5 themes
from urban living lab
experiences in
large-scale social
housing estates

SoHoLab

Refer to this report as:

Maranghi, E., Cognetti, F., Ryckewaert, M., Aernouts, N., Mosseray, J., Lefrançois, D., Wachter, S. & Labied, N. (2020). *5 themes from urban living lab experiences in large-scale social housing estates*, Brussels: Soholab

For more information: www.soholab.org

Research team:

Regional partners:

Local partners:

European and regional co-financing:

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Introduction

The SoHoLab project established and evaluated LivingLab approaches to understand how underprivileged residents, housing associations and other intermediaries can be effectively involved in the regeneration of large-scale social housing estates. It aimed at developing approaches and best practices which effectively address the social-spatial exclusion of residents in large-scale social housing estates in Europe. In particular, its goals were (1) to actively involve social housing residents in conceiving and realizing transformative projects for the regeneration of their housing environment; (2) to build-up a counter-hegemonic image[1] of stigmatized neighbourhoods and (3) to engage in bonding and bridging efforts to align different actors and governance levels around shared interests. As such, the project aimed to mobilize the socially innovative potential of co-productive and co-design approaches for the urban regeneration of social housing estates, focusing on the priority themes of 'social and spatial segregation' and 'social innovation' in the EU's Urban Agenda (EU, 2014-2020).

The SoHoLab project identified Urban Living Labs (ULLs) as a potentially innovative approach to deal with the policy field of urban regeneration of these areas. ULLs are intended to be able to launch open, collaborative and participative processes. Considering the multiple failures of the so-called "participatory approaches", SoHoLab tried to find out which new tools and methods could be applied in order to more effectively open-up the policy design and implementation phases, making them more inclusive especially for underprivileged populations (accumulating socio-economic difficulties).

Therefore, all over the duration of the project (2017-2020), the three research units involved (Bruxelles, Paris and Milan) have been focusing – through the development of research and action practices – on how to define the characteristics that an Urban Living Lab should assume in order to better support the participated regeneration of large scale social housing estates.

In order to comply with this objective, the research units have first of all developed an analysis of the existing planning contexts (Aernouts, Maranghi & Ryckewaert, 2020a) and a review of the most relevant methodological tools related to the Urban Living Lab approach and participatory approaches which have been applied to large-scale social housing estates (Aernouts, Maranghi & Ryckewaert, 2020b).

Based on the results of these analyses (WP2), a retrospective analysis on participatory approaches in France (WP3; Lefrançois & Saidi, 2020) and action-research activities (WP4), the present document aims at underlining

the main methodological findings related to the set-up of an Urban Living Lab in large-scale social housing estates of our European cities. On the basis of these findings, it formulates some (policy) recommendations for European, national, regional and municipal policy makers, civil society organizations, housing associations, activist and researchers.

The involvement of different local cases allowed the team to analyse the development of the ULL tool at different stages (Milan, on-going; Paris, retrospective analysis; Brussels, new ULL); nevertheless, it should be pointed out that the three cases are embedded in different national contexts in terms of welfare and planning systems associated to accessible housing and urban regeneration and, therefore, they offer a wide view on the possible employment of ULLs. While the French context is historically characterized by strong public interventions related to renovation of large-scale social housing estates adopting participatory tools, the Italian case is mostly identified by a general lack of public intervention and investment in the field and a wide spread of bottom-up actions promoted by local networks and inhabitants. The Belgian case, eventually, stands in the middle. Hence, even if the present document outlines common elements to be taken into account, it also states the importance of matching these reflections and indications with the specific characteristics of each territorial context, with its particular policy systems, institutions, social organizations, etc.

The document is structured in paragraphs dealing with relevant issues which were part of the original reflection of the project or resulted to be crucial during its development. The research units have associated each paragraph to a selection of cases studies, in order to better illustrate the possible application of theoretical reflection. The SoHoLab cases were developed by the different national units, while other "external" cases were collected for their relevance in connection to the reflections made.

Brussels

The Living Lab experiment in the Brussels Capital Region consisted of a long-term research engagement in the largest social housing estate at the periphery of Brussels: Peterbos. Its aim was to bridge the gap between extra-local planning processes and social dynamics on the site, in order to go to an integrated approach of neighbourhood regeneration.

The site under research is a high-rise social housing estate with 1400 apartments. It is managed by two social housing companies. Built in 1967, the site suffers from an ill-defined and worn-out public space, while a considerable share of the housing stock is in need of renovation. Several steps and actions towards regeneration have been developed,

but often independently from one another. The project aimed to gather a more in-depth knowledge on the daily life in the neighbourhood, its management and the projections of extra-local policies and measures in order to understand if and how these aspects can be better aligned. These "hidden" layers of social-spatial, urban and institutional information have been unravelled through an ethnographic research on the site and on the spatial, institutional and associative dynamics that impact on it. This was the base of an action research aiming to involve the different stakeholders, notably the residents, in a sustainable process of neighbourhood regeneration. The Living Lab experiment was aimed to lead to modest but tangible changes in the estate, in order to effectively announce and initiate such a process.

Milan

The SoHoLab project in Milan fostered and improved the existing experience of Mapping San Siro (a University Lab within a public housing neighbourhood).

Founded in 2013, Mapping San Siro was initiated with the aim of working within and together with the neighborhood of San Siro – one of the largest public housing neighborhoods in Milan – in order to produce an experience based on knowledge sharing between academia and civil society, able to encourage more articulated representations of the neighbourhood to come out. Since May 2014, the group has opened a space in the neighbourhood thanks to an agreement with Aler ("Regional Agency for Housing", that owns and manages the neighbourhood) and Lombardy Region. A place to enhance processes of on-field co-research, participatory planning and networking between different local actors. On the one hand, the purpose of this operation was to create a "multiple-sources" observatory on dynamics taking place in San Siro, referring to three main topics (housing, public spaces/common spaces - courtyards, non-residential empty spaces). On the other hand, the goal was to enhance concrete projects and activities co-designed with local actors (formal or not) and inhabitants. The Lab also aimed at promoting a dialogue and confrontation between the local level and the institutional level. The SoHoLab project tried to offer the chance to foster and deepen research on methods and tools of knowledge co-production, accessibility to knowledge and co-design with residents, institutions and local actors.

Paris

The aim of the research was to give a retrospective perspective on the SoHoLab approach and to question if and how the dispositive of

participation leads to a stronger social sustainability. This has been done by studying 3 rehabilitation projects in the Paris region and the SoHoLab Design Studio in Paris.

The general aim of the research was to better understand the effects of participation in the long run after the initial involvement. This information nourished discussions in ongoing and implementation SoHoLabs. The research measured the extent and forms of involvement of residents after the design and achievement phase and reflected upon if and how the dispositive of participation (that links a very large specter of concerned actors) led to a stronger social sustainability in the long run. More specifically it questioned if this sustainable implication changes the perception of inhabitants of their environment and their motivation towards a sustainable management. Concretely, the research studied and assessed in retrospect the participatory approach in 3 sites in the Greater Region of Paris and monitored the SoHoLab design studio in Paris, as well as the Labs implemented in Brussels and Milan through the debate promoted during the research meetings.

A necessary premise on the concept of urban regeneration

In the framework of the SoHoLab project, urban regeneration is intended mainly as the set of aspiration and resources that territories are expressing in terms of will/need of change and local development. This specific meaning of urban regeneration is based on a strong social protagonism of the different actors (above all, local network, citizens) and refers to the sphere of people's ability to reflect, imagine, aspire and take action for the transformation of their life context, becoming real "agents of change" and co-producers of policies and projects (Cognetti, 2020). Therefore, urban regeneration is intended as both material and immaterial interventions: it will be clear by examining the example and projects promoted within the SoHoLab project, that urban regeneration is placed both in material/physical and social interventions and in their fruitful integration. Such perspective implies the necessity of working on the development, on the one hand, of new institutional skills and, on the other hand, new local competencies as conditions to develop a better urban regeneration for these areas. Within this definition, the issue of time gains a particular importance since urban regeneration is intended as the development of a complex and articulated process. As the reader will notice in reading this report, urban regeneration has been intended as a process within which design and implementation are not separated, and, therefore intended as an open and continuously evolving.

1. Why establish Urban Living Labs in large social housing estates?

1.1 Top-down planning and the failure of participation: voids of power and lack of voices among local populations

This research project stems from the realization that participation in the renovation of large-scale social housing estates has been rather ineffective in the previous decades (Van Kempen et al., 2005). France has probably the longest tradition of urban policies geared towards large scale social housing estates of each of the 3 research contexts dealt with in the SoHoLab research. The Politique de la Ville in that country has made the involvement of the inhabitants one of its main principles of action for the rehabilitation of neighbourhoods. As one of the aims of the SoHoLab research is to investigate whether (Urban) Living Labs can result in improved methods to involve residents in regeneration projects and urban projects in general, this section first investigates the past experiences in France, followed by short reflections on the Brussels and Italian cases.

Participation actions and bodies in France have often been accused of being not very participative (Bacque, 2011; Donzelot, 2013, Blondiaux & Fourniau, 2011). They are said to primarily involve particular segments of the population, those who are best capable and most comfortable to express themselves. Mainly the voices of elderly retirees, and what can be called the middle-class segment of the population are heard, at the expense of others such as young people, immigrant populations, etc. The risk is that this "selective" participation and the dominant voice of some groups contributes and increases, rather than regulates conflicts between generations, between residents living for a long time in the neighbourhoods versus the newly arrived (Lefrançois & Saidi, 2020).

There are several reasons why not everyone dares, knows or wants to speak up. Very often, the content of what can be discussed, or the framework within which the discussion takes place requires particular know-how, diplomacy and highly framed or coded ways of doing that are not mastered by all residents. The lens of the French example and the assessments of it highlights some pitfalls for participation in general.

First of all, participation runs the risk of being normative. In the French case, elected officials, landlords, architects, town planners and

other experts dominate in the set-up of participation bodies and the outcome of the participation process. The questions raised and the answers obtained most often reflect the pre-conceived ideas of these officials. It proves to be much harder to include less-heard voices or to fully grasp points of view experts are not familiar with and translate those into participation outcomes. Participation then becomes ineffective as it is incapable to include "unplanned" or "unanticipated" outcomes. More so, it can even have undesired effects. It gives inhabitants the feeling that they are "examined" rather than that their concerns are not heard. These risks to further reinforce what is claimed to be a "growing" opposition between residents from different backgrounds. Also, the feeling of misrepresentation of vulnerable residents by locally elected officials is further reinforced as architects, town planners and landlords, fail to hear their voice.

Participation is also paradoxical as it happens to discuss issues that are beyond the control of inhabitants or that are of little concern to them. Very often, professionals concerned with regeneration policies in housing estates and neighbourhoods tend to focus on public space. This is a subject that doesn't necessarily or primarily concerns inhabitants as it is not theirs. In our surveys in the districts of Fresnes, Longjumeau and Taverny, it stands in stark contrast to their desire to be involved in the renovation of their own dwellings. It is paradoxical that their opinion is requested for the design of street furniture, while there is very few information and communication, let alone participation, when it comes to the renovation of their direct living environment.

Next to these inherent pitfalls of participation, the difficulties of participation in the French case of the Politique de la Ville is also the result of government restructuring and power relations (see also section 4.2). Increasingly, the actions under this program are dominated by some sort of a "triumvirate" associating the mayors, the presidents of the intermunicipal bodies and the préfet[2] who between them take the major decisions. Civil society actors, associations of users or inhabitants exert only a minor influence on this "triumvirate". In particular, the demolition and reconstruction programmes carried out within the framework of the ANRU[3] and contractualisation between the state and the cities have concentrated much of the power in the hands of mayors. Given this state of affairs, it is mainly the lack of political representation that marginalizes associations, inhabitants and other non-institutional actors and prevents them to defend their interests and to weigh in their favour in places of power (Epstein, 2015). Participation in regeneration projects is reduced to discussions at the margin, the substance of projects, or "why" certain decisions are taken, cannot be questioned. This nourishes the criticism of those who doubt the very interest of concertation or participation,

among inhabitants as well as professionals. With regards to the National Programme of Urban Renewal conducted from 2008 to 2013 some have claimed that «architecture is done without the inhabitants» (Gaudricamp & Saint-Macary, 2013). Others have repeated this very bleak assessment of the city policy, claiming inhabitants are faced with an "impossible participation" (Lavigne Delville & Carrel, 2017). The Politique de la Ville lacks a democratic character as the deliberative arenas – when they exist – are confined, at best, to one-way communication, or "tokenism" (Arnstein, 1969).

An emblematic Brussels example of the succession of Neighbourhood Contracts in a high-rise estate in the centre of Brussels shows similar results (Aernouts et al., 2020c). While community organizations in these neighbourhoods went to great lengths to involve a diverse group of local inhabitants, their demands and concerns raised during meetings didn't make it to the planning table. The final interventions in the context of the contracts were ultimately guided by political decisions.

In Italy, after the experience of Neighbourhood Contracts (late 1990s and 2000s) – in which, in any case, participation was often conceived as a consultation concerning very optional aspects of the renovation processes – large social housing estates are undergoing a structural lack of spaces of interaction and participation to the decision-making processes: so, even if and where bottom-up initiatives of listening and promoting active citizenship are taken, they frequently lack of a connection with the institutional level.

Even if many French neighbourhoods have been subject to the urban renewal policies since the 1980s, many of them are still part of the geographical priority areas today. In Brussels, the regeneration of large-scale housing estates is of much more recent date, while in Italy, for lack of public investment, it is still low on the political agenda. The recorded deficiencies of participation and concertation are therefore deplorable as in these quarters the needs for rehabilitation of housing and the living environment are still urgent and critical. SoHoLab therefore investigates if Living Labs could offer participatory approaches that avoid the pitfalls of earlier policies and that are truly cooperative and empowering.

1.2 Co-research, co-design, co-creation in large-scale social housing estates

In the latest years, applying the Urban Living Lab (ULL) approach to urban regeneration has been seen as promising in relation to the possibility to transform and enlarge urban governance and to effectively make different social actors access to participatory processes (Steen & van

Bueren, 2017; Nesti, 2018). ULLs are described, indeed, as cross-boundary objects/arenas and knowledge creative contexts (Concilio, 2016), able to connect stakeholders and relevant actors at different levels (institutions and the so-called "users": here, citizens, dwellers, communities); and, at the same time, capable of fostering social innovation (Naumann et al., 2018) through the emphasis given to co-design and co-creation, as integrated elements able to promote a "real" change in a participated way. The most interesting characteristic of the ULL methodology applied to urban regeneration is, indeed, the promotion of a collaborative approach which should be conducted all over the different phases of the process: from the definition of the set of problems/critical issues to the co-design of possible answers, to their co-creation. This aspect is particularly relevant if we consider that participatory approaches in urban regeneration policy in the latest 1990s and 2000s mainly addressed these phases separately, generating ambiguities and frustration in participants.

