

# Public space and its socio-political dynamics



**Ektor Ntourakos**

s1028876

Urban and Cultural Geography

Radboud University

Supervisors: **Olivier Kramsch**  
**Jeroen Boomgaard**

Rotterdam, the Netherlands  
August 2020

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Social & Scientific Relevance

The concept of public space, since the 1990s, is included in the academic debates in relation to processes of urban transformation. Scholars, especially geographers, started to develop conceptual frameworks based on works of theorists as diverse as Sennett, Sassen, Mitchel, Harvey, Foucault, Habermas and Lefebvre in order to make sense ‘of how these transformations impacted public life’ (Koch & Latham, 2012, p. 517). Koch and Latham in their inquiry in *Rethinking urban public space: accounts from a junction in West London* recognise three overlapping functions of public space based on its analytical conception: (1) ‘public space operates as an ideal type. That is to say, it functions as a kind of aspiration from democratic civil society’, (2) ‘public space defines a set of criteria, more or less explicitly spelled out, against which actual spaces or the process of transformation can be evaluated’, (3) “public space is understood as an arena of ongoing contestation and negotiation wherein different groups’ rights to the city are defined” (p. 517).

Meanwhile, the concept of public space is used to deploy a number of concerns related to city matters and processes that take place in the city. Here, I will discuss these concerns briefly. First, it is about concerns related to exclusion. This term includes the inquiries focused on exclusionary practices and processes of fortification and privatisation, mainly based on strict and rich policing, surveillance, and planning regulations (Herbert, 2008; Iveson, 2007; Mitchell, 1995, 2003). Those who are the most excluded are the destitute and homeless, immigrants, black and Mexican poor, black youths, lesbians and non-heterosexuals in general, prostitutes but also those who want to take part in practices of protesting or leafleting (Davis, 1990; Franck & Stevens, 2007; Loukaitou-Sideris & Ehrenfeucht, 2011; Mitchell, 2003; Mitchell & Staeheli, 2006; Sorkin, 1992).

Second, it is about encroachment. Here, the focus is not about concerns whether a public space is accessible to everyone, but rather of the extent to which practices related to communal or public life are restricted by practices of governance and surveillance. This is to talk about the punitive models of governances like those of law and order that intend to control spaces and to transform them into safe, regulated and predefined spaces (Chronopoulos, 2011; Helms et al., 2007; Miller, 2007; Ward, 2007). In addition, the development of business district areas in multiple locations in the cities embraces the question whether the spaces, like downtown streets, are recognised as public. For instance, the Zuccotti Park in New York in the heart of Lower Manhattan, in between Wall Street and the former World Trade Center site, which became known during the Occupy Wall Street movement in 2011. The park, although it seemed public, it was privately owned, and it remained public for zoning benefits 24/7 and police could not intervene if the rules were followed. Eventually, the police, together with the mayor Michael Bloomberg changed the rules of the use of the park over the occupation period, to finally force an eviction. The discussion about encroachment is generally focused on government practices to force regulations and control other practices of the city.

Third, it is about claim-making. This concern is related to the concept of *the right to the city*. However, this concept, as it was popularised by Henri Lefebvre in 1968, more as a provocative term, arises three questions: who has the right? What right? And in what city? Although I am not going to discuss here these three illustrations of the right to the city, as Mitchell puts it, the

protection of rights have not been provided by the state freely, but ‘they have been won, wrested through moralism, direct action, cultural politics, and class struggle, from the state and those it “naturally” protects’ (2003, pp. 25-26). Eventually, the concerns about claim-making highlight practices, events and processes through which public space and its boundaries are contested. It is about struggle, conflict and appropriation of public spaces (Franck & Stevens, 2007; Iveson, 2007; Low & Smith, 2005; Mitchell, 1995, 2003; Stevens, 2007).

However, within this research, I aim to push past these limitations, drawing a different analysis to the concept of public space. I consider public space a social phenomenon, and not a solid space with borders, which arises by the occurrence of practices and chains of activities. That is to say, activities or practices cause the emergence of other practices and activities, or interrupt and interact with other practices, and this process is the conceptualisation of the constitution of public space. By posing this argument, I do not intend to oppose myself to the insufficient concepts, mentioned before, of exclusion, encroachment and claim-making, but to explore the matters beyond those concepts. I use the word insufficient to describe these concepts, not because they are wrong, but simply because of how much is left out.

In a distinction between the two major approaches on public space, the *topographical* and the *procedural* approach, someone would argue that my approach would be clearly a procedural one. However, calling my approach for the conceptualisation of public space as a procedural one is not that simple, and I will explain why. The most commonly used definition of public space by academics and non-academics is that related to the topographical one. The topographical sense of public space refers ‘to particular places in the city that are (or should be) open to members of ‘the public’ (Iveson, 2007, p. 4). Here, public space is described as streets, sidewalks, parks, squares and so on. For scholars, ‘access to such places is said to be vital for opportunities both to address a/ the public and to be addressed as part of a/the public’ (p. 4). This relies on that fact that policies and technologies established in the urban domain lead to forms of exclusion, in the sense that reduce access to public space. However, for some others - politicians and urban planners - measures and policies are there to

‘restore “order” and “quality of life” in public space on behalf of a public that they claim is intimidated by begging, threatened by graffiti, menaced by boisterous groups of teenagers, disgusted by the smell of urine or faeces they associate with rough sleepers, and inconvenienced by unauthorised political gatherings which block traffic. Here, it is argued that exclusion from public spaces is the product of so-called ‘antisocial’ and criminal behaviour’ (Iveson, 2007, p. 5).

Some scholars refer to public spaces as products of political struggle, writers like Don Mitchell (2003). For him, public spaces have never been open to everyone and the circulation to reach the very ideal that public space is for all, entails a powerful effect. The circulation of an ideal public space becomes a ‘rallying point for successive waves of political activity’ as excluded groups - Mitchell focus in homelessness in his inquiries - seek to become part of public spaces in the city (Mitchell, 1995, p. 117). These so-called struggles for inclusion, according to Mitchell, have:

‘reinforced the normative ideals incorporated in notions of public spheres and public spaces. By calling on the rhetoric of inclusion and interaction that the public sphere

and public space are meant to represent, excluded groups have been able to argue for their *rights* as part of the active public. And each (partially) successful struggle for inclusion in “the public” conveys to other marginalised groups the importance of the ideal as a point of political struggle’ (1995, p. 117).

This position entails that the struggle for an ideal, open to everyone public space is ‘an activity involving creation and construction, not repair and retrieval’ (Phillips, 1992, p. 50). Note that for Mitchell, to be part of a public, it requires to be in public. Therefore, in order for someone to achieve to be part of a public requires that he has the right to occupy material public spaces: ‘public space is the space of the public’ (Mitchell, 2003, p. 131). This is quite a topographical approach, and he continues by stating that the *problem with public space* starts by ‘increasing alienation of people from the possibilities of unmediated social interaction and increasing control by powerful economic and social actors over the production and use of space’ (p. 140). In general, many of the scholars who follow a topographical approach to public spaces focus on the relationship between public address and the city.

However, as Iveson (2007) points out, an approach like the topographical entails many problems based on a ‘flawed conceptualisation of the relationship between three distinct dimensions of publicness:

- publicness as a *context for action* (“urban public space”);
- publicness as a *kind of action* (“public address”); and
- Publicness as a *collective actor* (“a/the public”)’ (p. 8).

When scholars who are in favour of a topographical approach, investigate the struggles of the public address and its ‘struggles over access to topographically defined public spaces, they (implicitly or explicitly) tend to assume an equivalence between these three dimensions of publicness’ (p. 8). However, the idea that there is an equivalence between these dimensions is flawed, since ‘access to a place generally considered to be “public space” in a topographical sense can be shown to have no fixed or privileged relationship to acts of “public address” or to one’s status as a member of “the public”’ (p. 8). The public address does not determine whether a space is public. For instance, when someone participates in a studio podcast, which is addressed as private space, the talk that takes place is addressed as public. In that sense, the topographically defined private space does not denote that the kind of action which occurs is not public. Eventually, the topographical approach entails many risks and assumptions and does not take into account ‘the messy and dynamic urban geographies of publicness’ (p. 8).

In contrast, a *procedural* public space is defined as any space which, through means and processes of political action and public address during a specific time frame, becomes ‘the site of power, of common action coordinated through speech and persuasion’ (Benhabib, 1992, p. 78). This position of Seyla Benhabib is based on Hannah Arendt’s idea on *polis* and that public spaces can exist in multiple different topographical locations. According to Arendt (1958), there is a clear distinction between the terms *polis* and the topographical physical spaces of the city:

‘The *polis*, properly speaking, is not the city-state in its physical location; it is the organization of the people as it arises out of acting and speaking together, and its

time-space lies between people living together for this purpose, no matter where they happen to be. “Wherever you go, you will be a *polis*”: these famous words became not merely the watchwords of Greek colonization, they expressed the conviction that action and speech create a space between the participants which can find its proper location almost any time and anywhere. It is the space of appearance in the widest sense of the word, namely, the space where I appear to others as others appear to me, where men exist not merely like other living or inanimate things but make their appearance explicitly’ (pp. 198-199).

However, the idea that public spaces can find their location almost anywhere and any time entails some flawed conceptions, as Iveson puts it, then ‘the “public spaces” of the city (topographically defined) would appear to have no privileged relationship to public-making and public address’ (2007, p. 11). The procedural approaches can highlight the complex geographies of publicness which topographical approaches are lacking. In this case, public space is not considered a ‘fixed set of topographically defined sites in the city which acts as a kind of “stage” for representation before a gathered “audience”’ (p. 11). In addition, other scholars, like Barnett (2004), argue that a procedural approach to public space requires to take into notice the importance of spatial practices, drawing a more explicit focus on media and communication practices. Note that media, and especially printed like published journals and newspapers had a prominent position in the constitution of the public during the modern period (Anderson, 1983; Jürgen Habermas, [1962] 2010; Warner, 1990).

To conclude the discussion about the two approaches to public space, the procedural approach is there to provide a new way of thinking and conceptualising public space. Iveson states two insights based on this approach. First, if we agree that all the ‘forms of public space have a distinct “material structure”, then we ought to explore the particular materiality of different forms of space, asking about how this materiality is made and remade, and considering the consequences of this materiality for different forms of public address and for different publics’ (Iveson, 2007, p. 12). This idea suggests, as it was mentioned, that publics do not have a proper location and no space should be called or characterised as ‘public space’. However, it does not mean that every space is a potential public space and not every space is available for engagement in struggles. Second, Iveson states that ‘we should not frame different kinds of public spaces as stark alternatives to one another. Rather we ought to explore the ways in which publics *combine* a variety of “public spaces” in their action’ (p. 13). That is to say, that public spaces are formed by public actions, and the actions which take place are formed by the spaces as well. Meanwhile, public space does not exist independently and isolated from another one, rather, ‘these spaces develop and mutate in complex relation to each other’ (p. 13).

## 1.2. Research questions

My approach to public space is not clearly a procedural one, either a topographical. Obviously, I oppose myself to the topographical approach to public space and the private/public distinction as it was promoted in the topographical conceptualisation. Although those in favour of the procedural approach try to highlight the ‘dynamic geographies of public address, they fail to appreciate fully the persistent power of normative topographical mappings of public and

private' (Iveson, 2007, p. 14). Both approaches negotiate with a specific aspect of publicness, public space and the city, but both eventually, in their turn, are not able to highlight the full complex of publicness neglecting other crucial elements. However, my approach and my focus here is on the *emergence* of urban public space through actions and practices of individuals and collectives - forms of address. The main focus is on the actions as the central constitutive element of social life. Samarajiva and Shields, from the perspective of media and communications studies, recognise that the distinction between private and public space is not spatial at all. Instead, this distinction is based on forms of interaction:

'Public spaces are characterised by a relative openness to initiation of communication by others, and private spaces are characterised by a relative closeness to initiation of communication' (Samarajiva & Shields, 1997, pp. 541-542).

We need to leave behind the stereotypical perception of publicness as a defined location of space and pay attention to the practices that occur in the constitution of public space. Note, that this space intertwines in the topographical and procedural perceptions of public space: it is topographical, and it is not, it is procedural, and it is not. It is topographical in the sense that when a practice occurs, this practice has a material dimension that takes place at a specific location on a specific moment, but it is not topographical in the sense that the space where the practice occurs is not a prescribed public space. Public space is procedural because it is constituted through processes, events, and action, but the same time it is not only procedural because it has a topographical dimension based on the material arrangements of space. To be even more specific, public space is the emerging property of practices, relations of practices between other practices, and of relations between practices and material arrangements.

However, I consider that the emergence of public space is conceptualised through political struggle and not only in the relations between practices and arrangements, or to say, the practices which occur entail a political dimension. The starting point of this idea - that public space is a property of political action - is based on the inquiries of Mitchel (1995, 2003) and Arendt (1958, 1970) and Harvey (2013). Harvey highlights this by saying that public space is 'the arena of political deliberation and participation, and...fundamental to democratic governance' (Harvey, 2005, p. 17). However, the political inheres not only in the practices of the actual of a public space but also in governmental practices, like those of lawmaking and order - politics in general as the 'collective intentional management of (some sector of) social site' (Schatzki, 2002, p. 251). Note, that politics is 'collective because it is an activity that people carry out together (regardless of how much contention and conflict are involved) (p. 251). In this thesis, I argue that public space is an *emergent property* of socio-political practices, and by emergent properties I mean the properties of a social phenomenon or a whole 'that are not present in its parts: if a given social whole [or a social phenomenon] has properties that emerge from the interactions between its parts, its reduction to a mere aggregate of many rational decision makers or many phenomenological experiences is effectively blocked' (DeLanda, 2010, p. 3). This position arises the main question, which I am going to explore in the following sections:



*What are the socio-political dynamics that occur in an ambiguous space of Sportheldenbuurt for a public space to emerge?*

By using the word ambiguous, I refer to all the city parks, squares, streets, etc., which are meant for a topographical public space. However, since I oppose the perception that public space is topographical-only-characterised, I argue that the publicness of the space is an emergent property of practices. Following this position and based on all the names that have been used to describe these spaces: public spaces; public spheres; common space; spaces of struggle and because I want to avoid any pre-assumption and predetermination upon the character of a space I consider that the epithet of ambiguous is the most proper one.

In order to tackle this research question, I apply a theory of social practices as it was stated by Theodore Schatzki (2002, 2019). I do so, in order to explain and analyse the ontology of practices and therefore, to understand the dynamics that occur in space. However, as I mentioned, the political dimension of practices is crucial for the understanding of the dynamics that occur. Although Schatzki refers to the politics (related to the rules and laws), he does not express the political dimension of the practices explicitly. To envisage this gap in social practices, I will apply Chantal Mouffe's ideas on the *political*. Note, that many geographers in recent studies on public space neglect the political aspect of it. Apart from Harvey and his inquiries in political economy and urban geography, few are those who explicitly focus on the political struggles of public space. In this research, I aim to analyse the political dimension of the practices, and therefore of public space, and make a detailed distinction between politics and the political.

Therefore, in the first chapter, I am going to analyse these two theories, of Schatzki and Mouffe. The main idea is that public space is a socio-political product which emerges temporary during the occurrence of interactions between practices and other practices or material arrangements. Afterwards, I will apply the theories in the case of Sportheldenbuurt, a neighbourhood, part of Zeeburgereiland in Amsterdam. Zeeburgereiland is part of a big urban development programme which takes place in Amsterdam. Sportheldenbuurt is a neighbourhood built up from scratch in 2005, and still, some constructions are taking place. It worths observing and discussing how public spaces occur in that area. From the theoretical framework and the case study, two research sub-questions arise:

*How are public spaces constituted in the neighbourhood of Sportheldenbuurt?*

*What is the role of social interaction in the constitution of public space?*

In order to give an answer to the main research question and its sub-questions, I use two qualitative methods. First, agenda and policy documents of the city of Amsterdam were analysed to deploy the intentions of the city on the urban developments that took and will take place in the neighbourhood of Sportheldenbuurt. Second, seven interviews were held with random city-dwellers to discuss how they perceive public space and publicness. Both of the methods will help me to draw conclusions on my research questions related to the public space of Sportheldenbuurt. In this final chapter, I am going to critically discuss these conclusions based on the policy and agenda documents and the interviews.

