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SOCIAL COHESION AND RESILIENCE THROUGH CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

A Place-Based Approach

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Preface

While traditional citizen participation is in crisis in many places, citizens are taking it into their own hands to change their neighbourhood and communities. These citizens' actions or community-based initiatives have emerged in many European countries mainly due to budget cuts and state retrenchment in various sectors (health care, social health care, energy, urban liveability, etc.) (Brandsen et al. 2017; Chaskin 2001; Seyfang and Longhurst 2016; Teasdale 2012; Edelenbos et al. 2021), meaning that community-based initiatives often undertake (former) public planning tasks to organize their common spaces. As various examples have shown (Asher and Paul 2020; Bulkeley et al. 2019; Iveson 2013; Scholl and de Kraker 2021; Willinger 2014; Ziehl 2020), residents and activists bring in their own resources, especially their time, knowledge and social networks, to design public spaces, to implement temporary uses of public streets or former brownfield sites or to establish social enterprises in more peripheral areas.

Up to now, there are few publications focusing explicitly on the spatial impacts and dimension of civic engagement, even if citizens' actions and initiatives are becoming important actors in cities and regions. This book is one of the first volumes explicitly discussing the relations between (temporary) civic engagement, social cohesion and resilience, urban change, urban planning and governance in Europe. It examines how citizens are increasingly taking it upon themselves to change their neighbourhoods and communities, how they become co-producers, makers and pioneers, and how they actively contribute to the design of urban spaces and spatial processes. As the practices of civic initiatives in European cities and regions – due to different institutional, political and historical contexts – vary greatly, the contributions in this volume show a great variety of examples and explicitly follow a comparative perspective. By analysing the potentials and limitations of civic engagement, this book further discusses how such participation can lead to greater cohesion of communities against changing environments.

Social cohesion is dependent on the interplay of attitudes and behaviours at the individual level, the actions and practices of individuals and groups, commitment to the common good, as well as rules and institutions at the structural level and trust in the constitution and (local) institutions (Forst 2020, p. 43; Green and Janmaat 2011, p. 18). This shows that the neighbourhood or community level plays a crucial role as these concepts refer to the

living environment of the residents, which depicts the interactions between individuals, communities and (local) institutions in a concrete (urban) setting (Schnur 2012). This also indicates that citizens take on responsibility for 'their' neighbourhoods and communities in various forms, as inhabitants recognize that they belong to the community and that they can change something in their immediate living environment. This can result in greater cohesion of communities against changing environments but, at the same time, it might also lead to the exclusion of other interests or initiatives as only the interests of parts of the society are represented and realized. Here, issues of power and structural forces – that shape the frames and manoeuvres for the scope of local action – come into force.

To explore the potentials and limitations of (temporary) civic engagement and urban planning with regard to social cohesion and community resilience in different contexts, the publication is divided into four parts. The two chapters in Part I provide the theoretical-conceptual framework of the research. First, civic engagement as a concept is explained in order to understand the basic principles of civic engagement for urban development. The presented analytical-descriptive framework distinguishes between citizens' individual activities, activities of citizen initiatives, and citizens' activities as a contribution to civil society's responsibility. As it can further be assumed that citizen initiatives or communities can develop resilience by actively building and engaging the capacity to thrive in an environment characterized by change, a conceptual outline of citizens' role and the transformative capacity of community-based initiatives is developed in a second step. By considering the three dimensions of width, depth and length, the analytical frame identifies various elements that are crucial for the development of transformative capacities.

The contributions in Part II analyse cultural heritage as source and target of citizens' initiatives. The examples from Albania, Slovakia, Greece and Turkey clearly indicate, to varying extents, that cultural heritage – at the same time – functions as hook and cause for engagement, be it top-down driven and supported, be it a combination of top-down and bottom-up, or be it a reaction of citizens against the plans of national or local government. Obviously, cultural heritage can be used here to trigger civic engagement and community-based initiatives, as it constitutes an important pillar of local identity which is also valued accordingly by the population. The four contributions in Part III address the various types of co-production and types of interactions between civil society and public/municipal actors, and the extent to which co-production strengthens social cohesion and resilience in urban neighbourhoods. All four chapters demonstrate that in-depth knowledge about citizens' initiatives involvement is the basis for all co-production activities as particularly the exchange of knowledge between the planning departments and different cit-

izens' initiatives allows innovative solutions and measures. All case studies further show that urban planning should understand the co-creative character of interventions such as community gardens, pop-up cafés or 'third places' as open processes for involving affected urban actors.

The four chapters in Part IV demonstrate the multifaceted nature of citizen engagement through grassroots initiatives. All chapters analyse the utilization of public spaces as interplay of citizens' initiatives and urban planning and identify different approaches: either the initiatives add value to already established and traditional forms of participation or they could be perceived as grassroots resistance or community empowerment. While the commonality in both of these utilizations of citizens' initiatives is the strengthening of social cohesion and social resilience, the different level of application points to the complexity of city making or the rupture between the process and the substance of planning. The conclusion in Part V considers and compares all the presented community-based initiatives and processes and draws conclusions with regard to the role of citizens' initiatives for social cohesion and community-based resilience. In this regard, it seems to be crucial that cities and civil society initiatives should be regarded and act as equal partners in co-production processes and that co-production or community engagement must be accompanied/ supported by structural public interventions, such as financial incentives and provision of infrastructures among other factors.

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PART I

THEORETICAL-CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

1. Citizen activities and initiatives: civic engagement for urban development

Falco Knaps, Jessica Baier and Stefan Lazarevski

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Citizen activities and initiatives are used in this chapter as a lens to describe civic engagement for urban development. Investigating citizens' contributions yields valuable insights for both planning practice and research. In planning theory, the crucial importance of civic engagement is already well established. As Friedmann (1987, 1998) elaborates, post-war spatial planning in the Western world was carried out under the proposition of a centralized state. During this period, spatial planning was assumed to benefit the public by preparing technocratic, mechanistic master plans designed by experts (mainly without any form of direct citizen participation). This way of planning could not entirely prevent rapid urban growth in combination with inadequate infrastructure and a lack of effective governance. As a result, further negative impacts such as environmental degradation, social inequality, and political instability appeared. To describe this situation of multiple problems, terms such as 'hyper-urbanization' were used (Friedmann 2002).[1] Related challenges have not only widened the ambit and objective of the planning discipline. They have also forced planners to create conditions that promote innovation and the chance to thrive, which means, in essence, to link their work more closely with an array of citizen place-based activities and their initiatives (Friedmann 1987, 1998). Likewise, Albrechts (2004) highlighted the significance of citizens' commitments and contributions in shaping places amid new vulnerabilities. He argued that citizen activities are a prerequisite for urgently needed spatial transformations in many parts of the world. Accordingly, his view on the

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[1]   Though Friedmann primarily used the term hyper-urbanization in the context of developing countries, he has also acknowledged that many of the underlying dynamics are relevant to urbanization in other parts of the world.

importance of civic engagement for urban development is transferrable beyond its context of origin in the Western world.

However, as some authors indicate (e.g., Fernández and Langhout 2018; Horlings et al. 2021), civic engagement is discussed in a variety of ways and from diverging analytical perspectives. Differing assumptions about a research topic's meaning, scope, and dynamics are neither uncommon nor a problem in general. Yet, it is useful to provide an overview of those approaches that bear the potential to be connected with relevant social phenomena and to encourage academic progress by promoting innovative ideas for practical application in spatial planning. This is particularly true for this volume, as it features a wide range of international case studies, research questions, and efforts to link civic engagement with social cohesion or resilience (see also the chapters in Part III). Against this background, this chapter does not develop one general theory of civic engagement for urban development. Instead, it considers the case studies' diversity and aims to present a likewise multifaceted conceptual overview as a foundation. Consequently, this chapter develops a common basis for taking different perspectives on civic engagement for urban development liberated from the premise that it must mean one thing regardless of its context.

To do so, section 1.2 introduces the concept of civil society as an arena for civic engagement and presents a preliminary understanding of civic engagement in urban development. The third part portrays a descriptive framework that serves as an operative rationale. It illustrates that a wide range of perspectives could be used in exploring civic engagement for urban development. As a way to describe civic engagement in terms of both (i) practical and scientific issues and (ii) its relation to social cohesion and urban resilience, researchers can focus on citizens' individual activities (section 1.3.1), activities of citizen initiatives (section 1.3.2), or citizen activities as a contribution to civil society's responsibility (section 1.3.3). Finally, planners' particular roles, tasks, and competencies are emphasized in an interface perspective (section 1.3.4).

1.2 CIVIL SOCIETY AS AN ARENA FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN URBAN DEVELOPMENT

1.2.1 Civil Society: Location, Demarcation, and Characteristics

The notion of civil society has a long and varied history, encompassing different approaches to understanding the complex interdependencies of human relations. While profound controversies evolved as to its meaning and explanatory value, civil society was and is generally perceived as a public realm in which a collective of citizens organizes their common life (Forst 2007). Although different in detail, more sophisticated elaborated approaches have in common that they describe civil society in reference to the state, the market,

and privacy. Chambers and Kopstein (2008) introduce a system that helps to distinguish different concepts in their relations to the *state*. Among others, their review encompasses the Western European idea of civil society as apart from the state that is characterized by freedom of assembly and association. Furthermore, Chambers and Kopstein (2008) present conceptions that focus on a shared public sphere of dialogue, including both the state and civil society. They also give explanations of civil society as an agent of opposition to the state (e.g., in post-socialist countries) and finally as a global civil society that crosses state boundaries. Giving an overview of the historic dynamics since Greek antiquity, Setianto (2007) illustrated the evolution of a contemporary popular idea to comprehend civil society: as a particular arena of social activities in the public realm which – as a vague, visual approximation – can be thought to exist at an intermediary position between the spheres of the state and the *market*. Dekker and van den Broek (1998) add that civil society can also be distinguished from *private affairs* (e.g., family, friends; see also Forst 2007; Figure 1.1).[2]

To avoid a simplistic description of civil society as being only a byproduct between different poles, Alexander (2006) highlights that a set of distinct values, norms, and practices characterize it. In particular, situating civil society as an intermediary arena (Figure 1.1) underlies the idea of coexisting but varying logics of activities: the state coordinates (top-down) by power and hierarchy; the market is guided by the principle of competition and exchange; the private sphere by notions of solidarity (within a community of fate) and private ends orientation; in the civil society arena, however, activities primarily rely upon *voluntarism* (Dekker and van den Broek 1998). Following this line of thought, civil society refers to a place of uncoerced action (Walzer 2010) where citizens engage freely. They put to use their empathy, time, ideas, know-how, reputation, and financial resources as a *gift* (Strachwitz 2022). In terms of its apparent manifestations, civil society emerges therefore as voluntarily founded associations, initiatives, clubs, and societies. A *non-profit orientation*, which is related to voluntarism, is another attribute of social activities in civil society.[3] This becomes most evident in the tendency to not distribute any profits to managers, owners (Salamon et al. 1999), or members (Kunreuther 2011). Finally, an *orientation to the common good* characterizes

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[2]   We decided to work with this analytical and inclusive conception. Another line of thinking is guided by normative aspirations focusing on a specific kind of society which is characterized by certain social norms (Kopecký and Mudde 2003).

[3]   Although there are also researchers who argue that the non-profit sector is an important element of civil society but the concepts should not be conflated (e.g., Smith 2011).

social activities in civil society. However, what citizens interpret as contributing to the common good is highly reliant on personal, social, cultural, and political conditions, which may also vary according to national contexts. Due to the subjectivity of the common good orientation, activities in civil society are often tied to issues that citizens perceive as relevant to themselves (Gieling et al. 2019).
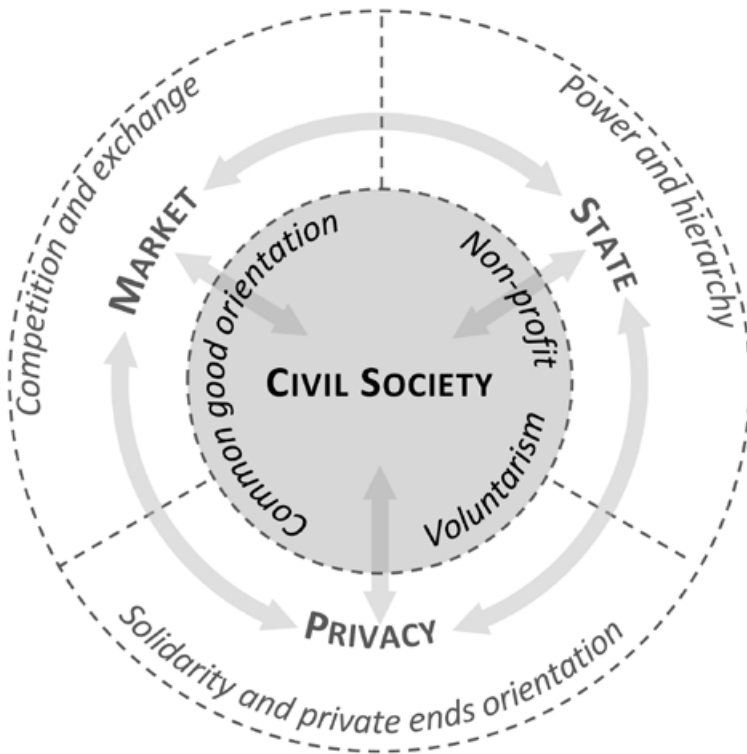
Source: Authors.

Figure 1.1   *Location of the civil society arena and respective logics of activities alongside the spheres of the state, the market, and privacy*

The various (in-)dependencies between the civil society arena and the other spheres (market, state, private life) are reflected in different ways. On the one

hand, civil society is often conceptualized as being relatively autonomous from the market and state (Alexander 2006; Walzer 2010), which is consistent with the contrasting logics of voluntarism, non-profit, and the common good orientation. In light of this, attempts to promote a vibrant civil society by ambitions of the state (i.e., through the logic of power) or the logic of the market (i.e., through exchange) are questioned (Luhmann 1982). On the other hand, there is widespread agreement that the state and the market influence civil society (Setianto 2007). After far-reaching tendencies in many countries to transform their welfare state systems, so-called post-wage politics are in fact being used to trigger civil society action. Through such approaches, national governments strategically aim to enhance civil society activities through underfunding infrastructure, and symbolic as well as monetized incentives (Steen et al. 2018; van Dyk 2018). Furthermore, market forces such as commercialization and privatization are highlighted as threatening factors because they enhance people's withdrawal in individual lifeworlds (Dekker and van den Broek 1998; Edwards 2011). While Kopecký and Mudde (2003) do not reject the idea of different spheres and their (in-)dependencies, they recommend researchers be aware of overlaps. Gray areas can be seen, e.g., in social entrepreneurship (Mair and Martí 2006).

1.2.2   A Preliminary Understanding of Civic Engagement in Urban Development

The baseline for conceptualizing civic engagement for urban development comprises people's activities carried out in the civil society arena (Diller 2001; Strachwitz 2022). Consequently, these activities correspond to the presented logic of voluntarism, non-profit, and common good orientation (see section 1.2.1). Following this line of thought, the foundations for understanding civic engagement for urban development need further specification. First, within the arena of civil society, people act in their role as citizen (Diller 2001). Hence, their activities can be seen as expressions of citizenship, which means that "people claim rights and fulfill responsibilities as members of a given polity' (Scholte 2010, p. 384). Consistent with widely accepted notions on the scope of citizen practices, these activities go beyond exercising the right to vote and traditional political participation (Diller 2001; Moro 2010). Particularly understood as civic engagement for urban development, these activities cover a notably diverse range performed by citizens as well as by citizen initiatives. To determine what belongs to this range is not always easy, because – second – it includes activities that, on the surface, have a small degree of being *place-based*. Evidently, there are forms of civic engagement that can *explicitly* be categorized as place-based, as they exhibit relevance for tangible material structures of citizens' living environment. However, there might be other

forms whose importance for urban development is expressed in an *implicit way*. To be identified as place-based, a respective form of civic engagement must be understood in practical contexts, motives and orientations, specific activities, and their outcomes.

1.3 FOUR CONCEPTUAL PERSPECTIVES ON CIVIC ENGAGEMENT FOR URBAN DEVELOPMENT

The following discussion presents a descriptive framework that serves as an operative rationale. It includes four conceptual perspectives that are grounded in the above-presented baseline understanding. These perspectives can be applied to grasp civic engagement for urban development and link it with social cohesion and resilience. Section 1.3.1 deals with the micro perspective, on which the individual activities of citizens are located. The following section (1.3.2) presents a meso level of the activities of citizen initiatives and organizations, while section 1.3.3 is dedicated to a higher (macro) level from which engagement is described as a contribution of civil society assuming responsibility. Finally, section 1.3.4 focuses on interrelationships and identifies an interface perspective.

1.3.1 Citizens' Individual Activities

Describing civic engagement as activities of citizens refers to individual efforts that explicitly or implicitly refer to their living environments. Studies in this area examine preconditions that influence citizens' behavior but also risks in this regard. From this point of view, however, the (formal) organizational and financial structures as well as the strategies they choose to express their ideas are less important (Moro 2010).

In important research, German sociologists Corsten and Kauppert (2007) introduced a set of subjective preconditions to explore and/or trace (durable) activities empirically. Their starting point is that people's desire to be part of social contexts can lead them to civic engagement. However, a durable commitment is tied to further preconditions. For this reason, Corsten et al. (2008) and Corsten and Kauppert (2007) describe that on the one hand, citizens' perceptions of appealing social contexts[4] must be consciously interpreted as a collective showing a certain, tangible scope. On the other hand, individuals intervene when this collective is perceived as vulnerable, meaning that intended social practices are at risk. Lasting civic engagement becomes even

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[4]   A social context can be understood as appealing when it allows for realizing (consciously or unconsciously) intended social practices.

more likely when people perceive that they can make a difference due to individual social competences, skills, and opportunities.[5] In the realm of urban development, this could include the power to share information and knowledge, to enhance place-specific consciousness, to cooperate with local public institutions, and to influence material (living) conditions (in orientation to Moro 2010). The international academic discourse emphasizes complementary attributes that promote citizens' voluntary contributions and commitments. For example, place attachments have been shown to positively impact a person's decision to engage in local contexts (Gieling et al. 2019; Stefaniak et al. 2017). There is also evidence for place attachment effects on individuals' sense of obligation and responsibility for the community (so-called civic responsibility), whereby the latter also affects the willingness to engage (Dang et al. 2022; Nowell and Boyd 2014). Likewise, feelings of social solidarity, we-ness and commonality are believed to make citizens receptive and sensitive to becoming active (Alexander 2006).

However, some researchers observe the increasing utilization of civic activities with concern. In particular, they problematize that citizen activities serve to compensate for services previously provided in the sphere of the state (van Dyk 2018, 2019; van Dyk and Haubner 2019). This is often accompanied by a blurring of the – formerly well-established – separation of an individual's social security from his/her interpersonal relationships and commitments. Weakening this disconnection carries the risk of marginalizing individuals who (apparently) do not qualify to receive benefits through appropriate behavior or through their own commitment. Moreover, engagement-promoting strategies can also be accompanied by informalization dynamics. This is particularly evident in areas where monetary compensation is used to stimulate activities while, at the same time, standards of employment contracts are not taken into account. Also, the activities carried out are not always based on professional qualifications, which also entails practical risks and dangers (van Dyk 2018, 2019; van Dyk and Haubner 2019).

1.3.2   Activities of Citizen Initiatives

Citizen initiatives can be understood as resident-led collectives that seek to influence their local surroundings (Igalla et al. 2019). Their activities cover an almost infinite range. Fields of activities that could be explicitly categorized as place-based include, for example, environmental protection and management

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5   Adler and Goggin (2005) present a four-level scheme for looking at involvement in terms of time spent and duration. It has already been empirically tested for civic engagement in North America.

(Enqvist et al. 2019), urban sustainability transitions (Frantzeskaki et al. 2016), or maintaining public neighborhood places (Boonstra and Lofvers 2017). But many more do not appear as place-based at first sight, for example the development of social innovations and their diffusion over wider society (Pesch et al. 2019) or issues such as community development, social well-being, and safety (Igalla et al. 2019). The extensive range of associated activities is addressed in academic research, which aspires to develop overarching conclusions about outputs, outcomes, and strategies.

As Horlings et al. (2021) indicate in their exhaustive literature review, outputs of citizen initiatives could be broadly structured in two categories. On the one hand, activities directly adjust the spatial environment by, for example, producing facilities, goods, and services or changing current land-uses. On the other hand, they strive to affect the institutional environment by (incrementally) influencing decision-making (e.g., through agenda setting, coalition-building, or the production of alternative plans) or by adapting the normative foundations of these endeavors (see also Bisschops and Beunen 2019).

On a rather abstract level, outcomes of citizen initiatives relate to one of their core characteristics and potentials: their activities rely on something their members share in common (Kunreuther 2011). Thus, citizen initiatives are highlighted as reflecting communities' self-interest, realizing collective ambitions (Boonstra and Boelens 2011; Rauws 2016), building social capital and community trust (Verba et al. 2002). Next to their ability to build social networks, citizen initiatives bear the potential to reinforce the evolution of collective action (Putnam 2001). Furthermore, Alexander (2006) describes citizen initiatives' functions for bridging social divides, allowing members of marginalized out-groups to enter the sphere of (political) decision-making, and (as a consequence) enhancing mechanisms of inclusion. Furthermore, they are described as places for learning interaction with the political and economic sphere and experiencing self-efficiency regarding (progressive) social change (Kunreuther 2011; Mitlin 2008). Given these outcomes, citizen initiatives provide a local level platform for citizen interaction in a democratic society (Kunreuther 2011; Mitlin 2008). However, it is also acknowledged that these desired outcomes are often flawed in reality by, for example, dominant leadership structures and/or by focusing on self-serving instead of community interests (see also Meerstra-de Haan et al. 2020).

A further relevant topic in the academic debate refers to strategies that citizen initiatives use to reach their aims. In this regard, cooperation with governments and administrative agencies on several spatial layers is essential (Meerstra-de Haan et al. 2020). The mode of cooperation may have different qualities: it encompasses one-way flows of information from governments to citizen initiatives but also two-way flows such as consultation, deliberation, or co-production (Reed et al. 2018). Co-productive interactions refer to joint

efforts of public sector professionals and citizens in the initiation, planning, design, and implementation of public services (Benjamin and Brudney 2018). Mitlin and Bartlett (2018) further argue that co-production also aims to strategically alter relationships and practices against the background of power differences. The probability of realizing a co-productive mode widely depends on the willingness of local government bodies to implement a decision-making model which involves citizen initiatives as equal partners (Rosen and Painter 2019). Further crucial factors include a wide variety of (1) contextual factors (e.g., the existence of a participatory culture and former experiences of engagement, available resources), (2) process design (e.g., transparency, suitable tools for integrating diverse knowledge) but also (3) a scalar fit between the issue at stake, the authorities and initiatives (Reed et al. 2018). Within this complex and often highly place-specific setting, citizen initiatives develop their strategies to address economic as well as state and political actors. These strategies can be described as different forms of activism (Leshoska et al. 2016). Contact activism is characterized by close, communicative cooperation and dialogue with economic representatives, local authorities, government spokespersons, and political parties. Constructive activism, for its part, is typified by proactive engagement, as prevalent in working groups, public hearings, or other participatory processes. Interactions personify the ideal of openness and equality, giving citizen initiatives the chance to present (even critically) their point of view, proposals, and requests. Finally, there is confrontational activism, in which the initiative acts primarily as a kind of opponent to state or political actors. Activities include participating in protests, signing petitions, or organizing public referendums to influence political decisions and social change. Next to these types, playful and creative means could be used to generate publicity for a spatial issue that needs to be fixed. This could include theatre (Horlings et al. 2021), pop-up art (Ashley 2021) or short-term, low-cost, and scalable interventions such as tactical urbanism (Lydon and Garcia 2015).

1.3.3   Civic Engagement as a Contribution to Civil Society Responsibility

Using the two approaches described so far allows us to explore civic engagement in the arena of civil society from both a micro-perspective, directed at individual activities (section 1.3.1), and a meso-perspective, which targets joint activities, their outputs, outcomes, strategies, and forms of activism (section 1.3.2). The approach introduced in this section has a broader lens: it aims to illustrate citizen activities for urban development in the context of higher-level societal phenomena. This aspect is already indicated in section 1.2, which out-

lines interdependencies between civil society, state, and market.[6] The matter presented here is dedicated to specifying these interdependencies as ongoing renegotiations of responsibility.

In many parts of the industrialized Western world, the renegotiation of responsibility is reflected in new forms of (multilevel) governance. A transition from state-led provision to increased citizen accountability, self-reliance, and risk-management characterizes these shifts (van Dyk 2018). State-led strategies are designed to enhance and integrate voluntary, non-profit, and common good-oriented activities by citizens (Smith 2011; van Dyk 2018). Contrarily, the dynamics and implications of climate change, finance, economic, or health crises, for example, often force governments to efficient decision-making. As a result, in some sectors, the state aims to assume responsibility and strives for a lower level of civil society participation. This can lead to protest and other forms of activism (see also section 1.3.2 on state–civil society relations). Although under different conditions, civil society in other parts of the world has also been involved in demanding, discussing, implementing, and reacting to new distributions of responsibility (e.g., in post-communist Europe or Latin America; Howard 2011; Dagnino 2011). The current academic debate can benefit from conceptual knowledge that sheds light on citizen activities against the backdrop of these new governance approaches.

Taking these new governance constellations into account, a (theoretical) framework could enable a more systematically comprehensive understanding of citizen activities (on a local level of urban neighborhoods) as a contribution to civil society responsibility (on a higher level of society as a whole). According to this line of thinking, this section refers to a research project of the German Research Institute for Social Cohesion.[7] Civil society responsibility is understood in orientation to the German philosopher Heidbrink (2022). His concept of responsibility emerges from state-theoretical thought aiming to describe political processes and structures (including citizen activities) in terms of a "society of responsibility." Specifically, he suggests this concept as also being applicable to small-scale contexts, "where people act, where communities have formed, and actual contexts of solidarity and loyalty have emerged" (Heidbrink 2022, p. 298; translated by the authors). Following his

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[6] Negotiation processes within the market and the assumption of responsibility by private-sector actors are predominantly analyzed in economics-related disciplines. Therefore, they are not the core component of this contribution, but are mentioned here for completeness.

[7] Research project "Zivilgesellschaftliche Verantwortungsübernahme für gesellschaftlichen Zusammenhalt 'vor Ort'" (Project number 60470488) funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF).

suggestions, urban neighborhoods and districts are particularly suitable for applying this notion of responsibility. In the context of the research project, the conceptual considerations of responsibility were combined with assumptions about the individual activities of citizens (see section 1.3.1, as well as Corsten and Kauppert 2007; Corsten et al. 2008), due to the potentials to describe super-ordinated processes but also to be locally applied. As a result, two specifications of civic engagement were differentiated to describe those forms of citizen activities which are related to (higher-level) renegotiation processes regarding responsibility:

1. Citizen activities can reflect a form of personal responsibility. The idea of personal responsibility is based on taking charge of one's own well-being and an independent way of life. In their role as citizens, people are perceived, for example, as self-reliant and, to some extent, obliged to themselves as well as for achieving their personal goals. Accordingly, civic engagement that primarily relies on personal responsibility is aligned with individual circumstances and specific living conditions. The associated social activities are consequently oriented toward needs and concerns that a person wants (or does not want) to be determined by. Factors that should or should not be decisive for one's own way of life encompass, for example, a new road, extra-high voltage services, or fiber-optic Internet in the vicinity of one's home.
2. In contrast, a form of citizen activities can be distinguished in which the principle of (joint or) co-responsibility is more strongly expressed. The idea of co-responsibility is based on taking charge of the social as well as spatial circumstances of life. In their social activities, citizens focus on the idea of caring. This emphasis is expressed in taking care of fellow human beings, their disadvantages and predicaments, the society and the environment.

The boundaries between personal and co-responsibility-based engagement are usually fluid and can only be separated conceptually. These forms of civic engagement occur both within established structures (e.g., initiatives) and outside of them (e.g., informal ways of activism).

1.3.4   Interface Perspective

The fourth perspective looks at civic engagement from the angle of the planning profession. Designing and structuring interaction processes has become an important task of spatial planners because the forms and consequences of (multilevel) cooperation become apparent at the interface between different spheres (market, privacy, state; see Figure 1.1) and the arena of civil society.

Examples include relations between active citizens and mayors, committee representatives, or authorities but also between citizen initiatives and municipal bodies. Attempts at cooperation at the interfaces are also affected by higher-level developments (see section 1.3.3; connected to the renegotiation of responsibility between state, market, and civil society). Given these complex constellations, challenges may arise from different logics, as illustrated in section 1.1.2. Consequently, a further important task for spatial planning lies in mitigating difficulties in this setting.

Specifically, the competencies and roles of spatial planners are relevant here to foster communication and interaction. Accordingly, academic progress in this respect is, to a large extent, driven by planning-related research. This kind of research indicates that planners can enhance dynamic processes at interface positions for various (in parts overlapping) reasons. First, planners might themselves be part of the dynamics when they hold a position to represent the state and have direct access to evolving citizen activities and their initiatives in specific local settings. In these cases, they can build upon competencies with participative planning instruments. The latter include traditional ones, such as public hearings, planning workshops, and open labs (Hrivnák et al. 2021) but also innovative approaches to ease interaction, such as public participation geographic information systems (PPGIS) (Knaps et al. 2022) or tactical urbanism (Cariello et al. 2021). Second, Horlings et al. (2021) emphasize that, to some extent, place-based civic engagement "interfere[s] with (traditional) roles of public spatial planners." Activities of both spatial planners and citizens are dedicated, for example, to producing public goods and services, raising awareness of spatial issues, and envisioning different urban futures. Given the proximity in activities, spatial planners are required to moderate the interface dialogue and to overcome mutual irritations resulting from differing logics. Third, due to the planning discipline's intellectual tradition and general contour, planners are competent in switching between and combining different roles. In this regard, Friedmann (1987) highlights spatial planners' communicative, analytical, and synthesizing skills. Combined with their familiarity with planning theory and experience in practical implementation, these competencies allow planners to link formal expert knowledge with experience, for example in relation to citizens' struggles with respect to their everyday life. Assuming this role, planners can help citizen initiatives in their search for practical solutions against the background of their knowledge on both promising leverages and institutional constraints. Practically, this could include channeling appropriate information, expanding the horizon of possibilities, fostering a realistic understanding of the situation but also (if needed) encouraging initiatives to formulate alternatives to the aims pursued firsthand (Friedmann 1987). Comparatively, Lamker (2019) mentioned planners' ability to act as strategic navigators or process moderators. Sager (2017) highlights planners'

role as facilitators, which is characterized by ambitions to include deprived groups in relevant communication channels. Rosen and Painter (2019) empha-size planners' ability to identify and question given power relations in the entire planning process. Overall, these skills and competencies are relevant for both current understandings of and attitudes toward planning. They do not only include the notion of planning as design of isolated spatial processes but are rather grounded in the idea of achieving overarching place-based aims by incremental and integrative spatial development.

1.4   CONCLUSION

This chapter provides an operative rationale that offers conceptual orientation and useful contextual references in the field of civic engagement to both the contributions in this volume and current practical planning issues. To this end, it encompasses four perspectives to assess place-based civic engagement. The first perspective is directed at *citizens' individual activities*. It assembles concepts that can be used to focus on conditional complexes and motives for place-based activities performed by citizens. Because they usually act in a common way, the second perspective focuses on *citizen initiatives*. Consequently, this perspective has a different emphasis but is nevertheless related to the complexes and motives to become involved. The conceptual approaches associated with this perspective allow exploration of collective strategies and positionings vis-à-vis other actors, which become observable in civic engagement for urban development. Various individual and collective forms of engagement can be understood through the third perspective because it involves abstraction. It is dedicated to civic engagement as a *contribution to the assumption of responsibility* by civil society. The fourth perspective, a so-called *interface perspective*, looks at civic engagement from a spatial planning point of view and associated understandings of its roles and tasks. This perspective allows for describing the status of planners in terms of civic engagement for urban development. This perspective makes it possible to practically highlight the relevance of the planning profession by means of the different roles of planners and competencies in relation to civic engagement as described in this chapter.

The contributions in this volume will take up the four perspectives pre-sented. They are enriched with examples of application and further literature in order to clarify the characteristics of place-based civic engagement as portrayed in the case studies. In this way, the contributions can be interrelated and connected to practical and academic discourses on social cohesion and resilience.

Beyond the realm of this book, our presented perspectives contribute to a fine-grained understanding of the complex dimensions associated with the

concept of civic engagement. This allows for a sophisticated exchange of local, place-based activities' characteristics, quality, and framework conditions. These insights could enhanced both progress in planning research and practical planning. Overall, our operative rationale gains importance as acute challenges such as the consequences of global climate change, financial crises, wars, or pandemics will further increase the significance of civic engagement.

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2. Community resilience: transformative capacity as driver for social cohesion and sustainable development

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2.1   INTRODUCTION

While traditional citizen participation is in crisis in many places, citizens are taking it into their own hands to change their neighbourhood and communities (Horlings et al. 2021). Committed individuals engage themselves in community initiatives, and collectively initiate and implement projects aimed at providing public goods or services for their own community (Healey 2015; Igalla et al. 2019). These community-based initiatives have emerged all over the globe: in developed countries mainly due to budget cuts and state retrenchment in various sectors (health care, social health care, energy, urban liveability, etc.); in developing countries often because of weak governments or governance structures, corruption, and scarce (financial) resources (Brandsen et al. 2017; Chaskin 2001; Teasdale 2012; Edelenbos et al. 2021).

What all these community-based initiatives have in common is that citizens actively participate in the design of urban spaces and spatial processes as initiators, advisers or implementers (Asher and Paul 2020; Bulkeley et al. 2019; Iveson 2013; Scholl and de Kraker 2021; Ziehl 2020). If we look at initiatives in Europe in particular, it is striking that the motivations for civic engagement differ. First of all, community-based initiatives can arise as a response to the failure of the state and market to provide public goods (Teasdale 2012). Consequently, the emergence of community-based initiatives occurs due to a perceived lack of public goods or is rooted in a kind of dissatisfaction with public policies. Here, (local) civic initiatives take over public tasks that the municipalities can no longer provide (Igalla et al. 2019, p. 1176). One example of this can be found in the austerity policies in many Mediterranean countries which often resulted, among other things, in social exclusion and that increased the social vulnerability in many neighbourhoods, deteriorating "the

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social cohesion of cities" (Piñeira Mantiñán et al. 2020, pp. 1–2). As response to the inability and inefficiency of the national governments and municipalities to counteract social exclusion and to mitigate negative (social) impacts, numerous community-based initiatives have taken the initiative to implement appropriate actions and measures at neighbourhood level (Piñeira Mantiñán et al. 2020).

Second, citizens are confronted with a multitude of challenges and uncertainties such as climate change, escalating housing prices and unequal access to urban services (Horlings et al. 2021). For many civil society actors, state or municipal actors do not respond quickly or comprehensively enough to these challenges. At the same time, individual actors also feel responsible for actively tackling climate change, to create liveable neighbourhoods, to reduce noise and pollution or to preserve biodiversity in the neighbourhood. In both cases, the progressive sustainability ambitions (Dale et al. 2010; Feola and Nunes 2014; Frantzeskaki et al. 2016; Seyfang and Longhurst 2016) result in the increase of civic engagement and community-based initiatives. At the same time, the renewed interest in communities, place and local identity also leads to an increased willingness to take community development into one's own hands. Communities are considered here as concrete life-experience settings, where citizenship rights are fought for, where mobilizations against social exclusion are initiated and staged, and where new political rights are defined (Moulaert 2010, p. 6).

Community-based initiatives in urban areas thus often refer to the transformation of neighbourhoods, intending not only to improve the built environment but also to sustain and strengthen social networks and cohesion in these areas (Cho and Križnik 2017, p. 1). It is assumed that communities can develop resilience, here understood as kind of a transformative capacity, by actively building and engaging the capacity to thrive in an environment characterized by change (Magis 2010, p. 401). To strengthen community resilience, citizen initiatives often link their activities to governments or municipalities and other formal institutions (Bakker and Denters 2012; Healey 2015; Igalla et al. 2019). However, there are only a few studies that have intensively reflected on the development of community resilience as a result of citizen engagement. The following research questions are thus largely unanswered: How can community-based initiatives strengthen their resilience? How is social cohesion addressed in this context? What preconditions are necessary to achieve community resilience? What transformative capacities do community networks have to strengthen social cohesion and sustainable development?

Against this background, it is the aim of this chapter to develop a conceptual outline on citizens' role and the transformative capacity of community-based initiatives. This can, at least analytically, help to scrutinize different elements that are relevant for community-led sustainability initiatives to develop capac-

ities to accelerate the transformation towards sustainable and equitable urban and community development. Therefore, this chapter first introduces one of the central preconditions for the development of community-based initiatives: the citizens' opportunity to participate in decision-making processes or to co-create certain projects and actions. We then introduce the concept of resilience as one of the central goals of community-based initiatives to strengthen, among other things, social cohesion. The specific forms of community resilience are of central importance for us as they allow us to identify approaches to how citizens and civic initiatives can thrive in an environment characterized by change, uncertainty, and unpredictability. Finally, we develop a conceptual outline on the transformative capacity of community-based initiatives and reflect on the potentials and limits of community resilience for achieving social cohesion and sustainable development.

2.2 PROMOTING COHESIVE AND ENGAGED COMMUNITIES: FROM CITIZEN PARTICIPATION TO CO-CREATION

There are several preconditions for the formation of community-based engagement and initiatives. One is the citizens' opportunity to participate in decision-making processes, because it can be a way of making these processes more accountable to citizens through transparent procedures seeking to incorporate public input. Therefore, participation is seen as key to developing social capital and cohesion in communities and strengthening the sense of community among residents, which can be regarded as an important prerequisite for urban regeneration and sustainable neighbourhood development (Boonstra and Boelens 2011, p. 100; Cho and Križnik 2017, p. 1). This requires involving residents in socially relevant issues and giving residents the opportunity to participate and play an active part in decision-making processes.

A broad spectrum of public participation approaches is available for this purpose, which differ in terms of the level of community involvement and the degree of decision-making power in planning and design processes (Ellery and Ellery 2019, p. 238). Information, consultation and involvement are, among other examples, characterized by opinion surveys, public votes or the participation in (urban development) processes initiated by politics and administration (International Association for Public Participation 2018; Rosen and Painter 2019). Thus, these forms represent rather passive types of participation, in which citizens can influence project outcomes through contributions to, and negotiation with, urban planners and politicians, but in which the planning and decision-making process is still primarily organized and led by public or official actors (Arnstein 1969; Rosen and Painter 2019). In this way, participation allows "the have-nots to hear and have a voice" in the planning process

(Arnstein 1969, p. 217). This means that residents' interests are considered earlier and more comprehensively in planning processes. As a result, planning for residential or other urban areas can be improved (e.g. with regard to social infrastructures, the design of public green spaces, etc.); at the same time, the residents' identification with their neighbourhood and the acceptance of public planning projects (see also Chapter 1 in this volume) can be improved.

With collaboration and empowering, on the other hand, the opportunity for community members to impact decision-making increases significantly (International Association for Public Participation 2018; Rosen and Painter 2019). Co-creation and empowering mean that participants or residents lead a project, are fully in charge of policy and managerial aspects, and are able to implement their decisions in practice (Arnstein, 1969, p. 223; Ellery and Ellery 2019, p. 238). Co-creation or empowerment can be seen as an effort to enhance participation as a strategic element and to strengthen social cohesion in fragmented and individualized societies (Leino and Puumala 2020, p. 784). This also applies to projects that contribute to improving the spatial quality of people's working and living environment (Boonstra and Boelens 2011, p. 100). In this regard, citizen initiatives can be understood as a special form of citizen participation as they independently and self-responsibly determine the goals and means for their community or neighbourhood and implement and control their activities (Healey 2015; Igalla et al. 2019).

As already shown, citizen initiatives are community-based and often locally oriented, which means that they often focus on neighbourhoods and follow an area-based approach (Edelenbos et al. 2021; Moulaert 2010; Peterman 2000). In this regard, community development can be understood as a process in which local residents are the driving force behind the initiatives (Igalla et al. 2019, p. 1182). Community development is thus based on the concept of citizen initiatives (see Chapter 1 in this volume). This refers to a form of self-organization in which citizens "feel they share a connection – whether of interest, place, lifestyle, culture, or practice" (Celata et al. 2019, p. 910) and voluntarily mobilize resources to create the community they want to live in. The aim is to identify and implement collective actions or projects that focus on community needs, for example by providing public goods or services for their community or neighbourhood (Edelenbos et al. 2021, p. 1691; Igalla et al. 2019, p. 1176; Matarrita-Cascante and Brennan 2012, p. 297; Magis 2010, p. 408). This also applies to social cohesion, which is often explicitly mentioned as a goal by community initiatives. Social cohesion describes the capacity of a society to ensure the well-being of all its members by minimizing inequalities and avoiding marginalization, by creating a sense of belonging and by promoting trust (Eurofound 2018; OECD 2011). The respective communities in concrete practices at the local level produce social cohesion. It is then the result of the interplay of attitudes and behaviours at the individual level,

the actions and practices of individuals and groups, and commitment to the common good, as well as rules and institutions at the structural level and trust in the constitution and institutions (Fonseca et al. 2019, pp. 242–243; Forst 2020, p. 43; Green and Janmaat 2011, p. 18).

Promoting cohesive and engaged communities is key to achieving community and social resilience in an urban context (see following section). Therefore, communities – ideally with support from the municipalities – have to create a sense of collective identity and mutual support. "This includes building a sense of local identity, social networks, and safe space; promoting features of an inclusive local cultural heritage; and encouraging cultural diversity while promoting tolerance and a willingness to accept other cultures" (Fonseca et al. 2019, p. 245). The success or failure of community or neighbourhood development depends on its ability to mobilize the different resources and to activate self-organized processes (Celata et al. 2019; Chaskin 2001; Edelenbos et al. 2021; Peterman 2000). In these cases, community input and involvement in the process are high, resulting in advanced levels of community learning and social cohesion (Matarrita-Cascante and Brennan 2012, p. 299). This becomes evident, for example, when looking at the establishment of community gardens, which allow residents to interact and to strengthen their social bonds and, at the same time, to produce goods needed in the community. These processes can, at least theoretically, help to increase social cohesion and community resilience, even if such initiatives tend to focus on soft issues such as urban gardening (Matarrita-Cascante and Brennan 2012, p. 300).

2.3 COMMUNITY RESILIENCE TO INSTIGATE TRANSFORMATIVE ACTIONS AS CENTRAL COMPONENT FOR SOCIAL COHESION

Despite the importance of the concept of resilience in science and practice, there is no conclusive definition so far; the conceptual boundaries remain rather blurred (McEachern et al. 2021, p. 4). Holling (1973) defined resilience as the ability of an ecosystem to maintain its functional characteristics in the face of disturbances. This primarily includes the ability of an ecosystem to return to its previous state (static resilience). This does not necessarily refer to all elements of an ecosystem but can focus on the maintenance of specific key functions only. These principles have subsequently been adapted and adopted by social sciences to analyse and to increase the resilience of social systems (Adger 2000). According to Folke (2006), resilience is a product of (1) the degree of disturbance a system can endure without losing its key functions or changing its state, (2) the system's capacity for self-organization, and (3) the system's capacity for adaptation and learning. In comparison to the concept of ecological resilience, the focus here is on the governance of linked social

sub-systems, including the institutional agility and adaptive capacity of communities or sub-systems (During et al. 2022; Wilkinson 2012). It becomes clear that resilience can be defined as the ability of a system to anticipate, respond to and recover from a disturbance (Simmie and Martin 2010, p. 28; Pike et al. 2010).

At the same time, the concept of resilience opens up another way of reading it that goes beyond recovery: especially in urban and societal contexts resilience is increasingly seen as the ability of (urban) systems to recognize shocks and adapt or reorganize the system in the face of these disturbances (Birkmann et al. 2013; Simmie and Martin 2010). This implies an active process of changing or reinventing the system, often based on policy learning processes (DeVerteuil and Golubchikov 2016, pp. 146–147; McEachern et al. 2021, p. 5; During et al. 2022). From this perspective resilience can additionally be understood as a concept of challenging the status quo and proactively and openly striving to create a new normality (DeVerteuil and Golubchikov 2016, p. 146; White and O'Hare 2014, p. 934). Against this background, the implementation of the resilience concept in urban development is considered a promising approach to develop cities in the face of multiple crises and their consequences, while at the same time contributing to sustainable global development. The implementation of resilience characteristics is necessary to achieve long-term sustainable effects through the adaptability and transformability of urban systems. Sustainability is necessary to strive for an efficient use of resources and not to lose sight of the needs of future generations. However, such a development is not a linear and predictable process. As a result of complex negotiations and interactions among those involved in urban development, it follows a variable course. In this context, various approaches to urban resilience have been conceptualized and are currently under discussion (Meerow et al. 2016).

With regard to community-based initiatives two similar resilience approaches are directly connected to communities and their contributions in urban development that we outline in the following: community resilience and social resilience. Community resilience, following Magis (2010, p. 401), "is the existence, development, and engagement of community resources by community members to thrive in an environment characterized by change, uncertainty, unpredictability, and surprise" (see also Carmen et al. 2022, p. 1372). It refers to the collective ability of a neighbourhood to deal with stressors and to adapt to changes by building and maintaining partnerships, empowering local action – for example through increased social capital and civic activity – and leveraging and strengthening existing social infrastructure, networks and assets (Saja et al. 2021; see also Aldrich and Meyer 2015; Snieg et al. 2019). Social resilience, following Maclean et al. (2014, p. 145), can be described as "the adaptive and learning capacity of individuals, groups and

institutions to self-organise in a way that maintains system function in the face of change or in response to a disturbance". To ensure and increase social resilience Maclean et al. identified six attributes which are knowledge, skills and learning, community networks, people–place connections, community infrastructure, a diverse and innovative economy and engaged governance. In this regard, community resilience and social resilience are closely related as both are directly linked to communities and their role in urban development (Saja et al. 2021; Kwok et al. 2016). For this reason, we use community resilience synonymously with social resilience in this chapter.

According to various studies (Berkes and Ross 2013; Carmen et al. 2022; Fonseca et al. 2019; Maclean et al. 2014), the following aspects play a role in the development of community resilience: strong community bonds, roots and commitments (trust, shared values, common goals, etc.), strong community networks and social relations (overlap of individuals' friendship networks, reciprocal loyalty and community solidarity, etc.), community resources and infrastructures, collaborative governance and self-organization (formal/informal control, collective actions, strategic actions, etc.), active agents and leadership, and knowledge, skills and learning. Previous studies (Fonseca et al. 2019) indicate that economic (community budgets, financial incentives, etc.), social (strong social bonds, social relations, etc.), cultural (cultural diversity, local cultural heritage, etc.), and spatial resources (settlement structures, building culture, etc.) have a large impact here. This applies in particular for social capital that is of central importance for community development and resilience. Social capital is often framed as social relationships or networks referring to "the ability and willingness of community members to participate in actions directed to community objectives, and to the processes of engagement, that is, individuals acting alone and collectively in community organizations, groups, and networks" (Carmen et al. 2022, p. 1373; see also Williams 2004).

Community resilience is not limited to adaption (Carmen et al. 2022; see also Snieg et al. 2019). Communities can actively and strategically tackle intended changes to "enhance people's well-being in the face of present and/or future risks" (Keck and Sakdapolrak 2013, p. 11). This, from our perspective, also includes social cohesion as a transformative contribution of communities and neighbourhood initiatives to sustainable urban development. Therefore, citizens must have and make use of transformative capacities. While there is consensus that communities can develop resilience via planning, collective action, or social learning it remains relatively vague how communities or community networks can develop transformative capacities (Magis 2010; Strasser et al. 2022).

2.4   TRANSFORMATIVE CAPACITIES OF COMMUNITIES AS DRIVER FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

There is general agreement that transformative capacity describes the collective ability to realize transformative impact. It is associated with decentralized and bottom-up processes that emerge from within and that are not imposed from outside (Castán Broto et al. 2019, p. 451). Many community-based initiatives (urban garden initiatives, transition town movements, etc.) seek to improve the quality of life for local residents, reduce ecological burdens or social injustices, or make an active contribution to climate protection (Frantzeskaki et al. 2016; Scholl and de Kraker 2021; Seyfang and Longhurst 2016; Strasser et al. 2022; Wolfram 2016). These initiatives are often community-led sustainability initiatives that aim to realize sustainable urban places with the help of (temporary) interventions and experimentation.

Whether such initiatives can achieve their goals in the long term, however, often depends on their ability "to access assets and assistance from the wider socio-political arena (i.e. from governmental organizations and so-called civil society), to participate in decision-making processes, and to craft institutions that both improve their individual welfare and foster societal robustness toward future crises" (Keck and Sakdapolrak 2013, p. 11). This includes connecting and networking of community-based initiatives with municipalities and other local actors to be able to achieve intended changes (Castán Broto et al. 2019, p. 450; Ernst et al. 2015; Ziehl 2020). As urban sustainable transitions are embedded in long-term governance approaches and adaptive concepts (Ernst et al. 2015; Wolfram 2016, p. 124), stakeholders who aim to develop transformative capacity "must be able to engage in networks of 'governed interdependence' […] to structure their knowledge base and develop a shared understanding of the problems in question, to recognize and explore the implications of various value positions, to develop trusted relations and shared responsibility, and to discover joint goals and reach agreement on new and innovative solutions" (Wolfram 2016, p. 124; see also Halpin and Daugbjerg 2008, pp. 191–192). This highlights the importance of collective actions and social learning, giving civic actors or community-based initiatives a strategic role as the safeguard of social needs and resolving social conflicts (Frantzeskaki et al. 2016).

For the further conceptual development of transformative capacity, we follow Strasser et al. (2022), who consider three dimensions to be relevant for community-based or rather network leadership practices and their possibilities to influence transformative change. The dimensions are width (widespread and coherent influence), depth (structural and cultural embeddedness) and

length (persistent and evolving reproduction) (Strasser et al. 2022, p. 2). These three dimensions can, at least analytically, help local stakeholders to scrutinize different elements that are relevant for the development of transformative capacities.

The first dimension, widening, aims at expanding the reach of the community networks by involving further people, places and contexts (Strasser et al. 2022, p. 9). It encompasses approaches, actions and strategies that are intended to contribute to a shift in consciousness and awareness among public and civil society actors, to create novel ways of cooperation and to enlarge governance arrangements. In this context, the following actions and approaches have proven to be particularly effective (Strasser et al. 2022, p. 7): creating visibility and awareness of initiatives through media campaigns; inspiring and enabling people to get involved through events, courses and training; ensuring accessibility and inclusivity for diverse population groups to participate in projects, platforms and network developments; and building partnerships with other local initiatives and partner organizations.

The second dimension, deepening, focuses primarily on system awareness and achieving fundamental changes of rules and incentives as well as of values and discourses (Strasser et al. 2022, p. 9). This includes, among other things, the following capacities (Strasser et al. 2022, p. 7; see also Wolfram 2016): identifying and supporting the implementation of community resilience approaches through collective visions, events, research projects, practical experimentation, courses and training; convening partnerships to advocate for discursive changes, policies and funding at a systemic level; capacity building and institutional mainstreaming, i.e. building recognition and institutional support by aligning strategies with established policy priorities (e.g. the SDGs); and co-creating ways of embodying transformative values (such as equity and justice) in the governance and culture of local networks. This, again, shows that empowering communities and addressing social needs "corresponds to the notion that responses to sustainability challenges provide a unique opportunity for transformative change in socio-economic and political structures and a parallel potential to address social inequalities" (Castán Broto et al. 2019, p. 452). Furthermore, the ability of a community to organize itself and actively change its own structures (Saja et al. 2021, p. 795) plays a central role as it enables a community to intentionally instigate transformative action and/or to navigate its way through an active or forced transformation.

The third dimension, lengthening, addresses capacities and priorities of continuity, acceleration and evolution over time (Strasser et al. 2022). In this respect, the capacities here aim at the transformation of current urban development policies in the sense of a "rebalancing of rights and responsibilities between actors, the citizenry and state" (Pelling et al. 2015, p. 115). The goal is to strengthen citizens' contributions to community resilience and the

sustainable transformation of cities in the long term and to integrate them strategically into the local planning system and the management of cities (Ziehl 2020). In detail, lengthening encompasses the following capacities (Strasser et al. 2022, p. 7; see also Ziehl 2020): co-shaping strategic goals and co-evolving governance of networks in response to urban sustainability; adapting laws to the needs of citizen organizations; adjusting (local) policy priorities and decision-making processes; generating and distributing funding and other resources that enable network continuity and that address sustainable transformation; developing trust and a sense of community among innovators across places and organizations through events and virtual platforms; and strengthening continuity of knowledge resources by integrating them in ongoing support activities and (virtual) platforms.

2.5   DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

It is the aim of this chapter to develop a conceptual outline and to explore central elements that are relevant to community-led sustainability initiatives enabling them to develop transformative capacities to accelerate change toward sustainable development and to foster social cohesion. By introducing a model with the dimensions of width, depth and length we presented an analytical and systematic approach to study and evaluate city-maker initiatives, urban pioneers and other citizen initiatives in different contexts with regard to their motivation, their working methods and strategies as well as their (spatial) effects. By linking this model to the concepts of social and community resilience, we have indicated the potential of such initiatives for urban systems to better cope with current crises through adaptation and transformation.

We see transformative capacities as the greatest value of community-based initiatives to contribute to the sustainable transformation of cities in the face of global crises. It is here that placemaking also offers a number of important perspectives about community involvement in planning and development processes: "Placemaking emphasizes the importance of community engagement and decision making and suggests that this form of engagement fosters an intrinsic connection and sense of identity between the community and place in which they live […]. This connection, or sense of place, is important because it empowers communities to pursue future changes, promotes the community's political voice, and fosters community stewardship for the environment in which they live" (Ellery and Ellery 2019, p. 246).

However, the contributions of community-led sustainability initiatives are also accompanied by challenges and pitfalls; for instance when actions privilege certain actors and exclude others or when actors do not share similar values. One concrete example is the non-consideration of the transformative capacity of elderly people. Senior citizens may be discouraged from engaging

in forms of collective action due to, among others, ageist structures in society and a sense of powerlessness and disappointment with traditional politics (Nygård and Jakobsson 2013; Serrat et al. 2020). Transformative actions can even threaten community resilience, as too many tasks threaten to overburden initiatives, especially if their members work on a voluntary basis. This may be exacerbated if communities pay too little attention to material resources and instead, due to the high reliance of most initiatives on the contribution of volunteers, focus almost exclusively on the commitment of its members. This can limit the success of community-based initiatives (Feola and Nunes 2014, p. 247).

With a view to a sustainable and liveable future, however, other actors also benefit; here, the public sector should ensure that the initiatives receive appropriate support. At the same time, there is a danger that too much responsibility is placed on civil society initiatives and communities, or that state actors "instrumentalize" civil society initiatives in order to justify the dismantling of public services (Frantzeskaki et al. 2016; Ziehl 2020). Viable solutions to such problems must be found in the future if the transformative capacity of community-led sustainability initiatives is to be expanded and further utilized to foster sustainable urban development and strengthen social cohesion.

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PART II

CULTURAL HERITAGE AS SOURCE AND
TARGET OF CITIZEN INITIATIVES

Introduction to part II: Cultural heritage as source and target of citizen initiatives

Sylvia Herrmann

The chapters in Part II look at citizens' engagement with the cultural heritage of their region. This engagement can differ significantly depending on whether the cities are old or younger. Some go back centuries; others are more modern and were built in the last century. In either case, however, the buildings, infrastructures (e.g. avenues, bridges, utility infrastructures) or public parks are for the citizens an important part of their cultural heritage. On this basis, they are able to create a strong cultural identity (Azzopardi et al. 2022; Dempsey et al. 2020). Urban cultural landscapes support the connection of common identity with culture, experience and history. They provide both a reflection and translation of a past culture and a source of connection between human behaviour and the built environment (Mahmoud 2018). As such, they provide a central source for coexistence in history.

It is generally accepted that each element of the built environment can influence human behaviour in positive or negative ways. Depending on their physical and visual appearance, buildings, infrastructures or parks can be associated with human emotions (Knaps & Herrmann 2018). But cultural heritage objects can have even broader impacts. Because of their role as the basis for a shared identity, they can trigger civic commitment to their preservation. In this role, they can provide an anchor point for connecting very different people, making them a community and building a network. The focus on cultural heritage thus presents a special case of civic engagement that can intervene in the processes of planning and urban development in different ways. Civic engagement varies in different countries – from the complete independence of citizens to engage in any project they want, to top-down participation that is often only partial (see Chapter 2 in this volume).

The examples from Albania, Turkey, Slovakia and Greece show very different levels of development in terms of spatial planning, citizen participation and the development of democracy in general. All of them try to address the questions of what constitutes 'cultural heritage' and what role public participation and civic engagement play in this context. Often it is not the age of the urban environment, but rather the identification of the citizens with the

structure under consideration which is relevant for the civic involvement of inhabitants in public participation or community development processes (see Chapter 2 in this volume). Furthermore, all contributions in Part II focus on the questions of whether modern (economic) development and the engagement on behalf of historical structures of great cultural identity can be combined and whether civic engagement as a bottom-up initiative leads to different results from a top-down driven engagement of the national or local government.

In Chapter 3, Ledio Allkja and Doriana Musaj discuss the controversy between public agencies and civil society regarding the 'right' way to protect the cultural heritage of the city of Tirana in Albania. By using the National Theatre as an example, they analyse how a prosperous development may conflict with the maintenance of the cultural heritage buildings of the city. This also deals with the relationship between the official planning system and the (non-)conservation of traditional features valued by the citizens. The chapter analyses the formal and informal ways that citizens were engaged in the cause of the National Theatre.

