

Doctoral thesis

Off-center. Citizen initiatives between
institutionalization and innovation. Evidences from
case studies in Slovakia and France.

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PhD Programme

Architecture, City and Design

Track: Regional planning and Public policy

XXXII cycle

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27 April 2020

Abstract (English)

In the last decades citizen initiatives of urban action have received extensive attention by scholars for their divergence from highly formalized planning routines, their innovative logics and ways of engaging with city making and with citizens' unformalized needs. These initiatives of reappropriation have often been regarded by urban scholars as open processes of emergent sensemaking and spaces of freedom, opposed to the institutionalized nature of public administrations. However, current urban theories on the transformative nature of citizen initiatives present an overly optimistic stance, assuming them devoid of institutionalized and oppressive dimensions. Furthermore, these conclusions are drawn from empirical research limited to the initial phases of these initiatives. Considering institutionalization incipient in every social situation continuing in time, the research aims at exploring the institutionalization of citizen initiatives, their learning and innovation processes and the effects of these phenomena on their urban actions, public services and internal democratic practices. The first level of analysis of the research explores synchronically and diachronically two citizen initiatives in France and Slovakia active for two decades. In the second level the thesis explores the engagement of these two initiatives with new problematic situations - specifically two processes of urban transformation - to observe the learning and innovation effects they generate. Adopting a perspective influenced by grounded, internalist, situated, value-critical and dialogical perspectives, the research illustrates that while these initiatives develop processes of habitualization and institutionalization, but they still present a certain level of flexibility; they institute values, routines, roles, practices, knowledges and operations of production of public services that are politically alternative, therefore creating alternative institutions. The thesis also argues that, in a cyclical loop, they can de-institutionalize or suspend part of their routines to tackle new problematic situations, allowing the inclusion of heterodox approaches in their operations. While they have difficulties in absorbing innovations in their institutional dimensions, these de-institutionalized spaces constitute innovative milieux from which other actors can learn and transfer innovations to other initiatives and contexts. Tackling these research themes, the thesis contributes to debates in planning theory and public policy, developing theoretical reflections on the relation between citizen initiatives, institutions and innovation, on the publicization of problems, on the institutionalization of direct action as a strategy to face problematic situations by citizens and on new analytical approaches to radical planning theory.

Abstract (Italiano)

Negli ultimi decenni le iniziative di azione urbana da parte dei cittadini hanno ricevuto ampia attenzione accademica per la loro divergenza da routine formalizzate di pianificazione, per le loro logiche e modi innovativi di interagire con la produzione di città e con le esigenze non formalizzate dei cittadini. Queste iniziative di riappropriazione sono state spesso considerate dagli studiosi urbani come processi di sensemaking emergente e come spazi di libertà, in contrapposizione alla natura istituzionalizzata delle pubbliche amministrazioni. Tuttavia, le attuali teorie urbane sulla natura trasformativa delle iniziative dei cittadini presentano una posizione eccessivamente ottimista, presupponendo che siano prive di dimensioni istituzionalizzate e oppressive. Inoltre, queste conclusioni sono basate su ricerche empiriche limitate alle fasi iniziali di queste iniziative. Considerando l'istituzionalizzazione incipiente in ogni situazione sociale continuativa nel tempo, la ricerca mira a esplorare l'istituzionalizzazione delle iniziative dei cittadini, i loro processi di apprendimento e innovazione e gli effetti di questi fenomeni sulle loro azioni urbane, servizi pubblici e pratiche democratiche. Il primo livello di analisi della ricerca esplora sincronicamente e diacronicamente due iniziative di cittadini in Francia e Slovacchia in attività da due decenni. Nel secondo livello la tesi esplora l'impegno di queste due iniziative in nuove situazioni problematiche - due processi di trasformazione urbana - per osservare gli effetti di apprendimento e innovazione che generano. Adottando un approccio grounded, internalista, situato, value-critical e dialogico, la ricerca illustra come queste iniziative sviluppino processi di istituzionalizzazione, ma presentino ancora un certo livello di flessibilità; istituiscono valori, routine, ruoli, pratiche, conoscenze e operazioni politicamente alternativi, creando quindi istituzioni alternative. La tesi mostra che, in un processo ciclico, possono anche deistituzionalizzare o sospendere parte delle loro routine per affrontare nuove situazioni problematiche, consentendo l'inclusione di approcci eterodossi nelle loro operazioni. Sebbene abbiano difficoltà ad assorbire le innovazioni da loro prodotte, questi spazi deistituzionalizzati costituiscono milieux innovativi da cui altri altre iniziative e contesti possono imparare e trasferire innovazioni. Affrontando questi temi di ricerca, la tesi contribuisce a dibattiti di planning theory e politiche pubbliche, sviluppando riflessioni teoriche sulla relazione tra iniziative di cittadini, istituzioni e innovazione, sulla pubblicizzazione dei problemi, sull'istituzionalizzazione dell'azione diretta come strategia per affrontare situazioni problematiche da parte dei cittadini e su nuovi approcci analitici alla radical planning theory.

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Acknowledgements

This PhD research has been a challenging, tortuous, exhilarating, frustrating and joyful path. It started with an idea and it ended up in places I never even imagined at the beginning. Along this path I have been accompanied by a multitude of different people, organizations and institutions.

First and foremost, I thank Università IUAV of Venice, for allowing me to develop this research with a full scholarship. I want to thank the members of the Scientific committee and in particular the professors who coordinated the Doctoral programme in Regional Planning and public policies over the years: Prof. Francesca Gelli, Prof. Giulio Ernesti and Prof. Anna Marson.

I want to thank the institutions and professors that hosted me during my research periods abroad: Prof. Emilia Sičáková-Beblavá at the Institute of Public policy at the Comenius University in Bratislava and Prof. Cefaï at the Centre d'étude des mouvements sociaux at the École des hautes études en sciences sociales in Paris. I thank the Slovak Ministry of Education and the Slovak Academy Information Agency for granting me the financial support of the National Scholarship Programme of the Slovak Republic.

I especially thank my two supervisors, Giulio Ernesti and Elena Ostanel, who followed, advised and supported the development of the thesis.

I thank and greet my fellow PhD students in Regional Planning at IUAV for the discussions that made this thesis evolve and mature, and for the company that provided relief in times of doubt.

I thank the members of the organizations Truc Sphérique and Mains d'œuvres, who allowed me in their organizations and guided me in their activities. I also would like to thank Interzona and Trans Europe Halles, as they were the humus from which this research grew. A special mention goes to Philippe Grombeer, founder of Trans Europe Halles, who recently passed away.

My gratitude goes to my family, who pushes me towards the realization of my dreams and the fulfillment of my happiness, and to my friends, for their light spirit and their support in the most difficult stretches of this journey. Without you, I would have lost my path.

“We did it, because we did it good”

Motto of Truc Sphérique

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First Chapter: Introduction

1.1 Citizen initiatives between institutions and innovation

In our cities, the social and material fabric of the urban is increasingly produced and reproduced by market and state forces. Nonetheless, urban actions led by citizen initiatives are relevant for urban planning and urban studies, as they shift the uses of the territory (Crosta, 2010) transforming it (Secchi, 2000: 7-8). In particular, urban research has focused on the practices and processes of urban transformation developed by citizens in order to appreciate their divergence from highly formalized planning routines, their different logics and innovative ways of engaging with city making, with different geometries and new outcomes. As these micro practices often generate public effects, urban planning research inquired them to learn from and reproduce their innovations in public administrations, market-driven companies or other citizen initiatives.