## 2. Social practices

### 2.1. About the social

The position of this thesis follows the idea that ‘social life is composed, at least centrally of practices’ (Schatzki, 2019, p. 3). This chapter is about the constitution of public space in relation to the social practice theory: ‘the nature of social existence [in a public space], what it consists in, and the character of its transformation’ (Schatzki, 2002, p. xi). Public space is approached here as a social phenomenon which emerges in the interaction of practices with practices and/or with material arrangements. In this chapter, I will analyse the ontology of practices in order to understand the *social* and the constitution of public space as a social phenomenon. I need to clarify that when I use the phrase of public space in this thesis, I refer only to the urban one, although the same attributes may well be applied in other types of public spaces as well. In addition, I should mention that with the adjective ‘social’ I mean the exact meaning that Schatzki gives to the word, which is the one of *human coexistence* [which can be understood as the ‘hanging-together (Zusammenhang) of people’s lives’] (Schatzki, 2019, p. 27). Already from the introduction, I postulated that public space is an emergent property of the practices that occur in the city landscape, I should make a more extensive contribution to this term, as it is the most crucial for the understanding of my position.

Public space as an emergent property entails that it is property of a whole, and it cannot exist by one part of a whole: it requires interaction between the parts of a whole. This idea is opposed to that of ‘human beings as actors, either as rational decision-makers (as in micro-economics) or as phenomenological subjects (as in micro-sociology)’ (DeLanda, 2010, p. 3). As noted for an emergent property to be exhibited, interaction among the parts of a whole is necessary, in our case, social interaction among those who and/or which constitute social life. In that sense, public space is not a product of a practice of a merely aggregate group like the urban planners, instead, it is an emergent property which arises in the interaction of practices with other practices and/or material arrangements. However, as I will clarify later in this section, human activity is an inseparable entity in the constitution of public space. Below I am going to analyse those practices, human activities, processes, material arrangements that take place in the constitution of public space.

Before I address the ontology of practices, I need to present the bigger image of this concept, which is *the practice plenum*. ‘Plenum’ is used by Schatzki to explain the assembly of certain things, which are not necessarily related (it depends on each case), the constitution of a multiplicity. Practice plenum, therefore, is more of a ‘plentitude’ as he puts it, and it consists of an aggregate of ‘practices and arrangements, which happen to relate and, as related, form bundles and constellations’ (Schatzki, 2019, p. 27). Practices are central in social life, and social life emerges in the relations of bundles of practices and arrangements. These bundles constitute a plenum as well. Social phenomena, eventually are ‘aspects or slices of this plenum’ (p. 27). Public space as an emergent property of a practice plenum portrays all the practices and the arrangements, bundles and constellations. I argue in that sense that public space is a social phenomenon consisting of a myriad of practices and material arrangements. As a social phenomenon arises only temporarily and lasts only during the occurrence of practices, activities and chains of actions. Public space emerges through the establishment of numerous practices. Those in favour of a topographical approach of public space, or those related to urban design and policymaking, would argue that urban planners and policymakers are those who create a public space. Those who believe in the emergence of

common spaces and spaces of resistance like Harvey (2013) and Stavrides (2016) would argue that public spaces are constructed during acts of resistance and claim for their right to the city. However, I already stated that places like those are ambiguous spaces and a public space arises as an emergent property of practices' interactions. Based on this idea, the public space that I am referring to, emerges in the interaction, e.g. between user practices of an ambiguous space and those of policymaking. In the following paragraphs I will discuss in detail what I am describing.

Schatzki already from his first academic works defined practices as 'open-ended, spatial-temporal sets of organised doings and sayings' (2019, p. 28). Doings and sayings could be formulated alternatively as 'nondiscursive doings and discursive doings' (p. 28). A doing, as the word predisposes, is the act of doing something, or something is happening. This implies the distinction between activity and action, as the first denotes an event and the latter an achievement. Sayings, however, have two dimensions, on one hand, sayings are just the words, sentences, phrases that someone utters (it can also be written or typed). On the other hand, sayings can provoke doings, in the sense that someone says something, i.e. give me the ball, this saying is a component of doing.

As regards the characterisation of practices as open-ended, it suggests that the practices that occur in a public space can 'be extended through the occurrence of additional performances that compose it' (Schatzki, 2019, p. 28). Think again of the walking example, while someone walks, she interacts directly with the material arrangements of an ambiguous space, e.g. the way the paths and the pavements are constructed, as well as the certain regulations of that area. However, the act of walking will continue to persist in a case when someone would see a familiar face and would stop by to greet or have chitchat and then finally continue her walking route again. In that sense, if a further practice that composes the act of walking would not occur, then the practice of walking would come to an end. However, there are practices that occur in different timeframes, for instance the practice of policing, which does not operate continuously. It is actually really vague to understand when the practice of policing occurs, its doings and sayings that compose this practice 'can be and usually are spread out in time and space' (p. 29). In that sense, practice is not a process which is interrupted by time and spatial gaps, on the contrary practice's persistence sometimes is expressed and sometimes not. As Schatzki would add on this, 'it is enough in order for a practice, in the future, to have persisted that *at some time* in the future a constituent activity occurs' (p. 29). Therefore, there is no rule, how short the temporal and spatial gaps should be, there is no rule, either for how quickly the activities that compose practice should occur. Eventually, there is no rule to say how long 'a time period must pass before the practice qualifies as having died' (p. 29). Therefore, practices like policing, city-dwelling, surveillance, etc., are indeterminate. Schatzki in his inquiry in 'The Timespace of Human Activity: on Performance, Society and history as Indeterminate Teleological Events', he argues that when a practices 'is performed at a given moment, it is indeterminate at the moment whether the practice persists' (2019, p. 29). This indeterminacy is inherent in all practices, and it suggests that the persistence of the practice 'remains indeterminate regardless of the length of time that has elapsed since the last persistence-authenticating activity' (p. 29). Their indeterminacy lies on the fact that we cannot acknowledge when one practice comes to an end.

In addition, it was mentioned that practices are spatio-temporal, which means that the activities which constitute a practice 'take place in or over time and at particular locations or along particular lines in spaces' (Schatzki, 2019, p. 29). Imagine the practice of city-dwelling through an

ambiguous space: it requires bodily actions that ‘are localised where bodies are located; at particular locations in or along particular paths through space (bodies themselves define such paths)’ (p. 30).

As noted, practices are organised sets of activities. In contrast to Bourdieu (1990, p. 60), who claims that practices ‘are organised by the distributions of capital that define positions and objective relations between positions in that space; by the common ends (stakes) people pursue there; and by group habitues, which are habitues of people who occupy a particular positions in the space owe to the same or similar conditions they have experienced’, Schatzki argues - and I follow this line - that practices are organised ‘by pools of understandings, rules, and teleoaffectivities’ (Schatzki, 2019, p. 30). I will explain here what he meant with these terms. There are two distinctions within the understandings: practical and general understandings. Practical understandings are understandings based on ‘how to carry out particular intentional actions in particular circumstances through performances and bodily actions’ (p. 30). These understandings include activities like how to bicycle, or how to wave to a friend as a way to greet. General understandings have to do with ‘ethoses or general sense of things’ (p. 30). For instance, what is perceived as politeness or unacceptable attitude, but also understandings about states or facts like liability or responsibility. In that sense, users of public spaces know how to perform in a space, but at the same time, there are different perceptions of general understanding in each actor. For instance, if we could observe two hasty pedestrians who are crossing through a crowded square, those two would have different standards of general understandings compared with each other: one would cross through the crowds in a hurry while asking for the people around her to provide some space in order to pass, being fully aware of keeping - what society perceives as - the politeness standards, while the other might pass through more clumsy without taking into account what people think or react on her manners. Both of the ways are different perceptions of politeness, at the same time there are many different perceptions of general understandings, although some of them would be more widely perceived as the proper ones.

As regards the rules, Schatzki focuses on the formulated ones and not on the unformulated. These are ‘formulated directives, instructions, or remonstrations’ (2019, p. 30). Rules have to do with the more authoritarian practices involved in a public space, e.g. policymaking, policing. As concerned as the teleoaffectivities, based on that Schatzki comes to the conclusion that human activities are teleological. The etymology of the word teleology comes from the greek *τέλος*, telos, end, aim, or goal and *λόγος*, logos, explanation or reason. A teleological activity is ‘performed for the sake of some way of being or state of affairs’ (p. 31). Human activity is performed for a reason, for a reason to put an end on something else. In many cases of teleological activities, emotions have an important place in them. Someone, for instance, might need to try to calm down someone who feels angry. This activity of calming down has the purpose of maintaining a more civil manner of communicating or avoiding an extreme expression of emotion. At this point, I need to clarify that in some teleoaffective activities, not all the end-project-action combinations are acceptable. For example, swearing to a person would not be an acceptable end-telos. In the end, all ends and emotions are driven by normativity. Therefore, it is unclear in practices what is acceptable and what is unacceptable activity. The same with the general understandings - it is on people’s perception to recognise what is acceptable or not. I need to point out here that an activity is ‘the performing of an action’ which makes it an event. In every event, an action takes place. This results that a practice entails a number of events. Also note, that the practices are managed by many individuals, and for ‘different activities to be part of a given practices is for them to express elements of that practices’

organisation: the activities realise common practical and general understandings, uphold certain rules, or instantiate the practice's normativized teleoaffective structures' (Schatzki, 2019, p. 30). Besides, the doings and sayings mentioned above, compose practices and therefore, the doings and sayings are events. In contrast, understandings, rules and teleoaffectivities organise the practices. As Schatzki underlines, the complex of understandings, rules and teleoaffectivities exist in practices.

## 2.2. Arrangements

To continue the discussion on the dynamics that occur during the constitution of public space in the paragraphs below; I will focus on the ontology of material arrangements. As it is mentioned, practices plenum consists of the relations and interconnections of practices and arrangements. The use of arrangements is understood through 'the multiplicity of material entities that are involved with human practices and also to the fact that these entities are connected to one another' (Schatzki, 2019, p. 36). Similar concepts have been used from other theorists, like Bruno Latour (2005) and Michel Callo (1998) who were referred to *réseaux* (networks), Deleuze and Félix Guattari (2003), who called them *agencements* (assemblages or arrangements) and Foucault (2008) called them *dispositifs* (apparatuses). Arrangements are material entities and can be found in the following four types: 'humans, artefacts, organisms, and phenomena of nature' (Schatzki, 2019, p. 35). Note, that not all of the arrangements are acknowledged by the users, e.g. the human organs or the motherboard of a computer: both of them are components of an entity, but it does not mean that people are aware of all these components. Think of the communication networks, smartphones, satellites, wifi-routers, antennas, 5G connections: 'such networks and infrastructures are arrangements, complexes of interconnected material entities' (p. 38). Arrangements are links between material entities. In that senses arrangements form complexes between practices, or to be more precise 'entities form arrangements - of connected entities', which comes to the point that arrangements highlight 'the multiplicity of material entities that are involved with human practices and also to the fact that these entities are connected to one another' (p. 36). The entities which form arrangements related with each other, either they 'hang together, [or] they determine one another via their connections, and as combined both exert effects on other configurations and are transformed through the actions of the other configurations' (Schatzki, 2002, p. xiii). Note that the arrangements amplify the material dimension of social life. The most characteristic arrangements that are inherent in the emergence of public space are the *infrastructures*, which in many cases are not visible to the users. Keller Easterling (2014) describes the term infrastructure extensively:

'[it] conjures associations with physical networks for transportation, communication, or utilities. Infrastructure is considered to be a hidden substrate - the binding medium or current between objects of positive consequence, shape, and law. Yet today, more than grids of pipes and wires, infrastructure includes pools of microwaves beaming from satellites and populations of atomized electronic devices that we hold in our hands. The shared standard and ideas that control everything from technical objects to management styles also constitute an infrastructure. Far from hidden, infrastructure is now the overt point of contact and access between us all - the rules governing the space of everyday life' (p. 11).

In that sense, infrastructures exist almost in every aspect of social life. Some of them are more acknowledged and some other less and, because they relate to other entities, form complexes of arrangements. Here I need to clarify that the word ‘entities’ does not mean an object or a thing which is a tangible or discrete thing, in contrast, entities are material beings, which are not necessarily discrete or tangible - e.g. the air - and they are simply something that is.

The material entities like benches, pavements, handrails, trash bins, trees can also form arrangements, at the point they are related or interconnected with other entities, e.g. if a city-dweller walks through an ambiguous space such as a square, the configuration of the square as material arrangements serves as a link between the practices of city-dwelling and urban planning. The elements of arrangements are sometimes the reason for practices to occur, e.g. practices in which you need to repair something; a tile in a square, or to restore the park benches.

However, once the arrangements are constructed, ‘networks and infrastructures persist independent of people’s actions; they are objective’ (Schatzki, 2019, p. 38). Their objectivity does not remain untouchable, human actors and process can change, destroy or damage them. Meanwhile, it is crucial to understand that some material entities operate independently - from the exact moment that they are constituted - and they can launch or ‘alter other arrangements on their own’, they are self-moving and self-operated (think the moment when a satellite is launched in space) (p. 36). This idea does not mean that human activities are not responsible for which arrangements are constructed, arrangements do not exist independently from human activities.

### **2.3. Relations and Bundles**

At the beginning of this chapter, I talked about the practice plenum, which consists of relations and bundles of arrangements and practices. In this section, I am going to discuss these relations and bundles. Schatzki posits that ‘practices...use, set up, give meaning to, and are directed toward and inseparable from arrangements and their components, whereas arrangements and their components induce, channel, and are essential to practices’ (2019, p. 41). Each verb and phrase in Schatzki’s phrase ‘denotes a type of relation between practices and arrangements’ (p. 41). It is in these relations where practices and arrangements form bundles. In a public space of the urban terrain, practices of urban planning, policing, policymaking, recreation, restoration, maintenance, entertainment, resistance, dwelling, communication, and many other practices take place. Each of the practices entails smaller activities in its bundle, and those activities or performances of action intercommunicate, interconnect and negotiate with each other. As these examples can denote, I contravene - maybe not that explicitly - the actor-network theories and the categorisation of actor and action to subjects of all sorts. As concern as that the practices are ‘open-ended, spatial temporal set of organised doings and sayings’ it implies that practices operate temporally, spatially and launched actions may continue indefinitely. Think the city-dwelling practice; it involves a set of doings, that is the bodily action of walking or waving someone in case of seeing a familiar face, and sayings, that is if someone talks during her action. However, the bodily actions, the path that someone would follow walking through an ambiguous (public) space like a square is highly based on the material arrangements of the space itself. Practices, therefore, operate inseparably from arrangements, and many practices even can bundle with the same arrangement. Arrangements of the



pipe system infrastructure of a public square involve practices of engineering, maintenance, and city-dwelling as well - each practice on a different level and in a different time frame. The relations mentioned above do not really need further explanation as they talk by themselves, but I will particularly focus on the 'directed toward' relation.

The 'directed toward' relation means that people 'are directed toward entities in their activities and, thus, in their enactment of practices' (p. 41). For instance, when a person is looking at something, is directed toward it, she might engage with it in multiple ways, like just staring at it, going away from it, hear it and many other options. In addition, the entity, or the event that someone is involved or directed at it is not always real and might be imaginary sometimes. Therefore, there is a 'directedness toward' which 'obtains between a person and an entity, event, or state of affairs and is effected through an activity, a cognitive state, or an ongoing emotion, state of consciousness, or conative condition' (p. 41).

