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Layers of use in urban planning:
Conflict management in the development of the European Quarter in Brussels

Presented by A. Kuhk in the workshop IRU 1: The Post-industrial Landscape (Aspect 'Strategies')
Cluster competence areas involved are conflict management and urban planning.

Introduction

The modern European city has been catalysed and made possible both through industrialisation and the development of various democratic systems. Actors in urban planning seemed at first to be limited to political and economic powers only. The participation in urban planning processes though was gradually extending and diversifying in the light of for instance emancipation movements and broadening citizen rights. Participation has been a frequent issue of research of policy processes since the late 1950s (see for instance Burke 1979, Clark 1994, Cockett 1976, Dalton 2000, Fagence 1977, Healey 1997, Henig 1982, Sewell 1977, Tanquerel 1988, Wates 1998, Wates 2000).

Urban environments today are changing rapidly in the course of global restructuring towards what could be called 'post-fordist economic and political orders'. The complexity of urban development is rising rapidly. Especially economic players have a frame which is often much larger - both in time and spatial dimension - than former perspectives of urban planning for a specific city or region. Official institutions find 'their' city often in a fierce competition with other cities or rather conurbations and regions, and the role of local governing therefore changed. It can be questioned whether existing concepts of participation would be still applicable to capture the evolving complexity in urban and regional planning processes. Furthermore, it is interesting to re-evaluate participation in urban planning in Brussels and Belgium, as the institutional setting has profoundly changed over the last twenty years (Witte (ed.), 1999). At the time when Central and Eastern European countries experienced an impressive ideological shift due to the dissolving of former communist and socialist regimes, also Belgium was in a phase of transition. The innovative process of federalisation from one nation-state into three regions with own executives, legislative bodies and administrations arrived at a milestone when responsibilities of the regions were divided in 1988.

The investigation of layers of use in urban planning tries to answer following questions: Who is participating in the urban arena of the European quarter in Brussels? What is the motivation, background and discourse of different actors? What are their tools to participate? What is the mutual relation between the actors? Where do conflicts occur and what measures are taken to resolve these? What co-ordination is actually implemented and what opportunities could be considered to lead to effective and more efficient urban planning processes? How can private and public actors co-operate? Before addressing the specific situation of Brussels, a short positioning of the phenomena 'participation'.

Delimiting the concept of participation

The notion of participation in policy processes is often merely directed towards citizen participation. For the study of urban planning in Brussels Capital Region, we chose to start from a broader perspective and investigate a variety of actors in the urban arena. Participation is thus understood in the broad sense of 'taking part' or 'having an interest in urban planning issues'. The analysis of actors is based on a classification by the political scientists Howard and Ramesh (1995, p. 52). They distinguish elected from appointed officials, interest groups,

Within the state	Elected officials	Executive
		Legislative
Appointed officials		

In society	Interest groups
	Research Organisations
	Mass Media

Table: Classification of political actors, based on Howlett and Ramesh (1995, p. 52)

research organisations and mass media, as shown in the table. Early in the study of participation, Sherry Arnstein described different levels of participation in a so-called 'ladder', as shown in the table. The influence and possible effect on decisions in urban policies can vary largely from for instance 'being informed' to 'controlling processes'. This ladder is adapted in the study of urban planning Brussels with some further specifications, such as the moment of participation in the policy cycle, the role of both participants and official institutions, the continuity of participation and the

Citizen control	Citizen power
Delegated Power	
Partnership	
Placation	Tokenism
Consultation	
Informing	
Therapy	Nonparticipation
Manipulation	

Table: Ladder of citizen participation, according to Sherry Arnstein, 1969 (in: Legates, Knowles, 1992, p. 243)

tools and strategies to participate. Local participation in urban planning has been an important step in the planning procedures. Not all tools to participate in urban planning are structurally embedded in existing planning procedures nor even recognised by official institutions.

The study of urban planning in Brussels takes the urban regime theory as a starting point. It investigates the demand for 'socialisation' of urban planning processes and starts from the hypothesis that heterogeneity and complexity of participation processes is rising due to this demand. The apparent broadening of the social basis for urban planning is

analysed –along the knowledge gap hypothesis as applied from Viswanath (2000)- for possible polarisation of information between actors. Another focus in this study is the possible creation of powerful coalitions through co-ordination of public and private partners. It is assumed that the role of local public authorities is oriented more and more towards control-functions. Changes in the structures for participation are analysed in the light of societal, political and economical transitions.