In this respect, in ULLs participation is intended as a collaborative practice oriented to change, while in the past it was frequently promoted as a practice which had a value per se, even when not able to produce an actual change. This issue is even more relevant in social housing estates which are particularly stuck in a sort of "immobility" and inertia.

The prefix "co" is particularly relevant when it comes to deprived areas[4] of our cities, with restricted access to decision-making processes: here, indeed, a specific attention should be paid to effectively "include" local actors and citizens in the planning process and the transformation of the area which they live or work in, through the valorisation of their knowledge and their voices.

Although in the existing literature it is not so widely described, when coping with marginalized and fragile contexts a particular attention should be paid first of all to the co-research phase: it is, indeed, the phase which opens-up the process and which should be, from the very beginning, designed to be as inclusive as possible and based on the principle of co-learning. In this way, it allows different actors (local ones, institutional ones, etc.) to mutually acknowledge themselves a competence and a voice on issues concerning the neighbourhood and its possible transformation, stimulating their power and will to participate in the following co-design and co-creation phases. Regeneration challenges and resources should be, indeed, identified and highlighted through the co-construction of a shared (even conflictive) vision. Moreover, local knowledge constitutes a fundamental resource to deal with the structural lack of information and knowledge which often characterizes large-scale social housing estates, and which frequently doesn't allow to identify a clear and shared image of critical issues. Large-scale social housing estates are, indeed, usually

characterized by a certain "opaqueness" in terms of available information: on the one hand, they are usually object of a process of stigmatization, reinforced by media discourses, which produce a misleading and unclear circulation of information; on the other hand, in contexts where a lack of public investment is experienced, institutions (such as the one managing the housing stock) and governments are often no longer able to effectively describe the actual living condition or the state of maintenance of the built environment[5]. This double process leads to a lack of knowledge related to the context, which prevents the possibility of planning effective policies and interventions.

As broadly known, ULLs are complex processes which lead to co-creation of answers to challenges through the development of co-research and co-design cycles. We intend here co-research as a mutual learning process (co-learning), constantly shaping the phases of co-design and co-creation. Learning together, learning while planning and learning by doing are all important parts of the process and the interrelation of these different phases helps to build a learning-friendly context and shared platform of accessible knowledge, engaging the diverse actors in a dynamic of empowerment and in an arena of collective work, as will be illustrated in the SoHoLab cases studies (pilot projects). It should be pointed out how mutual learning should not be considered as a linear process; it leads, instead, to the development of a circular process, carefully planned in order to critically reconsider and adjust the different steps moving from the learning process. In these regards, Stahlbrost and Holst (2012) state that the LL process includes several loops and iteration cycles in which knowledge owned, produced and shared by the different stakeholder involved, continually empower the whole process (Lehamann et.al., 2015)[6]. Knowledge is here described as multiple-source element, precisely because of the contribution of different kinds of actors (public-private-civic stakeholders). It is interesting to underline how knowledge in the LL is not only defined in relation to the heterogeneous subjects who produce it, but also in terms of different types of knowledge considered, shared and produced. In this sense, Nez (2012) suggests identifying three types of knowledge in the framework of urban co-creation: activist knowledge[7], usage knowledge[8], professional knowledge[10]. While the first one refers to "local" and "informal" knowledge of a particular territory, especially referring to its administrative framework and practices; the second one comes from repeated use of a product, infrastructure or service over time; the third one refers to the professional expertise of the stakeholder, which, of course, could be various and differentiated.

1.3 Networking and cooperating through different levels of involvement

Cost reductions in the building sector and the merger of social housing landlords into larger institutions for reasons of economy of scale, have increased the distance between management and construction on the one hand and inhabitants on the other (Mille, Desmoulin & Bretesché, 2019). It has also put pressure on the quality of construction works. Conceiving participation in a Living Lab framework, at least calls for true attempts to engage and to decrease the distance between these different planning stakeholders. The SoHoLab project was designed as an action research, meaning the aim was to actively cooperate with these stakeholders to collect data, finetune our goals and design actions to achieve these goals (Breitbart, 2003). Nevertheless, the nature of cooperation with the stakeholders was very different.

First, an active cooperation on a regular basis, was most evident and natural with the third sector organizations involved. They already had a keen interest to increase the impact of local inhabitants - their target groups - on their daily living environment. In addition, their modus operandi allowed for more flexibility and reflexivity about their current and future priorities.

Second, the collaboration with public administrations and social landlords in the SoHoLab, was more structured, developed in specific phases in the research. In the beginning it took the form of mutual consultations. While planning stakeholders provided specific information about the local planning context, the SoHoLab researchers were able to provide support, for instance, in setting up specific programs or applying for subsidies. Before developing co-designed or co-created actions with planning institutions, the SoHoLab researchers needed time to approach the site, study the local context and living conditions, and the planning instruments, actions and stakeholders at a regional level, in order to understand the challenges and to define some margins for intervention. In the case of the Italian living lab, the preceding research Mapping San Siro allowed for this, while in the Brussels living lab, this research was carried out the first year of the SoHoLab. Through the knowledge gained by "stepping back", the SoHoLab researchers were able to gain trust and to convince other stakeholders to codevelop specific interventions.

Third, although explicitly targeting a better representation of inhabitants and local knowledge, the SoHoLab researchers did not involve inhabitants from the very beginning, but rather focused on the methodology of ethnography or a space within the neighbourhood and the involvement of the local community organizations as a go-between. This

choice was related to the lacking political organization of inhabitants and the low confidence of inhabitants in the current planning system, resulting in a form of "apathy" towards any type of participatory project. Only after spending a lot of time within the neighbourhood and by collaborating with third sector organizations, the SoHoLabs have been able to develop contacts and projects with inhabitants (see also section 3 of this document).

Finally, in the case of a chantier e.g. a renovation during which inhabitants remain in their dwelling, a following step could be to also involve building contractors. As some architects and sociologists have suggested, the building site rather than the meeting room could be a space for dialogue and consultation between diverse actors, such as architects, landlords, contractors, workers, inhabitants. The inhabitants are invited to express themselves about issues that really concern them by voicing their opinion on the intended quality of the works. Construction trades can be revalued, as workers are more engaged with their "end users". Architects, project managers and contractors experience direct pressure from inhabitants to provide high quality works. This in turn can be beneficial to working conditions for craftsmen and construction workers (Jounin, 2009; Lefrançois & Saidi, 2020) . The will of residents to be involved in improving the quality of the construction also opens the road for on-the-job training programs for residents who want to get access to this sector. As a matter of fact, residents complain about the lack of quality in the construction without being heard, which contributes to make residents suspicious of participation actions.

A

The Icec ULL in Vienna

Promoted within the JPI Urban Europe programme, ICEC project focused on how to promote interethnic coexistence in European cities, considering the case study of diverse neighbourhoods in Amsterdam, Stockholm and Vienna. More specifically, the project focused on either top-down or bottom-up promoted initiatives which resulted to strengthen the role of neighbourhoods as a place of living and identification for diverse populations. "Due to a lack of existing living lab concepts that focus on socio-spatial research questions, ICEC designed a socially-centred approach to implementing living labs by applying the concept of a space of encounter. This means that the researcher accesses places where local residents already meet and interact with each other, for instance, community centres or public spaces." (Franz et. al., 2015, p. 51). Due to its flexible nature, the space of encounter could be very different, from city to city and the access for researchers depends on the relationship they are able to build with local stakeholders and, once they are able to access those spaces, on how they are able to engage with people in relationships of mutual trust and recognition. The project aims at an "authentic integration" of research in the local community: that is why the living lab characteristics are the same under a methodological point of view but varies in terms of places involved as spaces of encounter in the different cities. For instance, in Vienna ICEC living labs were implemented in a community space where sewing courses, cooking courses or legal consultations were taking place; in a market; in an urban gardening project.

Promoted by: ICEC project
Localization: Vienna (Austria)
Years: 2014
Highlights: situating, space of encounter, socially-oriented living lab
Main references: www.icecproject.com; Franz, 2015; Franz et. al., 2015.

B

Living Lab Caen la mer Habitat

Promoted by: Caen la mer Habitat
Localization: Caen (Normandie, France)
Years: 2018
Highlights: A living lab set up by the social landlord, empowering social housing tenants, reflection on future housing.
Main references: https://www.caenlamerhabitat.fr/actualite/clmh-au-c%C5%93ur-de-l_innovation/33

Caen la mer Habitat (CLMH) is the largest social landlord in the city of Caen. It wants to develop a Living Lab approach with a future test apartment called «Silver appart » for senior in which companies can test their solutions in real conditions. For this lessor, the Living Lab is an approach that it defines as the development of solutions based on uses and users, in order to anticipate, create and evolve the new services to the inhabitants. The social landlord Caen la mer Habitat is engaged in 2017 in a program of reflection around the social housing "innovative and collaborative". It joined the TES (Secure Electronic Transactions) Competitiveness Cluster to concretely participate in the development of the innovations of the companies that compose the cluster. The landlord intends to present itself for these companies as a privileged field of experimentation; it also tries to do its own field tests, to have them tested by the residents. Its objective would be to reflect with companies and inhabitants on the housing of the future and new ways of living. The demand for participation, in this case, comes more from the landlord than from the inhabitant. The lessor considers the Living Lab as a new way of designing social housing. The objective would be to solve the problems between tenants and lessors but there is also the economic stake to create an expertise in the field of the participation in CLMH and to be submitted to the municipalities.

2. Promoting situated and interdisciplinary approaches

2.1 Opening a space, inhabit a place

In the three national contexts, the research units have experimented with different forms of "being in the field" which share the characteristic of somehow leading the researchers to a certain extent to "inhabit the place". In the Belgian case, one of the researchers has conducted an ethnographic fieldwork between July 2017 and July 2018 during which she lived inside the neighbourhood, in an empty apartment provided by a social housing company; in the Italian case, since 2014, the research group has re-opened a vacant space in the neighbourhood, which is currently open three times a week and which has been operative during the last six years. The French team was also "on-site" to a certain extent both through the ethnographical survey realised in La Fosse aux Loup neighbourhood (WP3)[10] and during a three-days-long experimental interdisciplinary on-site workshop in La Gonflée, which involved architects, town planners, artists, sociologists, etc.

The researchers involved in Mapping San Siro have defined such engagements as "situating" (Castelnuovo & Cognetti, 2019), while some other authors also refer, in these regards, to the concept of "permanence architectural" (Hallauer, 2015) derived from the culture of the "artist in residence" (according to which artists reside in a certain place to create pieces on and within a site).

These concepts suggest that setting the ULL as a stable presence in the neighbourhood plays a fundamental role for at least two main reasons.

On the one hand, in large social-housing estates, a long term and stable presence is in countertrend with respect to the processes of abandonment and neglect that characterize these places. Therefore, it helps to build a qualified relationship with a context where inhabitants and local organizations usually perceive research and institutions as temporary and unstable presences, often "taking" from the context without offering anything in return. On the contrary, taking care of a certain place – or even "simply being there" (Aernouts et al., 2020) – helps to gain a more articulated ability to listen and to grasp the spatial, economic and symbolic constraints with which inhabitants must continually negotiate their life. It helps to acquire one's own experience of a certain space/place and at the same time to open up to others' (inhabitants and local organizations) by

practicing a relational dimension based on trust and mutual recognition.

On the other hand, inhabiting – in different forms – a place can help to deal, with the "unexpected in the contingency" (Cognetti, 2018a) that fosters the collection of the most diverse materials as clues[11]. In other words, "being on site", in different ways, and critically reflecting this methodology, helps to deal with the complexity of social housing contexts, where the overlapping of different dynamics and phenomena makes it difficult to even clearly frame issues and problems. This helps to avoid the pitfall listed in section 2.1. where participatory practices tend to merely answer predefined questions from an "expert" and external perspective[12]. The contingencies associated with being on site in a LL context allows unexpected questions to pop up. Contingency (Karvonen & Van Heur, 2014) also helps to critically look at the context from an "internal perspective", open to new interpretations and meanings, which at least tries to overcome stereotypical representations often associated with large-scale social housing estates.

In other words, the process and practice of situating helps to build a more "reliable" form of knowledge: by changing position and temporarily becoming "inhabitants", researchers and practitioners change their perspective, diving in the everyday life and the daily practices of the neighbourhood; being part of the place helps them to develop a vision of their role which includes its declination as a loving attachment to people and place, intending love in its multiple dimensions of «trust, commitment, care, respect, knowledge and responsibility» (Porter et. al., 2012, p. 603). Their research background can help them to keep a critical and wider vision, while a long-term presence they hold can function as an important resource to contribute with effective interpretations of problems or with creative elaborations of possible answers. In this way, they become able to bridge different "positions" and social worlds (academic, institutional, local, etc.) because they can understand the different sides, while (and precisely because) not completely belonging to any of them.

LL are rooted in every-day life and social practices, in the "real-life environment". More specifically, Urban LLs are usually placed in a geographical area (in this regard, authors refer to geographical embeddedness, Voytenko et al., 2016), within which the lab represents the place dedicated to open "urban" and "civic" innovation[13]. So, even if limited in time or objective, it can be pointed out how in the theory concerning LLs the dimension of "diving into" a real-life context is considered extremely relevant.

In the context of SoHoLab ULLs, more than referring to an "immersion", which implies considering social housing neighborhoods as separated areas, we would better refer to "entering in a relational field".

In these regards, it is interesting to refer to Franz (2015) who describes the characteristics that the ULL should assume when dealing with social-related matters, in specific neighbourhoods of our cities. In her opinion, derived to the development of pilot Labs related to the ICEC Project (see section 2 – Cases studies), ULL should be framed as "spaces of encounter", sufficiently open to unexpected interaction and to the unplanned. They should be experimental spaces which are not entirely artificially constructed with a top-down (even if participatory) approach, but which emerge from the encounter of researchers and users; where the overall outcome is not predefined but is the result of the interactions among promoters and stakeholders. Also, in the opinion of SoHoLab researchers, in the space of the ULL – whether it is a stable and physical space or a more metaphorical "space of encounter" – a balance should be constantly pursued among a planned space which is also flexible enough to adapt to what comes from the context, in terms of inspirations, demands, suggestions, relationships.

According to Franz (2015) time is a crucial dimension to promote an effective local involvement[14]. The author questions herself on the feasibility of the limited duration of the research and on the outcomes that it generates in the local context. In the SoHoLab, some participants are indeed in a position to have a long-term LL on site, in the case of San Siro. In Peterbos, the involvement was limited to the research framework. Nonetheless, during the conduct of the action research, initiatives were taken to activate other organizations, such as the local housing associations, the regional housing association, the office of the government architect, the municipality administration in charge of the neighbourhood contract and local social workers to continue initiatives that incorporate concerns of inhabitants on a more permanent basis. Therefore, we could state that if the conditions do not allow long term presence, other devices must be found to assure a certain continuity of engagement or to engage other actors to take up that role.

