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# Material dimensions of public involvement in planning

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*Everything I write is dedicated to my mother*

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## Summary

The discussion of public involvement is one of the most significant issues in planning studies, particularly in the context of governance-beyond-the-state in which parts of civil society may take greater role in policy-making, administration and implementation. This highlights the growing need for new ways and instruments of articulation, and different levels of support and regulation of public involvement. This research explores material dimensions of public involvement, in order to contribute to the development of the interface between civil society and planning. The participatory process of R-Urban project, that makes use of different materials to engage public, is explored as a case study using participant observation and semi-structured interviews. The data was further related to theoretical framework based on practice theory. The results demonstrate that material dimensions directly influence the articulation of urban issues, giving meaning to individual actions in the context of urban agendas. The seductive characteristics of experiments are used as "a good hook", to engage people and facilitate the diffusion and marketing of the urban issues at stake. Yet, the question of sustaining legitimate development of these practices remains open. It requires adequately trained personnel, time and finances. Great dependence on the setting design has serious implications for democracy, resulting in manipulation of framing and contextualisation of urban issues. Furthermore, its implementation depends on the ability of official system to become open and supportive for these kind of spatial experiments and their specific outputs.

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## List of Abbreviations

PI – Public involvement
CPT – Communicative planning theory
AD – Anaerobic digester

## Personal motives

Figure 1. *A model for Savamala*: citizen pointing at his window (source: author's own)

Since the beginning of consciousness people are trying to find and define their place in this world. We try to explore and understand it, but not as careful observers; our presence and interference is direct – we are constructing our world, believing that it belongs to us. Planning can be seen as a discipline that provides *signposting* in this labyrinth, organising human existence on this planet. However, in my personal opinion, planners (and generally, the State) usually forget that life is happening everywhere, under all circumstances, every day, and that the agency can offer myriad of imaginative solutions to societal needs. Planning is therefore responsible not only for offering a set of studied solutions to known challenges, but also for recognising future strategies for dealing with uncertainties.

However, I have personally experienced that the imagination nested in agency is not as romantic as it seems nor as logical to find as it appears. I will give an example. One of my previous projects, *A Model for Savamala*, where I was in the role of an architect, tried to override the limits of a planning system that was neglecting community needs in a devastated area in Belgrade (Serbia). In order to stimulate dialogue and provide the community with a tool for participation in the planning debate, we have constructed a 3D

physical model of Savamala relating to the sociological, economical and political facts. It represents the existing urban morphology and typology, it goes into issues of the property structure and space use, indicates the intensity and variety of commercial activities, availability of empty spaces, restitution issues, illegal spaces, indicates traffic data, number of space users during the day and night, old photographs and plans of each plot, personal documents given by residents, recorded interviews. However, constant presence in the area, inclusion of numerous institutions and other stakeholders, sensitiveness to subjective points of view, recognition of relations and mutual dependencies, listening and learning skills – they were all useless and the project was a complete failure. The community was there, active and engaged, but the change of political party and the rules of power behind the planning structure made this *imagination* irrelevant and at that point made our world hugely different from our everyday realities. If at any point one feels that his/her everyday imagination and needs are displaced from the 'world' around, can we still claim that our construction and invention of ways of finding our place in the world succeeded? I hope that the answer lies in changing the *signposting*. This is my personal motive for doing this research – exploring the potential of materials for improving the public dialogue in planning.

Figure 2. Frances Benjamin Johnston: Stairway of the Treasurer's Residence: Students at Work from the Hampton Album 1899-1900 (source: MoMA Collection, 2016)

> "Johnston's most famous photograph shows six men constructing a staircase, each of the six deploying a different skill yet locked together, mutually aware yet absorbed in their own work. Perhaps the most striking thing about this photograph is the expression of the workers' faces: there is none […] But Johnston has also staged this photograph, rather like a choreographer, to show how these workers relate to each other. Put on display are all the different stages of building a staircase; present at a glance is a clear narrative of the work they are doing. The workers do not look at one another but the choreography makes evident that they are intimately connected. Working on their own they appear relaxed, but not informal as in the casual encounters of a settlement house; relaxed, even though they are performing a demanding task together; and relaxed in being comfortable with their tools. We sense, in contemplating this photograph, that the people in the workshop are just what they seem; there's no hidden backstory; they are not a coalition. The structure of the image lies in its narrative of making a staircase, which shapes their shared purpose in time; the project furnishes their mutual respect" (Sennett, 2012:62).

# Chapter One – Introduction

## 1.1 Research Problem

In spite of over 30 years of participatory planning, citizen engagement has usually been ignored, under-managed, seen as a distraction and unnecessary, time-consuming activity (Cullingworth et al., 2014; Healey, 2006). At the same time population growth, urbanisation and unsustainable levels of consumption demand new approaches in organising public services towards the understanding of people as assets and producers (Cilliers & Timmermans, 2014; Coaffee & Healey, 2003; Healey, 2006; Kemp et al., 2007; Manzini & Straszowski, 2013; Meroni, 2007). In 2014, over half or the world's population (54%) lived in urban areas, and by 2050, an additional 2.5 billion people will be urban (66% in total), double the number since just a century ago (Desa UN, 2016). In 1970s world's population annual demand on resources exceeded Earth's bio-capacity, and today humanity uses the equivalent of 1.6 planets to provide the resources we use, and to absorb our waste (Global Footprint Network, 2016). Both on the systematic and on the individual level, we will have to learn to live in this smaller and denser world by consuming less and that can be achieved only by new and smart ways of distribution and social organisation. In many challenge areas (social, ecological, political) the institutional response has been the development of complex forms of governance, involving multiple actors, multiple scales for action, and forms of co-ordination (Arts, Lagendijk, & Houtum, 2009; Coaffee & Healey, 2003; Guy Peters & Pierre, 1998; Healey, 2004, 2006; Kemp, Loorbach, & Rotmans, 2007; Kemp, Parto, & Gibson, 2005; Pløger, 2001; Swyngedouw, 2005). Therefore, planning discipline as an interdisciplinary arena for communication on different scales became a very exciting field for innovative action towards more sustainable futures.

Since the 1970s planning has gone through a shift from rationalist, analytical policy processes to more interactive, deliberative and collaborative modes of planning (Coaffee and Healey, 2003; Cullingworth et al., 2014; Healey, 2006). However, collaborative (participatory) planning is a site of contestation, both in theory and practice. Much of the discussion on participatory planning focuses on its effectiveness, divisions of power

among different parties, legitimacy, motivation and involvement. The examples of collaborative processes with the positive outcomes are more or less equal to those that resulted in frustration and mistrust. The main challenge for participatory planning can be summarised by this quote from Cullingworth et al (2014):

> "Participation cannot be effective unless it is organised, but this, of course, is one of the fundamental difficulties" (p. 509).

In the same time, self-organised (informal) civil society initiatives that operate in urban areas around the world prove that public is capable of participating in city functioning. Co-housing projects, eco-homes and villages, urban gardens, farmers markets, slow food movements, placemaking initiatives, mobility schemes such as carpooling and collaborative taxies, bike culture initiatives and accommodation sharing, are only some of the examples. Additionally, public involvement (PI) is necessary for transition to sustainable ways of living – understanding and recognition of local possibilities enforce the commitment to sustainability objectives (Kemp et al., 2005). Policies in recent years express support towards civil society initiatives, but at the same time funding and regulation become increasingly greater barriers for the both sides. There is a growing need in developing the interface between civil society initiatives and the public sector, "[b]ut to do this effectively, encouragingly and respectfully, politicians and officials need to think differently about how they think and act when no longer the main deliverer of goods and services, and when regulation becomes less about controlling and much more about strategic oversight" (Healey, 2015:117).

Therefore, this research offers different point of view on PI in planning, through the lens of *practice theory*. Practices offer a different approach, because they explain the world as made of web of practices that people participate in, and that behavioural changes are changes in practice, not simply individual choices (Reckwitz, 2002; Shove, Pantzar, & Watson, 2012a; Shove & Pantzar, 2005). This enables the examination of PI in planning beyond linguistic and procedural terms. Practice exists through the interconnectedness of its three elements: (1) *materials* (objects, infrastructures, tools, hardware and the body itself), (2) *competences* (know-how, background knowledge, understanding and skills), and (3) *meanings* (mental activities, emotion and motivational knowledge). Individuals are 'carriers' of practices, and what is the most important – they are not just the ones who

perform the activity (bodily behaviour), they are 'carriers' of "certain routinized ways of understanding, knowing how and desiring" (Reckwitz, 2002:250).

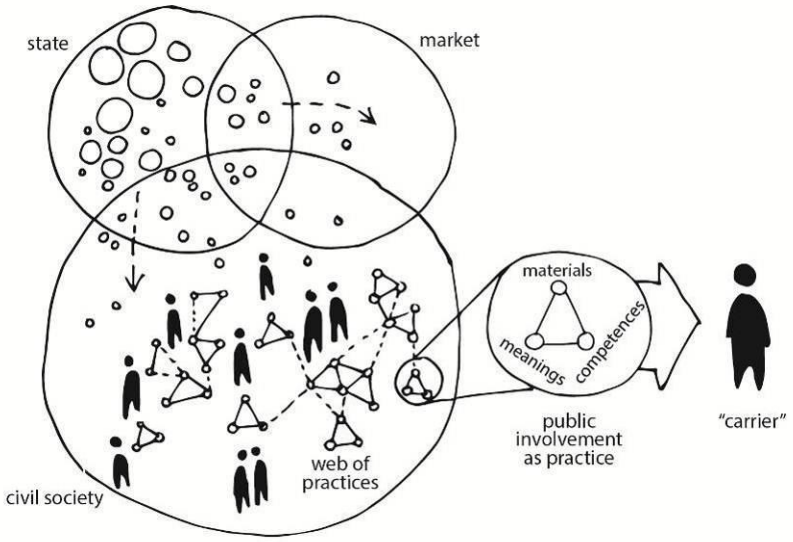


Figure 3. Practice theory as a lens for exploring potentials of PI in planning (source: author's own)

The scientific relevance of this thesis lies in its attempt to contribute to the understanding of how urban and regional planning can be practiced "on the ground", in the communities, to ensure progress towards realising global sustainability goals, namely making cities and urban settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (UN Sustainable Development Goals, 2016). It pursues the idea that in contemporary urban governance conditions which are perceived as transformative, uncertain and unstable, "social-learning processes become more important than bureaucratic procedure, rationalist scientific management or pluralist politics as modes of strategy formation" (Healey 2007: 185). Building governance capacities is one of the biggest necessities of our time.

Furthermore, one of the most important societal challenges according to the World Cities Report 2016 (UN Habitat) is the investment in infrastructure and inclusive provision of urban services. Practices approach might be one of the suggestions for urban governance capable to involve wider public and bypass some of the limitations of ineffective decentralisation, such as: "weak legal framework, lack of political will, poor capacity for effective implementation, under-resourced local authorities, hindering joined-up service delivery, synergies and institutional alignment (both vertical and horizontal), poorly trained personnel and inadequate political representation, feeding popular

disenchantment and even resentment" (p. 103-4). Development of new ways of communicating urban issues capable to diffuse knowledge and inspire responsibility among citizens, seems as an important task for dealing with urban challenges.

## 1.2 Research Question

Having introduced the participatory planning debate and the potential that civil society initiatives have to offer, this section formulates the aim and researchable questions for this thesis.

The overall aim of this research is to: *explore how practice theory might help us to rethink collaborative and participatory practices, in order to contribute to the development of the interface between civil society and planning*. It will explore if PI in planning has a potential of becoming an appropriate everyday activity for 'ordinary' people. Also, analysing PI as a practice may contribute to planning process theory. Therefore, in the core of this research is the main following question. As this is an ambitious and novel sphere of research, it is broken down into two modest, empirically-focused sub-questions.

| | |
|---|---|
| Main Research Question | **What can attention to the materiality of participation offer to our understanding of public involvement in planning?** |
| Sub-questions | How different publics come to understand what is required by public involvement and what is their role in it? |
| | How can interactivity, as a level of power diffusion, be regulated? |

Table 1. Research question and sub-questions

To answer the research questions, this research will examine a process of PI in building an anaerobic digester and several complementary functions on a temporary-use public land in a dense urban area of East London. R-Urban project is chosen as a case study because of its participatory process that makes use of different materials to engage public around the articulation of urban issues. Empirical research included participant observation and conduction of semi-structured interviews. The data was further related to theoretical framework based on practice theory, in order to recognise the patterns in people's behaviour. Understanding the mechanisms behind this sort of involvement might serve planning practice in acquiring new governance arenas, and better connection and transmission of ideas and common conceptions of the future between civil society,

market and public authorities. This might lead to the improvement of public participation and better life quality in our cities.

## 1.3 Research Structure

This thesis is structured around one empirical case and conceptual discussion; there is a total of six chapters, including this *Introduction*. *Chapter Two* provides the critical literature review of discourses that relate to the research questions, with the aim to formulate a conceptual model, as well as to highlight the literature gaps that this dissertation aims to fill in. *Chapter Three* develops a research strategy framework that logically relates research aim and question to the methodological choices made; it explains ontological and epistemological standpoint of this research, appropriate research design and methods employed. The empirical case is then presented in *Chapter Four*, as an introduction to *Chapter Five* which summarises the primary research of this thesis, relating it to the conceptual framework built in *Chapter Two*. Finally, Chapter Six concludes with highlighting the conclusions through research question, and examines the significance and future development of this research.

# Chapter Two – Literature Review

Chapter Two opens an array of questions in the attempt to formulate a theoretical framework for the specific perspective that this research takes. As explained in the Introduction, this thesis aims to contribute to the knowledge base and approach to PI in planning. It does so by proposing the exploration of PI as practice, focusing on its material dimension. To build the conceptual framework, this chapter will look at different literature fields: planning theory, political theory, science and society studies and design theory. Section 2.1 starts with setting a political scene – the emerging role of civil society in urban governance, and putting it into a context of brief historical explanation of planning methodology development – specifically the collaborative turn, focusing on the literature gaps (Section 2.2). Section 2.3 will introduce practice theory, and use it as a framework for analysing PI. The political implications of device-centred approach in public engagement will be exposed in Section 2.4, as well as its historical roots. Special attention is given to concepts of interactivity, experiment, and the relation between objects and practices. The chapter will conclude by drawing the relationship between literature and research question.

## 2.1 Creative Communities, Creative Governance

The state has evolved from an 'overall manager' of a politically enclosed space, to new forms of governance-beyond-the-state that encourage private economic actors (market) and parts of civil society in taking a much greater role in policy-making, administration and implementation (Arts et al., 2009; Swyngedouw, 2005). The concept of a more active role of civic society through collaboration, commons and creative communities has gained significance in various fields, mainly in welfare provision through health system, food governance, clothing, mobility, socialisation, urban activism. Besides responding to local government invitations to 'participate', civil society is capable to mobilise energy and resources to define and carry out initiatives of different types and scales. In social movements "claims are elaborated and put forward, constituencies are rallied and resources mobilised, ideologies are (re)elaborated, collective identities are created, organisations are formed, and actions are implemented, outside established

agency structures" (Moulaert et al, 2010:17). Civic initiatives and social experiments in provision of public services are being mapped around the globe, and researchers are trying to understand the patterns in profiles and motives of these actors ("heroes"), and to categorise the initiatives. They belong to a wide range of projects, including running a specific facility (e.g. a community centre), environmental initiatives (e.g. providing local renewable energy), building projects (e.g. eco-villages), supplying affordable housing and creating employment. The ways that they acquire resources are also diverse: public grants and asset transfers from local authorities have been substantially reduced after 2007 financial crisis, so they mainly depend on donations, low-interest loans, National Lottery grants (in the UK), their own assets (from rents, facilities and services they provide), returns from an energy facility, or fundraising campaigns such as community bonds and crowd-funding (Healey, 2015).

However, there is no clear vision of the development of these experiments and their relation to the mainstream. Empirical research shows that civil society is capable to take a more active role in urban realm, but the ways of enabling and empowering these still delicate establishments need to be explored (Meroni, 2007). While enabling new forms of participation and PI, these processes also redefine the meaning of citizenship and democracy. The state is not disappearing, on the contrary – the role of the state and its forms of organisations such as planning, remain important in regulating and establishing equitable modes of governance. Besides finding resources, the main challenge for civil society initiatives relates to questions of their legitimacy, accountability, power dynamics inside local groups and uneven coverage of initiatives in different places (Healey, 2015; Swyngedouw, 2005). This highlights the growing need for new ways and instruments of articulation, and different levels of support and regulation of PI. However, the question that originates from history still remains – how to find a balance in power distribution?

According to Arnstein (1969), citizen participation is the same as citizen power. It refers to redistribution of power that enables inclusion of citizens in the future political and economic processes, giving them the means to share in the benefits of society (p. 216). Barriers to the equal power distribution are, on the side of the powerful: (1) discrimination, (2) paternalism, and (3) resistance to power redistribution; and on the side of those without the power: (1) poor political socioeconomic infrastructure, (2) poor

knowledge base, and (3) difficulties of organizing a representative and accountable citizens' group (ibid, p. 217). Participation in public sector happens on different scales and it usually refers to *passive forms of involvement*, such as consultation on already conceptualised plans and projects. *Co-creation* is a more specific term and it refers to "*active involvement* of end-users in various stages of the production process" (Voorberg et al., 2015:1335). In Arnstein's ladder, it refers to sixth stage – *partnership*, where "power is in fact redistributed through negotiation between citizens and powerholders" (p. 221). It is being used in private sector where the direct experience of consumers is used for the improvement of the production chain, service or a product. In this research, co-creation will be used in the context of public sector where the *end-users* are citizens. Recently published systematic review on co-creation by Voorberg et al (2015), of 122 articles and books published between 1987 and 2013, shows that most of the conducted studies do not aim to identify specific outcomes and results of co-creation, that there is a clear gap in the literature on the real contribution of co-creation in bridging the democracy gap, and that the influence of different roles that citizens might take (co-implementer, co-designer, initiator) on the outcomes of these processes need to be empirically explored.

