations, processes, and movements outside the realm of the official governments usually are triggered by specific context related issues, and follow some kind of socially constructed intentionality.

The following section offers wide range theoretical consideration of self-organisation in different fields of studies, as attempts to understand the concept in its social importance for the urban environment. The result of such survey of various scientific interpretations argues for detailed explanation of the construction and meaning of urban self-organisation.

Origin and classical interpretations

It might be argued that the emergence of self-organisation as a topic in the debate of urban planning and governance is linked with the current state of collaborative rationality, which is in a search for logical exodus of the complex situation in which state it is at the moment.

However, self-organisation did not pop up like a mushroom in the scientific discourse, but had a not short history in the academia.

Self-organisation is neither novel nor isolated concept in the field of academic thinking. It is introduced in 1947 for the first time by the distinguished psychiatrist and cybernetic W.R. Ashby (Velkov 1989) and since then circulates in scientific debates of both hard and soft sciences. Forester & Zopf (1962) define the foremost principle of self-organisation as: the ability of a group to effect a collusion, i.e. to induce a willingness in its members to resist temptations to defect in pursuit in its personal gain.

Dalenoort (1989) differentiates two types of self-organisation: physical – that is related to the level of equilibrium or improvised order the elements of the system go through, and cybernetic self-organisation that is based on communication and feedback exchange between different actors. The processes of feedback exchange can generate congruence, which according to Platt (1962) initiate arbitrary displacement between the components and compensatory movements in adjacent mechanisms. These organizational changes in the structure of the system are inevitably linked with its functionality). It is argued (in Forester and Zopf 1962) that self-organizing systems have twofold functions: to evolve in joint structures from secluded entities and due to overgrowth to emerge with neighbouring systems forming in this way, self-connecting entities.

Jantsch (1980) outlines the following three aspects of self-organizing systems. First, that the ability to link up the animate and inanimate essence of dissipative structures. Second, due to continuous external and internal impulses of change self-organisation suggests processes of co-evolution with the environment. Standard process of adaptation with the environment will be inefficient since evolution is simultaneously taking place and conditions always change. Geert (1989) also points out that self-organisation is characterised firstly by the internal characteristic of the system and sustained by characteristic of the environment. Third, self-organisation emerges because of the self-transcendence of the actors that is the link with the omnipresent evolutionary processes.

Dalenoort (1989) summarises that self-organisation is simply about how order emerges without external pushes from the chaos and reveals the potential of self-organising systems outside hard sciences. Important aspect according to him is that self-organisation represents new approach to explore the existing scientific paradigms. The edited volume by Dalenoort (1989) also comes along with some potentialities identifies one of the major limitations of self-organisation, that of the environment. There should be, perhaps, some kind of balance between the elements of the self-organised system and the required goals in real life. The

presumption of self-organisation is that it creates or recreates better order. What often neglected is that imaginably self-organisation is about finding good order over existing order, but as Ashby (1962) claims the philosophical consideration of self-organisation recognised as good development will depend on the perceived environment, because self-organising system will be good system only from its point of view. Although the perhaps above are not showing any relations to contemporary urban planning processes, it is important to acknowledge their importance in the evolutionary development of the term. The emerging notions of self-organisation related to different fields are most likely a vital critique on the positives and disadvantages on the self-organisation theory itself.

Self-organisation and complexity perspective

Dalenoort (1989) infers that the recognition of complexity and self-organisation might be useful outside the realm of biology and cybernetics in approaching more practical and approachable to individuals diurnal practices problems. Therefore, the following section underlines the development of complexity and self-organisation in urban environment following mathematical models and analysis. One may ask why we should embrace the complexity perspective of the hard sciences in planning theory, but as pointed earlier in this thesis, Almendinger (2009) states that planning has no set of developed theory, rather it make use of theories and practices from different other fields.

In theory, the evolution of top-down into bottom-up approaches engage wide epistemological tactics implemented in planning, as for example highlighting the importance of the local knowledge and the specific context where the intended development is occurring (Healey 1996; Innes and Booher, 2010). However, it cannot explain the modes of uncertainty and unexpected change in the social systems, which normally follow unpredicted pattern of development.

Here the complexity theory steps in and argues, “complexity is perceived and surprises occur when causes turn out to be sharply different from expectations” (Holling, 1994:139). Holling argues that these complexities emerge from evolutionary dynamics of the social and economic developments, the managements of the agencies, aiming operational efficiency and changes in the biophysical environments, in meaning that the environments begins to count as qualitative source of information. Hence, complexity focuses on uncertainty and emerging decisions on self-organized basis. This description of self-organisation is influenced by the body of hard sciences as physics and biology and is central paradigm in dealing with complexity in general.

Portugali as one of the doyens of self-organisation and complexity in urban planning points that self-organisation is a property of open complex systems in constant interaction with the environment (Portugali 2011). The assumption is that cities are open and self-organising systems as well as the dissipative systems described in the realm of classical explanation of complexity. He argues that the actors in cities are unimaginably numerous and at the same time they are in constant interaction. This is how individual actors in cities maintain a stable urban form. To explain this metaphor of sand pile is used, where all the particles of the system are autonomous but at the same time, they aim to reach maximum usage of their capacity by relocation in the system. Another argument of self-organisation is that the cognitive notions of lower scale self-organisations are normally perceived more dynamic in comparison to the overall picture of self-organisation of the city (Portugali 2011).

Another way to approach self-organisation in planning practice is offered by Karadimitriu (2010). His argument is that cities aim to be self-organising systems in order to allocate and manage the instabilities occurring by sporadic impulses exchanged between the actors. Because this impulses are crucial part of cities itself, as part of their complexity, if they are removed this will lead to disastrous results for these dissipative events. The two necessities for maintaining self-organisation are the variety of the actors and their level of communication. Withal their valuable and complexity theory related input in urban planning the above mentioned authors give attention to the self-organisation more as a given condition of the urban instead as process of social and institutional attitudes, that this paper is aiming to inform.

By urban self-organisation, we mean...

In the following sections, I will offer possible linkages of urban self-organisation to other realms of social theory that is not dictated by the dominance of complexity perspective in order to highlight the social and metaphysical weight of the concept. Therefore, I will develop an theoretical argument that establish USO in a creative cloak, interweaving it with notions of community mobilising, spatial and social proximity and most interestingly the concept of collective intentionality, as an effective mean for enhancing citizen participation.

Community / Social Capital

One of the central arguments in this section is that urban self-organisation can be distinguished in the processes of community organising. Such processes offer a platform for alternative possibilities, addressing solution rather than simply defining problems communities face. The role of community development gains particular importance with the

work of Alinsky (1971), who argues that through a process of combining experience and knowledge, the individuals are trying to establish a new civic formation, which relies on qualities such as individual freedom, personal control, and self-realization. Radical community organising, as Alinsky refer to it, creates stronger relationships between citizens is resulting in deconstruction of their well-being and results in, what Putnam (2000) refers as, re-building of the social capital. Thus, in this piece of research, urban self-organisation is interpreting community organising as an experience, rather than top-down structuration of organisational bodies.

It is my intention, in his section, that social capital is the main source of energy for community organising and respectively, urban self-organisation. In his seminal work of social capital in 1993, Putnam argued that the main functions of governance approaches are not only to establish conditions for strong, responsive, and effective institutions, but also to achieve goals. Withal goals are accomplished not only agreement. The institutional success of governance relies on equilibrium that includes social capital. Putnam defends social capital as a productive, spontaneous collaboration supplemented to expand the available recourses in order to improve the capacity of institutional performance, primarily by considering norms of reciprocity and civic engagement.

Special features of social capital are the generated trust, norms, and networks, ordinary people establish via engaging in social activities. Those social activities generate networks of information exchange and interaction, as in horizontal, as well in vertical structures. In the long term, “the denser such network in a community, the more likely that is citizens will be able to cooperate for mutual benefit” (Putnam 1993:172). Hitherto, an exploration of the social capital relates to the variety and the connectedness of the individuals and their willingness to contribute for more accountable and sustainable future (Block, 2008).

The discussion of social capital and its embodiment in communities questions the issue of social self-organisation, which is characterised primarily by the creation and recreation of the social capital and the interrelations between them. Fuchs (2002) summarizes that application of self-organisation relates to the capacity of social structures to self-maintenance. Individuals as part of the re-creation, or self-organisation, of the reality are crucial elements that construct the urban sphere. Respectively, social movements located within a particular place raise the question of self-involvement and self-participation as a contribution to creating healthy community bonds.

Community development also takes the notion of urban self-organisation to the formation levels of new urban movements, occupying contested spaces or seeking for environmental,

social, or/and spatial justice. For example, the right to the city movements encompass the processes of self-organisation and self-realisation of the individual actors and reveal positive loops of development for the urban fabric. According to some authors, the mobilization of the justice movement represents the changing conditions of civil society or the movement itself (Nicholls and Beaumont, 2004). More recently, Nichols et al (2013) have investigated the intellectual importance on mobilisation and social movements by studying the dynamic of up-to-date resistance movement, such as Occupy. Although, their argument related to the role of space, scale and territory the original findings of the edited volume are rooted in understanding self-organised social performances.

However, in order to surround such bureaucratic practices, USO engage practises related to the everyday level of human existence. In this perspective, face-to-face contact, collective action, spontaneous ordinary actions, and information exchange convey notions of self-organisations diversified in specific context. The aspect of the cultural diversity, faith, and spirituality in the city reveals that holiness and piety can provide people visions about the future, build strong connections between the individuals, and contribute to the creation of a better world (Sandercock, 2006). Additionally, Haardt (2010) explains the linkages between the personal sacral spaces and faith through senses of representation and spiritual dwelling.

The 'creation' of proactive participation, based on faith and spirituality here, is seen as self-organising response to the desires and the capacities of the individuals. For example, Haardt uses an illustration of domestic helpers from the Philippines in Hong Kong that can be seen as a self-organised spiritual embodiment into public space, through practising spiritual rituals and face-to-face contacts in particular time continuum. On the other hand, Jamoul & Wills (2008), elaborate on faith as a central component of the social foundation of civil society, civil engagement, and politics combating urban injustices. Their example of London Citizens' as a broad-based organisation notable for the role of faith in politics glances in changing attitudes of individuals' and 'doing' their own world.

Having mentioned this specific examples of not labelled urban self-organisation, this seems to be a good moment to move the discussion about urban self-organisation on its next featured building block – that of proximity, space, and territory.

Proximity / Space / Territory

This section is concerned with the geographical dimensions of USO and summarises different theoretical perspectives on spatial and social proximity. It is rather popular fact that geography is everywhere, and the effects of location, such as the neighbourhood characteristics have not to be underestimated. Space and territory are potent characteristics

for urban self-organisation, because their concern is the levels of similarity between different citizens. The overall aim of considering proximity as an important characteristic of USO is related to the processes of learning, knowledge distribution, and performance that might occur in shared spaces. However, there is distinction between geographical and social proximity. Both of them relate to notions of shared attitudes and interaction, but the former is concerned with the physical proximity of the actors, whilst the latter is related not necessarily to physical attributes.

In this chain of thinking, urban self-organisation does not only occur in specific space, it also relies on the level of connectedness and the (non)existing proximity that agents share. As individuals share space and interact on a daily routine, they also encounter opportunities, which can create a sense of similarity and affect personal, and later – collective enactment. Agrawal et al (2008) summarize that spatial and social proximity are logical predisposition factors of knowledge exchange. Proximate locations create sense of shradeness where agents might be more willing to share knowledge with other agents and facilitate information exchange, which otherwise could not be initiated. In this sense, co-operative learning and translation of tacit knowledge, through formal and informal institutions, is recognised also as an important feature of proximity (Armin & Wilkinson, 1999).

Earlier, was argued that urban self-organisation can be understood as a medium of a social network that compromises various actors and theory ability to act or participate in different social constructs. Therefore, the body of urban self-organisation can employ certain standards of actor network theory, as it embarks spatial relations as reflection of complex interactions between actors, organised in multifaceted networks.

Crucial element of the actor-network theory is the observed heterogeneity and interconnectivity between objects in multifaceted places. The capacity of actor-network theory to connect the human and non-human actors and questioning power relations makes this approach eligible for explaining USO. The central argument is that society is constructed on heterogeneous network, consistent of different objects and materials, which are determinate on the locational proximity of the actors and their interaction (Law, 1992).

Actor-Network Theory suggest the relationship between material output of urban self-organisation and the intellectual importance of the concept, in a certain place, can constantly rejuvenate by engaging specific relational practices, due to the different relations between objects, events, and cultures. This can be embedded in broader settings of self-organisation due to its potential to problematize specific issues for dialogue and mobilization of human and artificial environments in contemporary processes of urban milieu. The result of such

negotiations between actors usually is denoted as “spaces of prescription and spaces of negotiation” (Murdoch, 1998:358). Additional contribution of actor-network theory, in understanding urban self-organisation, is related to the variety in the networked spaces, which attracts ‘random’ actors in relationship and synchronising their goals and objectives (Doak & Karadimitrou, 2007).

The importance of urban-self-organisation illustrated in this section touches upon the notion of proximity resulted from interactions in multifaceted networks. From all above might be concluded that self-organisation can be used as instrument of engaging different (social) actors that would not be otherwise recognised in the urban sphere. Reflection on the locational and proximity factors of self-organisation in urban areas executed by Batty (2011) shows that cities are incomplete self-organising systems where people and environment buildings continuously generate new relationships and accommodate change, regenerate and renew their functionality and capacity. The product of this omnipresent self-recreation of the urban sphere is to reveal the aspects of human involvement and representation by using approaches such as philosophies of mind. Mental representations of social reality as constructing force of USO will be elaborated in the following section.

Collective Intentionality

In this thesis, the understanding of urban self-organisation is loaded with low levels of managerial control and relative autonomy of action which each citizen holds. Most arguably, urban self-organisation is a form of collective action where citizens act together, more than they can achieve from their own, solo actions. This particular characteristic of USO is linking the concept with some metaphysical concepts, such as philosophies of mind and mental representations of social reality, in explaining the ultimate nature of reality, being, and the world. Since the individual is central hypothetical and ontological element of social systems, emerging in urban areas this research theme is in particular importance.

In a broad context, this links the fundamental nature urban self-organisation with some ontological augments and their possible implications in the urban sphere. It is in the view of the current theoretical foundations of urban self-organisation does not sufficiently explain how the individuals express their affections in collective form of actions. In this section, I will take symbolic crusade and will invest a new meaning of urban self-organisation by using the language of collective intentionality.

People tend to behave in sequence of engagements and activities in order to form a specific intellectual rationality. Often such behaviours are not soloist actions but evolve in interactions with other individuals. Typically, such interactions between independent

physical entities follow a cooperative behaviour, beliefs, desires, and perceptions. If this is a predisposition to claim that self-emerging consciousness and shared obligations are integral part of USO. Then we can accept that USO is an application of group action that has the capacity to represent the desires, beliefs, and intentions of individuals in logical structure.

Intentions might simply refer to the action of directing the mind to certain self-perceived goals or objectives. Intentions serve particular prospective purposes, actions, plans, or beliefs. In this manner, intentions show particular concern for the future. However, agents share different intentions, which also might be similar. Therefore, there is a chance to emerge a mutual form of action based on collective intentionality. Accordingly, the body of interest of collective intentionality has been inspired by the casual consciousness and intentionality of the moral agents and their relations in social forms.

Levy (2013) suggests that in the conceptualisation of everyday life intentional action comes first. It cannot be reduced to lower existence, because it is an example of explanatory proceeding to following actions. In a way, that intentional action can be deployed to analyse other notions such as reformatory act of agencies. The basic assumption of intentional action is that it exercises a voluntary control by expressing wide array of cognitive practises and conscious awareness (Levy 2013: 12). According to Searle (2004) the problem of intentionality relates to some form of functionalism, because the idea of intentionality implies some casual relations of representation and conditions of satisfaction. On the contrary, James (2004) suggest that intentional action is consistent of three performance related capacities of a person – a desire to perform, knowledge to show the know-how and skill condition, in which individual should justify his knowledge and desire. However, such ascriptions of intentional behaviour are difficult to isolate and rely on building hypothetical assumptions compared to others' beliefs and intentional performance.

Some authors suggest that intentionality and intentional content are interrelated with specific moral and association (Mela & Sverdlik 1994). As James (2004) argues, moral responsibility can clarify, recognize and attribute desired to the others in justifying a collective action. Additionally, Tollefsen (2002) argues that collective intentionality should be extrapolated not only from the intrinsic characteristic of the individuals and the group, but also from the extrinsic properties of an intentional state. Whether an intentional state is a direct element of the existing socio-cultural or physical environment is questionable, but the mental interpretations of existing social structures are crucial for developing an intentional entity.

In order to exemplify this statement we can imagine a particular group of citizens recognised as a community. Each community has certain self-asserted epistemic features related to its existence – to have clean green spaces for playgrounds or slow down the traffic on a particular street. These values are shared by the constituents of the community who engage in collective action supported by pluralistic viewpoint of “We intend... our community”. If a single individual does not share the same-minded intentions towards its environment, this is again justified with the aspect of the ascribed collective intentionality to achieve more liveable place to live. Hence, collective intentions engage coordination of acting and willing together in order to achieve certain goal in terms of summative reasoning.

Some basic assumptions of collective intentionality, proposed from Searle (1995) are based on individualistic presumptions, because a group does not have an identifiable mind. Searle identifies that collective intentionality is not only about showing cooperative behaviour, but about also sharing intentional states of mind such as beliefs, desires, and meanings. Collective intentionality cannot be reduced to singularity, because it is an elementary particle of social reality:

“Collective intentionality is a biologically primitive phenomenon that cannot be reduced to or eliminated in favour of something else.” (Searle 1995:24)

In a later argument, Searle (2006) defies partly his earlier proposition and suggests that it is possible of collective intentionality to occur in one’s mind. However, his argument goes, individual intentionality can be recognised only with contrasting to the collective, but cannot exist on its own. Therefore, collective intentionality is a crucial element in a collective sense of doing something together with someone and not a function of solitary existence.

The problem of collectivism of an agency originates from the individual interrelatedness and participatory intentions. The issues of collectiveness of collective intentionality is addressed by Bratman (1993), who maintains the statement that collective intentions are logical sequence of the individual intentions of the participant and their mutual relation. The extent whether individual intentions can evolve in collective depends on the level of sharedness, which also has a central role of understanding collective-intentionality. Shared intentions, as Bratman labels them, assist the potential satisfaction of each agent’s action to be expressed. Subsequently, shared intentions embody an amalgam of the available individual intentions, as possible midway for consensus making. In conclusion, shared intentions are the backbone that encloses negotiation of a common goal and objectives, which are perceived by every individual.

Confused?

In this thesis, the concept of USO denotes a wide range of conceptual frameworks and specification of shared vocabulary, stretching from the language of synergies, dissipative systems to the field of self-creation, social capital, beliefs, spirituality and come into contact with mental representation of social reality. Crucially, to understand better urban self-organisation we should acknowledge the acceptance and recognition of existing critical aspects, which require a collective human action.

In this section, I loaded urban self-organisation within planning as a particular expression of collective intentionality, which can help to understand emerging means of citizen involvement/participation in contemporary practices. Here several questions are difficult to be answered with a thesis. Are intentions embedded in urban self-organisation nominative or relative? How collective intentionality as part of urban self-organisation relates to action? In addition, how we shall cope with such values and assets that we cannot express in digits?

In order to simplify this fuzzy rationale I think that urban self-organisation is related to the self-emerging pathways of citizens to find solutions in their locale. Thus, citizens engage in spontaneous, thereby not planned collective patterns of performance and actions that are ascribed with particular sense of collective intentionality. Consequently, in the framework of the current research I defend that the notion that USO is a form of social cultivation that has the capacity to represent the shared desires and intentions of individuals, with no relation to official government authorities in its origins and adding value to the notion of urban sustainability. Of course, the question of political recognition, intensity, and adoption of the concept is a question for a very different discussion. Ironically, unity of urban self-organisation makes sense not because there are strong centripetal forces, but because sporadic axes are not capable of making influential decision on their own.

Conceptual model

From all above, it is clear that both citizen participation and urban self-organisation are concepts that have suffered a long evolution, metamorphose and catharsis. The intellectual history of citizen participation shows that it was and still it is trapped in the ambush between various actors, who fight for power and numerous legal actions, which claim equal right to everyone, but essentially miss the ordinary actions of citizens. Besides, with a slight detour in the theoretical discussion, it is well known truth that some animals are more equal than others are. Most studies, as also this thesis shows are taking citizen participation as a liability that shall be anticipated in the urban governance and ignoring the importance of real citizen commitment. Essentially, the participation literature is unclear about the assets of

participation, namely the tangible and intangible, spatial and social qualities of citizen participation.