2.2 Ethnographic fieldwork

The SoHoLab is largely built on ethnographic fieldwork, both for the retrospective analysis of past participatory regeneration experiences in Paris and in the set-up of a new Living Lab in Brussels. For the retrospective analysis, participant observations and interviews were done in order to study the significance of participatory regeneration projects, almost 15 years upon completion. In this analysis, it was revealed how inhabitants interpreted the interventions and if the past participatory regeneration process enhanced the use of these interventions.

In the Brussels case, a local and institutional ethnography was developed in order to grasp both the independency and contingency between everyday life and planning processes that intend to regenerate the area. By systematically and repeatedly observing inhabitants, social and community development workers and institutional actors in different settings, the researchers aimed to capture various organizational structures, planning and government processes, everyday practices and their relations within the context of the regeneration of the high-rise social estates. Ethnography proved to be constantly adapted in order to be compatible with contemporary planning and co-research perspectives.

From a theoretical point of view, influenced by postmodern scholarship and critical theory embracing feminist, gender, race and class perspectives (Chambers, 2009), both anthropology and planning have been encouraged to develop more reflexive methods and collaborative relationships with studied subjects. Similar to action research, acts and processes of engagement have become inherently part of the disciplines.

In terms of planning, an understanding of the "worlds" of diverse planning stakeholders through thick descriptions proved to be key for improving participation and communication between them. Generally, the institutions and planning stakeholders involved in the SoHoLab project lacked a sophisticated understanding of local inhabitants and the way their policies, planning instruments, but also attitudes and discourses about these inhabitants impacted on them. Showing these actors the results of the local and institutional ethnography, helped them to become more critically reflective about their own practices. In the French case, the results of the ethnographic enquiry is going to be shared with the institutional actors. Indeed, it was very difficult to involve 3F[15] during the project development. This has to do on the one hand with the monolithic character of the social housing landlord who is not actively present in the neighbourhoods and did not actively engage in the SoHoLab project, but on the other hand also due to the fact that a relevant staff turnover was made within the 3Fs and it was only the last year of the research that contacts were resumed[16].

In terms of action research, ethnographic research was used as a process of inquiry, both before the start of the project and throughout the project, to reflect on the projects developed as part of the action research, and critically reflect about our own (humble) role in the research.

Regarding the involvement of different user groups, frictions can be experienced by applying different disciplines. While action research and participatory planning approaches try to involve a group of people, anthropology is more individually oriented, in the sense that it often builds on one-on-one contacts. Action research tries to involve a smaller group

of people from the outset, while participatory planning is rather engaged with the involvement of all users.

In the SoHoLab, in the process of building contacts with inhabitants and diverse planning stakeholders in (large-scale) social estates, the one-on-one contacts seemed important, in order to build relationships and gain trust. These contacts proved to be a way to go to more collectively oriented activities, which were developed with rather small groups of people.

2.3 Integrating different expertise and competences

The contemporary city is asking us – as researchers and practitioners in the fields of urban studies and urban planning – to go beyond our disciplinary positions. Complexity needs more adequate categories to be interpreted; and our perspectives – as architects, planners, anthropologists, geographers, sociologists, etc. – need to "contaminate" one another, in order to get closer to a more "precise" understanding of ordinary life in our cities (Cellamare, 2016; Cognetti & Fava, 2017). As Fava and Cognetti have extensively described (2017), it can be stated that, to certain extents, a city is an object that cannot be disciplined, that has a character of resistance: it resists being reduced to a disciplinary order and always emerges as the extraordinary that forces the single disciplines to think from the outside (ivi, p. 134). If, on one hand, this aspect invites different disciplines to question themselves on their ability to open up to other perspectives, interpretative frameworks, tools, on the other hand, it also pushes them to open to non-expert knowledge. Indeed, in the last decades, urban areas have become increasingly complex arenas of actors. Today, many different stakeholders are legitimized to be recognized as carriers of urban knowledge, which becomes essential to promote more effective knowledge frameworks and policies. Interdisciplinarity, then, indicates the capacity to be able to listen to and to collect the issues that arise from urban space itself, through a relational observation. An observation which takes into account "local knowledge, knowledge of everyday life, a knowledge that is embedded in the actions and reflections of the subjects engaged with. This means to have an interdisciplinary but also non-disciplinary way of thinking and producing knowledge" (Pizzo & Rolnik, 2019, p. 30). This attitude is fundamental both in a problem-setting and a problem-solving perspective. Interdisciplinarity, indeed, questions the effectiveness of languages and tools not just to intervene on territories, but, first of all, to interact with them, to describe them, to promote participation within them, etc.

In the SoHoLab project, interdisciplinarity was relevant at least to three extents.

First of all, it provided an interaction and contamination among

spatially oriented and socially oriented disciplines, which have always been considered relevant in terms of their contribution to urban regeneration. In the SoHoLab approach, research units were conceived as interdisciplinary. This characteristic makes it possible to promote exchange and contamination which are not only confined to specific moments of the process of development of the ULL but were practised during the whole duration of the project. As Cognetti and Fava (2017) have pointed out, different disciplines show different attitudes towards the city: some of them are more effective in order to access to a deeper understanding, while others are more effective in order to produce actions; therefore, a long-lasting interdisciplinary collaboration allows research teams to reinforce the effectiveness of the research-action dimension. There is a collective dimension to interdisciplinary research (Cognetti, 2018b) but working interdisciplinary is not without conflicts. In the SoHoLab research conflicting points of view were encountered as well. Finding common ground is not easy, and sometimes not necessary. Close collaborations on site helps to understand each other's approaches, tools and views. In some contexts, this worked well, in particular where researchers and local actors could work together intensively on site, by sharing a permanent workspace (in the San Siro case), by conducting actions or educational activities on site (in all cases), or by establishing joint committees between researchers and local actors such as estate landlords, municipal and regional officials, designers and architects (see the case of the coordination committee in Peterbos). At the level of international collaboration between research teams, exchange was more difficult due the different Living Lab settings and due to the constrained time frames of (bi-)yearly research meetings.

Secondly, interdisciplinarity was intended as an exploration of different languages and "non-academic" disciplines, such as art, theatre, performance, video-making, narrative journalism etc. They were not considered as instrumental to specific aims but were themselves intended as parts of the action-research framework. So, although they may be included in one specific action, they were conceived to be part of a wider reflection and included in the research path. These languages are especially important in regards to the possibility of communicating more effectively with dwellers and with citizens more broadly, stimulating a "deeper" kind of participation, not just related to the expression of an opinion, but also to the emergence, for instance, of personal stories, perceptions, feelings, etc. which are very important to go deeper in the understandings of dwelling practices (Sandercock & Attili, 2010; Rifaad et al., 2020).

Thirdly, interdisciplinarity was also conceived as the combination

of "expert" knowledge with locally produced knowledge. It is important to this extent to underline the fact that this resource is also not confined to a specific phase of the research but remains crucial for the whole development of the ULL, assuming different forms and meanings. This aspect is clearly linked with the concept of "situating" (see the dedicated paragraph in section 2) which allows the research group to share an intensive and long "engaged ethnography" (Aernouts et al., 2020b) in the field, being able to constantly gather knowledge from local actors. This not only includes dwellers but also different professionals working in a certain territory (social workers, activists, local administrators, etc., who usually acquire knowledge through experience and practice, Dewey, 1949), whose contribution is considered as crucial in the different phases of the ULL: from the understanding of the local context to the implementation of pilot projects to the evaluation of research and actions promoted. The structural lack of knowledge which characterized dwelling conditions in large-scale social housing estates, indeed, obliges engaged researchers and practitioners to question themselves on how knowledge is produced and shared. Not only evaluating the meanings and targets of knowledge production but also questioning how and which sources of knowledge are selected, which materials are collected and elaborated, etc. It is particularly important to underline how "non-expert" knowledge[17] plays a crucial role in these contexts, characterized by significant informality or, in some cases, even by "parallel" systems of values. Lave defines this as "situated learning": learning that takes place through the relationships between people and connecting prior knowledge with authentic, informal, and often unintended contextual learning. By relating with these different sources of knowledge and through the already mentioned process of situating, researchers and practitioners acquire a "more local" perspective, which anthropologists would define as an emic perspective (Vereni, 2015).

In the SoHoLab approach multiplying – through the interaction among disciplines, non-academic languages, non-expert knowledge, etc. – the possible understandings of the local context and range of actions to be taken, not only enriches the action-research path but also leads to consider the partiality of strictly disciplinary or sectorial points of view in respect to complex problems or situations. It opens up the field to uncertainty, doubt (Cognetti & Maranghi, 2020; Aernouts et al., 2020b) and self-reflection[18], highlighting the relevance of time associated to change and of the ethical responsibility related to the presence – as researchers and practitioners – in the field. It is vital to keep this kind of attitude which associates a research-action framework (oriented to change and intervention) with the deep self-reflection that belongs especially to the point of view of the anthropological discipline.

C

Construire ensemble in Boulogne-sur-Mer

The experimental program Construire Ensemble le Grand Ensemble emerged as a critique to the demolition programs and the failure of participatory approaches supported by the French government to intervene on the regeneration of large-scale social estates. In contrast, the office proposed an approach based on the so-called "architectural permanency". Sophie Ricard, the architect hired by the office, lived and stayed in the neighbourhood before and during its renovation. For three years, her house became a reference point for inhabitants and outsiders; a place to develop workshops, an atelier, a meeting place, a cafeteria and conference room. The main goal was to enable different actors, especially citizens, to participate in the design, execution and management of the renovation works. At a wider level, but also, practically, in the renovation process of their own apartment.

During the first year, Sophie Ricard developed a social and architectural diagnostic, making use of the observation flottante (Petonnet, 1982). In order to get to know and to encounter people, Sophie initiated small workshops including gardening and craft activities for children. In order to do so, cultural and social associations were also involved. By engaging in one-to-one relationships, Sophie Ricard started to collect important information on the different priorities, resources (financial and social) and competencies that inhabitants could bring to the renovation process. By co-designing a plan for each house, describing its dwellers, their situation, desires, priorities, etc. she specified different possibilities for the regeneration process. At the level of the neighbourhood, the architecture office also established collaborations with associations, a landscape architect, a movie maker, an artist and building contractors to foster specific activities.

Promoted by: Construire ensemble
Localization: Boulogne-sur-mer (France);
Neighborhood: Chemin Vert
Years: 2010 - 2013

Highlights: architectural permanency; situating; new languages; tools for interaction
Main references: Hallauer (2015); Patrick Bouchain: ma voisine, cette architecte (available online at: http://strabic.fr/Patrick-Bouchain-ma-voisine-cette-architecte-1; http://strabic.fr/Patrick-Bouchain-ma-voisine-cette-architecte-2)

D

Cycle Terre in Sevran

Promoted by:
- Five research centers: IFFSTAR, Craterre, Lab AE & CC Labex of ENSAG, Amàco, and SciencesPo Paris;
- ANTEA group, an office of engineering studies specialized in geology;
- Joly and Loiret Architects;
- The Compétences Emploi Association;
- The city of Sevran;
- The real estate developer Quartus;
- CSTB;
- The society of Grand Paris.
Localization: Sevran (North suburbs of Paris)
Years: 2018-2021

Highlights: Integration of research, valorising inhabitants skills, participation in the construction site, environmental purpose;
Main references: https://www.cycle-terre.eu/

This project is one of the winners of the European call for projects "Innovative Urban Actions" in the Circular Economy category, it proposes to involve the inhabitants in the urban renewal of their city by allowing them to take part in the construction.

Cycle Terre consists of using excavated earth as a new building material for the city: with 68 stations to be built on the scale of the metropolitan network, 43 million tons of earth will be excavated between 2017 and 2022. In a logic of circular economy and reduction of the cost of managing excavated land, Cycle Terre intends to use part of the excavated land resulting from the creation of the Grand Paris Express network to build the city. The aim will be to treat this land so that it can be used as a building material in the territory of Sevran, a town that is badly affected by unemployment, which affects 19% of the working population and reaches 40% among young people under 25.

A factory of 6000 m2 of sorting, storage and land treatment will be created near the future station "Sevran-Livry" line 16; and some inhabitants of Sevran will be recruited as part of the insertion clause (a job insertion program), and trained to raw earth construction.

The project Cycle Terre is not necessarily defined by the municipality as a Living Lab, because the participative dimension is not involved in the design but in the building. However, it combines sustainable development and urban renewal, as well as important social issues for the city of Sevran. It is this social interest, even if it concerns only a dozen people at the project level, that has determined the choice of the city, and gave an ethical dimension to the project justifying its financing by Europe. The formation of the inhabitants and the possible creation of employment linked to this project, present it as a solution to the social difficulties of the suburbs, themselves linked to the concentration of social housing.

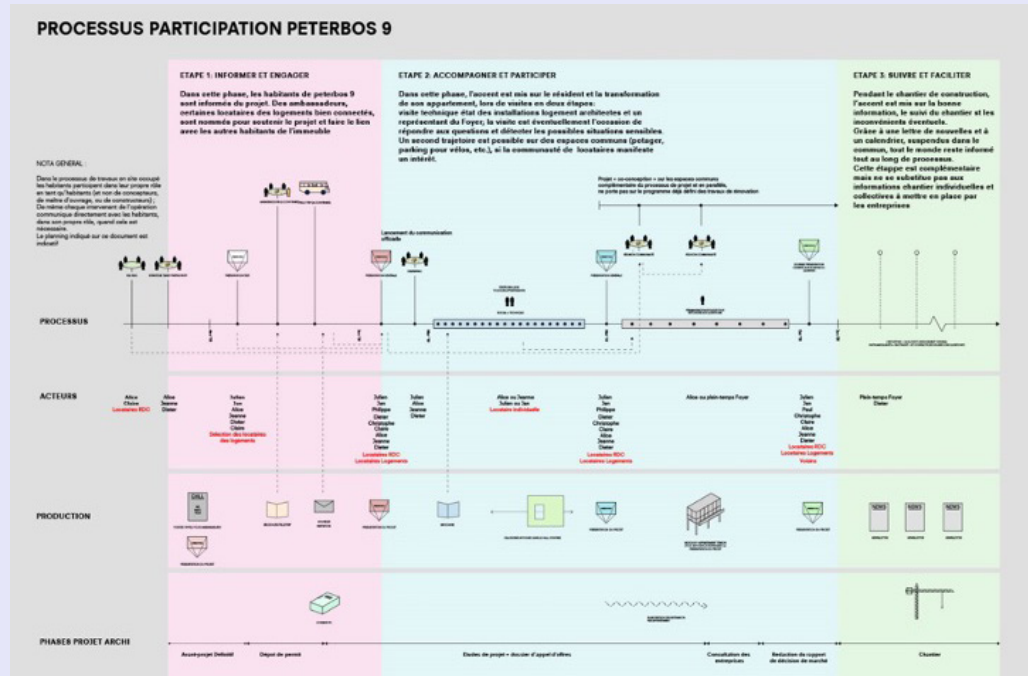# E   Bloc 9 renovation project

Inhabitants in the social housing estate Peterbos had been consulted during the development of several regeneration plans, such as a masterplan and a toolbox. Also in the sustainable neighbourhood contract, a renovation approach combining spatial interventions with social-economic aims, which would start at the beginning of 2018, a key role was given to inhabitants.