In Chapter 4, Sıla Ceren Varış Husar, Merve Buldaç and Gizem Hediye Eren explore civil society formation and citizen awareness, projections and position on the urban landscape of the city of Eskişehir, Turkey, in particular the currently transformed riverfront. Eskişehir is a city with a broad cultural diversity due to immigration. The natural heritage of the riverfront serves as a physical and emotional anchor for urban identity, providing a sense of place and belonging to the people and communities that inhabit it. Like in many cities, the riverfront has been developed with private houses and concrete barriers to separate private from public. The local community's cultural identity enshrined a strong attachment to the riverfront and a deep interest in preserving its historical and cultural significance. But getting involved in these goals themselves or supporting NGOs in doing so is only practised to a small extent. However, the fear of an even greater change to the riverfront, involving a further restriction of access to the river, caused a reaction in some citizens to protest against these plans.

A greater focus on the question of how the state can support the participation of citizens in planning processes is discussed in Chapter 5 by Milan Husar, Vladimir Ondrejicka and Renata Kascakova. They provide the example of Trenčín si Ty [Trenčín is You], an attempt to develop a vision for the new development of the city of Trenčín in Slovakia. As a concrete solution citizens proposed an idea for the development of the central urban zone in direct contact with both banks of the river Váh. It was a unique project combining engaged public servants and the enthusiasm of Trenčín's citizens. The engagement of the citizens stemmed from local dissatisfaction with the development proposed by the municipality. The cautious approach of the public planners

from the beginning and their long-standing planning experience involved strong trust building and eventually led to successfully developed spatial plans.

Chapter 6, by Miltiadis Lazoglou, Eleni Linaki, Evangelos Asprogerakas, Konstantinos Serraos and Antonia Koutsopoulou, presents the experiences of public participation in planning from Athens, Greece. Based on two initiatives, the SynAthina Platform and Cultural HIDRANT, the contribution analyses how citizen initiatives co-create their new position in urban development and determine whether these mechanisms have a transformative impact on local urban planning and society. Due to austerity measures and the economic crisis in Greece the operating capabilities of the municipality of Athens were significantly diminished. This led to an increase of citizen activities and involvement in planning to fight the deficiencies of Greek formal spatial planning. The two examples clearly show the necessity for and potential success of citizen introduced planning.

What connects the four chapters is cultural heritage as a hook and cause for engagement – be it top-down driven and supported, a combination of top-down and bottom-up, or a reaction of citizens against the plans of national or local government. Cultural heritage features can be used to trigger civic engagement because they often are the source of local identity and thus valued by the people.

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3. Civic engagement in the protection of historical heritage and city landscape

Ledio Allkja and Doriana Musaj

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Tirana, the capital of Albania, has been undergoing rapid transformations since the fall of the dictatorial regime in the early 1990s. During the 50 years of the dictatorial regime, private property was abolished, while urban development evolved through strict government control. With the regime's fall and under the new "shock therapy," Tirana, and Albania in general, entered a phase of chaotic development (Aliaj et al. 2009).

The lack of understanding of property rights, combined with peculiar legislation in terms of reorganizing private property and a weak government, led to a spurt in informal development (Allkja 2021) on the outskirts of the city as well as *laissez-faire* formal development (Aliaj 2008). The city of Tirana started to sprawl (in the outskirts/periphery) and become more dense within the existing center. While the planning system was slow in reforming itself due to lacking capacities and political will, urban and population growth continued rapidly in the city. In three decades, Tirana has grown from a city of 200,000 inhabitants to a metropolitan city of almost 1 million.

The rapid and uncontrolled transformations continued until the mid-2000s. With the signing of the Stabilization and Association Pact with the EU in 2007, a series of reforms were carried out in the country, including the territorial planning system. As such, in 2009, new legislation was approved, completely changing how planning was conceived in the country. The "new" system was designed to be closer to the citizens' needs and to give the government the right tools to shape the country's sustainable development (Berisha et al. 2018).

Nevertheless, implementing the new system and achieving the desired outcomes was challenging. Several legal changes occurred over the years that somewhat derailed the initial scope of the legislation. In 2014, the government tried to put the planning system back on track. The legislation was revised again and cleared of unnecessary changes that were made over the previous years. Also, municipalities were supported in developing General

Local Territorial Plans (GLTPs) to support their sustainable development. In the period from 2016 to the present, all 61 municipalities have had their plans approved or are in the final process of approval. This is quite a remarkable achievement, considering that before 2016, only 5 percent of the Albanian territory was covered by territorial plans (Allkja 2021). Additionally, the General National Territorial Plan (GNTP) and two supportive plans of regional scale (Tirane-Durres Region; Coastal Region) were also adopted in 2014–2017.

Although the planning reform aimed to accommodate sustainable development at the local and national levels, the mission of planning soon changed. Since 2017, there has been a spurt in real estate development in Tirana. According to data from INSTAT, in the period 2019 to 2022, a total of 2.2 million square meters of new development were issued in building permits in Tirana alone (Liperi 2022). This is quite an intensive and speculative development when considering the average wages (affordability) and the migration of Albanians towards European or more developed countries (population decline).

This intensive development occurs mostly within the inner city and often at the expense of cultural and historical heritage (Dhrami and Allkja 2021). Tirana is a relatively "new" city; the fast-paced development risks destroying and damaging the already limited cultural and historical heritage. One of the prominent historical heritage sites of the city is the city center ensemble, developed during the Italian occupation period in the 1930s and the 1940s. This ensemble comprises administrative, ministerial, and cultural buildings as well as the building of the (former) National Theater.

The National Theater was destroyed in 2020 by the Albanian government and the municipality of Tirana to build a new theater through a highly non-transparent and violent process. The decision to destroy the existing theater and build a new one was made in the early spring of 2018. Active civic engagement succeeded in postponing the demolition for two years. However, on May 17, 2020, demolition of the theater commenced, after ten months of occupation, on the last day of the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, at 4:30 in the morning, after being nominated one of the seventh most endangered sites in Europe for 2020 by Europa Nostra. The municipality of Tirana organized the destruction nine days after a decision of the Council of Ministers allocated the property from the Ministry of Culture to the municipality of Tirana, later stated as anti-constitutional by a decision of the Constitutional Court of Albania. More than 1,000 police officers accompanied the demolition, and special armed forces were used to evict the citizens by force from the building.

This chapter offers a case study of civic engagement in Albania. It analyzes the formal and informal ways that citizens were engaged in the cause of the National Theater and their engagement post-demolition. The chapter also compares two parallel processes regarding citizen participation in decision-making

for city development. On the one side, the municipality and the government tried to organize interest groups supporting their decision, while on the other, spontaneous and voluntary civic engagement tried to stop this decision.

We offer first a theoretical discussion on civic engagement and public participation, followed by a discussion of spatial planning in Albania, the National Theater building, the decision to demolish the theater, and the activities of civic engagement. In conclusion we look at the overall experience of civic engagement in this case and link it with the theoretical background of Chapters 1 and 2.

3.2   PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

As mentioned, this chapter tries to understand different aspects of civic engagement. On the one side, the formal engagement through planning processes is usually initiated by governments in various circumstances, while on the other side, voluntary civic engagement takes place where civil actors take their interests to the government. So, to put it simply, the first is a more "top-down" approach whereas the second is a "bottom-up" approach.

Over the last decade the concept of governance rather than government has come to the forefront in research on the relationships between different pillars of society (government, market, and civil society) and the roles they have in decision-making processes (Well and Schmitt 2015). While "government" referred to the approach in which government dominated over the different actors, governance refers to different networks, alliances, and channels used to shape and impact decision-making. Governance requires a shift in the governmentality of taking decisions, from the dominance of one actor to the relationships of a multiplicity of actors trying to shape decisions at different levels (Davoudi et al. 2008). Governmentality here becomes a key element in considering the high diversity of cultural contexts, and the ways in which governance and relationships are established and understood in different settings offer a great variety of approaches.

Within the overall discussions of the "shift" from government to governance, the concept of "territorial governance" has taken root at the EU level. Territorial governance is defined as "the formulation and implementation of public policies, programmes and projects for the development of a place/ territory by: coordinating actions of actors and institutions; integrating policy sectors; mobilizing stakeholder participation; being adaptive to changing contexts; realizing place-based/territorial specificities and impacts" (ESPON and Politecnico di Torino 2013, p. 5). As can be seen from this definition, two main dimensions are directly related to "civic actors" such as the coordination of different actors and the mobilization of stakeholder participation. The third

dimension, that of mobilizing stakeholders, has a direct connection to civic involvement as it deals with the type of engagement, inclusion of different groups, and processes and mechanisms to increase engagement. Meanwhile, the first dimension deals more directly with the issue of power and the room to maneuver of different actors in a specific context, although it must be said that it is more focused on an institutional level (government) rather than non-governmental actors.

Public participation has been a prominent issue in the evolution of spatial planning and decision-making processes. Since the 1960s, participation has been evolving as a key component in order to integrate the public in decision-making but also smooth over social differences in achieving public interest goals. In 1969, Sherry Arnstein's "Ladder of Participation" made a key contribution as a simple model for identifying the role, power, and ways that citizens can be involved in planning and development (Arnstein 1969). This conceptual framework has helped in developing different approaches in planning with regard to citizen participation and their involvement in democratic decision-making. Nevertheless, it is important to say that there is a top-down approach in this, as the model has mostly served governments in developing their public participation practices.

While it is agreed generally that public participation is necessary in spatial planning processes or for specific projects, the way this occurs and who controls the degree of involvement differs widely. This depends very often on the nature of governmentality, or to put it simply on the overall societal culture and government models. For example, countries which have a history of dictatorial regimes, featuring strong governments and little room for other actors to share their opinions, combined with a lower level of economic and societal development, find it difficult to develop participation processes compared with democracies of the West. Considering that the concepts have been exported from the West towards the East, the cultural adaptation and transposition of these concepts into local cultures varies.

Nevertheless, as part of the transition towards democratic societies and democratic systems of governance, including reforms in spatial planning to accommodate the new societal and economic dynamics, public participation has also been sanctioned in legislative frameworks, therefore obliging governments at different levels to involve citizens in decision-making. For example, preparation of public budgets at local level is required by law to involve citizens, and planning systems also require involvement of citizens in planning processes albeit at the sub-local, local, regional, or national level. So from a legal perspective, governments have had to adapt to the new circumstances and concepts as an overall pressure of "travelling notions" from West to East. However, the degree to which and the way these concepts are implemented in the field have strong variations, and to put it in Arnstein's terms, vary from

degrees of non-participation (manipulation or therapy) to tokenism (information) and rarely feature in approaches of citizen control through forms of partnerships or delegation.

Hence, on the public participation front, one can say that it depends a lot on the government in a specific context as to how they want to achieve it and for what purpose. So it is a process led by government. On the other hand, the "civic" pillar has also increased its capacities and awareness of the possibilities that the different legal frameworks offer for its involvement in decision-making. Due to government failure or by realizing opportunities of involvement, the civic sector is increasing its presence in decision-making. Nevertheless, different factors impact the ability of the civic sector to achieve its goals and the way organization occurs.

3.3   SPATIAL PLANNING IN ALBANIA

In Albania, following the strategic legal changes of 2009, which established a new approach to the planning system, some planning initiatives were taken at the local level in the period 2009–2013. However, a significantly intensified level of planning activity took place after 2013 due to increased government priority in planning. The legislation was reviewed, resulting in the preparation of Law 107/2014, "On Territorial Planning and Development," as amended. The review did not bring about a new framework but clarified and simplified some of the complexities of the previous law. According to this legislation, the most important plan in terms of spatial planning instruments at the national level is the GNTP. The latter is supported by sectorial plans as well as Detailed Plans of Areas of National Importance. At the local level, the most important document is the GLTP. It can also be complemented with sectorial plans and Local Detailed Plans (LDP). The GNTP and the GLTP are composed of three main documents: the Territorial Development Strategy, the Territorial Plan, and the Regulation of Development.

Regarding institutional actors, the Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy is responsible for planning, while the National Territorial Planning Agency, established in 2009, is the leading institution at the central level. The National Territorial Council (NTC), a collegial entity composed of ministers of ministries that impact the territory and are led by the prime minister, is responsible for approving national and local plans. It is worth mentioning that at the local level, only the GLTPs are approved by the NTC, while the mayor approves the LDPs. Lastly, municipalities are responsible for planning at the local level. Due to the territorial administrative reform implemented in 2015, municipalities in Albania have been reduced from 373 units (municipalities and communes) to 61 municipalities covering larger and more complex territories. The territorial reform, besides increasing the population of each territory, was also associated

with an increase in powers and responsibilities at the local level. This created a large demand for planning at the local level to manage their territories better. As a result, 55 of the 61 municipalities have had their GLTPs approved, and 6 are in the approval process of the GLTP.

3.4   THE ALBANIAN NATIONAL THEATER

The complex of the National Theater was designed and built during the monarchy of King Zog in 1938. It was commissioned and built by the Albanian government affiliated with the Italian government around the time of the occupation of Albania by the Italian fascist state. Italian architect Giulio Berte designed the complex as a cultural and sportive complex named "Circolo Italo-Albanese, Scanderbeg" – Italian-Albanian Circle Skanderbeg (Figure 3.1). It is considered the city's first cultural-sportive center, including a cinema, library, restaurant, coffee shop, tennis court, swimming pool, dance floor, and additional public functions. After its opening in the 1940s, the "Cinema-Theater Savoy," later renamed Kinema Kosova – Kosova Cinema, became a center where the most important cultural institutions were established in post-war Albania. It was designed for film screenings, as well as theatrical performances and concerts, and was categorized as "first class" at the time. It was in this cultural and artistic environment in the capital of Albania where the organization of a series of classical music concerts began, including works by Scarlatti, Cherubini, Corelli, Vivaldi, Boccherini, Cimarosa, Paganini, Rameau, Schumann, De Gallot, and Chopin (Plasari 2018).

The National Theater represents several stages of architectural development in the country. The cultural complex stood the test of time in the historic center of Tirana: it was considered by historians and local architects as "one of the most modern of all Italian inheritance in Tirana," and it was argued that it should be preserved and restored as it stands much closer to modernism than the later monumental projects in the city (Raça, 2018). It differed from other Italian architecture in Albania, as it aimed to bring a human scale by being simple and integrated into the urban space. The complex is considered to be a turning point on the monumental axis of the center of Tirana, designed by Brasini, as it is the first rationalist object after a period of neoclassical construction. The facility was first realized with prefabricated elements and innovative materials at the time, not only in Albania but also beyond. Scholars classify it as a rationalist building influenced by De Chirico's futurism and paintings (Plasari 2018).

In 1930, the center of Tirana entered a phase of significant changes. New governmental buildings and a new boulevard were developed (Bulleri, 2011; Instituti Italian i Kultures 2006). The main aim back then was to change the city's image and support the transition towards a modern European

Figure 3.1   *The frontal facade of the complex of the theater, three days*
                    after occupation

city. This was done through major support from the Italian government and
Italian architects such as Armando Brasini, Florestano de Fausto, and Gerado
Bossio (Instituti Italian i Kultures 2006; Mëhilli 2016). The boulevard's axis
underwent several changes before settling on the concept that was ultimately
realized and passed down partially to the present day. Before these ideas
that would introduce the Western spirit, with Italian and Austrian-influenced
designs and architecture, Tirana maintained its character in creating the city
and its social centers. The people of Tirana have left vital traces for the devel-
opment of the city and Albanian society as a whole by using local resources
and combining traditional style with Ottoman influence in the city's construc-
tion over the years.

   After the capitulation of the Italian forces while under German occupation,
the complex was named "Cinema Kosova." Following the end of the Second
World War, the complex was changed and used for different purposes by
the dictatorial regime. After reopening after the war in 1945, the first special
trial of the Communist dictatorship transformed its hall into a court for the
public judgment of the war (Kujto.al, 2018). Later, the National Theater was
founded and is considered the oldest modern theater in Tirana (it was named
People's Theater during the Hoxha regime). In the first 15 years after the

Communists took power, the National Theater's repertoire was dominated by works by Russian-Soviet authors, as relations between Albania and the Soviet Union were very close from 1945 to 1961. The building was a material witness to important moments in Albanian history, the womb of cultural and scientific institutions, like the first house of the Writers' Club, and the first place where Albanology studies were hosted. It is also the building where the following cultural institutions were founded: the Little Ballet (1947), the Opera and Ballet Theater (1952), the National Circus (1952, the only circus in the Balkans), the Metropolitan Theater (1952), the University of Arts (1959), and the Experimental National Theater "Kujtim Spahivogli" (2011) (Plasari, 2018).

3.5   DECISION-MAKING

Monuments of culture have been recognized in Albania since 1922, but the first decision on them was made only after 1948. During the Communist regime, the criteria for selecting the heritage material were closely allied with the political paradigms of the Hoxha regime, attempting to evaluate what served the government instead of what really had cultural value. The first attempt to conserve and preserve the monuments of culture after the fall of the Communist regime in Tirana was made in 2000. Within a decision of the Council of Ministers, no. 180/2000, the central axis of the boulevard and the buildings surrounding it, including the complex of the National Theater, were claimed as part of the cultural and monumental ensemble. By gaining this protected status, the center of Tirana, including its buildings, is considered historical and cultural heritage; therefore, changes in their use, layout, or any other interventions can only occur through central governmental authority. At the beginning of 2000, the facades of the governmental buildings were restored and renovated while the cultural and social buildings were left to decay. Low governmental attention towards cultural heritage, exacerbated by limited finances, led to the degradation of several public sites, including the National Theater complex buildings. The lack of investment in the heritage sites endangered their existence, and the city has since lost dozens of these urban commons. With the justification of the lack of architectural value and material degradation, the governmental authorities destroyed several monuments representing this epoch.

During its lifetime several attempts were made to demolish the theater, as its 5,000 square meters of land were highly valued by developers and various stakeholders. But the building was under legal protection as it was positioned in the historic center of Tirana, part of the cultural monument ensemble, until 2018 when the legal boundary of the same ensemble suddenly changed. The new boundary approved by a Council of Ministers left out several historic buildings including the theater complex.

Right after the new images of the butterfly-shaped theater were launched in early 2018, the Institute of Construction of Albania developed a technical analysis of the conditions of the National Theater complex at the request of the municipality of Tirana. According to this analysis, it was deemed that the building was not safe to continue its purpose (Instituti i Ndertimit 2020); additionally, as part of the assessment, it was deemed that the costs of restoring the existing building exceeded by far the "value of the buildings" (Instituti i Ndertimit 2020). It is interesting to see that although one of the main arguments is the cost of restoration, the assumed cost is not shown in the report to compare. This report advised the municipality of Tirana to stop any operations within the building, empty it, and cut off electricity to avoid any possible fire risk. In 2020, the municipality of Tirana requested that the Institute of Construction of Albania reassess the conditions of the National Theater complex. On May 11, 2020, the Institute replied to the municipality saying that the initial assessment report held (Instituti i Ndertimit 2020). Hence, the reassessment confirmed the first one, with the verdict that it was better to demolish the building and construct a new one due to high costs. Based on this official communication between the two institutions, on May 17, 2020, the municipality of Tirana began the demolition of the theater complex.

In parallel to the assessments made by the Institute of Construction of Albania, initiated by the requests of the municipality of Tirana, a process for developing a project for a new theater began (Massarente and Musaj 2021). It is somewhat peculiar and difficult to understand when, how, and by whom this process was started due to highly contradictory declarations by the different people and institutions involved. It is not the purpose of this chapter to try to answer these questions, but it is necessary to highlight this issue in order to understand also the civic engagement in the process and the public reaction. As declared by the local and national authorities, a private company, which owned the land behind the public theater complex, had developed a project for real estate development (Gerven Oei 2018a). In order to expand its development, it had proposed to the authorities to make use of some public land, including parts of the National Theater complex, with the condition that it would pay to support the construction of a new theater. Danish architect Bjarke Ingels designed the new theater, and the architectural design was "gifted" to the Albanian government. Based on this request, the government of Albania tried to pass legislation in the parliament for the construction of the new theater in the form of a public–private partnership (PPP). Due to a high level of pressure from the population and infringement of the competition rules, the legislation failed (Exit.al, 2018). However, although the theater PPP scheme was justified in early 2018 by "the lack of money by the government" (Gerven Oei 2018b), after demolition, the government decided to build the new theater through state budget financing. In 2021, the National Territorial Council approved the

building permit to construct the new National Theater. Procedures have been paused since then until this chapter was written.

3.6 CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

The controversy over the National Theater was met by strong civic engagement. In more than two years of resistance, a collective human assemblage was created in the heart of Tirana. The National Theater, unfortunately, is not the only case of orchestrated political violence toward the city. It is manifested in the form of high-rise consumerist buildings that replace pieces of the historical city. It is also manifested in imposed masterplans that refuse to recognize that an urban and cultural ecology already exists in the city. This violence is mostly related to invited designers using their brand names and authority as star architects to silence local voices and intimidate local critics (Pllumbi 2022). At the theater, suddenly a building situated in a public space started to represent the problems of a community and a society that struggled for decades to achieve democracy.

The starting point for civic engagement was in early spring 2018, just when the intention to demolish the historic building was being articulated in public for the third time (the prime minister had mentioned that he wanted to erase the building when he was first minister of culture in 1998 and later mayor of Tirana in 2003). The resistance built with members of the artist community, architects, academics, urban activists, experts from various fields, journalists, and intellectuals was identified as the "Alliance for the Protection of the Theater." The group of people was very diverse in terms of backgrounds, political views, and social status. They established common unwritten rules, set a scheduling discipline, and organized functions according to people's skills and predispositions. Since the state had abandoned the building for more than 30 years, this new grassroots community gathered in the square of the theater and entered into a direct relationship with the public without the need or mediation of institutions (Figure 3.2). This was a new experience for the city of Tirana and Albania.

For more than a year, the activists of the theater movement organized a Speakers' Corner each day in the theater square, where open-air public speaking, debate, and discussions were organized (Figure 3.3). During this time, the activists, artists, and citizens developed a sense of community that was strengthened further after the building was occupied later in 2019. On July 24 early in the morning, the police surrounded the theater complex to empty it prior to demolition. After several hours of confrontation with the police, the citizens occupied the building. In Albania, public space was never occupied; the theater is the first case.

Figure 3.2   *The slogan "Monument of Culture. Protected by People" at the entrance of the square of the theater*

The activists constantly elaborated on the rights to common resources, those public properties administered by the state, and all the city's public sites, such as parks. They argued that there are several reasons the city realm should not be just public or private, instead uniting the interests of all, thus being private and public simultaneously (Pllumbi, 2022). Theater activists administered the building 24/7 for ten months, using it for community purposes by organizing a Festival for Protection of the Theater, which succeeded in organizing some 70 performances with several international troupes in less than seven months. The purpose was to attract and generate a public connection with the movement community and to restore a relationship drastically broken due to 30 years of political, economic, and social transition.

The activists took care of the building, as it had been kept closed an entire year before the occupation. Immediately they saw the need to clean it, organize the space, and take away materials left in the main theater hall and stage. The aim was "to bring the building back to life." By organizing in 24 hour shifts, they safeguarded the building, made inventories of the materials and artifacts inside the theater, and filed records of them. They had to set up some disciplinary and ethical rules, as without them, it would not have been possible for such a diverse group of citizens to coexist (Pllumbi and Musaj 2021).

Source: Authors.

Figure 3.3   The view of the square from the terrace of the theater during the protest

On November 26, 2019, at 4:00 a.m., a 6.4-magnitude earthquake hit north-western Albania, in which 51 people died, and more than 3,000 were injured. In the first few hours of the tragedy, the theater activists organized an emergency rescue center at the theater square and called people for disaster aid. From November 26 to December 7, more than 15,000 people came to the improvised humanitarian aid center at the National Theater, to help, donate, and contribute to families affected by the earthquake. During the earthquake emergency, the citizens trusted the Alliance for the Protection of the Theater community, instead of state institutions, by bringing their humanitarian aid to the National Theater. A team of 200 volunteers, self-organized, distributed humanitarian aid to people in areas affected by the earthquake. Around 100 tons of disaster aid were donated by more than 15,000 donors. It was the first time that citizens organized themselves to help each other, despite institutional involvement. Public support for the theater cause increased as a result. Those seven days of transformation from a theater into an emergency center reframed the cause of the theater in the public realm. The media coverage during the earthquake connected the Alliance with a larger public. Even the diaspora was included.

Not only for this cause but also for other issues, the movement for the protection of the theater began to inspire a spirit of public participation. It was a means to demonstrate the value of the theater complex beyond its physical structure. The group members never left the facility, with many taking turns sleeping there to ensure its safety. On March 9, 2020, the theater movement entered a new stage. The restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic came into effect. The activists feared that the government could use the pandemic to destroy the theater. A core group decided to continue the protest. The Covid-19 restriction substantially reduced the number of individuals involved. The elderly were to remain at home, while the night duties were reduced to a maximum of two individuals. They revised their care protocols by implementing the new care protocols outlined by the WHO and the Ministry of Health while altering community engagements. The protest was now carried out only online via the Facebook page.

Nevertheless, as mentioned previously, on May 17, 2020, the municipality of Tirana and the government decided to demolish the buildings. The demolition began brutally at 4:30 a.m., when more than a thousand police officers evicted the activists, violently terrorizing them with armed force. Members of the group protecting the theater were still inside when demolition started, while several others were forcibly removed from the building. In the early hours of the morning, once the news started to spread, many citizens of Tirana came out to the main boulevard, protesting the theater's demolition (Figure 3.4).

The demolition of the National Theater building, carried out as a result of an operation ordered by the municipality of Tirana, was internationally condemned as a barbaric action and an infringement of the rule of law and the public safety measures applied under the Covid-19 regime. The demolition was put on the "Wall of Shame" by ARCH – the Alliance for the Restoration of Cultural Heritage organization. Europa Nostra, the pan-European organization, had nominated the building as among the "seven most endangered" sites in Europe for 2020 to help save the historic site.

The National Theater case is still open in Albania. Some weeks after the demolition, the protests reduced while the space once holding the theater complex was fenced and access was denied. The group dissolved with time. The theater was the only connection that made them a community; its destruction deeply affected their network. For almost three years, the extension of the protest period developed a new habit in the city, where people would pass by and see what was happening at the theater square. The loss of heritage had erased the reason to protest, but the loss of this heritage highlighted the exclusion of the citizens from decision-making in the city.

The theater episode led to two forms of storytelling: the one created by the public institutions and the second told in the public square during the protest. The Alliance for the Protection of the Theater initiated several procedures

Source: Authors.

Figure 3.4   *Demolition of the National Theater*

to contact and initiate a dialogue with the municipality until the morning of July 24, when police forces surrounded the theater. After the occupation, the

citizens developed other allies on the case, including other governmental, non-governmental, local, and international actors. Europa Nostra included the theater as Europe's seventh most endangered cultural heritage site, while the Albanian government devalued it as without cultural value. The decision to destroy the building was made even though several international bodies had entered the public debate. Despite being reported as a dangerous structure, the theater survived the earthquake, while its cultural values were recognized even by a larger public. Although the theater was demolished, the activists won the public cause, proving that the decisions were made arbitrarily while representing the other side of the story to the public.

3.7   CONCLUSIONS

The Albanian case of the National Theater shows two main aspects of civic engagement and the role of the state in this respect. Civic engagement grew in this case as a result of a government failure. The participation of citizens in decision-making in this case was reduced and led directly to a higher mobilization of civic actors in self-engagement to get their voices heard.

From a territorial governance perspective, the mobilization of stakeholders was quite weak. In this case, the government first tried to manipulate the public, and then it excluded stakeholders from the process. So, although there were public debates and consultations, these were held only with a small group of artists and/or members of the National Theater. The discussion was shifted from something of general public interest (cultural heritage and memory of the city) towards something important only for a smaller and exclusive group, the theater infrastructure. Hence, public involvement for this project was deformed and shaped in a way that interested more the decision-makers.

On the other side, civic engagement emerged as strong. It managed to postpone the demolition and the construction of a new theater for a period of two years. Self-organization of stakeholders was key in terms of developing a strong action. The use of creative methods of engagement, such as social media, appropriation of space, artistic activities, and debates, was key in mobilizing and increasing sensibility of the general public on the topic. This was seen in the protests after the demolition of the theater when a large number of people took to the streets to protest against the government.

Nevertheless, it can be said that there are limits to civic engagement. Timing is an essential aspect as the longer it takes to achieve results, the more the patience of civic actors wears off. So it is important to have clear strategies of keeping civic actors engaged in a certain cause. Additionally, the role of the government and in general territorial governance is important as an inhibitor or promoter of civic engagement.

Lastly, as a conclusion, what can be said is that in countries like Albania, territorial governance and public participation approaches are weak. The transition towards democratic governance is still ongoing with clear handicaps in terms of issues of transparency and overall democratic decision-making. On the other hand, civic engagement when there is a government failure has shown that it can work in mobilizing a highly diverse group of actors, but when there is no support or reflection from the government it can start to fade away. Hence, in post-socialist countries, although there have been many legal changes and reforms which support public participation and civic engagement in decision-making, these remain weak and subject to governmentalities of the past, as the dominance of the state continues to be seen.

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4. Uncertainty of urban landscapes on the threshold of urban transformation and the positionality of citizens: the case of Eskişehir Porsuk riverfront

Sıla Ceren Varış Husar, Merve Buldaç and Gizem Hediye Eren

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The possibility of change in the urban landscape has been perceived variously by different groups in society. In addition to existing interventions on urban space, it is necessary to raise awareness about possible ecological, economic, and social difficulties that may be encountered in the future, and to be prepared for the creation of spaces in this direction. Some research (Solon 2009; Martín et al. 2018) in the literature argues that there are effects at different scales before, during, and after the spatial changes. Some of them touch on the issues of common identity creation and common life in urban space. The relationship of common identity with culture, experience, and history is evident. Urban landscape has been a unique part of cultural heritage and co-living throughout history.

The objective of the Sustainable Development Goals (UN 2022) is to create cities and human settlements that are more sustainable, inclusive, safe, and resilient. Sustainability of urban public spaces leads to a discussion of democratic ways of life with civic engagement, the tools of spatial planning (Healey 2008) and urban policy of good quality (Booher 2008). Recent literature discusses the role of civil society in reaching the aforementioned goals. Some research discusses the extent of the players of civil society in terms of being effective in creating a kind of new world order and their capacity and impact in helping this change (Strachwitz 2022). While others focus on the notion of community in relation to economic and social reproduction issues (van Dyk 2018), here we discuss the related issues of resilience and social capital (Aldrich and Meyer 2015), community resilience and social attributes as in

networks, people–place connections, and infrastructure (Maclean et al. 2014) as social sustainability indicators (Magis 2010).

Civil society as defined in this chapter includes both citizens and self-organized institutions who actively participate in and contribute to the development and improvement of their community, specifically in the case study area. This research in particular explores civil society formation and citizen awareness, projections, and position on the urban landscapes of the city of Eskişehir, Turkey, in particular the riverfront. The riverfront, which has recently attracted more citizens with the global pandemic, is facing transformations. The relevant civil society institutions and the people that engaged with the riverfront area, representing a diverse population and opinions, are interviewed. We discuss the future spatial challenges of public goods and private land development in terms of the sustainable transition and the resilience of the public spaces in the city. The research is notable in terms of developing a general framework regarding the positionality of citizens regarding the case study area via interviews and observations of citizens and civil society bodies.

In terms of this book's contextual discussion about urban development and civic engagement in different countries, we present a local perspective from Turkey.

4.2   THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND LOCAL CONTEXT

The foundational concepts that constitute the theoretical framework of this section are the organization of civil society, the sense of belonging to the city, the role of the citizen in the production of urban space, the change and transformation of riverfront areas in the context of natural and cultural heritage, and possible threats to sustainability and resilience. While drawing the theoretical framework, we also make clarifications about how these concepts are formed, discussed and applied locally in Turkey and the Eskişehir case.

Before examining the literature, there are two important concepts to be discussed, namely resilience and positionality; urban landscapes are experiencing uncertainty and transformation that is a challenge to resilience.

Firstly, resilience within this context is addressed not only as the ability of a system, community, or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate, adapt to, transform, and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner (UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, n.d.) but also in a social and communal sense as the collective ability of a neighborhood or a certain geographically bounded place to respond to the sudden challenges in a cooperative manner while maintaining its daily living patterns (Aldrich 2012). According to Davoudi (2018), resilience is the capacity for adaptation and transformation, rather than just bouncing back to the way

things were before. Resilience has become a focus of academic literature across many disciplines, from the natural to the social sciences. However, the traditional engineering and ecological definitions of resilience are limited in their closed-systems approach, which is challenged by complexity theory. Complexity theory considers complex systems, such as cities and societies, to be non-linear, emergent, and inherently unpredictable. This means that small changes can lead to major disruptions, and resilience is about the capacity for adaptation and transformation in response to these disruptions. Despite its pervasiveness in public policy discourse, the ambiguity of the catch-all concept of resilience risks depoliticizing the political struggle for just resilience. Sustainability, on the other hand, is defined as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (UN Brundtland Commission 1987). According to Polat and Kahraman (2019, p. 321), resilience at the urban and regional level is a term that describes the dynamic characteristics and adaptive capacity of an urban system. On the other hand, sustainability is characterized by the ideas of intergenerational and transgenerational justice. When the concept of "urban resistance" comes to the fore, its application to various problem areas related to the city gives new meanings to the expression, going beyond mere "improvement" to adapting to the new situation that emerges through the processes of "change," "transformation," "adaptation" and "learning" (Chelleri 2012 as cited in Ersavaş Kavanoz 2020, p. 9).

Secondly, positionality refers to an individual's social, economic, cultural, and political positioning within a particular context or system. It refers to how an individual's personal experiences, beliefs, values, and identities shape their perspectives and influence their behavior and interactions within a given situation. Factors such as gender, race, and class are examples of social and spatial positions that are not static qualities, but rather indicators of an individual's position in society. This position shapes an individual's knowledge and understanding of both tangible and intangible concepts. As a result, knowledge is influenced by a particular position that reflects specific places and spaces, according to Warf (2010).

4.2.1   Civil Society and Sustainable Development

Civil society is "the ensemble of associations that can significantly determine or influence the course of state policy" (Taylor 1990 as cited in Keyman and Gümüşçü 2014, p. 150). The generic components of civil society are pluralism, consensus, altruism, toleration, and egalitarianism. Heper and Yıldırım (2011) describe civil society as a structured organization that seeks to improve society through public discussions and debates. The term implies a collective effort by individuals or groups to bring about positive change in their community.

Civil society requires certain prerequisites to flourish (Jenkins 2001). One of these is the existence of countervailing powers to central authority. Another prerequisite is a market economy, where resources are not controlled solely by the state, enabling the autonomy of business firms and other societal institutions. The third prerequisite is a widespread literacy and mass print culture that allows for debate among the various spheres of civil society. Fourthly, horizontal linkages among the constituent spheres of civil society are essential to promote dialogue and cooperation. Additionally, a desegregated societal structure is necessary to establish reciprocal and cooperative relationships among the various spheres of civil society. A fifth prerequisite is the absence of an in-group/out-group orientation among the members of civil society, which could arise due to a lack of trust among people.

Civil society can be defined as the space and institutions that exist between the government and the private sector, where citizens can freely organize and participate in collective activities to promote their interests and improve their communities. In Turkey, civil society includes a wide range of organizations, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), professional associations, trade unions, religious groups, and grassroots movements.

In recent years, the Turkish government has introduced an approach that restricts the activities of civil society organizations and limits their ability to operate independently through extensive control of operations. This approach has included new regulations on NGOs, limitations on freedom of speech and assembly, and increased government oversight of civil society groups. Despite these challenges, civil society remains an integral part of Turkish society and plays a critical role in advocating for social justice, promoting human rights, and providing support to affected and marginalized communities.

4.2.2   Civil Society in Turkey

After contemplating civil society conceptually and in relation to sustainable development, we now describe the local situation. How well integrated are the sectors for sustainable development in Turkey? Where does Turkey stand in this conceptualization?

Since Turkey's transition to democracy in 1945, the state of democracy in the country has been inconsistent. As a result, most of the research conducted on civil society in Turkey has concentrated on the role of civil society in relation to the dominant state and democracy, rather than on its impact on public policy-making (Heper and Yıldırım 2011). The establishment of a democratic secular vision is closely linked to the consolidation of democracy, which requires significant institutional reform as well as a robust civil society. Institutions play a crucial role in democracy, but the quality and nature of democratic institutions depend on a strong civil society. Despite significant

societal changes due to modernization and globalization in recent years, civil society development has been slow due to political and social divisions caused by the government. However, there has been an increasing connection between civil society and democracy in recent decades (Keyman and Gümüşçü 2014, pp. 144–150).

Which formations/bodies are defined within the scope of civil society in Turkey? There is one commission report referenced here (in relation to the 11th Five-Year Development Plan covering the years of 2019–2023 produced by Turkey's Ministry of Development) in order to show the history of and national perspective on civil society. This commission report shows that the NGOs in Turkey are becoming widespread with the support of international organizations and the regulations accepted in national and international legislation as proposed by the European Union, the World Bank, and the United Nations. Nevertheless, the civil society movement in Turkey remains disconnected from the majority of the citizens and appeals to only a small part of it, despite its development in recent years (Turkey Ministry of Development 2018, p. 23). Citizen participation takes place in a way that is narrow but deep and various social groups are represented in different ways. Foundations (Vakıflar) and associations (Dernekler) constitute a significant part of NGOs (Turkey Ministry of Development 2018, p. 23).

There are many regulations in both national and international legislation regarding the existence and functioning of associations. According to Article 33 of the Constitution titled "Freedom of Association," founding an association, being a member of an association and withdrawing from membership are rights guaranteed by the Constitution (Turkey Ministry of Development 2018, p. 27). Associations in Turkey operate in 21 different fields. There is a portfolio of associations in a wide perspective, from professional and solidarity associations to culture, art and tourism, environment, natural life and animal protection, reconstruction, urban planning, and development (Turkey Ministry of Development 2018, p. 30). In this research, associations as NGOs are determined as part of the focus group and interviews are held with associations that have positions relevant to the riverfront.

Would taking into account comparatively institutionalized associations solely functioning as NGOs be simplifying civil society in Turkey? Let us reorient the discussion towards the community and people. What is the situation of communities in Turkey? What type of community development triggers social cohesion in Turkey?

Recent earthquakes and natural disasters in Turkey have led to an increase in self-organization and agencies. Especially during the Marmara earthquake in 1999, the visibility of volunteers and NGOs increased and their importance was understood more clearly. However, it is obvious that volunteering activities carried out within institutions in Turkey have not yet developed enough.

This is due to legal, structural, and cultural deficiencies (Turkey Ministry of Development 2018, p. 43). Citizens have also witnessed the existence of organizations other than the state, and that these organizations can sometimes be faster and more beneficial than the state. The inability of the state to reduce the damage in the wake of the 1999 earthquake was voiced by the media and what happened was described as "a turning point in terms of civil solidarity in Turkey's history" (Minc 2000 and Özdemir 2009 as cited in Örnek and Ayas 2015). Not long ago, after the earthquakes in Kahramanmaraş province, southeastern Anatolia, in February 2023, the visibility and activities of many NGOs were shared on social media and the confidence in these organizations has increased.

4.2.3   Heritage and Urban Identity: Riverfronts

The environment is not just a location for heritage, but also heritage in various ways; this heritage is intrinsic to the environment as well as to how individuals interpret the significance of the environment (Azzopardi et al. 2023). Thus, a landscape's physical and biological features can be referred to as the part of a culture's identity which provides the resources, knowledge, and inspiration passed down through generations. In addition, natural heritage includes historic sites and monuments, archaeological sites, and areas with important religious or spiritual significance (Osipova et al. 2014).

   The concept of urban identity refers to a combination of natural and human-made elements and socio-cultural characteristics that make up urban environments. This includes both "social" aspects, such as socio-cultural, socio-economic, and psychological factors, as well as "environmental" aspects, such as natural and human-made elements. The human-made elements, such as settlement structures, symbols, and other cultural artifacts, are shaped by a variety of factors, including political, economic, social, and cultural values (Örer 1993; Ilgın 1997; Saban Ökesli and Gürçınar 2012).

   Natural heritage and urban identity are deeply connected and interdependent. Natural heritage serves as a physical and emotional anchor for urban identity, providing a sense of place and belonging to the people and communities that inhabit it. Natural heritage and riverfronts are also closely related in that both are concerned with protecting and preserving the natural environment, specifically along rivers. Riverfront plans require focus on protecting and improving urban rivers, such as restoring and enhancing the ecological health of rivers and their associated habitats. Rivers are also significant resources for people, providing recreation, habitat for wildlife, and water for drinking, bathing and other activities, and riverfront plans are also concerned with maintaining or restoring the traditional use of rivers (Otto et al. 2004).

In accordance with UNESCO's interpretation of heritage, cities rely heavily on rivers, which are frequently the reason for their formation (Chandran and Gowda 2014). Urban rivers, consisting of both concrete and abstract components, can be considered cultural heritage as they are closely linked to the local spatial environment (Nymoen Rørtveit and Setten 2015). They serve as a source of identity associated with a sense of place unique to the area (Soini and Birkeland 2014; Dempsey et al. 2020). Both locals and visitors are interested in enjoying and being close to rivers, learning about their cultural and natural heritage, seeing wildlife, and participating in a variety of outdoor activities. Communities are putting additional demands on their revitalized rivers (Otto et al. 2004).

4.2.4   Prospects for the Natural Heritage in Cities

Different approaches developed over the problems/threats experienced or likely to be experienced in cities also show their effect in urban built environments. Urban built environments are formed as a result of the relations of actors with different expectations and interests and with their desire-purpose-resources. According to Handy et al. (2002), the urban built environment encompasses the interrelated components of land use, transportation systems, and physical environment, all shaped by human actions. Built environments symbolize political, social and cultural elements and reveal human behavior (Tekel and Arı 2013). Knox and Ozolins (2007) identified various actors who play a role in shaping urban spaces, including landowners, speculators, entrepreneurs, contractors, users, real estate companies, financiers, professionals, management and regulatory agencies. The dominant actor or actors among these determine how spaces or areas are formed. In the context of sustainable cities, these space or area definitions are also very important, and emerging new concepts should be viable ideas in the long term. This requires mobilizing all public and private resources and multi-level collaboration between all communities and partnerships, from local to global.

Open public spaces such as natural and green spaces have a critical importance to the quality of life. The protection of green areas, which is an important value for the city, has become a problem over time. The weight of strong interest groups was felt in the city administrations, and the size of urban areas lagged far behind responding to social needs (Karataş and Kılıç 2017). The operation, maintenance, and control of these areas is carried out by municipalities, one of the management actors. Therefore, they are shaped according to the socio-physical characteristics of the region they are located in, as well as the political stances of local governments. The increase in the value of land in the face of certain developments and situations is perceived as presenting as

a strong rent[1] opportunity and such areas are the first to be sacrificed in capital flows (Tekçe 2021). Brenner and Theodore (2002), on the other hand, state that economic gains can be obtained in the short term through such spaces/ areas, and in the long term, they can form the basis of urban segregation environments.

Well-designed and planned open green spaces provide important contributions to the city through different values in terms of health, ecology, and economy. Ecological planning approaches are also of importance. Turkey has gradually started to integrate ecological planning approaches into planning policies that guide the urban form. There are various ongoing projects in this context in different cities, one of which is the project named "Eskişehir-Urban Transformation with Sustainability Performance (Super Urban System)" for the city of Eskişehir. This project, planned in partnership with the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization and Istanbul Technical University, aims to create "ecological settlement units," where the concept of sustainability is considered important in the transformation of areas with certain characteristics under disaster risk.

4.3   CASE STUDY: ESKİŞEHIR AND PORSUK RIVERFRONT – KANLIKAVAK AREA

4.3.1   Eskişehir from Various Perspectives

Eskişehir is a city in western Turkey situated along the Porsuk River, a tributary of the Sakarya River, located approximately 125 miles (200 km) to the west of the capital city of Ankara. Despite its name meaning "Old City" in Turkish, the majority of the city was reconstructed following its destruction during the Turkish War of Independence (1919–23). Throughout history, Eskişehir's fertile alluvial plains, nourished by the Porsuk River, have played a critical role in its settlement. From the 1980s to the 2000s, a modernization trend can be observed in Eskişehir's built environment. Since 2005, large commercial areas have been established in new complexes. The city continues to expand and grow to this day.

As for the social structure, Eskişehir has been the setting for immigration and today's cultural diversity is based on the immigrated population (Karpat 1985; Şahbaz 2016). Eskişehir has been growing steadily population wise since the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923. The city's popula-

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[1]   By rent we mean unearned income and speculation within the context of this chapter.

tion has grown from 41,000 in 1927 to over 900,000 in 2023 (Hakyemez 2016; TURKSTAT 2022).

During the Republican period, Eskişehir province saw significant industrial growth, including industries such as aircraft maintenance, sugar, brick-tile, printing, cement, and biscuits, which helped make it one of the more developed regions in Turkey. However, this development was mainly concentrated in the province's central city of Eskişehir. As of 2020, the literacy rate in the study area for those aged 6 and above was 97.49 percent, which is higher than the national average of 96.43 percent (Şahbaz 2016).

In 2017, a survey called the "Socio-Economic Development Ranking Survey of Provinces and Regions" evaluated various aspects such as demography, employment, education, health, competitive and innovative capacity, finance, accessibility, and quality of life. Eskişehir province was ranked 7th in Turkey according to this survey (Acar et al. 2019). Additionally, in 2013 Eskişehir was declared a cultural capital in two categories: Culture Capital of the Turkish World and UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Capital (Hakyemez 2016).

4.3.2   Porsuk Riverfront Characteristics and Public Use

The Porsuk River is the largest river in the province, and it flows through the city of Eskişehir from southwest to east, joining the Sakarya River. For centuries, the river has been an integral part of Eskişehir's image, providing opportunities for fishing, swimming, irrigation, and recreation. However, since the late 1960s, the river has turned into an open sewer and dumpsite due to the discharge of industrial and household waste and leaks in urban sewage and rainwater lines. This has caused ground liquefaction-related hazards for the surrounding buildings, and some parts of its bed have been filled by the former municipality administrations for creating parks, posing an overflow risk for the city. Prior to the 1970s, people in Eskişehir used to fish, swim, and have fun on the shores of the river. But with the rapid urbanization and industrialization, the river has become severely polluted, making it unsuitable for any recreational or commercial activity (Şimşek 2011).

The restoration efforts of Porsuk River in Eskişehir have been largely carried out by the Eskişehir Metropolitan Municipality (EBB 2010). The municipality has implemented a number of measures such as renewing pedestrian and vehicle bridges, improving transportation on the river, protecting against overflow, creating green areas without filling the river, paving water tunnels, integrating the city and the river through open-space planning, demolishing some production plants around the river, removing illegal housing from the surrounding area, clearing 9.5 kilometers of mud, and constructing concrete galleries measuring 2 square meters on both sides of the river (Şimşek 2011). The implementation of the "1/5000 Porsuk River and Near

Surrounding Master Plan Revision" after 2001 led to positive changes for the river (Hakyemez 2016). These efforts included following European examples for the development of the area, such as constructing gondolas and bridges (Figure 4.1) on the Porsuk River.

The Porsuk River Improvement Project, which is taken as an example by many municipalities in the world and in other parts of Turkey, was deemed worthy of the "Great Environment" award in the "Best Rehabilitation" category as a result of the evaluations of the Water and Environment Awards Jury (EBB 2016).

4.3.3   Places in Transformation: Eskişehir

The places on the banks of the Porsuk River, located in the Kanlıkavak area, which has recently attracted more citizens as a result of the global pandemic, have been faced with transformations. The land covering a part of the coastal areas of Osmangazi, Sümer, and Kırmızıtoprak neighborhoods is referred to as the Kanlıkavak area. In the area where improvement work was started by Odunpazarı Municipality in 2016, there is Kanlıkavak area with an area of approximately 1 hectare and Raif Özgür Park, which covers an area of 1.4 hectares. The well-maintained green open spaces offer a wide viewing area and spacious panoramic views (Şimşek and Yeşiltepe 2020, p. 496). However, in the Kanlıkavak area, close to the Osmangazi University Meşelik Campus North Entrance, the human-height concrete walls bordering the private property of the riverside houses and Sarar's (locally initiated world known company) private property on the Ertuğrulgazi neighborhood side of the river, bordering the park, prevent or limit the visibility and the panoramic view offered by the area. These concrete walls act as a restriction between public and private lands. The Osmangazi University side of the river area (Figure 4.2), which is on the opposite side of the river, has recently started to be occupied, and many private housing complexes have been built in this area. This situation involves uncertainty as to how the borders between the private property and the area on the other side of the river will be perceived by the citizens after the completion of the construction on the newly built lands, and how these borders will manifest in the public sphere. This uncertainty is the focus of the study.

4.4   THE RESEARCH

4.4.1   Questionnaires and Interviews

Conducting questionnaires with citizens and interviewing civil society institutions associated with the place using snowball sampling constitute the method of this study. Snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling method

Source: Authors.

Figure 4.1   Porsuk River and Kanlıkavak area

where new participants are recruited by existing participants to form part of the research sample. The questionnaires and interviews used in the research

Source: Authors.

Figure 4.2   Osmangazi University side of the Porsuk River, new developments

were carried out with the permission of the dated 21.02.2023 and numbered 182426 ethics committee, obtained from the Social and Human Sciences Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee of Kütahya Dumlupınar University.

The research involves conducting questionnaires with citizens who use the riverfront area. It aims to identify various aspects such as open space usage, riverfront usage, opportunities, and threats. The groups of users to be questioned include residents, daily users, people with families, friend groups, the elderly, and young people. Through these questionnaires and interviews, the research seeks to gain valuable insights into not only the perspectives and experiences of these different user groups and how they interact with the riverfront area but also the perspectives and experiences of the NGOs and their relationship with the riverfront area.

4.4.2 Findings

4.4.2.1 From questionnaires

The questionnaire aimed to reveal people's awareness and opinions of the activities of NGOs and the changes in the Kanlıkavak area. Thirty people answered the questionnaire, which asked for demographic information, spiritual impact ranking scale in the relationship between users and Kanlıkavak Park and its surroundings, use of Kanlıkavak Park and its surroundings, and civil society/ civic engagement. The bar chart (Figure 4.3) shows to what extent participants feel comfortable in and around the Kanlıkavak area and the pie chart (Figure 4.4) shows the distribution of age groups who filled in the questionnaire. A high proportion of participants belong to the age group of 18 to 25, mostly university students. In general, the participants feel comfortable in the area and spend time there.
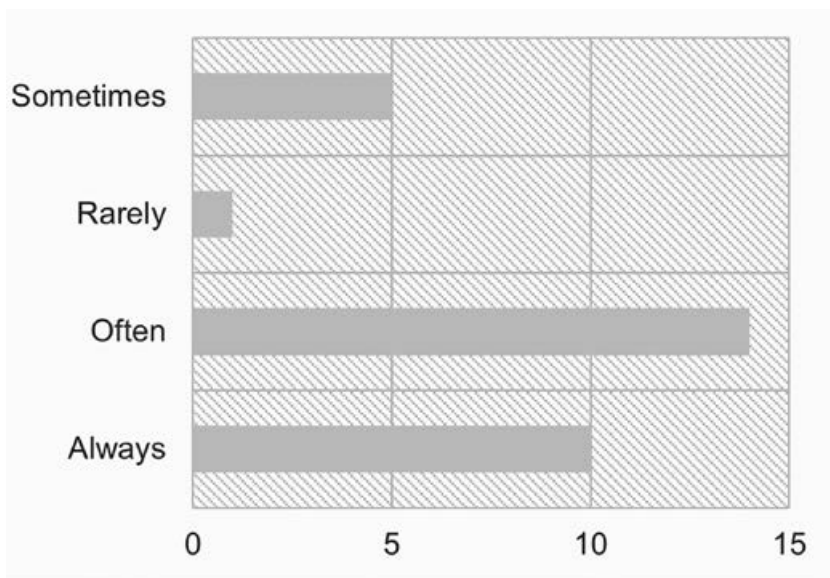
Source: Authors.

Figure 4.3   *Bar chart showing the participants' extent of feelings of comfort in the Kanlıkavak area*

Participants offered diverse opinions on the effectiveness of civil society's work for public spaces, ranging from positive to negative, with some highlighting a need for more work, and others expressing uncertainty due to a lack
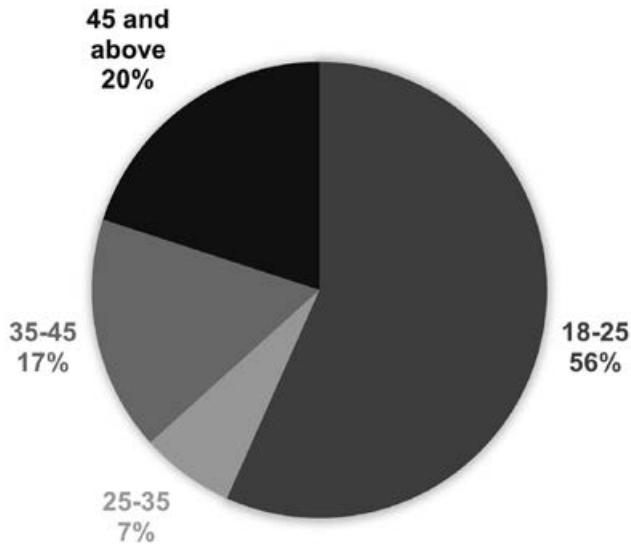
Source: Authors.

Figure 4.4   Pie chart showing distribution of age groups

of information. The relationship between the government and civil society also emerged as a significant factor affecting the effectiveness of NGOs.

Participants' awareness about changes in Kanlıkavak varied, with some lacking information. Some noted increasing construction and the proliferation of cafes and social spaces, while others emphasized the importance of preserving natural and green areas. Some participants were concerned with the occupied residential area close to the riverside regarding both nature conservation and potential disasters.

The potential future consequences of changes in Kanlıkavak were grouped into ecological, economic, and social categories. Ecological consequences included harm to the natural environment and damage to endemic species' habitats. Economic consequences varied, with some seeing potential benefits from increased economic activity, while others warned of increased inequality. Social consequences were viewed as both positive and negative, with potential benefits from increased socialization but concerns about reduced public and green spaces and the privatization of social spaces. Some participants expressed concern over spatial and structural problems, fearing that changes could damage the area's authentic urban fabric.

Except for two participants, most saw the natural park by the river as under threat due to potential future construction. Threats included damage to

natural life, a decrease in social and public spaces, increased pollution and environmental damage, and the negative impact of urbanization and dense construction.

In terms of ensuring the resilience of public spaces in the Kanlıkavak area for future generations, suggestions included increasing protection and awareness, encouraging sustainable construction, protecting and expropriating public spaces, preserving natural and cultural heritage, and implementing necessary precautions and regulations.

4.4.2.2   From the civil society representatives interviews

As a result of the interviews with four NGOs/associations based on voluntary participation, the data obtained from the various answers given to the interview questions prepared within the scope of the study in Turkey and in Eskişehir are evaluated. The answers given to the questions about the NGOs in Turkey are grouped in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1   Summary of interviews

	Positive-negative views/activities	Ideas for future
Interview A (NGO supporting training for people and other NGOs)	• Presence of diversely focused NGOs • Low number of sustainable NGOs • Lack of coordination in protecting the natural environment and cultural heritage	• Effective distribution of tasks • Improved institutionalization of organizations • Establishment of sub-branches that will ensure efficient working
Interview B (NGO supporting local development)	• Lack of resources (inability to obtain resources only with membership fees) • Educational activities/programs • Voluntary training • Elimination of the lack of fundraising • Disaster, construction, water/river pollution, etc. in the built environment; civil society awareness of issues • Increased visibility of NGOs after disasters	• State support required for continuous resources • The necessity of experts in decision making in matters such as disaster, construction, water/river pollution, etc. in the built environment • Developing collaborative approach models between trade associations and cooperatives

	Positive-negative views/activities	Ideas for future
Interview C (local body)	• Strengthened civil society after disasters • Active city councils • The result of the vision of the mayor, his team, and the academic community in the city	• More collaborative and active NGOs in close contact with decision-making bodies • More comprehensive approach to civil society dynamics
Interview D (local chamber representative)	• Importance of NGOs • Accurate information about urban dynamics • Lack of resources • The success of the public and professional chamber collaboration against top-down urban development • Strengthened NGOs after disasters	• Increased state support • Increased awareness of participatory approach • The necessity for women and youth to take part in the civil society • Seeking for sustainable change in civil organizations

Source: Authors.

Civil society representatives and NGOs are grouped in this research as NGOs supporting training and local development, local bodies, and local chambers. The interviewees are asked for their thoughts on the activities of NGOs in Turkey generally. They note that while there are numerous NGOs, most of them are not sustainable and operate on a large scale. This is mostly due to budgetary constraints.

Interviewees suggest that there should be a more effective distribution of duties among NGOs, with sub-branches being established to ensure that these organizations are institutionalized and can operate with greater efficiency. Some also note that there is a lack of coordination and clarity when it comes to the management of natural heritage, which can result in uncertain outcomes and weak impacts on environmental conservation efforts.

Based on these semi-structured interviews, it can be inferred that the people and community of Eskişehir are rather proactive in responding to issues they perceive as problematic. While Eskişehir is a large city where mostly students can enjoy freedom of expression and live as they please, it would not be accurate to generalize this to all 81 cities across the country. Eskişehir has a robust civil society that effectively utilizes social media platforms to mobilize and respond to issues quickly. From the perspective of the interviewees, the relationship between the city center and the research site reveals that the riverbed needs to be changed, and green areas in the surrounding region should not be overdeveloped. One interviewee notes that while there are no additional constructions in the center part of the riverfront, new constructions in Kanlıkavak area are causing changes in the vegetation and climate that may

harm the surrounding living ecosystem. Nevertheless, the Kanlıkavak area is widely used by the people of Eskişehir throughout the seasons, and there is often high demand for lawn areas that are designed as parks and gardens, with these spaces quickly filling up during peak times. This suggests that there is a need to expand green spaces in the city to accommodate public demand and enhance the quality of life for residents.