It is mentioned that arrangements do not exist independently of human activities, also, practices 'cannot exist independent of particular material entities' (Schatzki, 2019, p. 42). Think of the practices of water bottling; they would not exist without water, plastic bottles and bottling machines. The material dimension of entities as well as the arrangements that form are crucial in practice's existence. In many cases, material entities and arrangements are those which determine the outcome or the emergence of practices: 'human bodies, for instance, are essential to practices because practices are carried out through bodily actions' (p. 42). This idea of determining or prescribing the emergence of practices is denoted in the concept of *prefiguration*. Prefiguration entails that the present decides what is possible and what is not in the future. According to Schatzki arrangements 'prefigure activities and practices' and therefore prescribe what practices should and when to emerge (p. 43). The importance of the material entities and arrangements lies in the fact that 'objects, arrangements, and the events as well as processes that befall them can lead people to perform certain actions and to carry on certain practices' (p. 42). To come back to the concept of prefiguration, because of the arrangements capability to operate like this, they can determine the future. Regarding how much food there is, for instance, in the fridge, someone would decide to go to the supermarket to buy extra or not. Or, because of lack of money, someone would not go to the supermarket. Similarly, someone would decide to visit a specific square over another one because the material arrangements which are in that place are plentiful or more desirable than the other one: in the one square maybe there are more sitting benches than the other one, which makes it a preferable place to go and sit.

In sum, in this section, I discussed the relations between practices and arrangements. I presented some examples that exist in these relations, relations which are crucial for the constitution of social life. These types of relations between practices and arrangements are broadly described in four distinctions by Theodore Schatzki; these are: 'causality (setting up, inducing, and channeling), constitution (inseparability from and essentiality to), action and mind (use, bestowing meaning, directed toward), and configuration' (p. 44). As the title of the section denotes the relations bundle practices and arrangement. It is in these bundles where human activity exists. Therefore, what becomes clear here is, that, bundles are in the centre of social life and not the practices alone.

## 2.4. Relations and constellations

It is mentioned that the practice plenum consists of multiple bundles; in fact, there is no definitive number of how many bundles can consist of. These bundles, however, are related and connected with each other; and they form larger constellations. Note, that ‘bundles, and the constellations they form, link into a single overall nexus of practices and arrangements - the practice plenum’ (Schatzki, 2019, p. 44). The number of practices and arrangements, therefore, that constitute bundles and constellations vary, and it depends on their complexity and extensiveness. A supermarket, for instance, and the practices and arrangements which take place in it are less complex and fewer than the local community where the supermarket is located. A government is a more complex constellation than a university. The reason for that is that a government and a local community embrace a larger number of practices and arrangements and are more complex than a supermarket and university, respectively. Schatzki distinguishes five relations that form constellations between bundles.

The first one is that of common and orchestrated teleologies, emotions, rules, and general understandings. That is that bundles relate to the practice’s end, and when a practice reaches an end emotions can emerge. Therefore, an end can give space for emotions to emerge that are particularly different to each practitioner, depending on the outcome of the practice. The same with rules, imagine the emotional impact that a particular part of the population would have if the government would change the taxes rates in energy consumption. The second one is that of intentional relations and it has to do with the ‘directedness toward’ which was indicated above: ‘participants in one bundle being directed toward other bundles and constellations (or their components) in doings, sayings, and mental, emotional, and cognitive conditions’ (p. 46).

The third one, chains of actions as the phrase denotes is a ‘sequence of actions, each member of which responds to the previous member or to a change brought about by the previous member in the world’ (Schatzki, 2019, p. 46). The fourth distinction is material connections, which exist in the infrastructures, in networks of communications and transportations, but also in spatial relations such as ‘inside and outside, above and below, overlapping and separate, larger and smaller, and so on’ (p. 46). The last one is the one of prefiguration which I mentioned before, and it denotes that bundles may prefigure or predetermine other bundles. For instance, the changes of government in the taxes rules in properties would emerge some to make a different decision among their properties.

This discussion about bundles and constellations and their relations highlight that all social phenomena result or exist in the relation between bundles and constellations. Therefore a public space as a social phenomenon arises in the relation between bundles and constellations. At the same time, these relations are processes and not solid entities, something which is visible in the relations or interactions between individuals. Note that, social interaction exists because of the occurrence of practices and bundles, and therefore a relationship consists of them. However, the relations between individuals that form bundles require a more extensive discussion, since theories of relations between and among individuals which focus on the interactions give different meanings or characterisations on this action and it worths to present some of them. Note that this discussion

enables a better understanding of the political dimension of practices that will discuss later on this thesis (Chapter 3).

According to Crossley relations are mediated by interactions between individuals, and therefore this amplifies the idea that the relations are processes: 'relationality and process are two sides of the same coin' (2013, p. 125). In addition, he states that the individuals are shaped through the interaction and relations, in that sense, we are not speaking of actors, but for 'inter-actors: actors-in-relation' (p. 125). It is in the interactions between individuals when they are located in an ambiguous public space, where a public space emerges:

'relations, as ongoing histories, manifest...emergent properties: i's actions are a response to j's, which are a response to i's and so on. The behavior of the individual can only be rendered intelligible and explained, methodologically, if we remain alert to his or her location within a network of relations and interactions' (Crossley, 2013, p. 125).

Theodore Schatzki recognises although Crossley's position that relations between individuals arise processes is a good one, it does not state anything on the kind of interaction or even the role of the interaction in the processes - and I agree with him (Schatzki, 2019, p. 48). A more experimental approach and interpretation of relations are postulated from Bentley and Dewey (1949), who describe this relation as a transaction. According to them (Dewey & Bentley), a transaction precedes the relations between individuals, and it is the one which enables them. The same line is followed by other theorists who perceive a transaction as a matter of process. Erving Goffman, in his introduction in *Interaction Ritual*, describes this processual relation adequately: '[n]ot, then, men and their moments. Rather, moments and their men' (1967, p. 3). Something which Schatzki extends in the realm of interaction to: '[n]ot the people and their interactions. Rather, transactions and their people' (2019, p. 49). The processual relation of a transaction is also embraced from the theorist Mustafa Emirbayer (1997), who explicitly claims that transactions precede the relations between individuals, and it is through these transactions which individuals are shaped into who they are.

In sum, in this section, I attempted to analyse the relations between forms of bundles and constellations. Depending on the number of arrangements and practices that constitute bundles and constellations lies as well the complexity and the extensiveness of them. There are different forms of relations between constellations and bundles, but the central point of this section is that these relations are processual - either when they perceived as interactions or transactions. The discussion about the emergence of a public space lies in the realm of interactions, in which individuals emerge as who they are.

## **2.5. Materiality and Potentiality**

Social practices and social phenomena, in general, are closely connected to the material world, materiality 'runs through practices, bundles of copresent practices, and complexes of interdependent ones, helping to establish co-location, dependence, and codependence' (Schatzki, 2019, p. 52). In this chapter, I am going to discuss what *materiality* means. Materiality is not restricted to tangible objects but also the physical and chemical compositions of entities, e.g. the

chemical components of water, or the forms of data in a communication network. According to this idea, material entities can be 'dead, living, or intelligent; processes of many sorts beyond material ones can befall them; and such entities bear further sorts of property in relations to organisms, in relation to humans, by virtue of being elements of social life, and so on' (Schatzki, 2019, p. 56).

Meanwhile, materiality inheres in the processes and it is considered a process and not stable state, or to be more precise materiality here is considered 'as much force as entity, as much energy as matter, as much intensity as extension' (Bennett, 2010, p. 20). In that sense, the use of materiality here differs from a traditional point of view. Arrangements do not occur under the guidance or the governance of any central head or entity, 'no one materiality or type of material has sufficient competence to determine consistently the trajectory or impact of the group' (p. 24). However, assemblages can emerge material entities that are responsible for the constitution of social life and social change; these materialities are different from those which constitute a vital force. That is to say, that each component element of an arrangement 'has a certain vital force, but there is also an effectivity proper to the grouping as much: an agency of the [arrangement]' (p. 24).

Besides, I need to clarify how materiality pervades the practice plenum. To do so, I explain below the essence of the material world that lies on arrangements, doings and sayings, and on the organisation of practices and their relations. As it was mentioned, arrangements are 'by definition material phenomena' and help human activities to operate; when a bodily action takes place, those material arrangements determine where is this place, that is, to understand that material arrangements like walls, floors, stairs, doors note whether a practice operates outdoors (Schatzki, 2019, p. 56). According to Pickering (1995), practices are depended on the physical and chemical substance of material entities, events and arrangements, and it is required by the participants 'practical and propositional knowledges that are keyed to these matter' (think of someone fixing the engine of a car, it requires to know how to do it) (Schatzki, 2019, p. 57). In addition, humans are also eternally responsible for maintaining but also fixing arrangements (Arendt, 1958; Graham & Thrift, 2007).

Doings and sayings, as composing parts of practices, are activities and actions which are fulfilled by bodily actions, or what Arthur Danto (1965) would call as 'basic actions'. Focusing more on the material dimension of doings and sayings, 'they are voluntary movements, voluntary physical movings of a person's body (including utterings of sounds), that, in the context in which they are performed, constitute the doing or saying of something' (Schatzki, 2019, p. 59). Based on that explanation, that actions are 'spatially localised at the bodies', it suggests that actions take place at the place where the bodily actions operate (p. 59). At the same time, the location of action can be 'complex, multiple, or vague' (p. 59). An example like a Skype talk, or chatting through Whatsapp is quite complex because these actions require not only the bodily actions of the participants but also the activities which are involved in the telecommunication networks, to make these communications possible. Also, these practices suggest that the talk takes place in multiple material sites and not only in the place where the action takes place. In sum, practices are multiply located and according to Giddens (1990), locations of practices are spread out temporally and spatially, something which amplifies the spatio-temporal character of practices. In addition, complexity, multiplicity, and vagueness are inherent attributes of human actions, and this is what characterises the practices as such.

Practices are organised by pools of understandings, rules, and teleoaffectivities. The materiality in the practice organisation components lies on the bodies through which 'action

performing take place and practices are carried on' (Schatzki, 2019, p. 61). Emotions too are materialised in human bodies, although in different ways. Giddens says, for instance, that the 'rules that (according to him) structure practices are materialised as memory traces in the brain' (Giddens in Schatzki, 2019, p. 61).

At this point, and after explaining the importance of materiality for the understanding of the practice organisation, I want to talk about the *potential* of materiality. That is to talk about the 'capacity of the events to disrupt patterns, generate new encounters with people and objects, and invent new connections and ways of inhabiting everyday urban life...and to generate the possibility of new idea, encounters and collectives' (McFarlane, 2011, p. 209). I need to clarify here, that *potentiality* lies in the relations and interactions of human entities between the material ones, but it can also emerge 'in the interactive relations of material themselves' (p. 215). Potentiality attends in the agency of material arrangements, or to say in their capacity to be detached from a practice plenum and plugged into another one, creating new interactions. The agency as a capacity of the material but also of the social is discussed by Aristotles in his *Metaphysics* (1991) in which he recognised the existence of capacities and the reality of unexercised capacities; those are the capacities which are not yet exposed (p. 142). Potentiality is also recognised in the term *multiplicity* by Gilles Deleuze, according to him multiplicity 'refers to manifolds used to conceptualise possibility spaces' (in DeLanda, 2010, p. 127). Multiplicities, similarly to capacities are '*virtual*, that is, real but not actual' (p. 127).

By implementing here the concept of potentiality, I state that the practice plenum and its bundles and constellations in many case have the capacity to suggest practices, activities, and spaces by creating possibility spaces which have the potential to become something - something like a public space. In addition, materiality is an inseparable condition for the understanding of practices. Material pervades the practice plenum, either by the most obvious material entities that compose arrangements or by means of processes. Materiality exists in every aspect of the practice plenum, in the way practices operate but also in the way practices are organised. Public space's materiality is spread over the relations between the arrangements and the practices, as more processual materiality and in the material entities that may compose practices, as more traditionally-perceived-materiality.

## 2.6. Flat ontology

Through the previous sections, I argued that social phenomena are emergent properties of the practice plenum. The idea of a practice plenum and its emergent properties embraces a flat social ontology, in which the totalities that constitute social life are peripheral, something which I am going to explain in this section. First of all, the conception of flat ontology has been promoted, either explicitly or less explicitly, by three theoretical works, these are the work of Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari, and Bruno Latour. The link of these three theories is highlighted in Schatzki's interpretation of arrangements according to which arrangements are:

[s]ocial things organised in configurations, where they hang together, determine one another via their connections, combined both exert effects on other configurations, and therewith constitute the setting and medium of human action, interaction, and coexistence (2002, p. xiii)

Taking as a starting point that arrangements and social phenomena, in general, are ‘aspects or slices of the practice plenum’ there are two main understandings of flatness that I am going to discuss (Schatzki, 2019, p. 70). First, in contrast to those who believe that social entities can be ‘segregated into separate, possibly hierarchically ordered domains such as society and nature’, it is in flat ontologies in which social phenomena emerge in the relation of heterogeneous entities. While Pickering (1995) uses the term ‘mangled’ and others those of ‘monist’, or ‘symmetrical’, ‘flat’ seem the most appropriate term to describe heterogeneous entities, or similarly ‘heterogeneous assemblages à la Deleuze and Guattari and heterogeneous networks à la Latour (as well as heterogeneous apparatuses à la Foucault)’ (Schatzki, 2019, p. 70).

The second and most crucial understanding of flat ontology is that of denying any hierarchies of social phenomena, something which is explicitly explained in the works of Latour (2005) and Seidl and Whittington (2014). Embracing hierarchies in social phenomena means that ‘levels exist when systematic relations of causality and supervenience exist between entities of two general kinds’ (Schatzki, 2019, p. 70). This can be explained by saying that there are two types of entities, those which are higher and those which are lower. This relation also refers to the micro/macro phenomena and their distinction with each other.

To embrace flat ontology is to embrace geography without scale, which means to not treat scale as hierarchical given (Jones et al., 2007) and therefore oppose ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ distinctions (Allen, 2011). Although flat ontologies oppose any causality and supervenience, they do recognise causal relations between entities by:

‘(1) analysing the phenomena involved - e.g., individuals and institutions - in terms of whatever the flat ontology claims constitutes social life, for example practice-arrangements bundles (e.e.g, individuals as participants in practices and institutions as slices of bundles) and (2) uncovering causal relations among the phenomena so described (see in Schatzki, 2016)’ (Schatzki, 2019, p. 71).

While flat ontologies neglect any level of supervenience and systematic relations of causality, they embrace that all social phenomena ‘have the same basic composition’ (p. 71). Therefore, social phenomena, as it was mentioned, are slices of the practice plenum and its materiality. The causality in flat ontology works in horizontal levels and denies the verticality of top-down and bottom-up. However, social phenomena differ with each other ‘in the practices and arrangements that compose them in the density, continuity, and space-time spread of their constituent relations’ (p. 71).

In addition, if someone embraces the flat ontology, she has to abandon the micro/macro distinction and replace them with density, size and shape. According to Durkheim (1981) and Halbwachs (1960), these terms can be called ‘morphological’. Latour replaces the micro/macro relations with size, while DeLanda uses numbers as components of networks (DeLanda, 2006, pp. 6-7; Latour, 1993, p. 117). Schatzki argues ‘(1) that knowledge of relative sizes or densities and of kind of shape can further the enterprise of social understanding and explanation and (2) that insightful generalisations can be made on the basis of the sizes, densities, or shapes of social phenomena’ (2019, p. 76). In sum, someone should get rid of the vertical and hierarchical relations within entities and focus on other properties instead. Features like size, density and shape may offer insights on how social phenomena operate, but also how they evolve over time.



## 2.7. Chains of action

In the previous sections, I discussed the ontology of practices and the emergence of public space as a social phenomenon which occurs in the emergent properties of practices. However, when there is a difference in social phenomena or different sorts of dynamics, social change might occur. The current section is based on the narratives of social change and the social dynamics that occur as determinants of social change. Have in mind that change is an outcome of differences that emerge among practices, events and actions. Therefore, changes inhabit in the differences within practices and arrangements, but also in bundles. Although practices, arrangements and bundles are responsible for social change, they are also known for 'the persistence and stability of social affairs' as I deployed already in previous sections (Schatzki, 2019, p. 79).