During participant observations in the neighbourhood of Peterbos, it became clear that these forms of consultation were not always well-received. Whereas during such information or consultation sessions, especially the design of the public spaces was focused upon, inhabitants were absorbed by the (poor) state and quality of their individual dwelling. In some buildings, renovation works had been restricted to the outer shell, while the technical quality and comfort of the interiors remained very poor. In one building with a renovated facade, inhabitants were left without water and sewage system during three summer days due to a lack of maintenance. In addition, communication towards inhabitants about major renovation works was generally limited to information letters just a few months before the actual start.

The pilot project bloc 9 therefore focused on contributing to a participatory trajectory in the renovation of a block, and the appointment of a project assistant as part of that. During this refurbishment, inhabitants will remain in the building. The architects conceived a participatory trajectory in three phases. The first phase was designed as an information phase

involving social workers and selected team as "ambassadors". These ambassadors would participate in different meetings, a site visit to a similar refurbishment project and would make the link with the other inhabitants. They would also give feedback on drafts of presentations developed to inform other inhabitants of the block. In the next phase, interested inhabitants would be involved in the design of a collective outdoor area at the foot of the building. In the last part of the process, during the construction works, the focus would shift to good communication and information towards inhabitants.

As the renovation focused on technical issues and on the individual apartments, a more individual approach was needed than the three-phased approach of the architects. For this reason, the social housing company decided to hire a local supervisor of the construction site (accompagnateur de chantier). This supervisor would provide continuous support to inhabitants during the renovation processes.

During the building request, members of the SoHoLab team -the researchers as well as the social worker from the housing company, stressed the need for informing inhabitants about the works the earliest possible, and to combine the technical inventory of each apartment with social support. The future supervisor of the construction site could accompany the architect in order to meet the inhabitants, explain the project and listen to her/his concerns regarding their apartment and the future works. The SoHoLab researchers background in urban design and architecture enabled to explain certain technical constraints of architects and the landlords' technicians to the social worker. As such, in this project, the SoHoLab team contributed as a mediator in discussions, arguing for more attention for the individual living conditions of inhabitants in the participatory trajectory. For the social housing company, this case serves as a pilot project for similar renovation projects in Peterbos and elsewhere. This illustrates how approaches developed in the context of a limited timeframe project can have a more lasting impact.

F

Peterbos Coordination Committee

In the Brussels Capital Region, merger operations between social housing companies, relative decentralization and disinvestment have multiplied the diversity of actors involved in the daily organization, management and renovation of social estates. In terms of daily maintenance, support and management, multiple actors are employed for taking care of inhabitants, managing, maintaining and securing the site, such as administrators of social housing companies, prevention and security agents, social workers, nurses, janitors, cleaning services and maintenance workers such as plumbers and electricians.

In terms of renovation, social housing companies or municipalities rely on various subsidies and programs. For the renovation of housing, social housing companies should develop a strategic 4-year investment plan that needs to be approved by the regional housing association. A federal agency also sometimes contributes to the renovation of social housing. In order to select the architecture office and additional coordinators, a public tender procedure is organized. This procedure is generally time-consuming and complex, and usually deals with several kinds of delays (Aernouts et al., 2020c), in some cases going up to 5 or even 10 years.

For public spaces, as the main owner, the municipality is usually in charge. This municipality is legally bound to the region and needs the approval of different regional planning agencies in charge of developing projects on its

Promoted by: SoHoLab Brussels, BMA, SLRB
Localization: Brussels (Belgium)
Years: 2018 - on

Highlights:
Building a vision, stakeholders network, communication

land. Next to its own resources, it can make use of different bigger subsidy programs, such as a European program ERDF, the Brussels program Beliris, the sustainable neighbourhood contract, the urban policy (Politique de la Ville) and various smaller programs such as sustainable participatory neighbourhood, programs of the commission of the Flemish community and the Cocof of the French Government for sports infrastructure.

When the SoHoLab research in Peterbos started, the site was subject to various programs and subsidies, but an overall vision was lacking. One social housing company had ordered a masterplan in the past, but this was not approved by the regional government. In addition to that, the two social housing companies on the site hardly communicated to each other about ongoing works.

The participant observations of the SoHoLab team in Peterbos, revealed two important consequences. On the one hand, the multi-actor regeneration of the site created a lot of confusion. The missions and structure of the different agencies are hardly understood. On the other hand, the ad-hoc interventions, consultation processes without actual interventions, malfunctioning transfer systems during renovation works and poor communication about renovations, contributed to feelings of powerlessness regarding the resident's living situation.

After one year of research the SoHoLab team presented these findings in a meeting with the many different partners involved in the regeneration of Peterbos. As a result of the discussions following this presentation, and supported by the framework of the neighbourhood contract, a committee uniting the most important stakeholders was established to coordinate the different regeneration actions in Peterbos. While the SoHoLab action research led to the establishment of the committee, it is guided and convened at the initiative of the regional social housing association, illustrating again how research actions can result in long term initiatives beyond the scope and timeframe of the project. During the regular committee meetings, several themes have been addressed, such as the improvement of communication towards inhabitants, spatial guidelines for future development, and management issues such as problems of littering. This led to several initiatives. A graphic design office was appointed to develop a unified communication about all ongoing renovation works to inhabitants. In addition, the different design teams discussed their plans with one another, and with various stakeholders working within social housing companies during a series of workshops.

3.   Shifting power relationships for participatory planning in underprivileged neighbourhoods

3.1 Understanding and foregrounding power relationships in planning

It is not possible to obtain empowerment in planning without understanding the network of power relations and its traps. A Living Lab approach can be adopted in order to reveal and enhance awareness about power relations in regeneration processes, bringing to light why participatory planning approaches might fail, or how they could improve for the better, genuinely trying to redistribute power. The interdisciplinary approach in the SoHoLab project, combining ethnographic, sociological, architecture and planning skills, allowed to foreground this information, which proved to be essential for several reasons.

First, in the context of the regeneration of large-scale social estates, it is clear that «institutions hold power over unorganized inhabitants» (Hall & Rowlands, 2005 in Aernouts et al., 2020b, p.126). Inhabitants are subjected by different institutions for their very survival, in terms of dwelling, monthly income and specific services like food distribution in times of hardship (Mosseray et al., 2020). The widespread problem of illiteracy is adding to this, as many inhabitants rely on additional services in order to help them to fill in papers or translate letters directed to them.

Second, planning participation often does not even reach the steps of consultation and information (Arnstein, 1969). Throughout the SoHoLab research project, it became clear that forms of manipulation and therapy are still present, in the form of posters, information letters and activities teaching people how to use the elevator or how to behave or keep the public domain clean. Such communication strategies highlight how institutions conceive the norm, introduce the constraint of conformity that must be achieved (Foucault, 1991).

Third, initiatives that try to go beyond manipulation and therapy not only stand in sharp contrast with such forms of normalization or paternalism but also deal with constraints at a material and technical level. Many large-scale social estates have been built during the post-war period. The

cheap and experimental materials and construction methods that were still in their infancy at the time pose specific renovation challenges today. Participatory initiatives focusing on the regeneration of outdoor spaces or public facilities are less likely to attract the interest of inhabitants, as they first want to see their own dwelling condition improved.

Nevertheless, although inhabitants commonly see these «"powerholders" as "homogenous blocs", they host divergent points of views and competing vested interests» (Arnstein, 1969, p. 217). The SoHoLab project revealed that large-scale social estates are regularly subject to a multiplicity of planning instruments, both ordinary and extra-ordinary financial injections, complicating the development of a broadly supported future direction. It also obstructs an understanding by inhabitants of the different regeneration processes, and their potential role in this. Next to that, also within institutions, there is an unequal distribution of information and power, for instance between "architects" involved in regeneration processes, and social workers employed by the social department. While the latter deal with everyday concerns of inhabitants, they are seldom seen as a significant stakeholder in regeneration processes. Divergent and competing viewpoints, interests and realities between actors focusing on social concerns vs on material-technical concerns complicate their communication (Mosseray et al., 2020).

In the SoHoLab project, the enhanced awareness about unequal power relations, amongst others translated in feelings of powerlessness and aversion towards participation by inhabitants, helped to strengthen the accountability and responsiveness of the institutions concerned. Ultimately, this might contribute to both a shifting governance culture at the institutional level and enhanced knowledge on urban neighbourhoods, essential for reaching more empowering regeneration processes (Mosseray et al., 2020).

3.2 Supporting competences and promoting co-learning

As already mentioned, local people could play a crucial role in the regeneration of large-scale social estates. Even though these spaces are often characterized by social exclusion and high levels of socio-economic fragilities, at the same time they represent "local tanks" of competences and social resources that often tend to remain invisible. Local empowerment was considered as a key-point in the SoHoLab action-research development and also a crucial element of a radically new planning approach to cope with large-scale social housing estates. This is especially important for the most "unheard" part of the population of these estates (youngsters; women, especially with a migratory background;

people in precarious economic situations, etc.): empowerment is declined as an integrated approach oriented to highlight, reinforce or build their competences as part of a local community. Hence, one of the main objectives of empowerment planning is to create and "cultivate" spaces of co-learning and co-design of initiatives directed to these populations, able to involve them in the different phases: from the definition of contents and activities, to the learning or development of certain skills/knowledge, to the implementation, to the self-reflection on the co-designed path. In the SoHoLab cases, these spaces often took the shape of pilot projects, associated with specific populations.

Competences are a way to access society, both in terms of socio-economic inclusion and of full participation to citizenship. Three dimensions of competencies and skills development can be identified. First of all, there is the "capacity to aspire" (Appadurai, 2004): in disadvantaged contexts, throughout their lives, people have experienced lower levels of access to opportunities, compared to other parts of the city. Hence, many of them do not know that they can aspire to and, often, do not consider themselves engageable in projects, actions, training, etc. which, on the contrary, could potentially promote their personal development and potentiate their knowhow. Therefore, it is very important to reinforce and potentiate this aspect, developing strategies for efficient engagement. Secondly, the aspect of the proper "knowhow": at times, skills owned by part of the populations are not formalized in a way which is properly acknowledged by society. Moreover, often, there are even "implicit" skills (e.g.: cultural mediation; artisanal skills, etc.) not fully recognized as "useful" skills even by the person who owns them. Therefore, it is very important to focus, beyond the mapping and identification of skills, to an adequate "formalization" and strengthening, aimed on the one hand at a reinforcement of awareness and know-how related to certain skills, on the other hand at a good degree of formal recognition of these skills, in line with their level of development. Thirdly, the knowledge related to the understanding of "rules" and social norms related to the labour market. It is especially challenging for people with different cultural backgrounds and who have not experienced frequent contacts with the labour market to autonomously develop or promote the know-how related to personal and relational qualities; qualities which are required and highly esteemed in contemporary job selections. Therefore, a deep empowerment process should take into account this aspect, in order to be more complete and focused on a comprehensive development of the self.

It is important to underline here that competencies and skills act, at two levels, deeply connected one to the other: the personal and the collective. In the paragraph above we have just explored the first dimension. The second

one is more related to a process of reinforcement of citizenship, intended as the capacity to act and actively participate in urban creation and urban life (Holston, 1998; Isin, 2009), which is usually wicked in large-scale social housing estates. These areas, indeed, are characterized by "weaker forms of citizenship": "traditional citizenship" does not allow many people to be represented and to have a voice in collective matters (Maranghi, 2014). These places are characterized by the high presence of "unnamed figures" (Isin, 2009), whose voices fail to be reached or to emerge. These are certainly migrants, especially the ones with an irregular status living in precarious housing conditions (co-habitations in overcrowding, squatting, etc..); but also, more broadly – regardless their national background – people living in precarious situations (such as elderly and fragile people, e.g. people with disabilities or psychiatric pathologies, etc.). The discourse on citizenship is deeply connected to the discourse on rights and capabilities, as introduced by Sen and Nussbaum (Sen, 1985; 1990; Nussbaum & Sen, 1993; Nussbaum, 2002). The authors brought attention to the need to look at rights not only as a formal status but by measuring the ability of subjects to effectively practice them. In this sense, the development of competencies is intended as able to reinforce and stimulate the participation in society of people who have been always excluded from it and from the possibility to contribute to transforming their own environment.

In this regard, working on competencies does not only act at an individual level but functions as a vehicle to promote collective reflections, directly involving local people and their personal expertise of experiences and knowledge in planning processes. Appadurai has described the "right to research", as the right to access tools to increase knowledge capital which is essential to foster local claims and to participate – at different levels – in policy arenas. This realization proves to be useful in the context of the SoHoLab (or ULLs in general) as it implies there is a responsibility to develop knowledge as relational and inclusive, accessible and usable, so, not just more available but more understandable. And, also, by simulating the access to research-tools and critical analysis, in order to better support people in practising full and aware citizenship. Fareri (1995) described it as "the virtuous circle education-advocacy" by analysing the United States Urban Centre model in marginal areas. These cases represent not only the relevance of dissemination of information but also of the provision of cognitive and interpretative tools, useful for consciously intervening in policy arenas and interacting with other social actors (Cognetti, 2016). Research and education operate, then, the choice of making access and transfer of knowledge a "condition for development", as Paulo Freire would say (1970). In SoHoLab this process was experienced in the cases of Ghepensimi (in San Siro, see Cases studies section at the end of this

part) and the storytelling and Brico Rencontre projects (in Peterbos, see Cases studies section at the end of this part), starting, first of all, from the individual dimension of competencies and skills' development. This methodology seems to be effective to guide, then, a wider and collective reflection on the neighbourhood starting from very concrete aspects and issues, in which participants feel really involved.

3.3 Enabling spaces: bridging social worlds

Today, in many of our urban contexts, local and bottom-up promoted experiences which refer to sharing and "collaborative construction of the city" are becoming more and more important for territorial development and cohesion, and therefore can no longer be considered as "marginal" experiences. The concepts of "doing together" and "activation from below" are replacing the "structured participatory path" promoted especially during the '90s (Bianchetti 2014; Savoldi, 2014; Wachter, 2020). The relationship between collaborative practices and re-appropriation or regeneration of spaces is crucial and profound: usually, these practices promote the regeneration of empty buildings or abandoned green areas or foster the organization of informal welfare and accessible cultural production. Even if this kind of experience has always been present in our cities, today it emerges with particular evidence since these practices are gradually expanding and covering a wider range of diverse fields and actors involved (Cellamare & Cognetti, 2014; 2017).