In current debates focused on the effects of social transformation, direct initiatives and practices of urban transformations by citizens have often been regarded by urban scholars as open processes of emergent sensemaking, lacking formalization and presenting constant innovations; this interpretation of citizen initiatives offers a limited approach, as it presents an overly optimistic stance about these experiences as spaces of freedom and continuative self-organization, lacking any institutional dimension. Furthermore, they draw these conclusions from empirical research on the initial phases of citizen initiatives.

Considering institutionalization incipient in every social situation continuing in time, the research aims at exploring the institutionalization of citizen initiatives, their learning and innovation processes and the effects of these evolutions on their urban actions. The research investigates the engagement of long-existing citizen initiatives with problematic situations in conditions of routinization and emergent problematization. On a first level, it explores over two decades of activities of two citizen initiatives, showing the emergence of processes of habitualization and institutionalization of their practices, knowledges and operations of production of public services. These initiatives become institutions - even if they still present a certain level of flexibility. Furthermore, they institute knowledges, values, routines and roles that are profoundly different from the ones embodied by public administrations, creating alternative institutions. I explore the contributions of these initiatives to public problems, and to the

institutionalization of direct action as a strategy to tackle problems in a social repertoire of logics of action.

On a second level, the thesis explores the encounter of these two initiatives with problematic situations - specifically two processes of urban transformation - to observe the learning and innovation effects they generate in the initiatives and in the other actors involved. These processes constitute temporary spaces of indetermination, where others can interact and engage beyond the instituted ways of operating of the initiatives.

The thesis presents a more complex account of these initiatives: after initial phases as emergent practices of reappropriation, they develop institutionalized dimensions. In a cyclical loop, they can also de-institutionalize or suspend part of their routines to tackle new problematic situations, allowing the inclusion of diversity in their operations. While they have difficulties in absorbing innovations in their institutional dimensions, these de-institutionalized spaces constitute innovative milieux from which other actors can learn and transfer innovations to other initiatives and contexts.

Tackling these research themes, the thesis will link these initiatives to broader debates in the fields of planning theory and public policy. In particular, it will lead to reflections on the definition of problems as public, and on the institutionalization of direct action as a strategy to face problematic situations by citizens. Furthermore, the development of the analytical framework of the thesis will generate contributions to insurgent and radical planning scholarship.

1.2 An ongoing personal research

The research was not designed a priori, but was conducted incrementally and adaptively along its development. A posteriori, the research can be understood as an abductive process of inquiry (Schea-Swartz and Yanow, 2012), rooted in a sense of puzzlement from empirical cases, and the curiosity to understand these events. In order to understand the logic and evolution the thesis, it is crucial to focus on the path that guided me along its development.

In 2010 I started volunteering in the cultural association Interzona in my hometown of Verona, Italy. The association organized concerts, clubbing nights, artistic exhibitions, talks and conferences. Between 1993 to 2016 it managed two venues in the former warehouse complex of the Magazzini Generali, in the industrial district of Verona: from 1993 to 2006 the Stazione Frigorifera and from 2007 to 2016 the

Magazzino 22. The association operates through the volunteer work of 30 active members. The number of total members declined from 6000 in 2016 to 500 in 2019.

Interzona is built around a series of implicit and explicit codes. On the explicit side, being an association, it has a board of directors - elected by its members - tasked with taking the strategic decisions. But all the operative decisions - which band to call, which beer to serve, how to organize the spaces, how to set up the concert hall for an event - are left to the volunteers, organized in horizontal working teams. Interzona encourages people to take responsibility and begin new initiatives, creating new ideas and collaborations with other associations.

Over the course of the years of volunteering in the association, I progressively recognized the existence of implicit structural dimensions of Interzona. For example, while in theory everyone can take the initiative, in practice the volunteers' behaviour is strongly influenced by the opinions of the oldest members, who have extensive experience and skills. The Board of directors does not just intervene only on strategic decisions, but also on operative issues, limiting ideas and engulfing the emergent proposals into a bureaucratic stalemate.

In 2016, as I was about to begin the PhD program at Università IUAV di Venezia, Interzona was forced out of its venue. A question emerged in the association: how to (re-)create a cultural center?

In the following months, I was elected in the Board of directors, and I instituted and coordinate a newly created working team, focused in formulating answers for this pressing question. In the first year we developed strategies, conducted market researches, mapped abandoned and available buildings. In a short period of time, I recognized that the creation of a cultural centre reproducing the model we had been practicing for years was impossible, for contextual political and economic reasons. We had no financial support, and the municipality didn't politically support these cultural initiatives.

From my perspective, the issue we faced started having two dimensions: on one side, since we were not able to pay a market-price rent right away, we had to understand how to gain resources for the refurbishment of abandoned buildings which we could obtain for free (at least for a first period of time); the second dimension regarded the internal organization of Interzona: in order to maintain the regular operations of a new cultural center, it was impossible to continue operating only through voluntary labor. We had to find a way to evolve into an organization with a full-time team.

I initially focused on the first dimension, since it was the most fitting with my personal interests and expertises. Thanks to the connections of Interzona with the European network of citizen-initiated cultural centres Trans Europe Halles, in the summer of 2017 I visited several different cultural centres across Europe, to observe their venues and to inquire their processes of refurbishment, acquisition of resources,

citizen and stakeholder involvement. I selected cultural centres having conflictual, problematic or no political relations with their municipalities, to understand how we could acquire allies without dealing with the municipality of Verona.

From my previous knowledge of citizen-initiated cultural centres (CICCs), and from most of the experiences visited in this trip, CICCs focused their activities in a single venue, which they usually converted from previous industrial or commercial uses. Urban interventions were focused on the progressive improvement of the original spaces, or in the organizations of temporary interventions in spaces out of the original premises.

Most of the centres I encountered in my trip fit this description. One of these centres, though, was just finishing the renovation of a second space, even bigger than their original venue. Furthermore, this organization wasn't specialized in this type of urban interventions, which was then conducted out of their organizational routines.

This encounter spurred a sense of a puzzle, consisting in the incoherence between the reality I observed - the development of new spaces with other actors - and my past knowledge of CICCs focused on transforming their initial venues and their surroundings. The emergence of this difference was the beginning of the research, the engine driving the process towards the exploration of processes of urban intervention managed by CICCs out of their established routines. From there, I started looking around for similar cases, and started designing my future research through the work of other scholars.

But let's go back to Interzona. In spite of my lack of analytical focus on it, the second dimension of the question Interzona had to face emerged as a problem in the following years. As the organization had to apply for grants to renovate buildings, the Board of directors had to decide how we wanted to organize in the future and identify who was available to commit to the future of the organization.