One NGO carries out various cooperation projects, particularly in the Kanlıkavak area. Among these projects are sports activities involving young people, yoga activities, and environmental cleaning activities. In addition to these projects, the NGO also conducts local legs of EU projects in the region. Through these initiatives, the NGO seeks to promote social and environmental awareness among the local community and empower young people to become more active and engaged citizens.

4.5 DISCUSSION

The rehabilitation efforts on Porsuk River have been viewed positively by local bodies and the public in general. The municipality's restoration project is seen as a successful attempt to improve the city's urban fabric and increase the quality of life of its residents. The research is approached through the citizens and institutions and their positions, and supports the need for prevention of negative impacts from future urban developments. Ideas for the future in terms of civil society development in general include increased presence of specialists in NGOs, city councils, creation of sub-branches of social and civic topics, and development of coordination between state, private, and civil society for natural environment and cultural heritage protection.

From the knowledge that has been gathered from questionnaires and interviews, it can be summarized that the case study area is important in several dimensions specific to citizens' positions. The local community's strong cultural identity and heritage have an impact of great attachment to the riverfront and a strong interest in preserving its historical and cultural significance. With the current situation, it cannot be said that the consciousness of citizens is at the desired level, but it is observed that it has a certain capacity. There are also individuals who prioritize environmental sustainability and the protection of natural habitats. The general approach to the area is that ecological and social values should be protected in a balanced way by having a self-regulatory system.

Overall, understanding the positionality of citizens and civil society to urban transformation in this specific case of the riverfront is important for ensuring that their voices and perspectives are included in the planning and decision-making process. By taking into account the diversity of experiences and perspectives among citizens, it is possible to develop more inclusive and

sustainable approaches to urban transformation that benefit everyone in the community.

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5. Participation on a half-way basis? Evolution of public participation in Slovakia. Case study: Trenčín si Ty [Trenčín is You] initiative

Milan Husar, Vladimir Ondrejicka and Renata Kascakova

5.1   INTRODUCTION

Public participation as a way of making the decision-making process more accountable to citizens through transparent procedures seeking to incorporate public input (Rose-Ackerman 2007) is not fully consolidated in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) (Richardson et al. 1998; Thérivel 1997; Dusik et al. 2001). In 1990s, the situation in CEE countries was not easy; during the transition process countries were being rushed to pass statutes, including public participation procedures, which were often vague and unclear while inheriting top-heavy bureaucracies with little legitimacy from the citizens (Rose-Ackerman 2007). These inherited systems were perceived as highly centralized with rather ineffective public institutions (Bruszt 2008) and lacking any form of public participatory tradition and tradition of civic society organizations (Bell et al. 2011).

The situation for planning was similar – being linked to the previous regime and bringing bad connotations due to the centralized planned economy. Additionally, people were not used to having a say in decision-making; they commonly feel that their involvement in the planning process is futile, and have little comprehension of how planning may actually influence their lives, their property and their local environment (Maier 2001). CEE countries have traditionally closed planning processes (Richardson et al. 1998) and their opening was not just a legal problem – participatory practices were also somewhat unnatural and alien to the society.

Slovakia as a post-socialist country did not have an anchored tradition of public participation in the planning system or in any other public procedures.

Before 1989 (the year of the so-called "Velvet Revolution," when the socialist regime in the former Czechoslovakia was overthrown and replaced by liberal democracy and a market-led economy), the leading role of the Communist Party in both Slovakia and the Czech Republic did not allow for any similar participatory measures as it did not permit any opposition to the decisions of the ruling party. The transition from a society with limited citizen freedoms (including any form of participation in public affairs) to a civil society with an objective to maximize the level of involvement of people in decision-making requires freedom, willingness and activity of responsible individuals (Gindlova et al. 2001). Therefore, the model of public participation as an aspect of how public affairs shall be handled had to be adopted from the outside, in particular as a part of EU pre-accession support in the form of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) directive and the adoption of the Aarhus Convention. Adoption of these documents made it mandatory to perform some type of public participation and it was in the early 2000s that public participation as a way of approaching planning procedures became authentic as a way for municipalities to "do planning." This chapter provides a brief account of the evolution of public participation in Slovakia and its changing position in the planning system as well as its understanding by the public. It demonstrates, using a case study of the Trenčín si Ty (Trečín is You) initiative, an example of an effective project that took years to prepare and implement and led to a revitalization plan for the city center, including both riversides in the city of Trenčín, and strongly contributed to the city being awarded the European Capital of Culture title for 2026.

In the 1990s, public participation was perceived as something new and as something that was missing from the planning system. Several cities began to pioneer some participatory processes in the following years, and the city of Trenčín was among them. The Trenčín si Ty initiative is the first comprehensive, conceptual, as well as largest and longest, continuous participatory process in Slovakia and we argue that since then there have been no major projects of this kind in terms of scope and depth of stakeholder involvement. Despite the overall success of the Trenčín si Ty project, we further argue that Slovakia still displays a level of disillusionment in participation, being located somewhere on a half-way basis, where the expectations of the participatory processes from the point of view of the public authority as well as the stakeholders are too high and the results are anticipated instantly, leading frequently to dissatisfaction and overall weakening of the role of stakeholders in the planning processes. Further on, in early 2023, the Slovak Republic adopted an amendment to the law on SEA further weakening the position of the public in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)/SEA processes, reasoning that the previous law had extended the planning process unnecessarily and

that it should be speeded up even at the expense of reduced room for public participation.

5.2 STATUS OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND SEA PROCESS IN SLOVAKIA

Public participation understood as one of the tools for citizen participation in decision-making as well as access to information is one of the pillars of a democratic state (Gindlova et al. 2001). The notion that decision-making should involve public participation was in Slovakia mainly promoted by two international documents: (1) the Aarhus Convention – UN/ECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters – signed on June 25, 1998, by ministers from 35 European countries and the European Union in the town of Aarhus, Denmark; and (2) the EC Directive 35/2003 of May 26, 2003, addressed to the member states and providing for public participation in respect of drawing up certain plans and programs relating to the environment, which was adopted in order to contribute to the implementation of the obligations arising under the Aarhus Convention. The Aarhus Convention and the EC Directive 35/2003 are included in the "acquis communautaire" of the European Union and on June 26, 2005, they entered into force in all EU member states, providing the framework for good practice by specifying the basic procedure for public participation, the types of decisions to which it should apply and supporting the responsibility and transparency of decision-making processes at all levels (Schöffel et al. 2014).

Public participation still frequently remains undermined by the public authorities due to the traditional understanding of authority and the role of elected/appointed representatives, strong belief in a rational predictive planning paradigm where experts' opinions are listened to and other stakeholders are not fully accepted in the decision-making processes, not understanding the principles and the meaning of participation, and lacking skills and tools of participation or any examples of best practices (Pirosik 2005). We would add that in Slovakia there is also a long-lasting trend of lack of confidence in the state and public institutions.

5.2.1 SEA and Participation

Environmental assessment procedures (EIA and SEA), together with the processes of Europeanization (Börzel and Buzogány 2010), introduced elaborate processes of public participation allowing citizens to be a crucial part of decision-making processes (Suškevičs et al. 2023; Rega and Baldizzone 2015), and instruments for operationalizing sustainable development strat-

egies (Crnčević 2007). These procedures were also broadly related to the development of open governance structures in CEE countries (Cent et al. 2014; Engelen et al. 2008) as they have universal components with positive effects on projects' acceptance and managing possible conflicts (Hasan et al. 2018). This development not only brought comprehensive methodologies and procedures for performing appropriate environmental assessments, but also underlined the role of EIA/SEA processes as transformative instruments in public and private projects (Jha-Thakur et al. 2009). Their initiation provided new opportunities for formal public participation in major public and private development proposals (Richardson et al. 1998). These processes cannot be perceived as purely technical as they also help develop political participative processes fostering more open democratic procedures. In Slovakia and other CEE countries, EIA/SEA processes frequently provide the only opportunity for the broader public to influence decision-making on development projects (Richardson et al. 1998; Suškevičs et al. 2023).

It is the responsibility of public authorities to run these processes, but in this chapter we argue that participatory processes in Slovakia, after a phase of fascination with participatory planning projects, are not properly developed and the transition process remains only halfway along the road to becoming not only an honest exercise by some enlightened municipalities, but an inherent part of the way decision-making processes take place.

5.3 CASE STUDY: TRENČÍN SI TY INITIATIVE

The city of Trenčín, in the context of the Slovak Republic and the broader European area, can be considered one of the pioneers in the field of participatory planning, while its project Trenčín si Ty is often considered an example of successful participatory planning with the involvement of professionals as well as the broader public. It was, among other factors, a result of great enthusiasm of post-revolution dedicated and knowledgeable public servants characterized by open-minded acceptance of innovative ideas (Thérivel 1997).

The participatory planning project Trenčín si Ty and the subsequent international urban design competition "Trenčín – City on the River" determined as its main objective to find, in broad cooperation with professionals and the wider public, a vision for the new development of the city and to propose a solution for the development of the central urban zone in direct contact with both banks of the River Váh. Both projects, especially between 2011 and 2014, were the carrier of complex participatory processes precisely led by the municipality, in which the city sought optimal solutions not only for the planned new physical structure of the city in the context of the induced changes, but also for the transformation of the "spirit" of the city, its new overall direction, new

functions for the future and transformation into a sustainable city with a high quality of life.

5.3.1 The Birth of the Initiative

The initial impetus for this process was the difficult task of the new city leadership in 2010, when the inherited problem of the ongoing state railway company (Railways of the Slovak Republic) investment project in the city center began to be implemented. It involved the modernization of the railway line to higher speed standards, which included the transfer of the line to a new corridor and the construction of a new railway bridge in the very center of the city. The project required large-scale construction interventions, decommissioning of the original railway bridge, removal of rails from the original corridor, demolition of formerly built-up plots, and other measures. These changes particularly affected the most sensitive and also the most traffic-exposed area of the city in the historical center under Trenčín Castle.

The state's plans for such radical interventions logically created pressure on the city not only because of the need to rearrange the entire infrastructure and traffic conditions in the very center of the city, but also because of a number of new questions that arose when thinking about the further development and direction not only of the historic center, but of the entire city into the future. The new city management was aware of the moral responsibility of the municipality, but also of the residents themselves, the territory in which they live and whose future they were developing. It therefore chose a participatory approach and embarked on the path of consistent public discussion about the vision, identity and direction of the city.

Even before 2010, the city center was a subject of interest to the municipality, but the proposals for its new form met with very negative reactions from the lay and professional public. The people of Trenčín focused their attention especially on visualizations prepared as a part of an architectural study for the solution of the river embankment, proposing mass and height parameters of the new buildings that would significantly change the silhouette of the historic city. The proposal was criticized for its detachment from the overall context of the local territory and also for the absence of public discussion before its creation. Among the public, the study gave the impression of physical and mental privatization and commodification of public space with a change in the identity of a place associated from time immemorial with unobstructed views of Trenčín Castle. The study became the impetus for the first public debate activated by citizens and representatives of the third sector.

Behind the creation of the subsequent comprehensive Trenčín si Ty initiative there were specific people within the city's self-government administration who managed to build a small team of devoted collaborators close to the

city's leadership. This team then systematically and creatively developed the ideas of the initiative and materialized them in the form of individual project activities.

The main effort of the municipality as the leader of the process was the active involvement of the general public and professionals in the creation of the final form of the embankment and related areas in the city center, with the ambition to develop a new and hitherto unpracticed culture of open communication between the municipality and citizens. The final goal was to change the spatial plan and other strategic documents of the city, which would reflect the established vision as well as the outputs obtained on the basis of completed participation processes.

5.3.2   Milestones

5.3.2.1   Phase 1: Trenčín si Ty project – city development initiated in collaboration with citizens (2010–2014)

The preparatory phase of the project consisted of an initial idea, a vision, a dream in the head of an individual, which gradually transformed into an initiative of a very narrow circle of initiators and collaborators, who were faced with the task of convincing the elected representatives of the city of the importance of the process. It was followed by the approval process consisting of a presentation of the initiative to the city council, approval of the budget and creation of the implementation team. The project was launched to the public by a kick-off public discussion in the cinema hall on January 25, 2012, and was followed by a series of events:

- a series of public hearings intended for the general public (meetings with citizens, discussions, workshops, art competitions, public opinion polls, focus groups, urban walks);
- a series of public hearings intended for professionals, professional working meetings, discussions and round tables with invited experts on specialized topics such as transport, environment, cultural and social aspects, energy aspects, urban economy, monument protection, management and protection of river basins, water ecology, etc.;
- continuous work of the implementation team consisting not only in the preparation of individual events and invitations, but also in the continuous recording and presentation of partial outputs (video reports, preparation of newspaper articles, processing of information for the web and social networks, exhibitions, public events on the square, etc.).

Professional evaluation of the results of public deliberations was done in the form of cross-sectional discussion – professional interdisciplinary seminars,

formulation of outputs, media coverage and public presentation. This led to a proposal for an urban design ideas competition (Figure 5.1), the brief of which was based on the outputs of the Trenčín si Ty project. The effort included also the approval of the budget for further activities in the city council and culminated in obtaining funding in the form of a block grant from the Swiss Federation (Swiss-Slovak Cooperation Program) for the support of Swiss-Slovak cooperation partnerships implemented by the Ekopolis Foundation, Slovak Republic, and for co-financing of the competition.
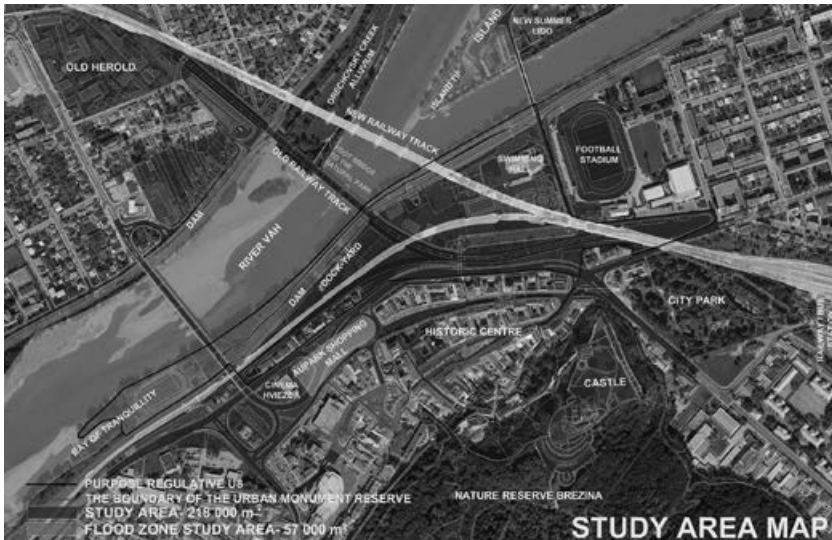
Source: City of Trenčín, 2014.

Figure 5.1   Site area map for the Trenčín si Ty project

This phase included elaboration of the working proposal for the brief of the urban design ideas competition based on the outputs of the participatory process Trenčín si Ty and the later discussion and commenting by the professional public (another series of professional discussions and workshops) and a presentation of the proposal to the broader public. The results of the commenting process by the professional and lay public led to the incorporation of all relevant comments into the competition brief and the development of the final submission conditions of the competition. The final proposal of the competition assignment included the brief, the competition conditions, the composition of the jury and the financing of the competition, including winners' rewards.

Source: City of Trenčín, 2014.

Figure 5.2   Winning proposal "Tracing Trenčín" by Mandaworks AB and Hosper Sweden AB

The international urban design ideas competition combined the work of professional competing teams (59 teams from all over the world took part in the competition), the work of the expert jury (international team), and the competition secretary team. It included the preparation, judgment and evaluation of the competition, announcement of results, broad media coverage of the outputs in the form of an exhibition of posters from all accepted works, a website, presentations in the media, a final conference and publication of results. In accordance with the conditions of the competition, the winning proposals of ideas (Figures 5.2 and 5.3) were transformed into the city's own final urban concept, which became the basis and input for the city of Trenčín for the creation of all its relevant strategic and conceptual plans for the future. The resulting concept of the future appearance of the city was also materialized in the form of a 3D model, which was exhibited to the public for several months in the premises of the information center on the main square.

Source: City of Trenčín, 2014.

Figure 5.3   *Winning proposal "Tracing Trenčín" by Mandaworks AB and Hosper Sweden AB*

5.3.2.2 Phase 2: Preparation and approval of strategic and conceptual documents (2015–2023)

Based on the outputs from both projects, i.e. from the participatory planning project Trenčín si Ty and the international urban design ideas competition Trenčín – City on the River, further necessary expert consultations were carried out, feasibility conditions were verified and subsequently all strategic documents of the city were prepared and approved: sustainable mobility plan, general transport plan, master plan, plan of economic development and social development of the city and also sectoral plans such as community plan, city adaptation strategy to climate change, smart concept of city development, etc. The Amendments and Additions to the City Master Plan No. 7 were approved in December 2022, and the Plan for Economic Development and Social Development of the City of Trenčín for the years 2023–2029, with a view to 2050, was approved in January 2023. By these documents the participative planning process was completed and the new developing zone in the city center along the two riverbanks could finally enter into the most important stage – the implementation period.

5.3.2.3   Phase 3: Preparation of candidacy of the city of Trenčín for European Capital of Culture title in 2026

All the previous phases were the inspiration and basis for developing the candidacy project of the city of Trenčín for the title European Capital of Culture 2026. After more than 10 years of participatory processes, the city submitted an application in 2022 and in competition with other Slovak cities succeeded in winning the title Trenčín – European Capital of Culture 2026. It is very satisfying to note that this process was also widely participatory and was led by a fresh, new generation of young creators and leaders of the city.

5.3.3   Results of the Project

At the beginning of 2023 the outputs from the projects Trenčín si Ty and Trenčín – City on the River are currently reflected in the city of Trenčín in all its approved basic planning and strategic documents determining future territorial, economic and social development of the city. It can therefore be said that the city of Trenčín is one of the exceptional examples where the strategic development of the city and its spatial planning, stemming from the sincere efforts of the city management to increase the quality of life, was solved in a long-term purposeful effort in the form of systematic communication and cooperation with the general lay and professional public, in a period exceeding one decade.

Today, this effort is already crowned with the first implementation successes, which are gradually manifested in the everyday life of the city – the successful reconstruction of the main square; the transformation of several neglected public spaces into high-quality leisure places; the maintenance of greenery within the forest park in the center of the city and castle and in inner blocks of housing estates; emphasis on cultural activities; reconstruction of educational, social, sports or cultural infrastructure; and the creation of the Creative Institute of Trenčín. Not only conceptually, but visually, the city is progressing and developing in accordance with the established vision. It is also successfully moving towards it with the acquisition of the European Capital of Culture 2026 title, which the city wants to use not only for the completion of the missing infrastructure – with the help of EU, national and local funds – but for the overall transformation of its potential and the fulfillment of the vision of a vibrant modern city on the river, where all generations can live well. The obtained title is another impulse and an opportunity to materialize the city's dreams of a sustainable quality of life for its citizens, but this time realized by a new, emerging generation of young leaders taking the baton in the development of the city.

The uniqueness of the efforts of the city of Trenčín lies in the fact that it was started by an unprecedented and, without a doubt, courageous concep-

tual effort of local politicians and experts spanning several election periods. Thanks to the observed continuity, after many years, this project is on its way to realization in the city of Trenčín, and a success story of spatial planning not only in Slovakia, but also in the international context.

5.3.4   Project Limitations

While the discussion so far might suggest that it was an ideal process, which could be induced by a simplified overview of the milestones and outputs presented in this chapter, the process was not always simple. In all its phases, there were critical turning points that could have resulted in project failure. At times there were tense relations between individual deputies and city management, moments of crisis communication (for example before the municipal elections), accompanied by risks of misunderstanding, misconceptions, non-acceptance of individual steps by certain interest groups, and tensions during approval processes. These were long-term processes, during which it was necessary to maintain the level of interest, enthusiasm, and belief in the result both in the team itself, including the city management, and among the public, which was severely tested by the reality of the city's inherited high indebtedness and non-functioning daily services. It was not easy to deal with the vision, the future of the city and the motivation to build it among the citizens, especially at the beginning of the process in a situation where the city found itself in a severe economic crisis on the verge of forced administration (i.e. bankruptcy).

The fact that the public in Slovakia was not used to participatory activities also played a role in the difficulties, and the initiators of the project and the events themselves had to overcome many communication barriers, especially at the beginning. Many times, they became the target of ridicule or even campaigns of groups standing on the opposite side of the opinion or interest spectrum and had to face tough argumentative exchanges. In retrospect, however, it is possible to state that all obstacles were overcome and diverse opinions were transformed into a resulting consensus, which can be called a collective result within the entire complex organism of the city. The initial mistrust was transformed into the pride of the citizens, certainly also thanks to the recognition that came in the form of prestigious public awards within the Slovak architectural and urban planning scene (e.g. the Special Award of the ASB Gala magazine in 2015 for the project Trenčín si Ty, or the CE.ZA.AR. "Patron of Architecture," awarded in 2020 to the city of Trenčín as an example of a municipality that makes its significant public investments conditional on an urban design competition).

5.4   DISCUSSION

The example of the city of Trenčín is an illustrative example of the fact that success in spatial planning lies not only in its necessary theoretical and professional background, but above all in the patient and concentrated efforts of several generations of citizens and city leaders during its implementation. It was a long process in which several methods of public participation were used, at various times and with different audiences (see Figure 5.4 for more details). The process changed several times; it was different from the initially foreseen timeline and it lasted much longer. After the many pitfalls outlined above, plenty of optimism can be found in the fact that if there are people with a strong enough vision and charisma in the environment of city management, they will find ways to make their surroundings more exciting, to prepare an authentic concept that will achieve a high degree of general acceptance and identification and finally ensure its implementation, i.e. the manifestation of its results in practice. This process encouraged people to scrutinize and challenge the existing decision-making processes and empowered them to ensure that their efforts came to fruition.

As part of the discussion, in the frame of spatial planning it would be recommended to shift the attention of the research work or public debate from the municipal and planning processes to the attitudes and views of investors and developers. In a situation where the whole world is concentrating on effective, economical and sustainable solutions and striving to improve quality of life and the environment, it is desirable to bring the interests of investors and municipalities as close as possible. In the modern world, it is no longer a relationship of rivalry, but a relationship of constructive cooperation and partnership that is needed. In an ideal case, cities offer investors good opportunities for economic success, but at the same time all the participants honor and maintain the win–win–win principle in respect of the needs of all groups of citizens, for natural resources and for the living environment.

Besides this initiative in Trenčín, there has not been any other project of this size and temporal extent in Slovakia. Trenčín si Ty was a unique project combining energetic public servants and the enthusiasm of Trenčín's citizens that was initially built on the dissatisfaction of locals with proposed development and the municipality working carefully with this initial impulse over several years. The vast majority of Slovak municipalities in the past few years have only rarely gone beyond the usual procedures described and mandated by SEA and spatial planning procedures, which rely on informing the public or at best on public consultation where civic society can in person or via written appeal express its positions. We believe that this is a result of high expectations of participatory processes on the part of the public, where although the munici-
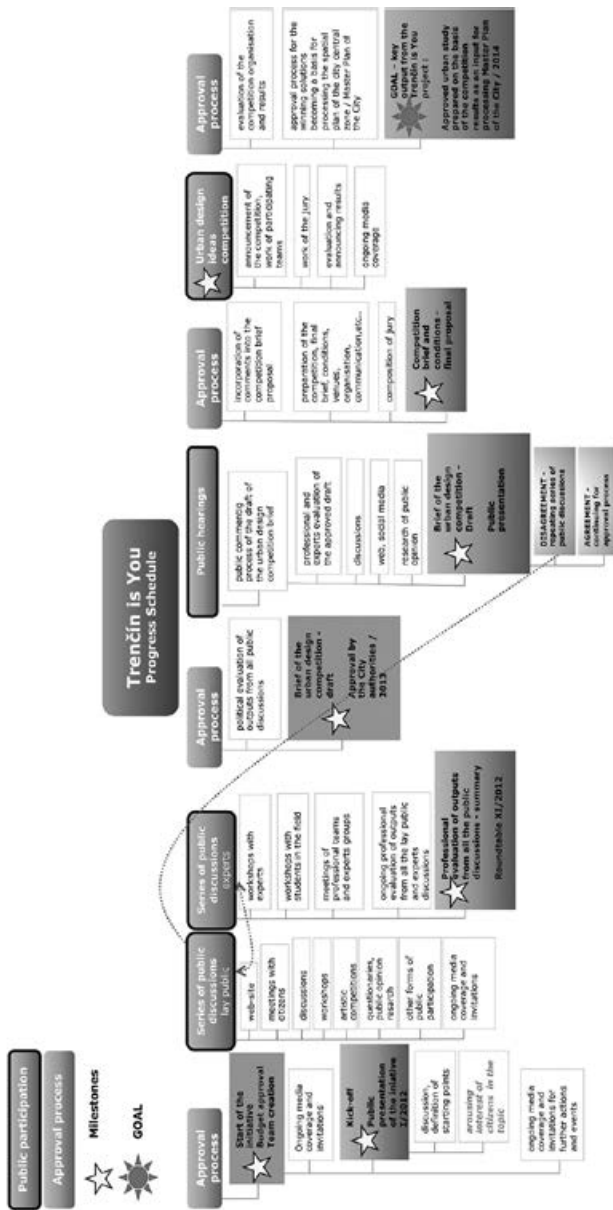
Source: City of Trenčín, 2014.

Figure 5.4   Progress schedule of the Trenčín si Ty (Trenčín is You) initiative

palities perceive public participation as a tool for better decision-making, there is a kind of disenchantment and dissatisfaction due to the lack of immediate results. Trenčín demonstrated that this process can take place, but it takes a lot of time and trust building as well as dedicated public servants willing to invest their time and capacity in the process. In the majority of public projects on a local scale in Slovakia and during the SEA processes, there is little to no interest in participation and even when there is, frequently it takes the form of opposition to the project and it is expressed too late when the decision has already been made by the authorities.

5.5   CONCLUSIONS

What are the possible ways forward from here? Several questions remain, including how public participation can operate as a useful tool bringing new qualities and added value to the planning decisions from the point of view of the public as well as public authorities and regarding the planning processes as well as public spaces. Broadly put, how can public participation become more inherent and authentic and a part of political culture (Pirosik 2005)?

From the point of view of practice, the question of implementation of the planned solutions is of primary importance. One of the pitfalls of experience with public participation is the gap between the rhetoric of participation and everyday practice (Rauschmayer et al. 2009) which often discourages people from joining and believing in these processes. Even when prepared with exemplary participation from the public, every planning process is ineffective without its implementation and materialization in the day-to-day life of the city. All visions and goals of spatial planning in municipalities need capital and financial resources to be transformed into reality. On the other hand, investors and developers need a vision of their own economic success. These two lines, adding other lines of the third sector and academic research, must go hand-in-hand and be built on the principles of cooperation, partnership and a common search for win–win–win solutions.

Through these lenses, every participatory process must be perceived as just one pebble in the mosaic of spatial development. It is therefore necessary to keep in mind that in order to achieve successful results, spatial planning including public participation will always serve only as a tool, not as a goal. Participatory planning approaches should endeavor to tune the individual interests, pulling together all stakeholders and investors towards a strong common vision based on a sustainable life and well-planned high quality living spaces for everyone, where the main goal is the vision being transformed and materialized in real life.

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6. Public participation in planning: experiences from Athens, Greece

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6.1   INTRODUCTION

The traditional dominance of spatial planning in defining the role of places and how to govern them has been challenged in the past few decades by dynamic transformations in the top-down planning process. When citizens are called to deal with many challenging and uncertain factors, spatial planning and social inclusion emerge as fundamental elements for achieving balanced urban governance by recognizing the need of citizens to shape their living environment (Horlings et al. 2021).

The increasing interest in demonstration projects as an arena for governing urban sustainability is reflected in the growing awareness of the research community that urban interventions can be viewed in practical terms. From demonstration projects to "living laboratories" in cities, urban experimentation enables people to try out new ideas in a world that is getting more complicated and where problems cross institutional and geographic borders (Horlings et al. 2021; Bulkeley et al. 2019). It is also a way for people to make their hopes for the future more tangible.

International literature offers an abundance of citizen initiatives in which citizens use their resources to carry out activities that create social value for the community. Although citizens are in charge of the means and implementation of these activities, their line of work in the public domain frequently places them in institutional contexts (Igalla et al. 2019). These initiatives are associated with bottom-up urban developments that showcase citizens' participation and self-organization. They may take, over time, hybrid forms by involving actors from civil society, the market, and formal institutions (Mens et al. 2021). This co-creation of organic urban developments is more open and flexible regarding its roles and rules. It suggests the development of institutional

changes through the reconfiguration of belief systems that eventually results in the creation of new institutions (Bisschops and Beunen 2019).

In addition to supporting social inclusion and driving institutional innovation, citizen initiatives have been closely associated with the concept of social resilience. Active citizenship through citizen initiatives, in particular, has been shown to increase cities' and residents' social resilience or their ability to address and adapt to social, environmental, and political changes (Buijs et al. 2016). By promoting sustainable urban and planning transformations, citizen initiatives encourage more inclusive governance for shaping future alternatives (Ziehl 2018; Saez Ujaque et al. 2021).

Despite the rise of bottom-up initiatives from civil society, their incorporation into formal planning procedures has been limited to simple participatory planning processes with little value for co-creating urban developments. Public administration most often seems unable to respond to initiatives originating from the dynamics of civil society (Saez Ujaque et al. 2021). In this context, it is considered essential to reinvent the definitions of inclusive planning and governance in a way that involves bottom-up initiatives, responds to the diversity and dynamics of active citizenship, and aligns with local actors at various scales (Buijs et al. 2016; Serraos and Asprogerakas 2019).

In this context, this study aims to provide a detailed understanding of how citizen initiatives co-create their new position in urban development and determine whether these mechanisms have a transformative impact on local urban planning and society. The research focuses on two citizen initiatives in Greece's traditionally top-down spatial planning system: the SynAthina platform and Cultural HIDRANT (Cultural Hidden IDentities Reappear through WaTer Networks). The two initiatives represent exemplary case studies of participatory and civic engagement processes in Athens that promote transformation strategies and social resilience.

6.2   THE CULTURAL HIDRANT PROJECT

Cultural HIDRANT is an innovative project that analyzes the Hadrian Aqueduct to reveal local cultural capital through tangible and intangible heritage. More specifically, it examines the Halandri municipality through its water networks. The project was selected and funded among 222 proposals from twenty-three countries through the European Competitive and Urban Innovative Actions (UIA) program. The project started during summer 2021 and was due to end in the summer of 2023. A direct analysis and assessment of the existing bibliographic references and data from the events of Cultural HIDRANT (participatory labs, theater performances) can be found on the Cultural HIDRANT website. The project's coordinator is the municipality of Halandri, which aims to upgrade the urban public space. In collaboration with

EYDAP (Athens Water Supply & Sewerage Company), they conducted a study for the rational management of the resource and the promotion of the Hadrian Aqueduct as a whole. Collaborators on the project include the Commonspace Co-op, the Ephorate of Antiquities of East Attica, the Mediterranean Institute for Nature and Anthropos, the architectural and urban planning firm Thymio Papayannis and Associates Inc. (TPA), Panteion University's Institute of Regional Development, and the nonprofit civil company "We Are Not Playing"/UrbanDig Project (Cultural HIDRANT – The initiative, 2021; Cultural HIDRANT – The project, 2021).

The elements forming the Hadrian Aqueduct project are related to heritage, water commons, and community networks. The program is based on the continuation of civic initiative and engagement. Its focal point is keeping the aqueduct as a pivotal point, not only for the municipality of Halandri but for the whole of Athens. The main strategies refer to three main principles: (a) cultural heritage awareness, (b) natural heritage and sustainable water use awareness, and (c) community building, as the program's interactions have a threefold importance: cultural, economic, and social.

The proposed solution has three innovative aspects (Cultural HIDRANT – The initiative, 2021):

1. It reintroduces a cultural heritage asset beyond the usual sight-seeing approach and towards reconstituting its contemporary use value as heritage and water commons and a potential community network. In this way, Cultural HIDRANT will raise heritage awareness by re-exploiting Hadrian's water, regenerating Hadrian's routes, and co-transforming certain spots into Hadrian-watered urban gardens. As a result, water serves as a cultural heritage ambassador, while cultural heritage promotes sustainable water use.
2. Focusing on the reintroduction of the monument, it aims to create positive momentum for the improvement of local well-being in two main ways: by proposing participatory processes to involve people in the co-governance of their natural resources and heritage branding and by building a sense of community; and by creating quality green spaces that anyone can use.
3. It chooses to test the vision in the periphery of the Metropolitan Area, aiming to create a peripheral heritage branding beyond the Athens historical center. In this way, it aims to create alternatives to the leisure and catering "theme center" of Halandri and contribute to more endogenous, resilient urban development strategies.

The project uses community-engaged methods that make policy recommendations more effective and sustainable by including stakeholders such as the six schools of the municipality but also citizens, social or individual companies,

etc. It improves public policy by engaging community partners and implanting community engagement methods. This initiative consists of a project with local and supra-local significance, through which water becomes the means for promoting cultural heritage (Halandri – Urban Innovation Actions, n.d.).

In conclusion, the project aims to promote cultural heritage assets through the water route by re-utilizing water and community empowerment. Therefore, it contributes to green urban policies on sustainable water use and quality green public spaces. At the same time, revitalizing the community or communities through participatory processes will operate as an innovative way to reintroduce a Roman monument of high cultural and natural significance. The participation of local communities is crucial to shaping the program and the design of the new public spaces through implementing participatory design workshops. Lastly, the project proposes the renovation of the proposed streets in each neighborhood, plantings inside the schoolyards, and communication material that will be placed in the regeneration areas and the schools to promote the Hadrian Aqueduct as a cultural heritage asset.

The citizens and institutions of Halandri participate actively in the project through the activities and strategies/interventions we have already mentioned. The main aim is to identify how an environmental and cultural asset such as the Hadrian Aqueduct can revitalize the community through participatory processes and create new networks, such as neighborhood networks, but also private and public networks and synergies.

These activities combine cultural production and fruition (the HIDRANT Festival, cultural and engagement activities with various goals, etc.), participatory activities, and establishing an informal community of water solidarity economy. Although the Covid-19 emergency slowed down the initial plan for engagement activities (with a reduced capacity of the partnership to organize in-person public workshops and co-design activities), the last months were used for the following activities:

1. Schools engagement (online and in-person): Commonspace was responsible for igniting the interaction with secondary school students, starting a conversation both on the general meanings of the aqueduct for the city (collective sense-making and cultural elaboration on local memories and identities) and on the local specific implications of the UIA proposal implementation (i.e., with a discussion of the transformation of the schools' surrounding areas, the schoolyard, entrance, etc.).
2. Residents' engagement (online and in-person): The City of Halandri organized several public meetings and open calls to cooperation to socialize and share project contents and values during the first informational phase. Beginning in June 2022, the residents' engagement process entered

a new phase, with open discussions, workshops, and gaming activities as the primary tools to support collective conversations.

3. Water solidarity network establishment: a first survey was circulated among residents whose houses are situated along the new water infrastructure pathway. Launched by the City of Halandri, the survey aimed at gauging the level of interest in the (potential) new water source and having a first understanding of the size of the future water community. (Cultural HIDRANT journal no. 1, 2021)

As part of the program, actions were carried out in schools to engage children through paintings, walking, and sensory routes for all ages, as well as the HIDRANT festival in the neighborhoods of Halandri, involving local and non-local actors in a series of actions around the aqueduct (May 3–July 4, 2021). The festival program was co-shaped by the participating collectives and organizations in the program, local groups, and schools. Through collective processes, a two-month period of public events emerged. The program included participatory actions of schools, joint actions for the environment and the history of the city, and discussions on the creation of a Solidarity Community for the management of water from the Hadrian Aqueduct, as well as the proposal of a digital local archive platform for the history and culture of Halandri and other artistic events (e.g., theater performances). It also included presentations of the participatory workshops of Cultural HIDRANT, which ran this year in nine schools of each grade. In collaboration with the Hiking Association of Halandri, the Association for the Protection of Rematia, and other organizations, a clean-up walk of Rematia and a historical walk were organized. Finally, in the theater of Rematia, the first public event was organized to create a Solidarity Water Community for the management of the aqueduct. The event's purpose was to present examples of community water management as a common good and to plan the next steps in forming the Hadrian Aqueduct community of water users (2nd HIDRANT festival, 2022).

Regarding the following stages of the program, in May 2022, a local archive data platform was officially launched. The establishment of a new institution is a significant additional action. The municipality is tasked with proving that a "water community" has been instituted as a multilevel project combining various actors' engagement and empowerment. Halandri seeks to establish a model in which decision-making is conducted collectively, in contrast to the prevalent hierarchical governance models that characterize water companies (Cultural HIDRANT journal no. 2, 2022). Examining the current regulatory framework of the Greek state regarding water helps to comprehend gaps, barriers, and the potential to generate new approaches and proactively engage the local community. Apart from this, convincing people to participate and get involved is another issue that requires attention.

Since the early phases of Cultural HIDRANT, critical aspects have peaked despite the anticipated timeline. The first issue relates to the (bureaucratic, administrative, and legal) complexity of public decision-making in Greece. Long delays and the increasing length of procedures diachronically characterized Greece at both the local and the national levels. In that respect, the Halandri city council's approval of the urban regeneration project in February 2021 was the first in a long series of decisions that state-level central bodies had to make (Cultural HIDRANT journal no. 2, 2022). Regarding the procurement process, the Greek public procurement system has historically been characterized by lengthy and complex approval procedures. This creates a lot of regulatory bodies balancing, controlling and guiding contracting authorities. This complicated layering represents a second and even more critical issue, as this system tends to discourage the introduction of changes to normal approaches.

The next steps of the project will be crucial for the delivery of the procurement processes for the two main building activities: the urban regeneration projects and the new pipe infrastructure, with new public spaces and new connection layouts between the green spaces in the city. In this way, building permits and agreements at the different levels (national, regional, and local) and the between the plethora of actors (Ministry of Culture, Ephorate of Antiquities, etc.) are just components of the overall work. So, a close partnership and direct engagement in the project of some of the leading stakeholders (EYDAP and the Ephorate of Antiquities) was a good start (Cultural HIDRANT journal no. 1, 2021).

6.3   SYNATHINA PLATFORM

The SynAthina platform is the City of Athens' social innovation platform for involving people in problem-solving and innovation. SynAthina is an Athens municipal project. It was launched in July 2013 and is now managed by the Vice Mayor's Office for Civil Society and Innovation.

Austerity measures and the economic crisis in Greece have significantly diminished the operating capabilities of the municipality of Athens. In the meantime, a dynamic civil society evolved, with many residents collaborating to enhance their neighborhoods and communities. In this context, the City of Athens developed SynAthina as an online platform to involve community members in problem-solving and transformation. Individuals and community organizations may submit volunteer activities and unique ideas to enhance their city. The individuals who submit ideas are then connected with the relevant authorities, non-governmental organizations, and commercial businesses that may assist their efforts. If outdated regulations unnecessarily impact the advancement of good ideas or if innovative solutions can be inferred from

civil society activities, the SynAthina project team brings the public and private sectors together to experiment with new approaches to working and cooperating.

The SynAthina platform has inaugurated a new era of social innovation in Athens, introducing novel ideas and ways to address the post-crisis social challenges of community cohesiveness and creative citizenship. Social innovation in Greece involves creating and implementing new ideas, processes, products, or organizations to improve people's lives. Social economy and civil society initiatives have addressed socioeconomic and environmental issues while boosting economic development. However, an enabling policy framework is needed to enable public, non-profit, and private actors to co-construct and implement socially innovative solutions to address socioeconomic issues, build territorial resilience, and better respond to future shocks. Based on this unique strategy for addressing urban difficulties via a culture of collaborative creativity, SynAthina has established a place for sharing, collaborating, and learning.

The SynAthina platform accommodates both official and informal groups inclusively by providing a systematized method to gather and facilitate the abilities of public-spirited individuals to provide solutions for the City of Athens that are easier, quicker, and more sustainable.

SynAthina's ability to facilitate the formation of unanticipated alliances and bring together diverse stakeholders is essential to the platform's success. They have developed a concept known as the "Social Innovation Constellation," where the private sector, civil society, public sector administration, and academic research on social innovation are arranged around the municipality. Citizens can submit ideas for improving their city, and they will collaborate with government representatives to find solutions to local issues. The result will be inventive grassroots solutions and a mechanism for the bottom-up reform of obsolete municipal procedures and regulations.

The SynAthina platform is designed with the following goals in mind:

- to map the previously unknown actions of active people and make them known to the public;
- to enable and empower these activities so that they may expand and have a significant influence on the city;
- to highlight civic society's best practices as new inventive solutions for the city that address current problems;
- to lead, via these ideas, to improving public administration and how the municipality of Athens may effectively meet the demands of a crisis-stricken metropolis.

SynAthina has so far enabled 1,918 civil society activities, which have been posted to the digital platform and carried out by 222 community organizations enrolled as active members. In addition, fifteen bottom-up activities have been identified as best practices of civil society that bring new intelligence as creative problem-solving models. Five of them have been implemented in the municipality's updated legislation, policies, and procedures.

Athens needs reinvention. The city was required to develop rapid and efficient remedies in places where social welfare and urban issues were severely impacted. The SynAthina platform unlocked the city's hidden opportunities despite budget constraints and a dwindling workforce. Inadvertently resembling the models of ancient Greek city-states, social innovation arose spontaneously due to the government's new public involvement and participation forums.

Athens has become a testing ground for novel approaches to reactivate and integrate inactive people in response to extreme poverty and the refugee crisis. The once "non-digitized" government is now soliciting creative input from the expanding community of software developers. Neighborhoods are built in collaboration with residents. Many small-scale innovations have brought Athens to the forefront in this arena in twenty-first century Europe.

Athens views itself as a model not necessarily for wealthy and influential cities but for having succeeded in embracing its caring and devoted communities. This cultural advancement makes Athens a pioneer for innovation that better equips society to face future difficulties.

6.4   CONCLUSIONS

The discussion of the two case studies leads to several conclusions that can be generalized to apply to initiatives that are comparable in Greece. One of the most striking similarities between the case studies is that their primary focus is on participatory processes that are a direct reaction to formal spatial planning and its deficiencies. It is interesting to note that their starting points are different. Exploiting and promoting a natural resource as a component of cultural heritage was the first step in the Cultural HIDRANT process. It is an ongoing program that has so far succeeded in accomplishing all three of its stated goals of cultural heritage awareness, natural heritage awareness, and sustainable water use awareness and community building. It is a government initiative that is supported by international funding and has the potential to serve as a model not only for Athens but for the rest of Greece as well. As a network that is social, cultural, and physically centered on a natural resource, such as water, it is a worthy endeavor that gives every indication of being successful to the fullest possible extent. While SynAthina has reaped benefits, the question of whether or not it will be sustainable in the long run is still uncertain. In

contrast, the Cultural HIDRANT project is still active and has substantially achieved its objectives.

Citizens and other partners, such as NGOs, commercial institutions, and municipal services departments, participate in all aspects of the SynAthina platform. These aspects include posting volunteer activities on the website, registering as prospective donors who may support and empower civil society initiatives, utilizing the physical space to organize participatory events and public workshops, and visiting City Hall every Monday to discuss their inter-disciplinary projects.

In conclusion, the analysis demonstrates that participatory processes in Greece are not dictated by planning; rather, such actions attempt to create a new trend that could eventually become a formal process of setting priorities in spatial planning.

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PART III

CO-PRODUCING URBAN NEIGHBOURHOODS

Introduction to part III: Co-producing urban neighbourhoods

Frank Othengrafen

In cities, self-organized civil society initiatives increasingly act as co-producers of urban neighbourhoods. By involving citizens, volunteers or non-governmental partners, co-production refers to processes of self-construction, collective work and self-organization (Schoonjans et al. 2022; Sorrentino et al. 2018; van Melik and van der Krabben 2016), including (temporary) interventions such as community gardens, place-making and tactical urbanism, pop up cafés, cultural spaces, urban art, etc. (Guinand et al. 2020, p. 55). Co-production thus attends to a collective process that can strengthen collaboration between multiple actors and that can lead to social interaction and empowerment, which are both necessary for social cohesion and community building (Mitlin and Bartlett 2018; Schoonjans et al. 2022; Watson 2014). In this regard, it can be assumed that co-production establishes ways for local communities to solve collective problems and to strengthen social resilience by increasing the social capital and civic activities in urban neighbourhoods, enabling the communities to adapt to changes (Horlings et al. 2021; Matarrita-Cascante and Brennan 2012; Saja et al. 2021). This might also include material improvements of public spaces or the construction of knowledge for social or spatial transformation (Mitlin and Bartlett 2018).

Co-production as a collective process is not a new phenomenon in urban planning; however, there are very few studies analysing (1) the various types of co-production and interactions between civil society and public/municipal actors, and (2) the extent to which co-production strengthens social cohesion and resilience in urban neighbourhoods. The four chapters in Part III address these issues by analysing the trajectories and logics of self-production of neighbourhoods and public spaces in relation to urban planning: What types of co-production and interaction exist in various local contexts? How can community engagement improve neighbourhoods or public spaces? How can co-production contribute to more cohesion and resilience? How do local communities interact with local administration and political representatives? What is the role of urban planning or what can urban planning offer in this context?

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In this context, in Chapter 7, Laura Saija, Giulia Li Destri Nicosia and Carla Barbanti look at the link between co-production and planning in the specific case of resident-led urban regeneration in Librino, a public housing neighbourhood in Catania, Italy, which has taken the form of residents' gardening practices. They show how civil society initiatives have succeeded in establishing urban gardening as a community practice improving the quality of life and social interactions of the residents involved. At the same time, the example of Librino demonstrates that co-production and cohesion cannot be enforced by local politics or administration alone, but have to be developed together with civil society actors. In Chapter 8, Jessica Baier, Falco Knaps and Sylvia Herrmann distinguish between various types or forms of co-production by analysing the (non-)collaboration between citizen initiatives and public bodies in selected German municipalities. They differentiate between communicative, cooperative and co-productive practices and identify the extent to which the presented four initiatives interact (or not) with local administration and political representatives on issues that affect citizens' everyday lives in urban neighbourhoods.

Roberto Falanga, Mafalda Corrêa Nunes and Henrique Chaves look at urban regeneration projects in social housing neighbourhoods in Lisbon, Portugal (Chapter 9). By analysing participative and civil society based planning interventions the authors highlight that the refurbishment of public squares, along with the co-design of festivals, plays a relevant role in improving the social fabric and citizens' trust, motivation and place attachment of the residents living in these deprived neighbourhoods. In Chapter 10, Eva Reinecke, Nicole Reiswich, David O'Neill and Frank Othengrafen discuss the role of citizens as urban pioneers or city makers in medium-sized cities in Germany. In doing so, they analyse the extent to which civil society initiatives take responsibility for citizens' daily (urban) environment and which instruments and means the initiatives use to develop innovative solutions. At the same time, they identify the effects that the interventions led by civil society initiatives have on urban development and how civil society involvement can be strengthened in the medium term through urban planning and (local) politics.

All four contributions demonstrate that in-depth knowledge about citizens' initiative involvement and the rationales behind their activities can be beneficial for urban planning. Knowledge on the needs and demands of the local residents can help intensify social relations among local stakeholders and residents through suitable planning interventions. Additionally, it might contribute to strengthen social cohesion and social resilience in (deprived) neighbourhoods as the examples in Catania and Lisbon show. Ideally, civil society and municipal strategies and projects complement each other. Therefore, the in-depth knowledge about citizens' initiative involvement is the basis for all co-production activities as particularly the exchange of knowl-

edge between the planning discipline and different citizens' initiatives allows innovative solutions and measures. All case studies further show that urban planning should understand the co-creative character of interventions such as community gardens, pop-up cafés or 'third places' as open processes for involving affected urban actors (Guinand et al. 2020, p. 56). This requires that cities and civil society initiatives should be regarded and act as equal partners in co-production processes and that co-production or community engagement must be accompanied/supported by structural public interventions, such as financial incentives and the provision of social or technical infrastructures and other measures.

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7. An organizational approach to citizen engagement for social cohesion: the gardening experience in an Italian public housing neighborhood

Laura Saija, Giulia Li Destri Nicosia and Carla Barbanti

7.1 INTRODUCTION

For years planning scholars have debated the importance of looking at city planning as an endeavor engaging not just decision-makers supported by trained professionals but also urban residents (see Chapter 1). This assumption plays a key role in the relatively recent debate on co-production, i.e., new conceptualizations of the relationship between public institutions and civic society beyond the top-down model. This chapter contributes to the co-production for social cohesion debate through the discussion of a single case of co-productive planning in the rationalist public housing neighborhood of Librino (Catania, Italy). The datasets and events described in the following paragraphs have been researched by combining two different methodological approaches:

- participatory action-research (Saija 2016); authors conducted research in collaboration with local organizations between 2007 and 2010, supporting the development of a neighborhood regeneration plan called *Librino Platform*, as well as in 2021, with the aim to enhance social cohesion around a specific neighborhood site (the San Teodoro gardens);
- case-study research methodology, including archival research, participant observation and in-depth open-ended interviews with eight key informants.

The Librino case is used to discuss what we think is an understudied dimension of co-production, i.e., the organizational one. Does the "organizational" dimension of residents' engagement have an impact on co-productive planning and its relevance when it comes to social cohesion? Drawing from the assumption that it is important to overcome the top-down model towards a more

effective institutions/society relationship, our research suggests that specific organizational tools and methods can be instrumental in building solidarity among residents through co-production in planning.

7.2   THE LINK BETWEEN CO-PRODUCTIVE PLANNING AND ORGANIZING

Decades ago, planning scholars began recognizing the direct, proactive role of urban dwellers in socially cohesive and/or resilient urban regeneration processes (see Chapter 2). A specific role within this debate has been played by the concept of co-production, which questions traditional conceptualizations of the relationship between society and public institutions (including planning authorities). Co-production goes beyond both:

- the largely unfulfilled (European, at least) social-democratic promise that the State can decide and act to address residents' spatial needs; and
- the over-criticized collaborative/deliberative illusion that "good administrators", alone, are going to share their political powers with stakeholders participating in decision-making processes on "substantial" and highly controversial spatial issues.

Co-production in planning occurs when the *civics* contributes directly to the shaping of plans and/or spaces. According to scholars, co-production occurs when institutions are willing to accept strategic collaboration agreements with civic organizations (Albrechts 2012) and shared governance solutions (Ostrom 1990), and also includes the case of socio-spatial effects generated by independent groups and social movements operating in the face of indifferent or conflicting institutional powers (Miraftab and Wills 2005; Swyngedouw 2014; Cellamare 2019). According to this comprehensive definition, scholars' current understanding of co-productive planning becomes inclusive of long-term traditions of "extra-institutional planning approaches" such as Davidoff's advocacy planning (1965) or Goodman's guerilla planning (1972), encompassing insurgent practices able to shape space and, eventually, impact the institutional dimension. In reviewing this literature, Watson (2014) argues that co-productive social mobilization and conflict are more likely than institution-led co-production to prioritize residents' quality of life over "planning efficacy," especially in the face of those institutional instabilities and power imbalances that are likely to occur in the Global South-East.

   In the many cases of co-productive planning not generated from exclusive collaborative relationship between institutions and the civics, it becomes crucial to identify what forms are assumed by the art and craft of spatial planning. Many scholars focus on the planning value of social practices occurring

"without professional help." In this stream of literature, genuine co-productive planning escapes the boundary of a (often corrupted by power) profession and becomes a realm of non-professional civic practices with spatial implications (Miraftab & Wills 2005; Swyngedouw 2014; Cellamare 2019). Other scholars take a different – we believe more productive – approach to the matter, looking at the necessary new skills required by professional planners so that they can play a desirable role in co-productive planning, both from within (Krumholtz 1982; Hoch 1984) and outside the City Hall (Davidoff 1965; Hartman 2002).

Drawing from these premises, this chapter draws from Watson's (2014) framework to argue for the centrality of the "organizational" dimension of co-productivity in planning – i.e., the specific mechanisms through which individuals get involved, interact, make decisions, develop, and implement strategies, etc. Our research shows that those mechanisms play a primary role in the ability of co-production to genuinely advance social cohesion.

There is a very large amount of research dealing with such an organizational dimension, only partially connected with planning literature. In the sociological literature on social movements, for instance, within the broad realm of "collective actors who, through an organized effort and supported by networks of individuals and groups sharing a common identity, mobilize through protest campaigns for the achievement of social and political changes" (Della Porta 1996, p. 4, translation by the authors), there is a special type of mobilization – the local, neighborhood-based "citizens' committee" that overlaps with the kind of co-productive resident-led initiatives studied by planning scholars. They are "organized but loosely structured groups of citizens, who gather on a territorial base and use primarily forms of protest to either oppose interventions they think would damage the quality of life in their territory or ask for its enhancement" (Della Porta 2004, p. 7, translation by the authors). According to Della Porta, Italian committees arose from the crisis of traditional representative democracy and traditional mass parties. They are mostly small "spontaneous" groups, with a strong leadership of a few motivated voluntary activists with previous political experience and relatively high economic and intellectual means. Their effectiveness depends on leaders' ability to mobilize larger groups when it comes to demonstrations and protest events as well as to reach out to experts to produce counter-narratives and counter-documents. Only occasionally, a single committee enters large networks or partnerships, not without significant challenges and conflicts, and their activity is not easily sustainable over time.

A slightly different picture is depicted by the literature on neighborhood-based organizations inspired by the US "direct action organizing" tradition (DAO), increasingly influencing the European debate. Saul Alinsky (1909–1972) was the first to experiment with DAO at the neighborhood scale, beginning in Chicago during the Great Depression and the Second World War. He

developed a model that is still used by many organizers around the world (Alinsky 1969, 1971). Based on the fact that most of the distressed neighborhood inhabitants were already members of what he called anchor institutions – churches, labor unions, associations, etc. – he facilitated the establishment of a "neighborhood council" with representatives from all these institutions: thanks to their representativeness of social distress, a council exercises political power since it is able to put pressure on decision-makers and even strong private interests through effective protests, boycotts, etc. A different DAO model was developed and applied by a network of hundreds of community organizations called ACORN (Atlas 2010), operating from the 1970s until the early 2000s. ACORN groups were based on an organizing model developed as an alternative to Alinsky's, for places where anchor institutions are not socially representative or willing to engage in political conflict. This model mobilizes individuals not through their anchor institutions but through a rigorous "door-to-door" approach aimed at developing a base that is quantitatively representative of the population residing in a single geography. In all the DAO traditions, community organizations are characterized by a systematic turnover of local leaders, who are supported by "professional organizers" with know-how on how to manage daily operations, run campaigns, etc. Organizers can be paid by a variety of methods (sponsorships, projects, etc.). In ACORN groups, organizers were paid mainly through membership fees in order to maximize independence. DAO has had a major impact on the planning literature through Davidoff's theorization of *advocacy planning* (Davidoff 1965), i.e., planning performed by professionals working in support of community organizations, which was introduced in Italy by Crosta in 1973.

In this chapter, we use the conceptual lens of DAO to look at the link between co-production and planning in the specific case of Librino residents' gardening practices taking over, since 2012, various portions of vacant public land. We believe this case is of particular relevance for the broad debate on resident-led planning for social cohesion since it shows the coexistence of various forms of co-productive planning, which we argue can be identified by looking at organizational aspects, which have different impacts on space, residents, and institutions.

7.3   CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

Librino is a public housing neighborhood planned in the 1970s by the City of Catania with the consultancy of famous Japanese architect Kenzo Tange. The famous 1962 National Law no. 167 required municipalities to plan for a minimum amount of public and affordable housing units within special "zones" comprising land acquired by the public through eminent domain.

Tange's "Piano di Zona Librino" (Figure 7.1) was completed in November 1972, and adopted by the city in 1974, following all the state-of-the-art theories and methods of rationalist planning. A little less than 400 hectares of rural fields south-west of the city center were zoned as an affordable "satellite town" for 70,000 people, connected with Catania through a new expressway. The town was composed of eight self-sufficient residential "rings" located around a directional core for municipal services and other activities. The design was based on the rigorous separation of motorized mobility along the roads around the rings from pedestrian mobility along pathways inside the rings. Residential activities were located in high-rise towers and multi-story linear blocks inside the rings, together with the legally required amount of parking, social activities, and schools. Special attention was paid to green spaces and public parks: the proposed plan included a significant "green network system" (shaded areas in Figure 7.1), which included pedestrian paths and underpasses crossing the different rings, parks, and squares of various dimensions. Tange's plan implied the demolition of the pre-existing rural settlements and informal villages, especially the central "Borgo Librino," but this was avoided with a revision of the plan by the local "STA progetti" firm (Figure 7.2).
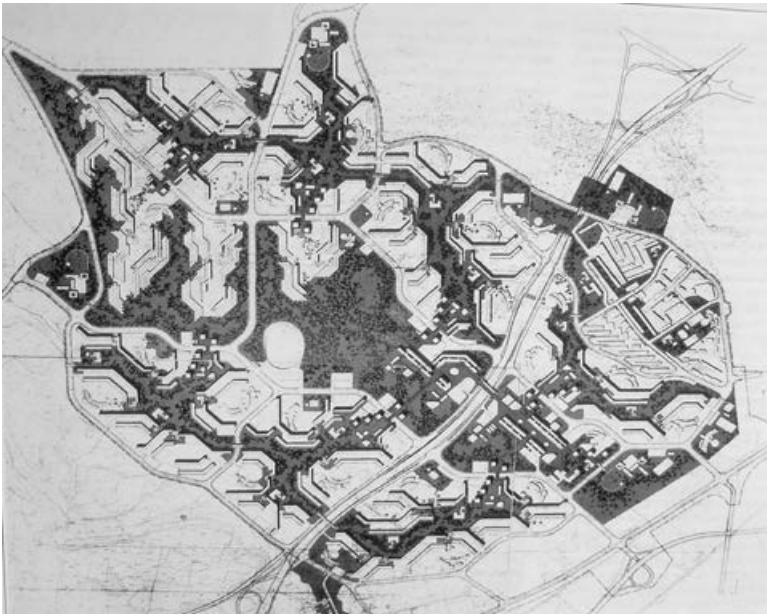
Source: DICAr - University of Catania carthograhpic archive.