Focus on the European Quarter Brussels (EQB)

For a better comprehension of participation in urban planning in Brussels Capital Region (BCR), the analysis starts from one central case, which is the development of the European Quarter. Brussels was extended in the 19th century towards the East with the Leopold Quarter, an at that time purely residential area (Demey, 1992). Both the scale and the land use of this area have thoroughly changed in the second half of the twentieth century though. Whilst the so-called Pentagon is undoubtedly the historic centre of Brussels, the spaces along the Rue de La Loi and the Rue Belliard are clearly also a centre, but one of a different kind, namely for administrative functions. As it houses mainly European Institutions, it is further referred to as 'European Quarter'. Three large European Institutions (the Commission, the Council of Ministers and the Parliament) find themselves concentrated around the square Schuman and the Leopold Park in an area no bigger than about 1km². The EQB is still in full transition and a multiplicity of actors with complex mutual relations is involved. The EQB was selected to be the central case in the analysis of participation in urban planning Brussels partly because of the high complexity, rapid evolution and ambiguous situation the regional level often finds itself in. The level of Brussels Capital Region is central point of reference to define relations to other actors. Furthermore, spatial and social questions of this quarter are obviously connected to other sites in BCR. The study of central issues in the development of the European Quarter therefore evidently requires insight in the development of other sites in BCR, such as the potential of the Heyzel and Turn and Taxis to serve as a location for another European campus, the development of infrastructure for international and local mobility, the protection of residential areas, the potential and organisation of business districts, and so on.

A first step in the investigation of participation in urban planning Brussels was the development of an inventory of possible actors and their participation tools. The second step was the analysis of mutual relations and potential or actual conflicts as well as strategies. This was developed through literature study, analysis of the juridical frame as well as in-depth interviews. This explorative phase with study of various indicative cases in Brussels Capital Regions is completed and the focus now is entirely on in-depth analysis of spatial, social and institutional changes in the development of the European Quarter in Brussels as a single case.

Actors in the development of the European Quarter Brussels

The urban arena for the development of the European Quarter is rather complex, both from the institutional level as well as from the side of private interest groups involved. In the following, the classification of Howlett and Ramesh is applied to give an overview of actors in the urban arena for the EQB before presenting the relations between different actors. As a third part, some discourses, conflicts and arguments in the choice of spatial options are discussed.

- **Overview of actors (see also appendix)**

The political level - originally referred to as 'within the state'- is subdivided for urban planning in the EBQ for three distinctive tiers, namely the federal, regional and municipal level. The federal level is the official partner for European agreements, and acts as party to the treaties unless these explicitly focus on regions (with permission of the federal level). The national government was the main political partner in questions of urban development in the European Quarter until the federalisation in 1989. Brussels has been extended from capital of Belgium into an agglomeration and meanwhile into a fairly independent city region, known as 'Brussels Capital Region' with extended own responsibilities, also in affairs of urban planning. The regional level has the authority for urban permits, regional plans as well as questions of economic development, infrastructure and mobility. Depending on the dimension of the issue though, the federal level might need to intervene. The municipal level (at least three municipalities are involved in questions about the EQB) then focuses on municipal development plans and particular land use plans. Some matters of security are also solved on this level, as the police corps is under authority of mayors. It is remarkable that the European partners do not appear as a purely political level for the

urban development of the EQB. The European Institutions act in the first place as clients or users, each on behalf of their specific needs.

Second, also the societal level can be further subdivided. We can distinguish different pressure groups, economic groups, users of the site, designers or architects and research institutions. The positioning of mass media in EQB-file is subject to further investigations. Pressure groups can be divided into regional umbrella-organisations and locally acting groups, as for instance neighbourhood associations. Most of these organisations mushroomed in the 1970s. The economy then was in a recession due to the oil crisis, and the construction sector in Brussels felt the backlash from this from 1977 on. With apparently not much selectivity, large projects were cordially welcomed, whilst a more widespread hangover from drastic urban measurements during modernist 1960s was still very much present.

The economic groups then contain for instance project developers, constructors, financiers, real estate agents and owners. Many of these organisations have also links with French capital. The main users in the European Quarter are, as said earlier, the European Commission, the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament. Research organisations can be further subdivided for private and public offices as well as universities and colleges.