The main initiator of social change in social life is a human activity, and human activity is depicted as an event. As it was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, human activity can be also said 'performance' or 'performing an action'. This use of performance does not refer to people performing their performances, 'rather, these performances happen to them' (Schatzki, 2019, p. 80). Performances or activities are interventions in the social and material world, changing their composition or their constitution. This idea, of making changes, intervening, is 'a form of causality', which is based on the fact that a change in the world is an outcome of the intervention: 'the alteration depends on the interventions' (p. 81). Therefore, interventions, and any activity that causes changes, 'directly alter material arrangements and material connections among arrangements' (p. 81). Chains of actions - as a sequence of actions - as one among the relations which inhabit between practices and arrangements (bundles) and link bundles into larger constellations. Materiality is crucial for the understanding of chains of actions, and I quote here Schatzki: 'First, material entities and processes (e.g., satellite transmissions) mediate chains. Second, people intervene in the world and bring about material changes there. And third, material entities and events/processes induce, or lead, people to perform particular actions' (Schatzki, 2019, p. 62).

Chains of actions are sequences of actions in which a participant reacts to a previous participant, action, or change. In that sense, many interventions or activities are reactions. In many cases, however, when someone responds to action, she does not always react with an action, but what she does is staring at it. When someone 'reacts to something, the something qualifies as a cause of her activity' (Schatzki, 2019, p. 82). Therefore, chains of actions are causal relations, in which a participant reacts to a prior action or to a change. In addition, 'most of the things that anyone does are reactions to events and states of affairs in the world' (p. 83). That circulation of actions is constant, and in most cases, people are not aware of that process, they rather focus on what caused them to react rather than the activities which occur during the chain actions. In chains of actions, usually, when someone takes part in a practice, she directly responds to another practice that takes place. This means that chains 'that circulate within given practices typically embrace a considerable dose of interaction' (p. 83). Think of someone who watches tv at home, and while she watches something, she remembers to call her friend, in a sense the practice of communication and friendship extended the chain of actions from the practice of watching tv. Moreover, 'how people extend chains of action, whether within specific or across different practices, can depend on the roles and positions they occupy in these and other practices' (p. 84). Public space as an emergent property of chains of actions can occur temporally and spatially. The most prominent example of

social change in the public space realm is that of demonstrations, occupy movements and acts of resistance in general. Those acts can create numerous actions as responses to their actions, and therefore a public space maintains its existence for a longer period. Acts of resistance can provoke practices of policing these practices in their turn can provoke other practices, which they might also respond back to the prime actions of resistance. In that sense, public space operates as a sequence of actions, in which the myriads of actors interconnect by responding to each other's practices and creating a chain of actions, in which it is often unclear what practice was the one which was the emergence point for all the action-responses.

The chains of actions include several features. The first one suggests that links between activities that react to other activities can be 'intentional or unintentional' (Schatzki, 2019, p. 88). To clarify this, when people react with an action to a prior action, most of the time happens intentionally, but the part of being involved in the action chain is not intentional at all. Another feature is that chains of actions 'are distributed through the plenum of practice. They can be denser in certain spatial-temporal locales or regions - small or large - and thinner in others, and happen quicker on some occasions or in some places than in others' (Schatzki, 2019, p. 88). This idea is well based on Latour concepts of power centres, who distinguishes three types of power centres: oligoptica, panoramas and centers of calculation. Oligoptica are those sites which can see much in detail [' - hence the use of Greek word to designate an ingredient at once indispensable and that comes in tiny amounts (as in the 'oligo-elements' of your health store)'] (Latour, 2005, p. 181). Panoramas in contrast to oligoptica, they see everything - as the word denotes - but not in detail. Centres of calculation, which 'offer such a star-like shape in a very striking form', are sites where calculations are made through means of mediation to other sites (p. 178). Note, however, 'power centres do not control what happens in the practice plenum' (Schatzki, 2019, p. 88).

The third feature of chains of actions is that they operate temporarily. Schatzki notes the examples of speed, rhythm, and acceleration and he explains that 'the speed of chain is how quickly its links occur measured against a clock (or by reference to the order of occurrence in an individual's experience), whereas the rhythm of a chain is the repetition of any sequences or patterns that help to compose it' (Schatzki, 2019, p. 89). The fourth feature of chains of actions is that they are able to form loops. That happens, when someone performs an action which is part of a chain, and this action continues to operate beyond him. At another time, she performs another action of the same chain, which is what forms a loop in the chains of actions.

The last feature is that chains of actions can create nexuses and that to say the actions of chains that coexist or cooperate. Schatzki gives an example of 'numerous action chains, encompassing the activity of diverse participants, pass through the activities of the moderator of an online discussion forum and thereby a nexus' (Schatzki, 2019, p. 90). Other theorists and researchers call the nexuses collective actions, like: the sports clubs, the sports teams, students, movements, etc. However there are multiple types of collective actions, and they consist of 'interaction, dialogue, exchange, governance, and haphazardness' (Schatzki, 2019, p. 91).

Interactions can be found in the mutual reactions of two or more people. They can be physical interactions when people are present in the same space, but also they can be physically separated and still interact with each other. Interactions, however, are a general category. And subcategories are based on the kind of the interactions which occur. Exchanges, for instance, are based on interactions occurring when an individual, a collective or a party provides something and receives something from another individual, collective or a party.

Another type of interaction is that of dialogue or conversation. Dialogue is the most common and the most used type of interaction in social life. It consists mostly of sayings as the most recognisable action which occurs. Besides sayings - discursive doings -, also not discursive doings take part in dialogues, of course not in the same prominent level as the discursive ones do.

Governance is a third type of interaction. The word here is not used with the same meaning as in political sciences (e.g., Stoker 1998, Hajer and Wagenaar 2003 in Schatzki, 2019, p. 93), something which I am going to discuss in the next chapter, but more to denote 'intentional shaping, directing, or making a difference' (p. 93). This interaction is found mainly in organisations, services, groups, institutions, ministries and it represents the efforts to organise, shape, direct, or make a 'difference to how others act, the practices they carry on, the bundles they are part of, and the emergence, evolution, and demise of social phenomena' (p. 93).

In sum, a chain of actions consists of elements of different entities. Schatzki states that:

'how, on a given occasion, someone reacts to others' actions or to the state of the worlds usually has something to do with his prior experiences and actions, what he has learned, the routines he has established, what [s]he believes, and what [s]he is willing to act for, as well as with how things had been standing with him just prior to the reaction and what he had been up to then' (Schatzki, 2019, p. 96).

The links that constitute a chain of action are also related to life trajectories, but life trajectories do not create any difference or change in the social world. Individuals, however, who with their actions are part of a chain and part of life trajectories can generate change, persistence or stasis (Schatzki, 2019, p. 96). Here, it is important to share Schatzki's ideas in which activities of individuals embrace social change when: '(1) activities set significantly different headings for chains of actions of which they are components - what people do significantly diverges from existing precedents, regularities, and patterns - and (2) significant differences in social life result' (p. 97). Note that how one person reacts to someone's action, might set the paradigm to how a third person could react in her act. This is what is called drift, and it emerges from 'people's responses both to others' actions and to changes that others' actions bring about in the worlds (p. 98). Change, therefore, results in the chains of actions which by their turn result in 'a) novel extensions of practices (think of a clothing brand which changes its collection based on the recommendations of its staff), b) reorganisation of practices (think of what is acceptable and what are the tasks in the clothing company), c) altered arrangements, d) newly or rebundled practices and arrangements and e) altering relations among bundles' (p. 100).

It is mentioned that all human activities are indeterminate, however, when activities are interrupted from their regularities, occasions emerge. Occasions, therefore, emerge when 'divergent, surprising, or irregular activities happen', and every occasion is a potential change. Change can occur anytime. To put it bluntly, an occasion transpires in activities 'only if the world reacts to it in a way that constitutes or leads to the world being significantly different than it was prior to the activity' (Schatzki, 2019, p. 101). It is crucial to understand that change is not something that occurs instantly, but it needs time to gather and finally emerge. And in some cases changes depend on the drift.

## 2.8. Conclusion

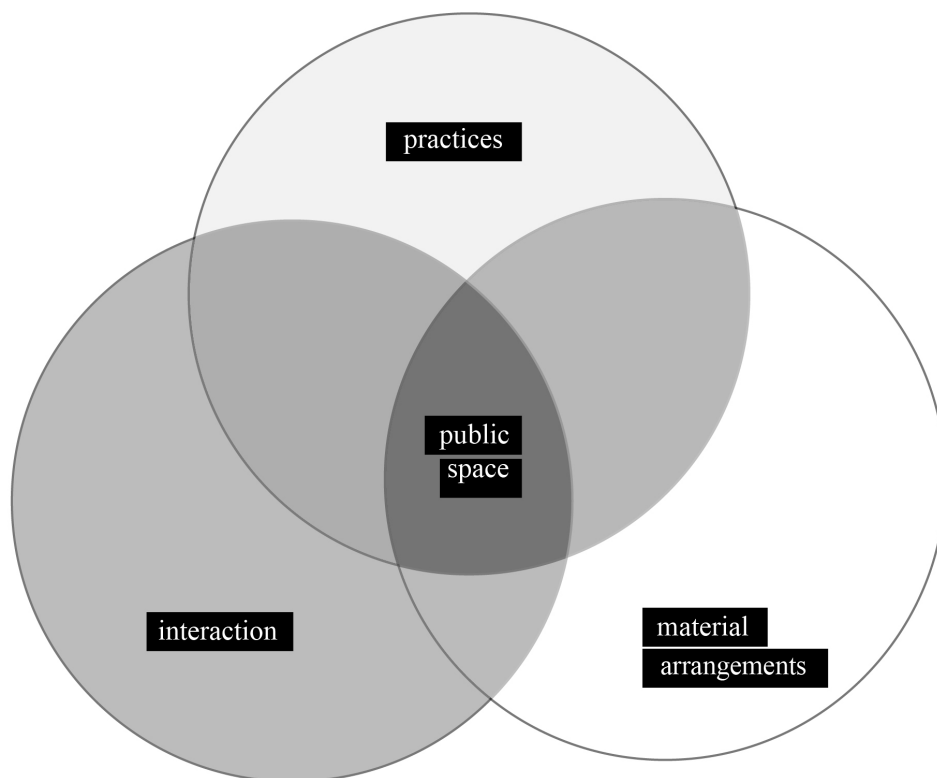
In this chapter, I analysed the ontology of practices and how a practice plenum is involved in the constitution of public space. At the beginning of this chapter I talked about the essence of a practice plenum and the definition of practices as open-ended, spatial-temporal sets of organised doings and sayings (see also Schatzki, 2019), as well as how those practices are organised by general understandings, rules, and teleoaffectivities. The following three sections dissected the practice plenum into practices and arrangements, as well as the relation between practices with other practices and material arrangements and the linked formations of bundles and constellations. Public space as an emergent property arises in the negotiation, interconnection, interaction between practices but also in practices between material arrangements. Human activity is a pre-existing condition for a public space to emerge. Without any human activity, each space remains ambiguous and constituted only of material arrangements.

Section 2.4. highlights materiality as an inseparable aspect of human practices and arrangements. Materiality exists in every aspect of the practice plenum, in the way practices operate but also in the way practices are organised. Public space's materiality is spread over the relations between the arrangements and the practices - as more processual materiality - and in the material entities that may compose practices - as more traditionally-perceived-materiality. Section 2.6., about flat ontology, is closely related to the anti-structuralist approach. In such cases, as I discussed, social phenomena are slices of the practice plenum and its materiality. The causality in flat ontology works in horizontal levels and denies the verticality of top-down and bottom-up. In that sense, by embracing the flat ontology, I reject the micro/macro distinction within arrangements, and I replace them with density, size and shape.

The last section, 2.7., which is based on the chains of actions, clarified that actions that provoke social change are intentional and unintentional. Public space may emerge in the interaction of practices with other practices or arrangements either as persistence of a situation or as social change, depending on whether the practices that occur can create difference towards the previous practices. Chains of actions - as a sequence of actions - as one among the relations which inhabit between practices and arrangements (bundles) and link bundles into larger constellations. Materiality is crucial in these chains of actions, and I quote here Schatzki: 'First, material entities and processes (e.g., satellite transmissions) mediate chains. Second, people intervene in the world and bring about material changes there. And third, material entities and events/processes induce, or lead, people to perform particular actions' (Schatzki, 2019, p. 62).

In sum, public space is an emergent property of practices, and it arises in the interaction between practices, or in practices and arrangements. In practices as such, human activity occupies a central position in the emergence of public space. However, the emergence of public space is highly complex, since it can include numerous types of interactions, interconnections, negotiations, processes, events, occasions.

Figure 2.8.1 Constitution of public space



### 3. The Political

#### 3.1. About the political

It was mentioned in the introduction that social practices, and therefore social phenomena, have a political dimension. The political dimension of practices inheres the idea that practices form antagonistic relationships, something which is opposed to the liberal ideas of democracy. In the public space realm, the political exists in the negotiations and interactions between practices and between practices and material arrangements. Therefore, public space as an emergent property of practices of social entities is highly political. In this chapter, I will explain the political relation between social entities during the emergence of social phenomena and more specifically, in the emergence of public space. Before I move towards the explanation of my position, it is worth mentioning the ontology of liberal democracy and how the antagonistic relationship of practices is opposed to it. By explaining the position of liberal democracy, I will provide a better understanding of antagonistic relationships.

According to many sociologists, we live second modernity, in which ‘individuals liberated from collective ties can now dedicate themselves to cultivating a diversity of lifestyles, unhindered by antiquated attachments’ (Mouffe, 2005, p. 1). In continuation of that, a free world, based on patterns of globalisation and liberal democracy, has overcome ideas of communism and, ‘with the weakening of collective identities, a world “without enemies” is now possible’ (p. 1). However, this post-political vision as Mouffe characterises it is profoundly mistaken, and I quote her:

‘[this post-political vision] instead of contributing to a “democratization of democracy”, it is at the origin of many of the problems that democratic institutions are currently facing. Notions such as “partisan-free democracy”, “dialogic democracy”, “cosmopolitan democracy”, “good governance”, “global civil society”, “cosmopolitan sovereignty”, “absolute democracy” - to quote only a few of the currently fashionable notions - all partake of a common anti-political vision which refuses to acknowledge the antagonistic dimension constitutive of “the political”. Their aim is the establishment of a world “beyond left and right”, “beyond hegemony”, “beyond sovereignty” and “beyond antagonism”. Such a longing reveals a complete lack of understanding of what is at stake in democratic politics and of the dynamics of constitution of political identities and, as we will see, it contributes to exacerbating the antagonistic potential existing in society’ (p. 2).

In order to understand the significance of antagonism in the social life, I need to describe the incapacity of liberalism to think politically, and by doing so, I will reflect on how the dynamics occur in antagonistic relationships. Many liberals like Isaiah Berlin, Joseph Raz, John Gray, Michael Walzer, believe in a liberal thought based on rationality and individuality, which both of the concepts in their turn neglect the ontology of collective identities. There is a methodological individualism entailed in liberal thought which does not consider any collectivity. Carl Schmitt in *The Concept of the Political* states that ‘in a very systematic fashion liberal thought evades or ignores state and politics and moves instead in a typical recurring parity of two heterogeneous spheres, namely ethics and economics, intellect and trade, education and property. The critical district of state and politics is easily explained by the principles of a system whereby the individual must remain *terminus a quo* and *terminus ad quem*’ (Schmitt, 2007 [1932], p. 70).



However, I need to clarify here what I mean with a political relationship. To do so, I will describe the concept of 'the political' and make a distinction with that of 'politics'. These two terms, 'politics' and 'the political' share common characteristics, but that depends on what perspective someone approaches these two terms: from the perspective of political science or from political theory. According to Mouffe:

'political science...deals with the empirical field of 'politics', and political theory...is the domain of philosophers who enquire not about facts of 'politics' but about the essence of 'the political'. If we wanted to express such a distinction in a philosophical way, we could borrow the vocabulary of Heidegger, say that politics refers to the 'ontic' level while 'the political' has to do with the 'ontological' one. This means that the notice has to do with the manifold practices of conventional politics, while the ontological concerns the very way in which society is instituted' (2005, pp. 8-9).