Figure 7.1   The masterplan of Tange's "Piano di Zona Librino"

Source: DICAr - University of Catania carthograhpic archive.

Figure 7.2   The revised "Piano di Zona Librino," officially adopted by Catania Municipality in 1979

The implementation of such an ambitious plan has engaged a variety of public and private actors and is still ongoing, after almost 50 years. Most of the housing was developed, in a relatively short amount of time, by the local

Public Housing Authority, housing co-ops, and private affordable housing developers. However, significant delays have characterized the implementation of public services and public infrastructures, whose responsibility was granted entirely to the "STA progetti" firm. The biggest implementation challenge has been the completion and maintenance of the "green network system": it has remained on paper for almost 40 years, leaving most Librino residents in an urban landscape of overall abandonment.

The large amount of "vacant land," however, has not been the only issue at stake. Like many other rationalist affordable complexes all around the world, Librino has become a manifesto for the failure of the rationalist urban "tower in the garden" ideal. Despite their being inspired by social justice values, these top-down plans have not matched people's real needs and habits, generating socio-economic distress. Since its foundation, Librino has held the reputation of an "urban ghetto," with local newspapers reporting weekly on criminal activities and decay. Librino is indeed a distressed neighborhood, where the concentration of low- to moderate-income families corresponds to lower educational attainments as well as higher percentages of unemployment, felonies, squats, and illegal dumping compared with richer neighborhoods. However, Librino is not the only distressed Catania neighborhood and certainly not the worst. Many Librino areas, especially the one where privately owned units and co-ops prevail, are safer, cleaner, and quieter than many areas in the historic center. For many years, the peculiarity of the unfinished modern urban landscape has fed into Librino's negative public image as well as residents' feelings of being second rank citizens.

Since its foundational years, in the late 1980s, Librino has been the home of several community organizations that Alinsky would have called "anchor institutions." They can be classified in four different groups:

- Librino public schools, which are recognized amongst the best in the province; highly committed school principals and teachers provide a variety of extra services to local students aimed at keeping them busy and "off the streets" for as long as possible.
- Non-profit social service providers, both Catholic groups and social cooperatives, targeting low- to moderate-income families; for them, Librino is a convenient location in the vicinity of a large concentration of social service-seeking residents.
- Left-oriented organizations. Left-leaning housing co-ops were amongst the first groups to move in, in the late 1980s. A local section of the Italian Communist Party was established in their vicinity at the same time. While the section closed its operation a few years after the 1991 dismantling of the Party, its social base was engaged in the establishment, in 2004, of the local section of the CGIL, the largest left-oriented national workers

union. Local activists "structured the work at the section like we used to in the Communist Party; if you listen, people were happy to talk, and every meeting was an occasion to gather information on what people wanted in the neighborhood, what they were willing to do, and I always asked for their interest in being contacted for initiatives of common interests" (former director of Librino CGIL section, interviewed by LS on February 22, 2023). In 2005, CGIL activists decided to form the "Comitato Librino Attivo" (Active Librino Committee, the Committee hereafter) to further enhance their organizing through its detachment from the reputation of the union to be "politically and electorally sided." One of the first activities carried out by the Committee was a door-to-door residents' survey on people's perception of the neighborhood, in collaboration with the University of Catania (AA. VV. 2008). In its early years, there were seven or eight active committee members while an average of one hundred residents used to participate in monthly meetings and common initiatives. Another important organization, established in 1995 by former ARCI "civil servants" (Associazione Ricreativa Culturale Italiana, Italian Cultural Recreational Association, the biggest Italian non-profit association not linked with the Catholic Church), is the Iqbal Masih Center. This is a self-organized informal group of non-Librino activists, volunteering in after-school "empowering" programs for Librino minors. In 2006, from within the Iqbal Masih group, a couple of passionate rugby supporters launched what is today an internationally acclaimed Rugby school and team, "I Briganti di Librino" (the Librino Brigands, *I Briganti* hereafter), engaging hundreds of Librino children in a sport considered particularly effective when it comes to teaching the ethical foundations of competing and hard work.

• Catholic parishes and religious operations aimed at spiritual and, occasionally, material nurturing of distressed residents. Amongst those, the Talita Kum Onlus was established in 2010 by the Catania section of the Caritas Diocesana, as an educational center for minors in the proximity of what was, then, the most dangerous drug dealing spot of the neighborhood. For more than a decade Talita Kum has offered free educational and psychological support to children of highly distressed families and minors with criminal records.

While each one of these organizations has played an important social role for Librino residents, from a planning perspective, only a relatively small group has played a co-productive role.

7.4   RESIDENT-LED CO-PRODUCTION: THE CAMPO S. TEODORO URBAN GARDENS

On March 5, 2008, inside the fancy Catania City Council Hall facing the central Duomo square, an unusual event occurred: representatives of two Librino public schools, CGIL Librino, and five community-based organizations (including the Committee, Talita Kum, and Iqbal Masih) officially presented to a dozen representatives of the press and other interested individuals a document called "Librino Platform." The document channeled a diagnosis of Librino's most relevant issues and potential solutions. From a co-productive perspective, this event is interesting for at least two reasons.

First, the Platform is substantially a planning document, developed in complete autonomy from city planning offices and with the intention of impacting public decision-making (partial support was provided by at least two research groups from the local university; AA. VV. 2008; Saija 2013). It was the first document not simply asking for the completion of the original plan, but pushing for its revision according to residents' perspectives and needs.

Second, it represented an innovative attempt, led by CGIL and the Committee, to develop – using Alinsky terminology – a "neighborhood council" able to impact decision-making thanks to the convergence and synergy between local anchor institutions: the document's signatories ended up becoming a collective actor named Librino Platform.

The 2008 public event did not produce immediate impacts. At that time, the city was at the very beginning of a long period of financial crisis (financial bankruptcy became official in 2018 and is still ongoing). However, the establishment of the Platform led to several successful campaigns, like the opening of Librino's hospital and the high school. Moreover, although collaboration was not sustained over time, leading to formal closure in 2022, the Platform has been an important forum for all these organizations and has most certainly played a central role in enabling the co-productive role of single organizations. This can be shown through a focus on a specific set of initiatives: the birth, between 2012 and 2018, of three different sites of urban gardens on more than 4 hectares of previously abandoned public land (Table 7.1).

Table 7.1   *List and characteristics of urban gardens in Librino*

No.	Name	Area ha	Birth
1	Orti Borgo Librino	0.7	Before 1979
2	Orti del Campo San Teodoro Liberato	0.7	2013
3	Orti del Castagnola	0.3	2016
4	Orti del Viale S. Teodoro	3.2	2018

Note: ID number corresponds to their localization in Figure 7.3.
Source: Authors.
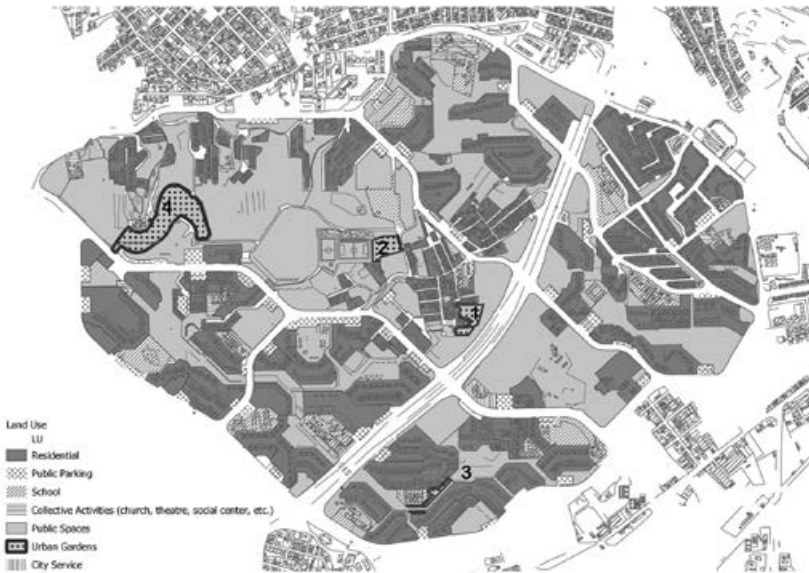
Note: Numbers refer to Table 7.1.
Source: Authors.

Figure 7.3   *Garden localization on Librino current land use map*

The idea of urban gardens in Librino started circulating within the Librino Platform circle, especially when members of the cultural organization *Terre Forti* joined the platform (Scalisi 2009). They were predominantly long-term residents from the Borgo Librino settlement, already caring for private gardens (localization no. 1 in Figure 7.3) and sharing vivid memories of Librino's historic rich agricultural landscape.

The idea started to become reality in 2012, when Iqbal Masih activists, operating in a small ground-floor commercial space in Viale Moncada, decided to occupy a 2-hectare abandoned city-owned sports facility, the Campo San Teodoro, in the vicinity of Borgo Librino. San Teodoro was built by the city in the mid-1990s but never opened to the public. For years, Iqbal Masih and I Briganti had requested the city's permission to use it, but without receiving any answer. In 2012, Iqbal Masih volunteers, with the help of a hundred volunteers from all around the city and other organizations from Piattaforma Librino, broke into the area and established their operation there without permission. Through independent fundraising and thousands of volunteering hours, they initiated the renovation works. In less than a year, I Briganti had an operating rugby pitch in Librino and the Iqbal Masih group had a functioning clubhouse for their socio-cultural initiatives. One of the first set of activities carried out by Iqbal Masih volunteers, including a planning graduate student from the University of Catania (Maccaronello 2013), was an urban gardens initiative. Through door-to-door flyer distribution, Borgo Librino residents were invited in December 2012 to a first meeting together with representatives of Terre Forti and other city organizations with expertise in urban gardening. Participants decided to work on a first set of 10 gardens located along the string of land immediately south of the rugby field (volunteers had already provided water for the field, so it was easy to plan for an extension of the irrigation system). All gardens were assigned to single households. Even two of them which had initially remained collective were soon converted into individual gardens. A lot happened in the course of the first year of "self-inorganization" (the term used by one of the Iqbal Maish promoters, interviewed by LS on March 13, 2023). By the end of 2014, the first gardens had been moved up the hill, and 35 more had been added, thanks to a self-funded and self-made extension of the irrigation system. The extension had occurred despite the fact that almost half of the pioneering gardeners had left. The word-of-mouth amongst friends, neighbors, and even relatives from out of Librino had allowed not only the easy replacement of those who had left but also the engagement of more gardeners. Most importantly, the group realized the need to work as a collective, sharing a set of rules developed on the basis of the challenges faced in the course of the first year. Their rules referred to the commitment of each gardener to care for the garden only for the purpose of growing plants (other spaces were suitable for other types of activities); not use polluting substances; not to take over other gardens; participate regularly in periodic meetings; and respect and be kind to each other.

The first year of operation of the gardens was also a time of political change in the city (a new mayor and council were elected in 2013). Those political representatives that had for years remained indifferent to Iqbal Masih and I Briganti's requests were replaced by others more open to collaboration. The

new City Administration granted I Briganti free-of-charge use of the facility. It allocated about half a million euros to enhance the rugby pitch up to National Rugby Federation standards. Renovation works were initiated in 2013 but encountered significant delays and lasted nine long years (it reopened in February 2022), creating significant distress to both the team and the gardeners. During these years, administrators were also involved in a set of regenerative activities involving young designers funded by international architect Renzo Piano, called the 124 Group. The group worked in Librino between 2014 and 2015, supported by local urban sociologist Carlo Colloca (2014), delivering a masterplan for the improvement of the overall San Teodoro area. Besides the 124 Masterplan, concrete improvements were funded by external donors, attracted by the good publicity associated with Piano's reputation: a local developer donated material to stabilize the hill and to asphalt the parking lot and the pathway running up the hill; local businesses donated the materials to decorate the site and paint on the asphalt street games designed by the architects. Games and other improvements were realized through participatory DIY.

Today, operations at the Campo San Teodoro are back to "normal." I Briganti are back in Librino for their practice and games while the gardens are up and running (Figure 7.4). Despite almost all the initial Iqbal Masih promoters moving out of town, a new group is in place with a new coordinator and still operates within a set of common rules, including a monthly fee for maintenance expenses.
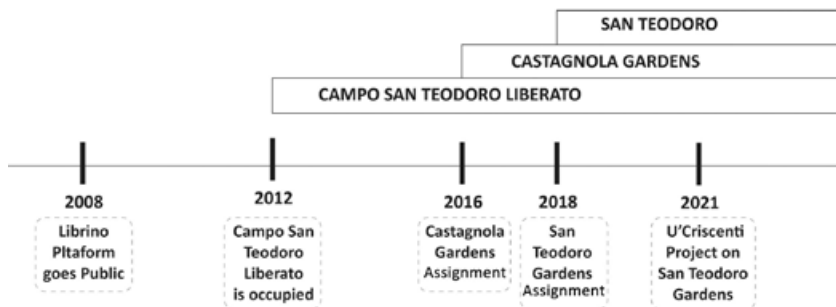
Source: Authors.

Figure 7.4   *Timeline of Librino urban gardens*

7.5   CITY-LED URBAN GARDENS

The mayor and the urban planning deputy mayor were certainly inspired by the success of the Campo San Teodoro gardens and they aggressively pursued the establishment of new ones.

By the summer of 2016, the city had already provided for site planning, public lighting, fencing, and leveling of 10 new gardens located inside the "Campagnola" ring (localized with no. 3 in Figure 7.3). Following a new set of approved "Rules for the implementation, granting, and management of urban gardens" (deliberation no. 14, February 9, 2016), the call for "gardeners" was highly successful. According to the city official working on the project at that time, "gardens were immediately assigned to single households and to the nearby parish. I can assure you, during the work and right after, residents from the apartments overlooking the gardens used to call us as soon as somebody was trying to do something wrong, like self-appointed guardians. They also started organizing, autonomously, the first block parties" (interviewed by LS on February 21, 2023). Librino Platform's activists welcomed the Castagnola urban gardens, viewed as the first sign of the implementation of Tange's green walk- and bikeways system, which eventually received complete funding and is currently under construction. However, they questioned the size of the gardens ("Castagnola gardens, each of them is about 200 square meters, which is more than twice the size of our gardens in Campo S. Teodoro. They are too large for a single family") and the quality of the works ("a private company would have done more in less time"). Today half of the gardens are abandoned: they were realized so quickly and under the direct pressure of the political head of the Urban Planning Department, that the political changes that occurred after the 2018 local elections led to a form of "institutional abandonment" of the site. After the completion of the works, the public management responsibilities were never transferred to the "Green Areas Department" and no one is currently in charge.

Right after the completion of the Castagnola gardens, the same political representatives applied pressure for the implementation of another, more ambitious, urban garden project, within the framework of the PON Metro 2014–2020 funding program,[1] on a 3-hectare site inside the San Teodoro ring. The area had been already transformed in the early 2000s by "STA progetti"

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[1]   PON Metro, which stands for "Programma Operativo Nazoinale per le Aree Metropolitane" (Operative National Program for Metropolitan Areas) is the national funding program aimed at advancing the European Urban Strategy 2020 for smart, inclusive, and sustainable growth. A first round of funding was provided within the 2014–2020 period.

as part of the implementation of Tange's green network, into a "public park" made of four curvy terraces around what was supposed to be an artificial lake. The actual implementation of the park was limited to land movements and the installation of public lighting. The lake was never realized, and residents had been using the area as an illegal dumping site. In 2018, the Administration used PON Metro funds to realize one of the largest urban garden sites in Europe (Viale San Teodoro urban garden) made of 70 fenced gardens of about 150 square meters each, distributed in four rows (one row for each of the terraces), equipped with irrigation and independent wooden toolhouses. Common areas were also equipped with stabilized gravel for pathways, public lighting, and decorative trees.

Under the pressure of the upcoming elections, the Viale S. Teodoro Gardens ribbon was solemnly cut in the presence of the national president Sergio Mattarella on January 16, 2018, even though only 10 applications had been received for the first official call for gardeners. Most likely, the site was not as attractive as the Castagnola site, located in a nicer area of the neighborhood, or the Campo San Teodoro, characterized by a unique form of civic self-organization. A second call, published in May of the same year, was accompanied by a more aggressive outreach campaign by city officials. In particular, low-ranked but highly committed city officials made use of their personal ties with local activists and leaders as well as experienced gardeners from the Campo San Teodoro site.

As a result, gardens were all assigned to individual households from around the neighborhood and two local associations (including Talita Kum). In general, gardeners have begun to take very good care of their individual plots, sometimes with significant structural improvements (many toolhouses have been transformed into relaxing areas equipped with self-constructed porches and verandas). However, activists' impression was that people enjoying the outdoors and the opportunity to grow their own food did not encourage cohesion among gardeners. Rather, local organizations believed that specific actions to enhance gardeners' cohesion were needed.

With this purpose, Talita Kum (granted one of the gardens) made the choice to form a partnership, which included the three authors as action-researchers, to successfully apply, with a project called U'Criscenti, for a National Ministry call for resident-led urban regeneration projects. The project aimed to enhance cohesion among gardeners of Viale San Teodoro, and it took place from October 2021 until July 2022 and explicitly adopted the ACORN community organizing approach to urban regeneration. This methodological choice was related to the fact that none of the gardeners were engaged in any of the local anchor institutions. Every gardener was initially interviewed, period-

ically updated,[2] and encouraged to participate in periodic project meetings. Gardeners were also engaged as co-organizers of two parties (Figure 7.5). These activities were integrated with research on gardeners' motivations and their perceived challenges and priorities.

Source: Authors.

Figure 7.5   *A view of the Campo San Teodoro site today, with the gardens in the front and the renovated rugby pitch on the right*

U'Criscenti organizers have successfully contacted and collected data from almost 70 percent of the gardeners. As a result, an average of 30 out of 70 gardeners have participated periodically in the project activities, ending up sharing a common understanding of problems and priorities. Amongst the problems, there are signs of collapse along several sections of the terraces, since stormwater runoff erodes the clay soil that is not blocked by terrace walls made of a porous metallic net. Gardeners' autonomous yearly attempts to stabilize the soil prove to be costly and not effective. When damage is not caused by heavy water, it is caused by vandals, who steal food and tools and damage structures on a weekly basis. The formal request for city intervention, expressed by almost half of the gardeners during a meeting with city officials, in June 2022, brought to the surface the scarcity of resources available to the only public employee who oversees the gardens with the exclusive use of his good heart and passion (city bankruptcy, filed by the newly elected mayor in 2018, left city departments with no operating budget). The sense of collective despair was overcome through the decision to use a portion of

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2   Communication was kept horizontal, through the re-activation of an existing but silent WhatsApp group, which grew from 25 to 46 members. The group is still active and is a main vehicle of communication amongst gardeners.

the project money to build sitting areas and stabilize part of the soil in the collective areas of the gardens. In the aftermath of U'Criscenti, a dozen active gardeners, under the leadership of Campo San Teodoro gardens' manager, who is also the Comitato Librino Attivo's vice-president, have submitted a proposal for the City of Catania's call for participatory projects (Figures 7.6 and 7.7). Their proposal of restructuring the collapsing San Teodoro gardens with soil-stabilizing vegetable species to be planted vertically along the terrace walls was declared, in November 2022, the most voted proposal city-wide and is going to be funded by the city with 200,000 euros.

Source: Authors.

Figure 7.6   San Teodoro gardeners meeting within the U'Criscenti project

7.6   CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Librino case speaks to the planning scholarly debate on resident-led urban regeneration, since here such a regeneration is tangible. More than 40,000 square meters of previously abandoned land and illegal dumping sites, located at the heart of what is considered Catania's most "infamous neighborhood," are currently cared for, daily. Caring means residents moving land, buying

Source: Authors.

Figure 7.7   A U'Criscenti gardens festival, April 3, 2022

and/or building stuff, seeding, cutting plants, harvesting, watching out for vandals, organizing meetings, and even participating in the development of proposals for enhancing the commons. When all these things are carried out "together" they might be interpreted as a tangible sign of socially cohesive urban regeneration. From a co-productive planning perspective integrated with the conceptual lens of DAO, it is crucial to look at the events, the mechanisms, and the approaches that made all this possible.

Between 2012 and 2015, the birth and growth of the Campo San Teodoro gardens are clearly the outcomes of resident-led co-production supported by a mixed approach to organizing. On one hand, Librino Platform operated as an Alinsky "neighborhood council" holding together representatives of Librino's already organized civil society. On the other, Iqbal Masih's practices, using door-to-door techniques in search of gardeners, are more similar to the ACORN model. This combined strategy succeeded, on the one side, in spurring civic autonomous and self-governed proactivity (gardening) while, on the other, pushing for recognition and material support by public authorities (free-of-charge grant, renovation of the rugby pitch). This means that social cohesion was enhanced both as the creation of a safe space for collaboration aimed at the common good and as transformation of a highly conflictual relationship between civics and public officials into a formal collaborative agreement.

Between 2016 and 2020, the birth of both the Castagnola and the Viale San Teodoro gardens was the outcome of institution-led co-production. In both sites, as the outcome of a clear political commitment with the support of passionate city officials, gardens were not as successful as in the previous case (first phase of Viale S. Teodoro Gardens) and did not last as long (Castagnola). In both cases, top-down decision-making on a less organized civil society produced gardening that did not equate with long-lasting social cohesion as exemplified in the case of the Campo San Teodoro gardens.

Such a lesson is reinforced by the events that occurred in 2021 and 2022, showing the ability to organize performed by local activists (garden-to-garden reach-outs, periodic meetings and reports, etc.) to transform several passionate gardeners, not frequently collaborating or even communicating with each other, into an organized and co-productive group.

As far as the future is concerned, further attention should be paid to the quality of the interaction between gardeners and the city, especially related to the implementation of the Comitato Librino Attivo's proposal. However, a few general reflections can be drawn for the benefit of the disciplinary debate. Assuming the centrality of the organizational aspects, which depends on the nature of the interaction between leaders, eventual planners, and every single resident, some questions need to be urgently addressed, concerning who should be doing the organizing and why, and whether it requires specific expertise and dedicated resources. In Librino, people in charge of organizing during the most successful phases of co-production were the ones with some level of training: CGIL activists promoting the Librino Platform; former "civil servants" and a planning graduate promoting the Campo San Teodoro initiative; and university researchers with some community organizing training within U'Criscenti. These are individuals who are not necessarily aware of their having "organizing" as a common base. More importantly, from a planning perspective, it is not yet clear whether the skills for this type of work, which have proven to be foundational for genuine co-productive planning, should be expected by planners interested in operating within a co-productive framework. While this question needs further research and reflection, cases like Librino show the importance of further developing the disciplinary understanding of DAO in a co-productive planning that effectively enhances social cohesion.[3]

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8. Co-producing urban neighborhoods: (non-)interaction between citizen initiatives and municipalities in Germany

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8.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter builds upon a basic definition of co-production understood as a joint effort of public sector professionals and citizens in the initiation, planning, design, and implementation of public services (Benjamin and Brudney 2018). In particular, various ways to accomplish co-productive processes are described (1) based on citizen initiatives' positionings vis-à-vis municipal bodies and (2) using qualitative interview data with engaged citizens. We draw upon citizen initiatives' (non-)interactions with municipal bodies in terms of financing, communication, and personnel to more deeply understand the nuances in and different contributions to co-producing urban neighborhoods.

Our starting point is the fundamental changes in German state governance throughout the 1990s that affected the provision of public services and goods. As some of the key characteristics are revised, new mechanisms to provide technical and social infrastructure are being piloted (Wegrich and Hammerschmid 2017). As will be outlined in the next two paragraphs, these changes can be observed in both the political field and the planning discipline.

In the *political field*, a core shift lies in attempts to activate citizens and involve them increasingly as well as more directly. These attempts consider citizens to be more responsible for themselves, the community, and the shared environment (Heidbrink 2006; van Dyk 2019; see also Chapter 1). Many expectations are attached to this change in political governance, such as increasing the public sector's legitimacy, saving financial resources and drawing more on the capacities of society to strengthen social cohesion in a highly individualized society (Brandsen et al. 2016, 2018). To implement the

new mode of governance, the nation-state (van Dyk 2018, 2019) and regional policy (Kallert et al. 2021) provide a number of incentives to stimulate and involve civil society activities encompassing, for example, program funding or symbolic valorization (such as award ceremonies). In contrast, a policy of underfunding is used to encourage citizens to provide needed services for themselves (van Dyk 2018, 2019).

The *planning discipline* reformulated its self-understanding as a result of the new mode of governance. In line with the international discourse, the understanding of co-production in Germany was adapted. While it was seen as a technical endeavor, the new paradigm highlighted the need to construe planning as a social endeavor that aims to link knowledge from different actors (Bauhardt 2004; Friedmann 1998). In this way, co-production (Benjamin and Brudney 2018) became one of the major approaches to spatial planning. For example Vanleene and Verschuere (2018) argued that neighborhood and community development is inherently co-productive, while Albrechts (2013) highlighted the co-productive essence of strategic spatial planning. Furthermore, co-production is emphasized as a precondition for sustainable urban transformation (Kraas et al. 2016). Yet, co-production continues to be the subject of revision. Since the concept entered the discourse, different development stages of the fluid concept can be identified and roughly described. While first being discussed as a state-led method of delivering public services at a lower cost, later debates critically addressed issues of power distribution and unequal relationships (Watson 2014). In recent discussion, co-production is neither a goal nor a particular kind of participation process. It is regarded as a long-term model of decision-making which is open to engagement of citizens in the complete process.[1] In Germany, co-production is particularly used in areas where the supplementation of planning expertise with practical (user) experience of citizens has proven useful or where a high degree of legitimacy needs to be achieved. Examples include joint efforts to strengthening neighborhood communities (BBSR 2017; Drilling et al. 2022; Räuchle 2021) and spatial adjustments for reaching equitable living conditions (Rappen 2022). In the planning discipline, co-production does not mean leaving planning processes entirely to civil society or governance without government participation (van der Stoep 2014). Instead, spatial planners are considered to have an active but not a dominant role in co-production processes (Albrechts 2013). Essentially, the model relies on attempts to reduce barriers to influential participation, such as group marginalization, power imbalances, etc. (Rosen and Painter 2019).

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[1] This includes identifying problems, developing solutions, piloting interventions, and implementation.

However, seeing urban development as inherently co-productive is not free of pitfalls. Clashing assumptions and approaches can hamper interaction (Horlings 2010). Accordingly, co-production takes place in a dynamic milieu, which is characterized by different constellations between citizen initiatives and municipal bodies (including local public administrations, individual political decision-makers, and councils). Constellations may range from attempts to work autonomously, to confrontational positions and extensive interdependencies (Chambers and Kopstein 2008; Leshoska et al. 2016). Within this dynamic milieu, it might be difficult to meet all the criteria of "good urban governance" (Kraas et al. 2016, p. 370), such as extensive participation and well-considered consent, but also effectiveness and efficiency. Furthermore, practical problems in joint efforts of professionals from municipalities and citizen initiatives can arise from different logics of action in the respective spheres (see also Chapter 1). In the case of public service provision, spatial planners work at the interface between the state and civil society – a setting where different logics of action need to be conjoined (see also Chapter 1). While activities of municipal bodies are embedded in a sphere of top-down steering and power, civic initiatives rely on voluntarily conducted activities and consequently exhibit a higher degree of diversity, independency, and vibrancy.

We argue that in-depth knowledge about citizen initiative involvement and the rationales behind their activities can be beneficial for practical spatial planning. Not only can this knowledge help to illustrate the fluidity of co-production processes, it might also be used to develop adequate working conditions for all actors involved and to share experiences between the planning discipline and different citizen initiatives in co-production processes. Since the academic discourse has not yet appropriately addressed this practical need, we choose an open empirical approach to illustrate different positionings of citizen initiatives in terms of co-producing urban neighborhoods and the benefits they associate with them.

Against this background, our chapter illustrates (1) how citizen initiatives position themselves vis-à-vis municipal bodies in carrying out their activities and (2) to what extent and why they (do not) contribute to co-production processes in their neighborhoods in this way. Furthermore, it provides insights into whether these interactions are self-selected and desired on the part of citizen initiatives or whether they are externally determined (e.g., by municipal authorities).

8.2   METHOD

To address these research questions, we adopt the initiatives perspective (see Chapter 1) with its specific focus on forms and qualities of interaction between resident-led collectives and governments. In order to gain a deeper under-

standing, we used qualitative data material that provides a rich and nuanced view on meanings and perspectives attached to the activities of citizen initiatives. In this chapter, we draw on insights from qualitative guided interviews with four representatives of citizen initiatives in urban neighborhoods (Flick 2004). The initiatives are located in two major German cities. In line with the important areas of co-production in Germany mentioned in the introduction, the initiatives studied either support community solidification or engage in place-making activities for sustainable and equitable spatial arrangements (see Table 8.1). Their manifold activities cover spatial entities in both the immediate vicinity and the whole city district. Given these varying urban areas, it is difficult to classify the initiatives based on the spatial scales in which they act.

Mostly, the persons interviewed were the current chairpersons or the founding members (see Table 8.1). The goal of this sample selection was to ensure the longest possible active membership in the initiative and the associated knowledge about its characteristics and features, such as knowledge about the initiative's founding, about established structures, usual activities, recurring projects, communication channels, and how these have evolved over time. All representatives have had at least five years of experience as chairpersons in their initiatives, and some of them have chaired for more than ten years.

Table 8.1   *Initiatives, respective fields of engagement, and activities related to co-producing urban neighborhoods*

Number	Representative	Field of engagement	Activities related to co-producing urban neighborhoods
Initiative 1	Chairperson with more than ten years of experience	Meeting point, charitable activities	Supporting community solidification within the neighborhood
Initiative 2	Founding member with several years of experience and (professional) expertise	Sustainability, environmental protection	Place-making activities in the neighborhood for sustainable and equitable spatial arrangements and designs
Initiative 3	Chairperson with more than ten years of experience	Cultural promotion, events	Supporting community solidification within the neighborhood
Initiative 4	Chairperson with five years of experience	Citizens' dialogue, working groups	Place-making activities in the neighborhood for sustainable and equitable spatial arrangements and designs

Source: Authors.

The data were collected by the authors in a broader project context of the German Research Institute Social Cohesion and against the background of a comparatively larger interest in civic engagement.[2] Based on this project context, the analysis methodology is aligned with the grounded theory methodology (Jørgensen 2001; Strauss and Corbin 2003). Using the available qualitative data, it is possible to comprehend how initiatives position themselves vis-à-vis municipal bodies and how they (can) contribute to co-production processes in urban neighborhoods (sections 8.4 and 8.5). For this chapter, the cited empirical material has been translated from German into English by the group of authors.

8.3   EMPIRICAL INSIGHTS

This section delivers empirical insights into the positionings of four initiatives vis-à-vis local public administrations, political decision-makers, and other community bodies on issues that affect citizens' everyday lives in urban neighborhoods. In the empirical material, interactions between citizen initiatives and municipal bodies become particularly clear when topics like financial structures, usual communication topics and procedures, and personnel are addressed. From the introduced initiative perspective (see Chapter 1), these topics are suitable for observing positionings of citizen initiatives vis-à-vis municipal bodies within civic engagement for urban development. The following paragraphs discuss four illustrative cases of citizen initiatives: section 8.3.1 describes financial structures, section 8.3.2 deals with the issue of communication, and section 8.3.3 is dedicated to the personnel of citizen initiatives. Later on, a summary of how and why they (do not) contribute to co-production processes in their neighborhood will be given in the results section (8.4).

8.3.1   Financial Structures

All initiatives used a hybrid financing approach. In each case, a selective combination of the following components was utilized to cover upcoming costs: donations, membership fees, funding programs, support from the municipality, and profits resulting from their own activities.

The first initiative has established a funding structure characterized by a high degree of independence, including the deliberate refraining from any support from municipal or political actors. For its comparatively independent

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2   Research project "Zivilgesellschaftliche Verantwortungsübernahme für gesellschaftlichen Zusammenhalt 'vor Ort'" (Project number 60470488) funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF).

position, the initiative accepts, according to its chairwoman, a high degree of uncertainty: "You always check how much money you have, but so far it has always been enough. That's the way it is with us." The financing structure of her initiative is therefore made up of many small elements. Symbolically, the chairwoman speaks of a "millipede", which includes donations, rental income for events, temporary foundation grants, and subsidies from their own support association. With its small-scale financing structure, the initiative usually only manages to raise the rent for its own premises. Nevertheless, showing appreciation and recognition for the group of further volunteers in the initiative is especially important to them. For this reason, the chairwoman invests additional time to apply each year (for each volunteer, if possible) to the state for a small monthly expense allowance: "They are all here voluntarily. They can all say, next week I won't come anymore because the lady didn't say hello to me or something. But our center only works with the support of the volunteers, and that's why it's a big priority for me."

The second initiative is characterized by a cost-avoiding financing strategy: "We have always tried to keep our costs as low as possible, and we have done a lot by ourselves." Nevertheless, some activities (mostly public events) needed financial resources for materials and meeting legal requirements with respect to traffic safety (e.g., temporary road closures). To settle its expenditures, the initiative sought to obtain funding from public administrations. With its own activities, however, the initiative is also known as a kind of counterpart and critical commentator of various activities exercised by municipal bodies. Thus, they try to create publicity for the corresponding contents and topics. Given this partly confrontational approach, the initiative has experienced both support and rejection. On the one hand, the interviewed founding member referred to an event for which the former mayor decided to pay the cost of temporary street closure. On the other hand, the initiative was eager for financial support to conduct a comparable event. Using the words "we were rebuffed there", the interviewed founder commented on the city representatives' dismissive attitude in this regard. As a result of unsuccessful attempts to receive financial support, the initiative also included unconventional financing approaches. Active members donated and borrowed private capital as the founder reported: "At that time, always looked around, 'Do you have money?', 'Yes, I'll give something.' That was fun." Next to a high degree of internal trust and an informal structure, this strategy is rooted in the very pragmatic attitude of the members: "If we want to achieve something, then we also have to take a piece of money in hand, more or less. It is that simple."

The third initiative deliberatively keeps its membership fees very low and therefore relies on donations from local businesses to maintain its activities. In addition, it receives a regular (albeit small) earmarked donation from the district council to seasonally decorate a local square. Like the first initiative,

the third one is continually confronted with challenging financial conditions. As a result, fundraising is a key activity primarily undertaken by the interviewed chair. However, the process of fundraising is described as highly labor-intensive and exhausting. For example, the chairwoman reports that convincing the district council to co-fund the initiatives' activities took her "years of work". She further considers fundraising as becoming increasingly challenging: "Today, it's very difficult to contact people and say, 'Gee, can't you support just a bit, just once?' It is more and more difficult to get other people's money." The challenges in fundraising are accompanied by rising costs to secure safety during public events (e.g., in terms of meeting legal requirements related to power supply). Above all, the additional costs are highlighted as bearing the potential to limit the initiative's scope of action: "No club can afford that any longer. And that's why it's no longer affordable for us."

Unlike the former initiatives, the fourth has a comparatively secure funding base. Membership fees only provide a part of the funding, which are accompanied by various donations. As the chairman emphasizes, there is a high level of willingness to donate within the local community and among companies, particularly in the case of earmarked donations. In addition, the initiative regularly submits applications to receive project- and topic-related funding from the municipality, the state, and the federal government. There is "a large number of funding pots … that you can tap into as an initiative. So, it's such a colorful mix."

8.3.2 Communication with Municipal Bodies

With regard to communication processes, our empirical findings offer a broad variety of civic initiatives' positioning. While some seek autonomy and reduce public sector interactions to occasional contact, others rely on cooperation with public administrations, political parties, or representatives. Where communication with municipal bodies takes place, the focus is on spatial activities and developments as well as on the initiatives' needs (e.g., in terms of finances, advice, or even practical support).

The first initiative describes itself as comparatively independent in terms of communication with local political actors and the usual communication channels and topics. The chairwoman justifies this approach referring to her already several years in charge, during which she has gained a lot of experience. According to her experiences, many communication processes have to be conducted in a sensitive and careful way. As an initiative, they have always wanted to avoid giving the impression (even implicitly) of promoting certain political directions or opinions. Contact and communication with political parties was therefore always weighed up, especially in relation to the initiative's guiding principles of openness and inclusivity, so as not to exclude

anyone: "Especially for us [this is] something so essential!" In this context, the chairwoman describes her initiative as very consensus-oriented and concerned that decisions made are supported by every member. On several occasions, they have received inquiries from political parties offering concrete support for projects and, later, to provide financial assistance. But the initiative collectively decided against cooperation. Of course, it was "tempting … if you can get money somewhere, because you always need it", but it simply did not feel right.

The second initiative uses indirect and direct channels to communicate with municipal bodies as well as to establish a communication link on common issues. A large part of the available means of communication can therefore be described as indirect, which includes public events (partly as local implementation of supra-local campaigns), demonstrations, interventions in public space, and petitions. In these activities, the specific nature of the initiative becomes visible, i.e., its ability to position itself critically and with a high public profile. As a result, the initiative – comparable to its experience in funding – has also faced challenges in direct communication with politicians and representatives of the local public administration. The founding member describes positive and constructive relations with a public administration employee who served as a contact person in the early days of the initiatives: "We kind of got to know and appreciate each other and then we just started the first things, so we first presented the needs to the district." The permission to use the rooms of the district management also indicates positive communication processes with the municipal bodies. However, the dialogue with politicians in the district council is perceived as poor. After presenting their concerns to the council, the approach and idea of the initiative were "ridiculed" by the members. Based on comparable later experiences, they felt that their participation was "basically not a priority for the policy". Nevertheless, some members worked on issues related to the initiative's activities in city-led committees.

In the case of the third initiative, a higher degree of dependency becomes visible. The initiative's communication with the municipality is directed to the district council. Topics of the dialogue relate to the initiative's own needs for its activities. The chairwoman exhibits a profound knowledge of the tools for supporting local initiatives: "The district councils have a certain budget with which they can do whatever they want. … So, if … a club needs gym mats. … And then comes an application to the district council … So then they get their mats, then they get their 2,000 euro grant and can buy these mats." However, she does not only use these formal communication channels for her own initiative. Based on her knowledge about (formal) application requirements, she offers support to other initiatives: "And I also help with the writing of these applications. Yes, then I always say, 'Gee, show me that beforehand, otherwise it goes back again and then we have to start all over again and we have to wait

four weeks'. And then I look at them beforehand and then I say, 'Please do that, change that in any case, that must not be in there at all'."

The chairman of the fourth initiative describes a positive and trusting interaction with the municipality, which for him is characterized by processes of continuous and open communication. It is possible that the nature of the interactions outlined here goes back to the founding history of the initiative, in which mutual appreciation with municipal bodies was already inherent.[3] According to the chairman, initiative members are concerned about not avoiding political issues in their involvement. Relevant politics for the district are included, because politicians often decide or (at least) are responsible for decisive fields, such as urban development. "I think it's wrong to shut ourselves off from that, which unfortunately some associations do, they want to be politically independent and politically neutral at the same time. I think these are different approaches and that's why we work together with them anyway." However, as the chairman emphasizes, the members are not afraid to engage in conflict and to try to convince opposing sides with good arguments "that our opinion is the more accurate one". The communication processes with municipal actors are thus characterized by their "cooperation [but] also constructive criticism and making demands" with regard to concrete (political) decisions and local developments as well as spatial activities.

8.3.3   Personnel

Insights presented in this section refer to the initiatives' personnel. Next to some general characterizations, this includes descriptions of interaction on a meso-level (see Chapter 1) through sharing knowledge and networks as well as using synergies between initiatives' personnel and municipalities. However, this kind of interaction is not obviously apparent in all of the four initiatives while it also entails interrelations with the descriptions on finances (8.3.1) and communication (8.3.2).

The first initiative placed great emphasis on volunteer appreciation and recognition activities. Enjoying doing something for others, having a helpful streak, and liking to initiate activities are characteristics ascribed to the major-

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[3]   The founding event of this initiative after German reunification was based on initial impulses from the municipal administration. According to this, there had been employees at the decisive points in local politics and in the city administration who had taken the standpoint: "We have to found such associations, we have to support such initiatives, because … this blatant development or change … the city was facing … [because] something like this can only be mastered with civil society actors."

ity of members. In addition, there are also volunteers who are simply happy to do something "that gives them more meaning in their lives, in their everyday lives. We have some older people, senior citizens or … unemployed people or pensioners on disability who are really happy: This is where I can be and … it gives me confirmation … in the evening of the day I can say 'it was good'." Over time, and based on the experience she has gained in her activity, the chairwoman has come to believe that her personnel also need to get something out of civic engagement. There has to be a "balance", "not just giving", otherwise committed people will eventually lose interest and it will no longer be fun for them. Rather, it has to be something that "also brings them something themselves". In addition to the expense allowances already described (8.3.1), this could be "community, that they can talk to others and … that they can share their worries and that it is simply a nice place".

In the second initiative, four founding members are primarily the key players. They met each other through activities in another initiative related to their private homes. In order to achieve their goals, they prioritize their involvement in the initiative, even if that means organizing much of their activities with only a few members and correspondingly less (practical) support. However, they do have some professional expertise due to their occupational backgrounds.

In the third initiative, engaged members are described as being of different ages and as "people who desire to do something". Nevertheless, the initiative exhibits a rather centralized structure. Although the members are appreciated for practical activities, the chairwoman acts as the initiative's "all round force", "common thread", "ideator", and a spokesperson for the initiative within the public sphere, but also towards politics. Regarding the latter, she performs a dual role, as she is also a member of the district council.

The people committed to the fourth initiative are described as being interested in their social and spatial surroundings, in "getting involved and being part of what is happening around them". Only a few have joined the initiative as sustaining members while having expressed from the beginning their intention to play a passive role by merely supporting the initiative financially. In this way, each member contributes to the initiative according to his or her interests, motivation, and time. With regard to the composition of its membership structure, the initiative has already been registering trends for some time, which the chairman emphasizes as being very positive: in addition to people of retirement age, more families and comparatively younger people between the ages of 30 and 50 are showing interest in becoming members. Especially in this age group, as the chairman describes it, there is traditionally a membership gap in many initiatives, "because people are in their professional lives and perhaps have other priorities, but we have a good reception here in the meantime". For the chairman, it is therefore important to recognize the commitment shown by

members in the context of their various living circumstances. Particularly in "this competitive situation with other obligations, with family and work, they try to somehow reconcile that with the group's activity".

8.4   RESULTS

The empirical insights on the interactions of initiatives, exemplified by illustrative passages on their financial structures, communication, and personnel, allow us to summarize findings on positionings vis-à-vis municipal bodies. The discussion allows for a deeper understanding on (1) the extent of citizen initiatives' participation in neighborhood co-production and (2) the reasons why they (do not want to or are not able to) contribute.

The results of this analysis indicate two different axes along which the initiatives can be arranged on the basis of their interactions with municipalities. On the one hand, a distinction can be made between initiatives that are active on their own (I) and, on the other hand, initiatives that interact with municipal bodies (II). In addition, initiatives can be structured within the autonomy axis (I) according to whether they work alone because they want to (Ia) or because they have to (Ib). In comparison, civic initiatives in the interaction axis can be distinguished according to whether their interaction is based on the fact that they need something from municipal bodies themselves (IIa) or whether the initiative and the municipal actors are rather in a relationship of mutual benefit (IIb). The remainder of the section links each initiative to one form of co-production.

The example of our first initiative shows that guiding principles and higher values that initiatives set for themselves can hinder their participation in co-production processes. As the case of initiative one has made clear, mutual appreciation is a priority for all citizen members – both chairpersons and further personnel. This can be seen, for example, in the fact that interaction with political actors is avoided in favor of personal authenticity, even if this goes hand in hand with forgoing (additional) financial and practical support. Furthermore, openness and inclusivity, as well as a concern not to exclude anyone, are at the heart of the initiative presented. Particularly due to the activities carried out, which also include cooperation with vulnerable groups, it is contrary to the initiative's own guiding principles and motives to give – even implicitly – the impression of promoting certain political ideas and opinions. Accordingly, initiative one does not wish to interact with the municipality (Ia).

Initiative two illustrates how interactions can be slowed down by municipal bodies, such as local politicians or administration. The example of initiative two illustrates that, especially in the founding and early days, there was comparatively more willingness to talk, to provide financial support, and to offer the use of available facilities. With the start of their (sometimes critical, con-

frontational) activities in public, successively fewer communication channels remained for the initiative to become aware of and participate in low-threshold funding opportunities. On the part of the initiative, interactions are certainly appreciated in this case, not only to obtain support, but also to be involved in co-production processes. However, it is challenging to reach municipal bodies (Ib).

Initiative three demonstrates that interaction with municipalities can also be very occasional and on an ad hoc basis. As our material indicates, the chairperson bears responsibility for all interactions between the initiative and municipal bodies in a comparatively centralized manner. In a carefully dosed way, the chair communicates issues, needs, and requests to the district administration when it seems appropriate and is necessary for her initiative. This is the case, for example, when it comes to applying for (additional) funding for activities. During her mandate, the chairperson has acquired a profound knowledge of funding opportunities, which she shares with other initiatives.[4] This suggests that (currently practiced) participation in interactions creates basic conditions for initiative three to (continue to) contribute to co-production processes. However, contacts and communication from the side of the initiative are usually linked to conditions. This becomes evident when needs and occasions arise that require the help of municipal bodies (IIa).

The fourth initiative illustrates a further example of interaction with municipal bodies. It works on the basis of open, continuous communication on the one hand, and mutual respect and (financial) appreciation of achievements on the other. As initiative four has made clear, the members do not exclude district-related political issues from their engagement. They explicitly include them in their activities by addressing political decisions and fields that are relevant to their neighborhoods and in their everyday lives through arguments, constructive criticism, and demands. In turn, political actors regularly contact the initiative to specifically ask for opinions, statements, or interest in taking part in planning processes. It is therefore a matter of mutual interest in each other's knowledge, skills, and abilities, from which meaningful synergies for co-production processes seem to result (IIb).

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[4] Reference should be made here again to the specific description of the initiative and its chairperson from the material (see section 8.3.3). It becomes apparent that, in addition to her commitment, the chair is also active in local politics. Probably she acquired part of her knowledge and contact with public administration through her activity in politics. This, however, is a specificity of the individual initiative and its chairperson. In order to be able to provide more transferable statements, we abstract from some specificities when classifying her interaction with municipal institutions in this section of the results.

8.5   CONCLUSION

The results we have presented on the basis of our illustrative cases show whether citizen initiatives interact with municipal bodies in carrying out their activities and, if so, how they contribute to co-production processes in their neighborhoods.

Using qualitative data material, we revealed a comparatively broad spectrum concerning perceptions and descriptions of interactions. In particular, our results emerged from the aspects of funding structures, communication topics and channels, and personnel. The empirical insights allowed us to shed light on the positioning of citizen initiatives vis-à-vis municipalities. *Methodologically*, the features and characteristics we (inductively) developed on the basis of the interview material represent only one of many possible ways to gain an in-depth understanding of the positioning of citizen initiatives and their contributions to co-production processes. In this way, our approach shows only a small part of possible access to interactions. But in terms of gaining *practical knowledge*, our approach offers valuable benefits: since all aspects are based on actual situations of (non-)interaction and were not theoretically introduced to the interview material, our findings allow derivation of diverse and likely applicable insights for practical spatial planning.

Our empirical results vividly reflect the fluid concept of co-production presented in section 8.1. Thus, they demonstrate various kinds of interactions between citizen initiatives and municipal bodies and reveal them as differing in terms of positioning. In these various ways, the combination of different concepts of work, communication, and cultures of co-production is expressed in practical terms. As the case studies have shown, the relationships between some initiatives and municipal bodies are closely interrelated, resulting in lasting synergies from and for each other. Co-production processes can occur here almost incidentally as the interactions are long-term, relate to the entire planning- and decision-making process, and are grounded in the notion of being equal partners. As such, they reflect core aspects of current understandings on co-production. In other cases, however, interaction is based on a culture in which references between those involved are made only selectively and expediently. The initiative as well as municipality actors try to minimize external stimuli in their usual activities, possibly to not disturb or irritate with different ways of working. This form of rather one-sided interaction, in which given power imbalances remain, reflects early understandings of co-production. The foregoing brief description suggests that different development stages do not displace each other but examples of all stages can be found in current urban development processes. Further remarkable findings relate to empirical cases, where it becomes clear that, on the one hand, there are initiatives that (as

a result of deliberation) decide against any interaction with municipal actors. On the other hand, there are initiatives that would be interested in cooperation, but have difficulties in being heard by their municipality.

With regard to practical implications, we argue that at the interface position (see also Chapter 1), where local representatives of the state and civil society meet in various constellations, creative approaches can emerge and be further pursued in co-productive processes. Spatial planners should be aware of this diversity and act – as Lamker (2019) notes – reflexively on their own roles when they aim to foster productive interactions. Where co-production is already well established (case IIb), they could contribute within existing networks in the role of experts on the subject, as inspirers, and (if wished) as leaders. When co-production is implemented as occasional and event-driven (case IIa), planners could intervene as moderators and strategic navigators. They could use their competencies, for example, to foster learning about mutual expectations, wishes, and constraints and try to overcome the (material) needs-based form of interaction. Finally, spatial planners could draw upon their competencies with respect to mediation in cases where interactions between citizen initiatives and municipality bodies remain challenging. With regard to stakeholders who refuse to cooperate (cases Ia and Ib for both perspectives), we recommend planners in particular not to marginalize initiatives and their contributions. Even if the desire for direct communication is reduced, spatial planners could function as technical problem solver (e.g., by providing spaces or by arranging road closure for events) but also as advocators when it comes to public decision-making that would question the continuing existence of a citizen initiative.

To conclude, our chapter not only provides valuable in-depth knowledge that can complement spatial planners' practical expertise to enhance co-production in urban development. For the scientific discourse, we also show that co-production's fluid character appears in both theoretical concepts and social reality. This can be seen, among other things, in the prevalence of different interactions, the positionings that can be described among them, and their meanings for cooperation in co-production processes. With our contribution, we point to the presence of different understandings and cultures that become visible in the (non-)interaction of citizen initiatives and municipal bodies. Reducing power imbalances, opening up decision-making processes, and offering participatory platforms can (further) favor co-production processes with some initiatives. Others will not be reached in this way, however. Here, spatial planners can also use their competencies by offering additional (new) exchange formats alongside comparatively intensive co-production to enrich established interactions with creative impulses. Our research indicates that efficient and satisfactory efforts of citizens and public sector professionals in community solidification or place-making activities for sustainable and

equitable spatial arrangements can likewise be achieved with less intensive forms of interaction.

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9. Community engagement in urban regeneration: highlights from the 'Sê Bairrista' project in Marvila (Lisbon)

Roberto Falanga, Mafalda Corrêa Nunes and Henrique Chaves

9.1 INTRODUCTION

The growth of the world population living in urban contexts is considered one of the twenty-first century's most impactful changes. In Europe, more than two thirds of the population live in urban agglomerations. This phenomenon brings to the fore new challenges for tackling urban poverty, exclusion and marginalization of the most vulnerable communities. Recent data indicate that reduced social mobility and labour market prospects particularly affect vulnerable social groups (Keeley 2015). Moreover, the number of poor and at-risk-of-poverty people has increased, with income inequality in OECD countries at its highest level for the past half century (OECD 2023). Against this backdrop, international agencies have called for strong policy solutions based, *inter alia*, on integrated approaches to urban regeneration in deprived areas (UN 2015; EU 2016).

Within its cohesion policies framework, the EU has been supporting and funding regenerative initiatives aimed at combating urban disparities since the end of the Second World War. EU regeneration schemes build on a long tradition of urban policies directed at the reconstruction (mostly in the 1950s), revitalization (mostly in the 1960s), renewal (mostly in the 1970s) and redevelopment (mostly in the 1980s) of cities. More recently, EU investments have triggered in place-based socio-territorial cohesion interventions, which are deemed to stimulate job creation, competitiveness, economic growth, quality of life and sustainable development (Barca 2009). Within this framework, urban regeneration has taken centre stage to improve physical and social environments through reconfigured institutional arrangements from the national scale upwards to supranational agencies, and downwards to regional and local powers.

Urban regeneration goals are frequently pursued through the action of local partnerships composed of multiple agents, and including local community members. As recently echoed by the new Urban Agenda for the EU, there is a growing belief that urban regeneration practices can help "reduce poverty and improve the inclusion of people in poverty or at risk of poverty in deprived neighbourhoods" (EU 2016). Nevertheless, concerns arise as to the sharing of power in making decisions related to urban change and whether the outputs can be sustained over time by the engaged actors (Harding 1997; Roberts 2000).

Bearing in mind the complex set of issues connected to the design and implementation of participatory approaches to the regeneration of deprived urban areas, our chapter focuses on the activities carried out within the 'Sê Bairrista' project in the Marvila district of Lisbon. We pay special attention to the area called '4 Crescente', which comprises four neighbourhoods that share physical and social issues related to long-term urban underdevelopment. In the face of that, communities have increasingly demonstrated motivation to play an active role in changing the urban environment they live in.

The chapter is structured according to the analysis of the results provided by the authors in the monitoring and evaluation of the 'Sê Bairrista' project, with a focus on the role of social cohesion and place attachment. Both dimensions were grasped through the development of the project, which was officially inaugurated in 2020. To this end, we adopted a multi-method approach consisting of participatory observation and pre-post survey questionnaires with householders. The main findings show that community engagement in regeneration initiatives can make a significant difference in enhancing social cohesion and place attachment. Nevertheless, considering the structural problems of deprived urban areas, this sort of initiative should be implemented within long-term plans addressing the multi-layered and multi-faceted causes of urban deprivation in specific neighbourhoods.

9.2   URBAN REGENERATION INITIATIVES AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Issues related to poverty, exclusion and marginalization are connected to the physical and symbolic boundaries that demarcate community 'insiders' and 'outsiders' (Sibley 1995). The permeability of social boundaries within increasingly urbanized settlements today escalates and accelerates socio-economic and spatial inequalities, which challenge our understanding of current urban phenomena (Healey 2013; Peck and Theodore 2010). In this regard, Loïc Wacquant has coined the concept of 'territorial stigmatization' to make sense of low levels of education and income, unemployment and inadequate housing in specific urban areas (Wacquant 2014). Other scholars have similarly referred to phenomena of social exclusion, (racial) segregation

and displacement (Soja 2009), which all contribute to the unequal distribution of burdens and benefits within the city (Fainstein 2005). Moreover, social housing neighbourhoods often represent spaces of powerful stigmatization leading to increased marginalization of local communities (Amin 2005).

Practices of urban regeneration are expected to improve the physical and social conditions of specific urban areas, and increasingly rely on the active participation of local communities. In central neighbourhoods, culture-led approaches are often used to promote ephemeral (e.g., events and festivals) and/or permanent interventions (e.g., cultural and creative infrastructures). For its association with a set of new urban values such as 'liveability', 'attractivity' and 'creativity', culture-led regeneration has become a newly marketable asset of urban historical landscapes (Bianchini and Parkinson 1993). However, city (re)branding operations often show controversial results for places and communities, with spreading phenomena of forced and/or spontaneous displacement of poor tenants (Evans 2003).

Acknowledging the (un)desired consequences of culture-led regeneration, other types of initiatives have sought new balances between wealthy and poor groups through the active participation of community members. Community engagement has been developed through a wide range of tools with householders and stakeholders, who are invited to collaborate in enhancing the built and social environment by triggering new (job) opportunities in the neighbourhood (Healey 1997; Edwards 2001). (Re)activated social bonds (Healey 1998), social cohesion (Couch et al. 2003; Martinez-Fernandez et al. 2012) and place attachment (Hidalgo and Hernandez 2001) are expected to become strong community assets. By being physically close, people rely on and give impetus to local networks that provide, in turn, new conditions for wider community engagement. As stressed by Falanga (2022), the connection between engagement and place attachment is all but linear, as it rather depends on whether changes are driven by either external or internal forces. When local communities 'own' changes, high degrees of mutual help and capacity of self-organization are found (Loeffler and Bovaird 2016). In contrast, externally driven changes can generate distress and loss of sense of control (Anton and Lawrence 2016).

The strengthening of social cohesion and place attachment through community engagement does not, however, guarantee the success of participatory approaches. According to some scholars, community engagement is often (mis)used to gain support for market-friendly service provision, which ultimately favours the interests of private stakeholders (Furbey 1999; Cooke and Kothari 2001; Cornwall 2004), which echoes unequal relations of power in neoliberal urban policies (Althusser 1977; Swyngedouw et al. 2002; Taylor 2007). In fact, participatory approaches can be disguised behind goals of justice that ultimately reinforce neoliberal urbanization at the expense of the

most vulnerable groups of society (Couch et al. 2003; Swyngedouw 2005; Harvey 1996). In doing so, householders are often portrayed as the key players of their own fate, thus shifting the public discourse from problems experienced by people and places to problems of people and places (Taylor 2007).

9.3   THE '4 CRESCENTE' AREA IN THE MARVILA DISTRICT OF LISBON

Around a decade ago, in the aftermath of the financial crisis, the Lisbon eastern riverside was targeted as a strategic area for creative and smart industries. Public and private agencies sought to refurbish the post-industrial heritage as one of the city's (re)development efforts. Empty factories and warehouses increasingly attracted the attention of 'creatives' and real estate developers, which ended up transforming radically the population living in and using this territory.