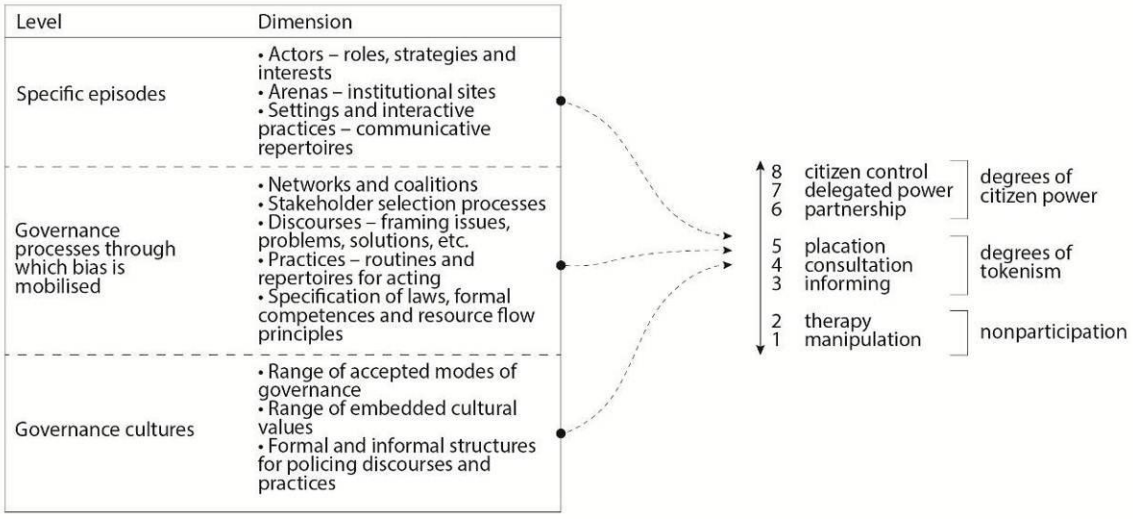


Figure 4. Dimensions of governance and levels of citizen participation that can happen in all of them (source: adapted from Healey, 2004 and Arnstein, 1969)

To illustrate myriad ways of participation, Arnstein's (1969) typology of levels of citizen participation (Ladder of Citizen Participation) can be combined with Healey's (2004) evaluative framework for exploring creative potentialities of governance practices. In her work, Healey explores new governance infrastructures that can release imaginative and innovative activities. She distinguishes between three levels: (1) specific episodes,

highly visible and experienced in daily encounter and action; (2) governance processes, where strategic processes are created and where power games are played; and (3) governance cultures, where norms and values that legitimate the activities are formed. These levels are not autonomous, and they are interrelated in any actual situation. The left side of the Figure 4 can therefore be seen as places where different levels of participation from Arnstein's ladder can take place. Depending on the means of articulation, this overview can serve for locating and defining arenas for potential policy innovation and recommendation.

Healey (2007) introduces the concept of creative governance (the endeavour to re-think government and governance) as crucial for *spatial strategy-making*, which treat the territory as a "complex mixture of nodes and networks, places and flows, in which multiple relations, activities and values co-exist, interact, combine, conflict, oppress and generate creative synergy" (21). She discusses power beyond the formal authority of government agencies, as an energy that is capable to mobilise and suppress attention to specific projects:

> "Power is also a generative force, expressed in potentialities - the energy to act, to do things, to mobilise, to imagine and to invent, 'power to' (Dyrberg 1997; Giddens 1984)" (Healey, 2007:36).

From this perspective, strategic thinking and acting gives life to the arenas and processes of formal planning systems; it may "move away from formal arenas, into particular alliances and the strategic actions of key actors" so formal procedures are not necessarily the arenas in which strategies are being created. However, to be able to have a long-lasting effect and a transformative potential, a spatial strategy must be seductive and persuasive, it needs to move "to the routine of practices" (Healey, 2007:184):

> "The planning project, infused with this understanding of socio-spatial dynamics, becomes a governance project focused on managing the dilemmas of 'co-existence in shared spaces'" (Healey 2006: 3).

However, management of these governance projects and ways of framing urban issues are not straight-forward processes. Thus, it is important to explain the collaborative turn in planning theory and the challenges exposed in academic debates.

## 2.2 Planning and Public

The discussion of PI is one of the most significant issues in planning studies. Planning as part of the state apparatus is caught up in institutional dynamics. On one hand it tries to answer to powerful pressures from market sphere on the more efficient management of resources and provision of infrastructure, and on the other hand to enable socially just and environmentally balanced world. This mediating role between opposite forces made planning the primary explanation for the failure of urban and rural development, but also a discipline responsible to enable a positive change (Cullingworth et al., 2014; Healey, 2006). This section will briefly explain the collaborative turn in planning theory and its critique, focusing on qualities that participation in planning process demands of citizens.

The idea of PI in planning has long historical roots. In the book *Cities in Evolution* published in 1915 Patrick Geddes promotes the completion of City Surveys and Civic Exhibitions prior to any town plans. In conjunction with museums, libraries and citizens, a complex examination of physical, social, cultural and historical situations would lead to "arousal of civic feeling, and the corresponding awakening of more enlightened and more generous citizenship" (p. 332). According to Geddes, this was the only way of preparing planning schemes that would be locally responsive and it also embraced important material dimensions. This is an issue discussed in more detail below, but Geddes' proposal remained merely a form of vision for a long time.

After the Second World War, the rapid expansion in the field of scientific achievements was thought to be transferable to the challenges of social and political organisation. Planning embraced scientific knowledge base, and professionals were perceived as working in general interest – there was no place for PI. In 1960s, the debate on divisions of power started to emerge. Planning system was seen as an important agent in distribution of resources, and therefore a need for new type of 'social planning' which

would readdress the imbalances in access to goods, services, opportunities and power, started to appear (Cullingworth et al., 2014). But, the "rational model" in planning continued to emerge – the attempts for PI such as 'advocacy planning' introduced in the UK in 1960s proved inefficient in the game of power of the real world. In this model, which is still very present in practice, planning works as science: focusing on what could be measured and verified through hypothesis testing and data, bounded by rules of bureaucratic procedures. The public's role is to advise on values and preferences (Innes & Booher, 2014). The introduction of *mediation* in the planning process has been a very active and vivid point for debate in planning theory, but with little concrete progress (Cullingworth et al., 2014:514).

*Communicative planning theory* (CPT) emerged in 1980s and 1990s as a response to rational model in planning. It is developed by several scientists, including John Friedmann, John Forester, Patsy Healey, Charles Hoch, Howard Baum, James Throgmorton, and Judith Innes (Healey 1998; Innes & Booher, 2014). It originates from *intersubjectivism* – cultural theory that locates the social in *interactions*, formulated in Jürgen Habermas's 'theory of communicative action'. Here, agents interpret the 'objective world' in their minds and are transferring those internal meanings through their speech-acts (Reckwitz, 2002). Its main critiques are mainly based on "an old philosophical confrontation between Jurgen Habermas's plea for a discursive ethic, and Michel Foucault's thesis of the omnipresence discursive powers" (Pløger, 2001:219).

CPT raised the questions on the process of planning, showing that planners seldom apply the rational model in reality because the challenges they face cannot only be quantified and formally analysed. CPT theorists signify the importance of listening, inclusion, dialogue and interaction among different stakeholders (government, private and public ones). However, since they claim that every situation is unique, they rarely offer any practical guidelines or handbooks for communicative practice (Innes & Booher, 2014).

Importantly, CPT has been subject to diverse criticisms mainly because: (1) it is not time efficient compared to a standard top-down approach; (2) it cannot make much difference in the face of societal structures of power; (3) it is too focused on the micro-practices and might not result in the 'right' outcomes; (4) community knowledge is not

legitimate for decision making, compared to science; (5) it puts too much emphasis on the process and missing the clear outcomes; (6) it denies the existence of power inherent in the individual; (7) diversity among actors is difficult to achieve (Fainstein, 2005; Healey, 2006; Innes & Booher, 2015; Pløger, 2001; Tewdwr-Jones & Allmendinger, 1998).

But, what does all of this mean for the public? What do the public have to be like to be able to participate in formal planning processes? This matters, because the main point in CPT is on the interactions, citizens have to be able to communicate. Besides having enough time to read and understand planning documents (mainly texts and plans), they have to be able to verbally express their opinions, and to participate in the discussion with competitive arguments. Inch (2015) is arguing that focus on the subjectivities required of citizens for participating in planning, can reveal challenges of its democracy. Both rational and communicative planning assume the involvement of already technically equipped citizens, who know what they want.

| Quality | Agonistic planning citizen | Deliberative planning citizen |
|---|---|---|
| Subject position | Activist for freedom/equality | Rational deliberator |
| Subject/identity formation | Through articulation of equivalences and differences. Shifting across space and time. No fixed, pre-existing set of interest. | Through inter-subjective dialogue that brings possibility of transforming pre-existing commitments |
| Modes of communication | Passionate range of political protest and argument | Rational argument |
| Goal of participation | Opening up lines of disagreement, linking of struggles for counter-hegemonic change | Agreement/consensus on best course of action |
| Relationship to others | Respectful disagreement or struggle to create new identities through articulation of equivalences across difference | Willing to respectfully cede to the force of the better argument through deliberation |

Table 2. The agonistic and deliberative planning citizen (redrawn from Inch, 2015)

Table 2 shows the qualities that agonistic and deliberative planning citizens need to have. This research further showed hidden costs associated with participation, since citizens usually have to employ an expert to represent their side. Besides financial resources, they also devote excessive amount of time over long periods (usually several years), during which their other life activities should continue running normally.

The problematic of articulating these necessary qualities is one of the arguments for trying to explore PI using the lens of practice theory. It can also offer another point of view to the CPT critique, as well as analytical framework for exploring alternative ways for PI in planning.

## 2.3 Practice Theory

The previous section has explained approaches to understanding PI in planning that derive from CPT as a normative ideal and as ontology, as well as a summary of some of their limitations. This section aims to show that an approach drawing on practice theory may offer an alternative way to explore PI, focusing more on what participatory actions are. It will explain the position of practice theory within social theory, the interconnectedness of elements of a practice, reproduction and the process of its evolution.

### 2.3.1 Practice Theory in Social Theory and Its Elements

Social practice theory is developed by several scientists, including Giddens (structuration theory), Schatzki, Bourdieu and Reckwitz (Shove, Pantzar, & Watson, 2012). This thesis will mostly rely on the more recent work of Elisabeth Shove, who is developing the theory using it to explain transition processes towards more sustainable societies.

Cultural theory is the field of social theory that explains the relation between action and social order through social construction of reality. Reckwitz (2002) explains practice theory as one of the four subtypes of cultural theory. The most important difference between them is what they take as a fundamental unit of social analysis, i.e. where they situate the social: in the human mind (mentalism), in discourse (textualism), in communication (intersubjectivism), and in practices (practice theory) (Figure 5).

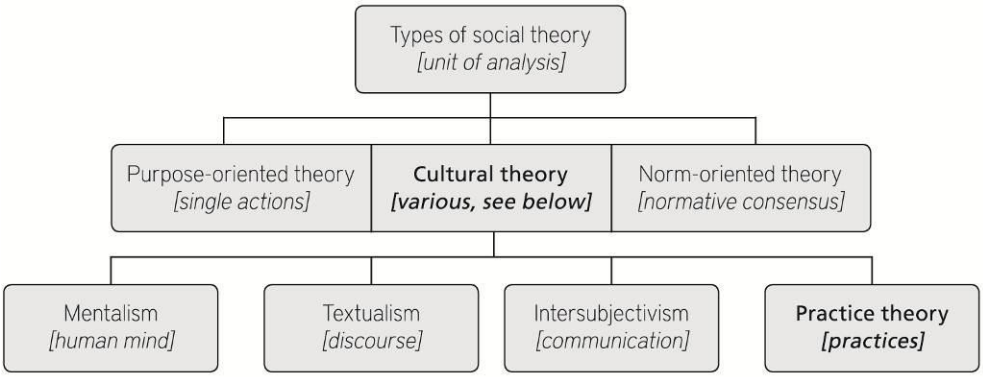


Figure 5. The position of practice theory within social theory (source: Kuijer, 2013)

It is important to explain the meaning of the term practice as it is used in practice theory. General use of the term usually refers to the whole of human action, as opposite to "theory" or thinking without action. The verb 'to practice' means to perform something repeatedly, to make a habit of something. However, *practice* in the sense of the practice theory, is something else:

> "A 'practice' (Praktik) is a routinized type of behaviour which consists of several elements, interconnected to one other: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, 'things' and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge" (Reckwitz, 2002:249).

Practice cannot be reduced to any of those elements since it develops out of their existence and interconnectedness. Different authors have proposed simpler scheme of elements that comprise practice. The terminology used in this thesis will be the one used by Shove (Shove et al., 2012; Shove & Pantzar, 2005):

- *materials*: objects, infrastructures, tools, hardware and the body itself;
- *competences*: know-how, background knowledge, understanding and skills;
- *meanings*: mental activities, emotion and motivational knowledge – the social and symbolic significance of participation at any one moment.

It is important to note that this model is just a loose grouping of the elements that overlap and influence each other.

### 2.3.2 Change Within Practice

Practices are defined by the interdependent relations between these three elements (Figure 6). Trajectories of elements, and making and breaking of links between

them is what makes it possible to analyse the change within practice, and its evolution (Shove et al., 2012).

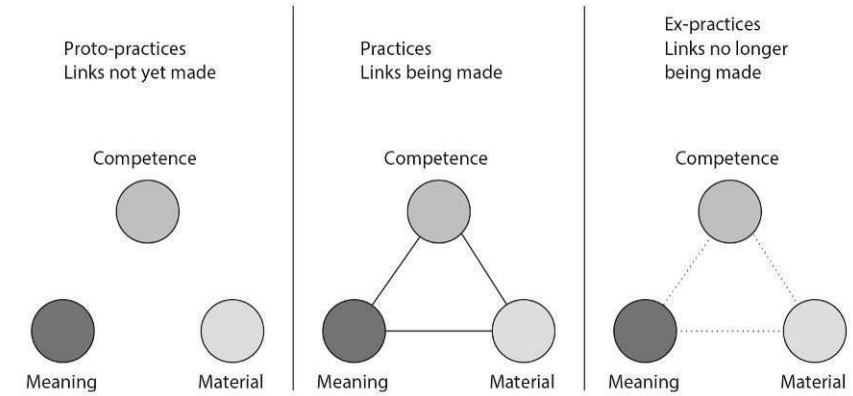


Figure 6. Competences, meanings and materials model: proto practices, practices and ex-practices (source: Shove et al., 2012:25).

One way to transform a practice is to introduce new materials. However, this connection is recursive – materials also get changed by the practice: "designed artefacts shape and are shaped by the contexts in which they are used" (Ingram, Shove, & Watson, 2007:4). Thus, practices cannot just be shaped by introducing new materials, because "[i]nteraction between humans and products [materials] is situationally contingent, their status is persistently dynamic and they are co-shaped both by their designers and the collectives of practitioners who integrate them in performance" (Kuijer, 2013:32). According to Shove and Pantzar (2005:58), new practices are either new configurations of existing elements, or connection of new elements with the ones that already exist – what matters is the way in which *the elements fit together*. In order for a practice to develop, new *associations* have to be made, practitioners have to prove themselves to be *competent and skilful* members of a community, they have to *master a required skill* in order to 'glue' materials and images, to go through a *positive experience* that they are keen to *reproduce*, and their activities have to be understood as *'normal'* rather then ludicrous.

Besides making connection inside of a practice, elements are capable of connecting different practices. For example, bicycle (material) is part of commuting and of leisure practices (Kuijer, 2013:33). This is important to have in mind because practice is not an isolated entity. Different practices can be connected in different ways, forming *ecology of practices* (Shove 2012) – the system of practices that manage to get practiced and

reproduced. Changes in one practice can influence other practices with which it co-exists or is co-dependent. Accordingly, practitioners perform many different practices, and different practices are performed by different groups of practitioners, which will be further discussed in the next section.

### 2.3.3 Ecology of Practices

Individuals are 'carriers' of practices, and what is the most important – they are not just the ones who perform the activity (bodily behaviour), they are 'carriers' of "certain routinized ways of understanding, knowing how and desiring" (Reckwitz, 2002:250). The practice *nests in people* in form of both bodily and mental knowledge, but it depends on people performing it in order to remain existent. Carriers are at the same times the ones who sustain the practice, and who are transforming it. Practices are made by and through their routine reproduction.

But, why do individuals carry specific practices? Besides the existing social ties (being part of a community, network of friends who carry certain practice), modes of recruitment take different forms as practices become established. Institutions emerge to promote certain practice, to introduce innovations, to improve performance. In formal ways this would mean organising courses and training schools, and in informal ones through mass media and informal communication between practitioners. However, academics argue that practices constitute complex webs and that innovations are difficult to make. As illustrated by Shove (2012), one of the crucial limitations which cannot be changed is the time available:

> "If we ignore the possibility of multi-tasking, if we take the world population to be 6.8 billion, and if we take the practice of sleeping out of the equation (Harrison, 2009), each day affords something like 108 billion person-hours available to the many other practice-entities in circulation today. Which practices succeed in capturing these human resources? Which end up colonizing peoples' time and energy and which lose out? Equally important, what does the present ecology of practice mean for the future?" (p. 64-5).

This "ecology of practices" is what makes the world order as it is, and is one of the reasons behind this research – reconsidering PI as a number of competing practices and considering people as assets and producers seems to lead towards sustainable futures.

## 2.4 Materials and Publics

Before continuing to the final summary and drawing of a conceptual model, it is crucial to dedicate attention to the material element of a practice, and more specifically – material dimension of PI. This section will first illustrate the debate around device-centred approaches to PI and political capacities of materials. It will then introduce *interactivity* and *experiment* as two instruments for empowering and activating public using material settings. Finally, it will discuss recent research on materiality of community consultation and engagement activities within planning processes.