However, this does not clearly answer the question about the constitution of 'the political'. The thesis of this research is, similarly to Mouffe, that 'the political' is a space of conflictual and antagonistic relationships. More extensively, Mouffe states:

'By the 'political', I refer to the dimension of antagonism that is inherent in human relations, antagonism that can take many forms and emerge in different types of social relations. 'Politics', on the other side, indicates the ensemble of practices, discourses and institutions which seek to establish a certain order and organise human coexistence in conditions that are always potentially conflictual because they are affected by the dimension of 'the political' (Mouffe, 2000, p. 101).

This idea eradicates the rationalist and individual approach of liberalism, which only leads to neutrality. I mention here neutrality because liberalism does not recognise any conflictual or different ideas, for instance, in the presence of two different minorities in a city, liberal tactics promote cultural assimilation instead of mutual coexistence. Here, the main concern on 'the political' is located at its 'ontic' level, since the focus is on the current practices of democratic politics (Mouffe, 2005). For Schmitt, the foundation of the political lies on the discrimination between friend and enemy. That is to say that we recognise the formation of a 'we' as it is opposed to a 'they' - this relationship entails concerns about forms of collective identities - and as Mouffe puts it, 'it has to do with conflict and antagonism and is, therefore, the realm of decision, not free discussion' (p. 11). Schmitt in his turn states that the political 'can be understood only in the context of the friend/enemy grouping, regardless of the aspects which this possibility implies for morality, aesthetics and economics' (2007 [1932], p. 35). That is to understand a consensus in the basis of acts of exclusion and not a fully inclusive 'rational consensus' like the one that Jürgen Habermas advocates. Habermas, therefore, opposed the Schmittian idea of the political claims that those who attempt to question a rational consensus and are in favour of discord leads to non-democratical ideas. He explained that 'if questions of justice cannot transcend the ethical self-understanding of competing forms of life, and if existentially relevant values, conflicts and oppositions must penetrate all controversial questions, then, in the final analysis, we will end up with something resembling Carl Schmitt's understanding of politics' (J. Habermas, 1996, p. 1943).

However, I agree with Chantal Mouffe's position and her approach to the Schmittian understanding of the political, in which 'the emphasis on the ever present possibility of the friend/enemy distinction and the conflictual nature constitutes the necessary starting point for envisaging the aims of democratic politics' (Mouffe, 2005, p. 14). Note, that Schmitt negates the pluralistic

dimension of a democratic political economy. Pluralism for him inheres only in relationships between states and at community level as he claims that democracy requires 'the existence of a homogeneous demos, and this precludes any possibility of pluralism' (p. 14). Mouffe recognises that and she postulates her antagonistic position on 'the political' by thinking 'with Schmitt against Schmitt', that is to recognise the 'we/they relation, the relation friend/enemy which can emerge out of very diverse forms of social relations' for a new understanding of liberal democratic politics.

In order to understand the we/they relations, we need to acknowledge the importance of the *constitutive outside* as it was proposed by Henry Staten by referring to Derrida's notions of *supplement*, *trace* and *différance*. Staten says, by developing Derrida's ideas, we are interested in the constitution of an 'entity' or 'object-in-general' which is constructed in a difference to something else. He describes the constitutive outside by schematising Derrida's concept of constitution: 'X is constituted by non-X.<sup>22</sup> X here means the essence of self-identity as conceived by philosophy, and non-X is that which functions as the "outside," or limit, to the positive assertion of this self-identity, that which keeps ideality from complete closure, yet in *limiting* it remains the *positive* condition of the possibility of the positive assertion of essence' (Staten, 1985, p. 17). The example of Derrida about the definition of memory in Staten's enquiry portrays adequately this position: 'the necessary condition for the definition of "memory" is that it must be subject to forgetfulness: "a limitless memory" would be "not memory but infinite self-presence" (p. 17). The same applies to the constitution of collective identities according to Mouffe:

'In the field of collective identities, we are always dealing with the creation of a 'we' which can exist only by the demarcation of a 'they'. This does not mean, of course, that such a relationship is necessarily one of friend/enemy, i.e. an antagonistic one. But we should acknowledge that, in certain conditions, there is always the possibility that this we/they relation can become antagonistic, i.e. that it can turn into a relation of friend/enemy. This happens when the 'they' is perceived as putting into question the identity of the 'we' and as threatening its existence' (2005, pp. 15-16).

This position, that all the forms of political identities envisage a we/they distinction, means that the antagonism can always emerge despite any neutrality of liberalism. Therefore, antagonism 'can never be eliminated' and it always finds a way to emerge (Mouffe, 2005, p. 16). Schmitt recognises that the political holds a very central position in our lives - it even constructs our lives. At this point, I want to clarify that the relation of us/them is not antagonistic at their starting point. As I have noted, the difference between groups is what is recognisable. Therefore if not any conflict will be expressed within this difference then not any antagonistic relation will be formed. However, when one collective or individual starts to 'question our identity and threaten our existence', it becomes an antagonistic relation (Mouffe, 2013, p. 5). As Mouffe puts it: that 'the very condition of possibility of the formation of political identities is at the same time the condition of impossibility of a society from which antagonism can be eliminated' (p. 5).

However, I need to implement here the notion of a hegemonic institution as an inseparable condition for understanding the political, as well as, for understanding the differentiation between the political and the social. By acknowledging 'the political' I recognise the hegemonic ontology of every social order and 'the fact that every society is the product of a series of practices attempting to establish order in a context of contingency' (Mouffe, 2005, p. 18). Ernesto Laclau states in his *Emancipation(s)*: 'the two features of a hegemonic intervention are, in this sense, the "contingent" character of the hegemonic articulations and their "constitutive" character, in the sense that they

institute social relations in a primary sense, not depending on any a priori social rationality' (2007, p. 90). Therefore, 'the political' is an attribute of hegemonic institutions, and there is where the political is differentiated from the social. The social, as it was mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, exist in the practices which are constitutive for the social life, that is the practices 'that conceal the originary acts of their contingent political institution and which are taken for granted' (Mouffe, 2005, p. 17). While I acknowledge the political in its hegemonic sense, I also recognise that it becomes visible in the acts of social institutions, something which eventually makes it difficult to distinct 'what is social and what is political independently of any contextual reference' (p. 17). Therefore, as Mouffe states, '[t]he frontier between the social and the political is essentially unstable and requires constant displacements and renegotiations between social agents' (p. 18). Note, every hegemonic practice may be confronted by counter-hegemonic practice in an attempt to 'disarticulate the existing order so as to install another form of hegemony' (p. 18). In sum, we can understand the constitution of a 'we' - a collective or an individual - in its differentiation to a specific a 'they', and this is the most crucial point in the understanding of the antagonistic relations - and therefore, of 'the political'.

In a public space, antagonism exists in the relations of bundles between practices with other practices and material arrangements and constellations. Theodore Schatzki, in his works, makes space only for politics as arrangements in social life. However, the political is recognised in the difference between practices. Once again, human activity is a pre-existing condition for understanding this occurrence. The most prominent example of describing the political relationship between practices pertains during acts of resistance. In the act of occupying a square the antagonistic level is expressed in many levels, but I will focus on the relationship between the social entities of occupiers and those of urban planners or those who represent the public order. In a case, as such, the antagonistic level is expressed openly, in which the distinction between the 'we' and 'they' is established. In the interaction between these two entities, or to be more precise in the interaction of the practices of two entities, e.g., the occupiers and the police officers, is where public space arises. To put it bluntly, an empty square consisted only of material arrangements, e.g. benches, the pavements, the paths, is an ambiguous space. However, when there is human activity combined with interaction towards other practices, public space arises. In the occupier-police forces situation, public space arises during the negotiation or confrontation between those two entities. Note that the act of occupying itself is a form of public space: the occupiers negotiate with the material arrangements of a square which is a product or component of the practices like the one of urban design. Nevertheless, the act of occupying is an extreme form of public space, and I implemented it here to describe the constitution of public space in a more expressive way. Besides, it is not the act of occupying the square, as an act, which contributes to the rise of public space, but the interaction of the act of occupying the space with the practices of policing is what contributes to the emergence of public space as a social phenomenon. This interaction makes a clear distinction between the antagonistic relationships that constitute politics. The antagonistic relationship of 'we' and 'they' is clear and the antagonism itself is expressed. Still, this a radical and expressive example of public space.

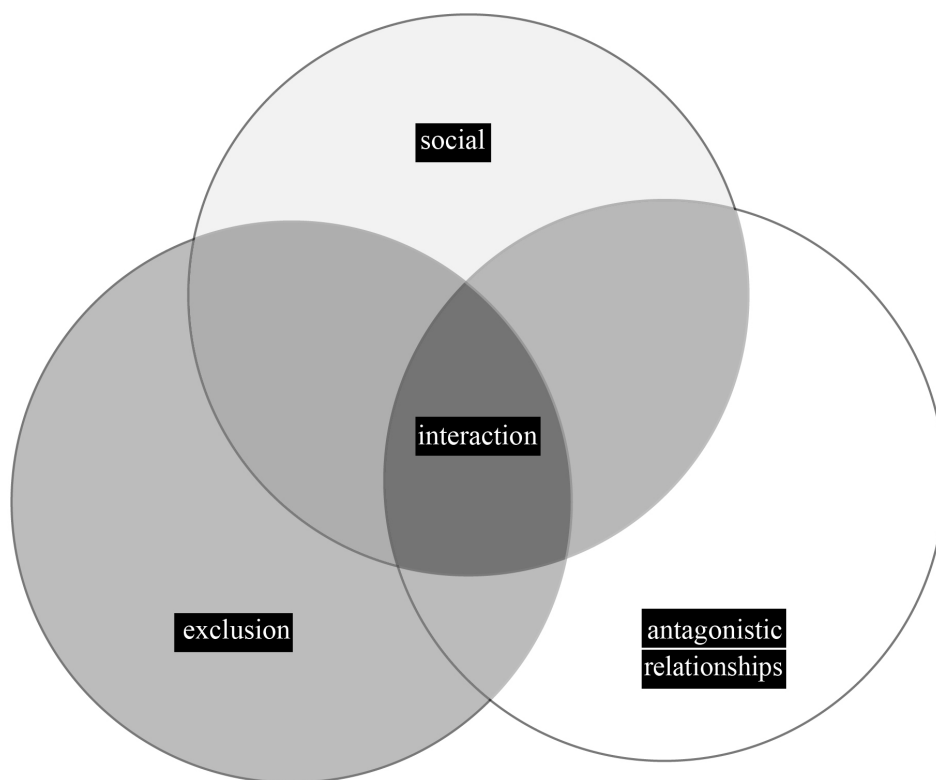
The same applies when a city-dweller uses the square for walking. The walker interconnects with the material arrangements of a square. However, this is a less expressive act than the occupying act, and the antagonistic relationships are not expressed. As I mentioned before and according to Mouffe, antagonism is not always expressed unless one collective or individual would express their differences towards another. In addition, every social entity entails an antagonistic

relationship. In that sense, during the emergence of public space, the space becomes exclusionary to some other collectives or identities: that is because of the political dimension of public space. It highlights the discrimination of we/they relationship, and it becomes inclusionary to the 'we' and exclusionary to 'they'.

### **3.2. Conclusion**

In sum, the interactions between practices and the negotiations over the material arrangements of an ambiguous space are highly political. Therefore, the emergence of a social phenomenon as one of public space as an emergent property of practices is a political condition among social life. Schatzki recognises that politics 'is a final exemplary mechanism through which practices, orders, and complexes develop coordinately or interdependently...Politics is clearly a central feature of social life, a key determinant of the coordinated and interdependent directions that human, and also nonhuman, activity takes' (Schatzki, 2002, p. 251). In addition, politics while they enact they shape the discrimination between the 'we' and the 'they'. According to Mouffe politics 'aim at the creation of unity in a context of conflict and diversity; it is always concerned with the creation of an 'us' by the determination of a 'them' (Mouffe, 2000, p. 101). Therefore, the determination of certain practices over others, it suggests that public space which arises is inherently exclusionary to some others. This struggle of practices over other practices is what makes public space political space and political practice.

Figure 3.2.1. Constitution of interaction



## 4. Methodology

In this chapter, I am going to discuss the methods that have been used to answer the research question ‘*What are the socio-political dynamics that occur in an ambiguous space for a public space to emerge?*’, as well as the sub-questions. This empirical research is fulfilled in cooperation with my internship in *ARIAS* (Amsterdam Platform for Arts and Sciences) and the *Contemporary Commoning* research project. The Contemporary Commoning research project is a two-year research project, based in Zeeburgereiland, Amsterdam, ‘investigating the many ways in which ‘commoning’ can contribute to new forms of public space, in the physical as well as the digital realm, and new spaces for public action. This research takes the potential contribution of design and art in these processes of ‘commoning’ as the main point of departure. The research is a collaboration between the Gerrit Rietveld Academy, Sandberg Institute, Waag: Technology and Society, University of Amsterdam’s Center for Urban Studies, Casco Art Institute and Studio René Boer, who were awarded an NWO/SIA Smart Cultures grant in 2019’ (ARIAS, 2020). In this project, I was involved in creating a deep mapping of the area of Zeeburgereiland, which included the infrastructures, the classification of public spaces in a topographical sense, and actors that were involved in the city planning and design.

The results, as well, as the analysis of the empirical research is divided into two parts. In the first part of the empirical research, I analysed policy documents of the Amsterdam city-hall about the area of Zeeburgereiland. In these policy and agenda documents are scribed the development plans and the focus plans of the area. In the second part, I include the data that I collected from the interviews that I conducted based on the perception of publicness and the multiple interpretations of the public space concept. The outcome retrieved from the interview data would eventually be applied in the case of Zeeburgereiland to provide a better understanding of the perception of public space. An adequate understanding of public space and its publicness would be useful to place-making policies and use of the urban public spaces.

### 4.1. Qualitative Content Analysis

In order to analyse the policy documents related to the plans of Zeeburgereiland I use content analysis. By this method I intend to identify patterns or themes which will provide with extra meanings this research. A qualitative approach content analysis, in contrary to the quantitative one, leaves enough space for interpretations and different approaches and perspectives on the patterns that may occur (Krippendorff, 2013).

### 4.2. Data Collection and Analysis

The policy documents were imported in ATLAS.ti software, where I followed the procedure of the analysis. First, I started to code every regulation, plan, purpose that was mentioned in the policy briefs. Second, after having all the codes, I recognised patterns or themes that emerged from the first phase of coding, and I formed multiple groups as a categorisation of those codes.

### 4.3. Interviews

In order to be able to give an adequate answer to my research question I included interviews in my methodological approach. The interviews are followed by a *transcendental phenomenological* research approach. After identifying the phenomenon of public space as the phenomenon to be studied, I intend to highlight the experiences of several persons during the occurrence of this phenomenon (Moustakas, 1995). Following that, I develop a *textural description* of the persons' experiences - which means what the respondents-participants experienced - and a *structural description* of their experiences - which relates to 'how they experienced it in terms of the conditions, situations, or contact' - and eventually combine both of the descriptions to denote the *essence* of the experience during the certain phenomenon ((Creswell, 2007, p. 60).

### 4.4. Sample Unit and Analysis

I use semi-structured interviews ('sometimes referred to as informal, conversational or 'soft' interviews' to elicit information from the participant. Based on the concept of semi-structured interviews I prepare a list of predetermined questions, but at the same time, there is space for improvised questions and the participants to feel free to respond openly with their own word rather than a 'yes or no' type of answer. The interview is based on the concept of urban public space, and it is perceived and experienced by the participants. I mainly focus on their practices or how space is being used. To begin with the questions, I firstly focus on what the participants think of an urban public space. In the second phase, I focus on existing urban public spaces and the interviewee's experiences in them, as well as how they use them. In the last phase, the questions cover the interviewee's ideas on an imaginary public space.

	Topic	Interview question
1st phase	Introduction	I inform the interviewee for the topic and the purposes of the research. I ask for permission to record our discussion.
	Introductory question, first response: understanding respondents' perception of public space.	What first comes to your mind , what symbolises the concept 'urban public space' for you? How would you broadly describe an urban public space in a physical sense?