In places such as large-scale social housing estates – where both the traditional relationship of political representation, the routine mechanisms of governance, and social cohesion are deeply compromised – the role of these "enabling spaces" is to contribute to "mend" these relationships. Enabling spaces could be defined, then, as both metaphorical and physical platforms, where the interaction – even conflictive ones – among different actors lead to the transformation of local practices of governance, of spaces, of relationships, etc.

These processes are particularly relevant in contexts where institutions (at different levels) have progressively lost their ability of acquiring knowledge and, so, the effectiveness of their action. Indeed, enabling spaces stimulate, on the one hand, the improvement of institutional learning (de Leonardis, 2001; Donolo, 2011), especially related to the issue of urban regeneration (Ostanel, 2017). On the other hand, the learning process is wider and includes other actors which progressively qualify themselves as relevant in the arena (Third sector organizations, local groups, NGOs, etc.).

Following Cognetti (2018c), enabling spaces are, first of all, contexts

able to stimulate a complex interaction among institutions and local actors belonging to the civil society (bringing different pieces of knowledge, values, cultural belongings, power position, etc.). Therefore, they are primarily to be intended as a relational field, in which relationships of trust and cooperation can be strengthened and can enrich the territorial social capital. Secondly, they are fluid and incremental contexts, within which actors could change their positions, roles and points of view over time, through different kinds of possible interactions (cooperative, conflictive, etc.). Through relationality, a "mutual learning path that is generated through the recognition of a field where different voices and interests can be negotiated, where conflict can be seen not as a barrier but as a manageable problem" (Padovani, 2016, p. 40). Thirdly, they are contexts able to produce new knowledge as a result of the construction of bridges between social worlds. This aspect implies that all forms of knowledge are legitimate within the platform [15]. Through the participation in these processes, actors are induced to negotiate their own values, roles, understandings, and therefore they are "enabled" to build new ones, based on the relationships with other actors involved.

What makes it possible to state that a bottom-up promoted regeneration process becomes an "enabling space" is, on the one hand, the space given to mutual learning, on the other hand, the possibility to scale-up and introject these learnings in the ordinary practices (both institutional and local ones).

Therefore, enabling spaces are conceived as local planning platforms in which it is not just possible to experiment good practices among citizens and local organizations but to effectively test new forms of governance and of interaction among administrations and the local dimension. Places in which institutions are pushed to experience the possibility of innovation of procedures and locals have the chance of strengthening tools for community empowerment. In these platforms, again, knowledge - produced within the ULL - plays a key role: usable knowledge becomes the medium through which fruitful communication and working together become possible. Local organizations are acknowledged a role precisely because of the quality of knowledge of the territory that they could bring to the process; while institutions could bring the knowledge related to available normative tools, etc.

The stress should be put on the transformative role of enabling spaces, in which mutual exchange triggers the possibility to change and improve existing practices. In the SoHoLab framework this issue has been practiced mainly in two ways: on the one hand, researchers have found out how the co-design of little and incremental pilot projects, which engaged both institutions, local organizations and inhabitants, have

produced effective learning-friendly contexts, fertile to acquire the ability to work together and also encouraging the different actors to take the risk of experimenting and testing the new. Although socially-oriented LLs are usually concerned with process-based innovation rather than with product-based one (Franz, 2015), it is important to highlight that the issue of working on the transformation of even little but concrete and existing physical spaces increase the possible impact, even when stressing conflicts. On the other hand, SoHoLab researchers have also experienced how working on the collective production of overreaching planning vision by involving different actors and include their expertise and knowledge (such as in the case of the Sansheroes network or the Peterbos Coordination Commettee) stimulates the production of new capabilities and new mutual learnings.

In both cases, space itself is, in other words, a powerful enabling platform, especially in a context in which maintenance and caring of collective and shared space is a crucial issue.

G

Ghepensimi: working with women in San Siro

Promoted by: SoHoLab Milan
Localization: Milan (Italy); Neighbourhood: San Siro
Years: 2017 – 2018

Highlights: local skills, individual empowerment, co-design
Main references: http://www.mappingsansiro.polimi.it/3-progetti/3-2-reti-e-competenze-locali/

The project: In Milanese dialect Ghe pensi mi means "I will take care of it": that is the expression that a group of women involved in the SoHoLab pilot project have chosen to identify the service they were willing to offer. San Siro neighbourhood is characterized by the presence of a high percentage of people coming from different countries (85 nationalities are represented in San Siro, where half of the population is not of an Italian origin). Women, especially from Egypt and Morocco, are especially numerous and spend lot of time in the neighbourhood, yet often they suffer from isolation and social exclusion. The main objective of Ghe pensi mi action was to involve a group of women with different cultural background in the co-design of services and products which could encourage their autonomy and increase their social inclusion. From October 2017 to May 2018 a group of women from the neighbourhood (around 20) was involved in a process of emergence and identification of their craft and skills (related to their cultural background or acquired thanks to the migratory process), such as linguistic mediation, cooking, sewing, body care, home care and babysitting etc., with the aim of acquiring awareness of one's own resources, potentially expendable on the job market. In a second moment, the group of women was accompanied by the formulation of an offer of activities and services that were "tested", with the collaboration of the neighborhood's entities, on events and public meetings or individually. More than constituting a concrete chance of

finding a job, the pilot project was aimed on the one hand at stimulating the activation of this relevant but invisible part of the population, increasing their confidence in their abilities; on the other hand at raising the issue of migrant women's working and social inclusion, presenting it to local institutions and administrative bodies (employment center, etc.) but also to third sector entities which specific competences in this field.

H

In search for new narratives in Peterbos

In Spring 2018, increased police surveillances at Peterbos, to deal with nuisances caused by drug traffic, culminated in several incidents between young people and the police, and an investigation of the public prosecutor. These incidents and the neighbourhood of Peterbos were widely covered in the media for a couple of weeks. In articles, reportages, twitter feeds and opinions, politicians, researchers, journalists, experts, and social workers shed their light on the circumstances for this violence and Peterbos in general. In response to this, the SoHoLab team (community organization Samenlevingsopbouw and researchers) launched several initiatives. The aim of these initiatives was not to improve the image of Peterbos, but rather to provide a platform for inhabitants to create their own narratives, as a reaction to a public imagination that was created by externals.

A first initiative was the development of an open letter, that described the impact of the media frenzy on inhabitants and their mutual relationships. The draft of the letter was written by one researcher of the Brussels SoHoLab, who had an apartment in Peterbos for almost one year and it was adapted and signed by 27 inhabitants and 7 social or community workers. The letter was published in several online news outlets (see http://soholab. org/news/media-attention-peterbos).

A second initiative was the development of a digital storytelling project. Digital Storytelling is a method in which participants create short movies, consisting of moving images, pictures and drawings. In digital storytelling,

Promoted by: SoHoLab Brussels
Localization:
Brussels (Belgium); Neighbourhood: Peterbos
Years: 2018 - on
Highlights: Digital storytelling, co-creation, counter images, counter stories
Main references: http:// insjalet.be/projects/ peterbos/

participants talk about their own lives, in their own voices (Truchon, 2016). The underlying idea is to offer a creative tool for "unheard" voices to be heard (Gregori-Signes & Pennock-Speck, 2012) and is often used among marginalized and sensationalized communities. By promoting them as "experts" in their own lives (Truchon, 2016), they are included as active subjects in forming an image of their neighbourhood (Costera Meijer, 2012). The digital storytelling project was led by a researcher of the Odyssee university college, who created the methodology of Insjalet. Over the course of six weeks, small movies with participants were created, using a self-written text, pictures, drawings and short moving images. Eight participants joined the project (5 singles, 3 female, 2 male and 3 teenage boys) resulting in 7 stories.

The initial goal of the project was to work on narratives surrounding the estate, but the movies were also a valuable tool in other projects. The trajectory and the information gathered from the movies inspired to reflect on general conceptions on public space and participation in the regeneration of large-scale social estates. Additionally, the project inspired a follow-up documentary on the neighbourhood to continue the audio-visual dialogue on Peterbos. The social worker of Samenlevingsopbouw would like to use this audio-visual dialogue in order to strengthen inhabitants in enforcing their right to qualitative housing and a decent management of their daily environment. The movies have also been shown to local policymakers to address issues of paternalism and participation in the neighbourhood. Furthermore, the movies inspired to develop an up-cycling project in the neighbourhood (see the Brico Rencontre case).

I

Brico Rencontre

The idea to develop an upcycling project in the neighbourhood of Peterbos originated during the Digital storytelling trajectory. One participant expressed her wish to have a studio in the neighbourhood, in which inhabitants could follow workshops or make paintings. Her apartment became too small for the paintings she was making. When speaking about their appreciation of the neighbourhood, several participants complained about the pieces of furniture and bulky household refuse left in or around the garbage containers. Others appreciated the group dynamic that had been created throughout the workshops and wished to continue doing something together in the future.

The Brico Rencontre (meeting) project, that came out of these ideas, is led by Samenlevingsopbouw, some participants of the Digital storytelling project and supported by the SoHoLab researchers. Several times a month, a group of inhabitants gathers in a space in block 8, to recuperate pieces of furniture, to renovate and/or redesign them. By developing the project in and around the block, the group soon expanded into a relatively stable group of 8 people. In summer 2019 they sold all the recycled furniture at the flea market during the neighbourhood festivity at Peterbos. Initially, the aim was to take this project to a next level, more continuously selling the objects in a small shop in the neighbourhood (Palette d'Or). However, practical issues, such as renovation works in the block in which the project is developed and differing ambitions among participants, complicate this aim. Currently, participants are receiving training to learn some basic technical competencies to renovate the furniture.

Promoted by: SoHoLab
Brussels
Localization:
Brussels (Belgium);
Neighbourhood:
Peterbos
Years: 2018 - on
Highlights: local skills,
co-creation, engaging
by doing

Sansheroes local network

J

Sansheroes network is a neighbourhood network composed by around 20 different entities, including volunteering associations, social services, research entities, cultural associations, health care services, local activist and resident committees, local churches and religious groups etc. It was started by Mapping San Siro in 2016 and at the beginning, it focused on the analysis of the neighbourhood starting from the knowledge that the different organizations were able to gather and share. The objective of this phase was to produce a shared vision of San Siro, in order to present it to the local and municipal authorities and to ask them to more effectively intervene on specific and urgent issues. From then on, the network started to meet once a month and little by little, apart from enlarging itself, it also began to be a planning platform, able to generate co-design projects. The fact that the network was composed by very different actors – bringing together different methodologies and purposes – enriched it a lot; Mapping San Siro had a cohesive role in putting shared and usable knowledge at the core of the very existence of the network. Knowledge became a tool to reciprocally recognize competence in the neighbourhood and which triggered a cooperative attitude in a context that until then had always been very fragmented. In 2019 Sansheroes publicly presented to institutions and the city a document ("Istantanee di San Siro/Snapshots of San Siro") that was produced during three years of work and which was shared and enriched by the comments of groups of inhabitants. The document also contained a vision for the future, including planning perspectives, some of which the network is already working on.

Promoted by: SoHoLab Milan
Localization: Milan (Italy); Neighbourhood: San Siro
Years: 2016 - on

Highlights: usable knowledge, co-design, non-expert knowledge
Main references: Maranghi, 2019

4. Rethinking urban design in large-scale social housing estates

4.1 Changing lifestyles and perceptions of space

The usual criticisms that have been levelled against modernist large-scale housing estates – the presence of a disproportionate public space, of conflicts and a lack of transitions between public and private spaces – should be re-examined in the light of changing lifestyles. Social changes such as the desire for individuation felt by all individuals, even between members of the same family, the intrusion of work into the sphere of the home, affect the working-class suburbs as they do in other parts of the city. This is often forgotten as these peripheral housing estates of the modernist era are often perceived as enclaves -as some sort of heterotopias that seemingly escape the great movements and changes occurring in society at large.

When redesigning space in modernist estates, architects, planners and managers should be attentive to social practices, rather than trying to regulate them at all costs on the grounds that they do not conform to the idealized notion of public space. This is no plea to reduce their margin of intervention. It rather draws the attention to consider the "misappropriation" of places, or forms of appropriation often deemed inappropriate and illegal as illustrations of the malleability of modern architecture and the way in which inhabitants have been able to bend it to their practices. It can feed the imagination of architects and prevent their urge to give shape and imagination to places that are in constant evolution.

In this case, the boundaries between public and private, which in history have never ceased to evolve, are to be redefined in the light of the individual's desire to find a little privacy, both inside and outside the home. This implies that housing should be thought of beyond the physical boundaries of its walls, that it can integrate "secondary spaces" - dear to the sociologist Jean Remy (1999) - those spaces where the individual can give free rein to his/her need for intimacy and express his/her identity.

The SoHoLab's analysis of the Fresnes estate illustrate some of these points. First of all, the car park serves as a converted DIY or mechanics workshop, invested more by men than women, illustrating how the sphere

of work seeps into the residential realm. Secondly, the playground that serves as a lounge or meeting place for women, illustrates how the private sphere enters public -or shared- space. These spaces also reflect the differentiation of spaces according to gender or generation. They combine the qualities of public and private. While being in the midst of others, residents engage in an activity that functions as a protective bubble that allows to isolate oneself from a neighbor who might be too present. As work is integrated into the domestic sphere, it reshapes the boundaries between public and private. The boundaries between domestic and work activities are also blurred as service jobs offered today to low-skilled suburban residents -such as providing childcare- turn a household task into a profession. The do-it-yourself mechanics who either work on cars for fun or remunerated equally blur the line between pleasure and work. The context of low employment rates thus further changes the domestic spaces as they are opened for (part-time) remunerated work, or simply because the DIY activity is an act of appropriation in itself. Do-it-yourself requalifies the space but also improves the identity of the individual. If the nature of public space in estates is considered from the point of view of its actual use, and not from a legal point of view, it becomes clear that it integrates different levels of "publicness".

Architects and the estate managers that are their clients should shape space accordingly, but also lawyers can be part of the process, as new configurations in between property and rent, in between public and private are receiving much attention nowadays (Garnier, Zimmermann, 2018; Ost, 2003). The old notion of third places or commonplaces is put on the agenda again, as spaces that can be shared rather than owned. These common spaces and shared use are strongly promoted and applied in the more affluent areas of our cities. Many of these projects emanate from residents with a high financial, social and cultural capital, as they are considered capable to engage in and organize such initiatives. In estates and neighborhoods with vulnerable residents, such solutions are often more difficultly envisaged because of the deeply rooted representation that in poor areas such competences to "regulate" the commons are absent. However, in many ways the car park/workshop area in estates such as Fresnes, and a lot others cities already functions de facto as a third-place or a commons. It displays common and plural uses as well as the implicit rules for using and sharing the space (Lefrançois, 2014).