### 2.4.1 Device-related Participation

Defining the public and public action in relation to socio-material conditions of public engagement, has been a central point of research in different fields, such as science and technology studies, sociology, geography, anthropology, archaeology, political theory and cultural studies. However, it has not been used in relation to public participation until recently. The main reason is that it stands in contrast to the traditional approach to PI which defines publics in discursive, linguistic and procedural terms. The idea that *language* is central in politics is deeply engraved in our way of thinking and acting. It is almost impossible to imagine any political situation that is not established mainly by acts of discursive deliberation (Marres & Lezaun, 2011):

> "According to the classical, Aristotelian view of citizenship, an actor became 'political' precisely by moving beyond the domains of work, of the domestic, of economic (chrematistic) action, and citizenship was denied to those, such as slaves and women, who were 'too much involved in the world of things – in material, productive, domestic or reproductive relationships' (Pocock, 1998 [1992], p.34)" (p. 492)

Additionally, this 'world of things' is classically being related to the material perspective of domestic life, which made this gap between language-related and device-related politics even wider. The growing interest in the role of things in mediating different spheres of our life can be explained partially as an effect of sustainability initiatives that are emerging in policy, business, science and culture, as well as by the growing digitization of many services. 'Non-humans' are seen as important contributors to our life, and many researchers are exploring social, political and legal arrangements that are enabling these

fragile settings (Marres, 2013). Material engagement can be seen as a distinct mode of performing the public, by exploring how objects, settings, devices and materials acquire political capacities and how they achieve participation as a specific public form:

> "Participation is rather performed in the workplace, the home, nature, the market – in settings and through objects that do not belong to a distinct sphere of action, but rather co-articulate public political activity with other domains of everyday practice" (Marres & Lezaun, 2011:496).

Similar to the practice theory explanation, materials cannot be observed independently, but as part of a carefully designed settings that are arranged to produce particular effects: "the design of a particular environment for the use and handling of objects is a central aspect of the configuration of a particular public" (Marres & Lezaun, 2011:496).

One of the main problems in adopting this point of view is that it can go too far into normative democratic theory (Marres & Lezaun, 2011). Attributing political capacities to non-humans disrupts the ideals of democratic subject – autonomy and human self-determination. Recognising non-humans as social and political agents transforms concepts of social order, power and morality (see also contributions by Foucault and Latour). Therefore, the politics of non-humans is only the tip of the iceberg of a much wider conceptual reorientation in social and political research and theory (Marres, 2013). It is beyond the scope of this thesis to open theoretical discussion on this topic. Therefore, materials will be investigated as elements of PI as a practice. The remainder of this section will discuss two instruments of PI that use material settings: interactivity and experiment.

### 2.4.2 Interactivity as the Exercise of Power

Using devices to empower and engage people has manifestations across different fields. In the end of 20$^{th}$ century, great debate around *interactivity* in the museums was a result of the changes in their public function (Barry, 2001). From very traditional and closed institutions they have opened to public in completely innovative and radical way. Barry connects this turn with a political debate on state restructuring. In order to transform citizens from consumers to producers, public authorities should "establish the conditions within which the citizen could become an active and responsible agent in his

or her own government" (Barry, 2001:135). Interactive devices are seen as a way to stimulate the agency and experimentation towards the development of self-governing capacities of the citizen. Interactivity empowers people by enabling them to believe that they can understand the world around them. Traditional PI in planning (a procedural perspective) can be juxtaposed to the traditional museum, and in the way that interactive museums illustrate the critical importance of technical devices in scientific practice, materials adopted in planning process can illustrate the importance of engagement, negotiation and collaboration.

However, interactive turn in the organisation of museums has introduced several new challenges (Barry, 2001). First of all, the exhibit largely depends on the knowledge and skills of a designer. Some exhibits, due to the lack of historical and industrial contextualisation, lead museum visitors to false conclusions. Many devices are not designed to be truly interactive (e.g. interactive screens only allow selection from a predetermined set of options), and therefore only use the concept of "interactivity" without really performing it. Additionally, large number of "human explainers" are employed to make sure that interactive exhibits do the job they are intended to do. Finally, constant feedback became a necessary requirement as well as surveillance and monitoring.

The interactive model has been generalised to other sites and situations, mainly to classrooms, marketing and mass media. In public service and politics it is used in a limited form, usually through methods such as focus groups and electronic democracy; it is highly controlled, in order to prevent unpredictable political controversies and conflicts (Barry 2001). Thus, interactivity is nothing else but the "exercise of power" (e.g. the case of electronic democracy would relate to the level four on Arnstein's ladder – consultation; see Section 2.1), and by controlling the level of play and flexibility it can serve as an instrument in communication. To illustrate how power is diffused by controlling the levels of interactivity, Table 3 puts it in contrast to discipline.

| Discipline | Interactivity |
|---|---|
| **The time-table**: 'Precision and application are, with regularity, the fundamental virtues of disciplinary time' | **Flexible time**: interactivity depends on the choice of the user |
| **The correlation of the body and the gesture**: 'a well-disciplined body forms the operational context of the slightest gesture' | **An orientation of creative capacity**: Interactivity does not depend on discipline but on the potential of the undisciplined body and the unfocused mind. 'For the child, or the aware but not especially knowledgeable adult, failed predictions can signal the need for further experiment or to see the phenomenon in a fresh way' |
| **Body-object articulation**: through rules and codes. The constitution of '**a body-weapon, body-tool, body-machine complex**' which persist over time. | **Body-object articulation**: through rguidance rather than rules. The constitution of a **brief 'body-machine interaction'**. |
| **Exhaustive use**: 'Discipline... arranges a positive economy; it poses the principle of a theoretically ever-growing use of time, ever more available moments and, from each moment, ever more useful forces' | **Intensive use**: the value of brief interactions must be maximised. Exhaustive use is likely to be impossible. |
| **The authority of the expert**: the scientist who lectures and wh acts as an autrority | **The concealment of expertise**: the authority of expertise is partially hidden in order to maximise the possibilities for interaction. The imagination and expertise of the ordinary citizen is worked with rather than contradicted by the voice of authority. |
| Injunctions: **Learn! You must!** | Injunctions: **Discover! You may!** |

Table 3. Differences between discipline and interactivity (redrawn from Barry, 2001:149-50)

When observing interactivity as an instrument for controlling the power diffusion, it is important to mention its implications for democracy – it is a very powerful tool if it is used in a right way, which brings back the normative debate of device-related politics. Characteristics and level of interactivity are highly dependent on designer's skills. Thus, framing and contextualisation of issues can be easily manipulated ending in misguidance and misinterpretation. Besides exercising the power of an individual ("designer"), the limitations of interactivity as an instrument for PI can be seen in relating in the right way to the (right) audience. In that sense, it is necessary to look at pubic experiments, as events capable to mobilise the public around certain issues.

### 2.4.3 Public Experiments

Public experiments and demonstrations are powerful instruments of PI. In the Middle Ages, the role of a "demonstrator" in anatomy lecture theatre was to *make visible to the audience the object* of which the lecturer spoke (Barry, 2001:177). They introduce new knowledge and objects to the society, serve as ceremonial events for the domestication of new ideas, provide *a format* for making things public. In the experiment one can witness a practice. It is the moment when something is proven, when it becomes a truth – an event in which "the role of techno-science in society and public life becomes clear" (Marres 2009:118, 2011; Barry 2001).

Public experiments seem to be a way to make interventions in the links and elements of a practice, since they require "the reconfiguration of the wider social-material relations among which the new object is to be accommodated" (Marres, 2009:119). This creates the "relation of dependency" between the objects of public experiments and their publics, because practitioners are the ones who are active in the accommodation of the new ideas.

Marres (2009) research on green living experiments (e.g. using smart meters in homes, not using the fridge for a year, 'No Impact Man') as devices of public engagement suggests that "it is partly the deployment of empirical forms of display that today serves as a solution to the problem of how to engage public" (p. 118). Experiments are able "to seduce" the public, mobilising it around certain issues, concepts and institutions by (1) stimulating peoples' *senses*, (2) engaging the *body* through *play* and exploration, and (3) using familiar things as mediators of social, political and moral relations. In this way, they "transform the material setting of the home into an engaging place" (p. 123). Further more, the experimental characteristics of participation facilitate the diffusion and marketing of the issues at stake (Marres 2011).

To conclude, interactivity and experiments are seen as two instruments through which the material engagement of public can be investigated, which are capable to establish and shape the relation between materials, meanings and competences in practices of PI. In the last section of this chapter they will be incorporated as important elements in the conceptual model used for the analysis. But before that, the recent research on the materiality of public consultations in planning will be briefly presented.

### 2.4.4 Materiality of Public Participation in Planning

Rydin and Natarajan (2015) explored current community consultation and engagement activities within planning processes through their material dimension in the case study of spatial planning in north Northamptonshire in England between 2009 and 2011. They concluded that public participation in planning involves "more than just the communicative engagement of social actors with each other" (p. 1), and that "the rooms, the tables, the chairs, the pens all exercised agency" (p. 8). The *playfulness* and *physical*

*interactivity* of artefacts are found to be critical in stimulating participation. Their observations of consultations are in line with theoretical arguments related to interactivity and experiments; interactive posters where participants would write their opinions or playfulness of the materials used, proved to be very important in mobilising the publics. Further more, their findings underline the importance of sites and artefacts in the consultation activity and in mediating the community's experience of their local environment. Public was feeling and behaving differently in different environments and the use of setting (e.g. not being in a school when talking with students about their town, or exhibiting the posters outside local authority's building) proved as crucial for opening the discussion.

One of the limitations of material approach that they stress is the linguistic translation of meanings and attachments expressed by the community into existing policy frameworks – the link between "participatory encounters and materiality to the culture of planners' practice" (p. 8). This is a very important point, because PI cannot be practised partially – it is not only about ways of mobilising the public, but about mutual communication. The detachment from materials seem as logical and democratic solution, but only if planning discipline is perceived exclusively as a land use enterprise. If we go back to Patsy Healey's concepts on strategy-making as part of a planning project (Section 2.1), the arenas of 'creative governance' (the endeavour to re-think government and governance) are the necessary conditions for enabling this communication. Therefore, this argument is not about incompatibility of community (lay) knowledge with urban policy – it has a greater normative connotation. To illustrate this, Rydin and Natarajan (2015) define public participation as:

> "a set of associations collectively created by local people, planners and the material elements of the participation sites, aides and artefacts. If these sets of associations differ, then so will the dynamics and outcomes of participation exercises" (p.8).

This illustrates the problem of framing urban issues, based on the actors and materials involved. It leads to conclusion that there is both scientific and societal need to explore the potential of material dimensions of public involvement. The missing debate on a material dimension of planning, does not diminish its importance. This thesis builds on the research of Rydin and Natarajan in terms of investigating the potential of PI that is

comprised of different practices, and different ways of engagement that these new settings and systems provoke. The following section will explain the approach built upon this literature review.

## 2.5 Practicing Involvement

This section concludes the literature review chapter, portraying a conceptual framework of this thesis. Four main points were analysed so far. *First*, the capability of civil society to take a responsible role in urban issues is directly dependent upon the "creativity" of governance and the possibilities of forming a strategic dialogue. *Second*, community involvement proves to be one of the biggest challenges in planning theory and practice. *Third*, practice theory can offer an alternative perspective to procedural and linguistic PI in planning and communicative processes suggested by CPT. *Finally*, materials invested with political capacities open new arenas for exploring PI.

The relationship between this review and research question is presented in Figure 7. To be able to explore PI as a practice, first the three main elements (materials, meanings and competences) have to be recognised and defined. Additionally, profiles of "carriers" and the quality of their experience can explain the reproduction of involvement. The way that elements fit together can only be understood through their links. Thus, the concepts of interactivity and experiment will be used as instruments for looking at the configuration of the elements. Finally, the relation of observed practice has to be put in the wider context of "ecology of practices".

If we adopt the point of view that PI in urban issues is also mediated by materials and that it doesn't happen only as a procedural event, there are several challenges to deal with. First, a lot of practices would have to be taken into consideration and there is a problem of their articulation. Second, as noted before, there is a problem of their legitimacy and inclusiveness. Third, which is empirically explored, 'public involvement' in these terms is not easy to distinguish from lobbying or 'public window dressing'. But, it is indeed important to describe what relations and stimuli influence PI, not only in their capacity to 'give the voice' and thus add to the inclusivity and accountability of political ways of dealing with the issues, or in empowering people to become citizens. The added

value of planning (or the state) who is capable to acquire materials as tools for PI, will be able to facilitate a peculiar articulation of issues, as matters of public concern (Marres, 2007).

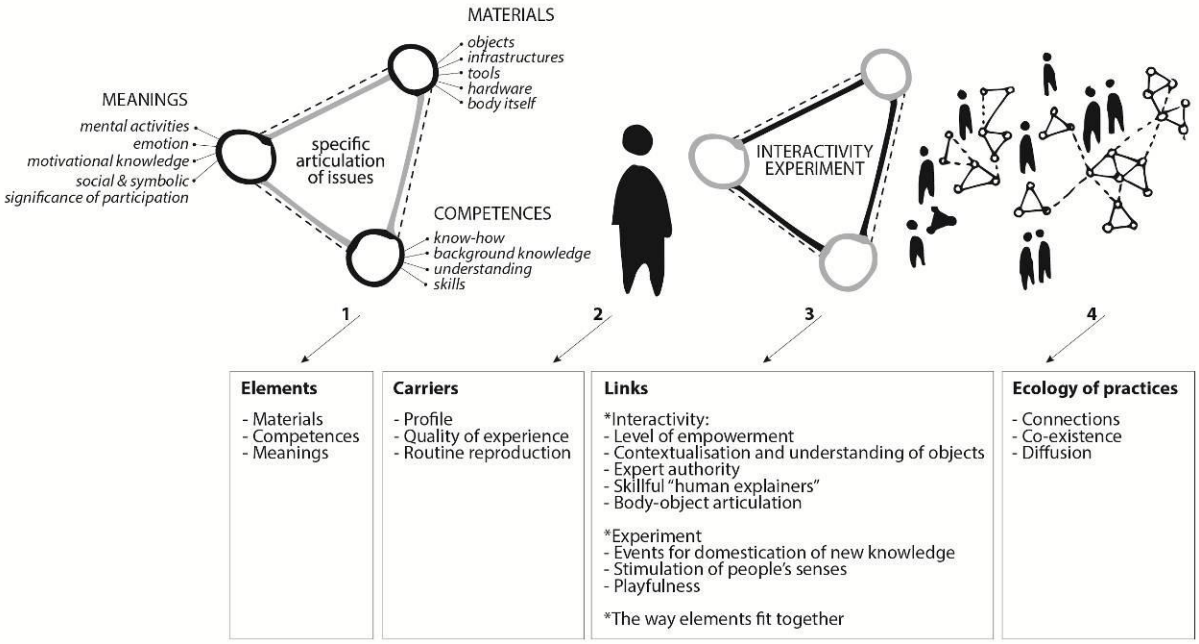


Figure 7. Conceptual model (source: author's own).

# Chapter Three – Methodology

The following chapter sets out an appropriate strategy for this research, explaining how the data was produced in relation to previously conceptualised theoretical framework. As a reminder, the following methodology is designed to answer this research question:

| | |
|---|---|
| Main Research Question | **What can attention to the materiality of participation offer to our understanding of public involvement in planning?** |
| Sub-questions | How different publics come to understand what is required by public involvement and what is their role in it? |
| | How can interactivity, as a level of power diffusion, be regulated? |

Table 4. Research question and sub-questions.

Section 3.1 provides an overview of epistemological and ontological considerations, and sets up a framework for research design. Section 3.2 discusses case study choice and ethnographic approach, and continues into the overview of methods which were used for data collection (Section 3.3). Limitations of the research are explained in Section 3.4, whilst Section 3.5 provides brief explanation of research ethics. Finally, Section 3.6 reflects on how researcher's biography and experience might influence data production and interpretation.

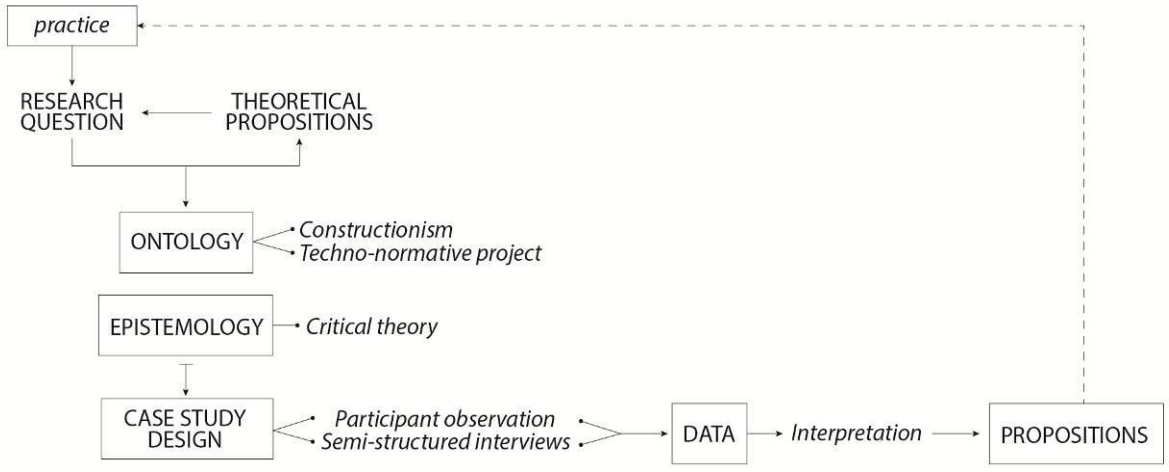


Figure 8. Research strategy (source: author's own).

## 3.1 Ontological and Epistemological Considerations

Ontological and epistemological assumptions frame the research questions and design. Therefore, it is necessary to briefly explain the position this research takes.