As the institutional level profoundly changed in the 1980s, the societal actors know often more continuity than the political level. Various interest groups existed already since the 1970s or earlier, whilst institutional levels were re-defined. Actors can further be divided along their respective political and economical power, the structural embedding, the involvement they show, the time frame they use, the spatial focus, socio-cultural heritage, tools for participation, awareness-level for spatial, urban and social problems of the site, expertise and possibility to perceive, diagnose, evaluate and propose solutions for the future development, reflexivity of actors, and so on.

- **Relations between actors**

The relations between different actors show great variety. There have been different structural or at least formal attempts to co-ordinate between actors. Not surprisingly, there have been also informal contacts and what Baeten also calls 'unholy coalitions' between different actors, such as growth coalitions between politicians, developers and investors (Baeten, 2001, p. 7). According to E. Swyngedouw, there is an obvious need to develop growth coalitions, but he stresses the necessity of variety and width of these coalitions (Swyngedouw, 2001). Apart from formal and informal networking, there are also different actors who might find themselves – whether intended or not- within the same discourse or working on the same area in the quarter. Actors with (often unintended or unnoticed) shared interest are called a 'cluster' here. They might be interested in the same site, look for similar tools to participate or even use the same arguments and a similar discourse. Actors might work on the same field and/ or develop similar discourses in parallel circuits without further co-ordination. With the complexity in the composition as well as institutional changes, it is often difficult to see which actors could actually co-operate. Actors from within a 'cluster', such as actors who were involved in the development of the European Parliament (the European Institution itself, the neighbourhood association Association Quartier Léopold, several official institutions, financiers and so on), could potentially form a round table to develop a vision for further evolutions. A formal 'bringing to mind' of clusters would also visualise whether an option has a general value or whether some minorities are opposed to the option.

Nevertheless, there have been some remarkable attempts to co-ordinate in a structural way, such as for instance the cooperation about the construction of the Council of Ministers, the Round table Maelbeek, the Comité de Suivi and the Task Force Brussels Europe (see also appendix). These attempts of co-ordination, although initiated from different actors and with different aims, have some objectives in common, such as clarification, creation of opportunities for growth, democratic involvement and the development of stronger bases for political decisions. The initiatives are often closely related to specific situations and therefore endangered in their continuity when the situation changes. There is no structural round table for the multiplicity of actors. The urban arena for the EQB is highly fragmented, complex and often overlapping, yet structural and continuous co-ordination is lacking.

- **Narratives and myths about the EQB**

Pressure points in the discussion and planning of urban development of the EQB are, amongst other things: the density and scale of the development, whether or not a mix of functions is desirable and feasible, the evaluation of future needs (in terms of office spaces, social facilities and mobility), possible symbolic representations or for instance the appeal on architectural competitions. Arguments in the discussion about the spatial development are for example functionality, accessibility, symbolic value and the liveability of the quarter.

The discussion about functionality of the EQB is a good illustration of differences in discourses, argumentation, time frames and spatial perspectives. Both political and economic powers supported a clear division of functions in the 1960s and 1970s. Different neighbourhood associations and umbrella-organisations fought meanwhile for the preservation and liveability of their neighbourhood and a functional mix with both residential and office spaces. Security is used in this discussion as an argument from both neighbourhood associations and European institutions.

On one side, the former Leopold Quarter is presented by neighbourhood organisations as becoming 'insecure' if it is only used for offices. The area would turn then into a ghost town at evenings and weekends. There is a strong fear amongst neighbourhood associations for a kind of ghetto-formation. This would catalyse a (partly) vicious circle of speculation, vacancies, decay and eventually what Baeten described starting from a definition of a problem area: *'Its most probable*

consequence is that these areas will sooner or later be subject to land speculation and development, whereby the definition of 'problem area' will serve as an excuse for profitable regeneration."(Baeten, 2001, p. 4)