Conceiving third spaces in housing estates also questions the concepts of defensible space or situational urban planning (Newman, 1972; Coleman, 1985; Lefrançois, 2006) which are often directed at public space in housing estates, with the aim of preventing delinquency and conflicts but that often result in creating monofunctional spaces. The examples of the

car park – combining parking lot and DIY workshop – and of the playground – a public as well as a domestic space for children and mothers, play area and living room at the same time – illustrate the richness of a flexible and multiply interpretable design and layout of outdoor space in housing estates.

Also the stereotyped needs of particular groups of residents as interpreted by designers, planners and estate managers risk in further "stereotypisation" of space in regeneration projects. Women and in particular mothers, who might be inclined to express themselves primarily as mothers, may also need their own space. But given the societal stereotypes and expectations linked to this role they might feel unease to express their need for a space that is not only free of men but also of children. This becomes clear when they reclaim spaces that are usually envisioned primarily for men and youngsters, such as gyms and sports halls. They see in these places the possibility of being able to engage in their own activities, away from men and children.

For the time being, only allotment or ecological gardens, which are flourishing in renovated estates, seem to be accepted as shared spaces. These gardens, not only conceived as spaces to appropriate and meet, but also to educate civility, cleanliness and good neighbourliness, are not always appreciated by inhabitants. Instead, they are associated with dirtiness and vermin. The somewhat ethnocentric and paternalistic approach overlooks the fact that they might be more suited for wealthier populations, who have an increasing dematerialized know-how, especially in the age of the Internet, in search of a return to the land and to the trades of doing (Berrebi-hoffmann, Lallemant, 2018). In addition, such allotment or ecological gardens do not play the role of thresholds or public spaces, like shops, facilities, urban parks, which allow people from different backgrounds, not necessarily inclined to get along, to meet.

As highlighted above, a slightly more attentive look shows that social tenants are not resistant to appropriate an ecological imperative. In that sense, the Living Lab – conceived as a meeting place for different populations – could be envisaged as a space for experimenting other ways of thinking about architecture and urban planning in relationship to the ecological question. Such a living lab might help to conceive peripheral large-scale social estates beyond a city/nature opposition. The Fresnes case studies and Insjalet storytelling trajectory revealed that inhabitants may have understood this better than anyone else, and appreciate this context due to its intrinsic characteristics.

4.2 Places and people, risk and excesses of Urban Living Labs

The practices of transitional and tactical urban planning have flourished in recent years. Some believe that they open new avenues for planning policies where various expressions of civic sense and citizenship can find ways and channels to express themselves. They emerge and insert into the flaws and cracks of urban planning and project urban planning deemed to be lacking innovation and in search of renewal - or better, reinvention. These non-standard approaches are genetically related to Living Labs and incorporate in most cases their main ingredients: innovation, experimentation, learning by doing, the participation of users and various stakeholders. This current feeds on approaches that decline all-out urban sustainability ranging from shared gardens to short circuits and edible landscapes from urban agriculture to precarious installations and temporary architecture in the public space to accommodate, to house various collaborative activities generally obeying the philosophy of do-it-yourself and grassroots initiatives. Its adherents or sympathizers are generally sensitive to representations in the air of time advocating a forward march towards a model of frugal city applying on all levels, for individuals and local communities, the values and practices of sobriety – if not austerity.

Such visions are generally encouraged by modernist urban powers[20] which, in good heart or forced march, stimulate and accompany these alternative practices and misuse of the standard approaches of urban planning. Often, these urban planning margins are incorporated into innovative approaches launched by cities wishing to offer real estate products and hybrid services combining private and collective developers or associations if not from the social sphere and solidarity, at least taking their distance from the logics of profit and the market. Moreover, it must be recalled that most of the time they are part of the framework and the spirit of experimental, cognitive user-centric and participatory approaches that can be stamped by the Living Lab label (Canapero & Benavero, 2016). Observers have analysed this trend as a gradual shift from one-off to the mainstream of urban policies. This seems excessive even though many local authorities have incorporated this type of urban planning into their planning offer as well as into their political agenda. Are these emerging practices called for a lasting anchor in the urban landscape? It is true that the collaborative urban fabric is a hit with caring audiences.

De facto, urban modernist strata have hooked this type of experience, combining the informality, creativity and festive culture that these approaches convey. In particular, in western metropolises, this trend expresses post-materialistic aspirations brought by social and urban

areas in gentrification. It is clear that some local authorities are surfing this wave by capturing and retaining audiences of sympathizers, cronies or clientele. Are we witnessing the rise of a new model called to become, if not dominant, at least inscribed in current practices, routinized and placed at the top of the planning agenda? Yes, certainly, but the scale of micro-projects that lie in the margins of ordinary urban production-but the most massively structuring-of housing, equipment and infrastructure operations. For this is the destiny of alternative planning: to intervene at the margins, in the faults, the gaps in the development policies. Gap is geographically the appropriate word because the elective places of tactical planning are mainly abandoned, wasteland, unoccupied land waiting for an assignment.

Popular and publicized, it affects only very moderately the essential components and mechanisms for the production and operation of urban tissues. In truth, the visibility and media coverage of these operations are inversely proportional to their actual ability to produce significant effects on the urban layout. These projects also struggle to be part of the long term: their nature obeys, in fact, the temporal cycles of the event, the planning and the temporary installations. In any event, this is neither disappointing nor deplorable, the will or ambition of tactical planning is not to change the architecture of the city! It must also be seen that, in the most favourable contexts, these approaches convey values and good feelings which are propagated by imitation which open up promising avenues and new principles for development policies. Last but not least, the approaches to tactical planning are based on collective intelligence, the production of common goods, cooperation and diffuse-for the worse and the better-values of sharing and solidarity. In other words, their message is benevolent and hints at ways and hopes for development projects outside the difficult struggle of real estate development. As such, they must be honoured, and they deserve to be encouraged - and evaluated and channelled. The rise of these experiences, however, raises a question: is this collaborative model not the preserve of the metropolitan fact and even more so in gentrified neighbourhoods with no real power to disseminate in disadvantaged spaces, be it the social housing neighbourhoods or low-density rural areas? Let's also acknowledge it: like temporary urban planning, Living Labs are, par excellence, a polarized metropolitan fact in some neighbourhoods and far from having won the sensitive areas awarded by the city politics!

For all the reasons cited, in a minimal register-one could say cosmetic-and in many respects, tactical planning is on the road to institutionalization. Indeed, it is observed that many institutions in charge of development have appropriated the languages and codes of this short-lived planning. The latter seems to have now been incorporated, even

digested, into/by the urban production strategies of the so-called creative neo-liberal city. In total, it must be admitted that tactical planning is a new essential element of contemporary urban policies of metropolitan areas that are caught up in competitive logic to attract investment, creators and tourists (Douay & Prévot, 2016).

4.3 Limits and potentialities of an incremental regeneration approach

Many European large-scale social housing estates have experienced during the 90s of the last century different programs and policies aimed at their regeneration. Integrated urban policies (among others, for instance, the Neighbourhood Contracts and the Urban Programs) included the interrelation between physical and socio-economic interventions, acting, at least on papers, for a wide and multi-scalar change of the neighbourhood considered. Rather than focusing on their results and effects (see Aernouts et al., 2020a), here it could be highlighted that, after the time of integrated urban policies, especially in Southern European countries (this is the case of Italy), large social-housing estates have not been invested by such a relevant amount of resources. Generally speaking, resources currently allocated to the urban regeneration of large-scale social housing estates are scarce, with important peaks in Mediterranean areas of Europe. Large-scale social housing estates are therefore experiencing a phase of stagnation which is worsening the living conditions of inhabitants and local stakeholders. In these places and in these conditions, incremental interventions are often seen as a possibility to still promote some kind of local change and work on the improvement of living conditions. We refer here to little interventions (such as pilot projects, experimentations, etc.) which include both locally promoted initiatives and institutional policies. Within this framework, the idea promoted by the SoHoLab (especially in the Italian context, as already mentioned, due to the existing conditions) is the one of developing a wider and co-designed common vision (a sort of ex-post integrated plan) which is able to bring together, rationalize, converge policies, initiatives, actions that come from different actors, policy sectors, etc. It is a way to adapt to existing conditions but at the same time to keep pushing towards a wider, complex and integrated vision of urban regeneration which could, little by little, be able to orient and influence the incremental dimension, by creating connections, coordination, collaboration among actors, etc.

On the one hand the ULL constitutes an important tool in these regards since it represents par excellence the possibility of testing innovations on a micro-scale. Compared to the large-scale and integrated interventions, indeed, the LL approach usually deals with small scales,

elaborating processes or products which could be then eventually scaled-up and transferred in other contexts or at a wider scale. Regarding this aspect, Concilio refers to the concept of frugality elaborated by Molinari: «[...] experimented solutions use small amounts of resources and are frugal [...] from two different points of view. To begin with, they are developed with resources available in the specific problem contexts and do not require relevant additional economic or physical resources (citizens are more prone to mixing resources than professional designers). Secondly, they are developed and tested in spaces of proximity, localities. They are situated and consequently frugal in dimension and do not require large investments. This frugality adds to these solutions being reversible and effective in urban environments» (Concilio, 2016, p. 12). Indeed, the LL approach offers the possibility to experiment – at a small scale – workable solutions to problems and issues experienced in large-scale social housing estates. Therefore, positioning these experimentations in the wider vision mentioned above could constitute a sort of "side strategy", useful to test innovative solutions which require a limited amount of money and resources but which could function as working platforms hopefully to be scaled up because their feasibility has already been successfully tested. Moreover, the participation of local actors and citizens acquires - within an ULL framework - a very specific mean and is connected to clear objectives (the elaboration of a service, a product; the transformation of a space, etc.): an issue which could help to avoid the risk of the frustration associated with participation when it becomes a mere form of consultation (pretending to assume a per se value, not oriented to change). Also, in this regard, the scaling-up of participation processes could be more successful if tested before at a restrained scale.

On the other hand, however, it should be underlined that the side strategy or incremental planning is more a form of adaptation to certain constraints than a desirable perspective, since it also subtends substantial risks and bottlenecks. Indeed, it could also lead to the fragmentation of interventions or to deal only with marginal issues, avoiding the crucial ones (usually also more conflictive ones) on which institutions are less likely to invest in or to experiment on.

We would like to refer in this regard to a kind of planning which is focused on "empowering". In this discussion, we regard empowerment in planning as a combination of top-down and bottom-up processes (Aernouts et al., 2020b), inserted in a specific context of problems and resources and integrated with a common process of co-learning and planning together. In this sense, incremental planning is regarded more like a step towards this more complete perspective, in which the different actors are aware of the empowering process they are together experiencing and building.

K

Green Living Lab: An incremental project on public space

Green Living Lab San Siro is a pilot action of the SoHoLab project, which promoted the participated regeneration of via Abbiati, one of the most problematic streets in San Siro neighbourhood where the first space opened by Politecnico of Milan was located. The project was aimed at bringing public attention to the condition of public space in the neighbourhood, often neglected both by institutions and locals and characterized, for instance, by the abandonment of waste, etc. GreenLivingLab was conceived then to promote a pilot project which could demonstrate how public space improvement could function as a device to encourage new forms of cooperation between citizens and local institutions, inhabitants and organizations and also to favour better living conditions in public space, especially for residents.

The transformation started by Temporiuso.net architects in collaboration with Mapping San Siro researchers and the participation of inhabitants, local institutions and associations has led to the co-design and co-construction of an intervention on the sidewalk (news colours and drawings, new furniture: green areas, benches, new bollards to prevent car parking; bicycle racks...). The intervention - which was also financed through the winning of a call promoted by King Baudouin Foundation - gave a start to the first Collaborative Agreement of the Municipality of

Promoted by: SoHoLab Milan with temporiuso. net NGO
Localization: Milan (Italy); Neighbourhood: San Siro
Years: 2018 - 2019

Highlights: public space, tactical urbanism, collaborative city, incremental urbanism

Milan (Patto di Collaborazione), an innovative tool which has the aim of facilitating the relationship among institutions and citizens in taking care of shared spaces of the city.

In a wider vision, the quality of public space is crucial to improve the liveability of the neighbourhood and the Green Living Lab Project represented a step to involve both institutions and locals in collaborative work to understand which new urban designs but also which new forms of governance and maintenance could be implemented in order to foster this vision.

L

Urban design and observation exercises in Peterbos

For three years, first year students of the Master in Urban Design and Spatial Planning of Vrije Universiteit Brussel conducted urban design studio's and mapping and observation exercises in Peterbos. The Brussels' SoHoLab researchers were part of the didactic team. For most students, these exercises are part of their first introduction to urban design tools, meaning the assignments were relatively basic and formatted. During the first semester student focused on basic mapping exercises as well as on-site observations, press reading, the assembly of socio-economic data, as well as interviews with social and youth workers and in some instances also with inhabitants. These talks with inhabitants were among other things centred on mapping their trajectories in the neighbourhood and the city at large. This revealed among other things that younger residents had a very strong outward orientation, contradicting the pre-conceived image of Peterbos as an enclave. They were also able to identify areas of intensive use of space, mainly related to "leaving" the neighbourhood, as well as the little commercial amenities in the centre of the estate, while in much of the park like environment in the neighbourhood low intensity space use prevailed, with exception of a recently renovated playground. The playground proved to be one of the only places invested also by outsiders, with exception of the occasional drug buyers who enter the neighbourhood mainly via one of the car parks to join a rather central location in the neighbourhood where drug dealing youth are dominantly present, an area somewhat avoided by other groups in the area.

In the second semester students focus on a redesign of (parts of) the public space and housing after drafting a thematic analysis (mobility,

greenery, housing, amenities) and framed within an overall vision for the neighbourhood and its surroundings. Not surprisingly, the design proposals are marked by some of the preconceived "solutions" for housing estates that regularly occur in architects' and planners proposals, such as the aim to "open up the estate to the environment" by including amenities such as sports halls or cultural centres, by including vegetable gardens. Also proposals to include middle income housing to improve social mix, or proposal to privatise part of the public space occur. Reducing car parks and the presence of the car and introducing bike facilities are frequent ingredients of student proposals. Other proposals, such as the provision of more spaces for local organisations working with youngsters, women or the elderly, careful redesigns of public space to make it more accessible (Peterbos is located on a relatively steep slope) or "wilding" parts of the park (rather than privatizing it or "cleaning it up") or apartment block renovations providing larger, more flexible and more private outdoor spaces such as terraces are probably closer to local needs. There is a discrepancy between things students learnt in the first observational exercises and interviews and the design proposals. This is illustrative of the difficulty to translate socio-spatial knowledge into design proposals. It is related to the assignment as set by the studio tutors, and the main aim of this introductory course to acquire technical skills in the design of public spaces and housing. Despite these limitations, it became clear that students eagerly immersed themselves in the reality of the site, with frequent site visits, even in a period when Peterbos came in the news because of small riots and violence on police, the press and public transport officials. As students were acquainted with the site they understood how to behave in non-conflictual ways, understanding that the violence depicted in the media was but a very narrow aspect of Peterbos' reality. They were also very eager to share results with local associations and social workers, inhabitants and officials such as the project manager of the neighbourhood contract. For the latter parties, even if the student proposals very often did not bring the "right" answer, it helped them to uncover issues that were not addressed by the planners and architects appointed for the regeneration of Peterbos. For the students, the feedback of the local actors provided a very valuable learning experience, leading to a more nuanced understanding of the lived and spatial reality of large housing estates with vulnerable inhabitants. They were also very eager to understand how their designs could "serve" the local actors and how it was translated into the ongoing planning processes. In that respect, the project manager of the municipality as well as the SoHoLab researchers play crucial roles in translating some of the findings among experts, designers, planners and architects.