When urban self-organisation is on the table, its relationship with the citizen participation debate ought to gravitate around the notions of human institutions that are constituent of human and social norms, customs, traditions and ideologies, living agencies, and self-reference. Actors tend to behave in consequence of actions and activities, which are involving also other individuals and form specific intellectual rationality. The interactions and the force fields between independent physical entities, which share a common space usually, follow a cooperative behaviour beliefs, hopes, desires, emotions, and perceptions, which trigger collective intentionality. Thus, self-organisation is as individual and as well collective asset.

Urban self-organisation is a factual and intellectual asset because it is a form of socialisation that has the capacity to represent the desires, intentions, and consciousness of individuals in logical structure. It opposes to the administrative reality by recognising the institutional reality of the social interactions consistent of intentions of the individuals. The graphic illustration (Figure 4) of the conceptual model of this thesis is simplified as a scale balance, where the traditionalist view on citizen participation decays and urban self-organisation beckons more impact, attention, and glare.

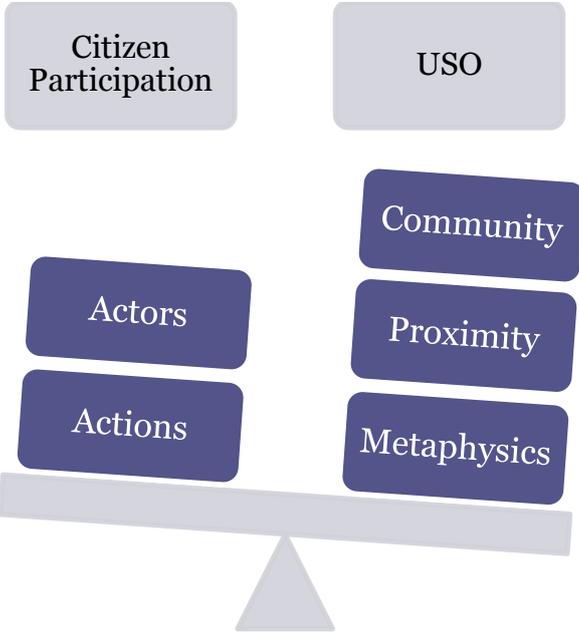


Figure 5 New scales in participatory thinking (Design by the author)

Hereby, short explanation of the components seen in the conceptual model is offered. The bulk of the literature is still under the spell of various allegories of ladders and steps of civic engagement. With this conceptual model, I would like to argue that participation is less about the steps where citizens stand but more about the ways the set up and achieve their goals in

participatory politics. After almost five decades of climbing ladders, perhaps it is the time to rescale the concept of participation and shift to a direction where each actor, action and assets have different weight into perspective. Therefore, here is what each component of the model stands for:

- **Actors** refer to the diversity of players active and inactive in an urban play – users, residents, local communities, activist groups, local entrepreneurs, scientist, policy makers, and experts. Analysing actors will provide insight into identification of key stakeholders, actors and triggers of public participation procedures and incentives
- **Actions** are understood as derivatives of various means of institutions and organisations, namely development strategies, policies, specific instruments for governance from one side and from another the proactive attitude of residents to enhance sustainable physical, social and economic capacities. Analysing such actions will help to identify measures, instruments, and implementation tools involved in participatory decision-making.
- **Assets** are defined as the availability and accessibility of certain peculiar and tangible social, economic, cultural, and spatial qualities, which are functional in collective or solitary existence that often depend on philosophical, ethical, and intentional expectations. In the research, the most powerful asset engaged is the one of urban self-organisation, explained in the sections above. The notions of community engaging, proximity or territoriality and of course collective intentionality as metaphysics of self-organisation could offer much more powerful explanation of why certain civil initiatives fails and others not, rather than the old good way of letting people the opportunity to complain and wait for actions.

The conceptual framework is to illustrate the acceptance and the acceptance and recognition of existing critical aspects of life, which require collective human action, are crucial to urban self-organisation, as an effective meant to citizen participation. As Putnam (2004) depict, the traditional forms of social participation such as trade unions or quasi-political formations have resigned in favour of new form of participation groups which recapitulate social capital in more appealing to the general audience manner.

Exodus

Before continuing to the justification of the research methodology involved in this thesis, I want to offer short summary of the theories and concepts I discussed in this chapter.

In this piece of research, I define citizen participation and urban self-organisation as socially constructed elements widely gaining popularity in planning theory and practice. First, I

investigated why participation is so important in temporary study designs by referring to philosophical paradigms, which navigates the existing intellectual currents. Secondly, I employed a wide range exploration of various citizen/public participation literature and pointed out current trends and limitations that have been affluent in the last decades. In the third part, where was also the original contribution to theory, I developed an alternative *scheme* to understand citizen participation. The one of urban self-organisation that claims to be an effective asset of citizen participation by employing interaction between citizens' notions on community, proximity and their collective intentionality.

In defence, employment of such theoretical arpeggios that is rooted in the social sciences is not to show the intellectual capacity of the researcher. It is necessary because borrowing concepts and methodological rigor from the scope of natural sciences cannot defend the legitimacy of social sciences. Here I agree with Flyvbjerg (2006: 42) that:

“The purpose of social science is not to develop epistemic theory, but to contribute to societies' practical rationality by elucidating where we, are where we want to go, and what is desirable according to different sets of values and interests”

Therefore, if we want to study the importance of urban self-organisation in citizen participation we must consider it from social science approach. In this chapter, it was highlighted that the importance of citizen participation many times has been undermined in different foci and locale, perhaps one of the reasons is the strong reliance on scientism, in which they were defined.

In the next chapter, I will explain the methodological considerations behind the research methods included in this thesis, which will engage guidelines to provide justification for employing contextually specific language, which will be used to address the issue of self-organisation and participation in the later chapters of the thesis. Based on the methodological inquiries and the related to them collected data I will return to the conceptual model in the Analysis section of this thesis where, the empirical findings will be exposed on critical instigation.

Chapter 3: Methodological Framework

Introduction

This chapter will discuss the methodological assumptions, which are considered in this thesis. Simply, methodology refers to *the study of the direction and implications of empirical research, or of the suitability of the techniques employed in it* (OED, 2013; emphasise by the author). It is not a secret that doing research implies high level of assumptions about how the researcher understands the research problem, and how he or she is coping with it. On the other side we have the assumptions that the recruited participants imply in their answers. It comes to the sight of science that research is a mainly theoretical effort, but one shall not ignore that the main goal of social sciences is to observe and understand how the reality works, and methodology employs exactly this. It seeks for the specific means and ends – methods – that can be utilised to understand a targeted social phenomenon (Trochim 2006).

The research design and methodology of this thesis is described in the sections bellow. First, the chapter will introduce the research paradigm of the thesis – intepreteivism – and the underlying rationale for adopting such philosophy. The second part of the chapter discusses the overall research strategy of the thesis, with the specific methods used in the overall research flow: literature review, and other particular research methods of qualitative data collection, their justification, limitation, practicalities, and ethical considerations.

Research Philosophy

In methodological sense this research relies on qualitative approach and qualitative means of data collection. The best way to introduce qualitative approaches in scientific methodology is to describe it as the opposite of numerical quantitative approaches. Qualitative research is apt for questions concerned with social structures and individual experiences, their emergence and understanding rather than their measurement and recording (Hay 2010). The race between qualitative and quantitative measurements can be generalised in the following statement by Trochim (2006):

“All quantitative data is based upon qualitative judgments; and all qualitative data can be described and manipulated numerically.”

However, it is not my intention to engage the reader in such vague methodological dilemma of quantitative or qualitative, but to depict the importance of the latter within this research. Engagement of qualitative research implies that the collected data will represent deliberate,

contrasted, and contextual information of the participant and the observed developments concerned with the research problematic this thesis is loaded with. The main goal of this thesis, as a mean of qualitative research, will concentrate on understanding the complex interactions that exist, which quantitative approaches might not be very helpful to comprehend. Qualitative inquiry of research calls for experiential understanding of human experience and seeks patterns of various relationships between the actors (Stake 1995).

Interpretivism, Objectivity and Subjectivity

Justification of a proper methodology and the applied methods of empirical data collection have to correspond with the theoretical and conceptual framework of the research. Bechhoffer and Paterson (2000) identify that the main purpose of designing a research depends on the researchers' capabilities to identify the most appropriate ways of obtaining the most relevant data. This, so called research management is central to obtain consistent results and accomplish reliable, objective, and good in terms of quality research input. After all, scientific research is usually seen as an intellectual effort that tries to explore, explain, or understand the reality (Shamoo & Resnik 2008).

To define the most suitable research method for operationalization of the research question posted in the first chapter, certain intellectualisation of the known and unknowns in the research area is needed. The main goal in this study will be to understand how people interpret the occurring changes in their environment and how do they contribute to such changes. In other terms, the research will rely on how reality is constructed socially by the interplay of actors, assets, and actions. This leads to application of interpretivist research approaches and related methods.

According to Roth & Mehta (2008) interpretivist agenda seeks to disseminate a socio-cultural phenomenon through interpretation, specificity, self-validation and construction of subjective reality. Abbott (2010) argues that if a phenomenon, such as citizen participation or urban self-organisation in this case, has to be understood as a social action it has to be dissected into the reasons and meaning which it constitutes. Levisay (2006) features interpretivism around two specific flaws – social interaction and subjectivity. Social interaction is based on tangible relationship between consciousness, unpredictability, and action, whereas subjectivity leads to meaning and social construction of reality.

Since interpretivist theoretical paradigm is the most applicable to answer the research question, the employed methodology will take a perspective of revealing the research problem from participants point of view. In doing so, interpretivist methodology will depend

on qualitative means of data collection such as unstructured interviews and participatory observation.

Intepreivism has a strong analytical ground on seeking knowledge in specific context, and thus the role of the researcher is important in understanding and interpretation of the observed phenomena. Therefore, it implies that the research might have certain nuances of subjectivism. The battle between objectivity and subjectivity in social research is a long standing. It can be simplified as the two sides of the same coin and looking for the answer to the ultimate questions of ethics and truth in academic universe.

Engaging with this topic, some authors suggest that by default social sciences does not provide ultimately certain knowledge about given matters, but they can provide evidential support for defending the argued claims they are implying. Thus, while engaging objectivity and subjectivity in social sciences

“the message is that while objectivity is a necessary ingredient to good investigation and we should strive towards it, even with the best will in the individual and the community we may not achieve it” (Letehrby *et al* 2013:75)

In other words, subjectivity is something that a researcher cannot avoid, yet a researcher should be aware of such considerations. As Letherby *et al* (ibid) argue that subjectivity is needed in social perspective, due to the constant interaction between the individual and the society, but also because it implies notions of realism and seeks to understand what is happening behind the stages.

Rationale for Choice Approach

With reservations, citizen participation is at the same time a curse and a blessing; a point of positionality and bias. This topic draws my attention due to several reasons. First, the under researched-ness of the phenomena in various unknown geographic foci assumes more experimentation and flair in the field. Second, the emergence of a new social movements claiming for improved performance of institutions and accounting for proactive citizenship outlining the socio-spatial and functional developments of urban space implies that citizen participation cannot be only state- or developer led. Lastly, the complexity and self-organising mechanisms of interaction in an urban context form a plethora of creative spontaneous solutions and complex resolutions represent a particular research and personal interest of mine.

The topic of citizen participation in the particular Bulgarian context, however, is not completely under-researched. Empirical evidence is emerging in scientific publications with case studies mainly in Bulgarian, but some in English (Hirt 2007). Yet, it might be argued that the periphery of EU is still unnoticed in mainstream, academic debates. The topic itself requires deeper sociological representation, but the main problem is still the missing credibility of experts, and particularly in academia.

The institutional and structural reforms in the region prioritised during the transition to market economy left on second stage the educational and cultural domains that currently the country is facing social issues, which are overreaching the proficiency of local experts. Often innovation in knowledge management is in the hand of young professionals and researches, which receive training abroad and attain broader expertise and credibility.

Research Strategy

The alternative heading of this section would be also “Research Overview”, because it summarizes the methodological integrity, which this thesis is following (Figure X).

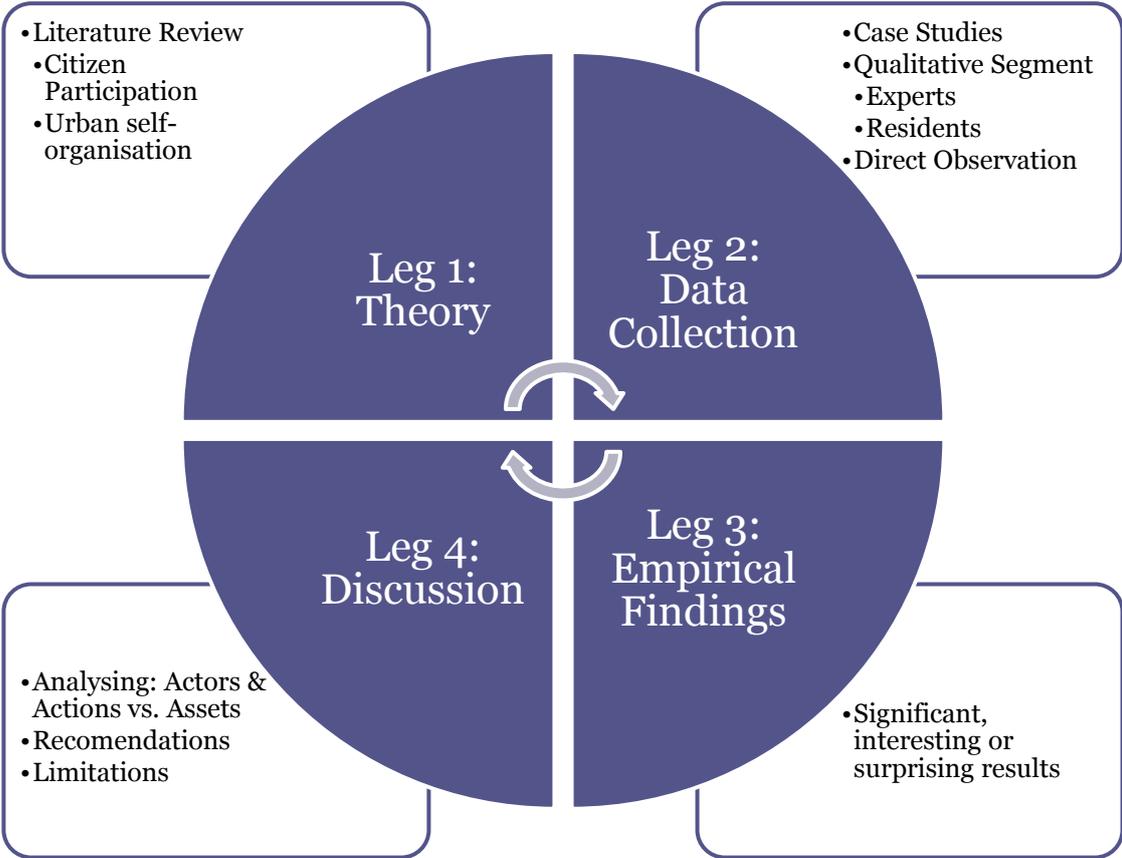


Figure 6 Methodological integrity of the thesis

At the centre stage just, related to the the research problem and aim is the assembly of analytically salient theoretical framework, based on highly systematic literature review. The output that the literature review generates is relevant as for the conceptual framework of the research as well for determining the relevant methodological philosophies and methods of data collection embedded in the thesis. In turn, the obtained empirical evidence is used for the basis for analysis and discussion of the research problem. However, the methodological notions of doing research should not be seen as a closed life cycle of set activities but as a spiral cord that advances in time-space continuum.

Literature Review

The systematic and coherent literature review integrated in the theoretical chapter of this thesis aimed to provide extensive summary of the relevant literature, which is related to the aim, and the objectives of this research. This was necessary to underline the importance of urban self-organisation in citizen participation and construct a conceptual framework, which does not merely repeat previous work, but instead provides creative insight in understanding the researched field.

Logically, the first step of each research project is the literature search and the following literature review that sets the research within a conceptual and theoretical context. The literature research and review is considered to be in assistance of the researcher in order to assure that the on-going research is reflecting critical amount of relevant literature related to the research field and point out common issues, which can be addressed within the context of the research. It also guides the reader with providing an extensive context to a particular issue in concentrated textual form. Reviews are conducted in order to identify if the current research makes an original and innovative contribution to the body of existing literature. Additionally, literature review also points out the procedures, techniques and measures that have been used in the research field up to date (Shamoo & Resnik 2009; Trochim 2006).

Case study

The core of this research project is laid by a case study design which is a general research method adopted in social sciences. According to Yin (2003, p. 13) case study design is “an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context.” Similarly, according to Trochim (2006), a case study is an intensive study of a specific problem or (in) a specific context, which relies on multiple sources of data collection and combination of different research methods.

However, it might be argued that case study approach has certain limitations, and particularly one major – that of generalisation. In this relation Stake (1995) underlines that we do not investigate case studies in order to understand other cases, contrarily each case is unique and the first thing to do is to understand the chosen case. Additionally, Flyvbjerg (2006) provides methodological evidence why the generalisation argument, which suffocates cases study research, is weak. The importance of concrete context knowledge, as seen in case study research, is much more valuable than normative and theoretical assumptions, because of the ability of case study researcher to isolate a zone where real-life situations can be observed and related to the occurring phenomena, as they happen in live stream.

Finally yet importantly, the importance of case study design is not just to cumulate development of context-driven knowledge but also to assist in answering the postulated research questions. Therefore, for the purposes of this project I have selected two different case studies – neighbourhoods that are independent and located in different sub-municipalities of Sofia and can be characterized with different dynamics in the built environment and social dynamics.

Woman's Market

Women's Market/Женски Пазар [Zhensky Pazar] is an integral part of the city centre and the urban redevelopment program of the municipality; this is the biggest market in the city with the lowest prices and highest visitor frequency from residents all over the city. The market always have been hot topic in the polemic of decision makers and angry residents of the neighbourhood, due to its low hygienic standards, presence of marginal groups and suspicion for fraud. Currently, the market is experiencing total reconstruction and modernisation, initiated mainly by the input of the citizen organisation established by the residents, which got support from the city council. The initiative was used as a positive development of citizen input, but lacked input from the users of the market, as well as professional organisations and the sellers itself. The market is due to appear with its new vision by 2014 and it is a battle arena of the two independent self-organised committees with overlapping spatial, but different social context and aims.

Students' Town

Students' Town/Студентски Град [Studentski Grad] is the name of the student campus area of various universities in Sofia. It has been created with special government act in 1980 for the housing purposes of students. Currently, it is one of the most diversified – spatially and socially – areas in Sofia. Once area designated only for the only purpose of a student campus, the neighbourhood now is a mixture between student-dormitories, new-rise residential

development, retail centres, bars, clubs, and pubs with bohemian night scene. It has a special status of regulated territory and due to the rapid changes it has experienced the parliament has imposed moratorium on all deals with vacant properties, issued in 2009. The area is characterised with high percentage of temporary residents, rising figures of permanent population, high land prices and concentration of services. In the area three different universes exist – the students, the new local residents and the developers. Whether these three different rationalities coexist, cooperate or collide and the changes reflecting to the quality of life and social environment are questionable.

Qualitative Segment

The original data contribution in this stage was based on semi-structured interviews from different fields of activities, recruited by using the researcher's personal and professional network. A contribution to recruiting participants is also given to the emerging role of social media (Facebook, Wordpress-blogs) in advocating proactive attitudes online. Recruitment of participants from professionals and experts is based on snowballing sampling. Whereas this sampling method is useful to approach experts that normally would not be available for conducting my research, this method has certain limitations when it comes to biasing the results with high detail of technocratic expertise in planning procedures.

Interviews, compared to anonymous questionnaires, are considered to be a personal form of research investigation (Trochim 2006). In an interview, the researcher collects information directly from the informant and has the opportunity to ask tailored questions, which are not constituted necessarily in the questionnaire design. Interviews also offer rich contextual and chronological information, which can help analysing the facts and figures on a later stage. A central argument of using interview, as a method in social research is that it is the main tool to understand multiple realities, which might be embedded in the observed phenomenon (Stake 1995). In the Appendices section at the end of this thesis, you can see the indicative questionnaire that was used for each interview.

Accessibility and approach to recruit participants was one of the first major encounters I expected to occur. Since, I was in the position of an (partly⁶) outsider in the selected case studies I have divided my fieldwork activities in three stages.

⁶ I have been living in the period of 2005-2010 in the Students' Town and I am familiar with the problems the wider area is encountering.