During one of these (heated) meetings one of my proposals was criticized with the argument "This is how we do it, and how we have always done it". Suddenly, I connected this comment with some readings I was doing in that period, in particular the works of neo-institutionalist sociologists and research on citizen initiatives as self-organized actions. An hypothesis developed into my mind: citizen organizations were described as self-organized and emergent actions, but in this case (and, thinking about it, in many other cases I saw over the years) the actions of the organizations were informed by past experience, and by the consolidation of specific ways of acting. A new puzzle developed: could it be possible that some of these citizen initiatives had become institutions? And if so, how?

These puzzles were subsequently tackled with different cycles of literature reviews, fieldwork, analysis, and active participation in the activities of Interzona. The research has been developing erratically, intuitively. It was structured as a spiral of understanding (Wagenaar, 2011) rather than a linear process of analysis.

1.3 Institutions and citizen initiatives: current debates and relevance in public policy and planning theory

Why focus on citizen initiatives in urban studies? These processes carry out only a fraction of processes of urbanization. Most urban transformations in western cities are produced by market forces through large real estate developers (Citron, 2016), or by urban projects led by public-private partnerships (Pinson, 2002). Scholars that focused on citizen initiatives have argued, through different theoretical frameworks and focusing on different dimensions of these processes, that research on these marginal initiatives can lead to relevant reflections on social, economical and political aspects of contemporary cities.

In the last years economists and policymakers have focused on the economic dimension of citizen initiatives addressing them as social enterprises (Borzaga & Zandonai, 2009) and creative industries (Chuluunbaatar et al., 2013), according to their different fields of research. These approaches explore these initiatives through an economic, managerial and entrepreneurial perspective, assessing their ability to generate value, to create new entrepreneurship, to innovate business models and to contribute to the general well being and the development of society. In particular this framework and its terms have been adopted in relation to other contemporary topics, such as creative cities (Florida, 2002), urban regeneration and social innovation (Tricarico, 2014; Cottino & Zandonai, 2012; Moulaert et al, 2013). Even if the economic and political status quo is often criticized by these scholars, the main strands of this approach understand these initiatives in direct continuity with the present social system, as elements of potential improvement and development of cities and society.

Other approaches have instead focused on the role of these initiatives in generating political rather than economic change. Planning and public policy scholars, as well as policymakers, have looked at citizen initiatives to draw lessons to innovate the actions of public administrations (Healey, 2004; Uitermark, 2015; Boonstra and Boelens, 2011; Edelenbos et al, 2016). They compared the effectiveness of self-organization and institutional action, and generated lessons for public administrations, focusing on the innovation of internal operations and on the improvement of political responsiveness through

participation. Under this approach, citizen initiatives are of political interest for their experimental nature, from which public administrations could learn scaling up eventual innovations into policies.

Focusing on the effects of regeneration, inclusion and innovation generated by these processes, the approach rooted in social innovation literature argues instead that public administrations should not simply use these initiatives to adapt their operations, but they should also learn to promote policies facilitating the emergence of these initiatives and the autonomous action of citizens (Ostanel, 2017).

These approaches focus on the potential effects of political change of citizen initiatives within the current institutional settings. They advance theories of improvement and reform of policies and institutional preferences, aiming at the improvement of the effectiveness of public administrations in developing public policies and plans. Furthermore, scholars often (implicitly or explicitly) look at these processes from the perspective of public administrations rather than from the citizen initiatives'.

Differently from these perspectives, radical and critical planning scholars have claimed that citizen initiatives (explored under several categories, like: self-organization, insurgent planning, radical planning, autonomous spaces, commons, intentional communities, activist planning) are politically relevant for their ability to generate effects of social transformation, as they emancipate their participants from the current institutional setting, generate alternative political systems and change society through their actions (Sandercock, 1998; Holston, 1995; Friedman, 1987, 2011; Grabow and Heskin, 1973; Miraftab, 2009; Sager, 2016, 2017; Chatterton, 2010). These authors work within the initiatives.

In this radical tradition, citizen initiatives are relevant for planning and policy studies as they are the primary means of establishment of radical alternative urbanities to current urban regimes. Scholars in this perspective often focus on macroscopic themes such as neoliberalism and social justice, arguing that these initiatives contrast oppressive institutions and emancipating citizens.

This approach has been the most widespread among radical planning scholars in international debates. Scholars have adopted it to criticize the effects on cities of social and economic social structures they perceive as dominant. They orient their research towards the formulation of alternative normative ideologies and approaches to planning.

However, while this tradition aims at exploring social transformative actions, its analysis of social transformation processes and practices presents methodological and analytical shortcomings. For most of these scholars, the justification for claims of social transformative effects of these initiatives is rooted in their divergence from governmental action or in the intentions and overarching ideologies adopted by the actors (Davy, 2019). Microsociological inquiries expose this lack of empirical groundedness, showing how inclusive and emancipative effects are often taken for granted (Meth, 2010). Furthermore, these scholars often limit the field of relevant citizen actions to the ones explicitly and intentionally aiming at generating

effects of social transformation (as resistance to forms of domination like capitalism or neoliberalism, or as generation of alternative ways of living and producing space).

In a tradition close but distinction from radical planning, combining radicalism, social learning, a microsociological and a pragmatic approach, Italian scholars have focused on citizen initiatives adopting a broader and more complex theory of action. Understanding planning as a system of multiple interactions related to the uses of the territory and not just to the production of plans, the field of relevant actions widens to include intentional and unintentional actions, which are assessed for their intended, unintended and perverse effects (Crosta, 1990, 1998, 2010). Scholars interpreted citizen initiatives on the basis of their effects, assessing their production of public goods and their role in the resolution of public problems. (Pasqui, 2001; Balducci, 2004; Cognetti et al, 2004; Vitale, 2007). They generate “bottom-up public policies” (Paba, 2011) and “self-organized public policies” (Cellamare, 2011), inventing unconventional public services and goods (Paba, 2011; Cottino and Zeppetella, 2009; Piazza et al, 2016; Montagna, 2007). The eventual public effects of these actions are to be empirically verified in practice with a critical approach (Cellamare, 2018: 13), and avoiding simplifications (Ostanel and Attili, 2018: 14; Ostanel and Cancellieri, 2014: 48).

Focusing on the interactive unfolding of these citizen initiatives in problematic situations, authors argued about the differences between these initiatives and public administrations: citizen initiatives are seen as non-institutionalized actions, while public administrations are observed for the backwardness of their institutionalized dimensions. Citizen initiatives can generate new meanings and new ways of interpreting and accessing urban spaces, constructing spaces for self-determination, and allowing the emergence of autonomous social organizations beyond the hetero directed processes of contemporary cities (Cellamare, 2014: 21). Public administrations, instead, are seen as institutions, with fixed meanings detached from society and with rigid and routinized dimensions limiting their ability to learn and innovate (Donolo, 1997; Donolo and Fichera, 1988). However, the consolidation of this dichotomous and rigid interpretation between initiatives and public administrations has emerged from empirical research on new citizen initiatives, lacking long-term analysis of institutionalization processes.

This thesis chooses to explore citizen initiatives adopting a perspective focused on their effects of social transformation. Considering social transformation primarily as a learning process, I believe that such an analytical focus can shed light on relevant innovations and political alternatives. It can lead to the improvement of living conditions in cities even if public administrations have no intention of learning from these experiences.