Even though it follows a strong constructionism viewpoint, focusing on "the *meanings* that people give to their environment, not the environment itself" (May, 2011:13; Bryman, 2012), the ontological position in relation to practice theory and material perspective is a place for theoretical debates. As discussed in Chapter Two, focus on embodied practices as alternative sites of engagement goes beyond linguistic interaction and rational argumentation. Therefore, Noortje Marres (2009:126-7) discusses different levels on which *ontology* can be situated in relations between science, technology and society:

> "In order to highlight that not just sociological discourses, but also practices and events, provide occasions for the articulation of social entities, a radicalisation of the notion of ontology is then necessary (Fraser, 2008)" (Marres, 2009:126)

Thus, this research's ontological position is situated *on the empirical level*, namely 'techno-normative project', focusing on the changing socio-historical roles of objects in social, moral and political life, as well as on "the rise of design regimes under which objects are to be deliberately equipped with moral and political capacities, such as 'the capacity to engage'" (p.126). This research aims to explore the connections of specific meanings, materials and competences that are purposefully used to involve public. Exploration of the practice of building an anaerobic digester in public is actually the exploration of the reconfiguration of the world influenced by the introduction of a new techno-scientific object. Constructionism implies that "social phenomena and categories are not only produced through social interaction but that they are in a constant state of revision" (Bryman, 2012: 33). Building upon this, there is a conceptual shift in the perspective: this research perceives humans and non-humans as constituents of practices, and their relation in which worlds are being reconfigured as dynamic (Marres, 2009).

The epistemological point of view derives from *critical theory* – constant interaction between theoretical framework and gathered data in which "theorist seeks to recognize the relationship between the constitution of their propositions and the social context in

which they find themselves" (May 2011:38). Practice theory is used to recognise the patterns of PI in real-life situation, so the data produced on the field can inform possibilities for PI in planning, especially through giving propositions for planning processes and consultations that are complementary to those in communicative planning theory.

## 3.2 Research Approach – Case Study Design

The rationale for choosing case study research derives from the general aim – to explore how practice theory might illuminate collaboration and participation in planning. A case study tends to be 'holistic' rather than deal with 'isolated factors', it enables a researcher to discover how the many parts affect one another, to get to know about relationships and processes within social settings, how they are interconnected and interrelated (May, 2011; Bryman, 2012). Therefore, this method is relevant for exploring the elements that comprise practices and the links between them. Dedicating all available time and efforts to investigation of a particular case offers "greater opportunity to delve into things in more detail and discover things that might not have become apparent through more superficial research" (Denscombe, 2010:53). Thus, the ability of a researcher to focus on a particular practice allowed the investigation of theoretical arguments in situ. Additionally, through learning, construction, discovery and problem-solving in a case study, "a greater concern is with the practical application of findings" (May 2011:225), which resonates in the aim of this research to inform planning processes about appropriating material forms of public engagement.

Previous empirical studies mostly relate to practice theory in order to explain consumption patterns or use as a complex and dynamic phenomenon (Kuijer, 2013). Researches have been using this approach to either analyse current practices (e.g. family cruise practices, iPod use, bathing, hair care), or their desirable evolution. Future practices have been explored by 'interfering': provoking routinized behaviour to reach consciousness, designing exercises for participants that use practice elements, integrating new elements in daily routines or doing experiments. These methods are very similar to co-creation principles, where division between researcher's and participant's role is blurred (Section 2.1). Therefore, most of these studies use observations as a method for

gathering data, usually supplemented with interviews with the observed, or in cases of private practices (such as bathing) – in depth interviews in peoples own homes, and with self-observation (Kuijer, 2013). Similarly, in this research, R-Urban is explored as a case (a single organisation) of PI in sustainable urban practices. The research is conducted using an ethnographic approach; participant observation is complemented with semi-structured interviews. The following sections will elaborate on reasoning behind making these research design choices.

### 3.2.1 Case Study Selection

The choice of a particular case was not based on the possibility of generalisation of findings, but on the analytic generality and logic that it can provide regarding the research question. Generalizable conclusions are later produced through theoretical reasoning:

> "the aim is particularisation – to present a rich portrayal of a single setting to inform practice, establish the value of the case and/or add to knowledge of a specific topic" (Simons 2009, as cited in May 2011:224)

Therefore, the case selected is an *extreme instance* (Denscombe, 2010); R-Urban is chosen as a polygon for learning, understanding and illumination of material settings as sites of PI; it represents a case of an active experimentation with what could be viewed as a possible future practice. The generalisation would refer to relating research findings to PI in planning practices.

The case selection process included online research of current consultation processes in different local planning authorities, social innovation websites, Nesta's reports on governance innovation, research on Google of the terms such as 'public involvement' and 'co-creation in cities'. It was informed by the consultation with several Urbact experts that work with innovative local authorities, organisers of "Funding Cooperative City" project, and university supervisors. Finally, the case was selected based on the following criteria:

1. the use of different materials for PI and co-creation;
2. the diversity of publics and institutions involved;
3. the possibility of exploring the case by taking *the practice* as the smallest unit of analysis;
4. relations to the urban realm and/or spatial planning.

R-Urban's attributes that were accessible prior to the site visit clearly indicated the existence of the elements of a proto-practice. The process of building an anaerobic digester was the example of an object interlinked with sustainable urban living (meanings), through which participants were learning and developing new skills (competences). It involved energy experts, designers, architects, artists, academia, development agency, residents from the immediate area and wider public. It was also relatively easy accessible due to the facts that organised workshops were open to anyone interested.

Besides the criteria related to research question, practical issues played an important role in choosing the case, especially concerning very limited time for conducting the actual field work. Participatory projects usually happen over a long period of time – locating a project that was in its active phase proved to be a true challenge. Additionally, the site is located in East London and was therefore relatively easy to travel to.

### 3.2.2 Ethnographic Approach

An ethnographic approach has been applied mainly for the strong viewpoint derived from practice theory related research, that practices can be 'hidden' behind routinized behaviour and that carriers of practice are not necessarily conscious of their embodied actions. Ethnographic research provides rich and detailed descriptions of real-life situations as they really are since the ethnographer experiences the life as being part of the community (May, 2011; Bryman, 2012; Denscombe, 2010). The researcher attended the R-Urban public workshop about building the anaerobic digester, and approached the main organiser who became a 'gatekeeper'. He introduced the researcher in a subtle way to the other participants without many details (in order to avoid disrupting the situation by researcher's presence), and he informed the researcher about the further activities. Ethnography enabled direct observation and contact with relevant people and places, holistic approach to processes and relationships behind the surface of events, understanding of actors' perceptions of the events, as well as putting all activities and situations into a wider context. It also produced detailed data on intricate and subtle

realities (especially related to the role of materials) that would be missed if only interviews were used as a method. The following section will explain the methods used to produce data.

## 3.3 Methods

Methods that were used for data production were participant observation and semi-structured interviews, with the intention to compensate the weaknesses in one method by strengths in another one. Participants were observed during two 'working weekends' , on April 16th -17th , and April 30th-May 1st, 2016. Most of the interviews were conducted during these four working days, depending on the availability of interviewees. The researcher joined on the weekends, as it is the dynamic of the organisation itself; participants meet every second weekend to work on the site.

### 3.3.1 Participant Observation

Data was collected directly, in the real-life situation, by working on the site as a participant – immersing in the social world that people experience, perceive and where they act according to their interpretations of that world (May, 2011). Participant observation may be defined as:

> "The process in which an investigator establishes a many-sided and relatively long-term relationship with a human association in its natural setting, for the purposes of developing a scientific understanding of that association" (Lofland and Lofland 1984, as cited in May 2011:166).

The observation happened over four days, approximately eight hours per day. Participants were observed as 'carriers' of a practice so the focus was on the elements (materials, meanings, competences) and their links. The emphasis was on *what people do* and *how they do it*:

> "[participant observation] does not rely on what people *say* they do, or what they *say* they think. It is more direct than that. Instead, it draws on the direct evidence of the eye to witness events at first hand" (Denscombe, 2010:196).

A prime reason for choosing this method is that the information about the practice itself could have remained hidden as an embodied subconscious activity, if the

participants were asked directly about it – 'under the microscope'. The assumption turned out to be right, that people found it difficult to speak about something that abstract as what they think about the things they do. Interviews revealed the reasoning and different ideologies behind their participation in the project, but the inner dynamic and the direct contact with the material setting was only revealed in the direct observation.

The research was overt – the identity of a researcher was known. However, since the gatekeeper introduced a researcher without giving many details, and the researcher was working on the site constantly, participants did not feel observed. The researcher took over a more passive role without expressing opinions or attracting attention in order to minimise disruptions to the natural setting and to be able to see things as they usually occur (Denscombe, 2010). In like manner, the photographs were taken before the participants would arrive on the site or in the situations when participants themselves were taking photos so it would look natural. It was not difficult to immerse in the community since the group is diverse in terms of age, sex and ethnicity, and also – the role and the setting were common to the researcher. However, since there is certainly an element of interpretation, a short reflection will be given in the end of this chapter on how researcher's biography, values and experiences might have influenced the nature of the study, as a prism through which the data was probably (subconsciously) filtered (Denscombe, 2010).

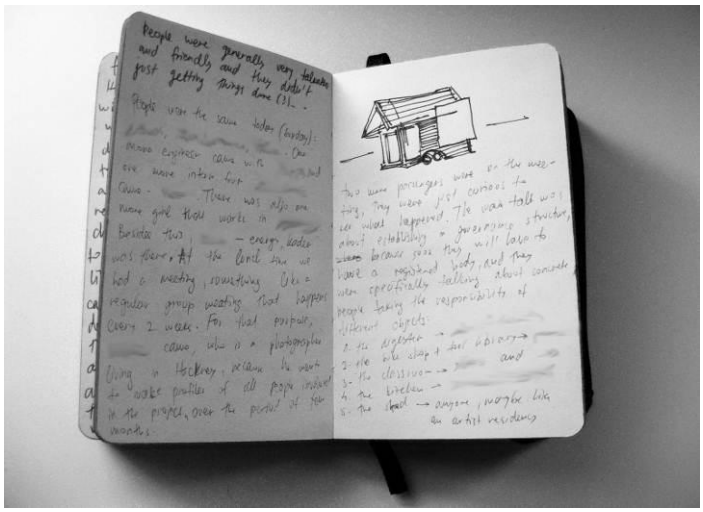

Figure 9. Small notebook for making ethnographic records (*Note: names are blurred due to the research ethic*).

Before the observation occurred, a list of things that should be observed was made in the small (easy to put in the pocket and look at, avoiding 'researcher' appearance) field

notebook (Appendix 1). The list served to prioritise the situations to be observed, regarding the research question. During the day, the researcher would remind herself to check the list, and therefore keep attention focused on the relevant things. This proved to be very useful in keeping the researcher away from losing sight of the original purpose of the observation, and from focusing on the actual physical work being – of "going native" (Denscombe, 2010). The first day researcher observed everything, taking "the grand tour", after which the analysis of the field data compiled from participant observation served to discover questions for the next observation (Spradley, 1980).

The researcher was aware of the challenge of *selective memory*, which is why the ethnographic records were always written just after the day was finished (Figure 9). Ethnographic records comprise of the descriptions of what was happening, as well as records of researcher's own experiences. Photographs and interviews helped to activate the field experience afterwards. Interviews with participants also helped in overcoming the *selective perception* – tendency to interpret things based on the previous experiences of the researcher.

### 3.3.2 Semi-structured Interviews

Interviews were conducted with eight individuals, five of which were participating in the project, two project organisers and one councillor for the area (Table 5). The main objective was to approach as many participants as possible, in order to understand their point of view and experience in R-Urban. Interviews were conducted with participants who came to the site at least twice, since the history of their involvement, as well as their understanding of the project was important. After meeting the participants during the workshops, it was much easier to arrange the interviews. The Gatekeeper provided the researcher with several more contacts of people who actively participated in the past but the researcher did not manage to reach them.

| Interviewee | Description |
|---|---|
| Participant A | Regular participant; involved in the project for one year |
| Participant B | Regular participant; involved in the project for six months |
| Participant C | Regular participant; involved in the project for nine months |
| Participant D | Occasional participant; involved in the project for three months |
| Participant E | Regular participant; involved in the project for a month |

| | |
|---|---|
| Organiser A | Architect, director and lecturer; designer and manager of the project since the beginning (2008) |
| Organiser B | Part of LEAP project, a cross-sector partnership developing cost effective micro anaerobic digestion for urban applications; involved in the project since the beginning of the anaerobic digester design, about a year ago |
| Councillor | Local government consultant (Labour party), Hackney Wick councillor |

Table 5. Interviewee profiles.

Interviews gave insight into complex and subtle phenomena, such as people's opinions, feelings, emotions and experiences. Participants could expand on their ideas, point of view on the things they are doing, and identify what they perceive as crucial (Denscombe, 2010; Bryman, 2012). Semi structured, one-to-one interviews were conducted following the interview guide (Appendix 2) informed by the themes recognised in the literature review. A clear list of issues was addressed but in a flexible order and extended, depending on the interviewee. People are making sense of their social worlds in different ways and it was very important for this research to discover how different interviewees see and understand their involvement in R-Urban. Moreover, since the researcher had time to first observe the group, it helped to make more informed decision about the choice of methods. The group of participants was very diverse in terms of age, ethnicity, education and the level of English proficiency. One-to-one interviews enabled the conversation to flow in pace and dynamic adjusted to the particular interviewee, which is why this method was preferred instead of focus groups or group interviews. The effect of a researcher on the interviewees was minimised because people already get to know the researcher through the work on the project.

### 3.3.3 Data Analysis

All interviews were transcribed, read several times and coded around themes and issues. Participant observation focused on social situations, that were described in ethnographic records and defined through patterns of behaviour, artefacts and knowledge. Those smaller units were grouped in cultural domains, as basic parts of a culture. At this stage, interviews were read again and correlated with ethnographic analysis. Further on, different relationships were discovered among cultural domains through the process of *taxonomic analysis* (Spradley, 1980). Taxonomic analysis helped to discover relationships between social situations that were further thought through the conceptual framework (Section 2.5). Complete taxonomy is presented in Appendix 4.

## 3.4 Limitations of the Methodology Used

Methodology was designed to answer the research questions, and it is important to note the limitations inherent in each of the choices made. The degrees of bias and subjectivity are the main critique of the ethnographic approach in general, but also of the case studies, participant observation and immersion in the field (May, 2011). Validity and reliability of the research might be brought into question if the research produces common-sense instead of scientific knowledge, stand-alone descriptions and story-telling. Therefore, it is important to indicate that the researcher had these limitations in mind prior to starting the field work process. Coherent theoretical framework, as well as similar research done in the field served to avoid the possible influence of the researcher's self. Participant observation was complemented by interviews, which introduced different points of view. In this regard, especially important was the interview with Hackney Wick councillor (C.A), whose opinion was independent from the whole practice and who provided strategic and critical perspective. Therefore, interview content was "checked against other interviews to see if there is some level of consistency" (Denscombe, 2010:189). Further on, in order to increase research validity, a short biography of the researcher is provided in in the end of this chapter. This has a purpose to make the researcher and the reader aware of the possible ways in which data interpretation could have been influenced.

In terms of access to data sources, it was important to approach the Gatekeeper and to be able to enter the community as a participant. Previous experiences of the researcher proved to be very useful in taking up this role.

The research was limited in both the amount of time available for the conduction of the research, and the amount of space made available for the research findings. Time on site is very important for participant observation, since it is needed to gain participants' trust and insights beyond the researcher's presumptions (Denscombe, 2010).

The fact that everything was happening at one location – the working site – had its positive and negative impacts upon the research. It was positive that interviewees were not distributed widely across a large geographical area. However, since it was a working

site, the interviews happened either during the lunch break or after working hours. For that reason, one interview had to be conducted via phone call; another one happened at the same time as a meeting of the group that might have been important for understanding the group dynamics. This limitation was dealt with spontaneously, depending on the situation. For example, one of the interviews was conducted while walking – the researcher offered to a participant to walk him home, because he didn't have time to stay.

Apart from all limitations related to validity and reliability of data gathered, the researcher has experienced the constraint that is rarely discussed in the literature – being an academic made gaining people's trust very difficult. Probably due to the bad research practice in general, participants and interviewees perceived academic research as exploitation of their time and practice, that never gives anything in return. The interview with the councillor particularly stressed this point; he noted that many 'researchers' come to speak with him, and that he never hears back from them afterwards. In order to give something back to the community, the researcher held a short talk in the end of the field work (so it doesn't influence the data), about similar practices. Additionally, the presentation of the findings to the participants will be organised upon the termination of the analysis.

## 3.5 Research Ethics

Special attention was made to approach the research in an ethical manner. The research was conducted in accordance with Cardiff University Code of Conduct, in a way that:

> "- protects the interests of the participants;
> - ensures that participation is voluntary and based on informed consent;
> - avoids deception and operates with scientific integrity;
> - compiles with the law of the land" (Denscombe, 2010:331).

The research did not cause any harm to the participants. A consent form (Appendix 3) was explained and given to the participants prior to the interview, where each interviewee understood and agreed that the interview data will be used for research purposes, will be anonymous and will be recorded. Since the participant observation was overt, participants

were able to make informed decision about their involvement. Therefore, there was no any invasion of privacy or deception. Participants were all treated anonymously in the writing up of the research.

## 3.6. Researcher's Background

This section will briefly reflect on how researcher's biography, values and experiences might have affected the study itself, in order to strengthen its validity. It is written in the first person and it will be used for alleviating experimenter bias.

I come from a country (Serbia) where PI usually happens in informal ways, rather than formal. Culturally, people are used to rely on collaboration due to numerous systematic crisis. As explained at the very beginning of this thesis, my interest in this topic is very personal and therefore biased. I believe that there is greater involvement and communication beyond language and procedural barriers. Additionally, my architectural education made me sensitive to the role of objects and spaces in people's everyday life and created acceptance to their active presence in social settings.

# Chapter Four – Case Study Introduction

Chapter Four will briefly introduce R-Urban project and its context. It aims to present the environment in which the data was gathered, especially because the focus of the later analysis will be on the inner structure of the practice.