Note: The Marvila district is located within the dotted line on the map. The flag pins show the dissemination of cultural and creative agencies on the riverside. On the inner side, only a few cultural and economic activities are in place.
Source: Map retrieved from Google Maps and edited by the authors.

Figure 9.1   *The Marvila district*

As shown in Figure 9.1, the Marvila district shows a multi-layered and multi-faceted urban fabric. Since the mid-nineteenth century, people from all over the country have settled in this area of the city in the search for new job opportunities. New workers and their families were especially attracted by the factories located on the riverside. However, people used to live in extremely precarious housing conditions until the central government set out a comprehensive range of policies aimed at eradicating shanty towns in the city. Since the 1990s, those people have been relocated into social housing buildings, most of them built on the inner side of Marvila (Figure 9.2).

Marvila's population pyramid
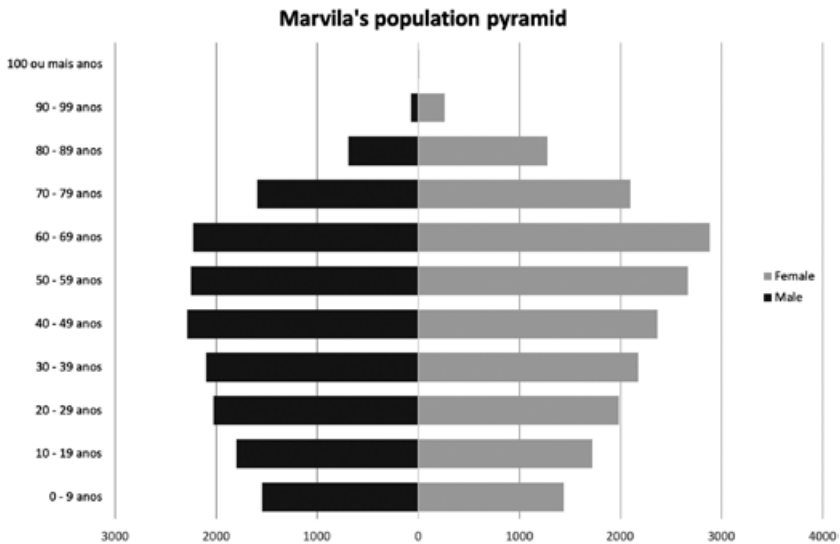
Source: INE/Censos 2021.

Figure 9.2   *Local population in the Marvila district (sex cohort and age cohort)*

In the last few years, the inner side of Marvila has been dramatically at odds with the wave of private-led regeneration on the riverside. Backed by poor quality public spaces and infrastructures, the inner side suffers from inadequate public transportation. In parallel, low levels of education and job occupation contribute to the urban underdevelopment of this area (Figure 9.3). Thus far, regeneration efforts have mostly targeted the city rebranding of the riverside with the aim to overcome the prevailing negative reputation of Marvila associated with urban decay and poverty (Falanga and Nunes 2021, 2022a, 2022b). On the inner side, new socio-cultural dynamics have been

attracting practitioners, policymakers and researchers, who have been keen to initiate small regeneration practices with the engagement of communities.

Community engagement in urban regeneration has been especially important in the so-called '4 Crescente', an area composed of four small neighbourhoods located on the inner side of Marvila. Those neighbourhoods share common urban and social issues, and some recent short-term practices have triggered small urban improvements. Households have either led or actively contributed to co-produce interventions together with local associations, NGOs and local institutions. A relevant role has been played by the 'community group' constituted in 2009, which has driven a significant participation of local communities in steering urban change (Verheij and Corrêa Nunes 2021; Falanga 2022). Likewise, the municipal library of Marvila, which was inaugurated in 2016, has played a strategic role in the socio-cultural development of the '4 Crescente' area, by promoting educational, cultural, art and tech-based activities.

Against this backdrop, the authors of this chapter have been involved in the 'Sê Bairrista' project, which has aimed to improve the built environment of the '4 Crescente' area through the active participation of local communities. The authors have been in charge of the monitoring and evaluation of the project, thus following up on the small-scale interventions co-produced in the area, with a view to increasing place attachment and social cohesion.

9.3.1 The 'Sê Bairrista' Project

The 'Sê Bairrista' project (project hereafter) emerges out of multiple regeneration efforts triggered by the NGO Rés do Chão, one of the organizations that has played a major role in bringing together different stakeholders and households around common goals of public space enhancement.[1] The project started in 2020 through a funding application to the Portuguese programme for social innovation 'Portugal Inovação Social', which manages Social European Funding.[2] As the project officially ended in June 2023, interventions are expected to have improved the quality of local public spaces, as well as triggered the social cohesion and place attachment of local communities.

The project was coordinated by the NGO Rés do Chão in partnership with five local institutions: the Lisbon Municipality, Marvila's public library, 'Gebalis' (a municipally owned enterprise that manages Lisbon's public housing stock), 'PRODAC' (a social promotion centre depending on the Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa, a private institution of public utility dedicated

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[1]   More information at: https://sebairrista.pt/.
[2]   See: https://lisboa.portugal2020.pt/.

Level of education of the population of Marvila over 15 years old
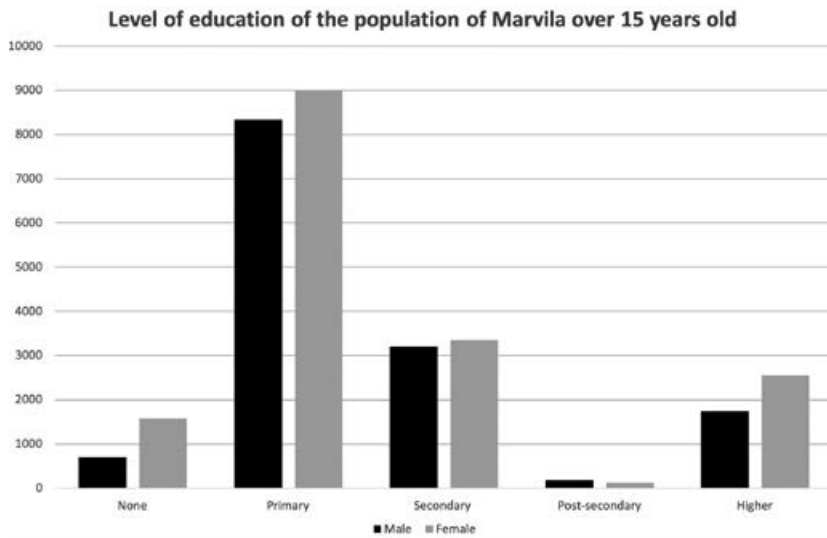
Source: INE/Censos 2021.

Figure 9.3   *Local population in the Marvila district (level of education of sex cohort over 15 years old)*

to social inclusion and development initiatives), and the '4 Crescente' community group.

The project aimed at refurbishing three small squares ('pracetas' in Portuguese) located at the centre of three residential blocks in the '4 Crescente' area (Figure 9.4). The low quality of such public spaces was paired with a shared acknowledgement of their potential for households' leisure time and socialization. Moreover, the lack of quality green spaces in the area motivated the project's orientation towards a green improvement of the three pracetas.

Accordingly, the refurbishment of pracetas A, B and C was structured around both tangible and intangible purposes. By improving the built environment, the project intended to give back those spaces to community life by improving their physical, social and environmental features. By centring the project's approach on community engagement, the aim was to foster social cohesion and place attachment by stimulating households to take the lead of small physical interventions. Alongside, the project promoted public cultural events aimed at strengthening social bonds within and outside the '4 Crescente' area. The festival 'Felizmente há Lugar!' was prepared and organized by the project partners in collaboration with local households during the summer of 2021 (Figure 9.5). It consisted of a temporary stage in a vacant area

Note: From the left to the right: praceta A, B, and C.
Source: NGO Rés do Chão.

Figure 9.4   *Axonometric image of the three pracetas located within the three social housing blocks in the '4 Crescente' area*

close to the Marvila public library, which hosted a wide range of cultural activities. Besides bringing a new cultural offer, the festival aimed to celebrate the project's achievements and the easing of the Covid-19 pandemic's restrictions.

A second public festival was organized in 2023 to celebrate the final stage of the project. Departing from the learnings of the project, the festival 'Co. Cidades' aimed to discuss potentialities and challenges of community engagement through different urban regeneration practices in Portugal. Multiple experiences were showcased through an outdoor exhibition that highlighted the potential of community engagement in the improvement of deprived areas. Experts and practitioners were invited to comment in an open debate with multiple actors, from within and outside the '4 Crescente' area (Figure 9.6).

Source: NGO Rés do Chão; photo by João Barata.

Figure 9.5   Image of a dance event that integrated the 'Felizmente Há Lugar!' festival

9.4   FINDINGS FROM PARTICIPATORY OBSERVATION AND PRE-POST SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRES

The refurbishment of the three pracetas and the co-design of two festivals have aimed to trigger community engagement in the '4 Crescente' area. Participatory observation of all the main activities allowed recording key information on the social dynamics established throughout the project. First and foremost, we noticed that all the partners of the project have been actively involved and played different, at times complementary, roles. By sharing
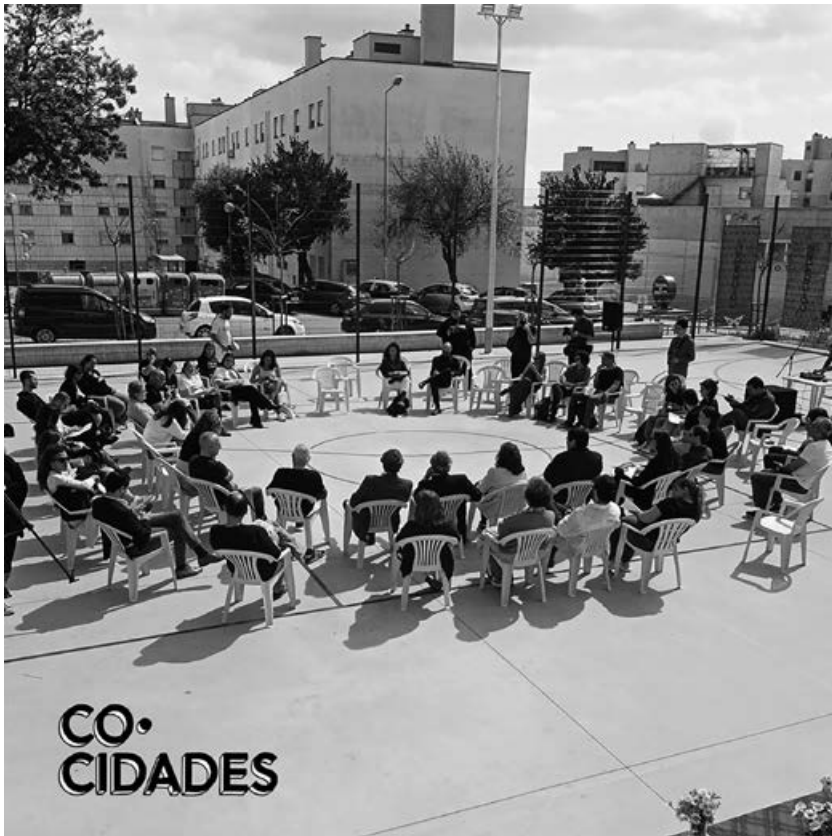
Source: NGO Rés do Chão; photo by students from the D. Dinis school in Marvila.

Figure 9.6   *Image of the 'Co.Cidades' festival*

knowledge, proposing ideas and making available material resources, partners collaborated in horizontal and collaborative ways throughout the project. All partners acknowledged that pracetas A, B and C had different spatial configurations, social needs and different uses, which conditioned from the very outset the design of physical interventions to be made within the project.

Households of praceta A showed strong community bonds and were rather proactive in taking care of their public space. Praceta A was used every day for leisure time and socialization thanks to the action of (informal) community leaders living in that housing block. Over time, leaders have encouraged neighbours to take care of shared spaces, which contrasted with the uses of praceta B. In that public space, weaker ties were evident among households. Some

conflicts have emerged from time to time, with negative impacts on the spatial quality of the praceta. Community bonds in praceta C were relatively strong, but the square was barely used as a shared space. The space was considered unappealing by households due to its poor infrastructure that made it uninviting for social and leisure activities.

By the end of the project, significant improvements were recorded through our observation. As Figure 9.7 shows, the refurbishment of a children's playground and the painting of concrete benches by a local street artist improved the spatial quality of praceta A. Likewise, despite the challenges in engaging households in praceta B (Figure 9.8), some improvements were made in the space, which was reflected in more positive social relationships. In fact, several meetings and open debates captured the interest of households, with growing motivation to collaborate within the project. Regarding praceta C (Figure 9.9), a more appealing space was perceived by the local community, which started to spend more leisure time there as well as socialize thanks to the creation of two garden plots.

Source: NGO Rés do Chão; photo by João Barata.

Figure 9.7   Picture from praceta A

Source: NGO Rés do Chão; photo by João Barata.

Figure 9.8   *Picture from praceta B*

Source: NGO Rés do Chão; photo by João Barata.

Figure 9.9   *Picture from praceta C*

Alongside participatory observation, the monitoring and evaluation of the project relied on the results from pre-post survey questionnaires conducted by the authors of this chapter with households at the start of the project, in winter 2020/2021, and at the end of the project, in spring 2023. The application of the survey questionnaires was made on-site via a face-to-face approach in the '4 Crescente' area. By the end of the project, we took advantage of some public gatherings and events, described above, to conduct the surveys. The main goal of the survey questionnaires was to understand the impacts of the project on local communities living in the '4 Crescente' area with a focus on the enhancement of social cohesion and place attachment.

9.4.1   Socio-Demographic Characterization of Respondents

The sample of respondents to the survey questionnaires was composed of 200 randomly selected households invited to answer to closed-ended questions.[3] Some of those questions aimed to characterize the socio-demographics of the '4 Crescente' area. They show the following characteristics as follows:

- Gender: female respondents were 55 per cent in the pre-survey and 56 per cent in the post-survey. Male respondents were 44 per cent in the pre-survey and 43 per cent in the post-survey.
- Age: around 55 per cent of the respondents were under 35 years old in the pre-survey, while most respondents (around 71 per cent) were over 36 years old in the post-survey.
- Ethnic group: those who identified themselves as White were predominant in both pre- and post-surveys (87 per cent and 86 per cent respectively). A slight increase of Roma respondents was registered from the pre- (6 per cent) to the post-survey (11 per cent). In contrast, a small decrease emerged among those who identified as Black, from 5 per cent in the pre-survey to 2 per cent in the post-survey. Last, 2 per cent in the pre-survey and 1 per cent in the post-survey identified themselves as Brazilian.
- Education: around 5 per cent in the pre- and 6 per cent of respondents in the post-survey were illiterate; 30 per cent in the pre- and 27 per cent in the post-survey completed the 3rd education cycle; 6 per cent in the pre- and 8 per cent in the post-survey had secondary education levels; and only 1

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[3]   The random selection relied on a snowball technique, which prevents us from considering the sample as representative of the population living in the '4 Crescente' area. Furthermore, the random selection was applied for both the pre- and post-survey, which means that the results of the pre-post survey questionnaires should be considered as an approximation of the impacts of the project in the local population.

per cent in the pre- and 3 per cent in the post-survey had higher educa-
tion levels. A significant change was retrieved among respondents who
attended the 1st cycle, from 18 per cent in the pre- to 41 per cent in the
post-survey, as well as among those who attended the 2nd cycle, from 40
per cent in the pre- and 15 per cent in the post-survey.
• Place of birth: a high percentage of respondents were born in Lisbon (58
per cent in the pre- and 43 per cent in the post-survey). Among them,
roughly 20 per cent in both surveys were born in the district of Marvila.
The rate of respondents born in another region of the country was 16 per
cent in the pre- and 27 per cent in the post-survey, while those who were
born in another country were 3 per cent in the pre- and 10 per cent in the
post-survey.
• Neighbourhood of residence (Figures 9.10 and 9.11): most answers indi-
cated more than 15 years of residence in Marvila (50 per cent in the pre-
and 78 per cent in the post-survey). Around 89 per cent of the respondents
lived in one of the neighbourhoods that compose the '4 Crescente' area
(Alfinetes, Marquês de Abrantes, Salgadas and Chalé). Only a small per-
centage of respondents lived in other neighbourhoods within the Marvila
district, whereas 5 per cent of the respondents in the pre-survey lived
outside the district. As regards respondents living in the housing blocks of
pracetas A, B and C, there was a significant decrease – from 81 per cent to
40 per cent – between the pre- and post-survey.

9.4.2 Social Cohesion and Place Attachment

The pre- and post-survey included 12 questions based on a Likert rating scale
from 1 (lowest level) to 5 (highest level) covering several dimensions related
to social cohesion and place attachment in the '4 Crescente' area. Overall,
there was a 26 per cent increase of rated answers at levels 4 and 5, and an 18
per cent decrease of rated answers at level 3, while levels 1 and 2 reduced by 8
per cent from the pre- to the post-survey.

Satisfaction with the '4 Crescente' area stands out with a 35 per cent
increase from the pre- to the post-survey (Figure 9.12). By disaggregating
this data in pracetas A, B and C, findings show that respondents from praceta
A showed a rather neutral position in the pre-survey (around 72 per cent stood
in between negative and positive answers), while respondents from praceta B
provided negative answers in the pre-survey (around 30 per cent). However, in
the post-survey a more positive outlook emerged, as no negative answers were
given by respondents from pracetas A and B, the latter showing a 69 per cent
increase of positive answers.
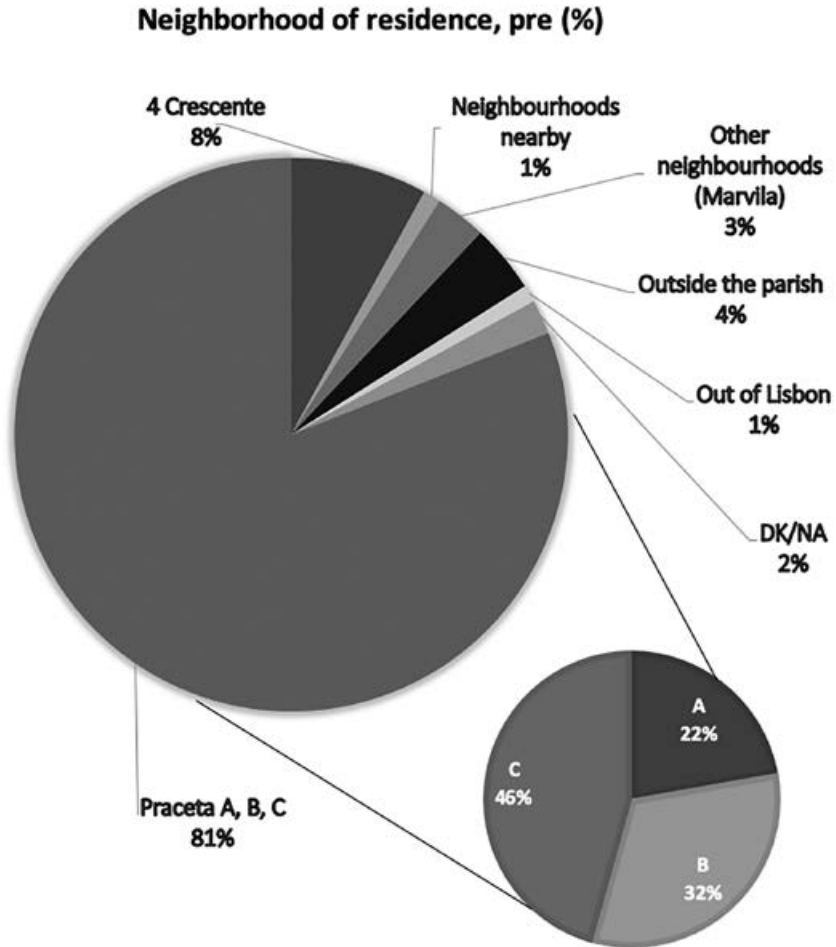
Neighborhood of residence, pre (%)

Figure 9.10   Neighbourhood of residence (pre-survey questionnaire)

As regards the quality of public space, a 32 per cent increase was registered. Moreover, a 31 per cent increase emerged as to opportunities to interact with people from other neighbourhoods (Figure 9.13).

In the pre-survey, the relationships with people from the same neighbourhoods were moderately positive (Figure 9.14). In the post-survey, the increase of positive rates reached 67 per cent from respondents in the praceta. As regards the relationships with people from other neighbourhoods, a similar

Neighborhood of residence, post (%)
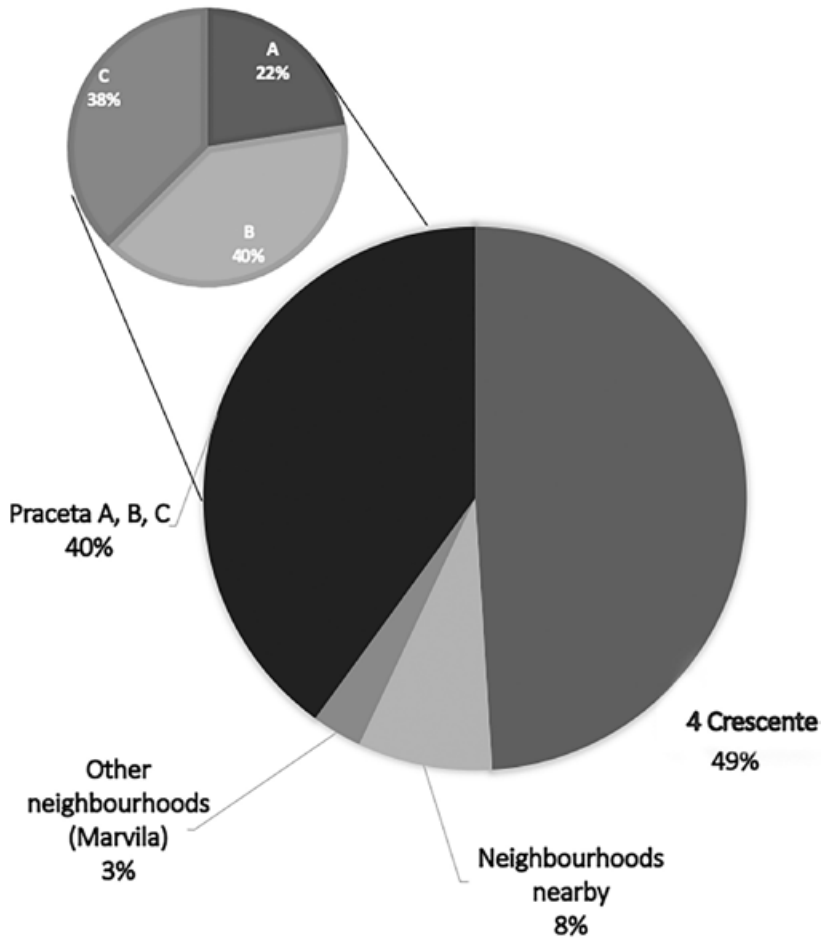
Source: Authors.

Figure 9.11   *Neighbourhood of residence (post-survey questionnaire)*

trend emerged, with a remarkable increase of positive rates in the post-survey, as respondents in praceta A show a 44 per cent shift to the top rate.

Satisfaction with the 4 Crescente area (%)
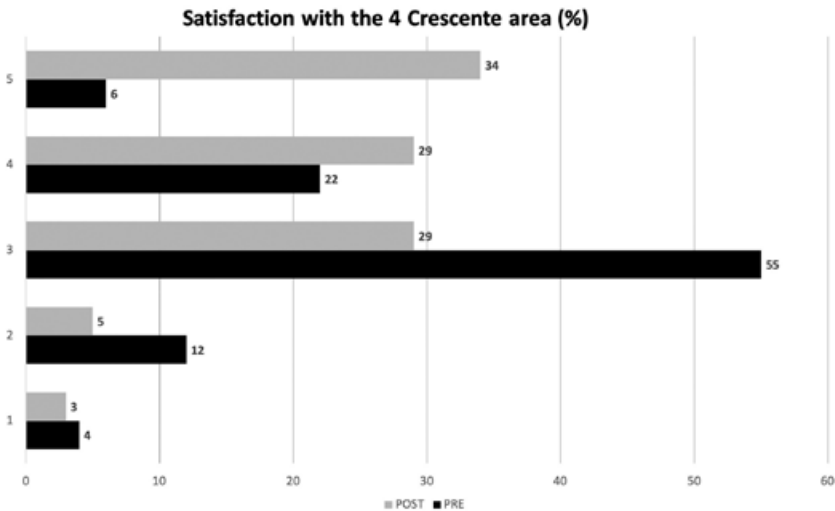
Source: Pre-post surveys applied by authors.

Figure 9.12 *Satisfaction with the 4 Crescente area (pre-post survey questionnaires)*

Participatory initiatives with citizens to improve the public space were among the most positively rated. In the pre-survey, respondents expressed a moderate enthusiasm about their engagement in such initiatives, whereas in the post-survey, 95 per cent of respondents from pracetas A, B and C were favourable to their participation, with the highest rate of positive answers given by respondents from pracetas A and B.

When asked about the use of public space, respondents showed an increase in absolute numbers from 188 (pre-survey) to 248 (post-survey) answers to multiple options – leisure time, socialization, sport, nature, work and walking. The option socialization received the greatest consensus (47 per cent), followed by leisure time (27 per cent). The option on sport decreased from 22 answers in the pre- to 15 in the post-survey. Overall, the most significant increase was registered in the option on walking, from 16 in the pre- to 44 answers in the post-survey.

9.5   STRENGTHS AND BOTTLENECKS

According to the data retrieved from the monitoring and evaluation of the 'Sê Bairrista' project, community engagement in urban regeneration can positively contribute to increasing social cohesion and place attachment.

Relevance of initiatives developed in the territory to improve the public space (responses from residents of pracetas A, B and C)
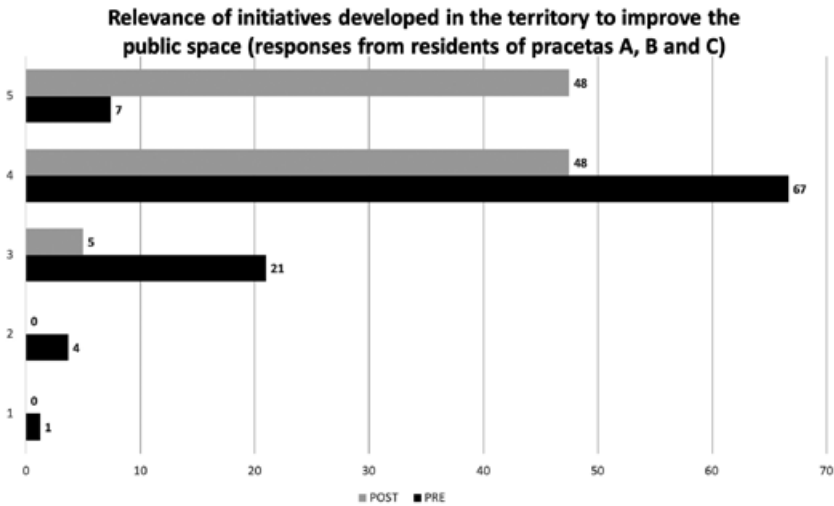
Source: Pre-post surveys applied by authors.

Figure 9.13   Relevance of initiatives developed in the territory to improve the public space (responses from residents of pracetas A, B and C (pre-post survey questionnaires)

Collected evidence in the field corroborates the findings presented above as the local communities show growing ownership of their improved public space. Households have frequently volunteered to lead physical interventions with project partners and other stakeholders. They have actively engaged in the co-creation of ideas for the improvement of the three pracetas and have offered to distribute flyers and posters related to the activities promoted within the project. Households have also made a difference whenever the project's partners identified emerging conflicts, by advancing tailored solutions in the four neighbourhoods composing the '4 Crescente' area. A significant increase in the number of participants throughout the project was noticed as well. Many people who were not used to taking part in such activities have been convinced by the good results of the project to change their attitude in the social environment. All in all, the positive results have allowed a more informed and reflexive discussion on the potentialities of urban regeneration in the '4 Crescente' area by raising awareness on multiple interests, skills and resources.

   In an attempt to systematize the strengths that emerged throughout the project, we identify first and foremost the collaboration of all partners in the project's activities, which have provided high quality conditions for community engagement. A second strength emerged from the horizontal approach

Relationships with people from the same neighbourhoods (%)
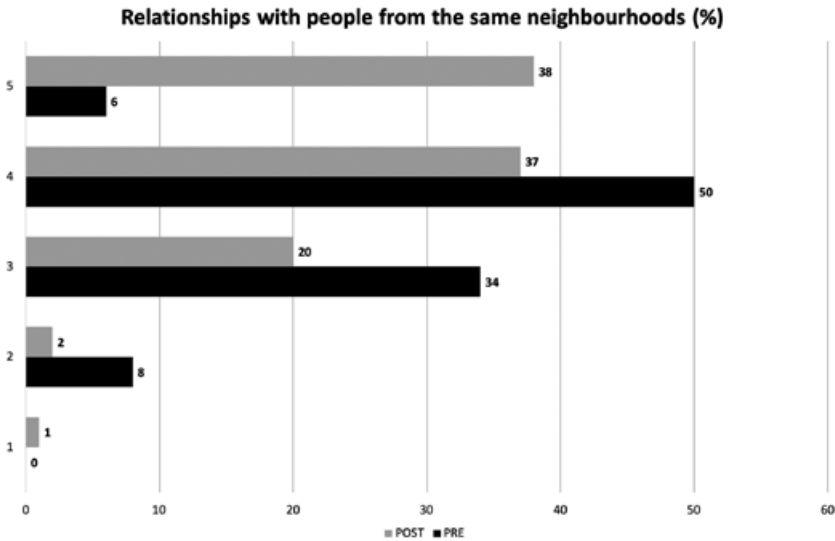
Source: Authors.

Figure 9.14   Relationships with people from the same neighbourhoods (pre-post survey questionnaires)

promoted by the coordination of the project, which has enabled all partners to know, understand and express their opinions over the action plan. In fact, the project was underpinned by shared values of social inclusion that paid attention to the effective access of all households to the expected results, regardless of people's age, gender, ethnicity and level of education. As the project pushed forward values of local sustainability, households proactively participated by making the best out of wasted materials to be reused for the sake of physical interventions. Another strength was the power of bridging the local community with agents and initiatives promoted in the rest of the city, as well as in other regions of the country, especially through the organization of the two festivals. A last remark should be made about the project's capacity to keep working through iterative test and learning loops, which allowed all participants to accumulate knowledge in a collaborative manner.

At the same time, some bottlenecks emerged along the way, which are worth mentioning to stimulate future research and practice in this field. The existence of louder 'voices' within the community should have been addressed in a more consistent way to ensure the engagement of all people, and particularly of those who already find themselves at the margins of local communities. The project experienced some difficulties in reaching some specific groups, like

children and younger people, thus hardly meeting standards of strong social inclusion in the area. Seemingly, social inclusion was limited by existing social stigmas that found some resistance from people who are less familiar with participatory settings. On a different note, the red tape has been perceived as particularly burdensome in some stages of the project, with negative impacts on partners and communities' trust towards public institutions. A final remark is made on the little knowledge that many households showed about ongoing regenerative initiatives in the area. Despite the efforts made throughout the project to disseminate information on other initiatives, we noticed both lack of interest from some community members and poor communication addressing the whole community.

9.6   CONCLUDING REMARKS

The 'Sê Bairrista' project leveraged community engagement in the regeneration of the '4 Crescente' area within the Marvila district of Lisbon. Against trends of long-term underdevelopment on the inner side, which contrast with private-led regeneration on the riverside of the Lisbon eastern side, this area has a continued lack of structural public intervention. Notwithstanding that, public powers increasingly seek to stimulate area-based regeneration practices by triggering community engagement in this area. In the last few years, a patchwork of urban regeneration practices has taken place via international, national and local schemes. The 'Sê Bairrista' project should be considered as one of the most recent ones, and its examination allows discussing emerging strengths and bottlenecks of community engagement in this type of regeneration initiative.

This chapter has discussed the main results of the project based on the findings retrieved from the monitoring and evaluation carried out by the authors. The project aimed at improving the quality of public spaces in the '4 Crescente' area by engaging communities in the design and implementation of small physical interventions. According to the project's rationale, community engagement should foster social cohesion and place attachment. Findings from both participatory observation and survey questionnaires provide an approximation to understanding the impacts of the project in the area, which corroborates this hypothesis. The project has successfully addressed issues related to the marginalization of local communities, mostly due to the urban underdevelopment of this area. By doing so, the project's partners have aimed to critically approach the existing stigmas that some social groups suffer within and outside the 'boundaries' of this area (Sibley 1995; Wacquant 2014; Amin 2005). Such efforts were undertaken within a highly disparate socio-economic context, with the riverside showing accelerated trends of private-led regenera-

tion and a dramatic transformation of the living population (Falanga and Nunes 2021, 2022a, 2022b).

Considering the main goals of physical and social improvement in deprived urban areas, community engagement is expected to make a significant difference in urban regeneration practices. In the 'Sê Bairrista' project, partners, households and other stakeholders have actively collaborated to enhance the built and social environment of the '4 Crescente' area by (re)activating social bonds around common goals. A sense of ownership of the changes driven by the local communities has most likely fuelled social cohesion and place attachment (Hidalgo and Hernandez 2001; Couch et al. 2003; Martinez-Fernandez et al. 2012; Falanga 2022). This project does not raise any doubt about the value of pursuing the creation of community capital, against often predatory interests and market-friendly ends disguised as participatory approaches (Cooke and Kothari 2001; Taylor 2007). Nevertheless and despite good results, it is worth stressing that short-term projects of this kind can only form part of the substantial changes required. Structural and long-term public interventions are needed to effectively address issues related to urban underdevelopment. Households show awareness of the impacts of their engagement in small-scale interventions, and structural inequalities should not remain sidelined, by calling for the state to be a key player.

We agree with Amin (2005, p. 625) when he says: "Without attention to the wider institutional and market circumstances that shape local fortunes, community-led strategies will never amount to more than a sop to the hard-pressed cities and regions, possibly even a cold towel, as state welfare support and other redistributive measures are subtly rolled back in the name of support for a community empowerment approach."

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10. Citizens as urban pioneers: setting impulses for community development in medium-sized towns in Germany

Eva Reinecke, Nicole Reiswich, David O'Neill and Frank Othengrafen

10.1 INTRODUCTION

Citizen initiatives, to an increasing extent, actively and self-determinedly appropriate urban spaces and contribute to the co-production of cities. In many German cities, we can observe the emergence of numerous 'experimental spaces' in which so-called 'city makers' or 'urban pioneers' develop and test new structures, approaches, practices and procedures to solve local problems in urban spaces (Willinger 2022). The range of these citizen actions includes neighbourhood initiatives; the valorization of public spaces and green areas; the (re)vitalization, conversion and interim use of squares or 'lost places'; strategies and projects for dealing with common goods such as land, water or transport infrastructure; practices in the field of the common good economy (e.g. exchange platforms, repair cafés, upcycling, urban gardening, etc.); shared living and working projects; or engagement in the context of social crisis intervention such as local welcome initiatives for refugees (Abt 2022; BBSR 2021a, 2021b; Beck 2021).

However, despite the increasing appearance of civic 'city makers' or 'urban pioneers', there have so far been few systematic and empirical analyses of the intentions and outcomes of citizen initiatives and how these initiatives can contribute to social cohesion and community resilience in Germany (see Chapter 2 in this volume). The cooperation between local governments and 'city makers' is a comparatively young constellation and, accordingly, still uncharted territory for many participants (Willinger 2022) – although an active (and activated) citizenry is considered one of the three pillars of urban and regional development alongside the economy and the public sector (Becker 2008) and therefore represents an important planning tool (Becker 2015; see also Chapter 1 in this volume). It is in this context that we want to discuss the

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role of citizens as 'urban pioneers' or 'city makers' in medium-sized cities in Germany in this chapter. We analyse the extent to which civil society initiatives take responsibility for their daily (urban) environment and which instruments and means the initiatives use to develop innovative solutions. At the same time, we identify the effects that the interventions led by citizen initiatives have on social cohesion as well as on urban renewal or development. This also includes analyses on how civil society involvement and community development can be strengthened in the medium term through urban planning and (local) politics.

For the analysis of citizen initiatives, we focus on 'urban pioneers' and 'city makers' in medium-sized cities in Germany. Medium-sized cities with a population between 20,000 and 100,000 inhabitants are typical for the German spatial structure and settlement system (Baumgart 2011). About 42 per cent of Germany's population lives in medium-sized cities, meaning that they play an important role in spatial development (Schmitt 2010). At the same time, we assume that the role of social networks is more pronounced in medium-sized than in large cities with their often more anonymous structures. Furthermore, medium-sized cities are often more affected by demographic changes, i.e. population decline and ageing population, and have fewer financial resources to maintain infrastructures and public services. These are often key reasons for citizen initiatives to engage in the common good of a city (Butzin and Gärtner 2017; Dehne 2021; see also Chapter 1 in this volume).

The chapter is divided into three parts. Based on a literature analysis, we first develop a conceptual framework to explore possible impacts of citizen initiatives on community development and urban renewal or development. On the basis of this, we then conduct an analysis of citizen initiatives in medium-sized cities to find actual case studies for further evaluation. For this purpose, a case study that has gained attention through its innovative approach will be examined and compared with two other case studies which differ greatly in terms of their nature and their geographical location but share one important feature: they all have emerged from civil society (bottom-up), focus on community development and have, to a large extent, developed independently of municipal influence. This allows for a broad view of different constellations and framework conditions. The main case study is set in Beckum near the Ruhr region in western Germany and goes by the name of 'Verve' (Figure 10.1). 'STRAZE' in Greifswald in north-eastern Germany and 'Stadtmensch' in Altenburg in the lower east of the country serve as comparative studies. We analyse and contextualize the case studies by conducting (a) interviews with local experts (pioneers, committed people, urban planners, etc.) and (b) a detailed document and literature analysis. The results are then, in a third step, synthesized and interpreted in relation to the conceptual framework.

The name **Verve** describes drive and enthusiasm in an activity, such as helping to shape one's own neighbourhood of Neubeckum, a district in the medium-sized town of Beckum. Verve is an initiative made up of committed citizens. The aim of Verve is to help shape the neighbourhood and one's own living environment in a way that is oriented towards the common good. This should strengthen the community and the quality of life in the neighbourhood.

Neubeckum is a district of Beckum. Beckum is located in North Rhine-Westphalia, between the cities of Münster, Dortmund and Bielefeld. The population is about 37,000 inhabitants (IT.NRW, 2022).

Source: Authors.

Figure 10.1   Initiative Verve in Neubeckum

10.2   URBAN PIONEERS, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND THE COMMON GOOD

The New Leipzig Charter postulates a new understanding and identifies participation and co-production as the guiding principles of common-good oriented urban development. Co-production thus attends to a collective process that can strengthen collaboration between multiple actors and that can lead to social interaction and empowerment, which are both necessary for social cohesion and community building. In this understanding, co-productive projects arise from the self-empowerment of citizens (Willinger 2022), referring to a form of self-organization in which citizens voluntarily commit themselves to a bottom-up initiative with the aim of implementing collective actions or projects that focus on community needs (Blecken and Diringer 2022; Mitlin and Bartlett 2018; see also Chapter 2 in this volume). What becomes obvious here is a change in meaning (Abt 2022): citizens with their commitment are no longer seen as 'an additional supplement to the public service, but as co-producers to this service, who are indispensably involved in maintaining the essential functions' (Röbke 2021; see also Willinger 2022). This also means that civil society actors and citizen initiatives bring in their own ideas and resources for community development, especially their time, knowledge and social networks, to design public spaces, to implement temporary uses on public streets or former brownfield sites or to establish social enterprises in more peripheral areas (Mitlin and Bartlett 2018; Scholl and de Kraker 2021;

Smart 2017; Ziehl 2020). This is in contrast to many urban regeneration initiatives in the 1990s and 2000s which arrived with a funded programme and invited communities to participate (Healey and Hillier 2020). Additionally, the motivation for initiatives to get involved in community development is less and less likely to arise from protests (e.g. Othengrafen and Sondermann 2015); far more often they are an expression of a will to constructively appropriate issues and spaces and thus claim a very practical right to the city (Willinger 2022; see also Chapters 1 and 2 in this volume).

The motivation for civil society actors and citizen initiatives can stem from an individual desire to shape one's own living environment; it might occur due to a perceived lack of public spaces or (public) goods; or it has its roots in a kind of dissatisfaction with public policies. This indicates that the motivation can range from individual interests, i.e. interests of people or groups to use certain spaces and products themselves, to a common good orientation, i.e. to contribute to spatial development processes to achieve social resilience, spatial transitions or similar (see also Chapter 1 in this volume). A central element is that civic engagement refers to a place of uncoerced action (Walzer 2010) where citizens engage by their free will. Additionally, civic engagement is defined as voluntary, mainly unpaid work for the common good that takes place in public space and is unaffected by political or administrative institutions (Enquete-Kommission 'Zukunft des Bürgerschaftlichen Engagements' 2002; Antonov 2016; Priller 2016; Kummel 2020). Alscher et al. (2018, p. 373) describe it as the 'cement that holds a society together' and Antonov (2016) regards it as the cornerstone of a democratically oriented society. It is also clear here that civic engagement depends on a sense of belonging and place-related attachments. This allows people to consider themselves to be an integral part of society and therefore view problems facing society as at least partly their own (Corsten et al. 2008; Horlings et al. 2021).

According to Wade (2015), reasons for becoming actively involved in citizen initiatives and community development can include being personally affected by a certain situation in urban society, personal contacts in the neighbourhood, the will to influence one's own living environment, informing neighbours or other social contacts about possible social inequalities, supporting those in need of help, and creating a sense of community (see also Chapter 2 in this volume). Three factors are named as the basic prerequisites for the emergence of community development (Neu 2007; Nadler 2017):

1. *A core number of citizens who are committed above average.* As shown in previous studies, it is 'leading figures' or 'caretakers' who, through their commitment, can find alternative solutions to certain problems and inspire other people to take them on (Kummel 2020). Faber and Oswalt (2013) refer to these leading figures as 'urban pioneers' who are mostly

well educated (Willisch 2013), whereas this does not seem to be a relevant criterion for the participants, who tend to contribute with their special skills and expertise on a situational basis (Krambach 2001).

2. *A local 'culture of ownership'* (Neu 2007; Nadler 2017) meaning that 'those who feel strong belonging to the social community are more likely to act on behalf of it than those who do not' (Leshoska et al. 2016). The feeling of belonging is particularly distinctive in the neighbourhood as the immediate living environment and functions as a prerequisite for the local 'culture of ownership'. Neighbourhoods or communities often are a kind of 'melting pot' where inhabitants recognize that they belong to the society and that they can change something in their immediate living environment (Roth 2023; Schnur 2012). This can be observed in large urban agglomerations as well as in small and medium-sized cities, which often show an even higher intensity of engagement due to the high degree of local rootedness (Gründer 2022). Brocchi (2018) refers to French sociologist Émile Durkheim in that he sees shared physical space as a 'totem' that 'serves as a moment of identification for the community' (see also Stimpel 2020). So when realizing that the neighbourhood is no longer in an acceptable condition and changes are necessary, urban pioneers might independently and self-determinedly initiate participatory processes, look for temporary uses for vacant buildings and plots and do their part in bringing about change on a small scale (Willinger 2014; Roth 2023).

3. *A municipal administration willing to cooperate.* For most municipal administrations, however, cooperation with urban pioneers is still uncharted territory (Willinger 2022), as it puts familiar relations to the test and requires a re-adjustment of power relations (Rauterberg 2013; Willinger 2014). In recent years, an increasing rapprochement between city administrations and city makers has become noticeable, opening up space for the emergence of completely new urban governance constellations (Willinger 2022). This change in municipal policy is moving away from the model of the abstract, objectified citizen, whom it is necessary to create a plan for within administrative guidelines, towards the acting, activated 'citoyen' in a 'citizens' municipality', who shapes the change himself or herself while drawing on governmental support (Gründer 2022; Schnur et al. 2019; Henkel 2020). According to Nadler (2017), it is necessary to understand this change as an opportunity and to establish equal relationships in which volunteers are recognized and valued as partners at eye level. Through a targeted use of the self-organization forces of the residents, a mutually enriching, productive empowerment dynamic can emerge that has an impact on the shape of urban space (Willinger 2014). In this way, both the municipalities themselves and the committed citizens can benefit.

For the analysis of our case studies, we will look at (1) the role of 'caretakers' and 'leaders'; (2) the existence of a local 'culture of ownership'; and (3) the relation between the civic initiative and the municipal administration in more detail. With regard to the 'caretakers' and the 'local culture of ownership', we will first examine the motivation of the founders and some of the 'dominant' actors of the civic initiatives as well as the goals of these initiatives. In addition, we will analyse the organizational structure (organization of activities, funding, etc.) of the initiatives and how they contribute to urban development goals or policies in general, also including the support (if at all) of local administrations and approaches in terms of the continuation of those activities. This will not only contribute to specify the 'culture of ownership' but also how the relationship between the initiative and the administration is structured and whether or how the commitment can succeed in the longer term.

10.3   VERVE: A CITIZEN INITIATIVE AIMING AT COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN THE INNER CITY OF NEUBECKUM

Neubeckum was an independent city until it was incorporated into the municipality of Beckum in 1975, despite numerous protests by its citizens (Kreisverwaltung Warendorf 2023). Today, 11,000 people live in the district of Neubeckum. The district is located in the north of Beckum and is spatially separated from its urban core by the A2 motorway (see Figure 10.2). Since the incorporation, the relation between Neubeckum and Beckum has been tense, as the residents of the district have felt disadvantaged by politics and the city administration. In part, this feeling still prevails today. To counteract the perception of Neubeckum residents and to act on urban development and social-demographic challenges, Beckum launched an integrated urban development concept for Neubeckum in 2020. The intention is to maintain and develop the district as an attractive place to live and work; this applies in particular to Neubeckum's city centre, in which various supply functions (retail, medical services, etc.) for the surrounding neighbourhoods are located.

The integrated urban development concept was created in an open participatory process and with the intensive participation of interested citizens and civic initiatives. Interestingly, there is a very active civil society in Neubeckum, which is reflected in the large number of civic initiatives (e.g. Heimatverein,[1]

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[1]   The Heimatverein is an association which deals with the local history of Neubeckum and organizes events for local residents (for further information: https://www.heimatverein-neubeckum.de/).

City Cleaner,[2] Bahnhofsretter,[3] Gewerbeverein[4]). As a result, Neubeckum still has its own library and pool, both run by voluntary initiatives and associations. As a possible reason for the strong involvement in Neubeckum, several interview partners mention the citizens' efforts to keep important services and offers in the district in order to maintain a certain degree of independence.

10.3.1 An Initiative Grows: Motivation and Goals of Verve and Its Members

Verve is committed to a common good-oriented inner city development and to increasing the quality of life, the community structure and the local identification of residents with the district (Verve, n.d.). In 2018, when a group of people started meeting regularly – which later resulted in the foundation of Verve as an association in 2020 – there were several vacant buildings in the city centre, the public spaces were not attractive or not used adequately, and there was no space for cultural activities and other kinds of leisure events. At the same time, the respondents felt that there was a lack of opportunities to get involved outside of established and traditional associations and initiatives (sports clubs, local associations, etc.) and to take responsibility for their own neighbourhood in a project-based, community-oriented and 'day-to-day' political way. Many committed people knew of comparable initiatives in other, often larger, cities where some of them had previously lived.

The idea of creating such a place, a kind of a 'neighbourhood living room' (see Figure 10.3) goes back to very engaged people who cared about the future development of Neubeckum. The previously informal group regularly discussed ideas about living together and redesigning the district. They focused on high-profile activities for the common good (contributing to district festivals, e.g. in the form of an outdoor living room or organizing planting campaigns, etc.).

Since most of the volunteers lived there, the centre of Neubeckum was the main focus of their activities. Parallel to the temporary activities in the district, the desire grew for a permanent space where residents of Neubeckum could meet and exchange ideas and take part in cultural events. It was and is thus the

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[2] City Cleaners is an initiative that meets weekly to clean litter from public space (for further information: https://cc-neubeckum.de/).
[3] This is an initiative to reactivate the unused railway station building in Neubeckum.
[4] The Gewerbeverein is an association of people from local owner-managed businesses who want to enhance the local main street (for further information: https://gewerbeverein-neubeckum.de/).
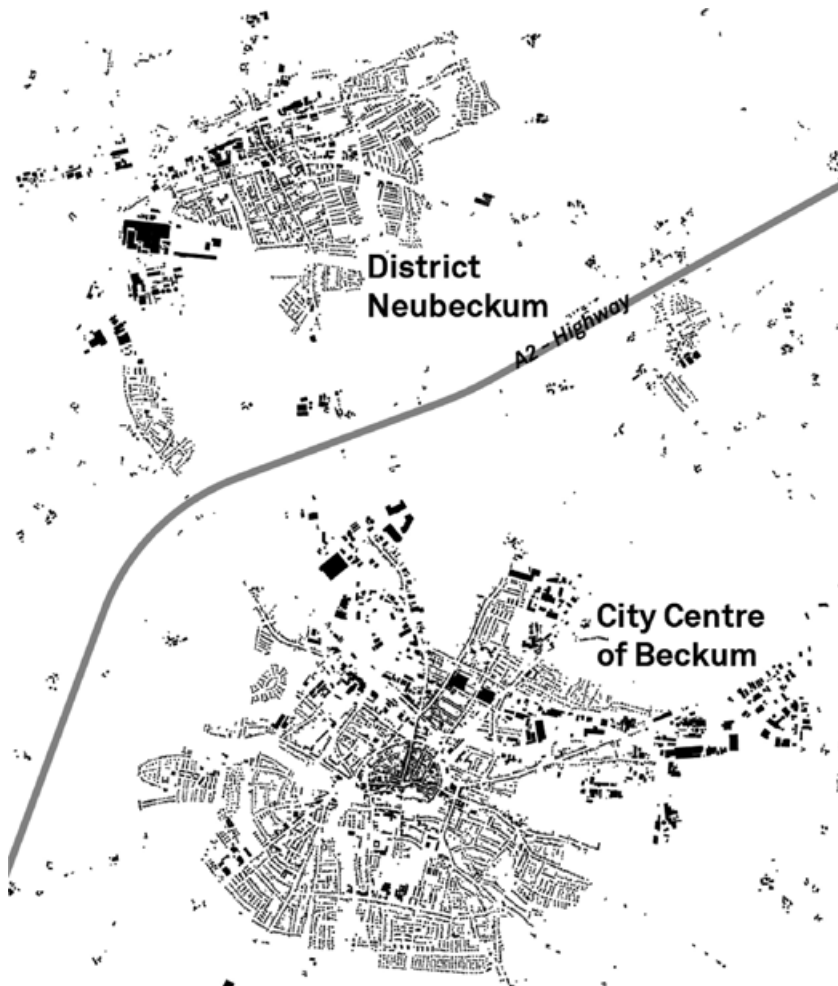
Source: Authors' illustration (we would like to thank Laura Mintzlaff for her support in creating the figure).

Figure 10.2　　*Map of spatial separation by the A2 highway between Neubeckum and the rest of Beckum*

aim to create a liveable and sustainable district that offers space for meeting and exchange, joint activities and neighbourliness. The 'neighbourhood living room', which Verve maintains in the form of a multifunctional space (which functions as a meeting and event space with a café, etc., see also Figures 10.4

Source: Authors.

Figure 10.3   *Verve as 'neighbourhood living room' in the main street of Neubeckum*

and 10.5), forms the cornerstone for this. Anyone interested can spend time in the café without being obliged to consume anything; the café serves as an offer for the residents and an additional source of income for Verve. Based on the neighbourhood living room and the organization committee, the members of Verve organize various culinary events, art exhibitions, concerts and other cultural events.

The intention is to create spaces for togetherness, to strengthen social cohesion between the inhabitants and to contribute to a peaceful, friendly coexistence in Neubeckum. With this focus and intention, Verve obviously offers an opportunity for many people to get involved in civil society. It can be observed that particularly newcomers (from other cities or states) are actively involved as members. These volunteers say that through their engagement with Verve they meet like-minded people and begin to identify with Neubeckum and to develop a 'sense of belonging'. Furthermore, the respondents state that it was and is important to them to 'do something good'. Interestingly, this refers to the individual level, i.e. the increase of one's own well-being through one's own social commitment, and on the other hand to the community level, here referring to the improvement of the attractiveness of the city centre, creation of cultural activities, etc. Additionally, the more flexible form of Verve – at least

Source: Authors.

*Figure 10.4   The interior design of the neighbourhood living room in
                  Neubeckum*

compared with an official position in a sports club or similar – also seems to be
appealing to many members as the project-based approach or the involvement
in certain activities allows everyone to organize their engagement individually
according to their own interests and (temporal) capacities.

10.3.2   The Organizational Structure of Verve

Verve started as an informal network, but is now an association which, in
Germany, is a precondition for applying for public funding. Currently, it
has about 25 permanent members between the ages of 25 and 65. As a con-
sequence, it has a decision-making committee; its members are elected for
a period of two years. The group meets regularly to discuss actions and
projects; however, the selection of those actions and projects that are actually
implemented depends largely on the individual interests of the members in
charge. Despite the hierarchical organization, the interviewed committed

Source: Authors.

Figure 10.5   *The interior design of the neighbourhood living room in*
                Neubeckum

persons affirm that everyone at Verve can contribute and share responsibility in a cooperative way.

   An important pillar of Verve's activities lies in the acquisition of public funding. Among others, the core group of Verve successfully submitted the concept of the 'neighbourhood living room' to the programme 'Dritte Orte – Häuser für Kultur und Begegnung im ländlichen Raum' ('Third Places – Houses for Culture and Encounter in Rural Areas'), funded by the Ministry of Science and Culture of the federal state of North-Rhine Westphalia. The programme supports citizens' initiatives and registered social associations in the development of places and facilities for culture and encounter in rural areas. With the funding (duration 2021–2024), Verve was able to take over a vacant shop in the city centre and convert it into a 'neighbourhood living room' (see Figures 10.4 and 10.5). In addition, Verve uses the funding to pay the rent and furnish the room; additional municipal funding was later used to redesign the facade of the building. In addition, the funds made it possible to permanently employ three formerly unpaid workers as café staff and event

coordinators. Also, other initiatives or associations can use the rooms for their own activities.

In view of the expiry of the funding at the end of 2024, Verve has to take care of the financing of the association from 2025 onwards. Until then, new ways have to be found to finance staff, rent and other project costs. According to our interviews with members of Verve, membership fees and donations are currently not able to cover these costs, which is why more members have to be recruited. In addition, Verve hopes to generate enough of an income with the café to be able to at least partly cover the rental costs for the premises. The team also targets the acquisition of further municipal fundings.

Even though the outcomes of Verve's work have been very positive, the past has not been free of conflict; in fact, a number of individuals have left the association due to internal divergences. Some of the founding members were against the funding from the Ministry due to the direction Verve had to take for application. The group split, but for the district of Neubeckum, however, this has been more of a gain than a loss, as these people have founded their own initiatives (e.g. City Cleaner) or joined existing associations such as the Heimatverein. Although the level of civic engagement is quite high, many of the interviewees complain about a lack of committed people who take on responsible organizational tasks.

10.3.3   Contribution to Urban Development and Further Social Impacts

According to the members interviewed, Verve gives people who have not felt addressed by previously existing organizations an opportunity to participate. With its 'neighbourhood living room', it has also created a place serving as a casual meeting point in Neubeckum. By renting a previously empty space on Neubeckum's main street, the association has revived an empty shop property. By opening up the premises and providing a café, Verve sets further impulses for urban development: the renovation of the shop makes the main street more lively and attractive, and the various activities appeal to many (different) population groups who now have another 'contact point' in the city centre. At the same time, Verve has contributed to the upgrade of public spaces and green areas in the city centre through various temporary actions and events (see Figures 10.6 and 10.7). For example, the committed members of Verve aim to implement a permanent use of the vacant railway station building in Neubeckum. They regularly organize art, culture and music events in or around the former station building to highlight the building's potential for the development of Neubeckum's city centre. In doing so, they cooperate with the members of the 'Bahnhofsretter' initiative as they have the same goal and overlap in terms of personnel.

Source: Mathias Kolta (2021).

Figure 10.6   Committed people in Neubeckum

Source: Mathias Kolta (2021).

Figure 10.7   Committed people in Neubeckum

Another spillover effect of Verve is the (re)activation of other initiatives and associations (e.g. Bahnhofsretter, City Cleaners, Heimatverein). The different initiatives and associations often carry out joint projects. However, the commitment always depends on the people involved, which is why some associa-

tions work better and others not as well with one another. Overall, Verve has an important role in Neubeckum. It is an initiator and supporter of neighbourhood coexistence and urban development. The city administration sees Verve as an important stakeholder in Neubeckum and emphasizes how outstandingly committed they are to the district. However, this can also be regarded as a challenge as civic initiatives such as Verve with its volunteers take on the responsibility for community development – something that actually could, at least partially, also be done by the municipality itself.

10.3.4   The Active Networking of Verve as a Continuation Strategy

The networking of Verve with the city administration and other civil society actors can be seen as a central strategy of Verve to be visible, to attract public attention and to make Verve 'irreplaceable'. At the same time, this is linked to the aspiration to establish the initiative permanently in Neubeckum and to carry out the core tasks (café, coordination of activities, etc.) not only as voluntary activities, but with the help of employed people who are hired through Verve precisely for these purposes.