However, given the analytical shortcomings of insurgent planning - the current dominant theoretical perspective - instead of adhering a priori to a single analytical perspective and contributing to its internal theories, the thesis opts to also explore the different analytical approaches to research on citizen initiatives as producers of social transformation, analysing their implicit normative assumptions. The next section will identify the theoretical and analytical gaps that the thesis aims at exploring among these debates, defining its main contributions and objectives.

1.4 Objectives and contributions of the thesis

The thesis has different objectives, contributing to different gaps in academic debates. The first contribution is based on the creation of a dialogue between literatures focusing on similar empirical objects but lacking established connections. The thesis questions the current radical and insurgent perspectives on citizen initiatives in international debates. These perspectives mostly focus on the generation of normative proposals for citizen action, and often lack a grounded focus on the micro effects on these initiatives (Meth, 2010), taking for granted the coherence of their intentions and effects. I aim at establishing a dialogue between these international debates with the works of Italian scholars - and in particular Pierluigi Crosta - formulating an understanding of planning as a multiple interactive system based on (direct and indirect) effects, (intentional and unintentional) actions and situated perspectives. This Italian approach is currently missing in international debates, and I believe that a renewed dialogue could generate new theoretical advancements in the field of radical and insurgent planning. This dialogue will lead to critical contributions to insurgent and radical planning regarding their empirical groundedness, and will also support the construction of the analytical framework of the thesis, based on the perception of effects and on the analysis of meanings in action, rather than on ideologies, intentions, external categorizations and economic aspects.

My definition of citizen initiatives is influenced by a perspective rooted in pragmatic approaches to policy analysis, focused on problematic situations and public problems. In this line of research citizen initiatives are often overlooked, dedicating extensive attention to the actions of public administrations. Scholars described the paths developed by problematic situations to become problems, and then public problems in order to be treated by public administrations (Cefaï, 1996; Blumer, 1971), often assuming as “natural” the delegation of action to public officials. The thesis aims at opening a debate on the

taken-for-grounded nature of this logic, advancing the hypothesis that problems can be constructed and become public through other logics of action, in particular through direct actions (Bosi & Zamponi, 2015). The continuative effective actions of long-existing citizen initiatives and their engagement with new problematic situations legitimizes and institutes this approach in society, integrating it in the general repertoire of logics of action available to tackle problems.

While I mostly agree with the Italian perspectives I connect to international debates, the approaches present their own gaps. In particular, the interpretation of citizen initiatives as actors dichotomous to public administrations on the basis of their respective non-institutional and institutional status, is based on the misunderstanding - present in common language - that identifies public administrations with institutions. The thesis aims at developing a more complex perspective by exploring cases beyond the usual empirical focus on emerging initiatives. On a first level it aims at clarifying the concept of institution, exploring the institutionalization of long-existing citizen initiatives. Secondly, it aims at analysing the engagement of these institutional knowledges with new problematic situations, assessing the processes of learning and innovation in conditions of uncertainty. The thesis therefore contributes to this line of research by expanding the repertoire of empirical cases and by developing a comprehensive theoretical interpretation.

On the basis of these renewed understandings, the thesis also aims at developing policy advices not just for the actions of public administrations but also for citizen initiatives themselves. Highlighting in particular the limits of these experiences and their effects at different level of action, I can suggest strategies and approaches to public administrations at various scales. Furthermore, I contribute to the improvement of citizen initiatives themselves by suggesting actions single organizations can adopt, or strategies that their networks (national and international) can foster at higher levels of policy-making.

1.5 Research design and methodology

The research adopts a case study method, as the processes I aim at exploring are based on contemporary and uncontrollable events. Furthermore, the research focuses on “how” and “why” questions (Yin, 2009), with an attention towards the use of practical knowledges (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

The research is empirically focused on two long-existing citizen initiatives: the citizen-initiated cultural centres Stanica from Zilina Slovakia and Mains d'œuvres from St-Ouen, France. I consider these citizen-initiated cultural centres as citizen initiatives on the basis of their membership to Trans Europe Halles, the european network of self-defined citizen-initiated cultural centres.

Each case is divided in two units of analysis, respectively focused on the first and second research questions. The first unit of analysis explores long-existing citizen initiatives to observe if and how they present institutionalized dimensions. The two initiatives are explored in their diachronic and synchronic dimensions to observe the current existence and the emergence of institutions. The first unit of analysis presents typical cases of long-existing citizen initiatives.

The second unit of analysis focuses on the problematic situations (the processes of urban intervention) faced by citizen initiatives out of their routinized activities to interactively generate new hypotheses and to describe these new phenomena in relation to learning and innovation. I explore the Espace Imaginaire project developed by Mains d'œuvres and the Nová Synagóga project by Stanica. The second unit of analysis adopts an explorative approach, with themes and structures emerging from the field.

The research gathers and interprets the evidence on the basis of cognitive, pragmatic, grounded and value-critical approaches.

With a cognitive approach I refer to an empirical attention towards the situated cognition of actors. Situations are defined through the perspectives of the actors living them. The institutional dimensions of the first research questions are visible (and exist) in their influence over the actors' interpretations of the world and their normative justification for action.

This approach is complemented by a pragmatic idea of engagement the reality: actors develop tests of coherence or incoherence of their envisioned course of action with the materiality of the world, reflecting (more or less consciously) on the feedbacks generated by their engagements. Through the actors' interaction with their environment (Thevenot, 2006), it is possible to explore their learning processes and their reflective adaptations. The effects of their actions are also to be observed in the situated perspective of other actors.

Through a grounded and empirical stance I aim at avoiding external definitions of what constitutes a positive or negative situation, according to a pre-established political analytical framework. Instead, I let judgments and evaluations - as well as constructions of reality - emerge from the cases. Adopting a value-critical approach (Rein, 1976: 256), I recognize that I support the values some of these citizen experiences promote (and enact), but I observe them reflectively to assess the effects they generate,

including their ambiguities and incoherences, focusing in particular in the relation between emergent and institutionalized actions.

1.6 Outline of the thesis

The thesis is structured in six chapters, including this introduction (first chapter): a theoretical chapter (second chapter), a methodological chapter (third chapter), two empirical chapters (fourth and fifth chapters), and a concluding chapter (sixth chapter).

The second chapter outlines the theoretical framework of the thesis. The first part of the chapter explores the analytical approaches of scholars focused on the transformative effects of citizen initiatives. It dissects the positions of different radical and critical scholars in relation to the definition of the empirical object of analysis, their qualification as relevant for planning theory, the bases for claims of social transformation and the underlying position of researchers. Acknowledging that these positions are ultimately rooted in the scholars' political approaches, I explicit and justify the choice of the analytical and political approaches informing my research.

The second part of the chapter details the current perspectives on citizen initiatives as spaces of emergent and free interactions. I translate this understanding to the literature on public problems, both in relation to the production of effects on specific problems and on the institutionalized repertoires of logics for the treatment of problematic situations. I emphasize the problematic understanding of citizen initiatives and institutions as dichotomic realities, based on a supposed congruence of public administrations with institutions. Through a sociological understanding of institutions, I advance the hypothesis that long-existing citizen initiatives could develop habitualized and institutional dimensions, presenting the first research question. Through literature on learning and innovation, I question how these institutionalized experiences could learn and innovate their routines as they face new problematic situations, introducing the second research question.