R-Urban project is located in London Borough of Hackney, in the Olympic Park area. Hackney is in 10% most deprived areas in the UK and was the eleventh most deprived local authority overall in England in the 2015 Index of Multiple Deprivation (Hackney Policy Team, 2016), mainly because of the big economic (and social) polarisation. It is an area of contrasts: on one side social housing and deprivation, and on the other rapid development and Olympic legacy. Westfield Stratford City, which is the third-largest shopping centre in the UK, is in 10 minutes walking distance from the R-Urban site (Figure 10). Employment rate is amongst the lowest in the UK; it has a higher proportion of social housing than London as whole; crime rates are high (Hackney Council, 2008). It is a very ethnically diverse borough, with significant 'Other White', Black and Turkish communities (Hackney Policy Team, 2016).

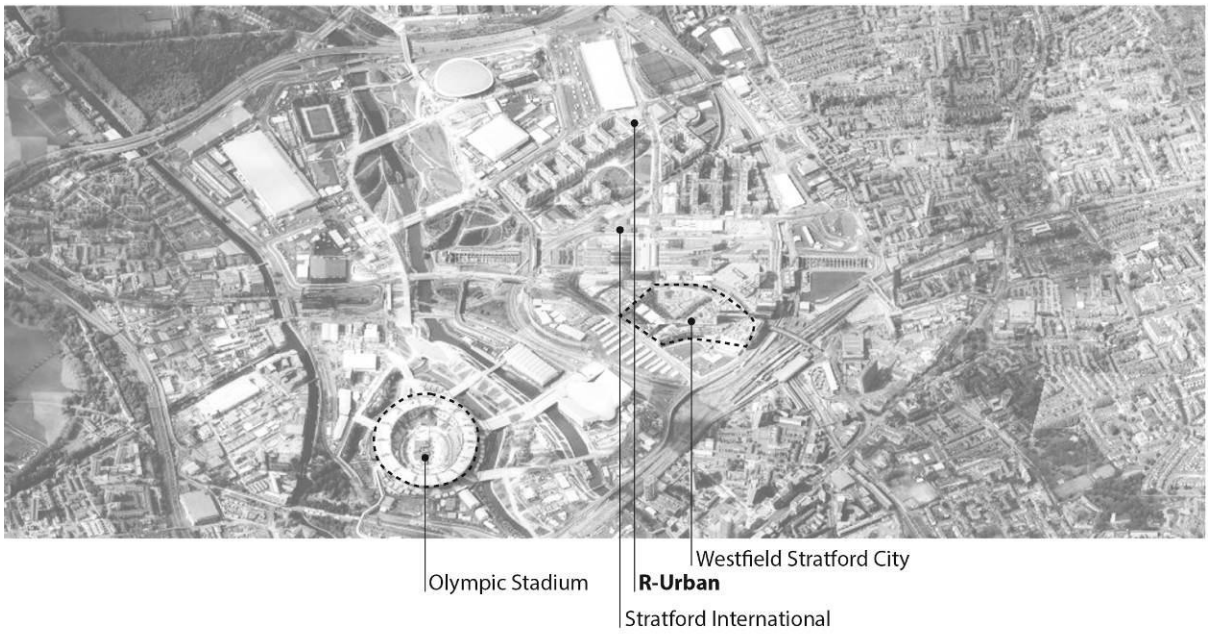


Figure 10. Location (source: author's own).

R-Urban is set up on a temporary-use site, as part of the London Legacy Development Corporation agenda. The project began in 2008 as set of events and mobile structures (e.g. Wick on Wheels that organised community collaboration workshops around the neighbourhood). The current phase started after getting the permission to use the construction site plot from September 2015 until December 2016.


Figure 11. R-Urban (as part of Mobile Garden City together with the urban garden) pictures the contrast of the whole area: village-like structures surrounded by monotonous block apartments and tower cranes (all photographs are author's own).

It is a pilot project that aims to create "new public recycling facility centred around ecological and eco-construction principles while exploring issues around mobile urbanism and reversible use of vacant urban sites" (R-Urban, 2016). In the core of the project is a collective and participatory process for establishing a new practice in the neighbourhood. It tries to engage residents to completely take over the facilities in the future. It builds a network of local initiatives and expertise, academia (UCL Energy Institute), cross-sector partnerships (LEAP), international agents (AAA France – Studio for Self Managed Architecture), and different organisations, groups and actors. The process is led by the design and architecture office *Public Works*, and *LEAP – Local Energy ADventure Partnership* who is in charge of the design of anaerobic digestion system. The site is independently shared with urban garden led and organised by Groundwork (NGO).

Currently, it involves a group of people (some new, some regular) that gather on site voluntarily every second weekend to participate and contribute to building an anaerobic digester and several complementary functions – a community café-kitchen, classroom, bike shop (among other peculiar objects). The idea is to build community

space “from scratch” that will use energy produced by anaerobic digestion of food waste and the vegetables from the garden. This research aimed to get to know participants and their motivation to come to the site and work on something so demanding and abstract, innovative and advanced.

As explained in Chapter Three, this project is chosen as a case study because of its participatory process that makes use of different materials to engage public around the articulation of urban issues. Its characteristics will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

# Chapter five – Discussion and Analysis

Chapter Five[1] discusses and analyses the empirical data in order to answer the research question. The analysis will explain the causes of events, processes and relationships within R-Urban, led by the conceptual framework explained in the Section 2.5.

Data is collected and analysed under four headings. First, the identification of elements of a practice introduces the whole social setting. Second, the profile of participants as "carriers" of practice is analysed. Third, the links between the elements are being investigated by using the concepts of interactivity and experiment presented in Chapter Two. The analysis ends with discussing the ecology of practices – ways of mobilising carriers around certain practices, and relates it to the concept of creative governance and spatial strategy-making (see Chapter Two).

## 5.1 Recognising Elements

This section analyses the elements of R-Urban, categorising them according to practice theory. It starts with explaining materials that were used on the site, and continues with competences that participation in this project demands from participants. Finally, meanings associated to participation in R-Urban are exposed.

### 5.2.1 Materials

Every communication process takes on different tools to channel the specific ideas or concepts. This cultural scene is not a round table or solely one small group of interested people. At first glance, the scene looks like a construction site: five shipping containers and different tools scattered around the plot (drills, saws, screwdrivers, hammers, masks, gloves…), amongst which people are doing different types of physical work.

[1] In the following section, references will be made to interviewees by using codes. Therefore, if the interview with the participant A is mentioned, it will be cited in the following manner: P.A:36, where the number indicates the number of the interview line. Interview with organiser will be marked with O.A, and with the councillor C.A.

Some containers are in the completion phase; *Bike Shop* is finished and *Tool Library* is installed inside. It looks cared for, tools are neatly organised on the walls, and there is always someone repairing his/her bike together with ***P.C.*** *Wick Shop* is also completed; it is a little shed on wheels that contains a variety of objects and publications about the history and transformation of the whole area.

The most active work happens around the container in which the *micro anaerobic digester* (AD) is getting installed: people are working on its mechanical and electrical system, metal structure that holds the gas reservoir, wooden trusses as a support structure for photovoltaics and the production of drawings and schemes for AD design manual. It gives the impression of complicated technology, it looks useful, exciting, smart and necessary for future oriented thinking.

Figure 12. Inside and outside the AD container.

*Classroom* container is in the process of transformation, its roof and wall are being cut to enable future use; it is a place of experimentation and imagination (for future ways and reasons for using it). "*Kitchen*" container serves as a tools storage, that will be transformed into café-kitchen in the next phase. It is interesting how strongly containers are connected with their meanings and future purpose; it is very hard to describe them only as physical materials, mainly because none of the participants perceives them that way.

Finally, there are two tables between the containers, around which chairs from the storage room (Kitchen) are being set up every day. The rest of the plot is an *urban garden*, composed of plants in raised beds, food waste containers, tables with holes for gardening workshops and a mini polytunnel.

Everything on the site is re-used, from shipping containers to wooden pieces. Most of the material is collected from the development plot nearby, some specific things for the AD are donated, and only a few were bought. Everything seems known and ordinary; it is the association with competences and meanings that gives the importance to the whole setting.

### 5.2.2 Competences

At one level, R-Urban is primarily a place of physical work: painting, carpentry, metal work, gardening and cleaning. Some activities are very difficult to perform, such as cutting the metal wall of a container with a specific machine, and they are performed by someone who has experience and skills to do it, or they are usually done by a specific person as in the case of making the electrical system for the AD. However, anyone who is interested to see and learn how the particular thing is done can simply join and help with the specific task. There are also activities that are extremely easy to do such as cutting the waterproof tape with scissors to fill the holes on the roof, or cutting the wood and assembling the wooden fence. Notably, these activities are so diverse in level of difficulty and duration, that there is something for anyone who comes to the site.

At another level, R-Urban is not about building at all, but about communicating. It is a place where people come to hear about different ideas about cities (lectures), learn about do-it-yourself and re-use techniques (workshops); it is a place where people communicate between themselves in different ways and for different reasons. Participants are giving instructions one to another, asking for help, giving ideas for new uses or ways of doing (planning). When an important decision needs to be made, people (all or a few involved at the time) gather to discuss next steps. When a newcomer enters the site, regular participants are explaining the whole project to them briefly or in a tour, or they give them the instructions for a particular activity.

Tea and lunchtime are the only instances when participants meet all together, so they are occasions for discussing the most important things in a very casual way. The day starts with a "tea session" where a plan for the day is being discussed. Lunch is always on the site; ***O.A*** usually buys ingredients that are shared amongst participants. After the completion of Kitchen container, vegetables from the garden and gas produced in AD will be used for making food.


Figure 13. Lunchtime on the working site.

Even though none of the participants would explain it in this way, R-Urban is a place where different people come to discuss the importance of alternative ways of waste management and concrete steps for their implementation, about energy challenges, citizen responsibilities, environmental concerns and sustainability agendas. Communication happens spontaneously; willingness to learn and communicate is the only prerequisite for joining R-Urban. There is variety of skills that can be further developed, from understanding urban development and assembling sitting stool, to controlling the temperature in AD and constructing wooden joints for trustees. However, the most important is to know how to ask for help and to know how to help. Next section will look more closely into the meanings that participants give to these materials and activities.

### 5.2.3 Meanings

Meanings that participating in R-Urban has for different people can be roughly divided in five categories: learning, health, socialisation, personal values (normative reasons) and convenience.

First, there are people who are interested in design ("[I want] to build a house for myself at some point" [P.C:19]) or technology (energy). Some practitioners expressed admiration towards organisers' work ethic ("making connections with people that are doing this professionally" [P.C:22]; "I want to get a sense of well being, working like this" [P.E:24]). Those interested in technology are mostly drawn by AD: its positive environmental causes, generation of energy and techniques of building their own digester to be able to live off grid. AD is seen as a way to learn how to reduce waste and food miles, lessen the negative effect of human existence and to teach future generation by example of living as part of the natural ecosystem:

> "People come here on their own accord, on their own time, not being paid. Because they believe in something… in different way of living, different way of… system, and different paradigm. And I feel, what I felt for 10-15 years, that the way we living doesn't make much sense, we are living on a finite planet, with finite resources. Yet, we are presenting this infinite, we are pretending that we can infinitely grow" [P.C:137].

Some practitioners come to the site as part of their official education and employment; it gathers students from product design and architecture that do their professional placements, photographers, filmmakers. Some practitioners see it as an opportunity to learn different things for free to enter the job market, or to create self employment possibilities by forming a social enterprise.

Second, many people come for health reasons, both mental and physical. It is a physical activity after which they "feel stronger" [P.A:172]. Participating in R-Urban works as a therapy, it helps with socialisation, enables self-improvement outside one's comfort zone [P.B], and brings happiness:

> "[W]e are mainly social animals, human being is a social animal. If you see all this elderly people who has Alzheimer and physical… and depress… they are depressed because they lost their social life. And we need this life. If people are coming and doing activity outside, relate to other people, we keep our health in a very good condition" [P.B:54].

Third, social reasons for coming to the site include meeting with people, being part of a team and building something together – learning to share and relate to others. As already noted, for some R-Urban is a place for networking, to meet experts in different

fields and learn from them for free. The most important reason, heard from almost all participants is that in this place they feel included; they feel as being part of the society, fighting alienation and separation, "connecting outside one's culture" [P.B]. None of the participants interviewed took part in official consultation meetings or similar, exactly for this reason – they do not feel local, either because they are foreigners living in London (even if it is for nine years already) or because they frequently change their address:

> "I basically believe that this has to be for locals that live many years in the neighbourhood and (you know) they have their opinion, strong opinion about the… Me, as a young person, not experienced in the council, going there and trying to put my opinion… Maybe it would be useful but probably not" [P.A:224].

Fourth, interestingly, is that people connect engagement in R-Urban with personal values. For some it is connected to faith, for others it is about being a better person: productive, non-consumeristic, helping a community project. Participants also mention the importance of the project for the future, especially making a good example "for the children of the future", being able to teach others and "see people around me improving their life based on something that I have done" [P.B:111]. Also, the pleasure of the work itself appears as an essential motive: to use hands, get dirty, and see and celebrate achievements:

> "I like to work with my hands and I also like for this particular project for example I like the… how we can prove to people that, you know… you can… basically we prove, you know – a cycle of life" [45]… "Makes me happy. So, when I go back at home and I'll say 'I did something today, I did something good, I did something productive, I designed something'… it could be just I cut a piece of wood instead of sitting home and probably watching TV or eating crisps and getting heavier and fatter and [laugh]. Personally, for me, it makes me stronger as well because … I… You learn about yourself being with other people, and see how people react with your movements and how you do stuff… maybe you think you are the best engineer but once you come here and start doing things, you start seeing that you're basically wrong" [171]… "My strong skill is not talking, my strong skill is making. So, I'm not a person that would do a presentation, I am the person that prepare the presentation " [P.A:220].

Lastly, for some people it is just a convenient way to spend their free time, it is close where they live and free. Those are usually curious visitors that take a look at activities, and stay there for short periods of time. In the conversation with organiser ***O.B***,

different layers of engagement were discussed, and one of the reason for wanting to build a café is to open an activity for people who just want to spend some free time, because:

> "if it [engagement] is done well, then you get people who aren't necessarily interested in sustainability but they become exposed to it because they come along to eat and then they find out more about it" [O.B:130].

The seductive characteristic of a setting like this will be discussed later, but it is important to highlight that meanings that practitioners find in the practice like this go far beyond the technology and design of anaerobic digestion (Figure 14). The diversity of activities is purposely design to attract different publics.

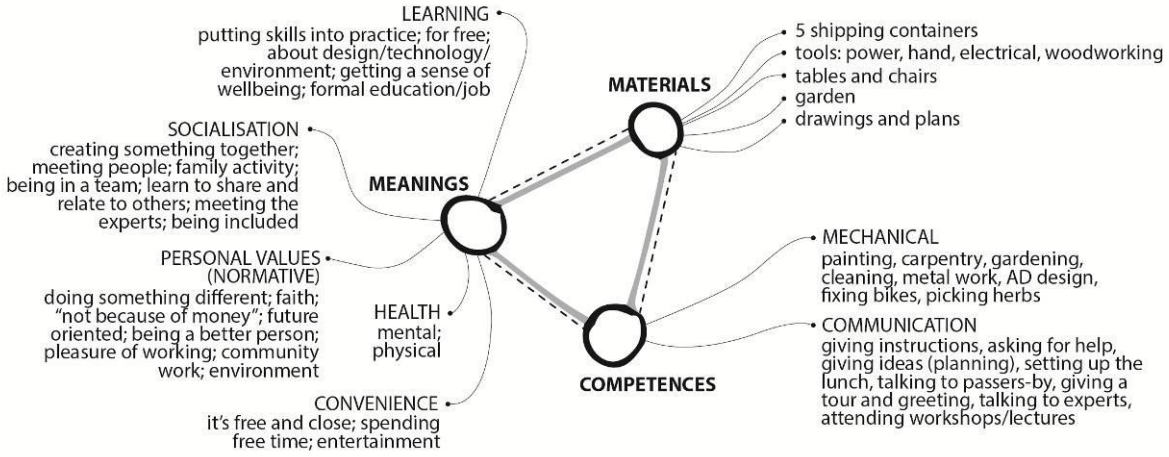


Figure 14. Materials, meanings and competences recognised in the case (note: for full categorisation, see Appendix 4).

Meanings that practitioners associate with this practice are more diverse than the range of materials and competences, especially if taking into consideration that none of the competences is necessary to have *a priori*. According to Shove and Pantzar (2005), practices are not simply groups of these three elements – what matters is the way in which the elements *fit together*. However, before discussing the links, it is necessary to analyse the profile of a "carrier" of this practice.

## 5.3 Who Is a Carrier?

A carrier of this practice (Shove et al., 2012a; Shove & Pantzar, 2005; Shove & Walker, 2010) can be anyone; it is someone who lives in the immediate area, someone

who lives in the other part of the city; a regular participant, newcomer, or just a passer-by (casual walker, cyclist, runner, tourist, a family). As already explained in the previous section, these people are interested in different things, from design and technology (urban and science writers, architecture and energy experts, photographers, artists, students, interns, electrical and mechanical engineers, academics, non-professionals), to personal ideologies and worries about the environmental challenges. They greatly differ in ethnic origin, age, gender and social status. There is no hierarchy in the process although people can have different approaches to it. The observation on the field revealed four rough categories of approaches that carriers might take: teachers, learners, workers, or companions.

*A teacher*, "handy neighbour", is someone "ordinary" who knows a lot about things that would solve any problem at any time. (S)he is stimulating and thought-provoking, ready to explain a task in a friendly way. (S)he can be a professional or an amateur. Different carriers take up this role at different times, depending how much they know about a task (problem); it is the opposite of a situation in which one teacher gives instructions to everyone, at the site practitioners learn from each other. *Learner* is a pro-active innovator and inventor, "non-standardised" explorer who is ready to learn, curious and dedicated. (S)he is enthusiastic, easily inspired and happy to talk about his/her experiences. *Worker,* on the other hand is someone who comes to R-Urban to work, who wants "to engage the other part of […] brain" [P.E:20], precise and concentrated. There is not a lot verbal communication going on, just the enjoyment of mechanical building activities. Finally, a *companion* is someone who wants to be in a team, funny, generous and talkative. There is also another type of companion, that is suspicious, indifferent and assertive – not all people come there in the good mood all the time. However, it is usual that carriers go through all those phases, and none of the phases give them less credit.