Stage 1: Local experts

The first stage of data collection was to contact experts (local government employees, scientists, and NGO workers) in order to obtain clear picture of the intended developments and establish informed research agenda about the specific social and spatial issues observed in the area. The topic of restructuring of the particular neighbourhoods already has attracted overwhelming media attention; therefore, I also approached several professional bloggers who have expressed strong and critical standings on the revitalisation of the observed areas. This was intended to assist me to build well-informed questions, which I would ask to the local residents at the next stage of the research.

At this stage of the research, I desired to execute semi-structured interviews, allowing flexible and responsive reaction from the participants. However, some of the participants, in particular the ones with limited time availability have notified me in advance about this constrain and it resulted in additional focusing on the semi-structured questions. Nevertheless, the majority of the participants preferred to answer spontaneously on my questions and engaged broader discussion. Participants were recruited through my personal and professional network using snowballing technique, and direct contact with participants.

In this research, the interviewees especially the experts involved in the new redevelopment program of Sofia are basically interconnected within the National Centre for Regional Development. This was possible through the existence of a gatekeeper – junior expert, whom I approached several months before my data collection, granted the access to this particular organization. The professionals from those planning agency were chosen particularly due to their link with the ongoing Sofia 2020 strategy and execution of the new Integrated Urban Redevelopment plan that has been approved in June 2013. Moreover, it appeared that the professionals from various NGO and bloggers are connected indirectly via their professional networks or branch organizations, which are also addressing issues of public participation and involvement in planning procedures.

To limit such bias in the data collection data triangulation is applied, i.e. taking different perspectives on the observed phenomena. Citizen involvement is not a one-direction process, therefore data triangulation methods are needed in order to obtain deeper understanding of the problem. This means that data collection and analysis will take different viewpoints. The purpose of triangulation in social sciences is to validate the obtained results and provide salient finding sin conducting research (Stake, 1995). By adopting data triangulation methods, the potential biases and misinterpretation form them snowball sampling can be reduced. This research will recruit locational triangulation – citizen involvement in two

different types of planning processes and triangulation of interviewees – interviews from different public instances, NGO, experts, citizen.

Stage 2: Residents and communities

The second stage of the research methodology, surprisingly, was the part that created early bottleneck situation during my research progress. At the preparation stage, I distinguished a local pro-development resident group, which have been active in advocating marginal spatial transformations in the neighbourhood where the Women's Market is located. Additionally, there exists an historical preservation resident group active not only in the same neighbourhood but also at the larger scale, which I also have approached. The original idea was to establish contact with both communities them and conduct semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions, which would give participants freedom to cover various aspects of their activities and goals of action. However, it appeared that the local pro-development group has a radical attitude to marginal minorities, who are perceived as problematic in the area, and to which minorities that I belong; therefore, they were not available for recruitment. This fact considerably limited my options to recruit directly participants.

On the contrary, in the other selected study field, there was no consciously structured community but a multiple operations of various citizens, inhabitants, institutions and organisations. I have targeted representatives from various cohorts – inhabiting students, long terms residents, long term employed in the neighbourhood, administrative personal and so on. The main topics discussed with each respondent during the interviews were:

- Their connection to the case studies;
- Their perception of the issues in the case studies;
- Their opinion about the current conditions of the areas researched;
- Reason for the current issues observed;
- Their hopes and expectations for the future of the areas;
- The main reasons they would like to see that happening;
- The role of the municipality/main actors in revitalising;
- Changing living conditions and social status

Stage 3: Secondary data

Document or content analysis usually refers to existing documents, which are available prior, or after the collection of original data. Usually such data collection includes newspapers, magazines, websites, memos, legislative acts and so on. Whereas such data collection might

not be with the focus of the current research, because another author has collected it, the importance of using secondary data relates to the contextual richness of the selected case studies.

The research made use of secondary data sources to obtain broader background of the research objectives. This included policy reports, legal documents, newspaper reports, old maps, and professional blogs. In this research, additional attention is given to the importance of social media and social networks as a medium of secondary data collection. This is done not just, because engaging social media is becoming increasingly attractive in social research and data collection, but also because by using social media each citizen is becoming independent broadcaster of ideas and public opinion. In order to comply with issues of ethics and professional language only publicly posted commentaries and opinion by experts or individuals with sufficient expertise of the research objectives has been considered in the data analysis.

Stage 4: Direct observation

In order to gain additional contextual data on the case studies and the research objectives, direct observation techniques, have been utilised. According to Trochim (2006) direct observation is used when participatory observation is not possible due to time restraint when the researcher does not try to become a participant in the context, but only an independent observer. This is in particular importance when the intention of the researcher is to develop a perspective that is more detached and limits potential bias, which can arise from participant observation or participatory action research.

Direct observation was conducted in the both case studies and resulted in rich visual and graphic inspection of the research. Additionally, during the collection of empirical data collection I was invited form a professional activist group to attend a public discussion about a particular development in the boundaries of the observed area. That gave me an insight, which is not visible through individual participant recruitment and provided me with the possibility not only to observe how a real-life, almost spontaneous, public discussion is organised but also to record short improvised interviews with local residents and activists.

Data collection & Analysis

Essentially, collecting data means placing your design for collecting information into operation. The section above described in in details the precise means of data collection that are envisioned in this research, and bellow some distinctive elements of the actual data

collection and data analysis are explained. Qualitative data collection is uneasy task with uncertainly in the control of the respondents, their frankness, and candour in the answers.

Data Collection

Important part of the data collection was the different interviews, which were realised on the field. Arguably, most important part of the data collection was to gain an emic perspective of each respondent. This was however, rather challenging in the beginning of the fieldwork data collection, because the interview guide was based on rather etic perspective of the observed case studies. Although, I had an overview of the problems and challenges, it provided me with emic perspective of the overall scene, but when it comes to the case studies – I was rather outsider with my etic perspective. However, during the data collection, the interview guide experienced some changes in order to gain more fundamental emic understanding of the case studies. It was necessary in order to keep the balance between the etic and emic perceptions of reality within this research. According to the literature the etic and emic perspective of reality, are often contradictory but also complementary, when it refers to the actual fieldwork data collection and the viewpoints both perspective can obtain (Given, 2008).

The help of a digital audio recorder has recorded all but one interview carried out in the fieldwork data collection. Whereas majority of the respondents were not annoyed by the presence of such technological tool and the interviews followed smooth storyline, some of them were aware of the presence and potential consequences of the device. Additionally each interview was supplemented with a personal log and filed notes. According to Hay (2010) recording allows for natural conversational interviews, where the researcher can concentrate on the flow and consistency of the interview rather than extensive note taking that can distract and disturb the process. The most vital benefit of audio recording, however according to Given (2008), is that it offers a precise reconstruction of what was said during the interviews. However, recording is helpful for reproduction for verbal data input, but certainly has limitations in capturing non-verbal data. In these situations, note taking can be appropriate solution.

Before continuing to the equally exciting aspects of data analysis in the preparation of this thesis, I would like to offer simple infographic that illustrates the logical interdependency between the research questions posted in the first chapters and the various sources of data input used in this thesis.

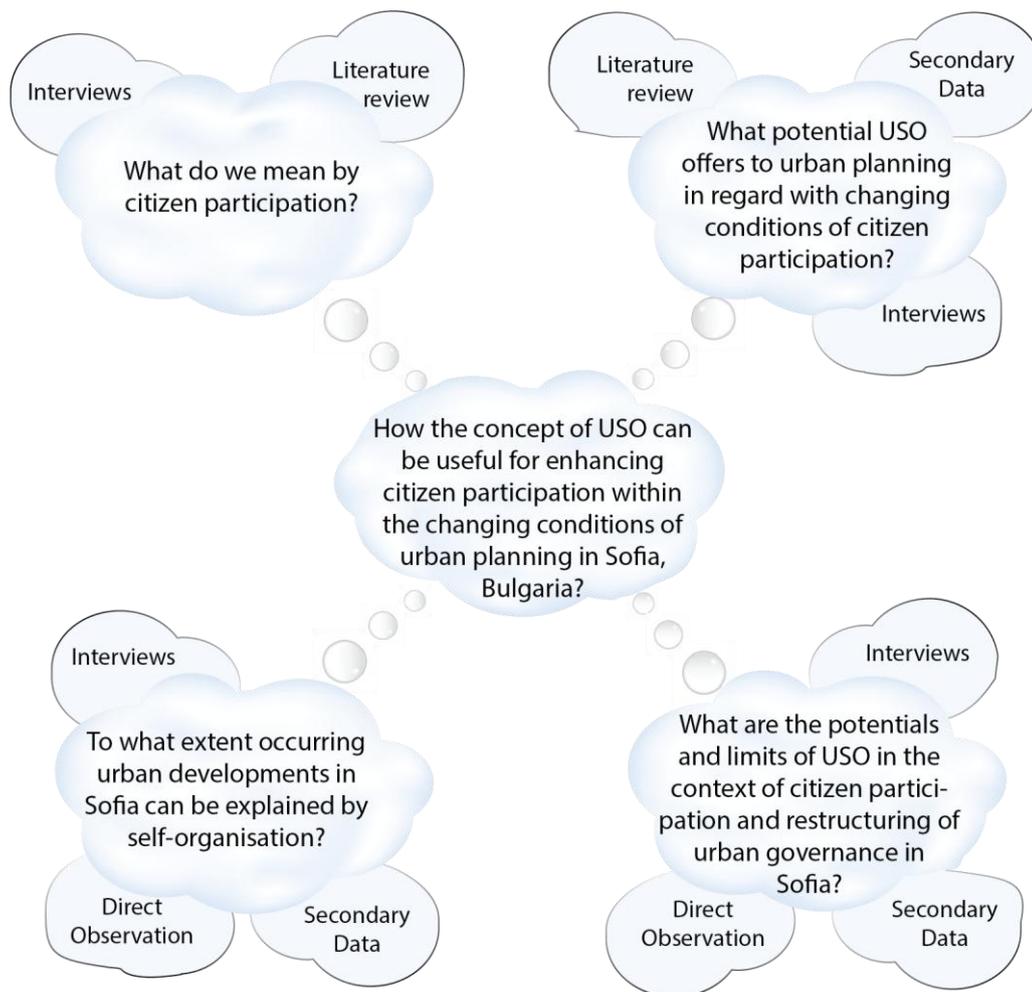


Figure 7 Link between the research questions and the data input

Data Analysis

Data analysis simply refers to the means and analytical tools used in interpreting the collected empirical data. The link between the data collection and the data analysis is the process of transcribing the obtained interviews. In this study, after completion of the data collection, the interviews have been transcribed manually in their original language, without the help of voice-recognition technology. Generally, the role of transcribing qualitative data is widely accepted by the social science not only as providing textual output of the recorded interviews, but also providing preliminary data analysis of the spoken words and their interpretation (Given 20008; Hay 2010). The importance of transcribing is also hidden in the fact that after finalising the analysis of the data transcribes are used as a quick access to direct quotes.

After the interviews were transcribed and organised into a digital catalogue a coding system, form the data was utilised. The coding of the transcripts was based on the preliminary data

analysis during the transcribing process and was divided in descriptive-expressive and analytical-investigative codes. The importance of employing codes into data analysis is seen as helpful to sort and retrieve the data. According to Hay (2010) coding might be descriptive when it describes only the surface of the gained data and analytical – seeking for thematic interpretation. Given (2008) refers to codes as inseparable part of qualitative data analysis.

Organising the collected data through coding process can be done manually or with the help of qualitative computer software packages. Within this thesis, the use of such software (ATLAS.ti version 7) was made⁷. Employment of specialised software optimised the collected data and assisted in quick access to specific documented data. According to The SAGE Encyclopaedia of Qualitative Research Methods (Given 2008) Atlas.ti offers two main advantages to the research process. First, it allows coding and retrieval of the data. Following that, it also allows conceptual analysis of the utilised codes in linkages, families, and groups. It also links each passage of the transcript which is coded with a direct quotation which can be shared with other codes or not linked to any code, but just a single quotation. It has to be noted that the software assistance did not lead to data analysis per se. The analytical skill invested in the data analysis, however, cannot be replaced by qualitative data analysis software.

Ethical considerations & Practicalities

Ethics

The importance of ethnics in scientific research is increasing its values. It is very often when qualitative research paradigm investigates intimate and sensitive topics, related to individual's behaviour. In such situations the importance of ethical issues in both research design and operationalization are highly relevant (Hennik *et al* 2011). Hay (2010) coins that all research methods involve ethical considerations to certain extent. Eligibility of ethical considerations are seen as emancipating researchers relation to the respondents, easing social responsibilities and optimizing hazardous situations between participants or between the researcher and the observed (Shamoo and Resnik 2009). In the same line of argumentations, they also prescribe that the estimation of ethics also relates to the specific conditions where research is executed. For example, awareness of the researcher towards the dictating norms of behaviour or hierarchical structures, if they exist, amongst the participants are crucial, and can influence the ends and means of data collection.

⁷ Due to technical and formatting reasons at the appendices section is attached a lo file, exported from AtlasTi with the full list of empirical sources invested in this thesis.

Anonymity & Confidentiality

Central feature in this research is the role of human agency in citizen participation, and since the answers each participant gave reflects specific piece of subjectivity and social interaction some practical considerations should be clarified. Due to the sensibility of the topic, feelings of anonymity and obtaining personal opinion about the topic I provided each participant with an informed consent stating the purpose of the research and the confidentiality of the obtained data. Translated copy of the informed consent can be found at the Appendices section at the end of this thesis. In order to keep the zone of participants' personal comfort each of them was informed about the nature of the research and technical items that (e.g. voice recorder) which were used during the interviews. Most of the meeting with the respondents were on neutral territory, such as a park, café or a designated meeting area, where conversations were held on four eyes.

The role of the informed consent, as illustrated by Hay (2010) was not simply informing the respondent about the title and the aim of the research, but also providing detailed information about the waivers and conditions of the interview and storing the collected data. The researcher signed each informed consent before conducting the interview. It is important to acknowledge that the informed consent was developed and written in Bulgarian, due to the locational characteristic of the research field. Translated copy of the informed consent can be found attached in the Appendix section of the graduation paper.

Practicalities

This research relies on a great extent in subjective construction of reality, my position, as an outsider to the communities and resident group could influence their behaviour and attitude in front of the microphone. For that reason, I “enrolled” as a member to several social media ‘communities’, which are concerned with developments in the selected neighbourhoods. This gave me some temporal and social advantage to connect with variety of participants, rather than applying a direct snowballing technique. Pre-scanning of the expertise and actions of the members of the online communities might be seen as an innovative way of participant recruitment and certainly helped in establishing a rapport with some participants.

Nonetheless, the classical snowballing approach that is embedded in the research also hides certain hardships. Since it was based upon a personal and professional network it could appear that participants and their opinion is biased. This issue was accommodated through enactment of data triangulation with different stakeholders who provided additional data. The importance of data triangulation in social research is widely recognised in

methodological literature (Hay 2010, Stake 1995). It ensures that multiple data input from independent sources is used to check and validate the results.

Additionally, my position as a young researcher from “the abroad” creates a bi-polar relationship with the research. From participant’s point of view, it will be perhaps a positively rewarded since a young professional is self-attained with such social problem. Alternatively, concerning the harsh reality of the post-socialist society, some participant might withdraw their interest due to their biased perception of an outsider – a student from abroad that is there just temporarily. For that reason, I had established a contact with a researcher from the Faculty of Geography and Geology, University of Sofia to whom potential participants might have reach and check my credibility.

Finally yet importantly, an unusual aspect of this research is the researcher itself. The neighbourhoods that are explored in the analysis of the data connection in this research are facing problems with marginal and minority groups. Since, my ethnical background relates to one of the ‘bad reputation’ groups and even my name hints to it, I anticipated certain scepticism and negative attitudes to participant recruitment. Whilst, this aspect depends on participant’s personal attitude to marginal groups, it was not considered as a problem with any of the participants. However, in one of the case studies another surprising contradiction popped up. The one of the *insiders* and *outsiders* of the community related to the sense of belonging experienced from particular citizens. Logically, my presence as a non-resident and external individual, who seeks deliberate information on *their* neighbourhood, were not welcomed and means of communication were interrupted.

Summary

In this chapter have represented an account the research philosophy, consistency and methodology according to which this research is constructed. The central methodological inquiry in this thesis is grounded in interpretivist philosophy and involves wide array of qualitative research methods in obtaining empirical data that suits the research design. The essence of such methodology cannot avoid issues of subjectivity and positionality of the researcher and the respondents. This was alleviated by using data triangulation and recruiting multiple participants with different subjective knowledge about the world. Last but not least, the research methodology holds in high esteem issues of research ethics and practicalities as a mean of responsible conduct of research.

The empirical data obtained by employing the research methods explained will be presented in the following chapter. The methodological provisions of this research will ease not only the

operationalization of the obtained contextual knowledge, but also help to identify the suitable analytical considerations for data analysis and discussion of the obtained results.

Chapter 4: Empirical Findings

Introduction

This chapter aims at presenting the information gathered during the empirical data collection that will be used in the analysis and reflection of this research. The chapter is divided in three main subsections. The current, where the structure of the chapter is exposed, will be followed by exposing the global facts about participatory approaches and self-organisation in the context of Sofia. Following, the two cases studies will narrow down the focus of the current research and present the gained empirical findings and significant, interesting, or surprising result, based on considered observation of various actors, actions and assets. The chapter will conclude with a summary of the key findings and slowly regressing to analysis of the facts represented bellow.

Citizen Participation in Sofia

The purpose of this subsection is to note down some characteristics of participatory measures and practices in the decision-making context. In order to navigate the reader in the context rich and heterogeneous amalgam of public participation context, it is necessary to present the bigger picture and understand the specify of the investigated projects, which was captured during the data collection.

Participation? What is it?

In order to set up the issues of participation and planning practice first it would be appropriate to outline this relationship both *de jure* and *de facto*. For this reason, I will shortly outline the expression of public participation in a legal context and followed by observed in practice, but not officially established rules of participation.

Within the Bulgarian legislative context citizen participation in regard of planning practice is outlined mainly by two the 2001 Spatial Planning Law⁸. Although, it is aimed to provide more transparency in decision-making, the act sets the stages of so called “public hearings” in preparing and executing development plans.

⁸ The original name of the act “Закон за устройство на територията” can be also translated as *Act on Arrangement of the Territory*, inspired by the French “*Aménagement du territoire*” and reflects highly architectural values implemented both in the legislative and practical turn.

Article 127 (1) of Spatial Development Law states the following:

“Draft general development plans shall be published on the website of the respective municipality and are subject to public consultation before being submitted to expert councils on Spatial Planning.” (Translated by the author⁹)

Although general, this article constitutes the place of legal public participation between the commencement of the project and its ratification on expert council. However, the same Law also states that

“Plans for regulation, re-development and restructuring in the residential complexes are subject of public consultation in accordance with Art. 127-1, before being submitted to expert councils on Spatial Planning.” (SPA, Art. 22-4)

Surprisingly, none of the articles of the law sets agenda for early participation or any requirements on what public participation or consultation shall be.

Additionally, due to its territorial specificity and national importance, there have been approved legislative acts valid only on the territory of the Metropolitan Municipality that are also lawfully binding with the issue of public participation – 2007 Planning and Construction of Sofia Municipality Law and 2007 Ordinance on the Manner of Conducting Public Hearings. It is interesting to follow the language used in these legislative documents and try to establish links to practices that will be explained in the rest of this chapter.

The local spatial planning legislates the body of public participation as the following:

“The procedure and manner of public consultations in Sofia Municipality, determining interested communities, disclosure of the public consultation and determining its outcomes are determined by an ordinance of the Sofia Municipal Council.” (Art 5-4)

This illustrates the relative flexibility and capacity for interpretation each municipality can have in setting the agenda for public consultation procedures.

Finally, the text of the ordinance on disclosure and executing public participation aim at effective usage of the available resources and:

⁹ It shall be noted that, due to communication issues, all the quotations used in the empirical section have been translated from Bulgarian, by the author of the research. The translations are neither professional from a linguistic point nor express personal opinion or view of the author.

“To ensure transparency and access to information of each citizen” (Art. 1-2)

By the means of current ordinance, here are two sort of public consultations, organized by the mayor of the local municipality or the chief-architect. The first and foremost legit act of this procurement constitutes the role of the professional organizations – Union of Architects and the Chamber of Architects - as the main institutional bodies who can lawfully address pleadings. Pleadings from other associations or organizations are allowed by the discretion of the Chief Architect. However, the period between the first public announcement of intended developments and the second consultation meeting where potential pleadings are answered and commentaries for amendment is locked in 14 days. Beside these actions, the law does not require other means of participation and involvement in decision-making.