The third chapter discusses the methods and research design of the thesis. It explains and justifies a posteriori the procedures adopted in the development of the research. After presenting its general logic, I broadly outline its design and empirical approach. I discuss the fitness of the interpretation as citizen initiatives of the category of citizen-initiated cultural centres emerging from Trans Europe Halles. I

describe the procedures of case selection, data acquisition, field operations and techniques of analysis. I also focus on research ethics in relation to my personal positionality and attachments with the objects and subjects of research.

The fourth chapter offers the empirical exploration of Mains d'œuvres and Stanica - two long-existing citizen initiatives - in their diachronic and synchronic aspects to answer the first research question. By exploring the current organizing processes and their historical evolution, I outline how the operations of these initiatives progressively habitualized. Contrary to current description of citizen initiatives, they present institutional dimensions in their operations. Beyond the internal dimension, I also assess which problems these organizations actively tackle (and how they publicize them). Finally, reconnecting with the general repertoire of approaches for tackling problematic situations, I assess how these initiatives influenced, through their pioneering and innovative efforts, the institutionalization of direct action in the fields of arts and culture.

The fifth chapter focuses on the second research question exploring the processes of urban transformation of the Nová Synagóga and the Espace Imaginaire, respectively developed by Stanica and Mains d'œuvres out of their institutional routinized activities. In the first two sections I outline their practical and chronologic unfolding, focusing on the succession of situations and the revisions of hypotheses in action. The third section of the chapter presents the analytical approach to the cases, based on the multiplicity of themes across cases, with multiple domains, actors, engagement regimes, scales. I explore the struggles for normative ordering of domains and the presence of spaces of indetermination. Finally, in the fourth section I connect these dimensions with literature on learning and innovation, to understand how individuals, organizations and institutions (eventually) learnt or developed innovations in the process.

The sixth chapter summarizes the thesis, linking the two research questions back to a general framework. It presents its key arguments and contributions focusing on: the interpretation of the relation between citizen initiatives and institutions; the discussion of ex-ante and ex-post processes of publicization of public problems; the institutionalization and innovation of direct action as a logic of action by citizen initiatives; and on propositions for the empirical groundedness of radical and insurgent scholarship. Finally, it outlines policy recommendations and emerging future directions for research.

Second Chapter: Theoretical Framework

2.1 Exploring analytical perspectives on citizen initiatives of urban transformation

Citizen initiatives of urban transformation are a secondary part in the process of urbanization of western cities. Most urban transformations are increasingly produced by market forces through large real estate developers (Citron, 2016), or by urban projects led by public administrations (Pinson, 2002). Multiple lines of scholarship focus on these processes, aiming at increasing their internal rationality and efficiency, or to criticize them as manifestations of neoliberal forces.

Even if the main urban transformations are performed by state and market forces, citizen initiatives of urban transformation are relevant presences in our cities. Different schools of planning theories (Yiftachel, 1989; Allmendinger, 2002: 29) focused on citizen direct actions in the last decades, advancing conflicting interpretations of their effects, their political relevance, and their limits. In particular, radical and critical scholars claimed that these citizen initiatives were able to generate effects of social transformation and emancipation.

Before engaging directly with the theories developed in these scholars' works, we have to acknowledge the differences between the analytical approaches informing their researches. Focusing in particular on radical and critical scholars, we can identify two different analytical perspectives on what constitutes a relevant citizen action of urban transformation: the first perspective - emerging from international insurgent, anarchist and autonomist debates - focuses on actions intentionally pursuing desired effects (seldom identifying the intention with the effect); the second perspective - developed mostly in Italian planning debates, with influences from liberal schools of American pragmatism and policy analysis - qualifies actions on the basis of the effects they (intentionally or unintentionally) generate. Analytically, these two perspectives draw different boundaries around empirical phenomena, and they focus empirically on diverging aspects. They have different conceptions of which actions are to be considered relevant for research, adopting different theories of action. Ultimately, the analytical differences of these perspectives are rooted in diverging political approaches, implying that the selection of a specific analytical lens to observe reality is not politically neutral. The choice of an analytical perspective informing my research on the topic has therefore to be problematized, to be justified analytically and politically.

The section begins with the introduction of the paradigms of radical and insurgent planning in international debates, problematizing the claim of emancipative potentials of these citizen actions as counter-hegemonic actions against dominant neoliberal processes of space production.

The second subsection introduces an approach rooted in anarchist and autonomous perspectives. This approach expands the insurgent planning approach adding a prefigurative dimension, and focusing on the restructuring of means rather than just ends of action (Newman, 2011; Day, 2005).

The third subsection introduces a critique of these first two subsections. It explores the works of Pierluigi Crosta, with an extensive focus on practices and direct actions leading to a renewed understanding of the relation between knowledge, action, territory, intentions, the public and intentional/unintentional effects.

I then explore the empirical analyses Italian scholars developed under and in parallel to the works of Crosta, focusing on their understandings of the direct territorial actions of citizens. I assess the categories of bottom-up public policies, bottom-up production of public goods, self-organized action, re-appropriation practices. These approaches advance a differentiated understanding of how citizens self-organize in urban transformation, focusing on their production of public effects, their emergent sensemaking and their alternative nature.

In the last subsections, I explore the main dimensions of the two emerging perspectives in order to construct an analytical approach for research. In particular, I argue for a micro-sociological, situated perspective, focused on interactions, dialogical meanings, effects and multiple rationalities. While I argue for the exploration of cases through the analysis of moments of “test” and revision of action, I also introduce different perspectives pluralizing this process, adopting other notions from pragmatic sociology, design studies and organizational studies to pluralize our understanding of action.

2.1.1 Citizen initiatives in insurgent planning

When planning emerged in the XIX century, it was described as a rational (and rationalistic) discipline, heavily linked to municipal and state action. The regimentation of urban expansion, rationalization of land use, and prevention of unhealthy environments in urban settings (Palermo, 2004) appeared as technical and a-political problems.

As cities and societies evolved, the problems planning had to face changed, exposing the inextricable political nature of the discipline and the impossibility of value neutrality: values are inescapable elements of any rational decision-making process” (Davidoff, 1965: 423). Reflections mostly emerged from practical experiences and researches on urban renewal projects developed in the 1960s in the USA, which exposed the lack of inclusion and participation of minority and marginalized populations in the planning processes leading to their displacement (Crosta, 1973).

Framing planning as a democratic political process that should encourage citizens participation, planners criticized the notion of “unitary plans” (Davidoff, 1965: 424), as comprehensive plans drafted by only a single public agency in a whole community, claiming the representation of public interests. Questioning the existence of a public interest capable of integrating the interests of majorities and minorities, scholars recognized an intrinsic and unsolvable bifurcation of interests, opening to the recognition of a pluralism in the production of plans. Going beyond the direct translation of political and value differences into a single plan, political parties, special interest groups and affected citizens could develop alternative plans to represent their interests, and submit them in an adversarial decision-making process, with the eventual support of advocate planners (ibid).