Networking with other civil society actors has been successful so far (see above). Verve is actively involved in a local network with other local associations, initiatives, schools, churches, the library and other relevant actors in Neubeckum. This network has the potential to jointly implement district-wide and target group-wide offers and events, as well as to promote cohesion within Neubeckum. At the same time, the successful participation in the competition 'Third Places' has also improved the awareness of Verve, so that Verve was increasingly perceived by politicians and the city administration as a serious actor with regard to community development. This also shows that city administration and Verve as a civil society actor complement or support each other. Verve partly takes over public tasks, particularly with regard to the upgrading of the inner city in Neubeckum and the community development. The municipality recognizes this potential and supports Verve, for example during the application for the 'Third Places' program, which required official support from the city. The networking is also reflected in the fact that Verve has offered the 'neighbourhood living room' to the external district management office, which is responsible for the implementation of the integrated development concept and the participation of citizens, and is open to the public twice a week. Here Verve acts as a mediator between the city, the district management and the citizens of Neubeckum. However, this also might allow further opportunities for Verve in the future as it could, as some members of Verve also start thinking about the possibility, take on the district management on behalf of the city once the current district management has come to an end. Here it becomes obvious, again, that networking serves to stabilize the organ-

ization and to set up Verve financially in such a way that it exists and operates permanently.

10.4 NEIGHBOURHOOD INITIATIVES IN OTHER GERMAN MEDIUM-SIZED CITIES: IS VERVE UNIQUE OR ARE THERE SIMILAR INITIATIVES AND PROCESSES IN OTHER CITIES?

Verve is, of course, not the only initiative of its kind, stemming from committed individuals concerned with the on-site living conditions. Two comparable examples are STRAZE in Greifswald[5] and Stadtmensch in Altenburg.[6] These two examples were selected after intensive desktop research, including criteria such as relevance and accordance with the research questions or access to documented results and studies.

STRAZE grew out of the idea of a group of friends, some of whom are newcomers and some of whom have lived in Greifswald for a long time. They noticed that although lots of young people move to Greifswald, many of them leave the university town again as soon as they have finished their studies. They often lack perspective and 'alternative' structures (Rosenthal 2017). The initiative also missed a place for exchange and encounter, and therefore created one themselves that citizens could use for their own activities (Nordt 2020; see also Figure 10.8).

With the help of donations, they bought a vacant building in need of renovation in 2013 (see Figure 10.9). Over a few years, the core group and a number of volunteers renovated the vacant building.

Since 2020, STRAZE has been a new meeting place in Greifswald's city centre (STRAZE, n.d. a). There are large rooms and a café that can be used for cultural events (see Figures 10.10, 10.11, 10.12).

Stadtmensch in Altenburg is attributed to the locals' dissatisfaction with their place of residence. Many residents of Altenburg take a critical view of the development their city has undergone in recent years. The city is strongly affected by population decline and out-migration which, among others, result in a lower demand of goods and the closure of retail businesses. In this context committed people in Altenburg got together in 2016 to develop innovative ideas and (spatial) impulses to improve the living conditions in the city (BBSR 2021a, p. 41). In this context, the committed people see urban development as a community task (Bernhard 2023). The goal of the Stadtmensch initiative is

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[5] For further information about STRAZE see: https://straze.de/.

[6] For further information about Stadtmensch see: https:// www .stadtmensch -altenburg.org/.

The name of the initiative **STRAZE** is derived from its location at *Stral*sunder Straße 10 (Zehn) in the city of Greifswald. The goal of STRAZE is to create a space as a meeting place for exchange and encounter. The initiative would like to create a place - currently missing in Greifswald - that citizens could use for their own voluntary activities (Nordt, 2020).

Greifswald is located in the northeast of Germany on the Baltic Sea. The medium-sized university town has a population of around 62,000 inhabitants. The population has remained at a roughly constant level in recent years (Greifswald, 2022).

Source: Authors.

Figure 10.8   Initiative STRAZE in Greifswald

Source: STRAZE.

Figure 10.9   Vacant building in Stralsunder Straße 10

to encourage the residents of Altenburg to get involved to make the town and the public space more attractive and liveable (Figure 10.13). To this end, they set themselves the task of promoting low-threshold projects for the common good (Beerlage 2022, pp. 46f.).

To sum up, it seems clear that the motivation and reasons for the emergence of the three initiatives in Neubeckum, Greifswald and Altenburg are similar:

Source: STRAZE.

Figure 10.10   Repaired building in Stralsunder Straße 10 (outside view)

in all cases a group of active residents recognized a lack of social facilities (social venues, cultural events, etc.) and attractive public spaces. This can be related to the identification of the committed people with the neighbourhood or city and the desire to belong to a social community. Here, the 'culture of ownership' becomes clear as a motivating factor (see above). However, with regard to organizational structures the three initiatives differ as STRAZE in Greifswald and Stadtmensch in Altenburg do not have such a 'hierarchical' structure as Verve. Although STRAZE as an association also has a board, the focus is on self-organization. Self-managed groups are responsible for different fields of activity. In addition, meetings are convened at regular intervals with all members in which major decisions are made – if possible with a consensus (Rosenthal 2017; STRAZE, n.d. b). The organizational structure of Stadtmensch is based on teamwork: there is no chairperson or board of directors. Rather, decisions and responsibility are assigned in the 'do-ocracy' principle: if people get involved in certain areas, they have the decision-making power and responsibility there (BBSR 2021a). The founders

*Figure 10.11   Repaired building in Stralsunder Straße 10 (view of the
            multifunctional interior room)*

of the initiatives serve as inspirational figures to the other members as they are
seen as 'caretakers' and 'leaders' (see above).

10.4.1   Contribution to Urban Development and Further Impacts on Public Policy-Making

Overall, the initiatives in Neubeckum, Greifswald and Altenburg have the
effect that vacancies are used, public spaces are given new attention and uses,
and people exchange ideas in and about their neighbourhood. This can increase
togetherness in the neighbourhood, which – as seen – can lead to the initiation
of further formal or informal urban development projects. Taking a closer
look at Stadtmensch in Altenburg it is noticeable that the initiative consists
of various 'neighbourhood anchors' representing concrete places or buildings
which residents can visit and where they can actively participate at various
activities, workshops, etc. (e.g. at the Open Lab, the 'Kitchen of Colour', the
Art Salon, etc.). Additionally, the initiative has also established a biennial
festival dedicated to 'provincial happiness', highlighting all the civic activities
in Altenburg (see Figure 10.14). The public's perception of Altenburg is not

Source: STRAZE.

Figure 10.12   Outdoor area STRAZE

limited to the structural challenges of a small east German town, but to a place where residents are committed to their town and thus provide a perspective.

Stadtmensch has received extremely high media attention as one of the awarded and funded projects in the context of the National Urban Development Policy (BBSR 2021a). As a result, the interest in the Stadtmensch initiative skyrocketed among local politicians and other citizens in Altenburg. Stadtmensch was able to develop a legitimizing effect (BBSR 2021a, p. 61), i.e. the members of the initiative – also due to the public and benevolent perception of the initiative from outside – were regularly involved by politics and the city administration in further processes. This is reinforced by the fact that Stadtmensch provides certain (cultural) services or events, enhancing

Stadtmensch is a German compound word that translates to 'city person'. **Stadtmensch** is an initiative in the East German medium-sized town of Altenburg. The goal of Stadtmensch is to motivate citizens for their own engagement project in vacant urban spaces.

Altenburg is located in the east Thuringia, 40 kilometres south of Leibzig and 40 kilometres northeast of Chemnitz. Altenburg used to be a residential town. It is connected to the railway network and still contains cultural facilities such as a theatre and a castle and a historic old town centre (Bernhard, 2023). In the times of the DDR, Altenburg was an economically productive industrial town (Beerlage, 2022). With the end of the DDR, companies closed and more and more residents moved away from Altenburg, so that in the last years there has also been an increasing number of vacancies in the shops in the town centre. Unlike Greifswald, Altenburg has suffered a dramatic decline in population: In the last 25 years, the town's population has almost halved and is now about 31,000 inhabitants (Bernhard, 2023). The trend is still downward.

Source: Authors.

Figure 10.13   Initiative Stadtmensch in Altenburg

Source: Jörg Neumerkel.

Figure 10.14   Committed people in Altenburg

the overall quality of life in Altenburg and showing the decision-makers in the municipality that Stadtmensch is a serious partner in urban development processes.

STRAZE followed a different approach. It was not the goal of the initiative to initiate a city-wide discourse on civic engagement, the common good and urban development, but to renovate a concrete, old building and to make it available as a place for various civil society initiatives. During this process, supported by a local media campaign, many different residents from the neighbourhood and volunteers from other cities could be motivated to contribute to the restoration and modernization of the old building. As a consequence, this strengthened the identification of the residents with their neighbourhood and contributed to the development of a community sense or feeling of belonging. At the same time, STRAZE renovated a building which, since then, has been used by STRAZE to offer other local initiatives appropriate premises for their own activities (against payment of a low rent), to organize cultural events in the building etc. STRAZE and the building will remain as a physical object in the long term and can be used by people and local initiatives as a place of encounter to meet, develop and implement their ideas together and to connect with like-minded people.

10.4.2 Constructive and Trustful Collaboration between City Administrations and Initiatives

As pointed out before, the relationship between the municipality and the engaged citizens is vitally important. In Greifswald, the town administration and local politics strongly influenced the sale of the vacant building to STRAZE (Rosenthal 2017); only through the foresight of the public actors and their trust in the initiative was it possible to implement the intended concept accordingly. Obviously, the municipal stakeholders have seen in STRAZE a project that creates added value for the city of Greifswald by strengthening the attractiveness of the city and promoting local cohesion. The appreciation towards STRAZE may also explain why local politicians and the administration are supporting the initiative, for example, when applying for public funding or requesting permission for events. To summarize, all three case studies indicate that municipal administrations and local politicians are often willing to collaborate with the initiatives and to provide support when recognizing that people are seriously committed to urban development and social cohesion and not only focusing on their own individual needs and wishes.

However, it is striking that both STRAZE and Stadtmensch are, similar to Verve, dependent on public funding. In all the examples, the initiatives actively applied for public funding to realize their ideas and to build up the infrastructures they need. This is a central prerequisite for the success and

the perpetuation of civic engagement even if STRAZE tries to cover at least parts of its costs through rents (e.g. for renting rooms to other local initiatives) and the organization of cultural events. Another challenge for STRAZE and Stadtmensch is, similar to Verve, the dependence on the very individual and sometimes unpredictable temporal availability of the participants and also on their own ideas and visions. STRAZE participants note that due to the voluntary, unpaid work, there is a lack of obligation for the engagement. Thus, it happens that participants suddenly end their engagement or, above all, look only for tasks within the framework of their engagement that they enjoy. It is therefore difficult to predict the extent to which the initiatives will exist and operate in the long term. In Altenburg, Stadtmensch seems to have embarked on a successful path in this respect as a variety of projects has been initiated, meaning that the engagement is therefore supported by many people and initiatives. Due to the heterogeneous population, it is understandable that engagement and also financial support are not always perceived as an enrichment by all local stakeholders. Nevertheless, in Altenburg the approval of the activities predominates. In addition, local decision-makers in Altenburg as well as the project coordinators of Stadtmensch are trying to raise or provide public funds in order to be able to set up a 'citizens' fund' to provide sustainable financial support for individual engagement when needed.

10.5   CONCLUSION

What can be learnt from Verve (Neubeckum), STRAZE (Greifswald) and Stadtmensch (Altenburg)? In this section, we compare the findings from the three case studies and reflect on the role of 'urban pioneers' in German medium-sized cities. For this purpose, we once again consider the intentions and outcomes of the three citizen initiatives, the contribution of citizen initiatives on urban development and social cohesion, and the role of urban planning and local politics in supporting civic engagement and community development.

   When looking at all three case studies, it is evident that civic engagement is rooted in the initiative of individual persons, who self-effectively take action in tackling community and spatial needs ('urban pioneers'). In the cases of Verve and Stadtmensch, these pioneers belong to the creative milieu; in the case of Verve an affinity for political processes and project management is also documented which might help explain the strategic actions of Verve. Together with STRAZE – where the initiative goes back to the idea of a group of friends – all examples confirmed that the 'culture of ownership' has been and still is crucial for the emergence and success of these initiatives. Without the will of the core members to actively shape their living environment or their sense of belonging, the reliability of the planned activities will be limited.

However, and this was also a clear result of the analysis, it is important that volunteers have the freedom to realize their own interests in their activities. Not surprisingly, Verve, STRAZE and Stadtmensch all started as bottom-up initiatives with flexible structures etc. But after a while, all initiatives took the legal form of a non-profit association, with a board, a clear structure and clear responsibilities, to increase their capacities to act and to be qualified to receive funding or other public support. This means that the former flexible structure becomes more formalized by a kind of 'governing body', that nevertheless opens possibilities for residents to get involved according to their strengths and interests. This is particularly evident in the case of the Stadtmensch initiative which attempts to involve large parts of the urban society via networking and temporary actions. In the case of Verve, this openness seems to be somewhat less pronounced, and the board seems to have a stronger influence on strategic decisions for Verve.

The intentions and outputs of Verve, STRAZE and Stadtmensch are surprisingly similar: in all projects, the goal is to establish a public place for encounter that improves the togetherness and the quality of life in the concerned neighbourhood and beyond. In that sense, the public intervention of the initiatives, e.g. in the form of the renovation and use of vacant buildings in Greifswald or the performance of public spaces, can be understood as the expression of certain claims and objectives of individual actors who feel strongly connected to their city and identify with their living environment. The commitment is thus composed of a mixture of self-will and public spirit (see also Chapter 1 in this volume): it is about one's own desire for such a place, which, however, can be used by the entire local society and thus also benefits those who may not yet have explicitly felt this need. These different motives of the volunteers in the selected examples correspond to the motives for engagement identified in the first part of this contribution (see also Wade 2015; Gründer 2022; Roth 2023).

The contribution that urban pioneers make to urban development is manifold. Verve, STRAZE and Stadtmensch all use spaces that were previously vacant or abandoned and reuse them in innovative ways. By redesigning and repurposing these buildings, the initiatives have each created a physical 'meeting point' or 'anchor' that also has a strong appeal to the residents. In this way, they increase the residents' identification with their neighbourhood, facilitate exchange between different actors, etc. Additionally, re-using vacant buildings also leads to the spatial upgrading of neighbourhoods and the increase in the attractiveness of the (inner) cities, as the developments in Neubeckum, Greifswald and Altenburg show. What is striking here, especially in the case of Verve and STRAZE, is that the newly created places are also available for other initiatives. Verve and STRAZE function here as a kind of 'think tank' and serve as a 'catalyst' for the formation of social networks and the emergence of further civil society involvement.

What all three initiatives have in common is that they act in the common good and contribute, in various ways, to social cohesion as well as to community and urban development (see also Chapter 2 in this volume). This is most evident in Altenburg, where Stadtmensch is an initiative that takes a city-wide approach to providing attractive living conditions in a region marked by population decline, especially for younger people. In this context, Stadtmensch as an initiative – similar to Verve in Neubeckum and STRAZE in Greifswald – mainly takes over voluntary tasks of the municipality (e.g. in the cultural and leisure sector) that the city of Altenburg cannot or no longer fulfil due to financial or personnel bottlenecks. This – and the pro-active networking of the three initiatives with the respective municipalities – helps to ensure that the municipalities also (actively) support the three initiatives in their work. However, it is to be expected that the municipalities would be more critical of or even reject civil society involvement if initiatives such as Verve, STRAZE or Stadtmensch wanted to take on compulsory municipal tasks (e.g. construction and maintenance of schools, water provision, waste management, urban planning, etc.).

Overall, the three municipalities Neubeckum, Greifswald and Altenburg consider the urban pioneers or the committed groups as central and socially legitimized actors, which is why they are regularly involved by politics and administration in urban development policy issues. STRAZE, Verve and Stadtmensch have experienced this acknowledgement and in part – at least Verve and Stadtmensch – have actively and consciously provoked it through appropriate measures and networking. The initiatives have developed expertise in urban development policy issues and the administration uses this expertise – also with regard to the development and provision of socially relevant services and offers through the initiatives. At the same time, cooperation with the initiatives makes it easier for the municipalities to involve citizens in planning and development processes, as it has 'institutional' contacts with the initiatives and can involve them in decision-making processes. In our understanding, this has two consequences: on the one hand, it can create impulses for the 'co-production' of urban and/or community development, especially in economically weak regions that see themselves threatened by demographic change. Here, self-determined, citizen-centred, discursive planning processes could support municipalities at least in some fields and contribute to keeping cities liveable. On the other hand, there is also the danger that – regarding community development, the common good or social cohesion, which belong to the core tasks of urban policies – too much responsibility is being offloaded onto civil society initiatives such as Verve, STRAZE or Stadtmensch with their volunteer members.

This also addresses some of the central challenges for civil society initiatives and urban pioneers. The initiatives are dependent on the voluntary,

unpaid work of individuals. In the case of internal conflicts (e.g. at Verve), lack of premises (partly a challenge at Stadtmensch), financial challenges (e.g. to organize events, to coordinate volunteer activities or similar), or the lack of acknowledgement of activities by local authorities, it may well happen that the commitment of individuals or the entire initiative ends. This is not the case with the initiatives Verve, STRAZE and Stadtmensch; in all examples rather a tendency towards permanence can be observed.

Nevertheless, with regard to the municipal options for action to support urban pioneers and civil society initiatives and to actively involve them in urban development processes (if politically desired), we can derive the following options for action from our findings. First, municipalities can or should provide appropriate premises for civil society actors or actively support them in finding specific premises. Second, they can also support the initiatives financially, e.g. by taking over the rent for the premises or similar. Third, municipalities can actively support urban pioneers with their know-how when applying for public funding from the federal government or the federal states. Additionally, they can ensure political support for the initiatives at the local level (for example, with regard to a required 'letter of intent' before receiving public funding) as the examples of Verve or Stadtmensch have shown. Fourth, municipalities can also create a concrete culture of acknowledgement and show their appreciation for the initiatives. This can include concrete awards and prizes for civil society commitment or – as shown above all by Stadtmensch and, to a lesser extent, STRAZE and Verve – the active involvement and extensive participation of urban pioneers in discussion on urban development and social cohesion. With these measures, municipalities can or should promote urban pioneers, actively involve them in decision-making processes, strengthen innovative ways or forms of community development, etc. However, municipalities should be aware of their own aims and duties to steer the development of the municipality, especially with regard to urban development. It cannot be a matter of ceding as many tasks as possible to civil society actors, but of strategically considering – and if necessary together with civil society actors – where and to what extent urban pioneers can meaningfully support the municipalities.

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PART IV

THE UTILIZATION OF PUBLIC SPACES
AS INTERPLAY OF CITIZEN INITIATIVES
AND URBAN PLANNING

Introduction to part IV: The utilization of public spaces as interplay of citizen initiatives and urban planning

Stefan Lazarevski

Citizen engagement is one of the pillars of civil society and the most important space for its manifestation is public spaces. In recent years we have seen that Lefebvre's (1996) "right to the city" and cry for social justice and change have been challenged by the rigidity of conventional models of citizen participation. What is more, increasingly we observe privatization of the urban sphere and the rise of the so-called investors urbanization, thus making it ever more difficult to combine collective values into the processes reshaping the city. In this regard it seems that Harvey's (2008) "right to the city" becomes a fight for neglected human rights. This is why some scholars propose a more radical-cooperative conception of the right to the city (Althorpe and Horak 2023), where "inhabitants have the space to meet their needs through self-governed cooperation across social difference". In this vision for a new urban future, grassroots initiatives are complemented by multi-scalar support from the state, and public spaces are a place to exercise this right. The chapters in Part IV examine the influence of citizen initiatives over the traditional forms of urban planning.

In Chapter 11, Mirjam Kats, Lummina G. Horlings, Christian Lamker and Ward Rauws explore the different roles of professional stakeholders within citizen-led urban planning vis-à-vis the level of engagement and trust of the citizens in the entire process. In discussing the variety of citizen initiatives in urban green spaces, they develop their argument on the necessity of professional actors to take different attitudes in the strategies to stimulate public engagement. Furthermore, they elaborate on the roles undertaken by the stakeholders within two distinctive support approaches in enhancing social cohesion. Through the case study of Groningen, the chapter provides an overview of actor mapping and interactions between citizen initiatives and particular outcomes, thus underlining the challenges in the neoliberal understanding of urban governance and spatial planning, in particular in the fields of urban sustainability.

In the post-Covid-19 era, however, it seems that conventional planning schemes are no longer efficient in building cohesive urban neighbourhoods. This is why many cities seem to adopt new pragmatic strategies for urban development in times of crisis. In Chapter 12, Alessandro Cariello, Rossella Ferorelli and Francesco Rotondo spotlight the institutionalization of tactical urbanism and temporary use of public space by several municipalities in Italy. They build their narrative on the premise that public spaces are of particular interest, as they provide space for experimentation, problem solving and new urban development strategy implementation. This enhanced top-down approach appropriates tactical urbanism as a strategy to transform the decision-making process and to build a sustainable and inclusive urban policy. The authors argue that by implementing temporary initiatives in public space we can question the pre-established functional and morphological properties of public space programmes and aesthetics.

On the other spectrum of political citizen engagement, Stefan Lazarevski and Divna Pencik in Chapter 13 argue that in societies with weak public discourse and social capital, bottom-up citizen initiatives test established societal norms, consequently adjusting them to articulate collective values. They provide insight into the young civil society of Skopje and the challenges of citizen activation and engagement in a state-centric culture and examine the role of citizens' place-based engagement in activation of left-over public space through the soft power of tactical urbanism. The line of argumentation extends to the political aspects of such initiatives and their role in constructing a healthy public discourse. They argue that these forms of grassroots initiatives exemplify a passive form of confrontational activism, responding to indifferent authorities and obsolete urban planning policies, while at the same time promoting a sense of community belonging and place attachment.

With similar concerns, in Chapter 14 Tabea Drexhage, Lina Ellinghusen, Aikaterini Nycha, Celina Segsa and Evridiki Tsola argue that implementation of tactical urbanism is not about the aesthetics of a place, but rather about building bonds, networks and common community goals, and by doing so, helping to bridge the gap between citizens and institutions, towards a more inclusive planning culture. In a comparative case study analysis of Stuttgart and Thessaloniki, this chapter offers insight into the power of an incremental combination of bottom-up initiatives and top-down instruments. Although the case studies differ in many aspects (socio-economic constellations, organizational structure, financial support, initial purpose, etc.) they both exemplify the effects of community densification and its impact on conventional planning governance, in an attempt to create sustainable, inclusive and citizen-led processes.

The four chapters in Part IV demonstrate the multifaceted nature of citizen engagement through grassroots initiatives. They can add value to already

established and traditional forms of participation with so-called instrumental rationality such as the examples of several Italian cities, Stuttgart and Thessaloniki or could be perceived as grassroots resistance or community empowerment (Lydon and Garcia 2015), like the example of Skopje. While the commonality in both of these utilizations of citizen initiatives is strengthening of social cohesion and social resilience, the different level of application points to the complexity of city making or the "rupture between the process and the substance of planning" (Wohl 2018). In spite of these nuances, all the chapters provide their own arguments for inclusive urban planning and in doing so, they instrumentalize the notion of place-making. In his article about place-making, Friedmann (2010) underlines the four elements that constitute a place: size in terms of social reproduction, a place for inhabiting over time, a sense of attachment, and identity, which are all social constructs. The case studies in the following chapters showcase the meaning of place and the relationships it embeds, which can be analysed only through socio-spatial and political lenses, thus revealing the deeper meaning of urban living.

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11. Citizen engagement in urban green spaces: a role-based analysis of supportive professional actors

Mirjam Kats, Lummina G. Horlings, Christian Lamker and Ward Rauws

11.1 INTRODUCTION

Rules and roles of public and private actors in spatial planning have shifted drastically in the last decades in Europe. Governance has become dominant over government and top-down state action is complemented with collaborative and co-creative processes (Healey 2015; Innes 1996; Mattijssen et al. 2018). This has raised new opportunities for citizen initiatives to take part in, initiate and sometimes lead the management and (re)development of streets, squares, urban blocks, and specific facilities and services (Horlings et al. 2021). However, the turn towards more citizen-led spatial planning receives severe critiques. Citizens are pushed to replace public services in a retreating welfare state as a result of a political ideology that is nested within a neoliberal understanding of urban governance settings (Healey 2015; Soares da Silva et al. 2018). Other critiques highlight the transfer of risks from government to civil society and the instrumental use of citizen initiatives in obtaining policy objectives (Klein et al. 2017; Verhoeven and Oude Vrielink 2012), the potentially exclusive nature of self-realized activities or facilities (Uitermark 2015), the challenges around durable performance of initiatives (Igalla et al. 2019), and balancing personal investments of initiators (Meerstra-de Haan et al. 2020). One way to address those concerns while valuing the important contributions of civic initiatives to city making is to rethink the relationships between stakeholders from civil society and stakeholders in private businesses, non-governmental organizations, and governments.

Civil society and citizen initiatives are well-recognized cornerstones of urban sustainability (Frantzeskaki et al. 2016) and climate action (Schreuder and Horlings 2022). In this chapter we focus on civic engagement in urban green spaces as part of urban sustainability. We study green citizen initiatives

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(GCI) that are, beyond fostering their own community and enhancing their living environment, especially concerned with the local impacts of climate change (heat island effect, risk of flash flooding), pollution, and biodiversity. In engaging with urban green spaces, they contribute to environmental qualities while simultaneously using the (under-explored) potential to shift personal convictions, foster pro-environmental behaviors (Mattijssen et al. 2018) and strengthen community ties (Igalla et al. 2019). Moreover, this engagement may contribute to environmental education, experiential learning, and capacity-building (Schreuder and Horlings 2022). Thus, the relevance of green citizen initiatives for urban sustainability stretches beyond purely spatial benefits and includes ecological and social contributions (Mata et al. 2019).

Inviting and relying increasingly on citizens in developing and maintaining urban green spaces has implications for the roles of professional actors. This chapter aims to contribute to this endeavor by applying a role-based approach in scrutinizing how these professional actors can relate to green citizen initiatives. The key questions are:

- What roles are played by professional actors in stimulating and facilitating green citizen initiatives in urban green spaces?
- What are the consequences for the durability and societal outcomes of civic engagement when some (combinations of) roles are prevalent over others?

We explore these questions through a single case study of Groningen, a medium-sized city in the north of the Netherlands with 235,000 inhabitants (2022). The city has a dense history of engagement for green spaces. In 2013, it was crowned the 'greenest city' of the Netherlands. In 2022, it was rated the healthiest city of the country, partly because of the high accessibility of urban green spaces. Groningen is a relevant case for studying the distinct roles of stakeholders and their effects, as the rich tradition of citizen engagement in realization and preservation dates back to the 1970s. Based on a social network analysis and semi-structured interviews with main stakeholders, we identify three novel roles for professional actors in relation to green citizen initiatives, extending the typology of support of citizen initiatives by Oude Vrielink and Van de Wijdeven (2011). We also show the limits to societal outcomes of civic actions for communities if the enacted set of adopted roles is geared towards primarily instrumental support. A lack of personal approaches may harm the durable engagement of citizens.

11.2   SUPPORTING CITIZEN INITIATIVES IN URBAN GREEN SPACES

The engagement of citizens has been approached with positive connotations. They contribute to local communities, quality of life, and social cohesion, in an often experimental and co-creative way (Bisschops and Beunen 2019; Igalla et al. 2019; Van Stokkom and Toenders 2010). Urban green spaces are no longer only consumed by citizens but increasingly also shaped and managed by collective citizen action, which raises questions on how to support their actions most effectively. Despite many collective citizen initiatives seeking collaboration with other urban stakeholders, they often face insufficient support to be effective or to endure (Igalla et al. 2019). Frequently, financial resources, time, or even suitable knowledge, are not sufficiently available at a given location or moment in time, as well as appreciation or a listening ear by other stakeholders. Understanding the support of green citizen initiatives by local businesses, educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, housing corporations, and others, can thus be pivotal to the success of these initiatives.

The literature discusses a continuum of strategies for professional actors to support citizen initiatives (ROB 2012; see Table 11.1). These range from strategies aimed at regulating and steering initiatives to strategies enabling their self-efficacy and self-governance (Gilbert 2005). Recent literature on urban sustainability transitions emphasizes the need for stimulating and facilitating strategies (Mees et al. 2019), which put citizen initiatives in the lead but keep professional actors in the loop. In scrutinizing the roles professional actors can take, this study focuses on these. *Stimulation* means to encourage and boost citizen action in the first place. After (green) citizen initiatives are initiated, they often still need the support and engagement of professional actors. This type of support is called *facilitation*.

Table 11.1   Ladder of professional actor participation

Attitude of the professional actor	Description
Letting go	The actor does not interfere at all with the citizen initiative
Facilitating	*The actor enables and helps by engaging in activities that were initiated by citizens themselves to reach specific goals of their own*
Stimulating	*The actor looks for possibilities to encourage citizens to act for a certain purpose or goal*

Attitude of the professional actor	Description
Steering	The actor is in charge of reaching a certain goal, but other parties, such as citizens, might be included in this process as well
Regulating	The actor tries to reach a certain goal by itself; there is a vertical relationship between the actor and citizens

Source: Authors, based on ROB (2012).

Facilitators and stimulators of green citizen initiatives can use a variety of actions to support citizens' projects or to mobilize citizens to participate in green initiatives (Bakker et al. 2012). For our analysis, we use the typology of Oude Vrielink and Van de Wijdeven (2011). They put forward eleven roles that professional actors often take and make a distinction between an instrumental approach and personal approach (see Table 11.2). According to Oude Vrielink and van de Wijdeven (2011), an *instrumental approach* is the most used type of stimulation and facilitation of citizen initiatives. Facilitation and stimulation are then used as an 'instrument' to mobilize citizens for reaching (policy) goals. Instrumental support often takes place within established frameworks and rules from the work field of professional actors and is focused on achieving predefined results. However, social outcomes might be constrained as the social effects (e.g. supporting places to meet, fostering social cohesion) are typically not so much acknowledged by professional actors. As a consequence, conflicts might arise between citizens' individual aims and public goals. Therefore, a *personal approach* is needed as a complement to the instrumental approach, focusing on appreciating and acknowledging citizens' needs, ideas, and efforts, thereby making them realize that they can make a difference in their neighborhood (Van Stokkom and Toenders 2010). This personal approach also increases the self-confidence and capabilities of citizens, which can motivate them to engage in citizen initiatives again or in other domains.

Table 11.2   Typology of support for (green) citizen initiatives

	Instrumental approach	Personal approach
Role in contact with initiators (facilitation)	*Complementing civil power* The assessor The guide The translator The financer	*Empowering initiators* The mirror The supporter
Role in contact with environment: institutions/ neighborhood (stimulation)	*Connecting institutionally* The marketing and communication manager The network builder The critic	*Vitalizing the community* The spotlight The network builder The listening ear

Source: Authors, based on Oude Vrielink and Van de Wijdeven (2011).

The typology results in four quadrants that show support for green initiatives with corresponding roles (Oude Vrielink and Van de Wijdeven 2011). In the instrumental *complementing civil power* quadrant, professional actors complement or co-design certain actions of green citizen initiatives without explicitly taking over the project. Four supporting roles are identified here: the assessor (by monitoring the objectives through testing the actions of green citizen initiatives against procedural criteria); the guide (by connecting citizens to helpful organizations and key persons for the success of their initiative); the translator (by translating difficult professional language or logic to understandable language for citizens); and the financer (by subsidizing the activities of green citizen initiatives so that they can reach their societal objectives). The personal approach of *empowering initiators* signifies that the supporting actors focus on personal growth and education of the members of initiatives. Two roles correspond with the empowerment of initiators: the mirror (by helping citizens in articulating their ideas, perspectives, and capacities in light of the initiative through personal conversations); and the supporter (by showing personal involvement with the initiatives to give the initiators extra confidence in their projects).

Green citizen initiatives can be stimulated instrumentally by creating "a fertile institutional infrastructure in and around the neighbourhood" (Oude Vrielink and Van de Wijdeven 2011, p. 447). This type of stimulation is called *connecting institutionally*. It revolves around three supporting roles: the marketing and communication manager (by making sure that there is publicity and promotion for the ability to start a GCI); the network builder (by creating connections between people and organizations in and around the neighborhoods); and the critic (by questioning the institutional logic of other organizations or supporting actors if they are hesitant to support green

citizen initiatives). Finally, the personal approach of *vitalizing the community* aims explicitly at improving the sense of social cohesion. Three roles can be played here: the spotlight (by arranging publicity for green citizen initiatives the initiators receive recognition and appreciation publicly, stimulating them and other citizens to start their new initiatives); the network builder (by creating connections between citizens, which improves the chances that they start an initiative together); and the listening ear (by listening to citizens about problems in the neighborhood and encouraging them to start an initiative to improve the situation).

Professionals can fulfill multiple support roles in parallel and over time. As these roles are sometimes taken consciously but often also unconsciously, this study maps the roles to understand in which ways green citizen initiatives are stimulated and facilitated and how that may affect the durability of green citizen initiatives.

11.3   THE CASE OF GRONINGEN: CONTEXT AND METHODS

Groningen provides an exemplary case of a city with high sustainability ambitions that actively seeks to engage citizens in these ambitions. Even though it is regarded as a relatively green city, it still experiences multiple challenges. Its compact urban structure in combination with population growth and a remarkably young population create high usage pressure on green spaces in the city (Gemeente Groningen 2020). Groningen is dealing with additional issues related to climate change and urban growth, such as extreme weather events, rainfall and flooding, and the urban heat island effect (Gemeente Groningen 2016). As a response to the importance of urban green spaces for these future challenges, the municipality and other actors such as nonprofit organizations created new policy plans and action groups in 2020 to develop and enhance urban green spaces in collaboration with civil society. As the municipality policy plan 'Groenplan Vitamine G' states, "citizens will be given the ability to develop and implement their initiatives" (Gemeente Groningen 2020, p. 16). For example, citizens can receive subsidies to apply greenery to their living environment. This chapter presents case study research which was conducted in 2020 on how green citizen initiatives in the city of Groningen are supported by three types of professional actors: the local government, nonprofit organizations, and local companies (Kats 2021).

Social network analysis (SNA) was conducted to visualize the network of interactions between the large variety of actors that are involved with urban green space in Groningen. It is a research method and a tool to understand how stakeholders interact and influence one another (Guenat et al. 2020). The SNA shows the diverse set of actors (nodes) in Groningen, their ties (who collabo-

rates with whom?), the frequency of interactions and the nature of these inter-actions. The data about the interactions was obtained between 1 November and 30 November 2020, and through online questionnaires that were answered by individual members, volunteers, or employees of green citizen initiatives, nonprofit organizations, the local government, and local companies involved with urban green space management. The SNA software Gephi has been used to create visualizations of the actor-network (see Figure 11.1).

Additionally, ten in-depth interviews were held with both professional actors and members of green citizen initiatives in the city of Groningen about the kind of support they provide or receive (Kats 2021). Four interviews were held with distinct types of green citizen initiatives in terms of their activities, the number of participants, location, and time of existence. The interviews furthermore included one employee of the municipality, three employees of nonprofit organizations, and two employees of local companies. An interactive visual conversation tool with examples of support roles was developed to map which of the roles of the framework of Oude Vrielink and Van de Wijdeven (2011) the interviewees recognized. It provided a starting point for a conversa-tion on why and how the professional actor supports green citizen initiatives.

11.4 ACTORS, INTERACTIONS, AND CHALLENGES

11.4.1 Mapping Actors in Groningen

The SNA study resulted in a map that visualizes the network of interactions between the variety of actors involved with urban green spaces in Groningen. In total, 77 actors (nodes) and 146 interactions (edges) were identified. Figure 11.1 shows a simplified version of the SNA map. The size of the nodes is based on the frequency of interactions that the specific actor has, hence the size indicates how 'well-connected' an actor is within the network. The connecting edges (lines) show the frequency of each connection between two nodes.

The analysis shows that GCIs mainly interact with nonprofit organiza-tions and the local government. The municipality of Groningen has the highest frequency of interactions and over half of the GCIs receive some kind of support from there (i.e. financial, information or promotion of the initiative). Other dominant actors are the nonprofit organization 'Natuur en Milieufederatie Groningen' and the citizen initiative 'Stichting Toentje'. Natuur en Milieufederatie Groningen is a local partnership of about 50 organizations in the province of Groningen in the field of energy, landscape, environment, and nature. It acts as a connecting party and stimulates GCIs by promoting the possibilities to start initiatives like a neighborhood orchard. It also educates citizens through workshops or lectures. Stichting Toentje is an example of a citizen initiative in Groningen that organizes activities related

Legend

👥👥 Green citizen initiative [36x]

🐟 Nonprofit organization [15x]

🏪 Local business [12x]

✏ Educational institution [3x]

🏠 Housing corporation [3x]

⚙ Other [3x]

🔍 Local government [2x]
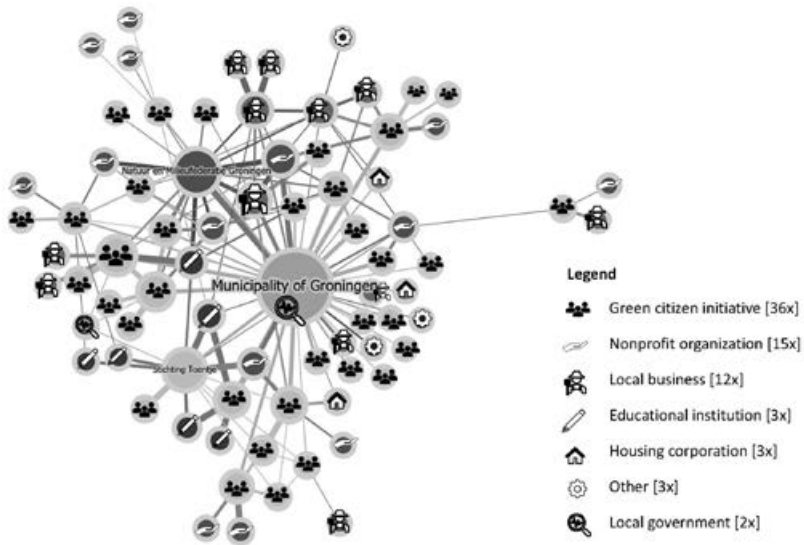
Source: Authors, based on Kats (2021).

Figure 11.1   Social network analysis

to urban farming and poverty reduction by offering work and learning places. While the reception of support was also dominant in the interaction between GCIs and nonprofit organizations, other more reciprocal interactions in the form of exchanging information, working together on projects, and exchanging materials were also evident. A smaller number of interactions was found between GCIs and local companies. These are more focused on working together on projects than on receiving support.

11.4.2   Interaction between Actors in Groningen

To gain more insight into *how* actors in Groningen interact, and more specifically how citizen initiatives fit within the social network of urban green space management in Groningen, we analyzed which roles professional actors take whilst interacting with green citizen initiatives, showing how green citizen initiatives are currently stimulated and facilitated (Figure 11.2).

11.4.2.1 Stimulation

Amongst the ten interviewees, the most often mentioned role in *stimulating* GCIs (i.e. to increase citizens' willingness to join or initiate) is the 'marketing and communication manager' (see Figure 11.3). If professional actors play this
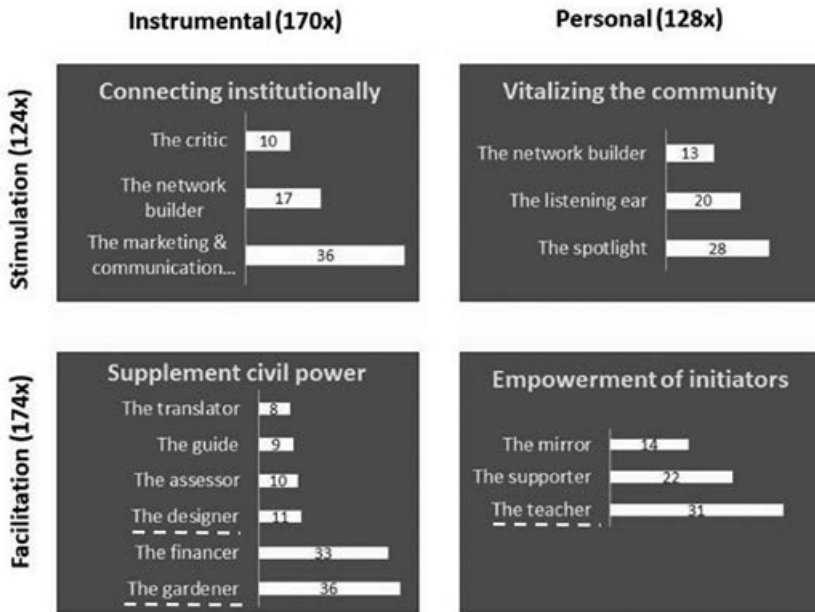
Source: Authors, based on Oude Vrielink and Van de Wijdeven (2011).

Figure 11.2   Overview of interview analysis

role, they try to create a suitable infrastructure for the initiation of green citizen initiatives by using marketing and communication methods. In Groningen, the main way of doing this is by using online marketing techniques such as websites, social media, newsletters, or even contests to win subsidies for 'your idea'. For example, in 2019 a competition called 'Voice of Groningen' provided the opportunity to win funding for a small scale initiative that improves the neighborhood. Marketing and communication are often used as instruments to 'sell' the offers of professional actors. For example, Stichting Steenbreek is a nonprofit organization that promotes multiple 'products' for citizens to apply urban greenery to their living environment, such as green roofs, facade gardens, and tree drip line gardens. An employee of Stichting Steenbreek has explained how subsidies and discounts on greenery are products that they try to sell through their communication channels:

> If you have nice products, you should also show them … I always compare it with Coca-Cola: if you have a good product, you should simply try to sell it and communicate about it. (Interviewee Stichting Steenbreek Groningen, 20/11/2020 (translated))

The ongoing efforts from professional actors to promote the possibilities for initiatives through marketing and communication correspond to the growing number of GCIs in the city of Groningen. In 2010, only 21 green citizen initiatives existed (Gemeente Groningen 2010). Ten years later, the number of initiatives massively increased, with about 70 new initiatives on neighborhood gardens alone (Gemeente Groningen 2020). According to an interviewee working for the nonprofit organization 'Natuur en Milieufederatie Groningen', this is also why stimulation of green citizen initiatives has become less necessary over the years:

> The role of Natuur en Milieufederatie Groningen started with Eetbare Stad Groningen [Edible City Groningen], to activate citizens: to point out the possibilities … Afterwards, our function changed a bit … neighborhood orchards were so trendy that they did not need any more stimulation … We were overwhelmed with requests. (Interviewee Natuur en Milieufederatie Groningen, 12/11/2020 (translated))

In conclusion, stimulating green citizen initiatives is mostly done through awareness raising and offering concrete opportunities. Over the years, however, the roles of professional actors in Groningen have shifted from stimulating roles to more facilitating roles; supporting the efforts of the already existing initiatives, instead of stimulating even more citizens to join or start an initiative. Alongside this, the awareness about existing GCIs has increased.

11.4.2.2 Facilitation

To facilitate the efforts of existing green citizen initiatives, the most played roles are two instrumental roles, namely *the gardener* and *the financer* (see Figure 11.4). Hence, facilitation mainly revolves around helping citizens to develop or maintain the physical urban green spaces in two ways: directly (by supplying or maintaining greenery), or indirectly (by providing money that initiatives can spend to develop or maintain greenery). According to an interviewee of Stichting Steenbreek, the choice between a direct or indirect approach depends on the capacities of the members of the initiative, as some citizens need more active steering than others:

> In some neighborhoods or streets, people can do a lot themselves … But sometimes I also come to places where people don't have that ability … I might then select and buy the plants for them myself. (Interviewee Stichting Steenbreek, 20/11/2020 (translated))

Source: Authors.

Figure 11.3 Most used stimulating role

The interviews also made it clear that facilitation by financial means is often given to GCIs because their activities fit within the (policy) goals of the professional actor:

> On the project level, you set certain goals. And those goals are connected to activities, and financing (for GCIs) is linked to those activities. (Interviewee IVN Natuureducatie, 20/11/2020 (translated))

In conclusion, both in stimulating and facilitating green citizen initiatives, professional actors in Groningen mainly follow an instrumental approach. They use tangible types of facilitation, where citizen initiatives receive funding or get help with establishing or maintaining greenery, based on specific requirements and procedures. These types of instrumental support fit well within the procedural logic of professional actors, and they are easy to concretize in policy measures. Examples of municipality requirements are that the initiative

has to consist of a minimum of three people, the project should be small-scale, and the activities performed by the initiative should be announced to all local residents and stakeholders. If citizens want to perform an activity that influences the built environment and which is not directly related to green space, such as constructing a community building or a fence, they will not be able to receive (financial) support for this and will need to apply for expensive permits.
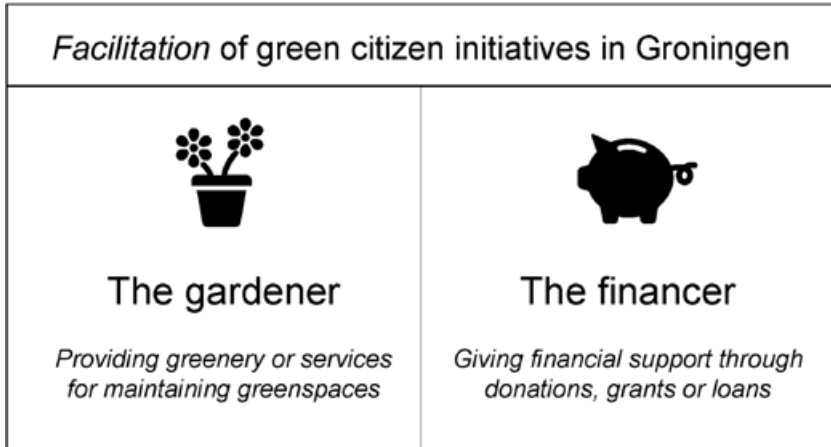
Source: Authors.

Figure 11.4   *Most used facilitating roles*

11.4.2.3 Novel roles

Three novel roles have been discovered from the empirical case study (see Figure 11.5), complementing the typology of Oude Vrielink and Van de Wijdeven (2011). The most tangible one is a type of practical facilitation that is specific to supporting green citizen initiatives: *the gardener*. This role is mainly played by the municipality and entails providing services or greenery for maintaining green spaces. Often mentioned, but outside of the existing typology, is also *the teacher*. Professional actors such as nonprofit organizations and local companies educate green citizen initiatives by answering questions, or by providing lectures, excursions, or workshops. Information often relates to specific skills in urban green space management, which is a type of personal facilitation that empowers initiators. Finally, creating landscape designs was frequently named, with the corresponding role of *the designer*. Here, citizens have a broad idea of what type of green space they want to realize. However, they struggle to create a detailed and achievable plan of what

it should look like. The municipality and local companies help by creating green space designs.

Novel roles for supporting green citizen initiatives in Groningen

The gardener

Providing greenery or services for maintaining greenspaces

The teacher

Educating citizens through lectures, excursions or workshops

The designer

Creating landscape designs for greenspaces
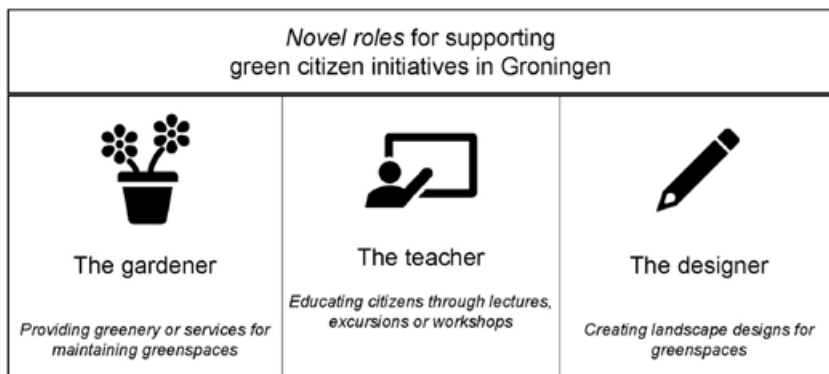
Source: Authors.

Figure 11.5   *Novel roles*

11.5   DISCUSSION: ROLE-MAKING AND ROLE-TAKING IN URBAN GREEN SPACES

Many different actors already work on facilitating and stimulating GCIs in Groningen using various roles. However, benefits like social cohesion that cross-cut existing policy ambitions are often not valued, or not explicitly recognized. Professional actors in Groningen focus mainly on 'complementing civil power' by providing direct or indirect financial support, for example through subsidies or through supplying or maintaining greenery. This includes roles such as 'the financer' and 'the gardener', which are mainly taken by the municipality and by nonprofit organizations. On the positive side, these types of support are essential because funding by professional actors is a crucial resource for citizen initiatives.

However, members of initiatives experience a *lack of autonomy*. They face obligatory requirements to receive support and are worried that the local government sees them as an instrument to reach policy goals. Some members tend to experience these requirements as a sign of distrust; their ability to combine environmental aspects with the social and community side of their activities is not sufficiently acknowledged. Citizens also experience a *lack of appreciation* for the diverse benefits they offer and which are not part of the policy goals of the supporting actor(s). For example, TuinInDeStad is a green citizen initiative that offers not just green space but also a campsite, workshops, and sports

activities, and is thereby creating an environment where people can connect and learn new skills.

Oude Vrielink and Van de Wijdeven (2011) argue that citizen initiatives can benefit from a balance between instrumental and personal support approaches. Instrumental support approaches can be effective; however, such an approach centers around procedural frameworks (rules, regulations, requirements) that can frustrate citizens and make them feel as if the supporting actor is in control of their activities. Bureaucratic procedures are often difficult to understand for citizens, are regarded as inflexible, and have been reported as discouraging. Therefore, an instrumental approach may counteract what it wants to promote: a lively, self-governing civil society with active doers and collective producers (Healey 2015). To have long-lasting effects and to enhance social cohesion, the instrumental approach should be balanced with a personal (support) approach that centers around valuing citizens' intrinsic motivation and that vitalizes local community and empowers initiators.

This means that professional actors should be able to 'bridge the gap' between their professional world and the perspective of citizens (Hartman and Tops 2005). Citizens value personal support, for example when professional actors show up during activities or when they arrange publicity for their specific initiative. Our results also show that citizens appreciate it when professionals teach useful knowledge or skills through workshops, lectures, or personal conversations. In this way professionals can boost capacity-building (Oude Vrielink and Van de Wijdeven 2011), including the ability to generate their own funding. Finally, recognizing social cohesion as a socio-spatial phenomenon (Madanipour 2015), personal approaches and valuing citizen initiatives as such can support processes of increasing social relationships and thereby social cohesion around defined green spaces (Mattijssen et al. 2018).

11.6   CONCLUSION

Citizen engagement has become a cornerstone of urban governance and spatial planning, in particular in the fields of urban sustainability. A shift from government towards governance approaches goes along with potential benefits for the environmental quality of life in local neighborhoods and the cohesion among inhabitants. The provision and quality of urban green spaces can benefit from citizen initiatives taking responsibility for their immediate environment. However, such collective action requires substantial knowledge, time, and financial resources. It is crucial to recognize benefits, but also inherent dangers of celebrating citizen engagement in what could also be considered public government responsibility (see Van Dam et al. 2015). To understand personal and instrumental approaches of facilitation and stimulation, this chapter has addressed the following questions: What roles are played by professional

actors in supporting green citizen initiatives in urban green spaces? What are the consequences for the durability and societal outcomes of civic engagement when some (combinations of) roles are prevalent over others?

The social network analysis showed that the municipality of Groningen remains the most central actor with a dense web for providing support to citizens. We have used a role-based approach to analyze the current support by professional actors. Next to the eleven roles described in the literature, we found three novel roles that have been less discussed so far: *the gardener*, *the teacher*, and *the designer*. Such roles support active engagement and increase the basis for personal connections between professional actors and citizen initiatives. We argue that finding a balance between an instrumental and a personal approach towards citizens can not just benefit initiatives but also increase collaboration and social cohesion between distinct types of actors. While citizen initiatives should be seen as a positive development, they face the risk of being considered instrumental to achieving policy goals that are imposed upon them. The example of urban green spaces in Groningen illustrates that citizens can complement public action at the very small scale and the neighborhood level. However, they need more than financial and material resources. This is important to acknowledge so that social outcomes like fostering social cohesion are not constrained.

In order to identify (combinations of) roles to support durable (green) citizen initiatives, we have identified three major aspects. First, professional actors need to restrain their own ambitions when stimulating and facilitating citizen initiatives. As part of a more personal approach, empowerment of citizens and vitalization of communities deserve attention to also foster social cohesion. A modest approach of shared leadership is likely to be more fruitful than regulating and steering civic ambitions. Second, for those citizens who show a great interest in urban green space management and are actively involved in manifold initiatives, stimulation and facilitation by professionals are not necessarily end-points. It can further develop to more autonomy where trust replaces the exercise of control and capacity for self-governance is built. Third, it became clear that support is needed to sustain initiatives and their contributions to the sustainability of urban green spaces. Especially here, a role-based approach can be of value as it provides a hands-on framework to adjust the kind of support offered to the needs, aspirations, and capacity of the initiative at a particular moment in time. This includes concrete actions such as education on income opportunities, supporting practical gardening skills, or increasing the management capacity of small initiatives. Altogether, a better attuned balance between professional actors and citizen initiatives enhances the efficiency and quality of urban green space management and potentially other sustainability citizen actions at the local scale.

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12. Tactical urbanism experiences in building public spaces: lessons learned in Italy

Alessandro Cariello, Rossella Ferorelli and Francesco Rotondo

12.1 INTRODUCTION TO TEMPORARY URBAN DESIGN ACTIONS

Urban planning has changed its paradigm following the evolution of the development approach from unlimited growth to sustainable development (Daly 2014; OECD 2020). The need to save natural resources (particularly the soil), to fight climate change, to favor local economic development, have brought about a paradigm shift also in urban planning that has moved the focus of disciplinary interest from the indefinite expansion of urban suburbs to the regeneration of the existing city both in its physical spaces and in its society (Van der Zwet and Ferry 2019; EC 2020; Beer and Clower 2019; Medeiros and van der Zwet 2020). In urban regeneration processes, the degraded spaces and the residual voids of previous expansion cycles have become the privileged spaces for new projects (Magnaghi 2005).

Social reasons for changes in urban planning have been added to the environmental ones, linked to the contemporary demographic dynamics of most Western nations experiencing a phase of demographic contraction. The shrinking cities phenomenon and its consequences have been explored in a large international literature (Oswalt and Rieniets 2006; Pallagst et al. 2009; Audirac and Alejandre 2010; Camarda et al. 2015).

After reductions in mortality, fertility not only decreased but reached values lower than those of generational replacement (which corresponds to approximately two children per woman). The European continent, as a whole, has collapsed below this threshold since the second half of the 1970s. The current European Union figure is just over 1.5. The United States managed to remain close to the replacement value for longer, but in the last decade it has suffered a significant reduction (United Nations 2022). Naturally, demographic dynam-

ics are very different for nations like China or India. Even more than in the past, growth rates between areas of the world and between generations have never been so divergent.

Such processes of ecological and demographic transition have forced development models to change with obvious and decisive consequences also in urban planning. Urban regeneration of existing cities is the main objective of urban planning and the main tool of urban design. But how should urban regeneration processes be carried out? There are project tools that allow "planning by doing" as Campos Venuti (1978) elaborated in another historical context, anticipating and verifying the possible consequences of design choices and allowing the inhabitants to realize this directly by experimenting with the solutions without having to read difficult three-dimensional models or to be anxious about spending a lot of public money without being able to go back on the choices made.

There have been multiple ways of defining possible answers to these questions which have taken on different names often indicating very similar interventions such as: "do-it-yourself" (DIY), "pop-up", "guerilla", and "tactical urbanism". All these practices (many of them already discussed by Lydon 2011; Lydon and Garcia 2015; and Bishop and Williams 2012) were informal and temporary urban design governance actions, very often related to bottom-up processes of community empowerment (a panorama of these European informal urban design governance practices has been made by the Urban Maestro organization,[1] summarized and discussed by Carmona et al. 2023), and used as urban regeneration catalysts (Oswalt et al. 2014).

With the spread of these experiences throughout the world, institutions have also begun to realize that these types of interventions, especially if placed within broader urban regeneration strategies, might no longer be promoted only by inhabitants or autonomous groups of interests (often to counteract the inertia of institutions in tackling the degradation of some places), but also directly by the institutions themselves. In this new institutional context, tactical urbanism (TU) has come to be regarded as a regeneration tool capable of providing innovative answers to pressing problems in cities and urban areas.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary[2] defines "tactical" as "of or relating to small-scale actions serving a larger purpose" or "made or carried out with only a limited or immediate end in view". So, starting from Lydon's (2011) definition, applied to an institutional approach, TU can be defined as actions and strategies for revitalizing and activating urban spaces that focus on short-term,

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[1] See https://urbanmaestro.org.
[2] See https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tactical.

low-cost, and scalable interventions and policies, to experiment with possible long-term effects in urban regeneration, directly involving communities.

As already said, after the first experiences, public administrations have also shown interest in these informal techniques for redeveloping public spaces and streets (in France, for example, those experiences have been called "urbanisme transitoire", ANRU 2021; or "urbanisme transitionnel", Besson 2020), but it was during the Covid-19 pandemic that the push to use these soft tools established itself and has resulted in many institutional projects and creations (Pradifta et al. 2021; Cariello et al. 2021; Stevens et al. 2021; Kim 2022; Abdelkader et al. 2023).

After some years it is now possible to evaluate the results and first tactical urbanism experiences instigated by institutions during the Covid-19 pandemic. We have the opportunity to observe the longevity of the earliest results in the mid-term.

In this chapter, case studies made of two municipal institutions in Italy (Milan and Bari, the first in the north and the second in the south) are evaluated and lead to some conclusions highlighting useful results to guide the use of these tools in urban regeneration policies, which increasingly use them even if not always consciously.