To translate those words into reality, public hearings are to be executed in the narrow period between completion of the plans and their approval in expert councils in each municipality. In such hearings anyone interested can be involved, criticize and ask questions. Legally there is no mechanism that ensures that one’s answer will be answered or taken into consideration. However, the more interesting fact is that none of the legislative acts constitutes the preparation of the plans or planned developments per se. There are no legally binding articles which require public participation in the research and design stages of plan development. In other words, social engagement is carried out by the discretion of the beneficiary or the executing agency. The results of data collection showed, whereas this is widely acknowledged practice in the local planning practice and design, yet signs of changing attitudes can exist.

[SOFIA XXI](#) is an ambitious renovation and reconstruction aiming to alter the vision of spatial development of the city by the year of 2020. Inspired by the neo-liberal ideas of integrated urban development ideologies and, as it was reported, “pre-requirement to apply for funding during the next EU period”, the plan aims at ennoblement of the environmental, financial and social sphere of the city. Accordingly some, social engagement measures have been implemented in the preparation stage of the plan. As some of the key figures who were involved in the preparation of the plan noted:

”We have been looking to achieve maximum amount of people from various fields, with the idea that they can generate their own proposals, i.e. to hear what they want, what they think is important to be done, what they are missing, what they would like to see. We [the planning agency] aiming at this conducted a serious representative sociological survey. Representative – this is to say that it is done by all the rules of sociology and following specific requirements.” (NCTR 1)

According to the coordinator of the plan surveys have been distributed in areas with dominating social importance, and response rate have been positive, but as one of the other team members responded:

“Our experience to involve people, resulted in one very professional survey, which has been very representative for some areas, considered from sociological viewpoint, and so what?! Many other areas were not included”. (NCTR 2)

However, the overall impact of the used opinion pools and expert surveys was perceived as a positive sign of participatory measures by the experts and noted as one of the perils of the integrated plan.

Turning to the wider picture of the local urban planning initiatives in Sofia, however, the leading response on the issue of public participation by the majority of the respondents was that it is either missing, ill-defined, strictly formalized, misleading or even unnecessary.

It can be suggested that there were two different camps on civic engagement: those of participation supporters and critical to participation. Mainly young professionals and enthusiastic citizens shaped the former, whereas the critiques about the maturity of society and wide public participation measures was picked up by professionals with long experience in urban and regional planning, mainly architects. It shall be clear that there was no demarcation line between the two opposing teams.

It was reported in a noted periodical that the opinion of the chief architect of Sofia municipality on the grounds of conducting public participation that it is done according all available rules.

“Planning is definitely public and the collegiate have the opportunity to be involved in this planning. The public consultations over the issues of urban development are ruled out according to the law. The both professional organizations related to the topic are invited” (arch. Dikov, Capital¹⁰)

This formalization of the planning and participation process was highly criticized by vast majority during the data collection and it can be summarized the best in the following statement:

¹⁰В-к Капитал, 05-10-2013, Имаме ли план за София.[Capital, 05-10-2013, Do we have plan about Sofia], <http://www.capital.bg/printversion.php?storyid=2154278>, Last accessed January 2014

“And when you ask “Was there a public consultation?”. The answer is “Yes, there was”. Still, for example, that meeting was held on the second floor, seventh room, from 11.30 and 5 citizens were there. Any such... not very well advertised, not very well communicated, but yes – the public opinion was considered, and the answer is “Yes, we had a meeting”, i.e. everything is very façade.” (YP 1)

However, official response on this accusation was:

“There is no such practice in Bulgaria, which to inform and invite citizens constantly and purposefully on public consultations” (arch. Dikov , Capital¹¹)

More interestingly the exact term that majority of the respondents used were “public hearings or public discussion”, which can relate to the perception and awareness of participation, both of experts and ordinary citizen as well.

In regards with the existing situation on the public perception and awareness of participatory approaches, some respondents expressed the belief that the current state of the society is not mature enough in order to engage in such, when it comes to the urban environment and planning.

In general, people in Bulgaria are not so critical towards such things. The feeling is as if that such issue are just reaching their front door and staying there. (Transformatori 1)

“There is missing this civil society – primarily on the neighbourhood level. A structure that will recognize the place as its own, and not only the dwelling unit, which it possess and locks. To realize that the situation depends on its behavior and its awareness. This is still missing here.” (NCTR 4)

“People are not educated on the topics of urbanism, architecture and urban planning. They are not educated and they are easy to manipulate and in general, they do not know where to look, how to fight for their rights. Where to go, what to do and where to look for this kind of information” (YP1)

“In 99 percent of the cases, citizens, are just observing form the tower of their own interest – one citizen is pro and other one is opponent” (arch. Dikov, Capital¹²)

¹¹ В-к Капитал, 05-10-2013, Имаме ли план за София.[Capital, 05-10-2013, Do we have plan about Sofia], <http://www.capital.bg/printversion.php?storyid=2154278>, Last accessed January 2014

It is clearly visible, that there was a strong consensus on the inactive role of citizens within participatory practices of any kind. Just for comparison with standard democratic participatory practices, it has been reported that the voter turnout at the 2013 Parliamentary Elections and 2013 National Referendum about Nuclear Energy was relatively low. This illustrated the trust citizens can express in participatory measurements, as well as the perception of local and national government efficacy.

Different respondents related to various NGOs, which were criticizing the capacity of local government to cope with participation and planning attitude in general, addressed quite strong and opposing opinions. While some participants were openly accusing the official governmental representative in lack of visionary thinking and no clear agenda for development. Others have accused the design cycle per se.

“The problem is in the assignments which are aired. Within all these years the municipality simply showed that it is failing in executing successful assignments. They are just failing, because they are written preformat, without any preparation” (PP1)

This line was also supported by a statement in a local newspaper which simply argued that:

“if during the designing process, we pay more attention to how public procurement assignments are prepared, on their wide public proclamation, setting their aims and agenda, supporting them with data, then we might have different outcomes” (arch. Zahariev, Capital¹³).

Other participants in the fieldwork, simply reported the role that NGO can play in urban governance

“According to me, organizations like ours can give small impulses and change little things, as if it will fit the purpose and vision it is indented to, but in global sense this cannot change the city, because it is huge and respectively, such projects always will be the white swallows, until the municipality realized that not the organizations, but their manner of operation is more accurate.”
(Transformatori 1)

¹² В-к Капитал, 05-10-2013, Имаме ли план за София.[Capital, 05-10-2013, Do we have plan about Sofia], <http://www.capital.bg/printversion.php?storyid=2154278>, Last accessed January 2014

¹³ *ibid*

However, public response on the last statement did not come very late and simply used a language of politics and populism.

“Personally, I do not see the point of such serious preparation, which is very timely. Especially, when it is important to catch the deadlines of European money for planning and realization” (arch. Dikov, Capital¹⁴)

Although NGOs were seen as importers of innovative ideas in urban planning context when it comes to hearing to ordinary citizens’ need, they can be also deceptive when they are considered from the profile of their field of activities and social composition. This is why one of the respondents reacted on the role of NGO with the following words:

“NGO are active partners, but still they are, how to say, structured a little bit on specific aim. In public consultation meetings they are very active partners, but to the extent they represent the society in the city... this is another issue. Broadmindedness there is still a territory, which is not shown. And they are very cautious... Practically, their function is to attract certain assets in execution of social activities, but they are limited in general.” (NCTR 4)

This raises concerns because NGOs usually have a limited scope of activities and expertise whereas issues such as participation rely on capacity to be open to various inputs. Undoubtedly, it was reported that non-governmental and non-professional organisations have higher institutional capacity than municipal bodies to cope with emerging issues.

“When we are talking about NGOs, they are well-structured, little. Each of them has a specific theme, direction for improvement, a focus. Those are focused group form the civil society, which represent specific causes” (PP 1)

On the contrary, decision-makers were accused for being dominant on the syndrome of the “pink-glasses”, which simply was summarised as an attitude of “it is better to do something, rather than waiting for the bright future to happen”. This line followed also inability to break up the functioning administrative system and open for flexible decision-making.

The levels of expertise and trust in tertiary sector organisation was slightly interesting but it is a different issue, which is out of the focus in this research, yet it can be summarised that

¹⁴ В-к Капитал, 05-10-2013, Имаме ли план за София.[Capital, 05-10-2013, Do we have plan about Sofia], <http://www.capital.bg/printversion.php?storyid=2154278>, Last accessed January 2014

there is no clear political will to synchronise with such initiatives or apprehension of NGOs, because they always complain.

“There is lack of political will and desire to change the situation. Largely, the fear of change rules the administration. This is an ossified structure that is between the hammer and the anvil.” (PP1)

However, other participant underlined the role of expanding institutional capacity of participatory approaches beyond the size of city officials.

“Yet, this solutions, cannot come from the politicians, they must come from the experts, specialist, anthropologists, architects and urban planners. In a way we should not rely on the civil servants to be creative. His task is to follow orders, not to be creative.” (Transformatori 2)

Additionally, it was reported that:

“It is more realistic that we raise the culture of planning, that starts from the university bench, passes through utilizing the foreign experience and results in upgrading the level of the city administration” (arhc. Pantaleev, Capital¹⁵)

These statements summarized in one sentence the pitfalls and failures of participation and planning efforts and explained the active position of the NGOs related to urban development. This was recognised in fulfilling the vacuum of participation, which was reported to be due to lack of public interest and will to recognise important urban issues by ordinary citizens. Then the role of NGO was seen as the only alternative on therapeutics on the occurring “encroachments that happen in Sofia during the last decades” (Yaneva, 2013). For example, the role of the various actions that NGO were preparing and requesting for attention related to the otherwise ruling inactivity.

“We strive to be a corrective to the municipality, and any other structures that have power and do things in the city, even if we receive financing from the municipality, we criticize them all the time.” (Transformatori 1)

Some participants expressed the belief that NGOs and professional organisations are charged with the idea to communicate the ends and means of planning to ordinary citizens, which usually do not understand the planning language. For example, some of the participants

¹⁵ В-к Капитал, 05-10-2013, Имаме ли план за София.[Capital, 05-10-2013, Do we have plan about Sofia], <http://www.capital.bg/printversion.php?storyid=2154278>, Last accessed January 2014

engaged closely with the professional structures used the example of the standard screen settings, which we use every day. The idea simply was that professionals see much more colours than ordinary citizens that can only work with brightness and contrast, and that there are changes that shall be done:

“Exactly, the aim of NGO, architects, professional organisation is to enlighten all settings, all the procedures and methodologies which are related to urban planning. This is it!” (YP2)

This gap of the communication management and information distribution was also highlighted by the capacity of administration to reach its citizens

“A lot is required in this direction, how the administration should be effective and how it shall effectively communicate with citizens. Communication is a global and very big problem in all the layers of the society here.” (Transformatori 2)

One of the most striking result that was obtained in response of the questions related to the embodiment of participation in the global vision on the local planning and decision-making, pointed to the finding that there are certain power-rationality control mechanisms, which are over-concentrated in a single authority. More specifically, the role of the municipal chief-architects and even more specifically the chief-architect of Sofia were accused in overconcentration of planning and development power. His existence collected various challenging perceptions shared by the professional community.

“It will be a positive development if Sofia, appoint itself a chief-architect without scathe” (Transformatori 1)

“The biggest problem here is the centralization of decision-making, which is related to urban development, into the hands of a single person, and that is the chief architect.” (PP1)

“Simply, the chief architects get carried away as designers of their cities. (YP2)

“Well, this is the ability of the chief architect, to turn around in such a way the coin that diverts adequate answers to questions. (Tranfromatori 2)

The image of the chief-architect as the Planning Master of the City was also confirmed with other participants, especially striking is the following opinion expressed by a heritage-management related respondent

“In general, Dikov has an exceptionally unbelievable and large-scale vision of the city, which is destructive and frightening. Not to mention that, besides anything else they are happening with remarkably shady procedures and nobody knows what exactly is happening, where and when” (PP2)

In this section, I tried to mark out the specifics of the participatory practices that emerged in during the last decade, mainly in the Bulgarian capital. The situation may vary in the different districts, and even neighbourhoods. The results do not aim to oversimplify the challenges of participation but to set up an agenda for action and impact that will be outlined in the next chapter. For now, this chapter will continue with highlighting the results obtained in relation with the two case studies, outlined in Chapter 1: Introduction.

Case Studies

After mapping the sea of participatory attitudes in the global level of the metropolitan municipality, the picture is even more colourful when zoomed at the neighbourhood scale. This statement is not only a product of generic knowledge, but also visible if we turn now to the gained empirical evidence on each of the case studies embedded in this research. This is also the aim of this subsection – to elaborate on each case study in a critical manner.

Of citizens and intentions.... available in a market

Ladies' Market or Women's Market and the surrounding neighbourhood date back to the beginning of 20th century, when the market activities have been relocated in the current location of the market. It has been reported that the area was known as the Old Jewish Quarter, which was inhabited by the new petty bourgeoisie, after the country gained independence. Due to major social and geopolitical changes, the housing stock is nationalized and the market undergoes major reconstruction and sanitation. In the post-war period, the market plays central role in the development of the neighbourhood, and gains local and regional economic importance. After 1989, the market and the society, enters stage of uncertain future and decay, turning into a metaphor for ungainly urban policy and planning, shady regulation and grey economy.

A professional blog, maintained by enthusiasts aimed at improving the urban environment have published that:

“Today, Ladies Market, have transformed in a common narrative for the biggest problems in the capital - holes, garbage, chaos in the traffic, illegal and

unprotected constructions, gypsies, trade with smuggled goods, thieveries, prostitution, drugs...." (De-zona.com, 2012¹⁶)

A bit more optimistic, yet critical language is used by other interested personalia, as the following publication in a national daily newspaper:

"Ladies Market is an unsightly, stubborn donkey, squishing in mud, not tolerable to urban interventions, exposed five kinds of hot peppers on a stall and ten types of curses. They call it a boil and a sewer; in the forums, very well intentioned people admit that it scares them. And it's scary" (Kalina Garelova, 24 Chasa)¹⁷



Figure 8 General impression of Women's Market (Source: personal archive)

Most of the interviewees also shared this image of the market and the neighbourhood. In general, the majority of the respondents refer to the area as “distinguishable and authentic part of the city centre” subject to “marginal groups and grey economy”, an area where the “parasite of the fraud” is located and “intractable environment”.

¹⁶ Депутати в нужда или обреченият Женски пазар [MP in need or the doomed Women's Market], <http://www.dezona.com/all-blog-zone/item/580-deputy-in-need-or-the-lost-cause-of-womens-market.html>, Last accessed January 2014

¹⁷ 24 Часа, Моят съсед - Женският пазар, 26-04-2013 [24 hours, My neighbour - the Women's Market], <http://www.24chasa.bg/Article.asp?ArticleId=1945555>, Last accessed January 2014

The public image of the neighbourhood, over the years, as an assemblage of social, economic and environmental problems had built an image of the area not only as unattractive and repulsive, but also commonly not acknowledged as a part of the old city centre.

With a conversation with an anthropologist who is engaged with researching the local communities present around the market it was shared that the area of the market and the adjacent streets (see the map in the Appendix) is frequently being excluded as a part of the city centre, although its geographical and spatial reference. This was primarily based on discriminatory indicators and decaying environment.

From a governmental planning and design point of view, in the new Integrated Plan for Urban Redevelopment and Revitalization the neighbourhood is included in the “zone of public functions with high public importance” (see Appendixes), which illustrates its importance and central trigger for socio-economic development. The stakeholder coordinator for the central zone of the plan also shared this view and added:

“Ladies Market is very specific and unique sort of urban structure and every intervention needs coordination with and analysis of the current situation”
(NCTR 1)

Departing to this chronological sequence and evolutionary development of the area, we now enter the current stage of ongoing discussions for reconstruction and renewal of the market and the adjacent territory. After this introduction on the history and perception of the market, the next issue of discovery during the data collection was the process of citizen participation in the ongoing plans for renewal and reconstruction. The plans for major overhaul of the area have been in the air since the early 2000s and associated with many delays, court cases, and active presence in the local and national media. The residents of the neighborhood who live in immediate proximity to the market have advocated the biggest trigger for removal and later modification of the market. The emergence of the proactive citizens’ initiative committee dates back to 2006 when they organized a massive petition, which later has been delivered to the city council. It has been reported that

“During the years the committee organized meetings and discussions with the city council, the mayor of Sofia and the local mayor, various municipal committees, the management of “Markets Vazrajdanе” [the principal of the market facilities

and maintenance], the Chief of the local Police Department, the ombudsman of the republic, residents of the area centre and interested parties” (Regal, 2013¹⁸)

This extraordinary activity of the local committee resulted in activation and mobilization of the whole neighbourhood and accompanied with various activities and intentions. For example, couple of the respondents mentioned that the committee was not very happy with the current state of the area and demanded a total demolition and transformation of the market into a parking lot or “European street”. To achieve that the committee engaged in active surveying and petitions and as documented

“In 2010 the committee has collected 2735 signed petition, mainly by people who live in the neighbourhood, which requests the demolition of the Ladies Market to start as soon as possible” (Regal 2013¹⁹)

Furthermore, interviews showed that the citizens’ voice received political recognition in the face of the deputy-chair of the city council and moved forward.

“At some point, these people living there, have been self-organizing and what they have achieved is to gain the support of a particular city councillor, member from Democrats for Strong Bulgaria, and that gives them larger scale for action, but he also explains them that the market cannot be demolished”. (PP3)

It has been also shared that this particular councillor is fighting against the entire open-air city markets located in Sofia and some other issues related to the spatial development. For example, I was able to find several official requests by the same councillor related to various “suspicious” street level developments.

However, many of the respondents reported that the core of the initiative committee is composed of about 10 active members who in need of massive actions and public appearance organise wider committee members and have totally conquered the public image of the neighbourhood and its problems.

“They are several women, who are very shrewd, who also happened to have prestigious employment in communistic times. One of them was something like a

¹⁸ Регал, 09-08-2013, Собственици от квартала: Осем години се борим за тази реконструкция [Regal Magazine, "Owners from the neighbourhood: Eight years we are fighting for this reconstruction"], <http://www.regal.bg/show.php?storyid=2119652>, Last accessed January 2014.

¹⁹ *ibid*

PR of a some kind of institution. So to say, it is clear that those people had some key position before and now are active in what they were good in their whole life. Moreover, at some point, they managed to involve the whole neighbourhood. Surveyed door to door, but really they are 4 or 5 people, who are very active and when there is a need for massive action around 20 or 30 are available” (PP2)

This statement was also supported by various appearances of the committee members. Most of them presented their self as architect, engineer, professor, and so on title before having to express opinion. The fieldwork confirmed that majority of the people involved in that organisation are retired citizens, who had elite job during the socialist era and currently are possessing certain amount of property in the area.

As it was noted in this sociological communique, there was a particular formulation of civic society, which had the capacity to participate in the public discussions and put pressure on the project.

“In reality, we have a game of gaining mutual benefit and attempts to exploit benefit, between societal interest and political expression, as there seems to be one particular group with very strong benefit – that of the ethnical Bulgarians who live in immediate proximity to the market” (PP3)

Especially noteworthy is the social composition of committee, as well as the dialectics and the discourse they have undertaken to defend *their* neighbourhood.

“The committee are people, who have been very active. When you meet them, they pouring you over with such emotional energy, right, and meeting with them are very powerful. They are very radiating. And they have persuaded many people, how terrible is there. What a torment is to live there. We are the people form the neighbourhood” (PP3)

Another respondent reported that often the language the committee use and actions they undertake are on the border of free speech and racism.

“There was a school in the neighbourhood and it is closed now, because the people living there refused.... They just un-enrolled their kids with the excuse that their kids cannot study together with gypsies, gypsy pupil. This is sign of a very ugly form of racism. The words they use... they are very ugly words.” (PP2)



Figure 9 The dismissed school (Source: personal archive)²⁰

Almost in the point of exaggeration, these statements were also confirmed in the field observations that were held on a later stage. The most striking result within the data collection was the sense of territoriality the committee members have developed and imposed every time they had opportunity to do. For example during the public discussion, organized by one of the NGO the most common question who was shouted in the air and personally asked to me several times were:

“Where do you live? You are not from here! Then, you do not have the right to be here and discuss about this thing, which is in front of our doors, and we live it every day. This does not concern you!” (Personal recordings)

This generalizes the attitude, positioning, and intentions of the locals toward the existence and the needed demolition of the market. By using this line of reasoning, the committee created salient vision of the local community. Moreover, their organizing capability was made

²⁰ By the end of the data collection fieldwork Sofia City Council decided that the building of the school will be divested to the National School for Ancient Languages and Cultures, which is currently located in the city outskirts. However, this resulted in internet- petition and a protest against the decision, as the most affected by it – the school staff and pupil were informed in the last minute with no option of public hearing or comment on the decision. Currently, the building on the picture is occupied by the above-mentioned school against all the objection of the staff members, pupils and the parental board of trustees.

possible that the market area will be reconstructed and made fit to the needs and visions of the local residents only.