2nd phase	Focus -mainly- on the material arrangements that constitute a public space.	I would like you to make a quick sketch of an existing urban public space that you often visit or use. Make it just as if you were making a rapid description of the place to a stranger, covering all the main features. I don't expect an accurate drawing - just a rough sketch
	Focus on the practices and activities as a vital element of the constitution of public space.	Please give me (and continue by drawing them) complete and explicit descriptions for what you normally do in the space. I'm interested in your practices, in the way you use the space.
	Material arrangements, politics, restrictions.	Do you recognise any particular signs ( i.e. traffic signs, or signs which don't allow skateboarding, or playing or any other practice) at the space that you're talking about?
3rd phase	Following the same questions of the 2nd phase but in an imaginary. Herewith, I ask indirectly the respondents to take the position of an urban planner who has the responsibility and the freedom to create her own public space. I want to investigate whether the answers and the perceptions of publicness would change compared to the previous answers.	For the last topic of our discussion, I would like you to make a new sketch based on an imaginary urban public space. This imaginary space could be created based on your favourite spaces during your life, or thoughts that you have, or what you would like to do in that space.
		Could you describe to me and draw what you would do in this urban public space?
	Flexibility, openness.	Is it important for you that space allows you to operate the way you want?
	Essence of publicness.	What makes it public in that case?
	Politics, normativity, material arrangements.	Are there any regulations/ restrictions?
End of the interview	Any further questions? Missed topics. Closing.	



Note that there is no particular point of focus for selecting and recruiting participants. The only emphasis here is that the participant should not be an expert or someone whose profession is based on urban studies or public space. Therefore, the participants are randomly selected, despite any age, ethnicity or gender. Valentine argues that ‘the aim of an interview is *not* to be representative (a common but mistaken criticism of this technique) but to understand how individual people experience and make sense of their own lives’ (Valentine, 2005, p. 111). All the interviews take place in the participant’s personal place, or somewhere they decide on and feel confident. As you may notice in the following plan, not all of the respondents are from the area that I am going to base my case study (Zeeburgereiland). That happens, because it was not easy to find available units, only from that area, to participate. At the same time, this does not affect the outcome of the empirical research, since the questions of the public space concept perception are really broad and not specific-topographical related. However, the respondents were all Dutch citizens. In the end, the interviews are recorded and transcribed.

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Place of Residence</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Duration</b>
1	Cindy (f)	30	Charlois, Rotterdam	12/05/2020	In person	27:45
2	Jorg (m)	39	Charlois, Rotterdam	19/05/2020	In person	22:55
3	Raffaella (f)	30	Charlois, Rotterdam	19/05/2020	In person	19:38
4	Jaap (m)	> 60	Zeeburgereiland, Amsterdam	26/06/2020	In person	28:37
5	Rama (f)	< 30	Zeeburgereiland, Amsterdam	01/07/2020	In person	17:29
6	Renée (f)	> 55	Zeeburgereiland, Amsterdam	01/07/2020	By e-mail	-
7	Michalis (m)	38	Buitenhof, Delft	04/07/2020	In person	26:25

Afterwards, I follow a phenomenological data analysis, according to Moustakas. Here I refer to the steps as they were discussed in Creswell (2007). After I upload the interview transcriptions in the ATLAS.ti software I highlight “‘significant statements”, sentences, or quotes that provide an understanding of how the participants experienced the [public space] phenomenon’ (Creswell, 2007). This first step of coding is what Moustakas calls the *horizontalisation*, and next, I seek for relations between those codes to develop clusters of meaning between these codes. As I mentioned before these codes of experiences and statements, and their clusters - groups in ATLAS.ti software - lead to the textural and structural description. Eventually, the textural and structural description of

the statements I write is a description that portrays the essence of the phenomenon of public space as it is perceived by the respondents who experienced it.

In addition to the phenomenological data analysis based on the methods of Moustakas, I take into consideration Kevin Lynch's interpretation and analysis of 'map sketching'. As you may notice in the interview questions, I request the respondents to create their own map, designing either their own public space or an existing one. This is an important element of the Lynchian methodology, and according to this method, Lynch pays attention to the *imageability*. For Lynch *imageability* is 'that quality in a physical object which gives it a high probability of evoking a strong image in any given observer. It is that shape, colour, or arrangement which facilitates the making of vividly identified, powerfully structured, highly useful mental images of the environment' (Lynch, 1960, p. 9). This research, however, requires, not only to maintain an emphasis on the physical environment as Lynch suggested but to highlight all the structural attributes (arrangements) that may shape the mental image of the user. Those are indeed the geographical arrangements of the space, but all also the omnipresent regulations and restrictions that manipulate or come in conflict with the social practices. In an extension of that, I use the maps for two reasons. First, I want to give the space to the respondents to be able to share their experiences as much as possible, and by means of sketching they can visualise situations and norms that otherwise would not be that easy. Second, I want to investigate the importance of the material arrangements - as an extension to the Lynchian imageability - and translate into the *material of the arrangements*. The maps are used in the analysis together with - and in the same way - interview transcriptions.

#### **4.5. Observations**

To understand even more the socio-political dynamics that occur in the area of Zeeburgereiland, I undertake non-participant observations in the area. I visited the area of Zeeburgereiland and specifically the Sportheldenbuurt to make my own statements, interpretations, narrations of the urban public spaces - in a topographical sense - as they were suggested from the policy briefs of the Amsterdam city hall. My observations take an important position in this research on the discussion and analysis chapter.

#### **4.6. Limitations**

As it was noted before, a qualitative research design leaves a lot of room for interpretations. This makes this research design a strong and preferable method in many cases, but at the same time, it is also the critique that it receives - that is too open for interpretations. However, the combination of policy documents, interviews, and observations has as a purpose to eliminate fast interpretations and not miss any deeper understandings of the phenomenon of public space as it occurs in Sportheldenbuurt. In addition, the findings from this research cannot be generalised in different areas and contexts (Bryman, 2016). However, the general theory of this research and the general

essence of the analysis can be useful in similar inquiries, either as the part of the conceptual framework and design or the methodology which was followed.

I should point out that this research took place during the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak in the Netherlands, something which made it difficult to observe social interactions in the public spaces of Sportheldenbuurt. However at the ease of the pandemic by the end of May, transportation and general movement in the city was almost back in then normal lives, despite only the fact of some restrictions in the public transport, which in any case would not affect the outcome of the research. Moreover, either because of the pandemic or because of people's difficulties to participate in interviews, I found it hard to collect interview units. In many cases, I had unanswered requests and emails or people were passing the task to one another. Eventually, I conducted seven interviews, where the initial thought was from 10 to 15. However, as I will present later in the results, I didn't find big differences within the respondents and a larger amount of interviewees would just have stated the same points in more responses.

#### **4.7. Conclusion**

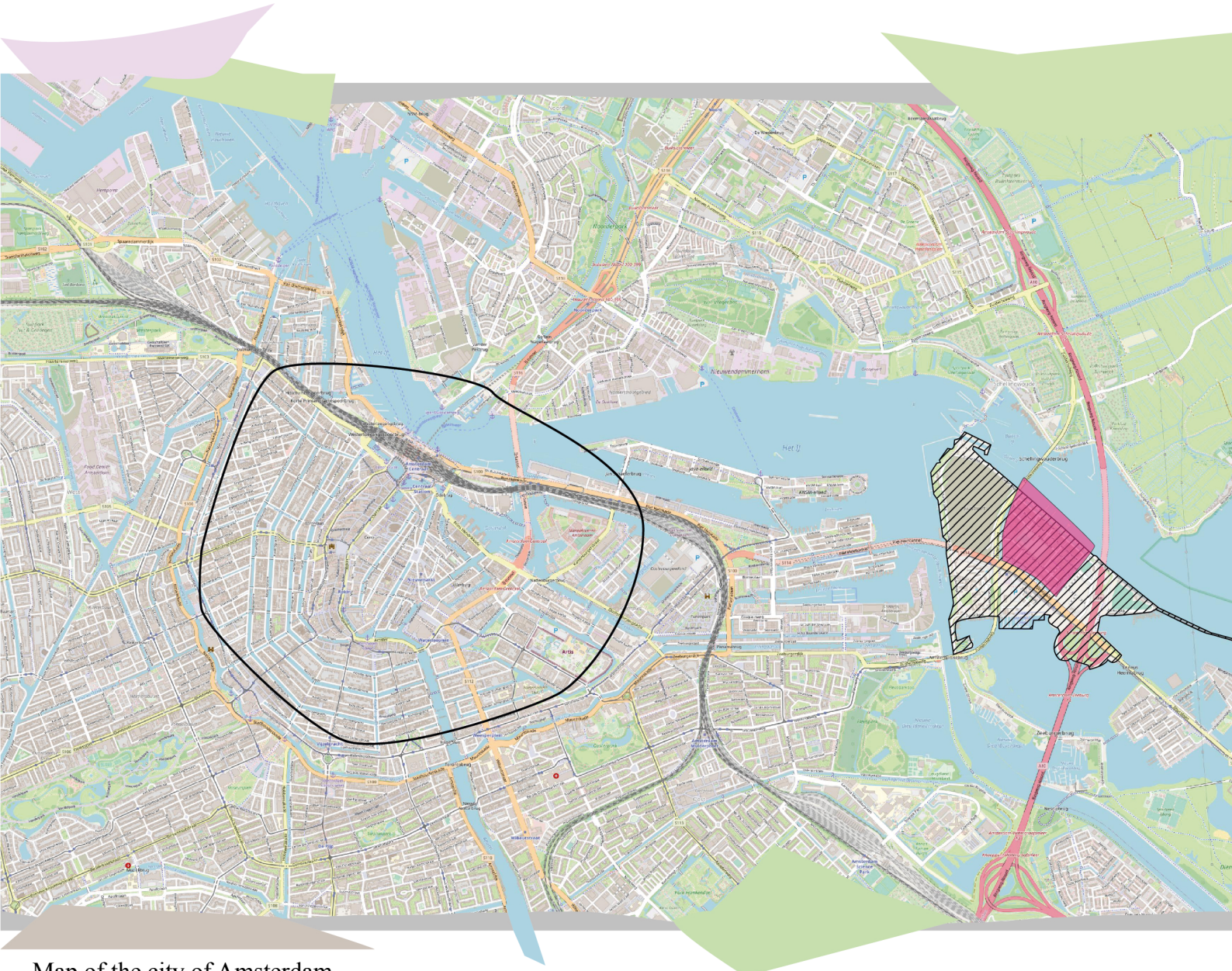
In this chapter I discussed the research design and the methods that I followed in this research. The research combines a qualitative content analysis of the policy documents of the city of Amsterdam for the area of Sportheldenbuurt together with observations and a transcendental phenomenological research analysis on interviews about the perception of public space. Consequently, these methods will provide me a deeper understanding of the socio-political dynamics that occur in the topographical public space of Zeeburgereiland, or what I call ambiguous spaces, and describe how the public space eventually emerges. In the following chapter I am going to present the results deprived from the research methods.

### **5. Results**

Before I start presenting and discussing the results derived from the data, let me present firstly the conditions in which the area of Sportheldenbuurt in Zeeburgereiland is constituted. Sportheldenbuurt among other areas in Amsterdam is part of an urban development programme which intends to create more houses in the municipality of Amsterdam. According to recent studies, Amsterdam's population increases by almost 11.000 inhabitants every year. The need for housing is on high demand. Therefore, the city itself plans to create 5000 homes every year until 2025. This development strategy wants to make sure that the city will remain accessible and affordable (Gemeente, 2011). To be more precise, Amsterdam, with the programme *Setting Course for 2025* intends to construct 50.000 homes by 2025 focus on 'sufficient high-quality housing in mixed urban developments' (2011). IJoevers west and east, zone A10 - west - ring line - Sloterdijk, Zuidas - Buitenveldert, Zuidoost, Zeeburgereiland are some of the areas which are part of Course for 2025. Sportheldenbuurt as part of Zeeburgereiland was constructed from scratch, an urban development that started in 2015 and it is also already inhabited by most of its space, and the last constructions will be done by 2022. The entire district offers 2.500 homes, and as the name of the neighbourhood, denotes (Sportheldenbuurt: Urban Sport Zone) focuses in the sports section by creating a sport public space zone at the middle of the area. In the following paragraphs, I will focus on the three



main focal points of Sportheldenbuurt according to the data derived from the policy documents. Although these three points are not directly related to the creation and of public spaces - at least not all of them -, they will help in the understanding of the general social and political dynamics that occur in the neighbourhood. These are (1) sports and social facilities, (2) greenery and sustainability, and (3) mixed neighbourhood.



Map of the city of Amsterdam

- Amsterdam Centre
- ▨ Zeeburgereiland
- Sportheldenbuurt

## **5.1. Sportheldenbuurt**

### **5.1.1. Sports and social facilities**

According to the plans of Amsterdam, the range of all the facilities that include art, culture and sports interest are located too far away from the area of Zeeburgereiland and Sportheldenbuurt specifically (Gemeente, 2019a). Therefore, the focus is to create as many facilities as possible within the range of the area - that was also the main promotional statement of the city to attract more inhabitants and newcomers in this area. The main sports zone that formulates a quite extensive rectangular shape in the middle of the area becomes one of the main reasons for someone to visit the area. A big sign at one of the entrances of the neighbourhood says with big letters: 'The Urban Sports Zone: a park with the biggest skatepark of Amsterdam'. The skatepark which is a pole of attraction for many skaters of all ages shares the area of the park among some other sports fields like basketball and hockey, while the peripheral area is shared with benches, trees and small paths that can be offered for short walks. In addition, Amsterdam promotes the waterside and all the greens edges of the island as the perfect place for jogging and other outside activities. It is called the 'Round of Zeeburgereiland', and it has been introduced as 20 minutes of cycling, 30 minutes of running, or 1 hour of walking (Gemeente, 2009). In addition the neighbourhood is more explicitly related to sports by naming all the streets Dutch athletes of the past who were recognised by their sports accomplishments or by their commitment.

### **5.1.2. Greenery and sustainability**

In the policy documents about the 'Course for 2015' and in the development plans of Sportheldenbuurt, there is an emphasis on creating a circular city, that is a cross-value chain approach in which 'food & organic waste streams, consumer goods and the built environment are taken into account (Gemeente, 2020). Already from the Paris climate conference, the Netherlands among other countries came to an agreement to reduce the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and lead to the limitation of global warming by 2 degrees Celsius. Amsterdam's plan is, by 2030, 'to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 55% compared to 1990 [and] 95% by 2050 [which leads] to be natural-gas-free by 2040' (p. 11).

In addition, the area of Zeeburgereiland and Sportheldenbuurt is part of the 'Water Recreation and Ecology Programme in IJburg and Zeeburgereiland' which has as a goal to 'guarantee and strengthen the ecological values and to optimise the possibilities for water recreation' (Gemeente, 2019c, p. 7). This programme is also an attempt to create awareness among the inhabitants, by 'offering information and education about the cohabitation of people and nature' (p. 7). Zeeburgereiland is a major destination for waterfowl birds from all over Europe that find a place to rest and seek for specific seafood like mussels, wreaths and smelt (2019c). Therefore, the city of Amsterdam thinks that is important that the inhabitants and newcomers are aware of the situation, despite the fact that the water around the area has been used quite intensively for swimming and jet-skiing and the problem of bottling trash still remains.

Another plan that is related to sustainability is the one of mobility. The policy briefs explicitly encourage a more sustainable way of moving in the area. Although there are barely some thoughts or statements on walking and the pedestrians, most of the plans pay attention to the use of

bicycle and public transport and to reduce the use of the car. Sportheldenbuurt is designed in that way that is a car-free area, and mobility was a precondition for the area development (Stelling & Bruijn, 2018, p. 9). The mobility plan suggests that according to the 'Investerings-agenda Fiets' that 70% of all the rush-hour journeys will be made by public transport or bicycle and all the development in infrastructure is required to follow this approach (Gemeente, 2017). One of the city's ambitions was to make the area of Sportheldenbuurt easily accessible during and after the realisation of the whole project. One of the key tasks for that kind of ambition was to provide facilities that are accessible in bicycle distance (1.5km).

In addition, it was requested from the newcomers that the urban development of Sportheldenbuurt would include a lot of green areas. Therefore, many trees were planted along the sidewalks, and around the skatepark, as well as the waterside of the island and the left side of the neighbourhood.