On the other side, it is argued from some European Institutions that a concentration of functions would be easier to handle in terms of security when top conferences are taking place. Already in 1974, with the discussions about the Council of Ministers, European partners stated clearly that an isolated site is desirable for reasons of security as well as proximity of services. This goes as far as discussing whether for instance the tunnel under the Justus Lipsius (Council of Ministers) could be sufficiently safeguarded at top conferences. According to some project developers for instance, it does not make sense to mix office spaces and residential areas, as the residences could enjoy more quality of life, they argue, if the residences would not be right next to administrative functions but for instance in a residential area. For a long time, it was feared that the arterial implant of administrative functions in the Leopold Quarter would lead to the creation of a purely administrative district or even ghetto (see also Papadopoulos, 1996). With the rapidly changed proportions of residential and office spaces in the European quarter, one can wonder whether some residences that are left, are not in fact the real enclaves or 'Indian reservations' in this area. A good example of this development is the Rue Toulouse and Pascale, which is encompassed from offices. The so-called formation of ghetto's can be seen from different perspectives. The Leopold Quarter, of course, used to be a purely residential area. A clear or even exclusive concentration of offices demands a different scale than the residences from the 19th century. As a plan from scratch or in the green field, the idea of division of functions can sound very tempting. In an already existing urban fabric, this looks different though. There is a demand from the regional level to compensate the construction of offices with the construction of residences. This rule is applied rather flexible (e.g. hotels also count as residences), with very long delays or – in the worst case- not at all. Real estate agents such as CODEMER put the attention also on the necessity of a mix within the use of offices to have both public and private users attracted to the European Quarter, again stated with arguments of security. A purely administrative use would make the neighbourhood much less lively, they argue.

Preliminary conclusions

Conflicts in urban planning about the European Quarter Brussels often have their roots in differing time scales and spatial perspectives of the actors involved.

The 'effective environment' on which actors are focussed can be a specific street, a neighbourhood, the European Quarter as such, a municipality, the regional level or even supra-regional levels. A more local approach (neighbourhood, municipality or region) then rather focuses on the development and profile of the European Quarter within Brussels. A supra-regional approach (federal level and international) rather focuses on questions of positioning Brussels within the European setting and the image of Europe through its presence in Brussels. Different matters require a different scale to be solved at. Through the superimposition of layers in the European Quarter as well as in various other sites in Brussels, a perspective for further development demands more differentiation than currently applied.

The 'effective term' on which actors focus can vary between short term perspectives of one to five years (e.g. official statements of the European Institutions) to long term perspectives of more than five years up to one or two generations ahead (e.g. discussions about liveability of the neighbourhood). As different perspectives require and lead to different solutions, a central strategy for the restitution of the city is then to co-ordinate in a structural way between different actors in order to integrate local and supra-regional policy frames for short and long term development. This co-ordination is not only an answer to the complexity and heterogeneity of the urban arena, but also a basic tool for democratic involvement in which both general interests (as much as this notion could still have a value in a seemingly fragmented problem) and minority objectives can be respected.

The co-ordination between public and private actors for instance is by no means organised in a structural, continuous way for the development of the EQB. The trend in post-fordist city politics (see Margit Mayer 1994) to have more links between local authorities and economic development does not seem to be applied in a systematic strategy for the EQB. It can be asked though whether the official institutions should not rather (or also) follow a kind of Reithian¹ ethos in order to protect minorities on this site, instead of looking for growth-coalitions with economic partners.

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¹ Referring to John Reith, who played a major part in the growth and developing ethos of the BBC, refusing to treat broadcasting simply as a means of entertainment and championing its moral and intellectual role in the community.

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Appendix

Structure of the urban arena for the European quarter

Political level

Federal Level: Belgium	Elected officials	Federal Government Prime Minister (Guy Verhofstadt) Ministry of Mobility and Public Transport (Isabelle Durant)
		Parliament
Appointed officials: Administration on federal level		
Regional Level: Brussels Capital Region	Elected officials	Regional Government (Le gouvernement de la Région) Francois Xavier de Donnée (Frédéric Dauw and Arlette Verkrusssen, members of the cabinet)
		Regional Council (Le Conseil Régional)
Appointed officials: Administration on the regional level (l'administration régionale)		
Municipal Level: Brussels Town	Elected officials	Mayor Freddy Thielemans (PS) and Aldermen
		Town council
Appointed officials: Administration on the municipal level		
Municipal Level: Etterbeek	Elected officials	Mayor Vincent De Wolf (PRL) and Aldermen
		Town council
Appointed officials: Administration on the municipal level		
Municipal Level: Ixelles	Elected officials	Mayor Willy Decourty (PS) and Aldermen
		Town council
Appointed officials: Administration on the municipal level		