During the same public dialogue meeting, it came clear that there exists certain mobilisation only of citizens which knew how to approach an institution and how to formulate a request or a petition. Residents were expressing opinion that the liveability of the area is low and they would like to live in a neat and pleasant environment. The reasoning for such intentions was hidden in the desire that by repairing the urban tissue the area will become attractive for different type of people and even result in gentrification of the area. However, it was difficult to assess that in the current stage.

It is interesting to note the element of faith-based organizations in the neighbourhood. The local church parish was also active in the committee functioning, due to availability of resources and experience of the members in writing communiques to official institutions and media. During the public discussion there was distributed two page message offering the position of the committee and signed by the local church parish. The local parish was also reported to be very active in mobilizing community's members and was rightfully represented at the organized public dialogue.



Figure 10 Representative of the local parish in the public discussion meeting. (Source: personal archive)

However, it was noted that such mobilization of citizens were not stand-alone. It has been reported that the reinforcement of local collective intentions was achieved after the wide political accreditation of the problem.

“Yet, the mobilization of the resident-owners is not solitary. The process is stimulated and directed by the local office of a political party, as the regional branch manager of the party is also the chairman of the local initiative committee and the most active face of the campaign” (PP1)

Therefore, not surprisingly, it was reported that these actions of the local community were recognized as a positive development of the state of the civil society and even used as an example for different occasions.

Turning now to the other group actors who were documented in the case study – the merchants, who although their active role in mainlining the market were left out from the mainstream debates on the reconstruction. The original data collection and the secondary data showed that the market sellers, intentionally or not have been not included in the public hearings and discussions organized by the local committee.

“When I started my work in this project I was fascinated by the public debate on the topic related to the market. Then I found that this project is very timely, and there is a local community with a very exclusionary vision” (PP3)

Another respondent said that practically, the merchants were excluded in the participation process and were never invited

“It appeared that the people who work in the market are not informed in any manner about what is going to happen. They have been told that there will be a reconstruction that will be executed at some moment and after that, they will continue working there. Nobody told them what exactly is going to happen and nobody asked them for opinion!” (PP2)

Another important input was that the actions of the committee did not pass unnoticed by professional organizations. It has been reported that

“The activist form the initiative committee have raised the bars bit too much in their favour, without considering that all stakeholders are within the same boat” (Grupa Grad Statement, 2013²¹)

This view dominated also during the public dialogue that was documented during my field visits. Merchants were afraid that the project will lead to total effacement of the area and they will be forced to move out. Here is the moment to note that most of the merchants are also living nearby the market. They had been renting the property of the same residents who dislike the current state. It was documented that there was an agreement that the market needs a face lifting, but the merchants were left out intentionally.



Figure 11 Relatively high interest in the organised public dialogue/discussion meeting. (Source: personal archive)

Naturally, the inactivity of the merchants was explained either with the demographics of the merchants – mainly members of marginalized minorities or with their social status in the society. Besides that it was reported that majority of the merchants obtained low educational levels and to a great extent relied on traditional ways of communication and management. What does it mean?

²¹ Група Град, 09-07-2013, ПРОЕКТЪТ ЖЕНСКИ ПАЗАР: ПРЕМЪЛЧАНИТЕ ИСТИНИ или за необходимостта от истински градски дебати [Grupa Grad, The project about the Women's Marker: the silenced truth or about the necessity to have real urban debates.], <http://www.grupagrad.com/-gradskidebati/>, Last accessed January 2014

“Well, they are a bit like kids. It is also like... they are a bit naive and normally react “But, how come, they promised by looking in our eyes, they cannot repeal what they promised. They are more traditionalists in their own way” (PP3)

The same was mentioned also about their attitudes as being active in any kind of debates

“How to say, they are a bit shy and worrying when it comes about stuff which is outside their reality and their work. They are feeling underrated and you can see that” (PP3)

Additionally, during the field observations it was evident that most of the people employed in the market did not have idea how to approach institutions in an official manner. Some participants suggested that the reason for this could be found in the lifestyle they had before the changes in 1989.

However, it was stated that recently the merchants realized that a change might occur, although all the pressure they had been experiencing.

“There is this feeling of impotence, which you see in them. And the precious thing lately is that, they start to realize that perhaps they can change influence something, because they are used to listen to order from above and that it is.” (PP2)

With relation to that, it was quite interesting, that some of the respondents who have this case closer to their hearts become some kind of community organizers who tried to mobilize and organize the merchants and other related individuals into community and highlighted the necessity of “doing something”

“Three years ago, in a community center there was a discussion about the future of the neighbourhood and I’ve met N. By that there was already strong pressure from the initiative committee for actions and we decided that there is nobody else who could try to get those people [the merchants] together, to encourage them and give them eagerness to fight against this situation” (PP2)

Over the time, it was experienced that some kind of community panel, alternative to the only existing one emerged and developed certain awareness of the problems. For example, a local TV news channel organised a live coverage from the market, where residents, merchants and professionals were supposed to express opinion.

“The best part of this TV coverage was that I managed to convince some of the sellers to stand in front of camera. They did it, and they told that the merchants are not informed about the future of the market and nobody is providing them adequate information. De facto, they tried to fight for their living” (PP2)

Overall, the mobilization of the merchants was not only an act of militant activist and community organizers. It was expressed opinion that some of the merchants have the charisma and rhetoric capacities to be active, but were not decisive to do that. In the aftermath another event the merchants organized – a protest in front of the municipality administration – a respondent reported the following

“This feeling [of civil frustration] is quite strong, and now when we tried with this protest, there were two very active persons. They were using good rhetoric and later it appeared that they are pastors in the evangelical community and are considered some kind of top-drawers. Because of that they started to be active, otherwise people would never do something.” (PP3)

Bessie that this illustrated once again the importance of faith-based institutions in mobilization of communities, it also showed the intentions of *the others* excluded from the elitist public image of the neighbourhood and the right of recognition of multitude opinions that can coexist in the same area. Different forms of art installations and actions were organized, including active social networking means in order to inform more people about the present situation and the future of the neighbourhood. For example there was installed a mailbox, where interested individuals can write letters to the disappearing Ladies Market. During the European mobility week, an art-installation named “The Invisible Ladies Market” was presented to the public, aiming to increase the awareness of ordinary people on such places and their importance for the urban fabric.

Софиянци на пазар - People of Sofia Go to the Market

Updated about 2 months ago

Серия карти "Софиянци на пазар"

Невидимият Женски пазар породи любопитство в градинката пред Кристал! Възрастни и младежи добавиха своите навици към интерактивната ни карта, коментираха разнообразието от посетители на пазара, сладурските типажи на нашия художник и си взеха пощенски картички със спомени от стария пазар.

22. септември 2013, Ден на мобилността.

Map series "People of Sofia Go to the Market"

The Unseen Women's Market evoked passers-by curiosity on Sunday! Young and old joined with input on their own shopping practice to our interactive map; commented on the variety of characters one can see at the market and their cute portraits by our artist; and took postcards with memories of the now gone market.

22. sept 2013, Day of Mobility



Figure 12 "People of Sofia Go to the Market" - art installation based on ethnographic research. Source: Facebook, Women's Market Art Project. Source: Facebook, personal communication

It shall be noted that expressing opinion about the future, present and the past of the market and the city in general was happening on-line – social media platform, e-magazines and so on. Especially active in the online discussion were the professional bloggers and online media, where the supporters of the both teams have met. The opinions varied from very emotional and romanticising the market to extremely negative and almost racist.

An anonymous Facebook user, for example, shared the following:

“At the Ladies Market the hungry is hungry, the rich is rich and everyone is mixing voluntary or not, because the hunger and the wealth do not divide people. What divide them are the contempt, disgust, revulsion and arrogance” (Facebook user, 2013)

Architecture blog maintained by students and young professionals had the following statement about the assets that the market carries on.

“The market might be very scaly place, but it is extremely living place, because it is a place of interaction and diversity” (PP2)

The “living city” and “authentic urban tissue” argument also came up in the interviews with various professionals and activists. For example, the importance of the market in every day dwelling was reported as such

“This type of merchandise is not available somewhere else anymore. You can’t find it in the shopping malls. This is to talk freely with the seller, to exchange two words, to waste a minute of your time and talk about random topic. Those are things that can happen only on a market” (PP2)

Other respondents replied more professionally and added:

“This is probably the most authentic places in the noertho-west of the city enter. This is one of the places which the urban should fight for” (NCTR 1)

Negative comments were not of a less overwhelming.

“I do not get what sort of a person shall be the one that insist that this ulcer in the centre of Sofia shall be preserved. With what purpose????? Let’s demolish it and clear up sooner. And the ghetto that is swarmed there to go away. Oh!” (Facebook user, 2013)

Another reported opinion created reference to the “Not in My Backyard” syndrome

“So I beg you "defenders of vividness, symbols and traditions" do not tell me how cool is here, and how not to delete such "multi-layered diversity" and other nonsense, take your multi-layered variety of scum and criminals, gypsies and drug addicts in your neighbourhood, the fact is that these people are here because of the market ...” (Comment in a YP blog, 2012²²)

Outside the anonymity and confidence of the virtual reality, a peculiar form of alternative opinion about the planning of the area have been emerged, mainly as a response on the

²² Провокад, 23.02.12, Женският пазар – въпросът вече е да бъде или не?, [Women’s Market – to be or not to be], <http://provocad.com/jenski-pazar-to-be-or-not-to-be/>, Last accessed January 2014

emerging actions of the merchants, NGOs and other institutions. However, such intentions were perceived as late, untimely and not in the right place.

“The one who is outraged that this discussion did not happen earlier should have been to the municipality more often. If you are interested in something you go to the municipality, right? So, this discussion is too late! We want radical change and we want to live like European” (Personal recordings)

There was even an opinion that such a different opinion is “against the modern and European development of the city centre”.

“If someone is against the radical, European and civilized change in the market, he is against the whole renewal of the centre, from the station till the old royal palace” (Personal recordings)

From a professional point, it was reported that the planning and participation process lacks sufficient levels of communication – not only between different users of the market and the area, but also between different managerial and organizational structures. For example, an architect who joined the first round of the professional debates about the renewal of the market and later withdrew from the meetings shared in an interview that the assignment distributed to the professional structures was unclear and raising many questions.

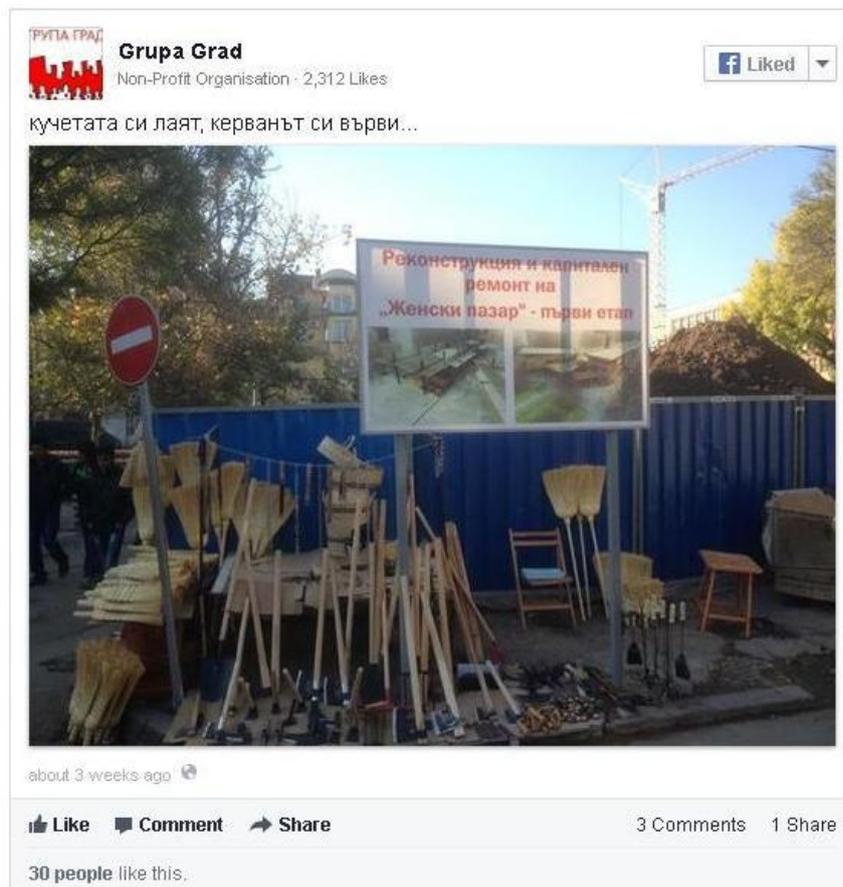
“There was information about engineering and amendments to the low infrastructure, and some empty words about the refreshment of the street, its European vision and such empty phrases, without any serious frame of reference and investigations”(PP1)

There was an accusation that there is no transparency in the planning of the implementation of the desired changes, no information about the overall changes that are going to occur. After the spontaneous public debate organized by some activist, with the support of a NGO, the latter distributed a statement which stated.

“We have learned is that in fact there is a project, but not quite. We understand that information on this project is intentionally hidden and it has been served differently to different stakeholders. Maybe that is why the municipality worried so much debate.” (Grupa Grad Statement, 2013²³)

²³ ²³ Група Град, 09-07-2013, ПРОЕКТЪТ ЖЕНСКИ ПАЗАР: ПРЕМЪЛЧАНИТЕ ИСТИНИ или за необходимостта от истински градски дебати [Grupa Grad, The project about the Women’s Market:

The information about the forthcoming overhaul of the market was presented also in the website of the organization that is responsible for the market in a sterile and confusing manner. Otherwise, on the field, the only sign of the potential change was an information sign with a fancy picture and a title, without textual information.



Information sign about the future of the market, which says “Reconstruction and marginal renovation of Women’s Market”- phase one”

Pavements are still subject of market activity, while behind the blue fence there are going on construction activities.

Source: Facebook, 2013

Figure 13 “The dogs bark, but the caravan goes on”

The empirical findings also showed also biased understanding on the notion of social inclusion during the planning process of the project, from social point. It has been documented in previous research that, currently the market has not only local, but also regional importance. Survey designed by Venkov (2012) reported that only 3 of 24 interviewed respondents live or work in the area adjacent to the market. Here, the statistical validity of the survey is not relevant as it is representatively of the people who visit the market, which was also established in the current fieldwork. Some of the responses from the interviews commented on the issue of social inclusion as poor or being underestimated by relevant authorities

the silenced truth or about the necessity to have real urban debates.], <http://www.grupagrad.com/-gradskidebati/>, Last accessed January 2014

“There should be an elementary consensus over the issues in the market if we want such projects to be marked as successful. But what is the reality – engagement practices by the side of the municipality are totally lacking” (PP1)

The social functioning of the market and the lack of social planning was also noted during the public discussion, a participant – not living nearby the neighbourhood and not engaged in an NGO shared that

“This market has also another very important function. It serves retired citizens, people who have low income. In addition, here we have many minority groups and their families, many immigrants and alyssum seekers, their fairies also. So many marginalized that depend on the market for survival” (PP2)

Practically, most of the opinions expressed about the failure to address social problems, which the neighbourhood is facing with architectural solutions referred to the institutional capacity of the municipality to address adequately social problems and functioning in preponderance of certain corrupt practices.

The more surprising result related to the issues of communication was that due to pressure from the side of the merchants protests and other NGOs the executive officer responsible for the market was able to transmit the importance of particular unwanted attributes of the renewal plan across the corridors of the city council and other related political bodies. Activists shared that the management of the market facilities are satisfied with the acts of protest and meeting with NGOs, because

“The superiors are still putting pressure to demolish the market, but they are happy with our actions, because the issues the management cannot address are addressed by us. They are happy because they cannot do that, but we can.” (PP3)

This provided evidence also on the power contamination and governmental attitudes in the planning process of this kind of projects. The political engagement in the process was already illustrated earlier in the data reporting. However, it was reported that many local politicians used the market as a platform to base their local election platform. It was reported in the media, by the city mayor that

“This project is real example of citizen’s project – set up by initiative of the citizens, which live nearby and executed under their control” (Capital, 2013²⁴)

Just before the commencement of the implementation phase, a magazine printed out a special issue on the developments around the market where it was shared reported the following statement:

“It shall be clear that this project is driven by and executed because of the pressure coming from a group of people, who are united in a committee. They have a big lobby in the city council and this project is happening against all the remarks and protest happening” (Regal 2013²⁵)

Against all the odds, and against all the multiplicity of the actions, actors and assets different users did not fight for different thing. The data collection documented a search for consensus about the future of the market. Nobody was against the reconstruction. On the contrary it was desired and welcomed by all the recruited participants, what was not clear about the whole decision making process was the notion of deliberation and democratic legitimacy in planning interventions. In a public appearance, one of the recruited participants in this data collection, was reported to mention that the solution should not be so radical and sharp

“We want the reconstruction to happen. There is nothing wrong with modernizing the market at all, but this should be done delicately and carefully.”
(P²⁶)

So far, the evidence originating from the amorphous fields of interaction and actions surrounding this case study illustrated one thing. Over the years, the market was a magnet for various stakeholders with different intentions about desired change nourished by dissatisfaction with the current situation. All stakeholders had strong intentions and overlapping visions about the intended developments. Unfortunately, the communication between them was not successful, or simply it was distorted, and there was neither political will, nor planning attitude for such coordination.

²⁴ Дневник, 20-10-2013, Фандъкова си пожела районът около Женския пазар да стане културно средище [Fandakova imagines the area around the Women’s Market as a cultural hotspot], http://www.dnevnik.bg/live/gradska_sreda/2013/10/19/2164507_fandukova_si_pojela_raionut_ok_olo_jenskiia_pazar_da/, Last accessed January 2014

²⁵ Регал, 09-08-2013, Гражданската инициатива: Искаме ремонт, но направен деликатно [Regal Magazine, 09-08-2013, NGO: We want reconstruction, but a deliberate one], <http://www.regal.bg/show.php?storyid=2119659>, Last accessed January 2014

²⁶ *Ibid.*

Urban environment? What is it?

Student's Town is part of the eponymous local municipality, within the structure of the metropolitan municipality. The history of the district dates back to 1943, when certain amount of empty are nationalized and allotted for military use. Later, large amount of the land was re-categorised as agricultural land and assigned to various agro-industrial complexes, which have been operating until 1989. Starting from the 1960s some part of the agricultural lands have been appropriated to construction purposes for the student campus, where all the student dormitories were located. In this manner, suddenly 60 condominiums have been built, with some of the buildings finished just in the early 1990s. In the massive creation of Students' Town also are designed recreation and sport facilities, university facilities and other commercial facilities.



Figure 14 The University Town in 1971²⁷. Source: Archive of Bulgarian News Agency)

As everything else in the post-socialist world, the neighbourhood is witnessing rapid and often violent changes in its built environment and socio-economical compost. Combined with the construction boom and expansion during the early 2000s, currently the Students Town barely reminds the communist ideals of academic society. According to a report of the Ministry of Interior, presented in a parliamentary commission by 2012 the quarter was host of “22 night clubs, 33 restaurants, 3 casinos, and 4 street-bars”. The number of non-student

²⁷ According to the archive of the Bulgarian Telegraphic Agency (БТА) on the façade of the newly build dormitories is placed the slogan “THANK YOU, BUILDERS!”. Following the rhetoric of communistic propaganda it does not refer only to the actual builders who build the city, but also hints to students that they are the builders of modern Bulgaria in the future (note of the author)

residential buildings is not subject of official statistics, but according to my field observations soon the normal residencies will outnumber the student dormitories.



Figure 15 The contemporary outlook of Students Town. (Source: personal archive & Wikipedia)

Quite interesting, was to discover that the area of the neighbourhood was recognised as a “central zone with of public functions with high social importance”. Though it was outlined as a secondary central zone in the integrated plan of Sofia, this hinted the emerging relevancy of the area due to its specifics.

"The truth is that, if we have to look for another area with primarily public functions where that function should be prevailing - this is Students Town, but it is not really a centre. It is a zone that concentrates very specific public functions, but it is not the same as a city centre."(NCTR 1)

However, the data collection showed that the area experienced rapid process of land restitution²⁸, due to claims by heirs of former landowners. Where land restitution effort has

²⁸ Land restitution was and still is one of the most questionable mechanisms in land planning in Bulgaria (other post-socialist republics). It refers to the process of “giving back” land ownership to the previous owners or related heirs, which aims to restore social justice in relation to the former owners, disturbed by the communistic regime after September 9, 1944. However, it is commonly acknowledge that instead of distributing social justice it created additional planning problems, especially in urban areas. Most of the new owners (if established and agreed upon ownership rights) traded their land to real estate investors. In Students Town was not so different. Additional complexity in this case was

done good or bad role for the urban development of post-socialist Bulgaria was not one of the goals of this investigation, but was widely referred as one of the reasons why the area currently has its current colourful landscape.