Davidoff’s approach, while mostly normative and prescriptive, developed an analytical and empirical shift (Allmendinger, 2002: 154), opening to the understanding of citizens as not just spectators of urban transformations, but as developers of plans and projects. The shift allows for example the reframing of the alternative plans that marginal groups of citizens - with the technical and educational support of advocate planners - were already developing in opposition to urban renewal projects. At the same time, while this approach supports a pluralist planning practice, it still prescribes their synthesis into a single and unitary plan (ibid: 154).

In the following decades, criticism to rational-comprehensive planning was further expanded, exposing critical points linked to the structural elitist, centralizing, and change-resistant dimensions of rational planning (Grabow and Heskin, 1973: 108). Criticism and theoretical normative reflections evolved towards radical visions of planning based on utopian social experimentation and learning.

Even if empirical research didn't focus on citizen direct actions, this change of level of criticism led to a shift in radical thinking: in the 1960s and first half of 1970s planners focused their criticism on modern planning and its rational-comprehensive approach, exposing the implicitly political nature of a planning discipline that professed a technical neutrality. The 1970s and 1980s saw instead the emergence of new critical reflections in planning theories. As the welfare state entered a period of crisis and rollback, radical planners expanded their critical efforts towards broader and openly political social phenomena, under the influence of the New Left and the counter-cultural movements. The center of theoretical reflection shifted from the flaws of rational-comprehensive planning to broader social issues, linking the emergence of local struggles and contestations to structural dimensions of a capitalist state and society (Friedmann, 1987). As this radical planning tradition got established, the critical effort shifted from policy critique to structure critique (Sager, 2016).

This shift in research attention also changed the understanding of citizen engagement in urban transformations. While Davidoff focused on citizen actions developing alternative plans of urban transformations, Friedmann moved beyond the conceptualization of planning as the development of formal plans, understanding radical planning as the mediation of knowledge - theories of structural transformation of society - and action - concrete radical practices - in a recursive process of social learning (Friedmann, 1987: 395; 2011: 4). Radical planners operate out of the State, working with social mobilizations for the transformation of organized society, for example assisting households in organizing themselves as a cooperative or tenant union (ibid: 398). The field of relevant citizen operations is therefore shifted and consequently expanded, from actions working towards the creation of alternative plans, to actions broadly aiming at social transformation.

Since the 1970s feminist, indigenous, LGBT movements - among others - exposed the multiple dimensions of oppression in western societies, in relation to the multicultural nature of contemporary cities (Young, 1990; Sandercock, 1998).

The problematization of the modernist unitarism shifted from a construction based on the impossible synthesis of political values to the impossible combination of cultural differences into a single comprehensive political community (Palermo, 2004: 163). This critical effort has also involved the modernist dimension of marxist theories, for their reduction of all struggles in a unitary theory of class struggles (Sandercock, 1998). The rational-comprehensive approach to planning was not just blind to political values, but also to the multiple cultural epistemologies embodying political preferences and cultural identities (ibid). The prescribed role of the planner in Sandercock's radical postmodern meaning is not to rationally define a "public interest", but to validate the multiple epistemologies of multiple

publics. This renewed radical planning operates between civil society and the State, arguing that both have repressive and transformative elements. (Allmendinger, 2002)

Criticizing the universalistic and dominant approach of top-down action, this radical perspective explores the actions of citizens emerging beyond formal and rationalistic plans. Citizen actions are assessed for their generation of narratives and historiographies alternative to the dominant modernist state planning narrations (Holston 1995, in Friedmann, 2011: 121), opening the possibility of the multiplicity of urban life and citizenship beyond the modern state (ibid: 48).

“Insurgency” has been introduced by Holston (1995; 2008) to categorize these citizen actions. Insurgent actions are explored for their work “against the modernist absorption of citizenship in a project of state-building” (Holston 1995: 48, in Friedmann, 2011: 121), defining instead their own insurgent citizenship. Insurgent planning follows on the insurgent citizenship concept, referring to mobilizations “challenging existing relations of power in some form” (Sandercock 1999: 41), by formulating alternative strategies of action. Planning is not understood as a professional activity, but as a practice performed also by mobilized communities in a transformative sense (ibid: 42): citizens are insurgent planners, as they engage in the formulation of strategies opposing existing power relations through social mobilizations.

Following the seminal works of Holston and Sandercock, the concept has been further developed in planning debates by other authors. Miraftab (2009) understands insurgent planning as the practices “responding to neoliberal specifics of dominance through inclusion” (ibid: 32), and as “purposeful actions that aim to disrupt domineering relationships of oppressors to the oppressed, and to destabilize such a status quo through consciousness of the past and imagination of an alternative future” (ibid: 44).

Insurgent planning practices are defined through three principles: transgression, counter-hegemony and imagination (ibid: 33). Insurgent planning is transgressive as it goes beyond “false dichotomies” of formal/informal and the categorization of national boundaries. It is counter-hegemonic as it refuses imposed and normalized relations of dominance to assert citizens’ self-determination. It is imaginative as it opposed the “There is no alternative” neoliberal discourse, providing hope to build just alternatives (ibid: 46).

Empirical research of insurgent planning scholars focuses on reappropriation actions. Ay and Miraftab (2016) explore the Gezi Park movement in Istanbul, launched “in response to neoliberal aggression and the assault on the public sphere and public spaces” (ibid: 2), to explore insurgent practices as “creative spatial practices that help to destabilize what is considered common sense in urban development and expand the realms of possibility and imagination for (re)development of urban spaces” (ibid: 2), generating new arenas of action and democratic debate.

Ay and Miraftab explore acts that are transgressing symbolic orders, giving new meanings to urban spaces and to social rituals. Insurgent planners are not (just) professional planners, but also anyone transgressing, countering and reimagining socio-political forces in urban spaces. As assessed by Watson (2012: 87), they are people such as writers, researchers, mothers, performing actions like book publication or community organizing, whose insurgent practices range from individual to collectively organized actions.

Similarly, Garcia-Lamarca (2017), explores the PAH movement in Spain, inquiring insurgency through a practice perspective (Schatzki et al, 2001) to “engage explicitly with more detailed socio-spatial and political processes around an emancipatory, democratic politics” (Garcia-Lamarca, 2017: 5). Practices like blocking evictions and recuperating empty housing are defined insurgent as they are a “collective socio-spatial and political nexus of actions”, that “enact equality and disrupt the dominant production of space, creating possibilities to generate new urban meanings and relations contrary to institutionalized ones and against the interests of dominant powers (for example, the 1%)” (ibid).

In recent years, the “insurgent” category has also been criticized, exposing its limitations: empirical researches on insurgent practices have exposed the limited emancipatory and inclusive effects claimed by many researchers. Investigating the everyday shaping of urban spaces by marginalized women in South Africa, Meth (2010) observes classic insurgent practices of “self-help housing, entrepreneurial practices, collective action, and resistance to particular state interventions” (ibid: 242), but also their vigilantism practices to “manage and resist very high levels of crime and violence” (ibid: 242). She categorizes them as insurgent for their opposition to the state and production of alternative futures (as in Sandercock’s definition (1999: 41)).

Meth complexifies the debate on insurgent planning. She deconstructs the binary analytical differentiation of repressive and transformative action, arguing for a more complex assessment of insurgent practices as potentially both transformative and repressive (Meth, 2010: 247). She further questions the categorization of individuals and groups as either marginalized or oppressors, arguing for the possibility of being both at the same time (ibid: 247-248). Her critical effort pushes for a more empirically grounded analysis of insurgency, beyond the assumed patterns of oppression and the dichotomy of transformation and repression (ibid: 258-259). Research should be grounded and adopt a situated perspective to make sense of the ambiguities of insurgency (ibid: 260).