M

Peterbos Masterplan
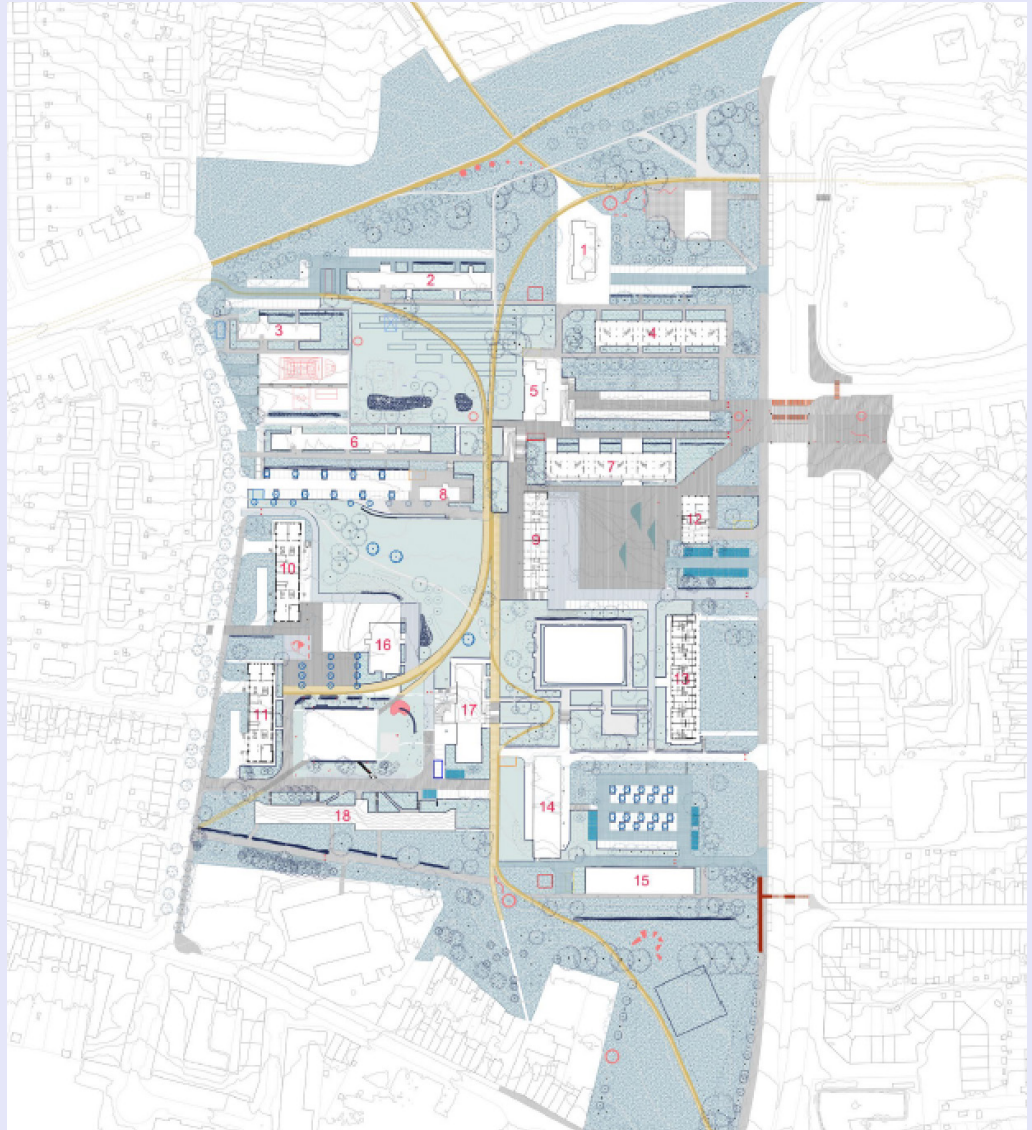
The project: The neighborhood contract of Peterbos (2017-2021) Promoted by : the municipality of Anderlecht through the sustainable neighborhood contract program
Localization: Anderlecht (Brussels, Belgium)
Years: 2020 - ongoing

Highlights: Masterplan, local issues into careful spatial transformations, considering local concerns

The masterplan project for the redesign of public space in Peterbos emanated from a public call launched by the municipality of Anderlecht as part of the neighbourhood contract program. The program has the explicit goal to develop an intensive participatory trajectory throughout the regeneration process. Its aim is not only to contribute to a renewal of the built fabric but also to install social and economic projects. Apart from the public space masterplan also the construction of a sports centre and a day-care are planned within the framework of the neighbourhood contract. The SoHoLab Brussels researchers followed the whole trajectory and participated in the jury and following committees of the masterplan project. The consortium of architects Studio Paola Vigano, VVV, ARA and BRAT won the competition and is presently designing the masterplan.

This masterplan is intended as a vision for 2029 while the neighbourhood contract only has a horizon of 4 to 6 years. The available budget will allow the partial implementation of the masterplan. The masterplan will also serve as a long-term framework for other construction projects outside and beyond the scope of the neighbourhood contract, such as building renovations and the creation of a municipal community centre.

The masterplan Peterbos 2029 (even if not concluded) is an interesting illustration of the consideration of local concerns, translating local issues into innovative and careful spatial transformations. Rather than focusing on intrusive interventoins, such as demolitions, privatizatoin and social mixing strategies, it adopts a rather modest approach. Three main strategies are interesting in this respect.

First, the masterplan reinterpreted the idea of a necessary "centre" as a place for identification and social cohesion. The project proposes to shift the centrality to the edge of the neighbourhood. Here it connects with the structururing device of the eastwest green boulevard that lies on the crest between two valleys. A central square creates a dignified and functional entry to the neighbourhood. This new central space gives Peterbos a sense and place in the wider topography of the city, and invites to think of the neighbourhood differently than in terms of enclave or a self-enclosed community.

Second, the structural idea of the project is built on the concept of "an inhabited park". The architects propose a close reading of the landscape and re-programming of space. In a site that has been scattered by car-oriented infrastructures, the masterplan reinforces the public plains by giving them more space and proposing new plantations.

Third, this detailed attention for the redesign of the spatial fabric is combined with a concern for mundane infrastructures. Issues such as garbage management, the organisation of the parking, the lay out of the playgrounds and the localisation of benches represent some of the daily concerns of inhabitants and occupies a foreground place in the definition of the masterplan. The garbage boxes for example integrated the concept of the 'intermediary grain' that punctuates the site and gives an intermediary scale between the large plains and expanses of the park and the high-rise buildings.

Finally, there is a detailed attention to the hilly terrain and spatial elements such as stairs, walls and embankments that help to negotiate the topography. As such, the masterplan provides spatial answers to everyday constraints while inscribing the site in a very old tradition that is reminiscent of the use of topography in renaissance and baroque urban design. This introduces a remarkable new imaginary not usually associated with social housing estates.

5. Reframing the "expert role" in an Urban Living Lab: insights from University experiences

5.1 The University in the city: a new role

In the SoHoLab project, the structure and meaning of the experimental ULLs were deeply influenced by the fact that these initiatives were promoted by research groups that belong to Universities. First of all it could be noticed, then, that ULLs were in this sense conceived as related to the social responsibility of each of the Universities involved, which, to different extents, was concerned with its public engagement. Responsibility is here intended, indeed, as a direct and concrete commitment of Universities in real situations and problems, related to specific territories or communities. It assumes at least two extents: that is why authors refer to a double responsibility (Castelnuovo & Cognetti, 2019): the first and more evident form of responsibility is directed outwards, since it establishes new relationships between academia and civil society; the second form of responsibility is rather oriented towards students and the academic community itself, by questioning, inspecting and reviewing structures and methods of education and research.

Opening up a space or establishing deep relationships with a marginalized territorial context by setting up a ULL, clearly affects both meanings: on the one hand, by doing so the University does not look at the city by "the outside" but it dives into the urban contexts, reversing the one-way relationship traditionally conceived and transforming the idea of the city as an object of study, into the idea of the city as a partner interacting with whom we are able to better understand social and urban changes (Castelnuovo & Ranzini, 2014). As mentioned in other paragraphs, this aspect has a lot to do with the valorisation of other forms of knowledge, different from the scientific one, but also with the possibility, for a University-promoted ULL, to become a learning platform, through which scientific and expert knowledge is shared with civil society. In this sense, it is important to underline how ULLs could become places in which new forms of knowledge are produced, but also shared: public presentations, workshops, and so on are here designed to reach a wider public, mostly composed of local organizations, inhabitants (but also institutions) who are willing to expand their knowledge on specific issues, problems, visions.

On the other hand, as the case of ULL promoted by the SoHoLab project, it is important to observe how the direct collaboration with multiple actors and the presence on site affect universities not only concerning research methodologies (and, often, orienting its practice to action) but also teaching methods. By involving teaching activities in the ULL, students have, indeed, the possibility to immerse themselves into the city and, by doing so, expand and deepen new competencies which they would need when finishing their courses. Students are, as a matter of fact, directly and concretely invited to establish local relationships, to spend time in the context and, by doing so, to improve their ability to observe material and immaterial elements and to include them in their projects. Thereby, students are invited to make a city not just a field in which to apply knowledge, but also an environment to co-produce knowledge with. As already mentioned, also students are motivated, in this way, to move away from the idea of a city as just an object of study - often identified with a map, in the case of planning students - but seeing it as a partner with which we are called to build a co-designed path (Castelnuovo & Cognetti, 2019). Moreover, it should be noticed that action-based initiatives, such as the ones promoted through ULLs (for instance, pilot projects) offer students the opportunity to explore new types of knowledge production since they stimulate learning before, during and after the action. The purpose, here, is to train professionals and researchers capable of producing changes in society and carrying on applied and responsible researches.

5.2 Third position: the role of the broker as an interface

People inhabiting large-scale social estates strongly rely on public welfare services to cover basic needs, such as housing, income, and various smaller initiatives to make ends meet (Mosseray et al., 2020). Paradoxically, institutions responsible for them are often marked by a physical absence, creating a sense of remoteness. The living lab approach of the SoHoLab project promoted the engagement of institutions at the local level, «configuring itself as a context of inter-institutional-territorial learning» (Maranghi & Cognetti, 2020, p.110). Similarly, it tried to make the local level more visible at a territorial level.

Acting both locally and at the level of the city, the living lab approach promoted by the SoHoLab could be seen as an "interface" (Wachter, 2020), "mediator" (Aernouts et al., 2020b), or "broker" (Maranghi & Cognetti, 2020), creating bridging, bonding and fertilizing dynamics between diverse places, scale levels, actors and cultural worlds. We refer to the following quote by Concilio (2016, in Maranghi & Cognetti, 2020, p. 110); «[brokers] enforce, activate and take care of relations that can

be observed and/or developed between the objects and the activities or situations composing the process itself. Brokers act as third parties with respect to the organizations involved, although they may belong to one of them. They can be intentionally or casually in charge of process caring and keep the cross-boundary context active by being intermediaries of the objects between the involved actors. Crucial for brokers are the ability and aptitude to recognize the opportunities for linking objects to specific situations. Also relevant in this perspective are actors acting as boundary crossers, key mobilizers of social capital, who provide leadership and cross the boundaries between the different involved organizations and worlds through their relationships. They understand the organizations' different capacities and can lead actions to build and use these capacities inside cross-boundary environments (Kilpatrick et al., 2014 in Concilio, 2016)». In the SoHoLab project, this "brokerage" role entailed three dimensions.

First, brokerage was both about "understanding" and "translating". Developing participant observations and attending meetings with inhabitants, associations involved in social programs and planning actors focused on renovation, we discerned communication difficulties. While this could be attributed to power dimensions, it is also due to another world of experience. Having acquired knowledge on several worlds of experience, by spending a lot of time in the social housing neighbourhoods, working together with local associations, attending meetings between planning stakeholders and studying different planning dimensions, in such meetings, we regularly took the role of mediator, trying to translate various concerns.

Second, the SoHoLab researchers were able to keep an open perspective throughout the planning process. Our living labs discerned scarcity of resources, uncovered themes, lack of communication and neglect of local living conditions. At the same time, we were continuously seeking openings and synergies in order to deal with certain challenges. This double role of discerning and discovering was only possible by approaching the site with an open mind during the three years of research.

Third, it should be noted that stakeholders played a key role. SoHoLab consolidated its presence by creating interfaces with existing stakeholders and regeneration programs such as the neighbourhood or city contract. The main difference with such "integrated regeneration approaches", is the independent position of the lab, not connected to one particular actor, nor to a specific budget. In that sense, the living lab can articulate existing devices at the local level and beyond (Wachter, 2020), contributing to new ways of coordinating stakeholders within the framework of ongoing regeneration processes.

5.3 Positionality

The SoHoLab was able to develop this research and achieve results by working in an academic context with (short-term) project funds. How the knowledge acquired, and interventions developed during the SoHoLab could be replicated or scaled up?

The collaboration between researchers and local, municipal and regional stakeholders involved in regenerating large-scale estates, such as social housing companies, umbrella organizations for social housing, municipalities, community development organizations and other NGO's was not only helpful for accomplishing the goals of the research but was also oriented towards nourishing existing practices and shifts in governance culture. In the collaboration with local stakeholders, the researchers tried to nourish reflections on actions focusing on improving inhabitants' housing situations. Fine-tuned answers to complex questions go beyond classical urban design projects or "best practices". In the SoHoLab research, it took the form of a manual for guiding planning processes in similar sites in the region, visioning with third-sector stakeholders, attending meetings, developing light interventions in the public space, activating underused spaces, creating tools for fostering citizen and third sector participation in the management of public and collective spaces (see section 5.)

Although the reflections and actions developed as part of the research might be similar to other contexts and nourish ongoing regeneration experiences for local and institutional stakeholders, and administrations and planners elsewhere, in-depth, context-specific approaches remains key. In other words, next to this dissemination through collaborations with local, municipal and regional stakeholders, it's important to consider what can be retrieved from learning experiences, whenever such investment by the university would not be possible.