One of the respondents who have been living in the area of the case study shared the following when he was asked about the current condition of the neighbourhood

"Ruthless restitution and filthy administration, which does two things in parallel - defends the so-called public interest and landscape of the area - to be campus, and also allowing its demolition by allowing new constructions, which are obviously in gross violations of established basic planning rules and regulations. The result - the Town now is dangerous, the environment is dangerous. Visited by various criminal contingents in effort to serve all bright and dark aspects of human desires" (NCTR 2)

Practically, the argument of land restitution was object of conversation in every interview related to the area. This showed the particular potential for future development of the area and the never-ending development interest in the area. However, the image and the pitfalls of the developments that occurred created very specific public opinion of the student's paradise. All the participants noted that the selected research focus is somehow neglected in the focus of urban planners and interested organizations.

"Students Town was a public topic, when there was a murder in one of the clubs there and the focus was hat more or less there are more clubs than dormitories [in 2008], but since then the topic is hardly raised. Yet there the problems there remained. Otherwise in students' town, the socialism and the severe capitalism co-exist." (Trasnfromatori 1)

Even members of a NGO related to the problems of the urban planning in Sofia, expressed feelings that it is not very clear what is happening there.

"Well, I am not very aware what is happening there, but I know that there are problems due to the ownership of the land and the student dormitories. There is a maintenance problem, also land management issues. But how this thing is managed is a super difficult chemistry to me, I have no clue" (PP1)

that part of the restituted land was transferred to municipal company, which was accused in massive land swaps, which resulted in the overbuilding of the neighborhood.

On the other side, residents and employees located in the neighbourhood shared that Student's Town now is an epithet for a ghetto or something at the end of the universe²⁹. A maintenance employee, working in the area for more than 10 years shared that

"Yes, there is discrepancy in the Students' Town, but it has been always like that. It was created to accommodate the students, with a special decree of the government, but then the time was such - small narrow streets, not enough parking zones, etc. From that point, they call it urbanistic; the things were not crafted well. You can see this everywhere" (PP4)



Figure 16 The myth says that there are more cars than students in Students Town. (Source; personal archive)

A student, who has been living in the area for more than 6 years, mentioned that the image of the neighbourhood, by default is negative and segregatory:

"Well, all those fences in decay around the flats and empty-derogated green spaces, which are here, place us, somehow, quite isolated from everyone else. And people talk about Students Town as something which is outside the World, which actually is not quite true" (ST1)

²⁹ Ironically, one of the bars in the area is also called "Bar at the End of the Universe"

Therefore, recruiting participants in this case study were one of the major difficulties experienced in the data collection. One of the major findings related to the lack of any critical perspective on urban development in this zone related to the sense of belonging and awareness of locals. This opinion was shared by almost all participants who were asked about the area. It was reported that:

“Students Town is a difficult topic, because it is difficult to engage the people there. They are coming from far away, and they also only there for a short term.”
(NCTR 3)

Although, the presence of new residents was reported not to have influenced any trigger for urban development or change. This also related to the lack of clearly visible community or local organisation operating or having interest in involving in the urban environment in the area. During one of my visits in the field area I asked a question related to the urban environment to one of the shop-keepers in the newly build commercial zone and the reply

“What urban environment? There is no such here” (field notes)

The majority of respondents felt that Students Town is a battlefield of various interest and actors who are seeking for financial benefit only. Due to decentralisation policies, the land of the student dormitories is property of the university, the space between the built environments is maintained by the local municipality newly built residential areas are in many private owners and construction sites are responsibility of the contractor.

The impossible amalgam of endless actors and unfortunate chain of events, ending with a death of a student in illegally constructed night club in 2008 triggered one of the biggest intended developments in the neighbourhood – a new master plan which will reflect the specificity of the area and offer suitable solutions. Combined with the moratorium on land sale and building restriction from 2008 were recognised as the only fields of action observed in the area.

According to one of the authors of the master plan for the area such initiative was perceived as a positive development, but attacked in the court by various stakeholders with interest in the area, which resulted in moratorium in property deals and blocking of the new plan.

"Practically, with this moratorium the property deals with empty lots are prohibited, until the land ownership is cleared out. Then, what happened, the moratorium stopped the land deals and the master plan - building new property.

Yet both of the things are now in the court and what will happen is unclear. The interests involved are huge" (NCTR 3)

Surprisingly the most active actors in the area were the owners of empty land-lots. It was documented that during the participation process of a new master plan they overtook the leading role of governmental institutions, including universities.

"In the beginning of the preparation, the most active were the students, later, gradually the landowners in the area were more active. Everyone who owned land which still does not have visa for new building lobbied in all directions to stop the new master plan" (arch. Dikov, Storitelsvto & Gradat³⁰)

The role of this actor-group role was criticized by some informants for being landowners without possessing the attitude of one.

"Well, what we have there is the following: people who possess high value land but no idea what to deal with it. We have aristocrats with land, which do not have the sovereignty of an aristocrat." (YP 2)

Another leading actor – the university bodies were accused in inertia and failure to address the most relevant issues of the comfort zone of their students in front of the general public and resign under the pressure accumulated by the private interest.

The housekeeper of a student dormitory I was allowed to interviews shared high criticism on the university management

"The other thing is the way universities work. They should be interested. You cannot have around 3000 incoming new students every year, or however was there; to receive their fees and taxes and not to do something about their environment. I cannot agree on such thing. Then in the backyard of the flat to have a lousy night club" (PP5).

This was related to the relative autonomy each university has in the maintenance of the housing stock and the adjacent territories. This issue was also assumed by the authors of the master plan.

³⁰ Сторителство и Градът, 22-09-2009, В плана на столичния Студентски град са обособени 12 миникампуса [Stroitelstvo & Gradat Magazine, "The new metropolitan plan predicts 12 specified mini-campuses for Students Town], <http://stroitelstvo.info/print.php?storyid=787638>, Last accessed January 2014

“We elaborated several mini-zones where any kind of building intervention was supposed to be forbidden, but they [universities] say that in some of the mini-zones they have land plots and took the master plan in the court. Very often in the court other rules apply.” (NCTR 3)

This statement was supported by the leases issued by the university administrations, which also fell in the domain of actions observed in the neighbourhood. Significant portion of some student dormitories have been leased to private developers or entrepreneurs, respectively, developed as restaurant, cafes, and other facilities. It was reported that this was done by using shady procedures and without consultation with the students.



Figure 17 Multifunctional space? Each entrance and foyer area of the student dormitories is transferred to a peculiar public service point. (Source: personal archive)

On the shore of the new residents present in the neighbourhood there was dominating the weather of disinterest. This was explained when it was reported than more than 50% of these dwellings have student inhabitants or young families, who were living in the area before. As one resident noted

“Before I lived in 14th block, now I live in opposite of it. Nothing has changed so much, only the students, perhaps.” (ST 2)



Figure 18 Before (left) and after (right) residence of the respondent. (Source: personal archive)

When participants related to this case study were asked about the issue of responsibility for the current state of art in the area, the majority commented that the local government is failing to fulfil its responsibilities.

“How come, who should be responsible? The municipality, of course. We do not pay taxes for nothing” (ST 2)

"If the local Municipality was a municipality with an honour, they should have not allowed these constructions. Yes, I am agreeing to have supermarkets and other facilities. We have everything here. We have even 2 big hotels and there is one more in building phase. Why they build them here, who will go in them, I ask. How come these things happen? A hotel in a dormitory heaven"³¹ (PP5)

The response rate was even lower when interviewees were asked about the role of social responsibility that citizens potentially took. One individual replied

“Nobody should pay from his wallet to fix what the municipality fails”. (ST2)

³¹A post-fieldwork web research, established that the new hotel would offer monthly accommodation for people who would like to have a bit of more allure lifestyle.

However, most of the respondent saw the students have the power to fight for their environment, but they were not doing it just because of their “youth, madness and manners”.

“Simply they do not care about it. They just exist here. Do you understand me?
(PP 5)

The role students played in the public image of the neighbourhood was not in favour of improving the area they live in. It was reported that the area is only a temporary stop for the students who come and go away. However, some students showed proactive intentions for plausible actions or at least complain notes

"I live here for two years now and I want to say that we, students, do like Students Town. We are not annoyed by the clubs and the nightlife. They are part of every campus. But they are not part of the problem. The biggest problem I have with Students Town is the lack of university or academic facilities" (Stoitsev, 2012³²)

Ironically, contentions for any kind of actions were self-restrained by the conventional perception of one-way dialogue and no response form respective institutions.

“Sometimes, I have been thinking that, by the way, that I would like to go in front of the flat and clear up the little garden and plant some flowers there, because I am really ashamed when I see it in its current condition. But I am really ashamed to do so, because everyone will look at me as I am insane for doing that” (ST 1)

Another interesting user group of the neighbourhood were the members of the facility management. Overall participation rate from various representatives of universities located over the territory of the neighbourhood was low. During the data collection stage, I contacted the managing officers of the biggest student facility services; however, interview with them was refused. It is interesting to acknowledge that when I requested interviews with the student-managers, there were several refusals due to fear of information leak or sanctions from direct supervisors. This can be used as illustration of the transparency and organisation structure in one of the biggest players in the area.

Nevertheless, some of the respondents who have overview and working experience over the state of the neighbourhood during the past two decades noted that Students Town is neither

³² За студентски град [About: Students Town], <http://stoitsev.com/uncategorized/student-town>, Posted on 25/08/2012 by stoitsev. Last accessed January 2014

for students only nor a town per se. This was confirmed also by a statement of the former education minister who was quoted to say

“There is an illusion. Students Town does not exist for a long time. There is an area in Sofia, where we have concentration of dormitories - 50 dormitories and also there are over 30 residential buildings. Currently, between the separate dormitories there are constructions of any type” (Parliament Stenograph, 2012³³)

On the street level, these words were simply referring to the co-existence of excessive nightlife, young population with bohemian lifestyle and the great potential of the area to offer any kind of desires to various visitors. The language used was much more contrasting and flourishing.

“Currently, all these characteristics transform Students Town as a mode of existence to Las Vegas, and I am quite serious with this” (YP2)

“Students Town should be a community where must be only students. I am agreeing to have canteens and restaurants, but club to club and bar to bar. You tell me is it a student campus or Las Vegas (PP 5)

Various means of data collection – field observations, photographic analysis and various publications in the press, as well as, public statements of various institutions, and organizations confirmed that the image of Las Vegas is the most suitable for this field location.

Once peril of the socialistic society, now golden mine for any desired grey intentions, Students Town, remained outside the focus areas of the regional urban policy agenda and ended up being metaphor for the local Las Vegas.

³³ КОМИСИЯ ПО ОБРАЗОВАНИЕТО, НАУКАТА И ВЪПРОСИТЕ НА ДЕЦАТА, МЛАДЕЖТА И СПОРТА [Committee on Education, Science, Children, Youths and Sports Affairs], <http://www.parliament.bg/bg/parliamentarycommittees/members/232/steno/ID/2406>, Last accessed January 2014



Figure 19 Students Town - the Bulgarian Las Vegas. (Source: personal archive)

The fieldwork concluded that the typical residents – student with their youthful gusts coexisted together with the newcomers in a bizarre symbiosis. Sense of place, belongings territory was not the case here, due to the transitional positioning of all respondents. And as a former resident of the area, the amount of alteration in the urban environment was more than worrying. Perception of the urban development and asocial engagement in the area was reported to be critically low. Although, one of the respondents used Karl Marx’s famous quote employed in dialectical materialism to explain the situation in the neighbourhood:

“It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness”

and yet, it was neither the consciousness of residents nor their being which were playing role in constructing the social reality in the neighbourhood. In this situation, it was no surprise that urban environment was missing as a category in the perception and vision of the locals.

Summary

Looking back to the investigated case studies, there was hardly a common line of comparison, except the unclear vision on planning attitude, high expectation for architectural solutions that were supposed to solve social problems and non-visionary collaboration and communication between different stakeholders.

Revisiting the findings above the experimental evidence on prosperity and continuity in participatory practises was reported as dissatisfactory or missing. The empirical findings supported the argument that citizen participation (when recognised) is unclear, fuzzy and invested with political and populist measures. On the other side, it was documented that they syndrome of the pink glasses, namely the attitude something to happen, rather than nothing happening, was not the best one to proceed with. There was certain distinction between participation and contribution. What the data collection established that the dominating view on public participation is namely contribution, but not participation per se. A lone voice in the wilderness of the hegemonic normativity, imprinted by the heritage of socialist ideologies, was howling and reminding that participation is not something that should be implemented, but rather performed. Some interviewees even expressed the hope that soon we will move from participation to self-organisation. Yet how soon this will be is unclear and depends on many things.

As this enthusiastic person posted on Facebook and was re-posted by one of the activists in the first case study.

Here is the moment to denote, that the period of fieldwork observations and obtaining raw data coincided with a massive wave of protest, against the ruling political élite and against

"What are you doing when you do not like something:

You start from the beginning and try to make it better, because if you are waiting someone else to do it, most probably you will have to wait for a long time. This someone will also wait.

You have Facebook!!! - Propose, organise, and negotiate/meet, if nobody appears - a lone soldier is a warrior too.

If it is related with the municipality and other governmental things - you try again and again. If you are alone, you are a single mosquito. If you are active, you are an active mosquito - an annoyance. If you are several - you are active mosquitos - a really big annoyance. If it really matters - you invite more friends over Facebook, because you really want to achieve change and become even bigger annoyance. If it is necessary - you also invite or annoy media and so long till your efforts are rewarded.

Mosquitoes are huge annoyance and they do the job!

Questions? - Just ask around!

It will not work out on its own, if you do not try. Experience teaches and attracts more people.

Imagination, they say, is more important than knowledge!"

Source: G. Tanev, 12-03-2013, Facebook. Accessed September 2013. Translated by the author.

the outrages that have been committed since “the democracy came” (inter alia, those protest are still ongoing by the date of this thesis – December 2013). During the majority of the recordings, it was established that recruited participants are either participating in these protests or sympathize with them in one way or another. As one of the respondents commented in the role of civic formations, maybe first we have to solve variety of other issues, such as healthcare, education, minorities and then turn to the problems of participation in urban planning. Whether the present socio-political landscape biased the results was difficult to assess, there was consensus amongst all participants that positive change in the status quo is necessary, and to achieve it we should invest in human and social capital.

Chapter 5: Analysis & Discussion

Introduction

This chapter will present an analysis of the empirical findings outlined in the previous chapter. This will be done in relation with the theoretical assumption invested with the conceptual model and the literature review in Chapter 2. This chapter will start with a discussion on the conceptual model refracted through the prism of the findings in Chapter 4 and will follow with the specifics of participation and self-organisation encountered in the planning process. Analysis of the envisioned case studies will follow thoroughly. Naturally, the chapter will conclude with a summary and prelude to conclusion and reflection.

From participation to self-organisation

The main line of inquiry of this thesis is to establish how far we have gone with participatory processes in the planning discourse. Moreover, the analysis of this thesis looks beyond the orthodox boundaries of participation established after the life-changing (at least for planners) ladder of citizen participation by Arnstein. In the sea of literature on the topic of participation, ships sails in fields from health-care management to public administration, and empowerment of racial minorities to deliberative participatory budgeting. Prior studies on participation have noted the importance of democratic values it transmits and contribution to modern day polity. However, the global findings from this study show that participation, although a democratic tool, might not be relating to principles of democracy.



Figure 20 Conceptual Model Revisited

Seas of Participation

Analysis of the empirical findings showed that in Sofia standard notions relating to any kind of participation are highly stigmatised. Whereas, citizen participation should ideally relate to the voice of civil society in a democratic state, it was noted that the current construction of civil society is something exclusionary and populist. The data collection shows that the most active citizens are also intolerable to new visions and different opinions. Yet, responsible authorities use this state of ‘civil society’ as an example of positive approach in planning. This phenomena might not be new to the scientific body of participatory research, but clearly illustrates a hazard in the face of participation, trending to be a moral principle or value that can be used to form the vision of majority composed ideal society. This is a reason to worry, especially in time of crises, where management is facing challenges or various fronts.

The ever-lasting Habermas-Foucault debate also moored deeply in the so-called post-socialist practices. The findings of the fieldwork observation and the interviews support the idea that planning attitude, and particularly participatory practices, are serving specific political or economic interest of financial groups and politicians. Whether, it is difficult to trace direct accusations, participants hypnotised that most of the developments in Sofia are happening due to strong financial benefits to limited circle of people in the high ranks. Such perception of clientelism creates asymmetric relationship between the goals, aims, and purposes of the planning products, in the context of Sofia, often resulting in problematic outcomes.

Following this train of thoughts, this research confirmed the role of opportunism in making participation happen (or not happen). Recognising a specific social problem and including it in the political agenda of the municipality, in order to offer an architectural solution, which benefits only certain user groups, and refusing to take the risk by including all related stakeholders, which will reduce the influence, support, even the wealth or popularity of the plans, shows how selective participation can be, even when it is based on civilian initiatives of urban self-organisation. On the contrary, taking advantage of amorphous but inactive fields of interest to gain lobby is a sign of conflicting expediency that is stabbing the potential of urban self-organisation.

It is somewhat surprising that according by some influential decision-makers, participation has been noted as unnecessary and not-worthy, due to its capacity to delay projects. The attitude of the chief-architect who often is quoted to say, “You can do everything, but I will decide at the end” shows the political commitment in decision-making, which simply refers to the absorption of the European structural funds and the limited mandateness of the

planning decisions. The latter often is criticized by the next mandate holders, and projects are executed all over again. The burden of participation is also clearly visible on the manner of conducting it. First, those meetings are called “Public discussions/hearings” that usually attended by the authors of the plans and proponents of the plan. Furthermore, public access and availability to resources related to such meetings reminds these famous quotes by Douglas Adams:

"On display? I eventually had to go down to the cellar to find them."

"That's the display department."³⁴

It is possible to hypothesise that these conditions are actually referring to citizen participation as a tool, technique, design, mechanism or any other technocratic approach that is seen burden to achieve plans on time and delay flow of funds. On the contrary, the dominating image of civil society also interprets wide-agenda participation as unwanted, because it does not work only in favour of dominating opinions.

Islands of USO

The data obtained in this research must be interpreted with caution because in seas of participation, often navigation is difficult and islands of expectation – easily bypassed. In the theoretical chapter it was elaborated that urban self-organisation refers to the self-conscious construct of social reality and involves the reasoning and consequences of various actions and activities taken by citizens. The results of this study show that some ray of light might break through the turbulent clouds of participation and be used as an example of urban self-organisation for other initiatives, in other times and other places.

This research illustrates that urban self-organisation cannot be something else but a mean of participation. Urban self-organisation combines the importance of civil rights and responsibilities in the urban fabric. The analysis of the results depicts that most of the critiques and remarks on the occurring spatial transformations in Sofia are addressed by proactive citizens with clear attitude and awareness about the importance of the urban environment, not only as an aesthetical but also as a social domain. Although, the argument of active citizenship might be contested through the application of power-rationality analysis, it still shows that every citizen should be active part of the city life and not only a resident that pays taxes and expect well-fare services in return. The availability of proactive attitude

³⁴ Adams, Douglas. 1995. *The hitchhiker's guide to the galaxy*. New York: Ballantine Book

amongst the citizens is one of the foremost conditions, which is required in order of urban self-organisation to take place.

The current study indicates that participation is considered as a commitment to a cause, by elaborating and enhancing the ways citizens are actually getting involved, rather than simply investing liabilities in legal acts and administrative deadlines. The results confirm that urban self-organisation is a mean to evoke how citizens are committed to a goal and answers the doubts related to the aim they are fighting for; how much citizens energy is invested and how much efforts citizens are going to make under difficult circumstances. Active role in streaming this energy is played by the NGOs and young professionals, which in the case of Sofia are understood as concentration of the citizen energy with clear commitment to a specific cause. Evidence shows that in the recent years they are gaining bigger support and considered somewhat as a partners in the municipal level, yet with not enough positive measurement in their scale. However, this shows the potential of mobilising public opinion emerging out of the post-socialist blue (red).

It is interesting to note that in the current context, socio-spatial developments in Sofia showed signs of emerging participatory society. Despite of being in a state of germ, this analysis shows that embracing such values as self-management, equity, justice, solidarity, and diversity are in the core of the intentional groundings and stances of urban self-organisations. This posture of urban self-organisation advocates for deliberative discussion and broader debate with not only affected stakeholders and other concerned citizens.