Figure 15. A carrier can be anyone.

This categorisation mirrors the link that carriers make between the elements. For example, sharing the knowledge on how to cut (competence) a metal container (material) is the "teacher's" way to contribute to the environment protection (meaning), or simple enjoyment of physical work (competence, material) makes a "worker" feel healthy (meaning). This means that there is no predetermined role for "carriers", opposite to consultation meetings where people are usually expected to act as deliberative teachers and learners. It is what makes the whole process open and inclusive. Diversity is a result of different emotions that motivate carriers to routinely reproduce the practice, to get involved over and over again. The quality of their experience is created through the links between the elements, to which we turn our attention next.

## 5.4 Identifying Links Between the Elements of Practice

After explaining everything that can be found on the site, activities, reasons for joining, and after building a profile of the carrier – this section will discuss the way in which five dirty and empty shipping containers are capable to involve such a diverse group of people around remarkably important environmental ideas (Figure 16).

Figure 16. How are the elements connected?

### 5.4.1 Interactivity

In Section 2.4.2, interactivity of the setting was defined as the level of participant's empowerment. Directly on the site, interactivity was observed through the way different things were explained among practitioners, and by the things used for involving people to participate.

Four different ways of explanations can be specified. First, different *graphical explanations* are used on the site: one big poster that illustrates the conceptualised scheme of the project, a manual that explains the experience in building AD that will be shared as an open source material, and different sketches and drawings in organisers' notebooks. The big poster is used frequently among different carriers, mainly for practical reasons, e.g. to show which part of roof goes where. It serves as a common drawing that anyone uses for describing. As explained in the Chapter Two, one of the challenges of interactive settings is that they can bring people to wrong conclusions due to the lack of

contextualisation and understanding of objects. Graphical explanations on the site were used exactly for mitigating this challenge.

Second, the way of explaining via *story-telling* is, usually, free of discrimination and paternalism. It is a funny and amusing way to explain complicated things in a friendly conversation. For example, ***P.A*** explained the process of anaerobic digestion through a comparison with cow's four stomachs, during a tea break. Interactivity empowers people through understanding, and story-telling is used here as a strategy for fighting barriers to equal power distribution (Arnstein, 1969). The one who has the knowledge, "the powerful", is using the format of a funny story to decrease the resistance to power distribution, so the "powerless" receives the knowledge in a very informal way. None of this is officially explained on the site – it is a result of the engagement and skills of a Mediator. In this case, that is the role of the organiser – ***O.A***. His skills and approach create the ambience that sets the 'rules' for communication. He is very knowledgeable, but this was seen only when his help and expertise were needed. Generally, he was relaxed, casual, friendly and spontaneously approachable. However, he doesn't perceive these skills as something distinguishable:

> "I don't know, it's… We've been doing kind of participatory work, socially engaged work since the beginning. So I think the skills set, if it's quite not so special [laugh]. I don't know if I would describe them as extra skills, but I think we try to keep process quite open, as long as we can" [O.A:55].

Participant observation revealed that his role is exceptionally important, mainly because of his interpersonal skills. This is one of the main challenges for dealing with material settings – how to train the personnel that would be able to ensure adequate communication, and ensure that the process is legitimate; how to *standardise* the role of a Mediator.

Third and fourth ways of explaining are the most common ones – explaining through *demonstration*, which will be analysed in the next section (Experiments), and *learning by doing*. In the interview, ***P.D*** told about his first day at R-Urban:

> "…it was one of these days…um… Saturday or Sunday, and they were welcoming, and they gave me a screwdriver, tell me what to screw and they made use of me [*laughing happily and proudly*]. And I was happy to take part in that [23]…It's so

> casual here, and ***O.A*** is giving jobs to people without really knowing whether they can do them or not" [P.D:102].

This social situation was observed many times, between different participants; after short explanation it is up to the participant to do the task, and to learn about it while doing it. It is a very high level of interactivity. As one of the important characteristics of interactivity, mentioned in Table 3, is the *concealment of expertise*, in which "the imagination and expertise of the ordinary citizen is worked with rather than contradicted by the voice of authority". This is again the skill of a Mediator. The researcher experienced this type of relation while working on different tasks during the observation period. Interactive devices are used to stimulate the agency towards the development of self-governing capacities of the citizen (Barry, 2001). Additionally, by empowering different practitioners to take over the role of a teacher, the number of 'human explainers' grows, and the process of inclusion of newcomers becomes much easier and faster. As mentioned before, learning and explaining are not the responsibilities of a Mediator – practitioners learn from each other. However, the Mediator's approach creates this ambiance. During the field work, he would say to a researcher: "Can you go to collect the wood for the fence? Ask ***P.D*** to come along and tell him/her how to help you".

Figure 17. Learning by doing.

Playful and sharable tools were not the only things that were used to involve people in activities. For the newcomers and visitors, a *short tour* around the site served as a ceremony, a demonstration that involves casual explanation of complicated meanings. Making a plan together, such as brainstorming new ideas during the lunchtime about the future space use, makes practitioners to invest themselves more. These instances serve for channelling the *responsibility* – the more responsibility practitioners feel towards the materials (idea how to upgrade the roof of a container), meanings ('this is how I can help the environment') or competences ('only I know how to finish a specific task'), the stronger carriers they become, and it makes the routinisation of the practice faster. Responsibility is also shared in dealing with difficult tasks (Figure 18). These tasks trigger the evolution of different relationships in the group such as communication, collaboration and discussion. They also motivate the carrier by making her/him excited and curious.

Figure 18. One difficult task: how to lift the roof structure on a container?

The interactivity expressed through different ways of involving people to participate directly results from design. Additionally, the design of an AD system itself is conceptualised as interactive, open source project: "we are offering it as a kind of kit of parts and the engineer enables participants to assemble it" [O.B:60]. However, since interactivity (as defined in Chapter Two) is an instrument of power diffusion, great dependence on "designer's"[2] skills has serious implications for democracy. Expressing the

[2] A person or a group who has conceptualized and organised the practice in terms of the whole process, not only the material part

power of an individual can result in manipulation of framing and contextualisation of urban issues, thus putting in question the accountability of these practices.

***O.A*** has also expressed conscious dealing with another challenge, the one of 'false interaction':

> "what I don't like often about these projects that are just facilitating use rather than people getting productive within it; and that's something we are trying to balance a bit" [123].

It can be related to the limitations of interactivity explained in Chapter Two – using the concept of "interactivity" without really performing it, the situation of "public window dressing". In R-Urban, the Mediator is aware of this limitation, and he is consciously trying to engage people to become carriers using design as a tool. But, how to make sure that this will be the case in all practices? How to rely on intangible skills and normative judgements of a Mediator? As noted before, one of the strategies used in the interactive museums is constant feedback and surveillance – but, how feasible is it in the planning context? This will be discussed later; before that we turn to the role of experiments in R-Urban.

### 5.4.2 Experiments

The R-Urban project is an experiment as a whole; it is a pilot project examining the feasibility of anaerobic digestion at the small scale, in a dense urban context. Things that are being investigated are both technical (the design of AD system; supporting environmental objectives), and social (the opportunities that the establishment of community enterprise would generate for the neighbourhood). It is also an experiment of future sustainable living, as explained by ***P.B***:

> "We people learn… 70% of our knowledge is coming from example. We follow examples, we are more easy to be convinced by the example rather than word. For that reason, if we build something, we include the children to see how it's… teaching the children of the future. They will be more easy to integrate and to improve their world, to fix things that are wrong. All this, the idea of this project is not about the people today, it's about the people of tomorrow, which obviously they are today, but they are childrens today" [101].

This example demonstrates the "relation of dependency" that is created between the AD (object of experiment) and ***P.B*** (public), because practitioners are the ones who are active in the accommodation of new ideas (see Section 2.4). Building AD is creating new meanings, making and breaking the links between the elements of a practice; AD is introducing a new knowledge to society, making public familiar with alternative ways of waste management in a very direct way. The 'human scale' of the practice – interest in people's everyday challenges, and the use of familiar things (such as construction with re-used materials, learning how to use a screwdriver or fix a bike) serve as mediators of social, political and moral relations, thus participating in the reconfiguration of a practice.

The organisation and design of the setting activate *the body* in several ways. Its playfulness is reflected in unusual tables and chairs scattered around the site, different tools that invite for use, containers that are in the state of constant change (Figure 19). Thus, people are playing while working and it makes the whole atmosphere open and inviting. The variety of activities, as well as lectures and workshops (e.g. making furniture by using recycled plastic bottles as joints) add to this ambience. Everything is made to be as accessible as possible, from raised beds with planters (so they can be used by people in wheelchairs and children) to AD illustrated manual. Its design engages people's senses.

Figure 19. Some of the playful elements.

The fact that the site is exotic in a way stimulates visitors to stop by. It looks as an "exhibition" of something unusual. For example, ***O.A*** has said about the Wick Shop:

> "people come and see it and they consume it sometimes when it was open regularly, they consume it on an interesting kind of level – 'oh, that's novel, you cannot buy it'" [O.A:131]

***O.A*** also noted that having the site is of great importance for involvement – the fact that people can relate to it brings people together and makes them invest themselves more and more easily [O.A:102]. Having a site is also a way to stimulate other groups of people to experiment, by providing them facilities for conversation and gathering. This is in line with the findings from Rydin & Natarajan (2015), that the setting itself plays great role in the engagement.

Besides being an experiment itself, R-Urban also organises different public experiments in form of events. One of them was the attempt to use biogas for cooking, an event for domestication of new energy knowledge:

> "we made this big event about cooking from the garden, using biogas to demonstrate. And that was quite busy. And it was nice. I mean, it didn't work, we ended up using other gas, but even that was fine" [O.A:196].

According to ***P.A***, R-Urban "brings life" in the area. In this way, the whole neighbourhood can become an engaging place, where public is mobilised around certain issues and concepts. R-Urban, as an experiment, can be seen as a format for making anaerobic digestion public, and publicly available. It succeeded in mobilising publics to re-think waste management (among many other things), to facilitate and transmit a very peculiar issue.

Finally, the main objective of R-Urban is not the experiments per se. The seductive characteristics of an experiment are meant to have greater purpose:

> "although we are working with a specific technology, one of the other maintenances is this intangible sense of community. And trying to rebuild that kind of level of connection between people. I think that for me that's the core of it. The technology is a good hook, it's got a little bit of excitement, it's a bit more complex than maybe composting and it's very environmentally friendly if you do it in a right way. But to use it to bring people together… is I think a real objective to me" [O.B:256].

Thus, experiments are used as "a good hook", to engage people and facilitate interventions in the evolution of a practice – among materials, meanings and competences. They are used for domestication of new elements, for making them attractive and available to public. Yet, the experiment is only the starting point for

activities, since the practice develops only in routinized behaviour in which public is made of carriers of "certain routinized ways of understanding, knowing how and desiring" (Reckwitz, 2002:250).

### 5.4.3 The Way Elements Fit Together

As stated by Shove and Pantzar (2005), in the reproduction of a practice, the most important thing is how elements fit together. Different publics are getting engaged on R-Urban site in the activities that are not standardised in any sense, associating the meanings with what they do and what they see around them. This 'fit' which cannot be explained by categorisation of materials, meanings and competences, might be exposed in different ways of understanding the working site. When practitioners were asked in the interview to 'give an imaginary tour' of the site to the researcher, each explanation seemed as different project. For ***P.C***, "other than housing, we've got everything to have *a mini community*" [225], including food, energy, education, arts and transport; (s)he explained it as an opposite to Westfield shopping centre, which is "the largest kind of bastion of capitalistic excess". ***P.E*** explained it as a *working site*: "there are five shipping containers, one cabin on a twin axe trailer which is a museum… oh… two dozens raised planters with various crops… really pretty shed toilet that doesn't work…ummm… and a lot of dirt; and a lot of hard work; a lot of people working together" [92]. ***P.A*** said that for her/him, the site is like a *big bucket* where everyone brings life and that is how the life in the neighbourhood is being protected. For ***P.D*** it is just a group of objects, but for ***P.B*** these objects form a complete ecosystem in which every container represents an element: dynamics of nature (Bike Shop), learning and interconnectivity (Classroom), energy for the mind (Kitchen) and the minimiser of a negative human effect (AD). Thus, mini community, working site, big bucket, group of objects or an ecosystem – the fit depends on the right constellation of elements, depending on a carrier of practice. The reason why that this particular setting works for this particular set of people seems to be manifold: carriers want to feel accepted, useful, to learn for free outside the official system; their meanings are connected with the contemporary uncertainties of the urban world – unemployment and environmental challenges. As presented in Figure 14, meanings that carriers associate with R-Urban are very diverse, and it seems greatly important for reaching different

audiences. Even though the list of materials and activities is not as long, they manage to raise different motivations, which is recognised as their important characteristics. This multiplicity of perceptions is a basis of a planning project, and according to Healey (2007) it is crucial for generating creative synergy in which "power to" (power as a generative force) is capable to mobilise and suppress attention to specific projects (Section 2.1). Next section will discuss this co-existence of practices, and the formation of ecology of practices.

## 5.5 Ecology of Practices

Practices cannot be observed as isolated entities; R-Urban is not only a practice of building an AD, but one of the practices in *ecology of practices* with which it co-exist or against which it competes. Besides giving the permission to use the space, London Legacy Development Corporation is not involved in any form of governance with R-Urban, as well as Hackney as a local authority. The councillor of Borough of Hackney (***C.A***) has made a clear distinction between planning and community development saying that:

> "it's a legacy of the way that we see planning fundamentally as land use planning of assigning different uses to an area for the long term and not about how you organise a community in a broader sense of the word"[25]…"so, there is a big disconnect in all sorts of ways between what people's everyday concerns are and the long term perspective of planning" [35]… "one of the reasons we have a bigger problem getting people involved in the planning issues is because it doesn't address the issues that people have in front of them" [238].

This example reflects the traditional approach to PI which defines publics in discursive, linguistic and procedural terms. On the contrary, Marres & Lezaun (2011) define participation as co-articulation of public political activity with other domains of everyday practice. In this sense, practices like R-urban can give meaning to individual actions that are compatible with urban agendas, which seems as a way for stimulating specific behaviours and lifestyles; they facilitate the diffusion and marketing of the issues at stake. The previous comment of ***C.A*** can be used to position the PI of this type in the Healey's table of creative governance arenas (Figure 4). In this sense, PI seems as a *specific episode*, working outside the governance processes and cultures. Even though spatial strategy making can be developed outside formal arenas, and thus be capable to influence the "general culture" (in this case – the traditional approach to PI), it seems that its

dissemination and strength depend on the ability of official system to become open and supportive for these kind of spatial experiments and their specific outputs:

> "Therefore, these people can only survive for a certain period during the planning process. Once a planning process is completed and implementation… they will have to, they will be pushed out. So, the influence of these people is what I would call a certain urban innovation" [C.A:70].

Temporary-use agenda in the case of R-Urban has enabled a platform for its existence. However, it is only one of the mechanism that builds up the creative capacity of urban governance by opening new arenas and changing traditional governance culture. However, discussing this concept in detail is beyond the scope of this research, but will be indicated in the recommendation part of this thesis. According to ***C.A***, the main problem is that this dialogue between parties does not happen naturally; on the one side, people that work "on the ground" don't want to get involved with officialdom and, equally, policy makers in Hackney don't immediately see how they can use these concepts – they don't see those initiatives as part of their job. The same challenge was noted in the research of Rydin & Natarajan (2015): important limitation of materiality of public participation is its problematic linguistic translation into existing policy frameworks. Thus, materials seem only as complication for existing processes of planning. However, the question on how democratic the existing planning process really is, brings back the normative debate, as explained before. According to Healey (2004) the concept of creative governance is the endeavour to re-think government and governance. The added value of planning capable to acquire materials as tools for PI will be to facilitate a peculiar articulation of issues, as matters of public concern (Marres, 2007). This is a bi-directional process; materials need to relate to agency but also to the structure.

Besides the general openness of 'creative governance' (Healey 2004), there are also practical challenges when reconsidering PI as a number of practices. The articulation of practices through constant feedback and monitoring, as well as trained personnel has been mentioned before. There is also the issue of uneven coverage of these practices in different places (Healey 2015).

Finally, there is also the internal problem of competing practices – cohorts of carriers change all the time, dropping out and taking up. How to ensure that enough carriers will keep reproducing the practice? ***O.A*** has expressed this concern:

> "It's kind of from previous projects sometimes the motivation [of carriers] suddenly changes. There are people that are really interested in the establishing of it and when it's up and running there is another kind of audience comes in, takes along as users. But I'm kind of quite keen to learn that, between user and producer" [121].

R-Urban is not established as a practice, it is in the stage of proto-practice (Shove et al., 2012) and it is still impossible to predict its trajectory. That brings in the additional level of uncertainty. Carriers drop out, but it also happens that they become more invested in time:

> "Someone like ***P.B***, it's quite nice that (s)he kind of found it as a… ummm… I don't know as something (s)he's now planning… now is the moment suddenly when (s)he takes on the responsibility to try the next thing. We were standing there: "ok, we need this, we need this, can you organise it"… so suddenly (s)he's becoming proactive. And that's great" [O.A:222].

Materials, competences and meanings can attract different publics, but the whole process involves a lot of risks, both internally (how to ensure that carriers get invested), and externally (how to influence the 'creativity' of governance). The concluding chapter will summarise the main findings presented and discussed here, in order to answer the research question.