Due to the independent role of SoHoLab, without financial constraints, the university researchers were able to position themselves "outside" the regeneration process, and the existing stakeholder relationships. This is different from policymakers, housing companies or planners, working in tight budgetary and time constraints, often citing these constraints as reasons for deficiencies of a too short or formatted participation process. As mentioned above, the combined expertise in both spatial disciplines (architecture/urban planning) and social sciences (sociology/anthropology), and the independence from other stakeholders, allowed to approach the site with an open-minded perspective, attentive for concerns of inhabitants, local associations, but also of stakeholders responsible for renovation. Such open-minded perspective before and during renovation processes, by spending time in the neighbourhood,

listening to different perspectives and participating in meetings between planning stakeholders might also be obtained by living labs, applied researches and/or exploratory fieldworks that are not university-driven. In neighbourhoods with multi-layered challenges one could imagine local governments to establish tender procedures as open trajectories, involving interdisciplinary expertise, in order to develop profound reflexive and truly participatory work. This is in line with new notions of welfare, in which the state creates enabling frameworks in order to support and/or push local governments to distribute power and give context-specific room for innovation.

N

Live works in Sheffield

Promoted by: Sheffield
School of Architecture
(SSoA) - University of
Sheffield
Localization: Sheffield
(UK)
Years: 2014 - on

Highlights: third
mission, community
planning, local
engagement
Main references: http://
live-works.org/

Live Works is Sheffield University School of Architecture's urban room in Sheffield city centre, set up to engage local people in debate about the past, present and future of the city, and to support neighbourhoods. Launched in 2014, Live Works is the UK's first permanent university-led Urban Room. It promotes partnerships with community groups and public sector organisations across the city and the region in order to support community-led urban regeneration. Live Works involves students, graduates and researchers to collaborate with community groups and other stakeholders in the co-production of projects. Indeed, it pursues, on the one hand, the objective of making the difference to the relationship between local people and their built environment; on the other hand, the one of enhancing students' learning experience while also strengthening and expanding the impact of University research. Live Works projects are interdisciplinary and work with academics across the University to benefit partnerships promoted with best practice and expertise from the arts, education, social sciences and humanities. Activities develop in three main directions.

First, the Urban Room: the space hosts a programme of exhibitions and events in order to share and develop knowledge about the future of the city.

Second, the Project Office: the team works with communities in order to develop strategic projects focused on bettering the relationship between

people and their environment. The projects range from participation toolkits, websites, feasibility studies, detailed architectural design and small-scale architectural installations.

Third, Live Works develop research in collaboration with academic and non-academic partners, especially focusing for instance on issues like resilience, sustainable regeneration, creative community engagement and co-design.

O

Combining teaching and research in Fresnes

Between 2018 and 2020, a project studio has been set up by ENSAPLV teacher-researchers participating in the Soholab research, in the Master 2 cycle of the school of architecture. This teaching can be considered as an integral part of a living laboratory: a wide variety of actors (specialized design offices, associations, school) were associated with the studio, and students exchanged with them to set up a participative approach of the urban project inspired by living labs. To hear inhabitants who are not used to public meetings, it may seem obvious, but you have to go and meet them.

One of the most striking experiences in this approach was the meeting with the teachers and students of the Charcot College in February 2019. The two teachers Vali Ehrlich and Laura Fernandez welcomed the teachers and students of La Villette, to whom they offered the opportunity to present their work to the students and in turn to attend a presentation of the visual arts work of the college students on the "city of the future". The objective pursued by these teachers through this exercise is undoubtedly less focused on the quality of the production than on the desire to teach these students from the disadvantaged neighbourhoods of Fresnes to get to know their environment and to become actors in it. It is precisely this aspect that seems to us both virtuous and reproducible. Firstly, because it questions the students as inhabitants, whose voices are rarely heard; but also because through the students, it is also possible to reach parents.

On the other hand, the experimentation of the LL studio has enabled

Promoted by: Living Lab project studio (Master 2, S9), ENSAPLV (Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Paris la Villette)
Localization: Fresnes neighbourhood (Paris)
Years: 2018-2020

Highlights: design studio; civic engagement

architecture students to grasp the concerns and questions raised by actors in the field. One example is the case of a student who used the observations of a donor who had come to intervene in the studio to produce a project hypothesis more grounded in the reality of the social park. Or the work of another student, who collected the words of residents telling her about their daily journeys in order to establish a design work for urban furniture transforming walls and fences into places of sociability on routes that enhance the fabric of the city's public spaces and include private open spaces. It is also through the proposals of a student that we grasped the interest of setting up a mobile and flexible "living laboratory", which offers, on the one hand, the advantage of being located close to the project site and, on the other hand, the possibility of being used for different purposes (meetings, animations, shows, etc.).

Furthermore, the studio's work has borne fruit with its long-term installation. Indeed, at the end of this third year, our territorial anchoring has been strengthened; we now have a wider network of contacts, which allows us to envisage experimenting with a living laboratory less "on the surface". This third experiment will benefit from the support of the Val de Bièvre Ecomuseum, located in the heart of Fresnes, and from the dynamics of the exhibition that will be held there.

After three years of teaching, we can summarize the mutual usefulness of teaching for research in the following lines:

1. The creation of a project group, subject to its own rhythms (weekly meetings, semester reports), made it possible to accompany the first exploratory stages of our research work, used as a teaching support; in particular, we presented LL case studies to offer students avenues for reflection.

2. Students test the project's hypotheses without preconceptions or taboos. They practice the field without constraint, make contacts without hesitation, without being embarrassed to ask naïve questions, which are sometimes the most useful. They have a large number of students and make ambitious proposals.

3. The study trip is an opportunity to learn more quickly with the sites studied by our partners and to compare the reality in the field with the research work.

4. The teaching material is the direct result of our research work. The concepts around which we discuss in the sessions are rich, first-hand raw material.

5. The biannual project group is part of a longer schedule and its ambitions and appeal go beyond the simple validation of units of value.

6. In the absence of a suitable room in the school, our course takes place in the premises of the research laboratories. We took the opportunity to ask students to present their work in the form of posters, such as those that report on research.

7. The project group can be an incentive to pursue a research path (this was the case for some students in our group in 2017/2018).

P

Exploring reality: sociology and plastic art workshop in Rouen

Promoted by: Cours de sociologie et d'art plastique, ou fabrique "Explorer le réel (Master 1, S7), ENSAN(Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Normandie)
Localization: Rouen
Years: 2018-2021

Highlights: Research action ; experimental architecture ; prospective ; multipluridisciplarity ;social practices, plastic art, sociology

This course, implemented for two years, seeks to instill a research and questioning approach at a time when academic research is entering architecture schools in France: the border between action and research is considered thin there. Seeking to renew the modes of representation of the architect, it stimulates students to question the nature and form of places, through the lens of social practices which are constantly evolving today. Supervised by a teacher in social science and an artist, it relies on the intersection of views – sociology, ethnology, more specifically – to encourage future architects at the same time to immerse themselves in reality, also knowing how to detach themselves from it, when required.

The purpose of the course is to "initiate" the architect to "listen" to social practices; it also encourages architects at the same time not to ignore their ability to make inhabitants dream and to instill imagination in the field of the city and the home.

Concretely, the time of the course was that of observation and immersion in the public estates buildings of Les Hauts in the city of Rouen.

It should be noted that the students "wore" the ethnologist's clothes with

great pleasure.

They especially met with residents who were usually absent from the consultation places.

The fruit of their observation and analysis was an architectural or artistic production, presented at the end of the semester in cultural centre situated in the neighbourhood (the André Malraux center)

A first exhibition "Permis de rêver" in 2019 reported on the question of housing today (or tomorrow?) while public space - at the heart of current events and incivilities - is at the center of attention.

It gave an account of all the utopian projects dreamed up or imagined in a crossover manner by residents and students on housing.

From the meetings among students and inhabitants five themes emerged giving material for projects or even to new words, reactions from the inhabitants. For instance: Do pets, who were in the center of inhabitants' speeches, equally have a right to the city? Do parents dream of places less for themselves than for their children?

The second year, students were invited from the Cultural centre André Malraux to reflect on its transformation into a "third place": border place between the domestic space and the work space; a place where other ways of meeting and sharing space are invented; a place of freedom and of highlighting the initiatives and skills of the inhabitants. Several questions were raised: should it be more open or closed to the city, at a time when people express the desire to find themselves quiet, a little alone but also among themselves (among young people; among women etc.)? Should it be a place that allows interaction, where you enter as easily as you leave? A stopping place where you can take a break and therefore a place of exchange; a place conducive to initiative, creation, a café?

Meetings during the exhibitions made it possible to confront the views of the students with those of the inhabitants, especially the ones who were usually excluded from public consultation meetings.

Q

Research is exposed: museum as living lab

The "Shared City" exhibition in Écomusée of Val de Bièvre tells the story of the diversity of "participatory sites" in the southern Parisian territory of Val de Bièvre. The exhibition is an outcome of a collaboration between the researchers from AUSser and ATE (Schools of Architecture in Villette and Normandy), and the curators of the museum. It aims at showing that there is more than one way to design a city differently. The Écomusée was keen on offering a key input to the creation of a city. In this respect, it strives to provide a set of recommendations, or instruction manual, consisting in examples of collective construction so as to encourage citizens to participate in the co-creation of cities. The researchers, on their part, were interested in pointing out the dilemmas and the controversies among the stakeholders and highlighting the dangers of a biased, or non-representative participation, which might backfire on the cities as well as their residents if not handled diligently.

 The exhibition targets residents, especially those who are currently absent in the co-creation process, with the limitation that the most immediate public of museums are those who are already highly inclined to entering so-called participatory spheres. It also targets the main stakeholders that are already involved in the design of cities – city planners, architects, technicians, funders, service provides to city planning, regulatory institutions, and political representatives, so that they comprehend both the importance of a participative process and its possible adverse effects.

Promoted by: Living lab Paris, Rouen, Ausser and ATE laboratories, ENSAPLV (Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Paris la Villette)
Localization: Fresnes,, France
Years: september 2020-march 2021

Highlights : exhibition ; co-creation

This initiative is thus one of the embodiments of the idea of a "living lab. As a place of discussion and questioning among the professionals, residents, researchers, the exhibition provides a meeting platform as a well as a milieu of dissemination for the Soholab research. In addition to the reflections on research and action carried out, and the experience gained across seven fieldworks during the last three years, the exhibition continues asking questions about the modes of dissemination of research outcomes, and proposes to be a scene of reporting, which is at the same time enabling discussions of results and different perspectives. Research reports, which tend to contain jargon, can be wordy, cumbersome, and far from seducing the audience. Hence, the exhibition tries to embody in a place the experience and the encounters of a living lab by incorporating narratives, round tables, events, joint events with the cinema of the city. The various experiences observed in Living Labs in Europe recounted the reversals of roles and professions present: journalist/resident writing duo, architect seeking to invent different modes of proximity to residents, ethno-photographer, teacher outside the walls, the exhibition of visitor/displayed, etc. Thus, it is as much about putting one's self in the shoes of the other as looking for a transformation of self.

 What could be a better space than a museum, a prototype of heterotopias (Michel Foucault), to enable discussions - the "other spaces, that is to say, counter-spaces, a place not only outside the utopian time, but also places backed by space, of which they constitute a mirror!"? The Écomusée aims at bringing together the space and the counter-space in order to augment human experience.

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Endnotes

1   As further elaborated, this objective aimed at a more "structural" change in the way in which images and representations of certain places are constructed and communicated. Indeed, it is not only about "changing representations" but aiming at questioning the ways in which representations are "imposed" to certain places, ascribing them a "predefined" identity.

2   A French territorial authority.

3.   Agence Nationale pour la Rénovation Urbaine.

4.   By using the term "deprived areas" we refer to the fact that these territories mainly due to their institutional context (the social housing context) concentrate a population that accumulates and faces socio and economic difficulties such as being outside the official world of work (as unemployed and retired), being mono-parental household, having disability.

5.   This is particularly true in the national cases in which Housing Associations have progressively "managerialized" themselves and they lost their territorial role and the associated knowledge.

6.   Bergvar-kalerbon et al. (2009) identified four phases to describe the process promoted through the LL, which seem relevant to mention for our purposes: co-creation/co-design; exploration and research; experimentation; evaluation.

7.   «Activist knowledge […] is based on formal and informal knowledge of the administrative and political processes. From an individual perspective, it involves knowledge transfer and know-how acquired through one associative membership and belonging to informal networks. From a collective perspective, this type of knowledge is associated with the level of proximity and interactions between citizen collectives and the administrative institutions» (Lehamann et. al., p. 1095).

8.   «Usage knowledge is derived from a refined local knowing of citizens about a particular territory, which comes from repeated usages of product, infrastructures or services over time. This type of knowledge is usually externalized through stories and testimonies, revealing the particularisms of a given territory as well as usages conflicts over it. Collectively, this kind of knowledge will be formalized through public debates and the expression of "common sense" » (ibid.).

9.   «Professional knowledge is derived from the technical skills of particular stakeholders in the LL. While experts often generated this type of knowledge, it can also emerge from layperson whether from their belonging to a particular group, formal or informal (i.e. makers) or from professional skills acquisition in the LL itself along the road. This knowledge can also emerge from the interactions between stakeholders within the LL leading to collective professional knowledge» (ibid.).

10.   Which also put the basis for an architectural course of Architecture school of La Villette.

11.   We can also refer here to the concept of "floating observation" (Petonnet, 1982) intended as a methodological tool that allows researchers to approach the site with an open and ever-available perspective, allowing information to penetrate without a filter, until reference points, convergences and underlying rules emerge (see Aernouts et al., 2020c).

12.   Often, indeed, inhabitants are not called to construct a certain proposal but, after having defined it from above, they are called to act as "cinematic appearances" of the participation process.

13.   This may be a region, an agglomeration, a city, a district or neighbourhood, a road or corridor, or a building. There are many possible urban configurations that can host a ULL, but the area is normally clearly defined and has a manageable scale. (Voytenko et al., 2016).

14.   «Social living labs should ensure authenticity and credibility. Both cannot be assured as long as the research is limited to the duration of a specific research project. To create a trusting and collaborative interaction with local citizens, a shift in research strategy towards long-term engagement is unavoidable» (Franz, 2015, p. 113).

15.   Housing Association, partner of the project.

16   However, many interviews and exchanges were carried out with a large number of people working at different levels and in different departments of the 3Fs.

17.   We could define experts as "people with deep knowledge of a subject" (Davenport & Prusak, 1998).

18.   For instance, also considering the option of "not to act" in certain conditions or at certain terms.

19.   In the sense of struggling to be heard and considered by urban policies.

20.   Urban authorities sensitive to issues related to ecological transition in accordance with the values and aspirations of the "creative class".

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