The selected case studies involved some of the authors and offer interesting indications of effective, ineffective and in-between experiences of TU applications promoted in Italy by the municipalities in Milan and Bari. They were chosen to provide an overview of the types of interventions (squares, pedestrian and cycle paths, green spaces, etc.) and to understand how the institutions, when they directly promote these processes, manage to involve the inhabitants in the construction of the new configuration of the public spaces.

Before going deeper into the analysis, a disclaimer is necessary to clarify that the proposed case studies presentation should in no way be understood either as a proper "classification" or as a "ranking" of the results. The analysis presented here is merely meant to suggest a research direction towards a complete evaluation methodology to observe existing Italian experiments and, perhaps, to foresee the impact of the ones to come. It is therefore evident that a complete research should include several examples for each category and for the different regional territories (for a nation as regionalized as Italy), which is obviously not possible within the limits of this chapter. This chapter should be understood as the start of a broader research work to be explored more comprehensively in the future, as the experiences of TU spread and become part of the usual tools of urban regeneration promoted by institutions as well as by the inhabitants.

12.2 LEARNING THE HARD WAY: CASES WITH CRITICALITIES

12.2.1 Typologies Matter: Piazza Minniti in Milan

We begin with the question of "typology".[3] By this slippery word we mean here to address features of public spaces that characterize their relationship with both formal-geometric and functional values. We will then address how some specific "typologies" of public spaces might critically influence the impacts of tactical, participatory urbanism experiments in the mid-term.

The first case studied is piazza Minniti, a beautiful space in the core of a central, historical upper-middle-class neighborhood named Isola, in Milan. This experiment, realized in 2020 with partial European funding,[4] belongs to the wide municipal tactical urbanism program of the city, named "Piazze Aperte" and started in 2018, with no fewer than 40 new tactical pedestrian transformations achieved to date.[5] Typically, the Piazze Aperte methodology, now in its third project cycle, involves citizens and neighborhood actors in all

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[3]   The Italian tradition of architectural theory pays strong attention to the concept of architectural typology. Theorists Saverio Muratori (1960) and Gianfranco Caniggia and Gian Luigi Maffei (1979) famously researched the relationship between the evolutions of urban morphologies and the building traditions of both residential and public buildings, as well as the progressive differentiation between base and specialized ones. By following this important and widely acknowledged theoretical approach, it could be interesting to extend the research to public spaces, recognizing forms of specialization in them and, as a consequence, their specific design approach.

[4]   The co-funding came from "CLEAR – City LivEAbility by Redesign", a project funded by EIT (European Institute of Innovation and Technology) Urban Mobility, a body of the European Union, in which Milan was networked with Amsterdam and Munich along with their technical universities and some private companies, and active from 2019 to 2021. See https://www.eiturbanmobility.eu/projects/city-liveability-by-redesign/ (last accessed April 6, 2023).

[5]   Piazze Aperte ("Open Squares") is a program of the City of Milan, developed by Agenzia Mobilità Ambiente Territorio (AMAT), together with Bloomberg Associates and the Global Designing Cities Initiative. The program centers around urban regeneration and sustainable mobility, key goals of the Territory Governance Plan for Milan 2030 (PGT Milano 2030) and the Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan, in the context of the "Piano Quartieri" ("Neighborhood Plan"). In 2022, a report containing all the squares realized in the triennial period 2018–2021 was publicly released and is now available in English at: https://portalril.org/contenido/Piazze%20aperte%20-%20A%20public%20space%20program%20for%20Milan.pdf (last accessed April 6, 2023).

the steps of the decision process, starting from opening to anyone the possibility to propose spaces for pedestrianization through specific calls, going on through a deep co-design process led by dedicated teams,[6] and partaking in co-realizing workshops involving NGOs, families, schools and active citizens to build up these city spaces together accordingly.

Piazza Minniti's case is slightly exceptional, as the peak of the Covid-19 emergency, active when the experiment was planned and realized, inhibited the actualization of a perfect participatory interaction and rather directed the municipality to involve muralists in the realization of the ground painting and forced the neighborhood to only interact with them remotely.[7] As a result, a nice work of public art was realized in the newly pedestrianized area in the heart of the vibrant Isola district to help distinguish it from the street surface and keep it safer for pedestrians and easy to understand by car drivers (Figure 12.1).

Source: Authors.

*Figure 12.1   Freshly completed artwork for the pedestrianization of piazza
                 Minniti, Milan*

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[6]   All the transformations are led by Officina Urbana, an internal team of AMAT, together with the Mobility Department of the City of Milan.

[7]   The process behind this and other Piazze Aperte cases has been reviewed in more detail in Cariello et al. (2021).

Even when it was a redundant street space colonized by parked cars, piazza Minniti has always been used as an open air urban marketplace, active twice a week with a very intense use in terms of logistics and attendance by citizens. By prioritizing this tactical urbanism intervention in the dense Piazze Aperte timeline, this strong *functional* character of the area was considered as an advantage by the municipality, as it would have been a powerful warranting factor in the activation of the new space, as well as for its security and identity. Unfortunately, a *typological* character had been ignored unknowingly, one that would critically affect the result in the mid-term. First, market squares must basically stay empty: the possibilities of adding furniture to them are reduced to very minor elements, as the big vehicles used in the logistics of the market must be allowed in the space when the market is open and active. Therefore, any square of this type will inevitably be slightly unbalanced in terms of void distribution, with sparse furnishings mainly distributed along borders or concentrated in small areas to allow the movement of dedicated vehicles. And, secondly but more importantly, market squares used twice a week are, accordingly, washed with chemical products and heavily wiped with mechanical brushes twice a week, with destructive effects on surface paintings (Figure 12.2).

Source: Authors.

Figure 12.2   *The state of the artwork after few weeks in piazza Minniti, Milan*

In piazza Minniti, this conjunction of elements determined a very quick erasure of the flooring artwork, which, for the reasons mentioned above, also contained graphic elements with functional values (like mazes and other playground designs for children's use), resulting in a rapid loss of effectiveness in the novel appearance of the square.

This case shows how the limited means of TU can affect the impacts of a pedestrianizing experiment under specific circumstances, and particularly when dealing with functional and morphological restraints requested by some typological features of public spaces. The relevance of such risk in TU processes might well lead to deeper research about the full spectrum of cases that could assimilate to this one and, as an interesting consequence, expand the existing urban design field of knowledge towards further characterizations of public spaces with a more attentive typological awareness.

12.3 CONTROVERSIAL OUTCOMES, INCOMPLETE SUCCESSES AND WHAT WE CAN UNDERSTAND FROM THEM

12.3.1 The Importance of Being Consistent: Lungomare san Cataldo in Bari

Lungomare San Cataldo is located on the sealine of Bari, a medium-sized city in southern Italy where, in May 2020, during the first Covid-19 wave, the municipality launched an "Open Space" program,[8] intended to foster sustainable mobility, increase the number and distribution of open public spaces, and improve greenery and nearby services by using tools belonging to the tactical urbanism domain, with quick, economic, flexible interventions involving the participation of local communities. A specific branch of the program, named "A stare", used TU as a means to quickly provide new public spaces and equip existing ones for physical well-being, sporting activities, and food takeaway and consumption, with specifically intensified activities around target neighborhood congregation spots, like schools, parishes and socio-cultural hubs.

Lungomare San Cataldo is a valuable piece of coastline right to the west of the urban historical center, in a vibrant neighborhood sharing the same toponym and characterized by the presence of events like the "Fiera del Levante", a district fair funded since the 1930s and known for hosting national and international events throughout the second part of the twentieth century. Here, the linear public space of the coastline, extending for about 1 km, has

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[8]   See https://www.comune.bari.it/-/bari-open-space-presentato-il-programma -di-interventi-sulla-mobilita-sostenibile-e-sullo-spazio-pubblico.

always been dramatically underused, compared with the potential of the area in terms of environmental, urban and architectural qualities, as well as the density of population living nearby (Figure 12.3).
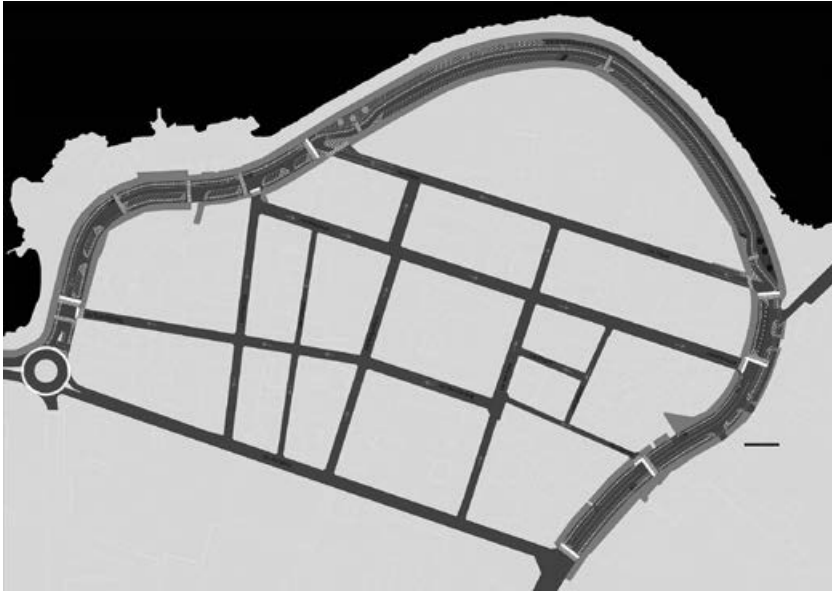
Source: Authors.

Figure 12.3 *The intervention extension around the San Cataldo peninsula, in Bari*

The transformation process began in 2020 with several participatory meetings with the neighborhood. Despite wide agreement on the need for a redevelopment of the waterfront, the possibility of total pedestrianization was not as popular among the participants. An experimental compromise was then preferred, with a reduction in the load and speed of vehicular traffic and a different displacement of the parking slots in order to increase pedestrian space and create a new bike lane right on the seaside (Figure 12.4).

After the conclusion of the participatory phase, the intervention was, unfortunately, postponed several times due to the first waves of the Covid-19 pandemic. The municipality's priority was, in fact, to co-realize the intervention with the citizens' communities in order to build affection for the project and a sense of belonging to the new identity of the place, but such a tight interaction in person was impossible, for well-known reasons, throughout all of 2020. Finally, after several stops and starts, the municipality was forced to realize

Source: Authors.

Figure 12.4   *View from the road of the intervention in Lungomare San Cataldo in Bari*

the intervention autonomously, with no possible inclusion of the citizens, and relying on a company through classical public procurement procedures instead.

This lack of interaction in the executive phase of the tactical intervention is probably the main cause of a first, partial rejection of the new vehicular traffic layout by the neighborhood during the first test phase. Luckily, the tactical nature of the experiment allowed for some adjustments in the geometry of the bike lane for easier management of vehicular flow, leading to a further test phase that proved successful.

Unexpectedly, this experiment provided the value of tactical urbanism, by experimenting with trial-and-error dynamics in participatory practices, and moreover in a very short period of time. Currently, after just three years and having completed its temporary phase, the intervention is being planned to be converted into permanent form thanks to future works on the area. Such an apparently favorable conclusion, however, masks some criticalities. Due to the discontinuous progress of the experiment, some furniture additions (like calisthenic and playground elements) planned in the tactical phase were postponed to the forthcoming permanent works phase. But the transient period of the intervention has already been extended longer than originally planned, given the complexity of such an integrated action that will impact the waterfront of the whole district, including the wider landscape, raising mobility issues and generating high social expectations due to the relevance of the urban context.

As a result of these multiple fractures in the whole process, the site is currently in a suspended phase, never actually completed as tactical nor really started as permanent. This has probably caused some dispersion in the potential strength of the process and the consequent, overall impact of the process, yet the site has already improved relevance and is densely used by citizens.

12.4 GOOD PRACTICES (AND SOME AFTERTHOUGHTS)

12.4.1 Lost (and Found) in Translation: Three Tactical Squares Made Permanent in Milan

Among the 40 and more Piazze Aperte realized in Milan within the program, there are some that can specifically be considered mature processes, having completed their life cycle from tactical – and therefore inherently temporary – experiments, to permanent transformations, realized under the classical procedures of public works.[9]

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[9] The webpage dedicated to Piazze Aperte can be found at the following link. By opening the tab "Dall'urbanistica tattica alla trasformazione permanente" it

Three of these spaces are piazza Dergano in Dergano district, piazza Angilberto II (N) in Corvetto and piazza Belloveso (N) in Niguarda, three semi-peripheral districts distributed all around the city center, in the northern, south-eastern and north-western sectors (Figures 12.5–12.7). The tactical phases of the three interventions all belonged to the first cycle of Piazze Aperte, realized between 2018 and 2019, and were therefore the first three to pass to the following phase.

Source: Authors.

Figure 12.5   Final stage of piazza Dergano intervention in Milan

The final step involved large, underground tree plantings with appropriate irrigation, an adjusted lighting system, an optimized disposition of furniture, ground repaving with stone and gravel materials and the final removal of all the existing architectural barriers to allow full access to people with impairements, children and the elderly.

Further relevant advantages of such completion phases are the possibility to extend the permeable areas of the ground by installing wide flowerbeds and

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is possible to read the list of squares that have already been made permanent or are currently in the process of being transformed in such a direction: https://www .comune.milano.it/aree-tematiche/quartieri/piano-quartieri/piazze-aperte.

Source: Authors.

Figure 12.6   Final stage of piazza Angilberto intervention in Milan

Source: Authors.

Figure 12.7   Final stage of piazza Belloveso intervention in Milan

replacing asphalt with semi-permeable finishing layers, which can also match the dominant colors in the neighborhood along with their traditional materials (an element that had emerged as critical during public debates in cases like piazza Belloveso, deeply nested in the old, rooted identity of Niguarda).

12.4.2   How We Learned (It Is Possible) to Stop Worrying and Love the Rainbow: Piazza Spoleto in Milan

A related but different example of good practice may be the case of piazza Spoleto-Venini. This involved the pedestrianization of an amoeba-shaped area in the center of a multiple crossroads in the North-Loreto ("NoLo") district. The intervention, also realized in 2018–19, was aimed at solving, at the same time, the problem of the hazardous nature of the original crossroads for pedestrians (due to its large, undifferentiated asphalt area, where crossing rules were quite puzzling to interpret for any kind of street user, including cars) and the lack of proximity space for an elementary school directly facing the street with only a narrow sidewalk to allow access for children and families at entry and exit times. The new pedestrian space, with its bubbly shape, bright thick color fields of yellow and pale blue with matching furniture, and several potted trees, was an immediate success (Figure 12.8). Day by day it became a significant center of the neighborhood, acquiring a new toponym coined by the school children ("piazza Arcobalena", translating as "Rainbow square") and progressively giving a new boost to the once sleepy economy of the surrounding shops and ultimately entering the imaginary and identity of that part of the city, to the point that the municipality is evaluating the possibility of extending the "tactical" phase for this case, as its visual appeal is considered one of the main reasons for its success.[10]

These apparently similar happy endings actually reveal some final considerations that must be made to complete the picture of the externalities and side effects we are now beginning to observe in such experiments.

From one perspective, if the permanent versions of the tactical squares acquire indisputably higher value by solving the social, technical and environmental issues mentioned above that necessarily require classical works and harder engineering procedures, they will also probably lose some aesthetic quality by conforming to the traditional design "norms", typically blending into the background of the urban landscape and abandoning any appearance of

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[10]   To the point that, in 2021, the municipality chose to use a second EIT Urban Mobility funding to consolidate the ground surface painting with an experimental composition of more durable materials in order to extend the life cycle of the square in its tactical configuration to a maximum of five further years.

Source: Authors.

Figure 12.8   Piazza Spoleto (piazza Arcobalena) intervention in Milan

fresh, "pop" or "bold" design solutions. That poses the danger of neglecting new horizons where urban design and public art could merge harmoniously with public spatial quality.

From the other side though, it may be that this problem is unique to piazza Arcobalena, placed in the core of a district that is itself part of a wider transformative process centered around the priority of entertainment and nightlife, and therefore mainly preferred by young people and prone to very quick processes of gentrification.[11] Piazza Spoleto has become a symbol of contradiction and a place of explicit user conflict in the latest history of the city, lining up residents and city users against each other[12] in the interpretation of the best use of the area, as the place is now overcrowded during both day and nighttime. Piazza Spoleto is still evolving, suspended between experimentalism

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[11]   Interesting research on the topic in English may be found in Lecci and Oberti (2021) and Mugnano et al. (2022).

[12]   Some emblematic news articles may be found at https://www.mitomorrow .it/online/ultime/nolo-milano-residenti-movida/; https://milano.corriere.it/notizie/ cronaca/ 19_settembre_12/ nolo -nuova -piazza -colorata -via -venini -spoleto -isola -pedonale-fa-discutere-periferie-divise-817af904-d522-11e9-8969-5b23f308f7f4 .shtml; https://www.labsus.org/un-patto-per-piazza-spoleto/.

and domesticity, between its appeal to the aggressiveness of the Milanese real estate market and the need to find a compromise between economic dynamism and universal livability.

12.5   CONCLUSIONS

At the end of this brief overview of cases in two emblematic Italian cities it is possible to draw some general reflections on the use of TU interventions in urban regeneration policies promoted by public institutions rather than initiated by the community. From the cases analyzed, such as piazza Minniti in Milan, it is clear that temporary interventions are not really an alternative to traditional long-term physical transformation processes of public spaces. However, they can represent a useful integration of traditional methods and for small-scale interventions they can represent the initial step, as demonstrated by the cases described earlier in this chapter. As already said by Vallance and Edwards (2021), tactical urbanism might usefully serve to enrich orthodox planning and make it more lively.

As hypothesized by the Urban Maestro Team,[13] we have seen in the analyzed cases, such as the Lungomare san Cataldo in Bari and all the cases in Milan, that synergies between such tools have the potential to make both approaches more effective in attaining their desired outcomes. The cases in Milan demonstrate as already noted in other national contexts (ANRU 2021, pp. 7–8) that the temporary transformations of disused, abandoned or badly used spaces can provide space for local social initiatives and activities, test or prototype reversible solutions, and offer new supports for local urban and social management.

Besides these considerations, analyzing deeply the cases, we can say that, as in piazza Minniti in Milan, TU interventions carried out by public administrations must be monitored even more frequently than traditional ones. The greater "volatility" of TU interventions and their overall cost-effectiveness compared with traditional interventions, if appropriately planned and discussed with the wider community, can be an opportunity for a review of the forms and uses of these spaces, thus keeping them at the center of continuous dynamics of socialization while reducing the risk of obsolescence.

It must not be forgotten that these interventions, precisely because of their cost-effectiveness, may have a limited duration, so it is necessary to think about their use within this temporary logic. Judging the results using traditional categories such as "duration" is misleading for these types of TU interventions.

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[13]   See https://urbanmaestro.org/about/.

Reflecting on the results of the intervention for the Lungomare san Cataldo in Bari, a tactical urbanism intervention neither completed nor transformed into permanent form in public space, we can see the risks, always present, of a work left half-finished. In the case of a TU intervention this risk increases compared with a traditional intervention because it makes the new uses envisaged by the temporary TU project difficult to read, making the pedestrian and cycle traffic less safe in this case.

It may be useful to always maintain a high level of involvement of the population because during the testing of the TU project new needs may emerge to the point of making it necessary to review the choices made and improve the refinement of the intervention before making it definitive. With reference to the peculiarity of the Italian case (but this example can be widened to all those regions that Europe defines as included in Objective 1 of Cohesion Policies), where the differences between north and south are still significant, the case of Bari highlights that in southern Italy, where public offices often suffer from a less efficient organization often due to a lack of adequately trained and competent public employees, the monitoring and the maintenance of these spaces risks being neglected, accentuating the common difficulties of an intervention left incomplete.

In conclusion, the value of temporary urban design solutions and their ability to integrate traditional ones seems confirmed by the cases analyzed. Also confirmed is the need to continue analyzing the results of the numerous TU projects currently underway, to understand them better, orient, strengthen and renew the methods for involving residents and users of the multiple phases of urban transformation (design thinking, participatory projects, etc.), and to increase connections with the various actors in the territory at different urban scales (cultural actors, associations and organizations dedicated to social housing, developers, public land bodies, temporary urban planning promoters, creative groups of inhabitants and users, city councils, neighborhood residents etc.). In this way, as far as case analysis has taught us, the ambition of TU projects can be increased and, by testing and therefore prefiguring future more permanent uses, TU can improve the whole process of urban planning.

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13. Our City, Our Scene: activating public spaces in urban neighborhoods through grassroots initiatives in Skopje

Stefan Lazarevski and Divna Pencic

13.1 INTRODUCTION

The development of civil society in the post-socialist world became a central focus during the processes of democratization, decentralization and, in the European context, Europeanization of the socio-political system and structure. It was in stark contrast to what Hayek (1988) refers to as the "fatal conceit", the fundamental feature of societies built on socialist theories, thus elevating the democratic processes in civil societies as the only acceptable model that promotes peace and stability.

In former Yugoslavia, the political and legal framework did not provide a foundation for development of civil society, in terms of a separate sphere between the state and the market. However, the necessity of achieving social cohesion[1] was acknowledged and consequently different forms of self-management were allowed, if not encouraged. Workers and local self-management teams, as well as a number of social organizations, sprang up, in particular after the reforms in 1965 and 1974, when centrally driven socio-economic planning transitioned from the Soviet planning model to a market-led model and then towards bureaucracy and the so-called bargaining model in terms of resource allocation. However, there was limited to no civil engagement in the decision-making processes, but rather management forms suitable for the peculiar socio-political system in Yugoslavia. Post-Tito,

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[1]   Social cohesion according to Bežovan (2004) is a necessary precondition for successful collective action if is based on mutual respect. This is why, in his definition of civil society, he adds another sphere (besides market and state) – the family, interlinking them by series of mutually shared civil rights.

reforms were designed on the premises of liberal pro-Western narrative, but the effort was wholly directed towards stabilizing the weakened state economy, with limited socio-spatial implications.

Stojanovski (2018) argues that, during the communist rule (1945–1991) in former Yugoslavia and thus in Macedonia, this excessive level of centralization had produced strong state-centric traditions, resulting in "suppressive engagement and social activity, directing expectations exclusively towards the State". Consequently, the fall of the communist regime in the 1990s resulted in what Simonida Kacarska (quoted in Markovic 2010) calls a "beheaded mass of clients of former state socialism" that had transitioned to capitalist and democratic society without the knowledge, self-drive and means to engage, initiate and organize in order to build sound public discourse. In the post-Soviet countries, emerging from the so-called Eastern bloc during the 1990s and 2000s, the effort to build and develop the two positive externalities of a distinctive civil society – social capital and public discourse (Dekker and Broek 1998) – was driven by various NGOs. The development of what many scholars refer to as features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit (Putnam 1995; Newton 1996; Whiteley 1996) was directed primarily towards elevating the "degree of civic community". As a result, the density of horizontal social relationships exploded during the post-communist era and, in the Macedonian context, in particular after the Kosovo crisis in 1999 and the domestic civil conflict in 2001, the number of civic organizations grew significantly. However, the quantity did not reflect the quality of these organizations, that is, the social capital and the development of the public discourse in terms of what Wuthnow and Anheier (1991) describe as "the ability of a society to articulate collective values, to reflect upon social problems, and to develop political goals". Many studies and much research[2] have shown that the main shortcomings of the NGOs in the post-communist countries were the lack of self-sustainability and high dependency on foreign donations, which in essence made these organizations responsible in their acting not towards the citizens but towards their donors; the commercialization, elitism and bureaucratization of NGOs ultimately led to a lack of transparency in

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[2]   2016 Index of sustainability of civil organizations – Macedonia (https://www .balkancsd .net/ novo/ wp -content/ uploads/ 2017/ 08/ 11 -2b -USAID -CSOSI -2016 -Macedonia_mk_FINAL.pdf, retrieved 10.6.2023); Strategy for cooperation of the government with the civil sector 2012–2017 (http://fiskalnatransparentnost.org.mk/ upload/ pdf/ nacionalna %20pravna %20ramka/ gragjansko %20ucestvo/ izvrshna %20vlast/Strategija_za_sorabotka_na_Vladata_so_graganskiot_sektor2012-2017 .pdf, retrieved 10.6.2023).

their operations. All these aspects hindered the impact of civil society on the democratic process. This is what some scholars (Friedmann 2010; Almond and Verba 1989; Inglehart 1990; Brady et al. 1995; Dekker and Broek 1998) often refer to as the differential role of civil society – the ability of society to build autonomous social organizations that lie beyond the direct control of the state and, more specifically, social organizations that actively participate in debates over public issues. To paraphrase Fukuyama (2001), there is direct correlation between weak social trust and public discourse and strong political centralization, thus effectively coinciding with the findings of Stojanovski (2018) within the local Macedonian context.

13.2   LOCAL CONTEXT

The development of civil society in the Macedonian socio-political system has been ongoing over the last 30 years. A number of studies and research papers[3] have shown a direct correlation between the political and economic insecurities of Macedonian society (including the cultural and historic background) and the level of citizen engagement and participation. While the conflict in 2001 had sped up the implementation of a legal framework for more effective citizen engagement, the participation itself was the object of intense interest of various NGOs and other citizen organizations. Over the years, citizen engagement improved as plural democracy settled in; however, although a variety of instruments (public hearings, surveys, debates, budget ideation, projects, etc.) had been made available for the broad population, citizen participation has exemplified a somewhat slow pace of improvement. Stojanovski (2018) underlines the lack of professionals involved within the organizational structure of NGOs, as well as the overwhelming focus on certain "hot" topics deliberated in terms of a global ideological construct as opposed to the local socio-political, economic and spatial context. In some cases, noticeable political affiliation and exaggerated individualization of the organizations have raised questions over transparency, motivation and purpose of their operation. Leshkoska et al. (2016) suggest that the high level of unemployment and increased migration trends among the younger demographics appeared to be a key factor in lower citizen participation and willingness to volunteer time and resources for public good. According to a study for civic engagement in Macedonia, between 2012 and 2016, about a fifth of the citizens had donated their time to so-called traditional volunteering, about a third of the population had participated in some sort of initiative for the common

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3   Leshkoska et al. (2016); Klekovski et al. (2008); Korunovska-Srbijanko et al. (2011); Gallup (2011, 2016).

good and about a third had contacted the municipality in an attempt to settle an issue.[4] A similar study on civic engagement in 2021[5] shows even worse outcomes, as "every fifth citizen reported he/she has participated in civic initiatives during 2019, accounting for a decrease by nearly 10% compared to the period 2012–2016".[6] Utilizing a reverse analogy of Dekker and Broek (1998), such a low degree of willingness to join collective actions, to associate oneself with an initiative or to commit and debate over an public issue are features of underdeveloped civil society, where social capital and public discourse are weak. Cacanoska (2010) argues that because the "development of the civil sector is rather slow it is an inappropriate and insufficient base for the creation of social capital in Macedonian society". The crucial reasons for this, she adds, is the modest trust of the citizens in the institutions of the system and an insufficiently developed and active network of the civil sector. This is why, according to the same study in 2021, only 14 percent thought that they had great influence on decisions taken at their respective municipalities as opposed to 86 percent who thought they had little to no influence whatsoever. Here it is worth noticing another common dichotomy when it comes to countries in transition. Baric and Dobric (2012) point out that while horizontal relationships in social capital are expected to provide connections and obvious benefit in terms of building a sense of community, sometimes (and this is more profound in transitional countries) it can restrict access to information and material resources to non-members of the group, thus mutating into social capital that provides the function of connection without the purpose of bringing closer.

The findings of the level of citizen participation in Macedonia, however, are in stark contrast to another indicator, which according to many scholars is highly dependent on the personal investment and commitment of an individual to a public good – the so-called sense of belonging. Both of the previously mentioned studies (2012–2016 and 2021) show a relatively high and steady percentage of those with a strong sense of belonging to their place of residence, from 75.5 percent in 2012, a slight decrease in 2016 to 63.3 percent and 65 percent in 2021. In 2021, only 4 percent of citizens felt no sense of belonging and 9 percent a weak sense of belonging, with most of the negative answers falling into the bracket of younger demographics – 16- to 29-year-olds. This raises the question of what drives people to have a sense of belonging if their voice is not heard and they lack the will to participate.

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[4] Leshkoska et al. (2016), pp. 6–7.
[5] Naumovska et al. (2021), p. 32.
[6] The context for this study is the Covid-19 pandemic and the consequent restrictions imposed.

In their definition of sense of belonging McMillan and Chavis (1986)[7] refer to a sense of community. There are two elements that are obviously missing in the Macedonian context: *influence* as a sense of making a difference in the community and *integration or fulfillment of needs* when the latter is measured by the resources received through their membership. This leads us to the elements of *membership* as sense of personal relatedness and *shared emotional connection* as belief that all the members share the same history, common places, time together and experiences. Further, McMillan and Chavis (1986) argue that membership is derived from the notion of boundaries, which in principle could differ in their physical and mental nature, as well as temporal dimension, but are in particular relevant for the spatial implication. Historically, Macedonian cities developed organically with a house/street/neighborhood unit as a construction block. In the case of Skopje, the sense of community has also been affected by migration. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries strong rural to urban migrations took place, which ultimately were reflected in the names of many neighborhoods of the city, thus mirroring the inhabitants' place of origin, ethnic groups, family ties, professional background, etc. Naturally, the notion of boundaries is inherited in the mental image of the place, thus strengthening the sense of membership.

The second element – shared emotional connection – is derived from interactions between the members, assessed by their type, quality, frequency, outcomes, personal investment, etc. These interactions, however, are horizontal as they unify groups with certain economic, educational, social, cultural and even ethnic backgrounds, and depend on the mutual trust and willingness to devote one's personal time for public good. Consequently, the most explicit evidence of vertical imbalance is found in the express motives and social norms of engagement, behind one's involvement in citizens' participation. The research study of Naumovska et al. (2021) found that, in the Macedonian context, the personal responsibility and drive for citizens' participation is directly linked to the educational and social background of the citizens, with almost 68 percent of the active citizens having graduate or postgraduate education degrees and an increasing engagement rate for the higher income strata of the population. From this perspective, it becomes evident that what Dekker and Broek (1998) describe as modern individualism, founded on self-realization and responsibility, is driving the personal motivation of this group for civic participation and social responsibility. At the same time, if we observe the age groups most

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7   McMillan and Chavis (1986, p. 9) define the sense of community as "a feeling that members have belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together".

involved in diverse citizens' initiatives – the 16- to 19-year-olds – it becomes evident that since they have not finished their graduate and postgraduate education, there are other factors having a bearing on their personal motivation. In this context, Dekker and Broek (1998) argue that the goods generated by civil society can be typified as resting on purely private, solidaristic or public bases, which ultimately drives the types of citizen participation people are involved in.

Here, it is worth noting that the heuristic approach to establishing a sense of belonging is also important, although it is possible if sufficient personal experience and knowledge is accumulated. Consequently, it will be tempting to approximate a stance that citizens of older age groups would primarily get involved in citizen engagement processes, while the younger population, which seems to be ever more mobile and not necessarily place-attached, would be prone to citizen participation. While this notion needs further research, it is certainly the case for the context of Skopje, where the last couple of decades have shown that the younger generations appropriate the strategies of confrontational and/or constructive activism, whereas the older engage in so-called contact activism.[8] These aspects show that the citizens in the Macedonian context build their sense of belonging primarily on the spatial and emotional notion of community.

13.3   OUR CITY, OUR SCENE

"Our City, Our Scene" is a grassroots citizens' initiative, that showcases how small and creative interventions in public spaces can revive left-over spaces in the city and contribute to building cohesive neighborhoods. This initiative was part of a regional project extending to four Balkan cities[9] with the overarching goal to involve the local community at the smallest of scales in the city by means of tactical urbanism and urban art. These activities within the program are scaled down to neighborhood level with the objective to establish a good practice policy of urban regeneration, shared through an exchange network of experiences in the region of the Balkans. The supportive human capital includes

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[8]   These strategies in citizen activism are described here as per the definition given in Leshkoska et al. (2016).

[9]   Our City, Our Scene is an initiative that is implemented through a partnership between the Arh Komuna – Center for Architecture and Culture in Podgorica, Montenegro; Center for Environment in Banja Luka, Republic of Srpska; the Belgrade Flower Festival in Serbia; and the Coalition for Sustainable Development in Skopje, North Macedonia. The project is funded by the Balkan Arts and Culture Fund – BAC and is supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation – SADC and the European Cultural Foundation – ECF.

local citizens, young professionals, and artists, as well as representatives of local authorities (in a personal capacity) in order to facilitate the process and provide initial logistics. As part of this citizen initiative, an interactive internet platform was set up, in order to provide easy mapping of the sites, identification of their shortcomings, the needs of the citizens, involvement of the professionals and information dissemination for the participants. The main objective of the initiative was to strengthen the sense of belonging in one's community, to proliferate the social networks and ultimately to help build or strengthen the existing cultural identity among different neighborhoods in the city.

The fundamental principles that this particular project was grounded on were: the need for the public spaces to reflect the common values of the inhabitants; the need to promote active engagement rather than mere observance; and the need for the public space to be scaled up and flexible, in terms of accommodation of everyday needs, primarily of the immediate inhabitants, as well as with a more heuristic meaning, to showcase in a small scale project that simple interventions by the citizens themselves could raise awareness of the professional community and local administration on the importance of public space in the urban environment. The added value of such low-key citizens' place-based engagement was promotion of collective action, through an approach that was clearly aiming at harnessing the personal, private motives for volunteering.

These principles can be backed by the findings of a study[10] conducted by the Faculty of Architecture in 2018 about the public spaces in Skopje. While the initial goal of the report was to measure the quantitative and qualitative parameters of public spaces in the municipality of Center – Skopje, as defined by SDG 11 and Target 11.7,[11] thus exemplifying how UN development policies could be based on scientific data, it also shed light on the current state of the public spaces: material quality, access and flow, safety and comfort, activity and use, etc. The study concluded that the functionality aspect of the public spaces is primarily determined by the distribution and evolution of planned services and non-housing functions; the users usually adapt their patterns of movement and use of the space as permitted by the motorized traffic and parking, the quality of materials used for the public places, and urban equip-

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[10]   Marina et al. (2018).

[11]   Target 11.7 within the UN SDG 11, states: "By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disability." The study for the city of Skopje featured measurement of indicator 11.7.1: average share of the built-up area of cities that is open space for public use for all, by sex, age and persons with disabilities.

ment installed. This is decided ad hoc by the designers, while the maintenance and collecting of waste is determined by the organizational capacities of the municipalities. These conclusions highlighted the lack of a unified "urban policy document regarding the provision, planning, designing, editing and managing of public spaces" (Marina et al. 2018, p. 57). Some of the key recommendations of the study were to establish open channels of communication with the citizens, to disseminate information and provision of opportunities for greater citizen involvement in decision-making, and to provide the authorities with the means to create sustainable urban policies. The initiative Our City, Our Scene addressed exactly these aspects of place-making, thus promoting an amalgam of constructive and passive confrontational activism, by enhancing the act of volunteering and reclaiming the commons from the authorities.

The site of interventions by the Our City, Our Scene team is located in the central parts of the city of Skopje, in an urban block better known as "Golem Ring Zapad – Dom na Gradezhnici" (Figure 13.1). The case study was not chosen lightly; it had historic and cultural meaning for the citizens and it would prove that protection of public space is possible beyond legal forms of participation. Following a devastating earthquake in 1963, these types of urban blocks were designed with a distinctive urban composition that was envisioned for the inner-city area of Skopje in a 1967 project by the Japanese architect and urban planner Kenzo Tange. The block, which later became known as the City Wall, comprised medium- and high-rise residential buildings, organized in a semi-permeable urban block, located on the fringes of an urban conglomerate known as the Large Ring. In fact, the design anticipated residential structure for nearly 8,000 inhabitants, occupying 1,814 apartments, varying in their typology and size. Being centrally located, in order to sustain the efficient use of land, the planners opted for a combination of 45m high towers, located in the back of the block as densifiers, and 24m high blocks organized in the front parts of the block. The key features of these blocks are typical in such perimeter blocks: public fronts (usually on the ground floor and mezzanine), facing a major traffic infrastructure, and private backs, usually designed for parks, parking, playground corners and even mixed-use zones. Because the Large Ring block was designed large in plan and because its composition was determined also by the left-over urban morphology from the traditional city, some service streets needed to be introduced in between the blocks to provide motorized access for the residential and commercial units. Nevertheless, such interventions at the time served the purpose of easy access and steady traffic flow without compromising on the quality of the planned public space. Consequently, the main objective of the perimeter blocks to transform the left-over space – such as the streets, the squares, and the parks, and to turn a few of them into positive urban spaces – was feasible. However, while such a concept was applicable during the socialist era of publicly owned
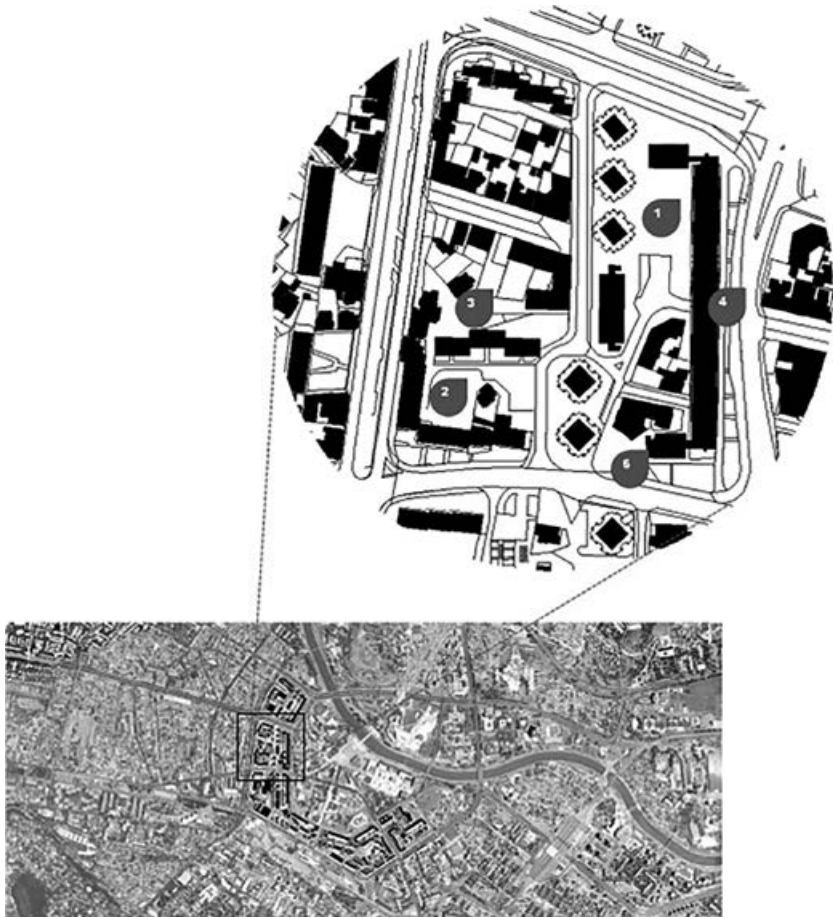
Note: Site analysis - Location, Gradski zid-Dom na gradeznici: 1. Playground A; 2. Playground B; 3. Pedestrian Pathway; 4. Pavement of Mixed-use Street; 5. Piazza.
Source: Korobar et al. (2018).

Figure 13.1   Site analysis – location

land, the transition to capitalism and private property meant that further urban development along these lines was more difficult. By the 1990s, although this urban scheme was largely completed, denationalization and so-called "investors urbanism" (Pencic and Lazarevski 2018) put the entire concept at risk, by increasing densities through urban infills and roof reconstructions, and also by reducing the common space via legal instruments such as land acquisition for

construction. In addition, the lack of efficient public transportation in the city further endorsed the use of private cars, thus jeopardizing the so-called private realm within the blocks. A study on the public space in Skopje (Korobar et al. 2018) showed that the quality of the open public space within the City Wall had been seriously diminished by the excessive urbanization as nearly 63 percent of the total surface was allocated to streets and pavements, as opposed to just over 11 percent dedicated to parks and green areas. The same study found that, while there were two major factors that controlled and safeguarded the development and maintenance of the public spaces – the detailed urban plan provisions and by-law standards on one side and the public investments on the other – they were either inefficient in preserving the existent public space or in some cases complicit in their reduction. Another concerning finding of the study was the prevalent mistrust between the citizens and local institutions: the former considered the authorities unresponsive, closed and dominantly protecting the private sector while the latter underlined the lack of participation in legal instruments beyond "personal, individualized interests".

In June 2017, a workshop within the Our City, Our Scene initiative was conceived as an impromptu intervention with the clear intention of showcasing the soft power of tactical urbanism and citizens' engagement in appropriating the existing public space from vehicles, over-commercialization and neglect of the authorities. The goal of the workshop was to gather the professional community and the local citizens together in an attempt to revamp an existing playground site by means of short-term place-making interventions such as cleaning, painting, decorating, instalment of temporary urban equipment and activating the place by short-term programs. The initiative was a clear bottom-up approach that was multifaceted in its deliberation: criticism towards the institutional inactivity in preserving the public space, development of immediate solutions for a particular problem through low-cost interventions, citizens' engagement through volunteering, etc.

The site for interventions was a children's playground corner and residents' parking site, located in the south-western parts of the "Golem Ring Zapad – Dom na Gradezhnici" urban block (Figure 13.2). The site covers an area of roughly 1000m^2 and is highly protected by a dense tree canopy; it is divided into a traffic area (occupied by cars of the local residents) and centrally located children's playground, furnished with partially torn down, although relatively new, play equipment (swings, slides and wooden house with climbing wall). The analysis of the site (Marina et al. 2018) showed that the playground had a high rate of active users[12] (although low in absolute numbers), which was due

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[12]   For the purposes of site analysis, active users are considered users of public space who are fully engaged and spend time at the place, as opposed to passive users, who are merely passing by/through the public space.

Source: Authors.

Figure 13.2   Site analysis

to its secluded location and relatively obscured access (only two access points – one through the service road for the parking area and one through a passageway from the perimeter street). The location itself contributes to a very high level of safety and security for the local users and children in particular. This was evident by the demographic structure of active users, falling in the group 15- to 64-year-olds. However, in spite of such favorable conditions, the site was underused by the local inhabitants and increasingly appropriated by motorized vehicles for parking purposes. These factors were the trigger to take action and showcase the potential of direct citizens' engagement in reclaiming their public space (Figure 13.3).

Following a public call for participation, shared through social media, many artists, architects, students, local inhabitants, members of the municipal council and interested citizens responded positively and took part in the guerilla DIY action (Figures 13.4 and 13.5). By cleaning up the place and repairing the installed equipment, and with artistic interventions in the space and activation by programming, the workshop managed to engage the community members and to build up political pressure on the local representatives. The socio-demographic structure of the participants was highly diverse, thus exemplifying that such local projects are equitable and inclusive as they promote civic actions for universal urban needs.

After this workshop, several celebrations, parties and gatherings took place on the playground, which effectively proved that enhancing place-making
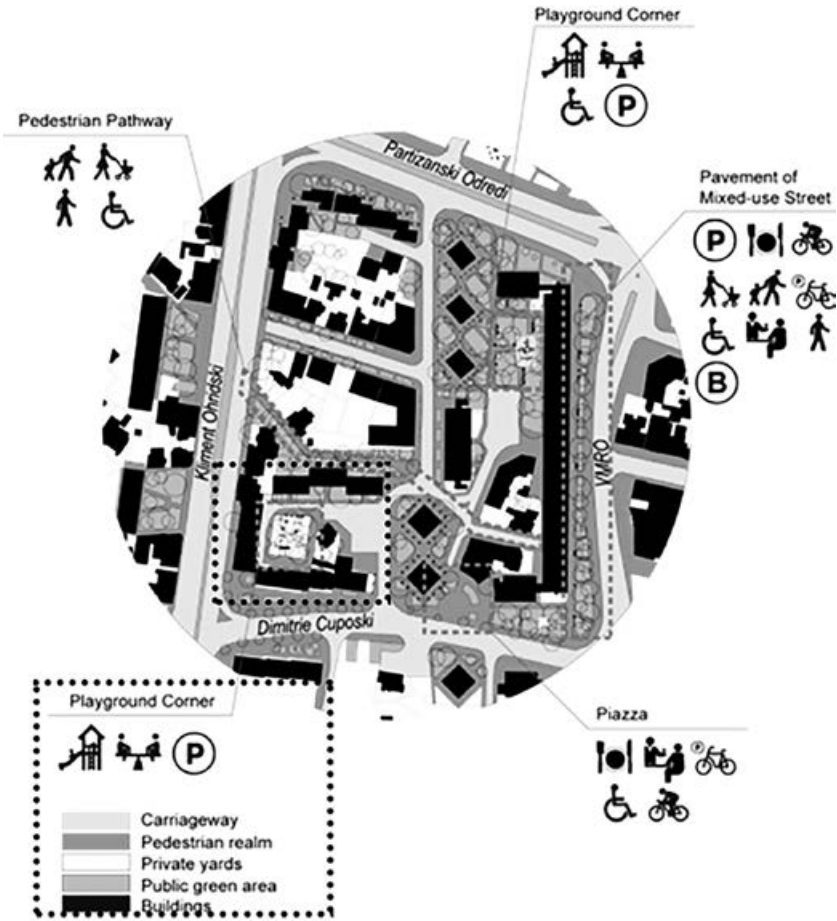
Figure 13.3   Site analysis – use distribution

through low-key means of tactical urbanism is possible and, what is more, it contributes to strengthening citizens' sense of belonging to the neighborhood (Figures 13.6 and 13.7).

In the aftermath of the workshop, other informal groups of citizens followed the same tactic to activate left-over places in their respective neighborhoods with somewhat mixed success. The common denominator of all these actions was their ability to address the inertia of the citizens, passively to confront the local authorities and temporarily to reclaim the public space by means of soft

Source: Authors.

Figure 13.4   Site, prior to intervention

Source: Authors.

Figure 13.5   Site, after intervention

place-making. In essence, these grassroots initiatives for citizen engagement challenged the state-centric traditions within the Macedonian context and questioned the traditional policy-making.

Source: Authors.

Figure 13.6   Evening party, informal use of space

Source: Authors.

Figure 13.7   Evening party, informal use of space

13.4   CONCLUSION

The workshop in the "Golem Ring Zapad – Dom na Gradezhnici" urban block organized by Our City, Our Scene showcased the power of place-based civic

engagement and has set examples to be followed for effective neighborhood social cohesion. While the interventions were temporary, the final outcome was measured through building stronger social capital and community trust among its members (Verba et al. 1995) and ultimately in increasing community resilience by building social networks and by promoting collective action (Collins et al. 2011; Putnam 2000). In the case of Skopje, this type of citizens' engagement had an added value in passively confronting the local authorities, thus putting pressure on the elected representatives to engage with the local communities in policy-making and reestablishing institutional trust.

By utilizing the methods of tactical urbanism, citizens in Skopje exemplified the potential of alternative political debate, grounded in participatory democracy. Such low-cost, incremental interventions that improve livability support the notion that urban places need continuous reiterative social practices so they remain alive and active. The use of tactical urbanism in Skopje was not institutionalized; it was an ad hoc event, an example of take action now and ask for forgiveness later, thus cutting through bureaucracy and "engineering populist swell" (Webb 2017). In parts of the academic discourse, this approach is contested as it challenges the cumulative and deliberative nature of democratic institutions, without anticipating the larger picture of socio-spatial development. While some criticize the scale of interventions and their temporal dimension, as well as their role in undermining the state in already established planning processes (Brenner et al. 2011), others question the inclusiveness of the initiatives and motives of the participants, as the majority of them are well educated, wealthy and privileged individuals (Douglas 2018), thus reinforcing the existent social inequality. The application of tactical urbanism strategy in the Skopje workshop, however, was not preconceived and structured to oppose the conventional participation instruments, nor to question the role of the state in the planning processes. Widespread institutional mistrust on the part of citizens had deterred them from taking part in already established forms of civic participation which effectively marginalized them from decision-making processes. The workshop aimed at engaging the citizens and triggering them to be proactive in activating the existent public spaces, but more importantly, by active participation in community-oriented projects its goal was to promote a sense of community belonging and attachment.

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14. Examining the inclusive potential of tactical urbanism projects: an analysis of two case studies from Germany and Greece

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14.1 INTRODUCTION

When thinking about solutions for sustainable urban development, it is vital to understand the concept of inclusive planning, which aims to take all dimensions of urban fabrics into account and to include every individual in the planning process. The aim of an inclusive planning process is to ensure that the priorities, needs and perspectives of all social groups are considered in the process to improve their living environment and their quality of life (Koirala 2019, pp. 14f.). Top-down planning, where professional planners determine the process, usually does not follow this aim, while bottom-up approaches take up and address the different community groups through the interaction of the group members (Koirala 2019, p. 15). As a tool that promotes civic engagement and the empowerment of a community (Andrade et al. 2021; Brenner 2015; Valjakka 2020), tactical urbanism projects, in which public space is briefly redesigned by citizens according to their own needs, became increasingly popular within bottom-up initiatives and urban planning itself (Mould 2014, p. 536; Yassin 2019, p. 254). However, there is little research on the impact of tactical urbanism projects on local planning processes and inclusive and sustainable design of urban spaces. Following Lydon and Garcia (2015) and Yassin (2019), this chapter argues that tactical urbanism can be a tool for bridging the gap between bottom-up and top-down approaches in planning, leading to more inclusive urban development. The questions that guide this research are:

- How can tactical urbanism projects connect bottom-up and top-down approaches in planning?

- How can tactical urbanism projects lead to more inclusive urban development processes?

The chapter focuses on the analysis and comparison of two case studies from Germany and Greece which consist of projects in public spaces organized by citizens and meet the criteria of tactical urbanism as described in section 14.2. Projects from different European countries were chosen to account for the fact that tactical urbanism is an international phenomenon that is still new in Europe with only little scientific research available (e.g. Angelidou 2019). As a case study from Germany, the project "Schützen Square – Neighbourhood Selfmade" by Casa Schützenplatz and three other civil society organizations in Stuttgart was chosen (Casa Schützenplatz e.V., n.d. a). The Greek case study concerns the creation of a pocket park in an urban void in the heart of Thessaloniki by the Alexandrou Svolou Neighbourhood Initiative (ASNI) (Iliopoulos and Litsardaki 2020). The analysis was conducted as a qualitative content analysis on the basis of desktop-based research including accessible sources of the respective projects on the internet. The criteria used for the analysis relate to the aim and outcome as well as the governance structure and instruments used in the case studies in order to answer the questions of what the project is about and who is implementing what with which method.

In the following, the chapter first defines tactical urbanism and its relation to bottom-up and top-down planning processes in section 14.2, followed by the analyses of the case studies from Germany and Greece in sections 14.3 and 14.4. In section 14.5 the results of the analysis are discussed and in section 14.6 the research questions are addressed.

14.2   WHAT IS TACTICAL URBANISM?

The term tactical urbanism goes back to the urban planner Mike Lydon (Mould 2014, p. 529) and has been increasingly used since 2010 (Silva 2016). Tactical urbanism has become more popular in recent years, which according to many authors is due to financial problems and the growing economic pressure on cities (Mould 2014, p. 536; Yassin 2019, p. 254) which can be seen in Germany and Greece (Angelidou 2019; Getimis et al. 2016, p. 41).

Tactical urbanism is often referred to as an "umbrella term" and applied to a wide range of urban interventions (Silva 2016). Various authors group DIY urbanism, guerilla urbanism and temporary urbanism under the term tactical urbanism (Silva 2016; Berglund 2019; Yassin 2019, p. 255), while others make a distinction (e.g. Lydon and Garcia 2015, pp. 6f.). Tactical urbanism is defined by Lydon and Garcia (2015, p. 2) as "an approach to neighbourhood building and activation using short-term, low-cost, and scalable interventions and policies". The term "tactical" within tactical urbanism is to be defined

within the context of small actions that contribute to a broader purpose (Lydon and Garcia 2015, p. 2). Tactical urbanism promises that it is flexible and adaptable to any context instead of being a one-size-fits-all solution (Lydon and Garcia 2015, p. 3). Thus, new innovations in urban planning are to be found, bringing new life to spaces (Lydon and Garcia 2015, pp. 3ff.). According to Silva (2016), tactical urbanism can happen on variable scales, generating temporary uses that are mostly informal (Silva 2016).

Within tactical urbanism, various actors with variable motivations and interests aim to transform urban spaces. It is not only attributable to citizens: "Tactical urbanism is used by a range of actors, including governments, business and non-profits, citizen groups, and individuals" (Lydon and Garcia 2015, p. 2). In addition, different processes of tactical urbanism are described: either the process is created bottom-up by the citizens and, if necessary, the city is involved later, or a project is implemented by the city to enable city-making from below, which runs within the city regulations, or a project starts in phase 0 of a planning process, is designed collaboratively and enables the testing of the actual planning in real life (Lydon and Garcia 2015, pp. 14ff.; Yassin 2019, pp. 255f.). However, different actors have varying goals in establishing tactical urbanism: for citizens, tactical urbanism is often a way to protest or get something done without having to wait for (local) government or administration (Lydon and Garcia 2015, p. 12; Yassin 2019, p. 255). This often presents possible solutions concerning outdated policy styles, or even a general improvement of an abandoned place (Lydon and Garcia 2015, p. 3). It is described that citizens also often operate in contexts where politics is overlooking the problems (Silva 2016). They take existing places and realize new uses (Silva 2016), also unlocking a place's radical potential (Webb 2018, p. 60). Thus, from the citizens' perspective, it is a direct, active response that offers the possibility of change for the better (Lydon and Garcia 2015, p. 12).

According to Yassin (2019), urban planning sees the potential of tactical urbanism in bringing citizens together with developers and the local government and administration through temporary actions, thus dissolving the fear of change through planning (Yassin 2019, pp. 255f.). Therefore, tactical urbanism is seen more as a chance to resolve a rising conflict within the official planning process in order to convince citizens of the benefits of a plan (Yassin 2019). The hope is to fill a gap in the planning system that the planners could not have foreseen (Lydon and Garcia 2015, p. 6). Through small interventions, a conversation is supposed to be enabled (Lydon and Garcia 2015, p. 4), which can fill the gap of bottom-up and top-down planning (Yassin 2019, p. 254). Temporary projects can be tested in the real world and thus, as an urban experiment, can also provide information for future developments (Yassin 2019, p. 256).

The promise of tactical urbanism filling the gap can be associated with current critiques of formal participation and the rise of co-productive processes. Frequent criticisms are that decision-making responsibility within participation processes is not clear (Vetter et al. 2013, p. 260) and that there are great differences in the given possibilities of influence by citizens within the process (Rosol and Dzudzek 2020, p. 329). This leads to unequal participation in these processes within the groups concerned (Vetter et al. 2013, pp. 259f.). The social distortion of the participants (Bödeker 2012, pp. 4f.) reduces the legitimacy of the participation processes and leads to a bias in participation (Ehlert et al. 2017, p. 22). Co-productive processes can be seen as a response, as they are a tool for more inclusive planning processes, promising to contribute to democratic legitimacy (Verschuere et al. 2018, p. 244). The general discussion about co-productive processes seems to lean towards co-production being associated with top-down processes and a more extensive participation (Verschuere et al. 2012, p. 1086). Watson (2014) contrasts co-production processes initiated by civil society actors and renders them more radical and outside of institutional frameworks (Watson 2014, pp. 71ff.). This definition adheres more to bottom-up processes and can be seen as similar to tactical urbanism.

In relation to terms like participation, co-production and social resilience, tactical urbanism is not only about aestheticizing spaces, but also about self-sufficiency and self-organization (Berglund 2019). Tactical urbanism is not about the emerging object at the end, but the process; the emergence and collective development is more important, which can also create a sustainable use of and attachment to the place. The focus is on the community that comes together to transform the specific place (Silva 2016; Mould 2014, p. 536). Through the formation of a community with a common goal, bonds and neighbourhood networks are formed that strengthen social cohesion and can lead to a more resilient urban neighbourhood (Andrade et al. 2021, pp. 36f.; Brenner 2015; Valjakka 2020).

14.3   TURNING AN INTERSECTION INTO A PARKLET IN STUTTGART, GERMANY

The case study showcasing tactical urbanism in Germany is the project "Schützen Square – Neighbourhood Selfmade" that was carried out at a square-like intersection named Schützenplatz in 2019. The square is in Kernerviertel, a residential area in the east of Stuttgart, a city of about 610,000 inhabitants in the south of Germany. The first draft plan for the redesign of the square was published by the city's administration in 2001 and 12 years later, after nothing had happened at all, the idea of a living lab on the intersection came up as a student project at the University of Stuttgart (Landeshauptstadt

Stuttgart, n.d.). In 2013, after the living lab was over, the citizens of the neighbourhood had organized themselves and gathered ideas to such an extent that the formal planning process was relaunched (Landeshauptstadt Stuttgart, n.d.). Inspired by the student project, the neighbourhood initiative Casa Schützenplatz was formed and together with three other civil society organizations created a parklet as a space for social and cultural encounters. The project took place for four and a half months and was prolonged to ten months to show how the residents would like to use the public space in the future when the planned rebuilding of the intersection is complete (Casa Schützenplatz e.V., n.d. a).