Davy (2019) further explores the ambiguities of insurgent planning, wondering if practices moved by alt-right and anti-immigrant ideologies fit the definition of insurgent practices. He argues that these actions - such as the Waco siege, Pegida rallies, etc - fit Friedmann’s (2002) definition, as they are

“self-declared and voluntary, their active participation is temporary and non-territorial, they wish to expand their view on spaces of (what they think is) democracy, and they seek comradeship from anti-government, xenophobic, nationalist, and potentially violent individuals and groups” (Davy, 2019: 293).

Far-right actions can also fit the definitions of Miraftab (2009) and Sandercock (1999), and their inclusion in Garcia-Lamarca’s (2017) category might be contested on the basis of the interpretation we give to “equality”. While the creators of the category implicitly linked this approach to a specific progressive ideology, it is now clear how actions fitting the “insurgency” category are not characterised per se by a transformative or repressive nature, but by the adoption of strategy of direct action. This strategy can be used by radical social groups with different ideologies against (what are perceived to be) dominant powers to generate alternatives.

Different radical planning theories developed analytical frameworks focused on citizen initiatives of urban transformation. In the last 50 years the center of the debate has shifted from policy critique to structure critique (Sager, 2016), changing the meanings of citizen initiative and urban transformation: the exploration began with a critique of modernist planning through the generation of competing bottom-up plans and concluded with the (physical and cognitive) transformation of urban spaces by citizen insurgencies defined by their critique against state powers, neoliberalism (Miraftab, 2009), the 1%, or other dominant powers (Garcia-Lamarca, 2017).

These different theories share an understanding of initiatives as socially transformative on the basis of their divergence with instituted laws and regulations, assuming a common commitment to equality. But the practice of insurgency does not directly imply the generation of emancipative social effects: this critique emerges from critiques rooted in different perspectives: while Davy (2019) roots his critique on the basis of the motivations of some actions falling under the insurgent definition, Meth (2010) develops her critique on the basis of the practices and their effects. Her call for empirical groundedness leads us to reflect on the connection of motivation and effects. Furthermore, the main perspectives in insurgent planning research observe the relationship between oppressed and oppressor as a static dynamic of roles. The self-determination of the oppressed through counter-hegemonic strategies (Miraftab, 2009) is interpreted as a process of revendication of pre-determined, static identities, rooted in stable and fixed cultural, religious and ethnic dimensions. This approach to the politics of difference (Sandercock, 1998; Young, 1990), focused on static and fixed cultural identities, limits the possibilities of transforming ideas and preferences.

In this subsection, I explored how the most debated claims regarding insurgent practices are related to their interpretation as emancipative, criticizing the direct linkage of emancipation and insurgency, focusing in particular on the presence of anti-emancipative aims and practices.

In the next subsection I explore fields of research focusing on citizen experiences developing their social transformative dimension not just in their goals, but also in the means of intervention.

2.1.2 Building alternative spaces: the limits of intentionality

Radical and insurgent planning are not the only field of research focusing on critical and alternative practices. I choose to explore a minor and unsystematized field in planning and urban research. In this field we can find researches on experiences advancing structural critiques (Sager, 2016: 1272), but focusing both on ends (the hierarchy of the values and goals in society) and on means (the ways of organizing, deciding and participating) while radical and insurgent planning focuses on citizen direct actions advancing structural critiques and proposing alternative ends of action (Sager, 2018: 5).

The first subsection focused on analytical perspectives exploring citizen initiatives constructing their relevance on the criticism of ends (and the direct pursuit of alternative ends), this second subsection collects perspectives focusing on experiences shifting towards a coupled reinterpretation of ends and means, and therefore on the practice of alternative organizing, everyday life and interaction. In particular, I will focus here on researches analysing the transformative potentials of spaces based on autonomy and self-management.

Differently from the insurgent and radical planning debate, this field does not constitute an organic perspective in international planning and urban research, with different models overlapping in the analysis of empirical cases. I will therefore explore the empirical and analytical works of other fields of research and minor planning perspectives.

Furthermore, this perspective focuses only tangentially on these citizen initiatives as urban interventions. The analysis of intentional communities, commons and autonomous spaces is mostly focused on their political relevance, leaving the processes of urban intervention in the background. When mentioned, their impact on urban intervention is related to their political dimensions, and to the way their “otherness” generates spaces of alternative interaction, both at collective and individual level. Research also focuses on the alternative dwelling and urban transformation processes, unhinging existing and institutional procedures.

Sager (ibid) recently reflected on intentional communities as experiences of activist planning. An intentional community is “a group of people who have chosen to live together to achieve a common

purpose, cooperatively trying to create and uphold a lifestyle reflecting their shared core values and ideas of the good society, and underlining their difference from the mainstream” (Kozeny, 1995, in *ibid*). Intentional communities often diverge from mainstream lifestyles on the basis of their “promotion of arts and crafts, social change, religion, counter-culture, ecological living, peace work, care and therapy, or experimental family relations” (Sager, 2018: 2).¹

The members of the intentional communities engage in different types of spatial transformations. Sager (*ibid*) focused on the planning practices of the Svartlamon community in Trondheim, Norway. The community was created in 1990 by a group of youngsters to establish an “alternative way of living”, pursuing artistic interests “without having their dreams crushed by the material chase”, and supporting the ideal of “conviviality” (*ibid*: 12). Since its official recognition in 1998, the community generated a series of strategic plans, into which the members of the intentional community were able to translate their main collective values, even if the planning processes generated internal tensions. (*ibid*: 19). Some of these plans were developed with municipal authorities. The specific lifestyle of the community also influenced the planning process: for example the flat decision-making structure and consensus-based decisions slowed the decision-making process (*ibid*:9).

Intentional communities also generate urban transformations by the direct action of their members, which take place in a different framework incentivizing the enactment of specific behaviors. For example, the shared implicit rules of the Free Town of Christiania in Copenhagen, Denmark, promote autonomy, creativity and self-expression. Even if dwellings should abide local standards, “given the particular status of this space, no one feels pushed to observe any kind of rule or standard” (Vanolo, 2012: 9). The buildings (and their interiors) are experimental creations that aim “to provoke and to renegotiate the limit of what we consider ‘normal’ ” (*ibid*: 9).

Perspectives on intentional communities are generally based on the assessment of their “otherness” (Sager, 2018; Coppola and Vanolo, 2014) compared with existing outer institutions, but also on the translation of their constitutional principles in collective plans and material productions. Furthermore, the specific regulatory framework of these communities, based on non-mainstream values, is explored both in its effects on the actions of members, and in its relation to other institutions out of the spatial limits (Coppola and Vanolo, 2014).

¹ Sager argues that intentional communities can be seen as part of the “communities of resistance” proposed by Sandercock (1998). While I agree with this interpretation, I chose to present them separately for the focus of intentional community research not just on the fact that they resist some domination, but in particular on the propositive and prefigurative nature of these experiences.