This study also shows that urban self-organisation can be a strong mean of citizen participation by being non-mandatory element of the participation debate. Here non-mandatory has two distinctive meanings. First, non-mandatory refers to urban self-organisation in terms of pure commitment and consistency and not lawfully recommended activity. Case studies showed that there is certain element of social proof in urban self-organisational capacities of the urban. People are doing things after they see what other people are doing. Thus, the role of experimentation and experience does count for urban self-organisation. It can reach higher impact due to the sense of reciprocity and stronger bonds between the individuals involved in actions. Second, urban self-organisation is not mandatory, because the capacity to outlast legally mandated administrations and verdicts related to decision-making, which in Bulgaria usually last between 3 and 4 years. The potential of urban self-organisation to reach impact on several mandates creates the opportunity to implement improved participatory practices that cannot overview beyond their short-term command, but provide long-term perspective. However, with a small sample

size, caution must be applied, as the findings might not be transferable to other context or situation.

Plans, visions and expectations

Women's Market has been in the air of public opinion, newspapers, reportages, etc. for years. What this study found is that planning intentions date back to the early 1990s, starting from some aesthetic upgrade of the area and reaching an apogee in mid-2000s, when the local self-organised committee was established. The area has been a homeland for various actors – residents, merchants, buyers, tourists, immigrants, concerned citizens, and even researchers. All of whom implied different intentions and actions to the existence of the market. Some intentions are stronger than others are, and some actors prevail among others. Naturally, this results in the current situation of the market, where all the actors have great expectations and hope.

Analysing this case study, it is necessary to see the plans which existed in the area, how they emerged and who was involved and how. Plans imply visions and the first vision of the market as a place that should be demolished and replaced by a parking causes a suspicion. This suspicion can be projected in three different beams. First, the residents – it was illustrated in the previous chapter their desire for a clean, safe and sterile place to live – have expectation that all the social problems related with the market can be solved with removing the surface of the problem. Second, the political support residents achieved is focusing on only structural changes, yet with no clear coordination, and following populist ideologies. After all, the statement “to disembowel this plague/ulcer from the centre of Sofia” pronounced by an influential city councillor is enough to show the political engagement in the decision-making process. Third, the design and implementation circle also is focused on structural changes, without any social content and preliminary preparation. The gained data shows that the architectural studio involved in the planning design become flexible after strong opposition from the professional guild, besides that they have been following orders from the assignor of the contract. Although, executive agencies simply follow the orders and cannot be accused in anything, often they are the agents with professional opinion that can address corrections to flagrant differences found in reality and in visions.

Nevertheless, the planning process of Women's Market is often use as the example of civil society which proactively achieves desired goals. Here the question is what exactly is civil society? A research by Venkov (2012) on the market shows that civil society in Bulgaria is still considered constructed by the cream of the society, mainly individuals who are holding or have been holding prestigious professions, and nobody else. The findings from this case study

align with the previous research. However, this is not the most striking result here. The present results are significant in at least major two respects. First, the language used in the planning process in order to gain support, bordering between free speech and language of hate are a symbol of not only not-working participatory approaches, but also democratic values in distress. Second and more interesting is the manner of how residents, proposing and citizens opposing their visions and expectations emerged on the front row that makes this case study interesting.

This case study illustrates that urban self-organisation has landed in the backyard of participatory approaches and waiting for public display. Yet, not so fast with proclaiming the advantages of the latter idea. The findings from this case study support the three-fold idea of self-organisation as community, proximity, and collective intentionality related phenomena. It can be argued that in the operationalizing of the plans, visions and expectations of the market's future two different urban self-organisations are spotted – residents and others.

Residents first

The data collection does not provide enough evidence when exactly the residents decided to act against the conditions of their neighbourhood, the first documented act dates to 2006, but earlier singular acts might also exist. However, the collected data supports the idea that in order urban self-organisation to emerge there should be certain notions of community organisation. The extraordinary organising capabilities of the core members of the committee made possible mobilisation of the whole neighbourhood and created image of collective action. They have been writing letters to institutions, reporting problems to the media, to each other – sharing frustration with the situation; however, they have not been looking for the real reason of decadent and rather following the easiest path.

Certainly, in this community mobilisation, the role of proximity in physical terms is more than evident, but the social and cultural proximity has not to be neglected. Besides that, those individuals shared the same physical space; they also shared the same services and utilities. Most of them also shared the same social status and politico-ideological visions about how society functions. However, this proximity was very selective, because it failed to exclude the other major actor group operating in the market – those of the merchants. Perhaps, if this have occurred contestation of plans and expectation would have been avoided.

Then, we arrive, at the most questionable moment, where collective intentions relate to social performance and expectations for future development. The empirical evidence shows that collective performance in any form exists in this case study. The residents co-exist in similar

social and welfare conditions, which nourishes their awareness, consciousness of the problem and intentions to act collectively. By intellectualising this, the residents' community certainly shows proactive and self-motivated attitude towards improving the urban fabric they habituate. The most interesting to note here is that, deeds of collective intentionality can carry worthwhile mileage of accreditation, but also follow interest, that sometimes it goes against commonly established conventions of urbanity and well-being.

Careful analysis of this case study shows that the three components proposed in the conceptual model of the thesis

The others follow.

The data collection fieldwork found the non-residents in the case study in severely active phase of activities. The others include – merchants, activist (including also researchers), representatives of NGOs, people that live in the area but also like the market, user of the market, interested citizens – simply the non-residents of the neighbourhood. Their actions, although late were symptom of some pitfalls in the planning process. The empirical findings showed that all the deadlines for official appealing against any of the intended changes have passed. The planning process has been a reign of miscommunication and disinformation. However, one of the unanticipated finding in this case is that some of the previous research of the market, together with some NGO activists set the goal to inform, the merchants and the wide public about what is happening in the area.

As a part of every market, the merchants created their community with their own worries and day-to-day live stories. From ethnographical point of view, this life of the market reflects the capacity of the urban to accommodate diverse generations and tolerance amongst the various merchant groups. This finding corroborates the ideas of Morales (2010) where the author explains that certain rules and unwritten conventions operate on a marketplace – namely self-organisation in the market's modus operandi. This finding was also confirmed in this case study, and enriched by the overall marginality of the area. Combined with the fact that the market provides existing of not only the merchants but also for individuals under the poverty line illustrates the necessity of more than aesthetic interventions in the area.

Returning to the line of urban self-organisation elaborated earlier in this research, during the fieldwork it appeared that two of the recruited respondents are active in enlightening specifically the merchants about the future awaiting the market. They have become some kind of community organisers who enlighten the merchants that their voice also can count and only they can do something if something has to be changed. This have resulted in quick

mobilisation, several protest and eventually attracting a NGO, which is aimed at improvement the urban and planning environment at the city, if not national level. These findings further support the idea of alternative community organising emerging in the area. Yet, the word community in a classical sense here might refer mainly to the merchants, but if we consider a community as a group of interacting individuals who share an environment, then the focus can include all the others who were left out in the participation process and realise that at late stage.

Proximity in the self-organisation of this group was an interesting asset. The merchants, besides working are also being residents in the area. Some of them even are renting property of the “elite” residents. Therefore, they share the area in physical meaning by a double bond – as a place to earn a living and a place to live. This is shown clearly in the activities, which are happening in the area. For example, during the fieldwork stay one of the respondents and activist received an invitation to a wedding by a big merchant family. However, the physical and socio-economical proximity is not the only one that made the difference. As the empirical findings suggest the market and its adjacent area carry the notion of the so-called living-city, as a place where the urban life happens and maintains itself. This suggests reference to an ideological proximity, advancing the observations of Jane Jacobs (1961), in this case located in politically different environment, but still carrying the philosophy of self-realisation and healing the city, in its pseudo neo-liberal rapture.. The most unexpected finding from this case is the intense activity of the newly emerging virtual proximity, which is gaining speed and support. This was observed in the unusual activity of various activists, professionals, and other citizens who have been flooding the social media and blogging platform with information about the case study and possible action they can undertake. Its occurrence suggests that diversity in the otherwise scattered urban environment. Moreover, it advances the view that in socio-economically and politically congested environment the trust and support to independent bloggers and experts outreaches those toward technocrats and politicians.

The most interesting asset observed in the group of the others is their collective intentionality. It already highlighted in this paper that those are professionals and citizens from different occupations and locations, which are somehow connected to the market. They are completely aware of its importance as a viable part not of the city centre, but also its importance on the city level. They have also achieved unwritten consensus that to preserve or refurbish the area is as much as necessary also as social responsibility and obligation. Respectively, due to the chain of events, they developed a conscious social brain that projected collective intentionality in the socially constructed brain of the group. The most intriguing thing about this brain, confirmed by the field observation, is that it is not

constituent of members or a delegated platform with a function. The socially constructed brain is a narrative of individual citizens who share identical collective intentionality.

Analysis of the ultimate findings from his case study supported the vision that urban self-organisation can be an effective mean of participation, not only in hypothetical but also in empirical manner. Based on the results it is possible to hypothesise that the next move in the participation research and practice will be towards urban-self organisation. The case study of Women's Market clearly illustrates this premise. However, urban self-organisation is in fragile and frail state. If polarisation of the contextuality occurs, it might fail to recognise the multiplicity of the problem and provide unjust solutions for citizen participation.

No man's land, yet a paradise

As extensive the analysis of the first case study is, this will follow more concise and relatively critical analysis. Students Town is a place of lust and irrational behaviour – this is the image that the case study area and it is for a reason. During the decades of democratic transition, the neighbourhood changed its boring dormitory outlook with fancy buildings, explicit night activities, and flashy images. The empirical findings from the previous chapter illustrated that the case is a definite field of interactions and interests resulting in specific quasi-spatial self-organisation³⁵. Namely, spatial transformations occur without clear framework and without consultation to related stakeholders, not to mention the minimal presence of participatory implications.

Following the conceptual framework of the thesis, it shall be noted that the actors illustrated in the previous chapter are not in any kind of interaction or liaison. Students are located in their universe of the neighbourhood as a transit stop in their life. The housing associations of universities are in financial struggle to keep sufficient maintenance of their facilities and interact mainly with higher university representatives, utility companies, and local municipality. The local municipality is under fire due to the new development plan it tries to implement. Real estate developers are on hold due to buildings restrictions. Landowners patiently wait until the memorandum on land sale is unlocked to get rid of their property and benefit. Newly arriving residents are too busy with their live and work. In this capsulation of the relevant stakeholders, it is not of a surprise that there is no clear community vision of any

³⁵ Here, I refer to spatial self-organisation as the manner in which structural transformation in the built environment are occurring, due to planning conditions that are result of various legal, economic, and political circumstances. In comparison, urban self-organisation relates more to social and intellectual properties of cities.

kind. This shows that everything can happen in a self-organising manner, when it is relate to the spatial ordering, but not he social content of the neighbourhood.

The multimodal lack of communities, however, is compensated by rich environment of actions. Here actions refer mainly to legislative measures and instruments, which follow peculiar positionality imposed by each stakeholder group. As the empirical findings prompted, the most active members in the area are the landowners and real estate developers. The land price in Students Town is one of the highest in the city level and tasty morsel due to the economic opportunities in the area – young population and a buffer zone between the suburban and central zones. Nevertheless, due to misinterpretation of previous practices and shady land restitution procedures, some political opposition to the current trend of development exists. The extent of success and timing of such actions is questionable and cannot be elaborated only in one thesis, but it suggests that political commitment and social responsibility would have been utilized before it is too late. In contrast to earlier findings, little (almost null) evidence form the data collection suggests presence of other means of action.

When it comes to available assets, this case study is a good example of clear vision on what assets are and how to utilize them. Assets as understood in this research are attributes of actors and actions in achieving balance in public participation. Within this case study, assets can be categorised as social, economic, and political. Starting with reverse order first I will elaborate on the political assets contained in the area. The empirical findings clearly illustrated that the area of Students Town is loaded with political intentions. The neighbourhood was included in the Integrated Plan for Regeneration, as a subsidiary zone by request of the Sofia City Council. Unfortunately, not enough empirical evidence advocates why this decision occur, but it can be hypothesised that it is a step further in setting up agenda for long term planning. However, no link has been found between the preparation of the plan and inclusionary practices.

Economic assets. Students Town is full with economic assets of any kind. Here, I am not talking about the development opportunities, which have been highlighted repeatedly in the empirical findings but also refer to the indirect economic assets that students, residents and other users of the neighbourhood sustain. As everywhere else in the world, students carry great economical potency, during and after their studies. They have bohemian lifestyle that is attractive to many young people. This also has implications for improving the liveability of the area, if there are certain regulatory measures that will ensure that capital flows will invest not only in nightlife but also in daylight activities. The same relates to the residents who moved in all those new buildings created by the construction boom of the 2000. Empirical

findings illustrated that most of the newcomers are young economically active individuals, who however use the neighbourhood as a place to reside. This might be an implication of their busy lifestyle but also on lack of place making policies and interventions. However, this cohort carries potentially big economic resources, but is not exploited fully.

Social assets. The empirical findings suggest that Students Town is an inert environment in regard of its social composition. There is a certain lack of public interest and in the perception of the neighbourhood due to its physical and social remoteness of the area, observed found in the insiders and outsiders. Moreover, there is also a lack of interest in investing in social capital and value creation of the available long-term liabilities by the responsible authorities. The empirical findings hypothesise that due to the complexity of the area each actor is accusing the other in failing to utilize any assets, just because “nobody cares”. Respondents shared the intention that the change in the attitude should come from the inside, not the outside. It shall be not only locals responsibility to expect something to happen, but residents also should do something more than expecting something to fix their problems. Although this shows that mobilisation of assets in Students Town might occur in the recent future, these findings are not very encouraging.

When it comes to urban self-organisation, Students Town is a terra incognita. The empirical findings at the current state suggest to capacity to organise in community formation, although the potential the neighbourhood holds. There is no will to do anything in investing time and energy in community organising. Furthermore, the lack of delegated planner who can enlighten the members of the distorted communities in the area widens the gap in social capital. In contested urban areas those are probably the ones who can balance technocratic and idealistic realities.

Proximity in this case study is a term that is actually misleading. The suggestion here will be to replace it by clustering of interest. The collective intentionality is severely individualistic and lay. Respectively, the neighbourhood more or less is abandoned on the mercy of time and power struggles which results in decay. This result is slightly disappointing because it shows that strategic thinking of the area is focused on thinking in short term with no clear vision for the long term. However, it is important to bear in mind the possible bias in these findings.

The value of the empirical evidence suggests that a weak link might exist between the potential development of the area and the role urban self-organisation might have. Yet, until that emerges, the neighbourhood will be a place where spatial self-organisation of the built environment with no clear reference to citizen participation will continue to occur.

Generalising from the case study analysis

This section will present short summary of the analysis over the both case studies considered in this research. Although, this kind of generalisation is depicted to be a fallacy of case study research it was refuted in chapter three (Flyvbjerg 2006). Therefore, it can be used to explain the specific and context-depend knowledge about the processes of citizen participation and arising urban self-organisation.

The present case studies were designed to determine the effect of urban-self organisation in participatory processes in Sofia. Strategically the cases have been selected not on base of similarities, but rather on differences in the decision-making approach, desired and achieved outcomes, and level of citizen's attainment. What they share is the notion of social relevance and importance, but again in different dimensions and directions of development.

Both case studies show that citizen participation occurred, yet it has not. Their analysis showed that citizen participation is a slave of socio-political institutions and creates more difficulties rather than helping to build enduring decisions in planning. Their comparative analysis also shows that 'participation' is constitutionalised as Healey suggest but instead creating opportunities for Habbermasian dialogue and ideal speech, it tend to follow Faucauldian discourse. Participation in both cases is something that weights more to stakeholders who already gain political impact and lobby. Deliberation and trust are norms that are torn out form the meaning of participation in both case studies.

In practical terms, participation has occurred according to the law. It has to be noted that participation procedures in both cases are following the narrative of participation research and practise outlined in Chapter 2. In the case of Women's Market, it has led to outcomes that depend on the positionality of the stakeholders; in the case of Students' Town – existence of participation is questionable. However, from the previous analysis, it can be seen that in both of the issue of participation is leading to contestation in post-socialist collaborative decision-making context.

On the other hand, in spite of much new knowledge about the role of urban self-organisation, analysis of the case studies shows that it can be also essentially contested concept. Surely, urban self-organisation explains the exiting achievement of civil collectives in an innovative way. It also constitutes certain image of collective consciousness and intentionality of the citizens towards achieving certain goals. Yet, such goals as invested in these cases might be not synchronised with the widely accepted norms of urbanity and well-being, instead – march against them. It is somehow unfortunate that at this stage of development urban self-

organisation cannot achieve the balance of power-rationality dilemma and thus contemplate successfully urban sustainability. Yet, there is not ultimate bliss to cure citizen involvement in planning practise.

In addition, it is important to question the ontological emergence of urban self-organisation. Analysis suggests that it is something that requests the existence of peculiar assets, which have been precipitated until certain tipping point before they burst out in a collective form. USO reminds the allegory of the Cave and the path to the world of ideas described by Plato; and the role of knowledge, experimentation, and sensation in trying to understand the reality of citizen participation and urban governance. The case studies illustrates that urban self-organisation requires certain socio-spatial PACTS, namely persistence, adherence, compliance, and transformability, found in philosophy of collective behaviour and intentionality, in order to raise a voice and be heard from responsible authorities and achieve higher impact of urban sustainability..

This chapter has analysed the gained empirical evidence from the data collection in this thesis and the effect and causes of urban self-organisation in participatory practices. The next part of this thesis will synthesise the main analytical findings, conclusions, limitations, and recommendations from each chapter.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This chapter is natural continuation of the discussion started in the analysis and aims to summarise the main areas covered in the writing process of this thesis. By looking back on the theoretical and empirical findings this chapter is seeking to answer the research questions and the containing it sub-questions in a critical manner. The chapter will also provide commentary on impact, implications, reflection, and suggestions for further research.

Review of Theory / Climbing Ladders and spotting USO

This paper has given an account of and the reasons for the widespread discourse on citizen participation and emergence of urban self-organisation in the planning perspective. The theoretical strings in the research can be divided simply in three streams – reasoning and logic of participation, evolution of citizen participation in planning precise and urban self-organisation as a novel mean of participation, which is independent of technocratic blueprints.

The intellectual inquiry of the thesis started with the philosophical discussion about the necessity of participation and its relationship to planning practices. As the communicative planning rationale advocated that participatory society is necessary for durable outcomes, the theoretical section continued with carious conceptualisation of participation practices, ever since Sherry Arnstein introduced the famous ladder of citizen participation. The review of the literature proposes that often citizen participation is a recipe for the tragedy of the common sense, in the oven of the bottom-up and top down rationalities. Therefore, based on that certain foundations in explaining that contestation the theoretical chapter outlines urban self-organisation as expanding the frontiers, or even going beyond the current body of participation theory and practice. Shorty, urban self-organisation is depicted as reliable mean to understand and constitute citizen participation on a certain spatial scale, by encompassing different intellectual notions and referring to participation as socially-constructed thinking and acting with no managerial properties attached.

Respectively, it can be seen in the conceptual framework, which emerged after the theoretical discussion that the relationship between climbing ladders of participation and spotting urban self-organisation is somehow mutually bonding. It results in not in diversion (in military sense), but rescaling the balance of collective civic participation in (re)shaping the urban.

Approaching the data

The empirical data collection of this thesis has relied on evidence from two case studies and general surveillance of the participation landscape in Sofia. The original research contribution in this research relies on qualitative data collection, namely in form of semi-structured interviews and fieldwork observations.

Case studies have been chosen in relation to their socio-spatial relevance and potency, participatory processes that have occurred and gaining popularity. The most exciting about the case studies is the socio-political context within they are located. Sofia, as most of the rest post-socialist cities experienced rapid urbanisation, which resulted in contrasting alterations on social and spatial form. The both case studies are a metaphor of such transformations and illustrating the need of intellectual and developmental catharsis.

The original data contribution chosen to execute the qualitative segment of this research was split in several target groups over the selected case studies – experts, activist, and residents. Secondary data collection related to the aim and purposes of this research preceded and succeeded the original data collection, due to the place of the research topics in the public agenda. The use of systematic secondary data provided additional richness and grounding to the original empirical findings by rooting them in an intellectually salient context.

Looking for answers

The present study was designed to determine the effect of urban self-organisation in contemporary participatory practices. The research question, posted in Chapter 1 is as follows:

- ✚ How useful the notion of USO can be for enhancing citizen participation within the changing conditions of urban planning in Sofia, Bulgaria?