14.3.1 Aim and Outcome

One of the main goals of the project was to reclaim the public space of Schützen Square (Stadtmacher Archiv, n.d.). In the citizens' opinion, instead of parking spaces, the square should be of higher quality and provide a greater level of safety for pedestrians and cyclists (Landeshauptstadt Stuttgart, n.d.). This was achieved through a boundary of fences and mobile planters (Casa Schützenplatz e.V., n.d. b). Another goal of the project, to create space for leisure activities, was also achieved as a result of self-made furniture in the public space and the experimental testing of initial ideas by the residents (Stadtmacher Archiv, n.d.). Neighbours were able to get to know each other for the first time at joint breakfasts, and small concerts took place on a newly built stage (Rehman 2019). The project also aimed to promote neighbourly involvement and constructive exchange about the importance of public space for life in the city and to encourage civic engagement for all generations in the neighbourhood (Casa Schützenplatz e.V., n.d. a, n.d. b). This was achieved and permanently implemented by founding the citizen initiative Casa Schützenplatz (Casa Schützenplatz e.V., n.d. c). The experiences of the project have been compiled in a toolkit and made publicly available for other initiatives to carry out similar projects (Casa Schützenplatz e.V., n.d. b).

14.3.2 Governance

In order to be able to better organize and represent the interests of the citizens, the citizens' initiative Casa Schützenplatz was founded and continues to represent the interests beyond the duration of the project (Stadtmacher Archiv, n.d.). The initiative mediated and took over large parts of the communication between the citizens and the municipality (Landeshauptstadt Stuttgart, n.d.). The municipality itself took note of the interests and implemented the citizens' ideas for new solutions in the formal plan for the redesign of the square (Landeshauptstadt Stuttgart, n.d.). The municipality also tried to actively

involve citizens through participation formats (Landeshauptstadt Stuttgart, n.d.). Moreover, Casa Schützenplatz worked with three other civil society organizations in coordinating and carrying out the project "Schützen Square – Neighbourhood Selfmade" which contributed their knowledge and skills for designing the square (Casa Schützenplatz e.V., n.d. b).

14.3.3   Instruments

The project was carried out as an experiment and via cultural offerings as "gap fillers" between a design plan and a long-time realization (Stadtmacher Archiv, n.d.). Therefore, the citizens used a newly founded initiative to gather their interests. To do so, the initiative offered public sessions for first exchanges between the residents (Casa Schützenplatz e.V., n.d. a). The time of implementation was marked by joint building, painting, and planting activities and also monthly brunches (Casa Schützenplatz e.V., n.d. a; Stadtmacher Archiv, n.d.). After the opening celebration, the square was occupied by various local initiatives. In addition to the instruments that have been applied from the civil society side, the municipality used formal and informal participation processes to gather more information and exchange with the citizens (Landeshauptstadt Stuttgart, n.d.). Permits, political decisions and funding from public institutions were needed so that the project could be carried out legally (Stadtmacher Archiv, n.d.).

14.3.4   Bottom-Up and Top-Down

The project "Schützen Square – Neighbourhood Selfmade" has partly led to a networking of bottom-up and top-down processes. Here, the process initiated by the city of Stuttgart can be seen as a top-down process, as it was actively driven by a non-local actor. The students' living lab can also be classified here, even though this process was already more co-productive. Only the process of the Casa Schützenplatz initiative can be seen as bottom-up, as it was formed out of the neighbourhood. The city's top-down planning came to a standstill, as previously indicated, and could not be carried out due to various obstacles. The student project served as inspiration for further development of the square but did not lead to active change on the ground. The bottom-up initiative Casa Schützenplatz was only able to gain attention and acceptance for its ideas through an active implementation of its ideas for the square. Through this, opinions and ideas about developments were not simply brought to the attention of the city, as is the case in common participation processes. Here, the opinions and ideas could be experienced directly on the ground, and thus the tactical approach ensured improved acceptance. The active citizenship on site and the interconnected social network could be shown and through the

haptic experience on site, the change on the square could be directly experienced. Elements of the design of Casa Schützenplatz were officially adopted as a consequence.

14.3.5 Inclusive Urban Development

Within the framework of the analysis on tactical urbanism, it turned out that some of the neighbours got to know each other for the first time through the project. Thus, an extended network could be formed within the neighbourhood. In addition, the local neighbourhood continues to maintain the self-funded initiative even after the end of the tactical urbanism project, which is evidence of a functioning and active social network. This development also shows that a network has emerged, which is based on existing trust, that could be further increased during the project. In addition, other activities such as weekly meetings or monthly brunches show that the local people know and want to work together and will continue to do so. Thus, an active neighbourhood network operates voluntarily and a stronger identification with the place can be emphasized. It can thus be said that tactical urbanism has increased the cohesion of the neighbourhood by bringing people together, who did not know each other before, building new networks, which are also sustainable, an increase in trust and a heightened identification and awareness of the place. Thus, it can be said that the local project has strengthened the social cohesion and increased the resilience of the neighbourhood.

14.4 TRANSFORMING AN URBAN VOID INTO A POCKET PARK IN THESSALONIKI, GREECE

The Greek case study concerns an intervention in an urban void in the heart of Thessaloniki by the Alexandrou Svolou Neighbourhood Initiative (ASNI) (Iliopoulos and Litsardaki 2020), a diverse group that consisted of citizens, shopkeepers, researchers, activists, artists, and students (Chatzinakos 2020). Thessaloniki is in northern Greece and is the second largest Greek city, with more than a million residents. It is considered a densely populated city with mostly residential neighbourhoods. The site of the intervention is located at the junction of Agapinou and Michail street and is the property of the municipality of Thessaloniki and a state-owned public limited company based in Athens (Chatzinakos 2020). ASNI decided on converting this 431m² urban void into a pocket park in 2017 to reactivate the neighbourhood through this bottom-up experiment and reclaim this public space for the citizens.

14.4.1   Aim and Outcome

Urban voids are neglected and unused spaces in the urban fabric, small sized and very common in modern cities. Right before ASNI started the conversion of the void into a pocket park, the specific site was abandoned and was used for illegal activities (Iliopoulos and Litsardaki 2020). The aim of the intervention was to turn this underused space into a green and creative one, where the citizens themselves reclaim and upgrade the urban space (Chatzinakos 2020). In fact, there were benches, feeders, places for bicycles and a library installed, while there were also plantings and a vegetable garden (Κουκουμάκας 2017). The space was made accessible for the public and approachable by everyone, also offering a barbeque and a platform for activities and events to take place (Κουκουμάκας 2017). One of the primary goals of the project was to bring the locals together and foster social sustainability by activating the neighbourhood (Iliopoulos and Litsardaki 2020). It was referred to as an urban experiment, with a goal of being permanent once applicable. Furthermore, it was a collective effort to achieve a new form of social organization by organizing events, activities, and workshops (Iliopoulos and Litsardaki 2020). The implementation of citizens' ideas was a very important aspect of the project. For the visualization of the park, their ideas were collected through an open call for participation, while paintings by children were exhibited around the site (Iliopoulos and Litsardaki 2020). The project took place in 2017, and the park has been growing steadily ever since (CityZen 2021).

14.4.2   Governance

Before starting their intervention, ASNI members held a meeting with the deputy mayor to get permission and start the initiative, since the site belonged partly to the city (Κουκουμάκας 2017). The actions were organized by ASNI and anyone eager to help in any way with no external source of funding (CityZen, 2021; Iliopoulos and Litsardaki 2020). The municipality supported them by providing the resources like water and soil, while a network of local shops showed their support by contributing financially to the initiative (CityZen 2021). Moreover, the initial engagement of people mostly consisted of students and planners, instead of the ones who could directly benefit from the pocket park. After further promotion of the initiative, more and more citizens participated.

14.4.3   Instruments

The initiators of the project followed activist methods, experimented and listened to the locals' thoughts in order to plan and implement their vision

(Iliopoulos and Litsardaki 2020). Campaigns, information spots, activities and events were organized, while relevant studies were presented to provide information on the benefits of the park, in order to engage as many people as possible (Iliopoulos and Litsardaki 2020). The design for the space was not predetermined but rather emerged from the ideas and needs that arose through conversations with the citizens. The community's participation was one of the most important aspects of the project, and more than 1,000 people showed their support by signing a petition concerning the implementation of the park (Iliopoulos and Litsardaki 2020). This served as a form of legitimacy which was symbolically stronger than any other form, as it emanated from the citizens (Iliopoulos and Litsardaki 2020).

14.4.4 Bottom-Up and Top-Down

This case demonstrates how a small group of citizens came together and turned an urban void into a pocket park, redefining the neighbourhood's character at the same time. Therefore, the project helped to initiate an act of urban development that otherwise would not have taken place. People's response had a high impact on the intervention, and the initiators managed to engage a large number of people residing in the area. This project showcases the potential of community collaboration whereby the ideas and interventions of the citizens are made possible through collective action. This process can be described as a radical bottom-up approach of informal urbanism. The legitimacy of the initiative derived mainly from the residents' support and efforts to achieve their goal. However, both the municipality and the local actors were supportive towards the implementation of the initiative. This shows that there is a relationship of communication and collaboration created between the actors. The engagement of citizens as well as stakeholders, government and business is of great importance to promote mutual understanding and develop common goals for future opportunities. Since there was no knowledge about how to create a pocket park among the actors, the project was tested as an experiment. Through the process, the participants gain insights from a real-life implementation and then use it as knowledge for future development. This impact would not have been possible without the tactical urbanism initiative, and showcased how a space like that could and should function. All the previous points prove that collective actions like this one contribute to a more collaborative relationship between the community groups, thus connecting bottom-up and top-down approaches.

14.4.5   Inclusive Urban Development

Through this project the community came together and worked collectively for a common goal. During the process, diverse perspectives were considered while the participants connected with each other and created shared experiences. The result was a space that encourages social interaction and recreation and serves as a meeting point. All this promotes social cohesion and the sense of belonging between the residents. The successful implementation of the project strengthens the belief in the ability to make a difference and instils empowerment within the community. Meanwhile, citizens who play an active role and see the impact of their efforts can be further motivated to participate in future activities, leading to better inclusion. Furthermore, in terms of the pocket park, this neglected part of the neighbourhood was strengthened and redefined, offering the residents a new, improved public space. This served as a secure and safe place for the community, accessible and approachable to all. This may increase the inhabitants' feelings of safety and belonging within the city and thus provides the potential for more inclusion as well as a sustainable and resilient urban environment.

14.5   LIKE GERMANY, LIKE GREECE?

The "tactical" in tactical urbanism refers to the small steps that are being taken on the way to a larger purpose (Lydon and Garcia 2015, p. 2). In both case studies, the small-scale action was the transformation of a relatively small but underused and overlooked urban space with the aim of improving the quality for the public (cf. sections 14.3 and 14.4). Moreover, the short-term transformation has led to a sustainable and lasting change of the space that is guided by the needs and wishes of the citizens, which has been legitimized by the respective cities, but in different ways (cf. section 14.6). On the one hand, the long-term transformation of the respective place, even after the initial tactical urbanism project was over, could be mentioned as a larger purpose. But also, the social and sustainability goals which had a high priority in both projects (cf. sections 14.3 and 14.4) can also be seen as larger objectives. The tactical urbanism projects were about demonstrating bottom-up urban design and experimenting with processes and cooperation that may continue to be used in the future to make planning more citizen-led and inclusive.

   The aims in both projects were similar: to create a higher quality of public space and a place for leisure, recreation and communication for residents and citizens. An important element in both projects was the construction of physical structures, for example the building of seating areas as well as the planting of greenery, in order to change the physical shape of the space (cf. sections 14.3 and 14.4). In addition, and this aim was emphasized even more in both

projects, the social aspects, namely the participation of residents and citizens and the collective creation and organization of this place, were of great importance. Both projects have achieved a state of permanence, creating sustainable physical changes in the space and sustainable social structures in the neighbourhood through the formation of initiatives (cf. sections 14.3 and 14.4).

But there were also differences. The spatial conditions with which the initiatives had to work were slightly different. While in both cases public space was concerned, the project in Thessaloniki took place on an abandoned area and the project in Stuttgart on a square-like intersection with parking spaces. The Greek project has thus transformed an underused space, the German project a space that had previously been used in a different way. In addition, a formal plan for the redesign of Schützen Square in Stuttgart had already been drawn up years earlier by the city of Stuttgart and a living lab had been carried out as a student project on the same intersection before, so the initiative could draw on previous knowledge, while ASNI started the planning for the redesign of the unused area in Thessaloniki without any knowledge on how to carry out such a project. The organizational structure also differed in the analysed projects: while Casa Schützenplatz registered as a legal association and worked with three other organizations on "Schützen Square – Neighbourhood Selfmade", ASNI remained a citizen initiative that constantly recruited supporters from the neighbourhood and had a looser organizational structure. Support also came from other actors. In Thessaloniki, shop owners gave financial support, while the city administration contributed material resources. The city of Stuttgart was supportive of "Schützen Square – Neighbourhood Selfmade" but it is not clear from the material if they also funded the project. ASNI calls the transformation of the urban void an urban experiment for new forms of social organization (cf. section 14.4), while the project at Schützen Square is not described in such terms. From the analysis it can be concluded that the project in Stuttgart was less radical than the project in Thessaloniki because the ideas from the tactical urbanism project were integrated in the formal plan, while in Thessaloniki, ASNI still works without any compromises but also without any legal protection of the initiative's actions.

14.6   CONCLUSION

The case studies for this chapter were chosen to represent bottom-up, short-term, low-budget and temporary projects that fit the definition of tactical urbanism. Following Lydon and Garcia (2015) and Yassin (2019), this chapter argues that tactical urbanism projects can bridge the gap between top-down and bottom-up planning by at least starting a conversation between different groups involved in and affected by planning projects.

In the case of "Schützen Square – Neighbourhood Selfmade" there already was a plan by the city of Stuttgart for the redesign of Schützen Square that was put on hold. So there already had been a formal, top-down planning process for this space which the tactical urbanism project re-started with its efforts. Casa Schützenplatz and the other organizations tested the citizens' ideas in a bottom-up project and entered these ideas into the formal planning process, which consequently changed the plan for Schützen Square (cf. section 14.3). It can be assumed that because of the ongoing commitment of the initiatives – and the attention that the students' living lab received before – ideas could be entered into the formal process with more emphasis. In addition, exchange with the city of Stuttgart already took place during the project. In this case top-down and bottom-up approaches were linked by legally implementing the tested ideas from the tactical urbanism project into the formal plan so that the city of Stuttgart can now rebuild Schützen Square permanently to be more citizen-oriented. In Thessaloniki on the other hand, ASNI initiated a bottom-up project from the ground up as there was no plan or even an idea for the space from the city of Thessaloniki beforehand (cf. section 14.4). In this case, one can speak of informal urbanism. Still, the city approved of the project, and still does, but there were no further steps taken to start a formal planning process or to change any official document. The project did not link a top-down and a bottom-up planning process as "Schützen Square – Neighbourhood Selfmade" did but it filled a gap where the city of Thessaloniki overlooked a problem, namely an unsafe urban space where the citizens would like to see other uses realized, which is a common motivation for tactical urbanism projects (Silva 2016).

Inclusive planning is about including diversity in the planning process and involves the participation of all stakeholders, especially those who are traditionally marginalized or excluded (Koirala 2019, p. 14). In both projects analysed in this chapter, the initiatives actively promoted the engagement of the citizens, and many people could be reached, probably more than with a formal participation process. It can be assumed that citizens who otherwise would not have actively participated in shaping their city could be included in the process. However, it is not clear who was actually involved and who "set the tone" among the participants, because even if there is no relationship of superiority and subordination as in formal participation processes, there can also be different power relations and structures within citizen initiatives. It can also be assumed that in such initiatives more people are involved who are also otherwise engaged with politics and have had experience with such projects. Here, too, a participation bias cannot be ruled out (cf. section 14.2).

Looking at the concept of inclusive planning as defined above, it is mainly about the representation of traditionally marginalized people (Koirala 2019, p. 14). The tactical urbanism projects analysed are more inclusive than formal

participation, simply because of the number of citizens who have participated and the participation formats that have been implemented by the initiatives. However, even they cannot guarantee – and this was also not their claim – to represent all social groups and to pay special attention to marginalized people.

Nevertheless, in both case studies it was possible to design urban public spaces according to the wishes of the local, engaged population, so that the perspective of the local community was considered. This was achieved through the active implementation of the ideas. In contrast to top-down participation, people could not only formulate their ideas, but also test and experiment with them. Expressing one's opinions in formal participation processes is not easy for some people for various reasons, so the approach of discussing one's ideas with neighbours and implementing them before approaching the city administration is an inclusive approach that holds great potential – especially for marginalized groups who traditionally cannot make their voice heard as much. In the case studies, sustainable social structures were procured in the form of citizen initiatives that offer a contact point, where people from the neighbourhood can participate, represent their interests, and bundle them to give them more emphasis in conversation with other actors. This not only is a more inclusive approach to urban development but also strengthens social cohesion in the neighbourhood.

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PART V

CONCLUSIONS

15. Civic engagement and community-based initiatives as driving force for social resilience: some comparative conclusions

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15.1 INTRODUCTION

As the previous chapters have shown, citizens' actions or community-based initiatives have emerged in many European countries, meaning that residents and activists bring in their own resources, especially their time, knowledge and social networks, to design or to improve public spaces, to protect historical monuments or landscapes, to implement temporary uses on public streets or to improve living conditions in (deprived) neighbourhoods. The previous chapters examined how citizens actively change their neighbourhoods and communities, how they become co-producers, makers and pioneers, how they contribute to designing urban spaces, and how they influence planning discourses and the definition of planning priorities.

However, as the practices of civic initiatives in European cities and regions – due to different institutional, political and historical contexts – vary greatly, it is the intention of this concluding chapter to discuss and reflect on the relations between (temporary) civic engagement, transformative capacity, social cohesion and resilience for urban development in a comparative perspective. Therefore, this chapter pays attention to the diverse relations of citizen engagement and community resilience and analyses (1) different perspectives on civic engagement, (2) the role of transformative capacity as a game changer for social cohesion and community resilience, and (3) how civic engagement and community-based initiatives can contribute to strengthen social cohesion, community resilience and urban development. This also includes the comparison of contextual factors affecting the shaping of civic engagement and com-

munity resilience as well as the role of public authorities and the development of strategic partnerships.

15.2 PLACE-BASED CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN DIFFERENT NATIONAL CONTEXTS: PRACTICAL CONTEXTS, MOTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

The conceptualization of civic engagement (see Chapter 1 in this volume) has presented various motives and orientations for civic engagement: it can arise from individual wishes or desires to shape one's own living environment; it might occur due to a perceived lack of public spaces or (public) goods; or it may have its roots in a kind of dissatisfaction with public policies. This indicates that the motivation can range from individual interests, i.e. interests of people or groups to use certain spaces and products themselves, to a common good orientation, i.e. to contribute to spatial development processes to achieve social resilience, spatial transitions or similar. In this regard, civic engagement activities depend on a sense of belonging and place-related attachments. This allows people to consider themselves to be an integral part of society and therefore view problems facing society to be at least partly their own (Corsten and Kauppert 2007; Horlings et al. 2021). By doing so, citizens contribute to the co-production of (former) public goods or planning tasks or in order to independently organize their common spaces, meaning that citizens take on responsibility for their neighbourhoods and communities in various forms (see Chapter 1 in this volume).

In summary, a total of three perspectives of civic engagement in an urban or spatial context were identified (see Figure 15.1).

The first type of place-based civic engagement, the citizens' individual activities (perspective A), can be summarized as individual efforts that explicitly or implicitly refer to the (direct) neighbourhood or community of the citizens. This type of engagement does not necessarily have to take place in a specific location or to focus explicitly on the improvement of spatial conditions in a neighbourhood. However, it has been shown that place attachments can positively impact a person's decision to engage in local contexts (see, for example, Chapters 7–14 in this volume). Additionally, civic engagement of individuals becomes even more likely when a person perceives that he or she can make a difference due to individual social competences, skills and opportunities (see Chapter 1 in this volume). Some of the case studies, e.g. in Skopje (see Chapter 13 in this volume) or Neubeckum and Altenburg (see Chapter 10 in this volume), also indicate that personal responsibility and support for citizens' participation is strongly associated with the educational and social background of the participants, meaning that the commitment and (independent)
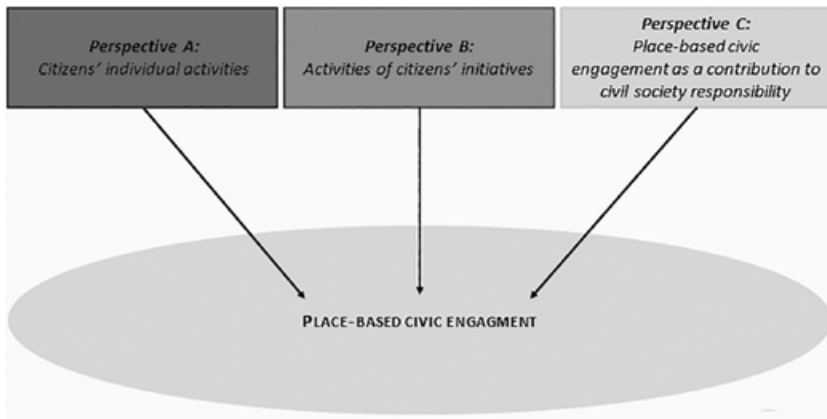
Source: Authors.

Figure 15.1   Place-based civic engagement

organization of urban interventions increases with a higher level of education. This does not mean that low-income and educationally disadvantaged population groups are not socially engaged. The case studies in Librino (see Chapter 7 in this volume) and Lisbon (see Chapter 9 in this volume), for example, show that residents in more disadvantaged neighbourhoods are strongly committed to their living environment and derive positive individual benefits from their engagement in smaller urban interventions. However, it should be noted here that these forms of engagement often arise on the initiative of others, i.e. municipal or state actors or organized civil society initiatives that determine or accompany the process.

Since the citizens' individual activities seem to be a basic prerequisite for all the case studies presented in this volume and as we want to emphasize community-based initiatives and civic initiatives and their contribution to spatial responsibility, we will focus on the activities of citizens' initiatives (perspective B) and civic engagement as a contribution to spatial responsibility (perspective C) in the following.

15.2.1   Activities of Citizens' Initiatives

According to our understanding of place-based civic engagement, citizens' initiatives can be understood as community-based initiatives or resident-led collectives focusing on improvements in their neighbourhoods. Citizens' initiatives ideally reflect communities' self-interests, strengthen social capital and community trust, and realize collective actions. However, the reasons, motives

and strategic orientation of the citizens' initiatives might differ. For example, contact activism describes a communicative approach towards local authorities, political parties and other actors to receive support for the initiative's ideas and goals. Constructive activism should be understood as a kind of proactive engagement, allowing citizen initiatives to present their (even critical) point of view, to develop and implement their own activities, etc. Finally, there is confrontational activism, in which the initiative acts primarily as a kind of opponent to state or political actors (see also Chapter 1 in this volume)

Many of these aspects can be observed, for example, at Verve in Neubeckum, at STRAZE in Greifswald or at 'Stadtmensch' in Altenburg (see also Chapter 10 in this volume). At Verve, for example, volunteers with similar motives and interests come together so that a 'sense of belonging' is created. Interestingly, the intention 'to do something good', which connects all members of Verve, refers to the individual level, i.e. the increase of one's own well-being through one's own social commitment, and on the other hand to the community level, here referring to the improvement of the attractiveness of the city centre, creation of cultural activities, etc. The situation is similar for the citizens' initiatives examined in Hanover (see also Chapter 8 in this volume). Here, we can also observe that the members of some initiatives get involved as part of their self-realization, i.e. they are committed to the community within the initiative to give their own everyday lives more meaning at the same time. It is noticeable that a certain balance between 'giving' and 'taking' is required here. By getting involved in an initiative, the members give something to the community; at the same time, a kind of 'acknowledgement' is essential for the individuals. This is often expressed as formation of a 'community', providing the members a place to meet and to exchange with each other and, at the same time, do something good for the neighbourhood. What all the cases in German cities have in common is that they present forms of contact activism and constructive activism, i.e. they are characterized by proactive engagement of the citizens' initiatives. Particularly, Verve, STRAZE and Stadtmensch focus on the active exchange with the public administration to implement concrete spatial interventions (e.g. improving the quality of life in the city centre, reusing an empty building as a cultural venue, etc.). Place attachment and 'sense of belonging' play a central role here.

Similar reasons and processes can also be seen in 'Our City, Our Scene' in Skopje (see also Chapter 13 in this volume). Here, committed stakeholders and residents have launched an initiative to upgrade public green spaces – in particular a neglected and unkempt playground – through their own commitment and through low-cost interventions. At the same time, the initiative also sees its work as an expression of opposition to the inaction of politicians and administrators regarding the use and development of public spaces. In this regard, Our City, Our Scene is a clearly bottom-up approach, representing elements

of constructive activism as the proactive engagement of inhabitants indicates. This also reflects the sense of belonging of the individual members, especially with regard to the social, spatial and emotional cohesion of the community. At the same time we can also find elements of confrontational activism here. This manifests itself, for example, in the criticism towards the institutional inactivity in preserving public spaces. Overall, it is striking that Our City, Our Scene has succeeded in building stronger social capital and community trust among its members through collective actions and the concrete focus on selected neighbourhoods. This can also be seen in other cities. In Lisbon, for example (see also Chapter 9 in this volume), the involvement of residents, the open and communicative participation processes and the spatial interventions in the '4 Crescente' project have demonstrably contributed to an increase in resident satisfaction and a stronger sense of belonging. This in turn is a key prerequisite for community resilience (see below).

In addition to direct personal concerns or involvement, other case studies show that a sense of belonging and collective or community-based actions can also arise in other ways. The project Cultural HIDRANT in Athens (see also Chapter 6 in this volume), aiming to maintain the aqueduct as pivotal infrastructure for Athens, shows that the existence of the aqueduct as local cultural capital is of central importance in encouraging residents to participate or to engage. The peculiarity of the project is that it has succeeded in linking the historic aqueduct as cultural capital with concerns for the common good 'water', thereby creating a large network of shared responsibility. This created a common understanding that the cultural heritage not only should be preserved for touristic purposes, but that it can also link local residents with each other. This enabled a broad and intensive public participation process between various stakeholders (including the city of Halandri, the Athens Metropolitan Region, the water supply authorities, local residents, etc.). At the same time, strong social bonds and a sense of belonging were created, focusing on the goal of sustainable water use. In this regard, the Cultural HIDRANT project can be considered an example of 'contact activism', characterized by dialogue and collaboration between local authorities, government bodies, political parties, inhabitants and community-based initiative, and economic actors (see also Chapter 1 in this volume)

We can conclude here that the preservation of cultural heritage has a positive influence on the development of new (civic) networks and community-based initiatives. At the same time, this leads to closer cooperation between different groups, which increasingly take responsibility for common goods or the future design of the city. This can also be observed in the case of Eskişehir and Porsuk riverfront (see also Chapter 4 in this volume). The development of the riverfront in Eskişehir shows that, despite government restrictions on bottom-up initiatives and civic engagement (including the ban on certain NGOs or polit-

ical groups), local residents still participate and engage in community-based initiatives. It is clear here that the NGOs play a decisive role, as they structure and drive the process forward. This is also one of the key differences compared with Athens – the Cultural HIDRANT project is funded by the European Union and coordinated by the city of Halandri. Another difference is that the example in Athens can be classified more as contact activism and constructive activism, while the example in Eskişehir also contains elements of confrontational activism. What both case studies have in common, however, is that Athens and Eskişehir are not exclusively concerned with the preservation of the cultural heritage and historic fabric, but are linked to ecological, social and other (cultural) objectives. This is a key prerequisite for activating different stakeholder groups and gaining their (long-term) commitment. Nevertheless, it is clear in Eskişehir that cultural identity is the driving force behind activation and participation (see also Chapter 4 in this volume) and thus also forms a central condition for increasing community resilience (see below).

15.2.2 Civic Engagement as a Contribution to Spatial Responsibility

Some of the case studies described above already indicate that individual citizens or local initiatives take responsibility for specific spaces or neighbourhoods – in Neubeckum, for example, for the revitalization of the city centre (see also Chapter 10 in this volume) or in Skopje for a playground in a residential area close to the city centre (see also Chapter 13 in this volume). This is not surprising as, according to the concept of the 'society of responsibility' (Heidbrink 2022, p. 298), it is primarily at the level of (urban) neighbourhoods where inhabitants participate and get involved. In this regard, taking responsibility for the development of their district or neighbourhood residents depends on a sense of belonging and place-related attachments of the citizens. This allows inhabitants to consider themselves to be an integral part of society and therefore view problems facing society to be at least partly their own (see also Chapters 1 and 2 in this volume).

Looking at Verve in Neubeckum (see also Chapter 10 in this volume), it becomes obvious that it takes responsibility for the development of the inner city by organizing and implementing urban interventions. In this regard, Verve has contributed to the upgrade of public spaces and green areas in the city centre through various temporary actions and events. The voluntary assumption of responsibility for the community is also demonstrated by the decision to rent a property to have kind of a permanent 'residence' in the inner city and to offer a meeting point for other stakeholders. Verve can thus be seen as initiator and supporter of neighbourhood coexistence and urban development. Similar events can be observed in Skopje with regard to the Our City, Our Scene initiative (see also Chapter 13 in this volume). Here, the members of

the initiative upgraded a neglected and unkempt playground through their own commitment and low-cost interventions. By doing so and by organizing events and gatherings on the playground, the committed inhabitants have taken responsibility for shaping their living environment and contributed to social cohesion and resilience.

In addition to the Our City, Our Scene initiative in Skopje, the bottom-up projects and community-based initiatives in Stuttgart and Thessaloniki also demonstrate a civic assumption of responsibility (see Chapter 14 in this volume). By opening and reorganizing former parking space into parklets at the Schützenplatz in Stuttgart, the citizens' initiative provides residents with more public space. The active local community and the associated social network have contributed to the redesign and use of the Schützenplatz, for example, by building the street furniture for the parklet. This has demonstrably increased the involvement of all generations in the neighbourhood and strengthened neighbourly involvement for all. For that reason, the citizen initiative Casa Schützenplatz was founded, representing the interests of its members and the residents beyond the duration of the project. This proves that the initiative has clear roots in the neighbourhood, and that the members identify with the initiative and take co-responsibility for the development of the Schützenplatz. The Alexandrou Svolou neighbourhood initiative in Thessaloniki is similar. Here, a small group of citizens had the idea of transforming an urban void into a pocket park, redefining the neighbourhood's character at the same time. On the one hand, this bottom-up approach demonstrates the potential of community collaboration, whereby citizens' ideas and interventions are realized through collective action. On the other hand, it also shows that the initiative takes responsibility for the transformation of the urban void by coordinating ideas and actions with public actors, by actively involving residents in the process and by ensuring the realization of spatial interventions.

15.3   TRANSFORMATIVE CAPACITIES OF COMMUNITIES AS GAME CHANGER TO STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AND SOCIAL COHESION

Community resilience (see Chapter 2 in this volume) refers to the collective ability of a neighbourhood to deal with stressors and to adapt to changes by building and maintaining partnerships through strong community bonds, roots and commitments (trust, shared values, common goals, etc.); empowering local action, for example through increased social capital and civic activity; and strengthening community networks and social relations, community resources and infrastructures, collaborative governance and self-organization, including active agents and leadership, etc. (Berkes and Ross 2013; Carmen

et al. 2022; Saja et al. 2021). Community resilience encompasses not only the ability to react to external shocks and events, but also to proactively initiate and achieve socially desired conditions in communities via planning, collective action or social learning (see also Chapter 2 in this volume). To do this, communities need to develop a transformative capacity, consisting of the three dimensions width, depth and length (see Figure 15.2).

Widening	Deepening	Lengthening
Expanding the reach of the community networks by involving further people, places and contexts:	Focusing on system awareness and achieving fundamental changes of rules and incentives as well as of values and discourses:	Addressing capacities and priorities of continuity, acceleration and evolution over time:
» creating visibility and awareness through media campaigns	» supporting the implementation of community approaches through collective visions, events, experiments	» co-shaping strategic goals and co-evolving governance of networks in response to urban sustainability
» inspiring and enabling people to get involved through events, courses and trainings	» convening partnerships to advocate discursive changes and policies at a systemic level	» adapting regulations to the needs of citizens' organisations
» ensuring accessibility and inclusivity for diverse population groups to participate in projects,	» building recognition and institutional support by aligning strategies with established policy priorities (e.g. the SDGs)	» adjusting (local) policy priorities, decision-making processes and regulations
» building partnerships with other local initiatives and partner organisations	» co-creating ways of embodying transformative values in the culture of local networks	» generating and distributing funding and other resources
		» developing trust and a sense of community among innovators across places and
		» strengthening continuity of knowledge resources

Source: Authors' own illustration based on Strasser et al. (2022).

Figure 15.2   Transformative capacity

15.3.1   Width: Expanding the Reach of the Community Networks

The first dimension, *width*, aims at expanding the reach of the community networks by involving further people, places and contexts (Strasser et al. 2022, p. 9). It encompasses approaches, actions and strategies that are intended to contribute to a shift in consciousness and awareness among public and civil society actors, to create novel ways of cooperation and to enlarge governance arrangements (see Figure 15.2). This can also be seen in many of the case studies presented in this volume. For example, in the '4 Crescente' project in Lisbon (see Chapter 9 in this volume), the project partners prepared and realized festivals at various stages of the urban regeneration process to strengthen social bonds among the inhabitants, to celebrate the project achievements and to stimulate the inhabitants to take the lead for smaller interventions in their neighbourhoods. The workshops and festivals proved to be a suitable means of addressing residents and raising awareness of the potential of community engagement in disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods.

The Our City, our Scene initiative in Skopje (see Chapter 13 in this volume) has followed a similar path yet with some differences. Here, the aim was to activate public spaces in urban neighbourhoods to upgrade them and to make them usable for the residents. To this end, a network of committed inhabitants

brought together professional community members (architects, planners, etc.) and inhabitants to beautify a public playground through short interventions as a pioneering project. By doing so and by organizing events and gatherings on the playground, the committed inhabitants celebrated the project achievements and contributed to strengthen the sense of belonging of the citizens to their neighbourhood. At the same time, the successfully implemented pioneering project has stimulated other actors and initiatives in Skopje to get more involved in upgrading public spaces and taking the lead for smaller interventions in their neighbourhoods so that the network generally increased. When comparing the 'widening' activities in Lisbon and Skopje, however, it is noticeable that they were initially initiated by different actors and with different intentions. In Skopje, the criticism of institutional inactivity was the reason for committed residents to become active in place-making processes to strengthen community resilience via temporary interventions. In Lisbon, on the other hand, the activities took place as part of a publicly funded project to upgrade deprived neighbourhoods.

These two case studies show that widening, i.e. expanding the reach of the community networks, is a necessary step for transformative capacity. This primarily refers to approaches that create visibility and awareness through media campaigns or which involve people through events inspiring them to get involved in the initiative. However, widening as a strategy is not always successful as, for example, the civic engagement for the preservation of the National Theatre in Tirana (see Chapter 3 in this volume) showed. The civil society actors obviously knew that they would only be successful if they managed to bring together a broad alliance of different groups (artists, architects, urban activists, etc.) to pursue their goals. However, even though the 'Alliance for the Protection of the Theater' succeeded, at least temporarily, in inspiring and bringing together different players and encouraging them to participate through various events and formats, the alliance was ultimately unable to prevent the demolition of the building.

This also indicates that building partnerships seems to be another key element to further strengthen the intended community activities and, if necessary, to secure public support for the implementation of the projects at an early stage. A positive example of this is Verve in Neubeckum (see Chapter 10 in this volume). In addition to several local media campaigns to publicize the initiative, the initiators focused early on building partnerships with other civic actors. Networking with other civic and also with public actors can thus be seen as a central strategy of Verve. On the one hand, this includes an intensive exchange with other stakeholders and the development and implementation of temporary interventions. On the other hand, Verve – with its 'neighbourhood living room' – offers a new meeting point in the inner city, which is equally accessible to all residents. The premises of Verve can also be used or rented

by other civil society initiatives to carry out activities; this can also be seen as strategic networking. The latter is also reflected in the fact that Verve has offered its premises to the neighbourhood management, which is coordinating the implementation of the integrated urban development concept on behalf of the city of Beckum and offers consultation hours twice a week in the premises of Verve.

15.3.2 Depth: Achieving Fundamental Changes of Rules, Incentives and Discourses

In addition to extending the reach of the community network, the ability of a community to organize itself and actively change its own structures (Saja et al. 2021, p. 795) plays a central role with regard to transformative capacity (see Chapter 2 in this volume). In this regard, *depth*, in addition to width, as a dimension is crucial as it focuses on a system's awareness to achieve fundamental changes of rules and incentives as well as of values and discourses (see Figure 15.2).

As described above, Verve in Neubeckum and Stadtmensch in Altenburg (see Chapter 10 in this volume) present two examples where community-based initiatives consciously entered into strategic partnerships with other civic initiatives and public actors to achieve their objectives. At the same time – and this applies in particular to the Stadtmensch initiative in Altenburg – they managed to establish the initiative as a serious partner in urban development processes through their openness, their 'neighbourhood anchors' or projects as well as the biennial festival. Over the years, tested and reflected as part of a research project, this has contributed to a lasting change in the relationship between civil society and public actors with regard to urban planning and development processes.

A similar trend can be seen in Skopje (see Chapter 13 in this volume). While the interventions on playgrounds and further green spaces were temporary, social capital and community trust among the members of the initiatives increased. This, on the one side, strengthened community resilience by building social networks and by promoting collective action. On the other side, a 'new' actor or player has emerged that questions political-administrative routines and, on a discursive level, puts pressure on the elective representatives to engage with the local communities in policy-making processes. While the initiative in Skopje is still in the process of establishing itself as an 'institutional' player to represent the interest of citizens and to restore trust in public institutions, the case of Groningen (see Chapter 11 in this volume) demonstrates that all involved actors, be they public or private actors, believe in the added value of co-production and joint leadership. Here, public and civic actors discuss as equals and have agreed on the definition of common rules and understandings

which have resulted in long-term and innovative projects that have improved the efficiency and quality of urban green space management. At the same time, this basic attitude that the public sector does not have to perform all tasks alone potentially contributes to the emergence of other sustainability citizen actions at the local scale, which in turn can influence the municipality's policies at a systemic level.

Looking at the contributions in this volume, we can conclude that joint experiments or events form the basis for achieving lasting changes in the routines or values of local actors, especially politicians and administrators. Joint interventions help to demonstrate that individual ideas or projects work; at the same time, they also contribute to building trust and partnerships between various actors that promote discursive changes and policies at a systemic level and that can also change the local policy culture. This is also validated by the tactical urbanism projects in Stuttgart, Germany, and Thessaloniki, Greece (see also Chapter 14 in this volume). In Thessaloniki, the initiative first coordinated its project with the politicians and urban administration before organizing the intended interventions. The municipality supported the initiative by providing certain facilities but the initiative did not receive public funding. In the run of the project, several campaigns and events were organized to engage as many inhabitants as possible. The design for the public space was not predetermined but rather emerged from the ideas and needs that came up through the public dialogue to which more than 1,000 people contributed. This can certainly serve as evidence for establishing a trusting collaboration between the public sector and the initiative through the concrete intervention in the public space. The situation was similar in Stuttgart: here, the citizens' initiative 'Casa Schützenplatz' represented the interests of the citizens and mediated between the citizens and the municipality. Moreover, Casa Schützenplatz worked with three other civil society organizations in coordinating and carrying out the project 'Schützen Square – Neighbourhood Selfmade'. Together, the civic partners contributed their knowledge and skills for designing the public spaces. At the same time it was their intention to influence political decisions and to receive public funding for implementing their plans and conceptions for the square.

However, networking and establishing common rules does not necessarily lead to a change in existing practices and routines. The 'Alliance for the Protection of the Theater' in Tirana (see Chapter 3 in this volume) had established common unwritten rules, set a scheduling discipline and organized functions according to people's skills and predispositions. By the networking of various civic actors and by carrying out public campaigns, it has also been possible to significantly increase trust in the Alliance, which was also reflected in the fact that residents have tended to trust their humanitarian aid to the Alliance rather than to public actors. Overall, however, it can be concluded that

the initiative represented a kind of protest movement aiming at preventing the demolition of the theatre; the focus was less on commonly improving the living conditions in the neighbourhood and strengthening community resilience. In addition, the state or the public sector had other interests from the start, did not offer the initiative any room for manoeuvre and finally demolished the theatre without any kind of dialogue or exchange with the initiative.

In contrast, a more proactive and supportive role of the public sector can be found in the example of Librino, a public housing neighbourhood in the south-west of Catania (see Chapter 7 in this volume). Here, civic actors set up and ran the Librino Platform, consisting of a strategic planning document and a kind of neighbourhood council. Through the involvement and active commitment of other actors (e.g. citizens, further civic initiatives, the public sector, private donors and companies that contribute financially to the design of public spaces) and through various events (garden-to-garden reach-outs, periodic meetings and reports, etc.) it was possible to establish a dense network of local actors and thus to transform several passionate gardeners, not frequently collaborating or even communicating with each other, into an organized and co-productive group that improved the quality of life of the inhabitants and contributed to the design and use of the open spaces. The public sector has perceived these community-based urban gardens as very positive and has subsequently designed city-led urban gardens according to similar principles. Even if these projects have not been as successful as the community-based urban gardens, we can conclude that the strategic partnerships, networking with other stakeholders and addressing relevant social objectives have led to the adaptation of local policy priorities, at least for a certain period of time.

15.3.3   Length: Addressing Capacities and Priorities of Continuity, Acceleration and Evolution Over Time

The third dimension, *length*, addresses capacities and priorities of continuity, acceleration and evolution over time (Strasser et al. 2022). As with width and depth, the capacities here aim to transform current urban development policies in the sense of a 'rebalancing of rights and responsibilities between actors, the citizenry and state' (Pelling et al. 2015, p. 115). The goal is to strengthen citizens' contributions to community resilience and the sustainable transformation of cities in the long term and to integrate them strategically into the local planning system and the management of cities.

Many of the aforementioned features of lengthening can be found in the municipal tactical urbanism programme in Milan, the 'Piazze Aperte' (see Chapter 12 in this volume). The programme was initiated in 2018 and is now in its third project cycle, with no less than 40 new tactical pedestrian transformations achieved to date. Typically, the 'Piazze Aperte' methodol-

ogy follows co-designs and co-leadership principles (see Chapter 2 in this volume), meaning that inhabitants and other neighbourhood actors are actively involved in all the steps of the decision-making and realization processes. The positive feedback and success in transforming the public squares have led to the programme being extended to date. On the one hand, this requires the provision of public funding for the implementation of the planned actions and interventions; on the other hand, the continuation of the programme also ensures that local knowledge resources are maintained and strengthened in the long term. The example of the design of public open spaces in Groningen (see Chapter 11 in this volume) also illustrates that citizens can complement public action at a very small scale and the neighbourhood level. However, it is not enough to simply provide initiatives with financial and material resources. The public sector must also ensure that public and civic actors discuss as equals and have agreed on the definition of common rules and understandings. At the same time, this means that the public sector not only gives other actors the opportunity to participate, but also allows other actors to have an active role in processes of co-production (co-production of knowledge, spaces, public services, etc.). As, among others, the two examples of Milan and Groningen show, this in turn can influence the municipality's policies at a systemic level.

The role of the public sector and the public administration in particular can also be seen in the example of the city of Trenčín's bid to become European Capital of Culture 2026 (see Chapter 5 in this volume). Here, a small group of people within the city's self-government administration was responsible for initiating a participatory and relatively open planning process that had not existed in this form before. The initiators within the municipal administration then succeeded in building a small team of devoted collaborators close to the city's leadership, so the group can be seen as the driving force behind the participatory planning process. Although this is a top-down initiated process, the aim is to change (local) policy priorities as well as local decision-making processes. Even if it can be critically noted whether the focus here is really on strengthening the local community, it should be noted that participation and to a lesser extent, co-production were used successfully here. In this way, common (strategic) goals could be tackled, local priorities – especially with regard to participatory planning processes and local decision-making structures – were widened and a joint bid for the European Capital of Culture was developed. However, this example was and is unique in Slovakia, which is why it also demonstrates the challenge with regard to transformative capacities to perpetuate successful projects and measures in the long term.

15.4   CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNITY-BASED INITIATIVES AS DRIVING FORCE FOR COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

The aim of this volume was to analyse the spatial impacts and different dimensions of civic engagement on community resilience. In this regard, we can conclude that we have been able to compile an extremely interesting gallery of meaningful case studies and experiences. Despite the different levels of scale and (national) framework conditions, the case studies have shown that there are comparable motivations, processes, and (spatial) structures. However, the various chapters also indicate that there are both facilitating and hindering factors for the establishment of community-based initiatives and the development of community resilience. In a comparative perspective it becomes evident that it is the situatedness, the local context and national conditions, which determine the success or failure of the initiatives in some respects. In our view, local conditions can only be compared with each other to a limited extent. With this in mind, we would like to use the presented case studies to identify key factors that can help explain the different approaches but also the success or failure of community-based initiatives. These factors, encompassing the role of context, the role of public authorities and the development of strategic partnerships, are therefore summarized and reflected upon in this chapter.

15.4.1   The Role of Context

The different types and forms of citizens' initiatives presented in the case studies emphasize the great importance of context conditions and proximate conditions for civic engagement (see Chapter 1 in this volume; see also Edelenbos et al. 2021, p. 1690). Looking at context conditions, for example, there seems to be a unique situation in the central and south-eastern European countries with regard to the development of an active civil society as a third sphere, here understood as a separate sphere between the state and the market, and thus also the inclusion of civil society actors in decision-making processes (see Chapter 13 in this volume). As a consequence, civic engagement appears to be less pronounced here, with corresponding effects on the understanding and perception of civic engagement in urban development processes. This may be at least one explanation as to why civic engagement in individual countries and case studies refers primarily to public participation and the active involvement of citizens in planning processes. The case studies in Athens, Eskişehir, Tirana and Trenčín (see Chapters 3–6 in this volume) clearly show that the

population and society play only a subordinate role in decision-making processes – even on the basis of existing laws and regulations. Due to the lack of development of a civil society and the extensive concentration on expert-based planning and decision-making processes with the associated 'exclusion' of civic actors in these processes, community-based initiatives focus primarily on improving their opportunities for participation. Participation is seen here as key to develop social capital and cohesion in communities and strengthen the sense of community among residents, which can be regarded as an important prerequisite for urban regeneration and sustainable neighbourhood development (Boonstra and Boelens 2011, p. 100). This, of course, refers to a form of self-organization in which citizens who feel they share a connection voluntarily mobilize resources to create the community they want to live in (Celata et al. 2019, p. 910). However, in the case studies in Athens, Eskişehir, Tirana and Trenčín this refers to public participation; whereas civic engagement and citizens' initiatives in other case studies, for example in Catania, Lisbon, Milan or Thessaloniki (see Chapters 7, 9, 12 and 14 in this volume) aim to identify and implement collective actions or projects that focus on community needs, for example providing public goods or services for their community or neighbourhood. Thessaloniki and Athens are particularly interesting case studies here, as they strikingly demonstrate how the different local, social and spatial differences impact the emergence and the differing forms of civic engagement and community-based initiatives within one country.

This already indicates that proximate conditions, i.e. actor- and process-related conditions, also affect the motivation for civic engagement and the activities of community-based initiatives. According to Edelenbos et al. (2021, pp. 1695–1697), actor-related conditions can include the perceived neighbourhood capital, the intensity and reliability of social networks, or the organization of leadership whereas the process-related conditions encompass, among other factors, the public support of local initiatives, their involvement in decision-making processes, etc. Analysing the proximate conditions, which are also related to specific socio-spatial settings, can help to classify the different forms and strategic orientations of citizens' initiatives. In Skopje, for example, it is obvious that the widespread institutional mistrust deterred the citizens from taking part in already established forms of civic participation (see explanations above and Chapter 13 in this volume). This also explains why the initiative Our City, Our Scene explicitly sees itself as an 'opponent' of state or municipal institutions in improvements in the development of open spaces and neighbourhoods in Skopje. Similar proximate conditions and developments can also be found in Tirana where the citizens' initiative tried to prevent the demolition of the National Theatre building (see Chapter 3 in this volume). In both cases, it seems that the inadequate opportunities for civic actors to participate and the institutional mistrust have contributed to the emergence of

local initiatives. Citizens' activities can here be understood as an expression of confrontational activism (see above and Chapter 1 in this volume).

With regard to social innovations and the sustainable transformation of the living and working environment, the projects presented in this volume clearly indicate that networking among grassroots innovations has an enormous impact on the success of community-based initiatives and transition initiatives (see also Seyfang and Longhurst 2016). This is, for example, evident in the 'Casa Schützenplatz' initiative (see Chapter 14 in this volume), in which various citizen initiatives supported each other and thus contributed to the implementation of the 'Schützen Square – Neighbourhood Selfmade' project. The spatial proximity and intensive informal exchange between individual initiatives and projects can be considered constructive activism (see explanations above and Chapter 1 in this volume) and seems to play a positive role in the implementation of the 'Piazze Aperte' programme, a publicly initiated tactical urbanism approach in Milan (see also Chapter 12 in this volume). In Neubeckum and Altenburg, two medium-sized German towns, and in Groningen, it also becomes evident that the existence of citizens' initiatives and the mutual exchange between them can generate an environment contributing to the emergence of new initiatives and the implementation of innovative ideas (see Chapters 10 and 11 in this volume). This is confirmed in further studies – Feola and Nunes (2014, p. 248) summarize with regard to transition initiatives in the United Kingdom that "initiatives located in areas characterized by a higher density of other transition initiatives and where there are active regional or national Transition Network hubs, have a greater chance of interacting with other transition initiatives". In general, urban space as a 'breeding ground' for socially innovative community-based initiatives seems to have a decisive impact here as particularly in urban areas the population density, education and prosperity of the population or political attitudes of the inhabitants can form specific socio-ecological milieus, leading to the development of innovative, community-based and sustainable transformations.

15.4.2   Strategic Partnerships between the Public Sector and Citizens' Initiatives and Co-Production as Success Factors for Community Resilience

According to Igalla et al. (2019, p. 605), community-based initiatives are often dependent on how local governments respond to them, i.e. the success of such initiatives in the long term is often dependent on whether local governments and administrations support the initiative financially or organizationally, whether they involve the initiative in decision-making processes, etc. (Castán Broto et al. 2019; Keck and Sakdapolrak 2013, p. 11; Ziehl 2020). Possible strategies of the public sector to promote community-based initiatives or inte-

grate them into development processes range from ignoring or not interfering with regulating and steering initiatives to reach certain goals to approaches that enable the self-efficacy and self-governance of these initiatives (see Chapter 11 in this volume).

The different strategies and approaches of the public sector and local governments (Gilbert 2005) can also be observed in the presented case studies. The example of the National Theatre in Tirana, the development of Eskişehir Porsuk riverfront and, to a certain extent, also the Our City, Our Scene initiative in Skopje (see Chapters 3, 4 and 13 in this volume) show that the public sector has hardly any interest in community-based initiatives and does not provide any support for them. Here, other competing political objectives take centre stage resulting in the non-interference of public authorities with citizens' initiatives. Additionally, there is no developed civil society sphere in the three countries; in fact, civil society involvement is often perceived by politicians as a kind of disruptive element.

Looking at the 'Trenčín si Ty' (Trenčín is You) initiative and the experiences with public participation in Athens (see Chapters 5 and 6 in this volume) we can summarize that the municipality or other public sector actors define certain goals and carry out specific actions to achieve these goals. In both case studies, the main aim is to improve the transparency and acceptance of planning and to provide impetus for local development processes by actively involving other stakeholders, e.g. citizens, in the participation process. The situation is quite comparable with the implementation of the publicly initiated urban gardening projects in Catania and the 'Sê Bairrista' project in Lisbon (see Chapters 7 and 9 in this volume), in which citizens were actively involved to improve the living environment. The difference to the participation processes in Athens and Trenčín, however, is that the citizens and initiatives in Catania and Lisbon can actively participate in the development processes and that processes of co-production and co-learning are allowed or fostered here.

In this regard, the public approaches in Catania and Lisbon can also be regarded as part of the stimulating and facilitating strategies (Mees at al. 2019; Oude Vrielink and van de Wijdeven 2011) that are crucial for the support of community-based initiatives as they put citizen initiatives in the lead but also involve local governments and administrations in the process. Stimulating means that public actors attempt to encourage citizens to act for a certain purpose or goal. Once citizens' initiatives have been established, they often need the support and engagement of local governments and administrations to achieve their goals. This type of support is called 'facilitation' (see Chapter 11 in this volume).

In terms of stimulating and facilitating strategies, local governments may provide a range of services and support functions for community-based initiatives, including seed money and grants, networking and marketing,

technical and managerial expertise, and advisory services to navigate through bureaucratic tangles (see also Edelenbos et al. 2021). This can be seen in the case studies in different forms and manifestations. In Catania and Lisbon, the provision of public funds to promote citizens' initiatives and the involvement of residents in their direct neighbourhoods plays a central role (see Chapters 7 and 9 in this volume). In Altenburg, politics and administration actively involve the 'Stadtmensch' initiative as a quasi-institutional actor in all planning decision-making processes, which ensures that the initiative has a permanent say in (participatory) urban development (see Chapter 10 in this volume). However, there are further approaches with regard to stimulating and facilitating strategies as the examples of Stuttgart and Milan indicate (see Chapters 12 and 14 in this volume). Here, the cities – Milan rather consciously, Stuttgart rather unconsciously – relied on tactical urbanism as a strategic approach to initiating, promoting and also supporting community-based initiatives.

At the same time, the case studies also demonstrate that particularly such community-based initiatives are successful that actively form and expand networks with the public sector and other civil society actors (see Chapters 10–14 in this volume). Some of the initiatives use the guidance and assistance of the public sector, but do not simply rely on it, but actively demand specific forms of support and networking or join forces with other citizens' initiatives to achieve their goals. This once again shows the importance of co-production and co-learning processes between community-based initiatives and other stakeholders (see also Feola and Nunes 2014). In this context, relational quality and trust are important elements of the collaboration between the public sector and citizens' initiatives (Klijn et al. 2010). This was also evident in various case studies (see Chapters 8–12 and 14 in this volume). Ultimately, this also implies that the citizens' initiatives must convince local governments and administrations of their strengths and the added value of civil society involvement for the municipalities. The first promising approaches can be found in Lisbon and Catania (see Chapters 7 and 9 in this volume), but above all in Neubeckum and Altenburg, where community-based initiatives have apparently succeeded in making themselves largely irreplaceable through a combination of different approaches (see Chapter 10 in this volume).

15.5 CONCLUSIONS

What does this mean for community development and community resilience? To what extent is transformative capacity a game changer to strengthen community resilience and social cohesion? The examples presented in this volume show a rather differentiated picture. There are many actions taken by civil society actors or local communities to enlarge their supporting network, to ensure broad societal support for their initiatives, etc. (widening). The

development of partnerships with other community-based initiatives and with local politics and local administrations is a central and successful element here to develop kind of a transformative capacity (see also Castán Broto et al. 2019; Edelenbos et al. 2021). This also highlights the importance of collective actions and social learning, giving civic actors or community-based initiatives a strategic role in safeguarding social needs and resolving social conflicts. Some case studies clearly emphasize the importance of place-making in this context as it fosters community stewardship for the neighbourhood or environment in which people live (see also Ellery and Ellery 2019, p. 246). However, developing a sense of place or a sense of belonging does not automatically mean that a citizen-led initiative will be successful. As some of the case studies in this volume have shown, this is just one of several factors that contribute to strengthening community resilience. The other two dimensions of a transformative capacity, deepening and lengthening, are obviously much more difficult to achieve or address (see also Castán Broto et al. 2019, p. 460). Although there are some case studies in which citizen initiatives work together with local politicians or the administration over a longer period of time, in which local initiatives and politicians or administrators jointly formulate goals and develop strategies and where a change in the attitudes and routines of local actors can be observed, these tend to be the exceptions.

We can conclude here that the transformative capacity of communities has the potential to function as a game changer, but has not yet been consistently utilized, for example with regard to adjusting local policy priorities and decision-making processes or the acquisition and distribution of funding. This should not be understood as a criticism of the community-based initiatives presented in this volume, which often arise spontaneously, often do not yet have any organized or institutionalized structures and therefore may not yet act in a targeted manner, especially with regard to the recognition of path dependencies, strategic positioning or social learning capacities to reflect their actions in order to optimize them where necessary.

Against this background, it is understandable that there are very few examples clearly indicating that the local initiatives are trying to strategically build or enlarge their transformative capacity or their financial basis to implement their own priorities and realize their goals, also with the support and cooperation of local politics and administration. These case studies, on the one side, emphasize the importance of a developed and established civil society sector, the broad funding landscape for civil society initiatives and the high degree of autonomy of citizens' initiatives and communities. On the other hand, the role of local politics and administration in the development of a transformative capacity also becomes evident here. A general openness of local politics and administration towards the initiatives, equal communication and the possibility of co-production are factors that contribute to the establishment

of community-based initiatives and allow community resilience. However, in many case studies we also witnessed that local, and sometimes also national, politics and administration, but also parts of the urban society, viewed community-based initiatives sceptically, which also made it more difficult to develop transformative capacity and in some cases led to the failure of citizen initiatives.

We can further conclude that the success or failure of grassroots innovations, especially if measured in terms of impact on a local regime and its routines, priorities and decision-making structures, depends on the simultaneous pressure of various grassroots innovations, here referring to a number of citizens' initiatives across levels and scales and thematic issues, as well as the strategic partnerships between local administration and community-based initiatives. This can create windows of opportunity for change as some of the presented case studies indicate (see also Feola and Nunes 2014). However, it should be noted that the case studies in this volume were not selected on the basis of scientifically derived criteria, but rather on the basis of the initiatives that seemed exciting to us. A systematic and comprehensive comparison and derivation of conclusions or recommended actions is therefore difficult, also with regard to the different (local) contexts and conditions. But we see this as the charm and strength of this volume: the case studies and experiences presented in the various chapters are intended to encourage readers to compare their own situation with the presented case studies and to check whether the solutions presented are suitable for their own situation. In addition, reading the book may also give rise to ideas for completely different solutions, as the reader will realize that even paths that initially seem unthinkable have nevertheless been taken by others.

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