### **5.1.3.Mixed neighbourhood**

The concept of creating a mixed neighbourhood in Sportheldenbuurt is addressed in many policy documents and city's agendas. The mixed character of the agenda lies in the fact that Zeeburgereiland, in general, can combine multiple uses of city-dwelling, from the urban living, till sports activities and working. In the future plans, a new neighbourhood will be constructed next to Sportheldenbuurt with the name Sluisbuurt. The main idea is that every area within Zeeburgereiland will promote different facilities and activities among their space that fit the urban environment. Sportheldenbuurt specifically will provide the establishment of secondary education, field sports and a sports hall (Gemeente, 2009). The mixed character, also, is portrayed in the idea to create residential and non-residential sites, for instance, the old silos, part of the history of the island, will become part of the non-residential programme. The building developments of the area include rental housing, private-owned houses, a care complex, collective private commissions, three educational buildings, multiple social-functioned spaces, student housing and social rental housing. Moreover, there is a focus on the ages from 0 to 17 as concerns the outside areas of the primary and secondary schools and the sports park, which were partly designed by the children and the youngsters. All these places are considered public, and therefore should be accessible via a path, passage, or street (2009). The agenda documents of the city make clear that the ambitions for a mixed neighbourhood lead to a democratisation of the area, in which everyone has a lot of space to share.

### **5.1.4.Conclusion**

In sum, the agenda of the urban development of Sportheldenbuurt and Zeeburgereiland follows more or less the same ambitions and goals with the rest of Amsterdam. The most important goal of the city is to create a circular city. Eventually, the urban developments on sport and social facilities, mobility, greenery, and the essence of a mixed neighbourhood have their very foundation in the ideas of the circular city. However, the creation of a mixed (gemengd) neighbourhood is quite important, although it is not justified in detail how it would succeed in a plan like this. As I mentioned before, the three main focal points of the city of Amsterdam about the urban development of Zeeburgereiland and Sportheldenbuurt are not directly related to the emergence of



public space. However, they can provide a deep understanding of the material arrangements, the practices, the bundles and the relations between practices and arrangements that are formed in the area. Concepts - as I mentioned in the theory chapter - which is in the centre of social life and responsible for the emergence of social phenomena, and the phenomenon of public space specifically. In the following section, I will present the outcome of the interviews about the perception of publicness. These results, when they are applied in the case of Sportheldenbuurt, will create a more understandable image of the occurrence of public space.

## **5.2. Transcendental Phenomenological Analysis on Interviews**

After uploading the transcribed documents and maps in the ATLAS.ti and after the textural description and structural description of the persons' experiences in a public space I came up with the following statements which are necessary for the essence of a public space: (1) activities and interaction, (2) designed practices and material arrangements, (3) interpretations of publicness, (4) flexibility and openness, (5) restrictions, rules and normativity. In this section I am going to analyse these statements.

### **5.2.1. Activities and interaction**

These two words - activities and interaction - are those states or situations which were most noted in the transcriptions. Interaction has been noted 15 times in the coding of the transcriptions, either used explicitly, or by denoting it, and sayings that denote activities have been coded 26 times. During the structural description of the coding, I decided to merge these two separate textural descriptions as it seems they go hand in hand: either activities provoke interaction, or interaction refers to sorts of activities. Respondents refer to public space as a community, a place where people come together, and you can meet others, but also a place for change connected to protests, public opinion, expression and conflict, where in general interaction happens. Note, that with the word interaction, the respondents do not suggest only the social interactions, but also - how one interviewee puts it - to interact with the city. By these means, the city includes all the human entities and material entities that take part in it. An interviewee states about a small group that hangs out regularly at a square:

‘they hang out... and so, it becomes a sort of social place, and I think that it is maybe what public space is: that they change [the purpose of the place], that the social changes the content, the context of the design.’

These words of the interviewee portray a less topographical perception of public space, in which the human presence, activity and interaction transform the space into a social space. Other people relate public space to activities of relaxation, as a space where you can go and relax in combination with walking as pleasure, see for instance some quotes which are based on the question how the respondents use the public space that they refer to:

‘...most of the time relax.’

‘...sit there and relax.’

‘...you can sit down, you can relax.’

‘...relax and walk.’

In addition, there are respondents who see public space as a place where you can also observe or watch others how they use the space, or space itself. Consequently, the answers on the question about the perception of public space are inseparably connected with the myriads of activities. Public space is seen as space where activities take place.

### **5.2.2.Designed practices and material arrangements**

Public space is seen as a space which is designed, in the sense that is intended topographically but also designed to be used for certain activities or in certain ways: ‘everything has an architectural plan already, everything is planned, the streets are planned’ says one interviewee. Within this code of designed practices and material arrangements, interviews described public space as something which was designed already in the general form of the space but also its components, or what I call material arrangements. Most of the respondents state that the public spaces that they recall or they would imagine share a lot of green areas and for them is a precondition for nice public space. However, the greenery is also seen as something which is organised by someone. In many cases, greenery considered the border of the space: ‘green has been clearly defined the borders [and] the public space that comes in mind is a clearly defined [space] that has been designed by service by government’.

In addition, material arrangements have been used from the interviewees to describe their route within a public space or the materiality of the space. Sometimes material arrangements are thought as points of reference, but also as points which direct the route of the visitor. A characteristic example is the response of one respondent who recalls a fountain at the centre of a square:

‘...if I remember correctly it is a round fountain, a really simple one and I do remember that because by exiting the metro station that's underground obviously... I remember it! it divides the prosing of the square in two directions... so either I have to go left, or right... and I always choose to go right, because usually, my meeting points are on the right side of the square across. So, that's interesting for me, that it is a central part and it always, although it is spontaneous, I follow a certain program on what to do... while I'm crossing it and it feels like an interesting pleasant programming for how I perceive this square through the years’.

In his saying, the respondent clarifies that a material arrangement - component of his perception of public space - manages to direct his path through the square. In addition, the fountain also serves as a point of reference, since it entails a central position in the square. To conclude, the interviewees see the material arrangements as a twofold: material arrangements are there to host and serve someone’s activities, but at the same time may also direct her activities.



### **5.2.3. Interpretations of publicness**

In this section, I am going to discuss the multiple interpretations of publicness. This idea emerged from the number of statements and perceptions of public space, as they were deployed from the interviews. Surprisingly enough, many interviewees used quite radical terms to explain their understanding of public space, similar to those urban geographers, social and political theorists - experts in general - who would dig into the most undefined and obscure aspects of public space.

‘...space for the public - open space - special place - safe haven - social space - anonymous space - neutral ground - free space...’

These were some of the words that have been expressed from the interviewees to state what public space means. The perception of publicness, that means how everyone understands her public space - desired public space or existing one - plays a major role in the actual use of the space. Those who see public space as an anonymous one, or neutral ground, according to their answers on how they operate in the space, they use the public space more likely to pass through or to keep a distance from other passengers and to observe. On the other hand, those who describe their public space as a space one the public or a social space, they more likely use the space in a more interactive way.

Furthermore, the publicness of the space lays on the fact that certain activities are allowed to operate. ‘It’s public because you share it with your fellow citizens / other users’ said one respondent. Some other reactions were ‘[public space] is where people can meet each other’ ‘a place to sit and chill’. In sum, despite the perception of each respondent on the interpretation of public space either as neutral, open space or as an interactive social space, public space has many purposes. It is eventually space, where many users may operate in multiple ways, and space itself has the capability to offer this.

### **5.2.4. Openness and flexibility**

The previous section-statement leads to this section. Openness and flexibility were mentioned numerous times by the respondents, and for that reason, I decided to explicitly present it herewith as an inseparable condition of public space. Openness in public space serves as twofold: firstly, as a topographical description of the space, that is to say, that public space denotes that there is a lot of space, and secondly, being accessible to everyone. Respondents talk about the matter of equality in relation to accessibility, everyone has the right to enter a public space, and everyone is seen as equal.

Flexibility is based on the statements that public space has to be flexible in changes. That is, what I mentioned in the theoretical chapter about changes: a change occurs when there is a difference in social phenomena or different sorts of dynamics, social change might occur. Change is an outcome of differences that emerge among practices, events and actions. Public space has to be flexible enough to adopt these changes; it has to cover a wide range of functions as well. A space needs to be open and flexible to let things happen. A respondent claims that the flexibility goes beyond the designed practices, the practices that are involved in designing the space. However, in a bit different approach, another one points out that those you design spaces ‘maybe they should leave

space for accidents, for things to happen' suggesting that public spaces should be less strict in their functions and design in order for new things to occur.

#### **5.2.5.Restrictions, rules and normativity**

This is the most controversial statement among the respondents, due to the fact that restrictions and rules express stability, while at the same time normativity and what is acceptable is not the same in every human entity. This section is based on the rules and the restrictions that are held in public spaces. These are part of material arrangements, but since these terms were mentioned explicitly in the interviews, I decided to create a different code group with these concerns. As I mentioned in the material arrangements section, arrangements serve but also direct human activities; the same is with the restrictions and rules. Restrictions and rules are there to organise the use of the space. However, most of the respondents clarify that in a public space, not strict restrictions should be applied. Although many places include signs about how to use the space, many respondents share the position that 'when you restrict a lot of things, or you say there are a lot of boundaries as well, you can do this you cannot do this, people most of the time they would do that'.

Meanwhile, most of the respondents do not have trust in people's behaviour - in the sense of what is normally acceptable to do in space. In addition, the positions of what is acceptable or not to do in a public space are quite diverse among the respondents. In sum, although almost everyone believes in a less strict public space, it does not seem that normativity - what meant to be normal - is enough to enhance this idea.

#### **5.2.6.Conclusion**

In this chapter, I discussed the results of the transcendental phenomenological analysis of the interviews about the perception of public space. Within this analysis, the essence of public space consists of activities and interaction, designed practices and material arrangements, interpretations of publicness, openness and flexibility, restrictions, rules and norms. This section promotes the idea that public space is not just a topographical space, but a myriad of practices, concepts, states of affairs and rules. The centre of this idea, however, belongs to the practices and interactions. Practices, and therefore human presence and activities are a precondition for a public space to exist. Designed practices and material arrangements accommodate or direct activities in public space. Material arrangements as I mentioned in the theory chapter are related to politics, and therefore to the restrictions and rules of space. In the interviews, it was discussed that every person has a different perception of normativity. In addition, every respondent had a different understanding of publicness: which portrays either a vivid socially interactive place, or neutral and distanced public space. Openness and flexibility are also important in the occurrence of public space. In the following chapter, I am going to draw some conclusions based on these statements and in relation to the theoretical framework that I established and some key developments that occurred in Zeeburgereiland.

## 7. Discussion and conclusions

In this research I focused on the understanding of public space and the social and political dynamics that occur within its emergence. This thesis started off with establishing the theoretical framework based on the input of Theodore Schatzki in social practice theory and Chantal Mouffe in the antagonistic relationships. The main idea is that public space is a socio-political product which emerges temporary during the occurrence of interactions between practices and other practices or material arrangements. In order to give an answer to the main research question *What are the socio-political dynamics that occur in an ambiguous space of Sportheldenbuurt for a public space to emerge* I used two qualitative methods. First, agenda and policy documents of the city of Amsterdam were analysed to deploy the intentions of the city on the urban developments that took and will take place in the neighbourhood of Sportheldenbuurt. Second, seven interviews were held with random city-dwellers to discuss how they perceive public space and publicness. Both of the methods will help me to draw conclusions on my research questions related to the public space of Sportheldenbuurt. In this final chapter I am going to critically discuss these conclusions based on the policy and agenda documents and the interviews.

### 7.1. Public spaces and exclusion in Sportheldenbuurt

In this section, I am going to discuss the phenomenon of public space as it occurred in the Sportheldenbuurt. The phenomenon of public space is highlighted by the construction of the biggest skate park in Amsterdam, the placement of picnic tables at the water-side of the area and other smaller interventions. It was mentioned in the analysis of the agenda documents that in the area of Sportheldenbuurt, as the name of the area denotes, there is a focus on promoting urban sports trend. Due to the essence of the skateboarding, it relates mostly to young ages and people who are interested in the sport. I visited the skatepark during and after its construction, and my initial thought was whether a park made for a specific target group would be a thriving public space and in a second level what makes a successful public space.

The opening of the skatepark was mentioned in the national television, and it got attention nationwide as the new largest skatepark of Amsterdam. I visited the skatepark a few days after the opening on a sunny day, and I do mention here the weather conditions as they are components of the material arrangements of the space which influence the attendance in the park. During my visit I was surprised by the number of the people who were using the skate park: skaters of ages 12-30 were using the space massively, some others were forming groups which were spread all over the place (even outside the suggested borders of the space). Also, non-skaters were using the benches and the sitting areas of the peripheral area of the skate park.

In contrast to the ideas of the analysis of the interviews, according to which, public space is related to openness and accessibility, public space is a very exclusionary space - sometimes this exclusion is less visible than others. Every ambiguous space which has the potential to become public space it is inclusionary to some practices and activities and exclusionary to some others. That has not only to do with the space design but also with practice components that operate in a space, in the sense that a practice or an activity obtains a hegemonic ontology (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014). For a hegemony to stop its contingent character from developing the constitutive presence, a

counter-hegemony needs to eradicate it or confront it. That is to say, that different forms of activities walking or gazing could reclaim the material arrangement of the skate park and form brand-new hegemony. This relationship that could occur in an ambiguous space highlights its political dimension which is inherent in the occurrence of public space.

In addition, the city hall of Amsterdam and the urban designers played a major role in the constitution and the embracement of an exclusionary public space, in the sense that they openly established a space for a specific target group. This is something which may seem contradictory to the agenda plans of a mixed neighbourhood. Therefore, in a situation like this, the antagonistic relationships can be openly expressed: the skateboarders form a hegemonic 'we', to which a counter-hegemonic 'they' may react.

The same applies to other public or semi-public spaces spread in the area. The picnic tables, for instance in the Kea Boumanstraat next to the water-side of the island, or the vegetable gardens and places used for playing football or badminton. That brings me back to the idea of a mixed neighbourhood as it was promoted from the city hall. The word 'mixed' apparently applies to the different lifestyles and practices that occur in the area. The different lifestyles are shaped based on the daily working lives, so eventually, the daily routine is formed throughout the working schedule of someone and therefore, each one's lifestyle accompanies the use of public space. Although there are different cultures on the island, they are not that visible, and the mixing focus on the area remains on the different lifestyles and householders' status. And although it is mixed in that sense, every type of household is quite segregated to one another: the private-owned houses to rental-owned houses, and so on. Besides, many of those share a public area around their houses which inevitably reclaimed from one lifestyle and becomes exclusionary to another. This is not something that is observed explicitly, but it is noticed in the essence of the space, especially when you are walking near to it. I will explain this more in detail. In the image (*see image pg. 50 Gemeente, 2019b*), you may see the locations which are described as public spaces according to the city hall; these are playgrounds, picnic tables, and greenery.

By visiting these spaces, someone gets the feeling that they are almost private owned, that these areas are there to host the activities of the houses next to these locations. This feeling is empowered by the fact that the houses are so firmly attached to these spaces that someone would get the impression that the houses around it, own the public spaces. Here, concerns on the accessibility of the space are highlighted.

Similarly, the picnic tables at the Kea Boumanstraat are located next to the waterside of the island. The side of the Sportheldenbuurt where is next to the water forms a strip of private-owned houses which were constructed based on a ground lease provided by the city hall. Someone could say that these houses have the best location on the island, view-wise, but they seem segregated from the rest of the urban developments forming their own smaller neighbourhood within the area of Sportheldenbuurt. All the houses have a view towards the water, while a small road and a green zone separate them from the water. The green zone is the one that was mentioned in the city hall's agenda as the green zone which is located perimetrical to the island and provides space for jogging, nature activities, and relaxation. Note that the picnic tables are not placed by the house owners. However, they are placed in such a way that someone would think that they are owned by the houses next to it, which suggests that everyone cannot use the tables.