Societal level

In society	<p>Interest groups</p> <p><i>Umbrella-organisations:</i> BRAL Brusselse Raad voor het Leefmilieu (support for European coördination) IEB Interenvironnement Bruxelles (support for European coördination) ARAU Atelier de Recherche et d'Action Urbaine, Brukselbinnenstebuiten Comité de suivi Europe habitants</p> <p><i>Neighbourhood associations</i> AQL Association Quartier Leopold (Henri Bernard), GAQ Groupe d'animation Quartier Nord-Est Association Riverains Jourdan (Christine Goyens), Associations Riverains Loi (E. De Keuleneer) Comité Pascale Toulouse, Comité Stevin</p>
	<p>Economic groups</p> <p>Project developers and Reasl Estate groups (Investimmo, Codemer, Jones Land Lasalle, etc.) (NV Berlaymont 2000, NV Espace Léopold, NV Promotion Europe, NV Promotion Europe, etc.) Constructors (CFE, Maurice Delens, Batiments & Ponts, etc.) Financers (BAC, Société générale de Belgique, Gemeentekrediet, ASLK, ANHYP, Dexia, etc.) Owners (Regie der Gebouwen, EII Etudes Investissements Immobiliers, OCMW Brussel, etc.)</p>
	<p>Users/Clients</p> <p>European Commission, European Parliament, Council of Ministers, other European function, related businesses</p>
	<p>Research Organisations</p> <p>Private offices (Agora, Richard Ellis Research, Healey & Baker, Ernst & Young, Bureau espace-mobilité, Iris-consulting) Public Offices (BRAT, Bureau de recherches en aménagement du territoire, part of the GOMB, Gewestelijke ontwikkelings-maatschappij Brussel) Universities and Colleges (Université Libre de Bruxelles - IGEAT Institution de gestion de l'Environnement et d'Aménagement du Territoire, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Katholieke Universiteit Brussel, Katholieke Universiteit leuven, ...)</p>
	<p>Designers, Architects</p> <p>Montois Architecten, M. & J-M. Jaspers- & Partners, J. Eyers & Partners, Spazio architectenbureau, EO Design Partners, Luc Schuiten</p>

Table: Classification of political actors for urban planning in the European Quarter, based on Howlett and Ramesh (1995, p. 52)

Examples of co-ordination attempts

Attempts though to co-ordinate between different actors in a structural way have been for instance:

- The cooperation about the construction of the Council of Ministers: the Ministry of Public Works (under Jos De Saeger) initiated a reunion of different actors involved for the planning of the Council of Ministers in 1972. This group only gathered twice as there were serious differences of opinion about the planning and use of the Chaussee d'Etterbeek.
- The Round Table Maelbeek: Immediately after, Jos De Saeger hold another co-ordinating session about questions of the valley of the Maelbeek. The gatherings were followed up from members of the Agglomeration of Brussels (with Serge Moureau as president), different communities involved (Brussels, Etterbeek, Ixelles and Saint Josse), different ministries (e.g. public works and the traffic department), the central administration of urban planning and spatial development, the national train company NMBS as well as the regional company for public transport MIVB, the society for regional development and different neighbourhood associations. This group was informally called the 'round table of the Maalbeek'. The establishment of this group is a side effect of earlier actions of neighbourhood associations and interest groups such as ARAU, BBL and IEB. The gathering resulted in renewal plans for the valley of the Maelbeek in 1973. The implementation of ideas from this group was only achieved about 20 years later though.
- The Comité de Suivi: Different pressure groups and neighbourhood organisations of the European Quarter tried to co-ordinate the efforts between neighbourhoods and users (the European institutions). The aim of this gathering was to exchange information, but also to create a larger platform and have a better base for political decisions. This was an initiative from umbrella-organisations like IEB and BRAL, and was followed up from neighbourhood associations like AQL and GAQ. The inhabitants are central actors in these gatherings, they decide which aspects to put on the agenda. The other participants are mainly observing.
- Task Force Brussels-Europe: The Minister-president Francois Xavier de Donnée initiated a new commission for consultation between the regional level and European institutions. This initiative started on the fifth of December 2000. This study group contains representatives of Brussels Capital Region, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and representatives of all five European institutions in Brussels. The co-ordination was inspiring for the Regional Development Plan of 2001 and resulted in several smaller reports. Main focus is on the future needs and possibilities for administrative functions, social facilities as well as mobility.