# Chapter Six – Conclusions and Recommendations

This thesis undertook the task to *explore how practice theory might help us to rethink collaborative and participatory practices, in order to contribute to the development of the interface between civil society and planning*. It explored material dimensions of PI in the case of sustainable urban practice of building an anaerobic digester in a dense urban area. The following section will relate findings exposed in Chapter Five to research question. Finally, the chapter ends with the reflections which identify lessons for future research.

## 6. 1 Conclusions

Sub-question 1:
**How different publics come to understand what is required by public involvement and what is their role in it?**

The diversity of participants seems to be a result of the diversity of meanings that they associate with their involvement, and different emotions that motivate them to get involved over and over again. Materials are very strongly connected with their meanings and future purpose; it is hard to describe them only in physical terms, mainly because none of the participants perceives them that way. Their use facilitates the creation of numerous activities aiming to attract different publics. They differ in level of difficulty and duration, so there is something for anyone who comes to the site.

There are no predetermined roles or expectations for participants. The quality of their experience and the dissemination of their understanding is a result of the interactivity of the material setting. Interactivity is carried through a range of strategies for helping people to understand and engage. It directly results from design. Various *graphical explanations* (posters, manual, sketches and drawings) were used for mitigating the challenge of bringing people to wrong conclusions due to the lack of contextualisation and understanding of objects. *Story-telling* is used as a strategy for fighting barriers to equal power distribution such as discrimination and paternalism. In this way, the understanding is generated in a very informal way, through funny, amusing and friendly explanations. *Learning-by-doing* is a direct way to *channel the responsibility* as

a crucial element for the investment of carriers. The more responsibility practitioners feel towards the materials, meanings or competences, the stronger carriers they become, and it makes the routinisation of the practice faster. Responsibility is shared in dealing with difficult tasks and in collective brainstorming and decision-making. These tasks trigger the evolution of different relationships in the group such as communication, collaboration and discussion. They also motivate the carrier by making her/him excited and curious. Finally, different types of *experiments* were used to mobilise public and introduce new knowledge to a society. A short tour around the site served as a ceremony, a demonstration that involves casual explanation of complicated meanings. In material setting, familiar things and people's everyday challenges serve as mediators of social, political and moral relations.

Sub-question 2:
**How can interactivity, as a level of power diffusion, be regulated?**

Interactivity is regulated through the role of a Mediator and the design of a material setting.

The role of a Mediator is exceptionally important, mainly because of her/his interpersonal skills and approach that creates the ambience which sets the 'rules' for communication. The concealment of expertise, and the right way of working with 'ordinary citizens' is a necessary requirement for enabling successful interactivity on the setting, and therefore the empowerment of public. This is one of the main challenges for dealing with materials– how to train the personnel that will be able to ensure adequate communication and a legitimate process; how to standardise the role of a Mediator.

The design of a material setting plays great role in the engagement. The organisation and design of the setting activate the public in several ways. It provides playfulness, variety of activities, accessibility, the engagement of people's senses and attractiveness of the issue at stake. The fact that people can relate to it brings them together and makes them invest themselves more and more easily. However, great dependence on the design and conceptualisation of the setting has serious implications for democracy. Expressing the power of individual can result in manipulation of framing

and contextualisation of urban issues, thus putting in question the accountability of these practices. Another challenge is the one of 'false interaction'; using the concept of "interactivity" without really performing it, the situation of "public window dressing".

Main research question:
**What can attention to the materiality of participation offer to our understanding of public involvement in planning?**

Design and conceptualisation of the process directly influence *the articulation of urban issues*. Participation as co-articulation of public political activity with other domains of everyday practice can give meaning to individual actions that are compatible with urban agendas, which seems as a way for stimulating specific behaviours and lifestyles. The seductive characteristics of experiment are used as "a good hook", to engage people and facilitate interventions in the evolution of a practice – among materials, meanings and competences. They are used for domestication of new elements, for making them attractive and available to public. In this sense, they manage to facilitate the diffusion and marketing of the urban issues at stake. Yet, the experiment is only the starting point for activities, since the practice develops only in routinized behaviour in which public is made of carriers of "certain routinized ways of understanding, knowing how and desiring" (Reckwitz, 2002:250), and the question of sustaining legitimate development of these practices remains open. It requires human resources, as well as time and finances.

Materials, competences and meanings can attract different publics, but the whole process involves a lot of risks, both internally (how to ensure that carriers get invested), and externally (how to influence the 'creativity' of governance). The internal level of uncertainty in predicting the evolution of a practice has both positive and negative implications. Carriers drop out, but they also become more invested, responsible and active.

The added value of planning capable to acquire materials as tools for PI will be to facilitate a peculiar articulation of urban issues. This is a bi-directional process; materials need to relate to agency but also to the structure. Even though spatial strategy making can be developed outside formal arenas, and thus be capable to influence the "general

culture", its dissemination and strength depend on the ability of official system to become open and supportive for these kind of spatial experiments and their specific outputs.

Important limitation of materiality of public participation is its problematic linguistic translation into existing policy frameworks. However, the question on how democratic the existing planning process really is, brings back the normative debate. In that sense, ignoring the material dimensions of existing planning processes does not only miss the potential of materiality as a tool, which is presented above, but intentionally neglects the problematic of current approach, and its implications for democracy.

## 6.2 Reflections on the Research

This thesis' focus on a particular case and a qualitative methodology makes the findings highly contextual. This limitation was mitigated by constant reflecting on theoretical framework and previous research. However, further research replicating this study would strengthen its reliability. Findings were analytically generalised regarding the research question.

The core of this research is the attention on material dimensions of public involvement, and due to the time limitations it is more focused on the agency (the practice and its carriers). Thus, it lacks the institutional dimension; interviews should have been made with London Legacy Development Corporation and planning authority. Furthermore, only one interview was conducted with a councillor and therefore it can only be considered as another point of view on the context, but not as entirely valid data. Locating the barriers for implementation of material approach to public participation in planning from institutional perspective would be a very interesting research topic, as well as investigating if temporary-use frameworks are capable to open new arenas of 'creative governance'. Research on how different material dimensions in planning processes influence framing of urban issues, may show the role that materials play in shaping democracy.

Participant observation proved to be a very useful methodological choice for this type of research, since interviews only gave limited information on material dimensions. Using practice theory for analytical framework proved as very helpful in understanding complex and indefinite relations that were observed. Future research is necessary on ecology of practice, in which certain practice could be compared with other 'competing' practices. Additionally, since every practice and its elements relates to elements of other practices, it would be interesting to see how the materiality of engagement differs in different planning contexts internationally.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Participant observation guide

The following lists of things that should be observed was made prior to the field work, according to Spradley (1980). The lists served to prioritise the situations to be observed, regarding the research question. First list was made in the very beginning, before getting to know the social setting. Second list was made before the second working weekend, to focus the observation.

*First list – "Grand tour observation"*

1.Space
2. Actor } *Social situation*
3. Activity
4. Objects – make a list and drawings of all the objects and tools.
5. Act
6. Event
7. Time – sequencing that takes place over time.
8. Goal – things people are trying to accomplish.
9. Feeling – emotions felt and expressed.

*Second list – Focused observation*

1. Can you describe in details all the objects?
2. Can you describe in details all the activities?
3. Where are objects located?
4. What are all the ways space is organised by objects?
5. What are all the ways objects are used in acts?
6. What are all the ways that objects are used in activities?
7. What are all the ways that objects are used in events?
8. What are all the ways that objects are used by actors?
9. How are objects used in seeking goals?
10. How are object used in different times?
11. What are all the ways objects evoke feelings?
12. What feelings lead to the use of what objects?
13. How are actors involved in activities?

# Appendix 2: Interview guide

Three lists of questions served as a guide for semi-structured interviews. Issues were addressed in a flexible order and extended depending on the interviewee. In the beginning of the interview researcher would explain what the research is investigating and how it will be conducted. Prior to recording the interview, consent form was explained and signed.

## 2.1 List of questions for participants

INTERVIEW
**A public that plans versus the planned public: practical public involvement in planning**

This interview is for participants in R-urban Wick projects. The purpose of questions is to learn about the community engagement in urban sustainable practices. The inputs will be used for better understanding of public involvement in planning. The study is part of a master's research at Cardiff University and Radboud University. This questionnaire is designed by Dasha Spasojevic.
This interview is anonymous and all data will be kept confidential. If there are items you do not feel comfortable answering, please skip them. It will take approximately 30 minutes. You are not obliged to take part in this study, but your responses will be greatly appreciated.

---

**Part 1: Participation in R-urban Hackney Wick project**
1. Do you live in Hackney? If yes – how long; if no – where do you live?
2. Can you tell the story of your engagement with R-urban Wick? In which activities did you participate? For how long? Since when?
3. Why did you do a particular activity (depending on the previous question, e.g. help in building the Curiosity Shop)? Do you think that it is important to do that?
4. What did you learn in this project?
5. What do you think that this project means/represents for Hackney?
6. What does it mean to you?
7. Did you ever imagine yourself building anaerobic digester?
8. Were your neighbours participating, or your family?
9. Do you think that your neighbourhood should have more projects such as R-urban Wick?
10. Which of the following reasons would be your main motivation for participating in projects like this in the future: I want to make Hackney better, I want to learn something new, I care about the environment, I want to meet my neighbours…

**Part 2: Involvement in planning**
11. Do you participate in council's community involvement initiatives: local meetings, volunteering, voting, responding to a consultation, participate in a focus group?
12. If yes, in which way do you get involved? How much time do you dedicate to it?
13. If not, can you describe the reasons? (I have never heard about them; I don't have time; I don't think I can contribute to the discussion; I do not find them reasonable…)
14. How would you define Hackney Services (London Borough of Hackney)?
15. Do you think that residents should take responsibilities for local projects and public spaces?

16. Finally, can you describe the site to me? Can you give me a short tour of the things around us?
*Do you have anything to add, that I have forgotten to ask?

## 2.2 List of questions for organisers

INTERVIEW

**A public that plans versus the planned public: practical public involvement in planning**

This interview is for organisers of R-urban Wick projects. The purpose of questions is to learn about the community engagement in urban sustainable practices. The inputs will be used for better understanding of public involvement in planning. The study is part of a master's research at Cardiff University and Radboud University. This questionnaire is designed by Dasha Spasojevic.
This interview is anonymous and all data will be kept confidential. If there are items you do not feel comfortable answering, please skip them. It will take approximately 30 minutes. You are not obliged to take part in this study, but your responses will be greatly appreciated.

---

1. How did you start this project?
2. Is this project part of your usual practice?
3. What experience, skills and knowledge did you have prior to starting this project?
4. As I know, it is funded by the EU. How did the partnership with R-urban in France happen?

5. Can you talk me through your main strategy in conceptualising the project? Why exactly these elements: Anaerobic Digester, Curiosity Shop, Wick on Wheels, Wick Sessions, Household experiments?
6. How many residents were involved? Which strategies did you use to involve residents?
7. Who else was involved?
8. What do you aim to achieve with this project?

9. How do you see the role of R-urban Wick in governance and planning of Hackney? What role does it play in its development?
10. Is Borough of Hackney doing something to ensure R-urban Wick remains a success?
11. Do you have any ideas how this might feature in policy?

12. What do you think that this project represents for Hackney? What do you think are the best features of R-urban Wick that would influence positive evolution of Hackney and its community?
13. What does it mean to you personally?

*Do you have anything to add, that I have forgotten to ask?

## 2.3 List of questions for councillor

INTERVIEW

**A public that plans versus the planned public: practical public involvement in planning**

These interview questions are for Hackney Wick local authority members. Its purpose is to learn about how Hackney Borough influence community engagement in urban sustainable practices, and which materials are being used in that process. The inputs will be used for better understanding of public involvement in planning. The study is part of a master's research at Cardiff University and Radboud University. This interview is designed by Dasha Spasojevic.
This interview is anonymous and all data will be kept confidential. If there are items you do not feel comfortable answering, please skip them. It will take approximately 30 minutes. You are not obliged to take part in this study, but your responses will be greatly appreciated.

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**Part 1: Hackney Wick ward**

1. Hackney Borough has an interesting governance structure, including Team Hackney, and ward councillors. Can you tell me more about it and what is your specific role in it?
2. Which experience, skills and knowledge are necessary for being a councillor?
3. There is a great emphasis on community involvement, visible through documents such as Sustainable Community Strategy and Statement of Community Involvement. However, what is happening 'on the ground'? Is community in Hackney participating in planning issues?
4. What do you do to motivate people to participate in planning?

**Part 2: R-Urban Wick**

5. Do you know about R-Urban Wick project?
6. They are an "interim use" project; they've got to use that plot as part of a development scheme. Why do you think that projects like that are useful?
7. How do you see the role of R-urban Wick in governance and planning of Hackney? What role does it play in its development?
8. Is Borough of Hackney doing something to ensure R-urban Wick remains a success?
9. Do you have any ideas how this might feature in policy?

10. What do you think that this project represents for community in Hackney?
11. What do you think are the best features of R-urban Wick that would influence positive evolution of Hackney and its community?

*Do you have anything to add, that I have forgotten to ask?

# Appendix 3: Consent form

Before giving the consent form to interviewees for signing, the researcher presenter herself and the research – what are its objectives and questions, how it is to be conducted, and what benefits are likely to emerge from the investigation. Further on, the researcher read and explained the content of the consent form and finally give it to interviewee.

**Consent Form**

**Project:** A public that plans versus the planned public: practical public involvement in planning

**Researcher**: Dasha Spasojevic

---

Participant to complete this section (**Please tick**):

☐ I agree to take part in the above study
☐ I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time
☐ I understand that my name will not be used within the study and all data will remain confidential
☐ I agree that the interview may be recorded for information recording purposes

---

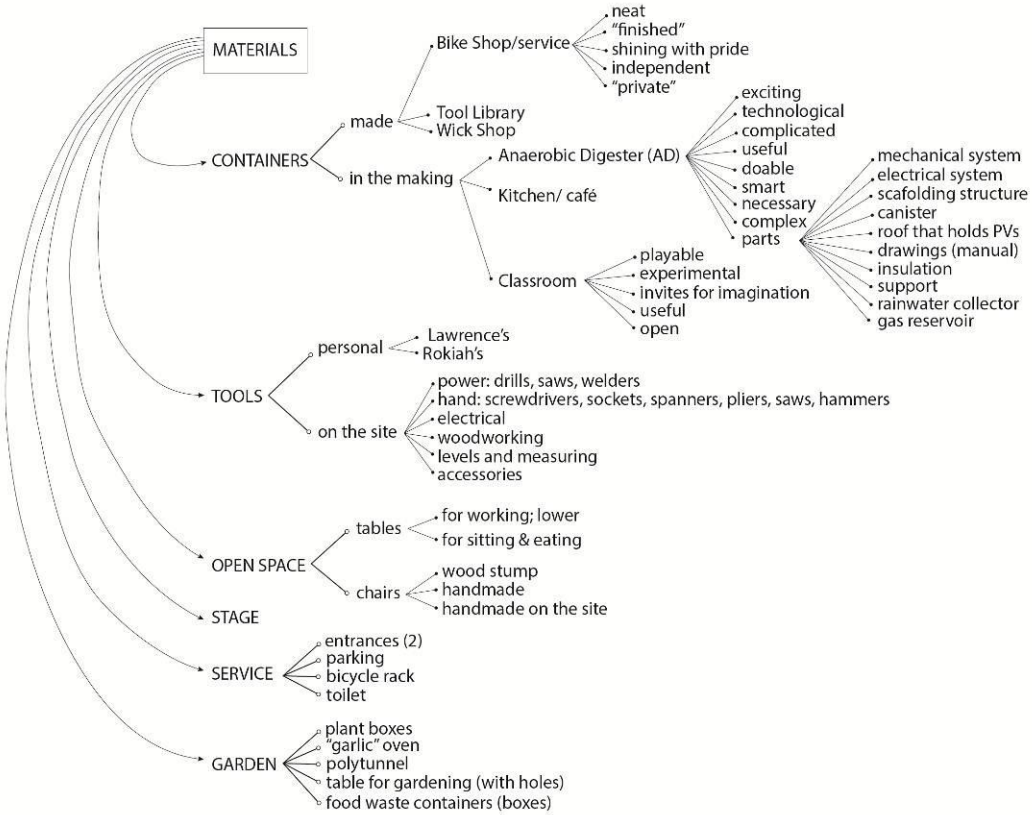
Signed (researcher/student): _____

Signed (Participant): _____

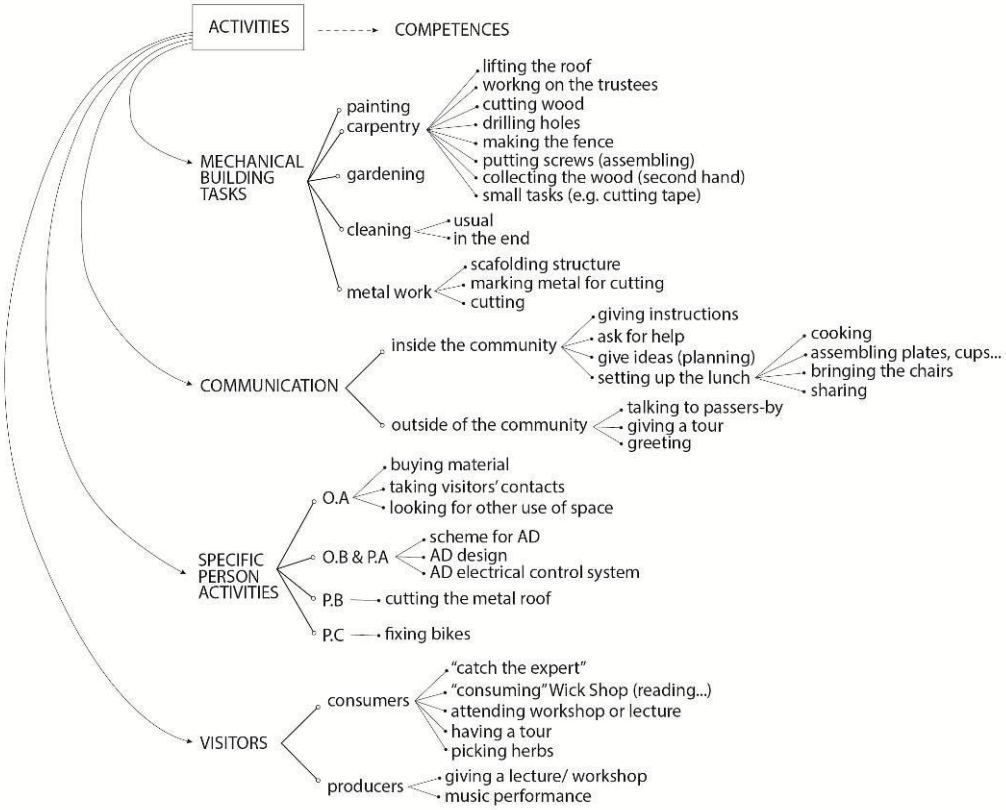
Date: _____

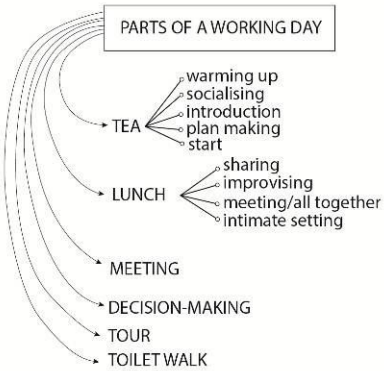
# Appendix 4: Taxonomic analysis of cultural domains