The attempts of the Amsterdam city hall and urban planning to provide a neighbourhood of mixed lifestyles and practices are fulfilled by delivering predetermined spaces for specific target

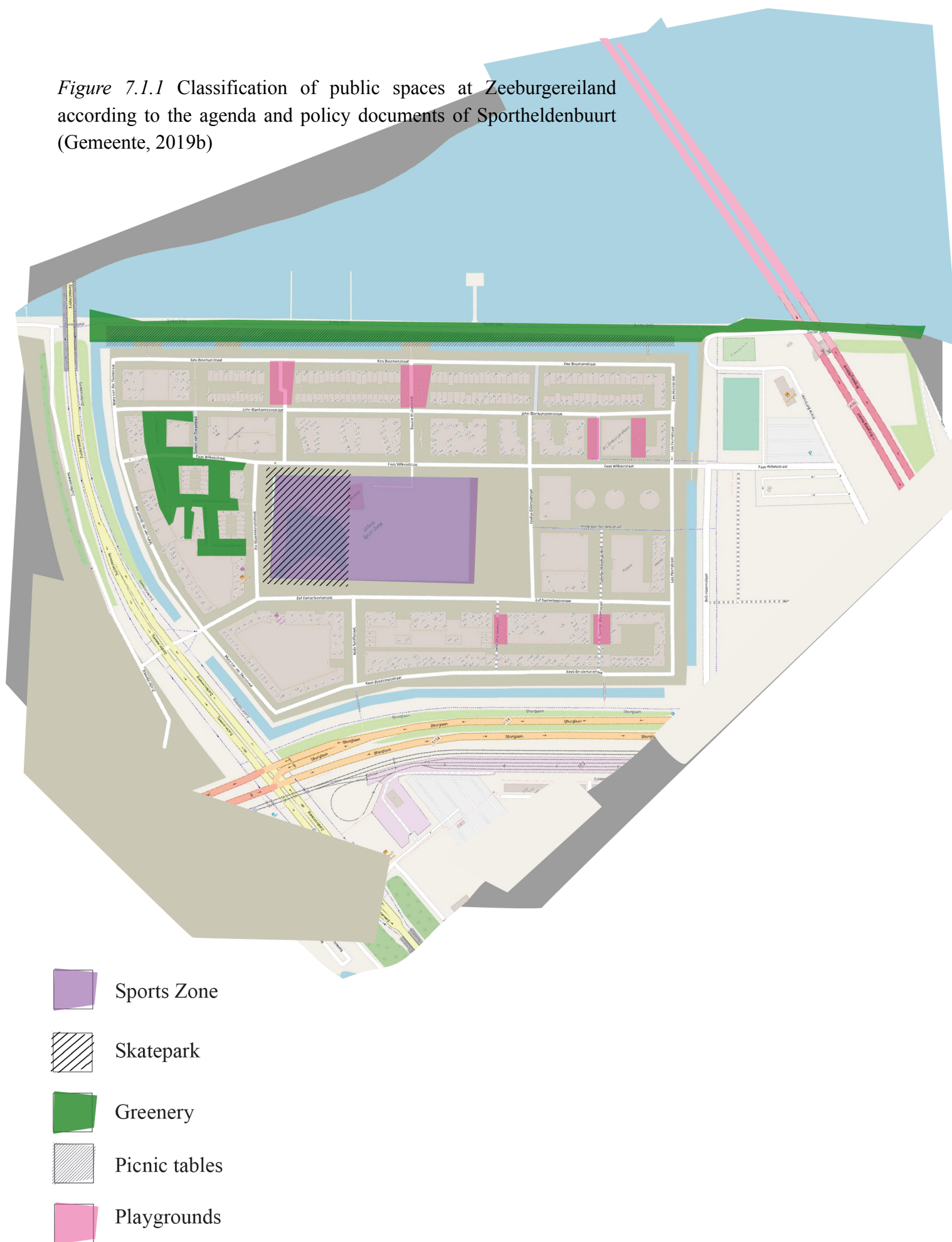
groups. That is to say; there is an apparent effort from Amsterdam's side to give a stage to all kinds of practices. However, every practice due to the material arrangements established in the area is segregated from another. The design as a predetermined practice of the material arrangements of the area develops a clear distinction of we/they relationship. I mentioned before in the theory chapter about social practices, and the political relationships held, that in the emergence of public space, the distinction of we/they is established. Therefore the antagonistic relationships are components of the phenomenon of public space.

Nevertheless, that antagonistic relationships inhabit in the practices that occur, the urban planning of Sportheldenbuurt creates spaces that shape clear distinctions of we/they relationships, which suggests that the public spaces which merged are highly exclusionary. In this thesis, I embrace that antagonistic relationship that occurred, in the sense that we need to understand and recognise their ontology as an inseparable component of public space. However, when these relationships are not organically formulated they create radical exclusions and distinctions among the inhabitants of the area. In addition, urban design and planning practices create spaces for the one side of the we/they relationship, creating from the start hegemonic entities which can be barely countered. By setting up the picnic tables as such, it makes it clear that those tables tend to be used by the activities of those who live in the water-side of the island, something which formulates a really strong we - the residents of the water-side - and it can not be contested, and if it does the antagonistic relationship exposed would probably be not that civil.

The same also applies to other focuses on the agenda of the city, such as greenery. Bushes and trees have been planted in the area in such a way to negate many activities and actual use of the space. Although residents of Sportheldenbuurt expressed their ambition for implementing a lot of greenery in the area, in addition to the area's agenda, it does not mean that greenery, in general, can help in the emergence of public space and provoke social interaction. In contrast greenery has been used in the area to create neutral grounds that provide no further use than a green area. Greenery has been the solution in many urban developments, where the use of the space is uncertain, and a green zone would create a zone of neutrality where no social tension could take place.

In sum, the agenda and the urban planning of Sportheldenbuurt focus on the creation and the maintenance of predetermined, prescribed, exclusionary public space. Despite the plans for sport and social features, greenery and sustainability, and the idea of a mixed neighbourhood the area of Sportheldenbuurt hosts exclusionary public spaces which tend to be used by specific target groups. Note that exclusion here does not play the productive role and component of public space. Instead, the exclusion is a prescribed condition of a suggested public space which is created by practices of urban planning and design. In the ambition to fulfil the needs of the different lifestyles and practices in relations to the area's agenda, the area has failed to provide open public spaces. Note the public spaces have been successful for the target groups which were designed or suggested for. However, the practices and the activities which could apply in these spaces are so explicitly indicated that do not leave space for others to interact. By doing so, the antagonistic relationships are clearly constituted and the might expressed with more tension.

*Figure 7.1.1* Classification of public spaces at Zeeburgereiland according to the agenda and policy documents of Sportheldenbuurt (Gemeente, 2019b)



## 7.2. Public Space

In this section, I am going to discuss the social and political dynamics that occur during the emergence of a public space based on the outcome of the qualitative analyses and the theoretical framework which was established, as well as the critical discussion over the public spaces of Sportheldenbuurt. Already from the introduction and the theoretical chapter, I set the theoretical framework that public space is an emergent property of social practices. Meanwhile, the interviews and the observations on the area of Sportheldenbuurt confirm this position. All the interviewees reacted to the question about the ontology of public space as a space that you can do something - meet people, walk, relax, observe, etc. - which suggests that practices and activities are preconditions of public space. This approach intensifies my position that every public space in the topographical sense is an ambiguous space, a space without a social character yet, consisting only of material arrangements, which has the potential to become public space. However, every ambiguous space, as such, has the potential to be transformed into a public space. By saying this, I want to point out that every ambiguous space which is designed to be public space by the practices of urban design and planning, entails the possibility to become public space. The topographical suggestion of design practices are part of the constitution of public space. The material arrangements established by those practices are playing a contingent role in the constitution of public space. The possibility, the potentiality, for something to emerge (in our case: public space) it is part of the practice plenum and social life: the potentiality for a public space to emerge is part of the social phenomenon of public space. Potentiality was discussed in the theory chapter and in connection with materiality plays a major role in the constitution of public space. Note, that this does not mean that every public space is a successful one, and by successful I characterise the public space that can host numerous practices at the same time. However, potentiality cannot be neglected from the phenomenon of public space, since practices of design and planning already suggest or create the potential for a public space to emerge.

Moreover, a human entity which operates in an ambiguous space interacts with the materiality of the space: walks; sits; occupies space; reclaims space. A human entity, by interacting with material space, also formulates a specific use of the space, which already forms a 'we' relationship. The public space is an emergent property of this human activity and the reaction with the material arrangements, and it is portrayed in the formation of 'we' against the 'they'. The public space is a place of exclusion, but this type of exclusion works as a productive phenomenon which enables other activities or human entities to participate or to react. This is the reason why public space as a social phenomenon is highly political: not only because of politics - as material arrangements - which are held but also because it develops an antagonistic relationship of we/they. The moment we would understand the conditions which are held during the practices which are responsible for the constitution of public space, practices of urban planning and design, policing, would become more efficient in the use and the management of the space.

In this thesis, I approached public space as a social phenomenon which emerges temporary and spatially. Public space appears in the interaction of practices with other practices and/or material arrangements. There are several types of interactions: the physical ones, dialogues or conversation, and governance. The practices like city-dwelling (e.g., walking, relaxing) although they operate intentionally they construct public space unintentionally. Public space does not emerge intentionally, but its potentiality is suggested intentionally by practices of urban design. For

instance, when someone walks through a park which was planned as a public space, she intends to operate this activity (walking), but unintentionally though she interacts with other practices and the publicness is embraced. The other practices that she would interact directly are those of urban planning and design, which intentionally design and construct the materiality of the space. This reaction of the participant towards the material entities of space is what I previously discussed as the 'directedness toward', which means that participants are 'directed towards entities in their activities and, thus, in their enactment of practices' (Schatzki, 2019, p. 41). The participant can engage towards the material entities in multiple ways when she is directed toward them.

Although the practices of urban design and planning have the intention to create public spaces, they only create public spaces in topographical sense or more to say ambiguous spaces and possible spaces which they have the potentiality to arise public spaces. The publicness of space emerges during the interaction of different practices. However, many practices may react intentionally to one practice which was the emergent point of the constitution of public space. That is what Schatzki describes as a chain of action, in which a participant in an action reacts to prior action or a change. Note, as it was mentioned, that the circulation of actions is constant, and in most cases, people are not aware of that process, they instead focus on what caused them to react rather than the activities which occur during the chain actions. Therefore, the occurrence of public space lasts as much as the circulation of actions, the timeframe of the chains of actions determine the birth and the end of public space. For instance, during the actions of protesting and demonstrating, practices of policing may react. The practices of policing operate intentionally, but it is in the tension (which is a form of interaction) between practices of protesting where public space is constituted. That does not mean that that kind of interaction is the most profound expression of publicness. However, tension may also evoke in a public space since the antagonistic relationship is exposed. In sum, public space emerges unintentionally, but practices which take part in its occurrence operate intentionally.

When practices, especially practices of urban design and planning, attempt intentionally to create public space, that might lead to over-exclusion and limited accessibility to many social entities. However, practices of urban design and planning are inseparable components of the emergence of public space, in the sense that are those practices which establish the material arrangements. Material established arrangements by practices of urban design are required for a public space to constitute. However, when these practices over-design and eliminate other practices which can take place over the designed spaces, these spaces are becoming ultra exclusionary. That is related to the concept of prefiguration, which I discussed in the *Relations and Bundles* (2.3). That is to say that the material arrangements prefigure, determine, or prescribe activities and practices (Schatzki, 2019). Note, as I mentioned before, practices which are related to the establishment of material arrangements can not constitute a public space on their own. They form a space in a topographical sense only - an ambiguous space, which is a possible or potential public space.

As it was mentioned in the interviews, the respondents discussed the accessibility and the flexibility of the space. These two concerns have to do with the strict planning of the space. The specification of space by determining the practices and the activities which can occur, e.g., the skateboarding in the skatepark of Sportheldenbuurt, or the picnic tables at Kea Boumanstraat, forcibly deny the access of other practices. Although exclusion cannot be eradicated from the conceptualisation of public space, since it is a vibrant component of it, it also would not be wise to



be forced beforehand in a space. When exclusion is formed organically in a space, it is open for contestation by the various practices which are engaged in the constitution of public space.

On the contrary, a forced predetermined exclusion leads to a non-flexible public space, which, as the respondents of the interviews stated, is not desirable at all — the same with the concern of flexibility as the interviewees reported it. When there are strict material arrangements focused on the establishment of certain practices, the space is not flexible enough to adopt new uses and activities in its spaces. In that sense, the material entities and arrangements held in the constitution of the space can determine the future - how to perform in this space. The prefiguration of material arrangements of an ambiguous space entails that the present constitution of the space decides what is possible and what is not in the future.

In sum, this research clarifies that the public spaces formed in Sportheldenbuurt are quite exclusionary to the point that there is no space for other practices, except the ones which are already applied, to be involved. That is quite confronting to the area's agenda and its focus in creating a mixed neighbourhood. To approach public space as a social phenomenon which is an emergent property of practices and occurs temporary and spatially would give a deeper understanding of the social and political dynamics that evolve in a public space. Therefore, different planning decisions could be made in the future and create more open, flexible and welcome public spaces.

Also, this research by recognising public space as a social phenomenon is to acknowledge that practices are placed in the centre of social life. Practices together with material arrangements and their relations constitute a practice plenum. Public space is a very complex phenomenon which is portrayed in the plentitude of a practice plenum. Practice plenum as plentitude consists of an aggregate of 'practices and arrangements, which happen to relate and, as related, form bundles and constellations' (Schatzki, 2019, p. 27). Practices that are components of public space and other phenomena are 'open-ended, spatial-temporal set of organised doings and sayings' (p. 28). In this thesis I followed the ontology of social practices by Theodore Schatzki in order to provide a deeper understanding of the dynamics that occur in public space. However, the social practice theory as it was applied by Schatzki and his ideas on the practice plenum neglect the political dimension of the practices. In this thesis, I attempted to enrich this conceptual gap of social practices by implementing Chantal Mouffe's antagonistic politics. I approached the relations between practices as antagonistic interactions, in which the antagonistic relationship is not always expressed. In cases where the material arrangements established my urban design practices create over-exclusionary possible public spaces there is a big chance for the antagonistic relationships to be expressed violently.

During the emergence of public space, chains of actions as reactions to previous actions or practices can take place. In the chapter of chains of actions (2.6), I discussed the ontology of these chains of actions. Public space may arise as an emergent property of the interaction of intentional or unintentional practices. However, the phenomenon of public space operates unintentionally. In sum, public space is a highly complex phenomenon and that lies on the potentiality of practices and material arrangements; that is to say that practices and material arrangements, during the constitution of a possible public space, can be detached from their initial practice plenum and plugged into another one forming new practices and relations.

### **7.3. Limitations and further research**

The limitations of this research are based on the respondents who were chosen. The interviews were based on users of public spaces, city-dwellers since the focus was on the perception of public space related to its use. However, another approach could also include stakeholders who are involved in the urban design and planning of the area, something which would have provided some extra dimensions in the application of the public space concept. Although this point was attempted to be answered through the policy and agenda documents of the city, a qualitative analysis on city experts' responses would also enrich this research and would make a better understanding of the gap between actual use and formation of public space. Besides, due to COVID-19 outbreak, the number of respondents was not the desirable initial one, although it is sufficient enough for the outcome of this research. Also, the virus outbreak made it difficult at the beginning of the research to make observations at the location.

Further research on similar theoretical concerns on public space and its application on the urban realm could also focus more extensively on the political dimension and the ontology of antagonistic relationships. In addition to that, further research could be made on more extreme formations of public space, during the acts of resistance, protesting and demonstrating where the tension between entities is more visible. In that case, bias towards concepts such as normativity, legality and city restrictions would be exposed. These concepts are important for a deeper understanding of the political dynamics that occur in a public space.

This research focused on the perception of public space. Public space was approached as a social phenomenon which arises temporary and spatially. It is a highly complex concept in which many social and political dynamics occur. This research highlights that gap between practices of urban planning and city-dwelling. It also highlights that practices are central in the constitution of social phenomena in general and of public space specifically. In sum, this research provided extra insights in the constitution of public space to the academic debate on this topic, not only from the perspective of urban geography but also from the standpoint of sociology and political theory.



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