The analysis of the theoretical and empirical groundings of this thesis illustrate that urban self-organisation, as a mean of citizen participation in urban planning, can be quite beneficial in reducing technocratic tension by allowing civic formations to address collectively desired aims and vision. Certainly, it has the potential to lift up the inactive and sluggish otherwise civil society in mobilization and interplay of various actors, actions, and assets that are available.

The analysis of the case studies shows that establishment of urban self-organisation, and respectively citizen participation is not an end itself. It requires time and civic energy in order

to emerge and to gain velocity that will enlighten decision-making. Most importantly, it requires recognition by the authorities in order to enter the planning arena. In period of socio-political change and crisis, those ones attract the most attention. Philosophies of urban self-organisation are slowly entering the operational field of spatial planning not only in Sofia, and they underline the role of citizens serving their communities. The planners should stop bringing people together in superficial public discussions and get bonuses for organised participatory meetings. Instead, the focus should be on educating, preparing, and advocating citizens that they are the one who pull the cart and the technocrats and engineers follow after; and the comparison of the two Bulgarian patients in this thesis teaches exactly that.

Naturally, synthesis of the answer on this research question did not emerge out of the nothing. It is supported of several narrower subsections, which tackled different questions and answers in each chapter of this thesis. Hereby, short summary of the main sub-questions is offered:

- What do we mean by citizen participation in planning?

In Chapter 2: Theoretical Encounters, it is shown that in general citizen participation has been taken for either granted as part of the decision-making process or just imposed as a liability of the stakeholders. Nevertheless, the literature evidence on the various notions of participation showed that it addresses the quest for deliberate and informed decision making, by considering powerful players and voiceless lay people sailing in the same boat. However, the bulk of existing theory on participation also did not answer in Swiss precision what exactly we mean by citizen participation in planning. It showed that participation is happening because it has to happen. However, contestation of participatory practices occurs not because citizens transform it into Sisyphean toil, but because what supporters of constitutionalized participation fail to grasp is that not participation but conditions of participation reshape their impact and competency.

- What potential USO offers to urban planning in regard with changing conditions of citizen participation?

Changing conditions of participation as depicted above are related to the dynamics in the modern socio-political and financial conditions. As noted earlier it is the planning rationale actually that follows the mainstream reasoning of science and practice. The potential that brings urban self-organisation in these uncertain waters of future is the ability it delegates in provoking new participatory civil initiatives, which are more to the point than administration initiated assignments. Urban self-organisation captivates the energy of the collective civic

performances and undertakes actions instead of awaiting orders. Urban self-organisation is a signs of hope and activism in perceiving participatory approaches not as a liability but as assets, which contribute, to creation of the urban and sustainable urban futures.

- To what extent urban development occurring in Sofia can be explained by self-organisation?

Urban self-organisation is happening everywhere, no matter if it is good or bad. In the case of Sofia, the both case studies showed certain type of urban self-organising (or urban self-not-organising). This thesis hold the argument that urban self-organisation is investment of citizens collectively committed to achieve their goals. If this is true, the evidence form the empirical findings supports that argument. These results however need to be interpreted with caution, because urban self-organisation can take various forms and easily falls into the fallacy of power-rationality shadows. Furthermore, due to the path dependency of decision-making, the maturity of urban self-organisation is relatively low and still predetermined by spatial (structural), rather than social form.

- What are the potentials and limits of USO in the context of citizen participation and restructuring of urban governance in Sofia?

Considered within the general framework of modernizing institutions in Sofia, which are failing at achieving socially desired goals, one of the more significant findings to emerge from this study about urban self-organisation is that there is no clear boundary between the promises it makes and the impediments it is causing. The success story depends on the positionality of the self-organising elements and their recognition in the wider picture of governance. This research has found that urban self-organisation has potential to mobilise otherwise inactive citizens in purely bottom-up manner, but within the presence of certain conditions. Due to its collectiveness, self-organised citizens are apt to gain higher social and even political recognition and result in community-based decision-making. However, the limitations of urban self-organisation are as important as its potentials. If there is not enough deliberation and democratic legitimacy in the emergence of the urban self-organising entities, it might result in elitist and exclusionary vision of the collective civil initiatives, which is not the ultimate goal of urbanity and urban sustainability. In summary, pros and cons of urban self-organisation to higher extent depend not only to the self-organising capacities of the citizens but also to the extent the institutional capacity of decision-making is allowing urban self-organisation to happen.

Implications / Impact

Taken together, these results suggest certain theoretical and practical implications of urban self-organisation when it comes to the matter of citizen participation and urban governance.

Theoretical Implication

This thesis investigates widely the role of citizen participation in city matter. The evidence from this study suggests that urban self-organisation can be operationalized to achieve better understanding of civil initiatives within the urban fabric. By doing it, it is important to acknowledge that the existing bulk of urban self-organisation is wrapped in technocratic and scientific perspectives and slowly embracing the field of social and behaviour sciences. An implication of this is the possibility that within this thesis it is clearly illustrated that urban self-organisation has moved out from the box of standard toolboxes of academic research and reaching new frontiers in understanding the behaviour and the performance of civilian initiatives and retranslating them into the practice.

The results of this research support the idea that there should be distinction between spatial self-organisations promoted by the complex actor-network view on the concept and urban self-organisation seen as creative mean of citizen participation based on place specific characteristics. Taken together, it seems that these two phenomena are interrelated and essentially attractive for the scientific community, but should not be promoted as interchangeable or substitute terms.

Policy implications

This research backs the notion that urban self-organisation is a valuable phenomenon, that slowly gains recognition by policy- and decision-makers. It has the capacity to ground implementation of intended developments to the self-organised initiatives of civilians who backs certain developments in their neighbourhoods. An implication of this is the possibility that it can be the mediator between the technocratic top-down desires and idealistic bottom-up desires.

In times of stagnation and budget cuts on the administration, urban self-organisation has the capability to reduce certain time, energy, and finances on organising public discussions, hearings or any other resource-consuming activities. If recognised by respective authorities, urban self-organisation might be a suitable tool to consider residents' voice, ease any social unrest and/or any additional social contestation.

Policy implications, therefore, are not related only to policy makers and administrators. Urban self-organisation is about to take in account grassroots desires and intentions and grant them an impact. Therefore, an implication of USO for practice is the impact it generates amongst citizens, observers, researchers, and practitioners when it comes to supports notions of urbanity, urban sustainability, and well-being. Thus, the effect of such impact is spread not only over the socio-political scene, but also experienced by all the affected stakeholders in the decision-making process.

Reflection & Limitation

A number of caveats need to be noted regarding the present study. From theoretical standpoint, the literature review and the conceptual framework of the thesis based urban self-organisation as a contrary phenomenon to the complexity perspective on self-organisation. This might have created some uneasiness in gauging more critically the notion of urban self-organisation. However, this construction of urban self-organisation is not a *salva veritae* and need further critical and analytical dissemination.

The current limitation was also limited by the means of the data collection. Although, the case study research was combined with gaining original qualitative data by the means of interviews and secondary data by using various legislative acts, press publications, etc. it lacked contribution by quantitative variables. Combining the current results with more quintile aspects might have provided higher levels of validity, reliability, and wider implications of the results.

Another limitation of this case study, which was out of control settings, was the timing and locating of the research. The research and more specifically the empirical data collection were executed in a time of social unrest and mobilisation of massive critical civilian performances in Sofia. This might have resulted in a wide and creative range of empirical findings but might have also planted a slight bias in the collected data, which is difficult to evaluate at the current stage. Another limitation related to the thesis fieldwork is the lack (or reluctance) of input from possible local government representatives. The present study represents view on the topic of urban self-organisation mainly by professional and activist point, but not input from managerial and administrative staff.

The most important limitation lies in the fact that the research has been executed with certain positionality and bias. Whereas full objectivity on the topic of citizen participation, and research in general, is difficult to achieve, the fact that I was familiar with the origins and emergence of the main fields of activities in the context of the case studies, might have

created certain tendency in describing and analysing the results. However, this has been compensated by the data triangulation methods implied in this thesis.

Further research

Finally, it shall be noted that those limitations of this study have thrown up many questions in need of further investigation. This thesis underlined important gaps in the literature, which would require deliberate attention in the future. For example, further work needs to be done to establish whether the issue of collective intentionality is valid component of urban self-organisation. It appeared that such notion is a novelty for urban planning aspect and needs amply exploration. Importance of collective intentionality has also high potential to enrich the frontiers of urban planning and not only understanding of citizen participation cycles, in multidisciplinary approach.

This study relied on urban self-organisation observed in more or less similar institutional and structural context, what can be essential for further research is perhaps a cross national or cross-institutional study involving various forms of innovative civilian initiatives that have gained importance or lost influence. Urban self-organisation, beyond complexity perspective, and also beyond Anglo-Saxon normativity where actually the term is coined, is still under researched and can build influential understanding of the concept in theoretical and practical turnover.

This research also finds some methodological gaps concerned with modern day research practices. Although, this study refers to urban self-organisation as emotional and intellectual notion, that relies qualitative than quantitative knowledge, it is recommended that broad statistical surveys are needed to suggest association of collective intentionality, proximity and community organising within the body of urban self-organisation.

Looking back at the means of communication between the participants and the pathways in which urban-self organisation emerges, elaborate research is needed to understand the role and influence of social media in collective urban performances. The existing bulk on methodological deeds does not pay sufficient attention to the role of ICT and social media in doing research. Whereas this field is still a relatively novel in academia, more experimentation and innovation in methodological aspect in doing research related to urban theory and planning is necessary.

Based in the findings of this thesis, a further study could asses also the role young professionals and graduates are having in forming the landscape of urban self-organisation.

The role of young professionals in urban practice is essentially important given the socio-economic and politic circumstances, which we are experiencing. This would be a decent opportunity to assess the role of societal transformation in times of crisis.

Thinking globally, it would be interesting if urban self-organisation reaches out the boundaries of the urban and aim its goals in collective civilian performances in rural areas, due to the intensity and the amplitude of the existing social bonds in limited territorial areas. Finally yet importantly, this thesis showed that the discourse on public participation is slowly sliding into the realm of urban self-organisation. Such transition for participation to self-organisation needs apt exploration, observation and explanatory investigation in multidisciplinary research.

Epilogue

The ultimate objective of this research was to develop recommendations for empowering citizen participation in the existing conditions of decision making in Sofia, reflected through the prism of urban self-organisation. The study, however found, that not only urban self-organisation but also the whole concept of citizen participation is novel and challenging for the citizens and for the planners.

There is, therefore, a definite need for deliberate societal and policy changes in the planning context. A key policy priority should therefore be to plan for the long-term care of the urban fabric, not only in its built form as it is now, but also from social and cultural planning point. Planning and respectively participatory practices trapped in the legal terms of the administration of the local self-governing bodies and often, should be more transparent and independent.

The planning officials (currently mainly architects) should not see civil participation forums as a place where their visions are under fire, but rather be able to communicate their ideas in acceptable and readable for the uneducated eye. Responsible authorities also need to be aware that proactive citizens and their collective performances are not threat, but a measure that can ensure their socio-political stability and security.

Signs of self-organisation are already visible in the society, but in order to flourish, blossom and tie civilian energy needs to concentrate on pluralist and inclusive societies that share the same urban grounds. Urban self-organisation is function mainly of society, and its maturity. Unless we do not adopt targeted and deliberate policies on civilian leadership, education, and public outreach, urban self-organisation will not be attained. This is not to say that urban self-organisation needs a strong lawful form of interpretation, but rather emphasise its capacities in constructing a true democratic culture.

After all, democracy is about not only promoting equal right, responsibilities and opportunities to everyone. It is about establishing communication and consensus towards progress.

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Appendix 1: Interview Guideline³⁶³⁷

Opening questions:

1. What is your professional and/or personal connection to the observed problems?
2. To what extent you are familiar with the case study/studies?

Core questions:

3. What is the aim of public participation practices in Sofia?
4. What mechanisms or tools are implemented to achieve it?
5. What is the role of different actors?
6. Are you familiar with the local organizations or communities engaged in the public participation processes in the specific case studies?
7. What is the extent of social engagement various stakeholders in participatory practices?
8. Which are the most resourceful assets important here (or public liabilities which can be transferred to assets)?

Closing questions:

9. How do you see participation debate in the nearby future?
10. What is the next step for you/your organization/community?

³⁶ This is an indicative questionnaire used in the process of the original data collection. The sequence and depth of the questions was determined by the willingness of the recruited participant to answer to the asked question. Thereby the numbers of the questions do not indicate strict ordering. With some informants the opening questions were skipped, due to the preliminary information I gained in the recruitment stage. With other respondents, extra questions, which were not included in the indicative questionnaire, were used in order to gain additional information about the observed issues.

³⁷ The questions are translated from Bulgarian by the author. The integrity, point, and signification might be into very logical to the reader due to logical and linguistic discrepancies lost in the translation.

Appendix 2: Informed consent³⁸

Dear participant(s),

Thank you for your agreement to participate in this research, which is part of MSc thesis of Mustafa Hasanov, student at Faculty of Spatial Sciences, University of Groningen. This form contains details about the aim and purpose of the research, details about your participations and as well information about your rights as a participant in the research.

Aim of the research:

- The aim of this project is to assess critically citizen participation and engagement practices in Sofia, within the light of the most recent and mainly EU legislation inspired urban development projects and programs

Objectives of this research include:

- To determine the reflection and implementation of the term “citizen participation” in Sofia
- To determine main element of participatory practices , which are guiding currently the practice
- To determine the role of social engagement and self-organisation within the implementation of the ongoing processes of urban planning

The methods, which will be employed in this research project, include:

- Face-to-face interview with optimal length about 45-60 minutes;
- Mini-discussions with groups of two to maximum three participants

Confidentiality

For safety and educational purposes, each conversation will be recorded with a digital recorder, which will allow precise reporting and analyzing of your input. The recording will be available only and exclusively to me and nobody else. If you feel uncomfortable with the recorded or wish not to be recorded, you can request the researcher to turn off the device at any time. This also includes request to terminate the recording process during the interview.

³⁸ The original informed consent was written and distributed in Bulgarian only. Thereby the consent above is translated from Bulgarian by the author. The integrity, point, and signification might be into very logical to the reader due to logical and linguistic discrepancies lost in the translation.

You have the right to withdraw your participation in this research at any time. In case that you would like to withdraw your participation, the information you have provided (including also the digital record) will be destroyed and excluded from the final report.

The data provided by you and the other recruited participants will be only used in the preparation of my Master's thesis, and in eventual academic paper. Direct quotation might be used in the final version of the paper, but your name and other denouncing information will be kept in confidentiality.

Each participant is highly encouraged to ask questions or show concern at any time about the essence of the research and the employed methods. You can reach me at any time at the contact details given at the end of this consent.

By signing this form, you declare your consent for participation in this research and if you would like you can disturb your participation in the process at any time.

Participant

M. H. Hasnov

/name and signature/

/name and signature/

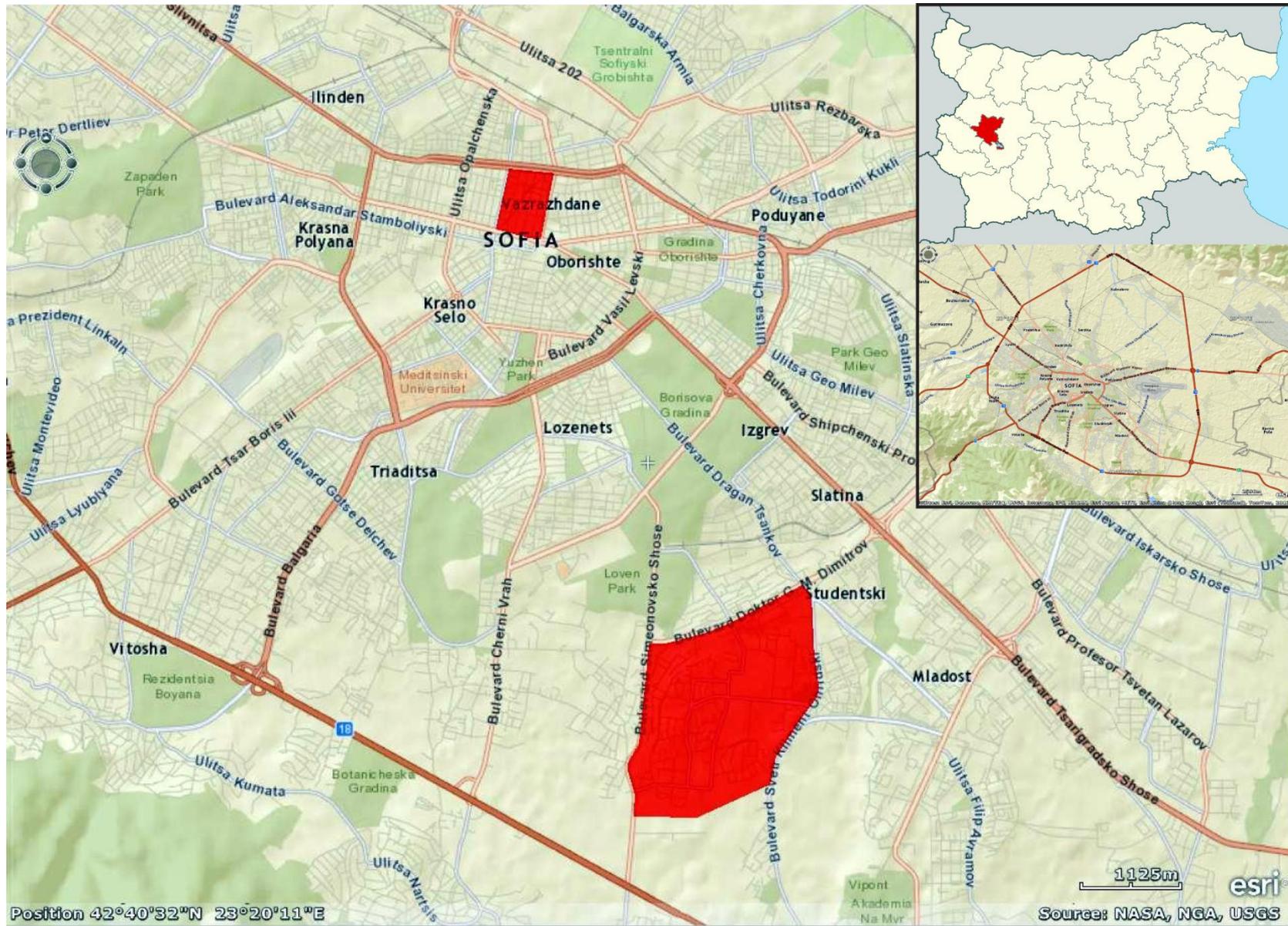
Appendix 3: List/Legend of Informants

1. Transformatori 1 – One of the founders of an NGO, engaged with problems of the architecture, built environment and urban issues
2. Transformatori 2 – Active member of an NGO, engaged with problems of the architecture, built environment and urban issues
3. NCTR 1 – Junior expert in the National Centre for Spatial Development, who has been working on the Social & Central development zone of the new development plan – Sofia 2020
4. NCTR 2 – Senior expert, coordinator of the Social development zone of the Sofia 2020 plan.
5. NCTR 3 – Coordinator of the Sofia 2020 plan and author of the micro-development plan of Students Town
6. NCTR 4 – Senior expert, coordinator of the economic development zone of Sofia 2020 and other spatial development plans on country level
7. NCTR 5 – Senior expert, architect with rich experience over the developments in Sofia
8. PP1 – Practicing professional/architect, a founding member of activist group, which looks at various urban interventions in Sofia and other big cities – Grupa Grad
9. PP2 – Local activist, known for her work around the developments in Women’s Market. Additionally, founder of an NGO, which aims preservation of old architectural monuments in Sofia.
10. PP 3 – Local activist/Blogger/Researcher working on-flied at Women’s Market
11. PP 4 – Mid-term employee (10 years) at Students Town.
12. PP 5 – Facility manager of a student dormitory at Student’s Town
13. ST 1 – Resident / Student (7 years) at Students ‘Town
14. ST 2 – Resident / Young parent, living in Students’ Town more than 10 years.
15. YP 1 – Young professional / Blogger / Activist in the field of architecture and planning
16. YP 2 – Young professional in the field of architecture and planning
17. Personal recordings – Transactions of the organised public discussion/dialogue

There was conducted one more interview with the author of the new development plan of the area around the Women’s Market. Due to ethical and practical considerations that interview was not recorded but included in the overall empirical findings and analysis of this thesis

18. Conversation with Arch. D. Pantaleev – author and designer of the Women’s Market re-development plans

Appendix 4: Location of the case studies included in this thesis. (Design by the author)



Appendix 5: List of all sources coded in ArlasTi®

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