## 4.1. Materials

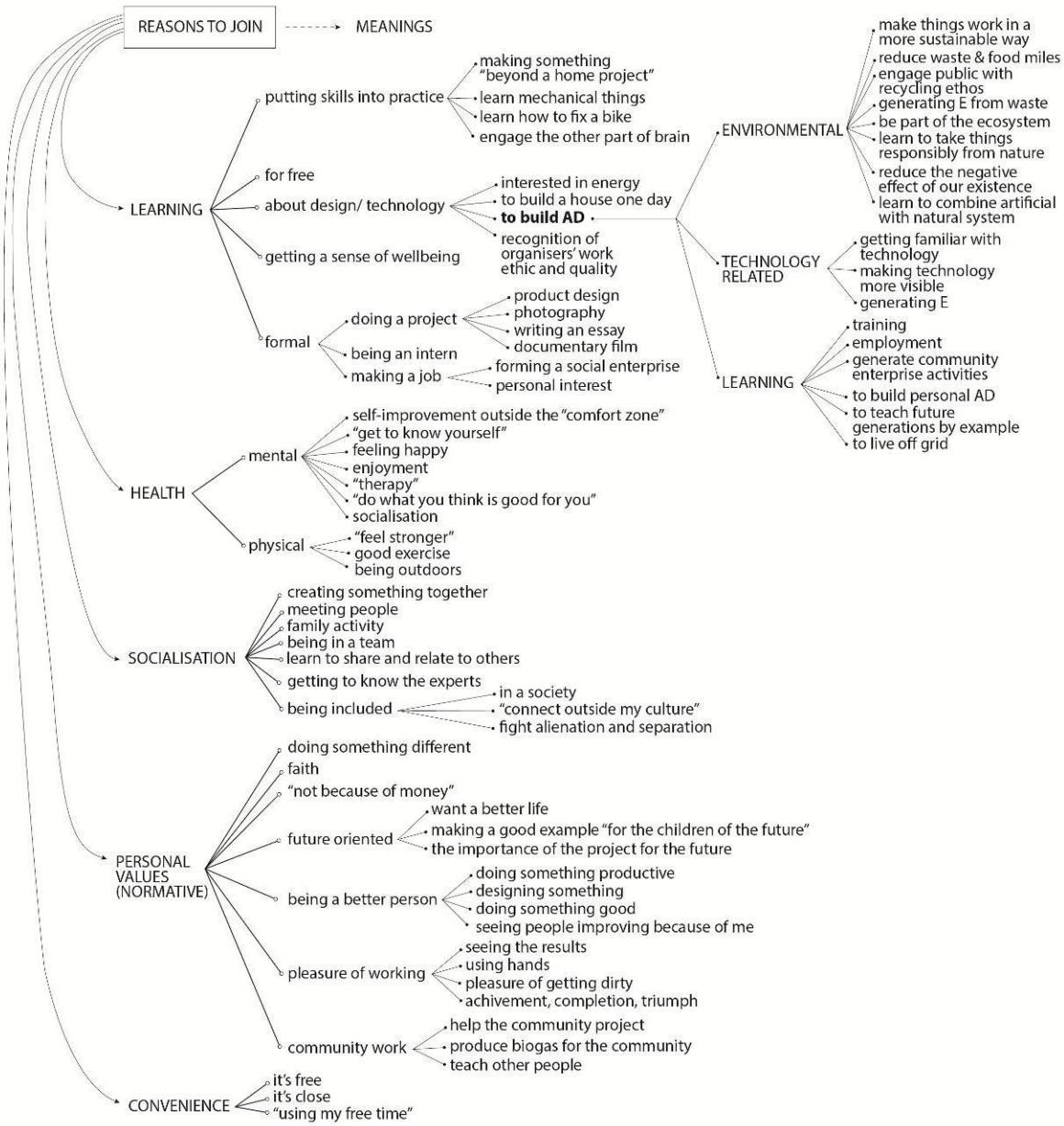


## 4.2. Competences

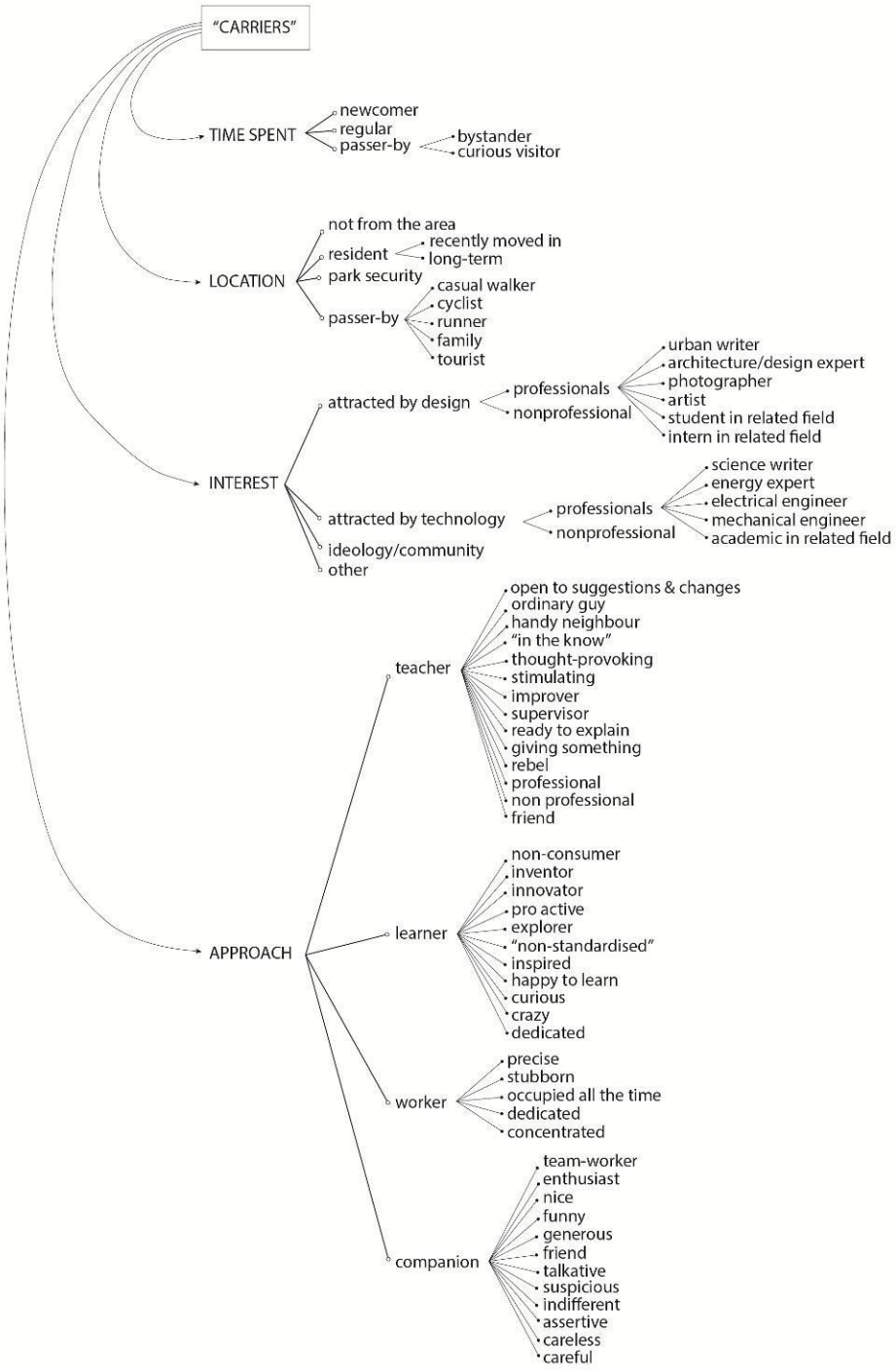


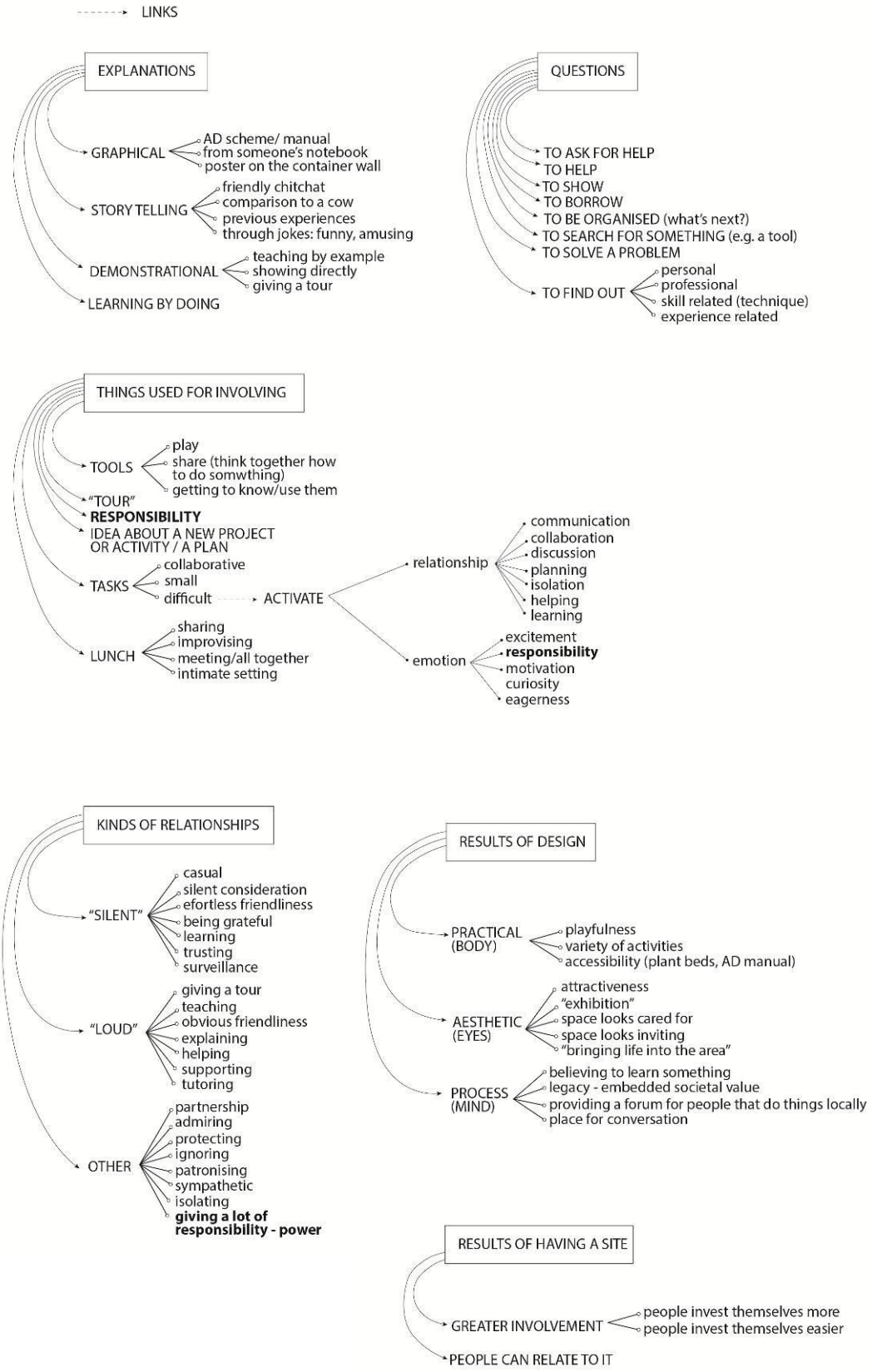
# 4.3. Meanings


REASONS TO JOIN
MEANINGS
LEARNING
putting skills into practice
making something "beyond a home project"
learn mechanical things
learn how to fix a bike
engage the other part of brain
for free
about design/ technology
interested in energy
to build a house one day
to build AD
recognition of organisers' work ethic and quality
getting a sense of wellbeing
formal
doing a project
product design
photography
writing an essay
documentary film
being an intern
making a job
forming a social enterprise
personal interest
ENVIRONMENTAL
make things work in a more sustainable way
reduce waste & food miles
engage public with recycling ethos
generating E from waste
be part of the ecosystem
learn to take things responsibly from nature
reduce the negative effect of our existence
learn to combine artificial with natural system
TECHNOLOGY RELATED
getting familiar with technology
making technology more visible
generating E
LEARNING
training
employment
generate community enterprise activities
to build personal AD
to teach future generations by example
to live off grid
HEALTH
mental
self-improvement outside the "comfort zone"
"get to know yourself"
feeling happy
enjoyment
"therapy"
"do what you think is good for you"
socialisation
physical
"feel stronger"
good exercise
being outdoors
SOCIALISATION
creating something together
meeting people
family activity
being in a team
learn to share and relate to others
getting to know the experts
being included
in a society
"connect outside my culture"
fight alienation and separation
PERSONAL VALUES (NORMATIVE)
doing something different
faith
"not because of money"
future oriented
want a better life
making a good example "for the children of the future"
the importance of the project for the future
being a better person
doing something productive
designing something
doing something good
seeing people improving because of me
pleasure of working
seeing the results
using hands
pleasure of getting dirty
achivement, completion, triumph
community work
help the community project
produce biogas for the community
teach other people
CONVENIENCE
it's free
it's close
"using my free time"
REASONS FOR NOT PARTICIPATING IN OFFICIAL INVOLVEMENT
EXTERNAL
it is for locals
frequent change of address
complicated procedures
INTERNAL
"I still don't feel 100% local"
time
not motivated
being a "practical" person
language proficiency
opting out of politics

## 4.4 Carriers


"CARRIERS"
TIME SPENT
newcomer
regular
passer-by
bystander
curious visitor
LOCATION
not from the area
resident
recently moved in
long-term
park security
passer-by
casual walker
cyclist
runner
family
tourist
INTEREST
attracted by design
professionals
nonprofessional
urban writer
architecture/design expert
photographer
artist
student in related field
intern in related field
attracted by technology
professionals
nonprofessional
science writer
energy expert
electrical engineer
mechanical engineer
academic in related field
ideology/community
other
APPROACH
teacher
open to suggestions & changes
ordinary guy
handy neighbour
"in the know"
thought-provoking
stimulating
improver
supervisor
ready to explain
giving something
rebel
professional
non professional
friend
learner
non-consumer
inventor
innovator
pro active
explorer
"non-standardised"
inspired
happy to learn
curious
crazy
dedicated
worker
precise
stubborn
occupied all the time
dedicated
concentrated
companion
team-worker
enthusiast
nice
funny
generous
friend
talkative
suspicious
indifferent
assertive
careless
careful

# 4.5. Links


LINKS
EXPLANATIONS
GRAPHICAL
AD scheme/ manual
from someone's notebook
poster on the container wall
STORY TELLING
friendly chitchat
comparison to a cow
previous experiences
through jokes: funny, amusing
DEMONSTRATIONAL
teaching by example
showing directly
giving a tour
LEARNING BY DOING
QUESTIONS
TO ASK FOR HELP
TO HELP
TO SHOW
TO BORROW
TO BE ORGANISED (what's next?)
TO SEARCH FOR SOMETHING (e.g. a tool)
TO SOLVE A PROBLEM
TO FIND OUT
personal
professional
skill related (technique)
experience related
THINGS USED FOR INVOLVING
TOOLS
play
share (think together how to do somwthing)
getting to know/use them
"TOUR"
RESPONSIBILITY
IDEA ABOUT A NEW PROJECT OR ACTIVITY / A PLAN
TASKS
collaborative
small
difficult
ACTIVATE
relationship
communication
collaboration
discussion
planning
isolation
helping
learning
emotion
excitement
responsibility
motivation
curiosity
eagerness
LUNCH
sharing
improvising
meeting/all together
intimate setting
KINDS OF RELATIONSHIPS
"SILENT"
casual
silent consideration
efortless friendliness
being grateful
learning
trusting
surveillance
"LOUD"
giving a tour
teaching
obvious friendliness
explaining
helping
supporting
tutoring
OTHER
partnership
admiring
protecting
ignoring
patronising
sympathetic
isolating
giving a lot of responsibility - power
RESULTS OF DESIGN
PRACTICAL (BODY)
playfulness
variety of activities
accessibility (plant beds, AD manual)
AESTHETIC (EYES)
attractiveness
"exhibition"
space looks cared for
space looks inviting
"bringing life into the area"
PROCESS (MIND)
believing to learn something
legacy - embedded societal value
providing a forum for people that do things locally
place for conversation
RESULTS OF HAVING A SITE
GREATER INVOLVEMENT
people invest themselves more
people invest themselves easier
PEOPLE CAN RELATE TO IT

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