The category of intentional community defines its field or research by putting the emphasis on the existence in these experiences of an intention of generating alternative systems of interaction. Other fields of research focus instead on the specifics of alternative systems, like the commons and autonomous spaces.

Another relevant category in contemporary debates is the “urban common”. Following the resurgence of the Common after Ostrom’s “Governing the commons” (1990), the urban common has been adopted in planning and urban research to interpret citizen initiatives. As generally understood, the practice of the Common is based on the collective sharing and direct self-management of resources, within a collective institutional setting regulating the interactions between individuals and resources. Without exploring in detail the broad implications of the Common as a political project², we can say that the alternativeness of commoning as a practice can be assessed from a liberal or a post-marxist standpoint (Bianchi, 2018b). For liberals as Ostrom this practice is a resource management system alternative to the approaches institutionalized by the State and the Market. Through their critical interpretation of capitalism as a project enacted both by the Market and the State, post-marxists stress instead the political value of the Common as a project of emancipation of people from capitalism (ibid: 3). In their view, the practice of the common as a collective self-management of resources can make groups and individuals move towards a revolutionary self-government beyond the State and the Market (Dardot and Laval, 2010; Hardt and Negri, 2001).

Chatterton (2010; 2016) extensively elaborates on urban commons as analytical tools, focusing on commoning as a dynamic social practice. He claims that interpreting the city or urban life as urban commons might “deepen our understandings of spatial justice and the city” (2010: 627), while generating new political imaginaries. This analytical approach, he argues, might help challenge the logics of capitalism, supporting instead “a radical commonization of the production of urban space and everyday life in the city” (ibid: 628).

Empirically, this approach is attentive to the commoning practices, and on their role in the development of a general emancipation project. Bianchi (2018a) explores three different Urban Commons (understood as relations between social groups and spatial resources) in Barcelona, assessing their self-management practices, the production of their Common, and the emancipatory effects of the Common on the commoners. Exploring a recent community-led co-housing project, Chatterton (2016) instead focuses not just on the micro-practices of self-management of its members, but also on their implications on post-capitalist transition beyond the “niche” of the common.

² see Bianchi, 2018a for further informations

Commoning practices and the Common as a concept are increasingly diffuse categories in radical and critical urban research. As with theories on intentional communities, commons are observed for their institutionalization of an alternative way of organizing as alternative means and ends. While an intentional community tends to cover most aspects of the life of its members, each Common instead relates only to specific aspects of their life, among which the maintenance, use and transformation of urban spaces. Furthermore, post-marxist theories on the Common interpret each urban common as part of a unitary project aiming against neoliberalism and capitalism.

Citizen initiatives can be included in different categories by different theories, as their multiple dimensions often overlap. The Free Town of Christiania, already described as an intentional community for its collectively and intentionally generated lifestyle, has also been described as an “autonomous space” (Coppola and Vanolo, 2014). Autonomous spaces are “spaces where people desire to constitute non-capitalist, egalitarian and solidaristic forms of political, social, and economic organisation through a combination of resistance and creation” (Pickerill and Chatterton, 2006: 730). The category potentially includes experiences and processes of urban intervention such as “social centres, eco-villages, food production, housing cooperatives and self-education and experiments in non-hierarchical organization and consensus-based decision-making” (ibid: 731).

“Autonomous spaces” are rooted in the concept of autonomy, whose meaning is contested across different political traditions, from autonomists to anarchists. Pickerill and Chatterton interpret Castoriadis’ (1991) definition of autonomy as a project with individual and collective aspects: “individual autonomy implies individuals’ capacity to make choices in freedom, while collective autonomy implies the self-rule of a given society or group through the freedom of its institutions and equal participation in institutions” (Pickerill and Chatterton, 2006: 733-734). Autonomy is understood not just as an end, but also as a mean (Chatterton, 2010): autonomous spaces are “based around a belief that the process is as important as the outcome of resistance, that the journey is an end in itself”(Pickerill and Chatterton, 2006: 738).

The idea of autonomy is also crucial in the recently resurgent anarchist and post-anarchist perspectives in planning literature (Hillier, 2017; Newman, 2011; Purcell, 2016, 2017). Here, autonomous spaces are understood as being “heterogeneous to the order of the state and capitalism”, focusing “on fostering alternative ways of life, new relations and intensities” (Newman, 2011: 10).

Empirically, the qualification of spaces and movements as autonomous is often constructed around their collective autonomy: Chatterton interprets autonomy as “a deep desire to expand collective capacity for self government” beyond capitalism, hierarchy, and authoritarianism (2010: 899). Researches on

Italian Social Centres have mostly interpreted their autonomous nature on the basis of their collective self-management processes (Piazza, 2016; Mudu, 2004), dedicating little attention to autonomy as individual and decentralized freedom within a broader constitutive framework (Membretti, 2007; Mudu, 2012).

An exploration of the internal organizing of autonomous social movements reveals instead that even if movements are self-managing at collective level, internal relations might not be devoid of hierarchical dimensions (Pruijt and Roggeband, 2014).

Interpretations of citizen initiatives as autonomous spaces have focused on their divergence from external institutions on the basis of their adoption of specific values and collective self-management, implicitly claiming that this divergence is sufficient to imply the absence of authoritarianism and hierarchy in these spaces. These claims are problematic for their determinism: the aims of the organization and the adoption of specific governing practices can not be taken as indicators of transformations at individual level, even if they are described to be intentionally aiming at a coherence of ends and means.

The categories explored in this subsection highlight critical aspects that are also common to research on insurgent planning, like the determinism between collective and individual, and between intention and effects.

The understanding of these experiences of urban intervention on the basis of their intentions presents political and analytical problems. These aspects are interconnected, but for clarity we'll explore them as separate.

In these two subsections, researchers praised some of these experiences for their political value. But a commitment to the development of emancipation, anti-hierarchy and anti-authoritarianism in practice would require a critical effort not just towards the maligned neoliberal order, but also towards the distortions and the limits of these experiences. The examples of perspectives analytically grounded on autonomy at the practice level (Pruijt and Roggeband, 2014; Mudu, 2012) provide useful indications to reflect on the problems of institutionalization and the presence of hierarchical structures, that could assist them in their improvement.

The analytical problems are rooted in the identification of experiences with their intentions: researchers claim that these experiences have specific characters and effects, but the verification of this claim is based on deterministic assessments of coherence between intention and effects³. Scholars focusing

³ In particular research on insurgent planning and autonomous spaces, while commons and intentional communities have a more grounded approach

on the situated perspective of these experiences, argue instead that effects do not always follow the initial intentions.

At a broader level, in their quest for alternatives to capitalism and “other forms of domination”, researchers in these first two subsections generally limit their focus to experiences explicitly aiming at these goals. Under these perspectives, the effects of social transformation being evaluated are often only the ones being generated as consequence of intentional action. This limit is the other side of the deterministic interpretation of effects through explicit intentions: implicitly, they assert that the desired effects derive from an intentional pursuit.

To further reflect on this double-edged point (does intentional action generates the desired effects? The effects we desire can be generated only through intentional action?), we should shift our understanding of action. In the next subsection I will introduce the works of Pierluigi Crosta, which provide a pragmatist perspective on territorial action, its effects and its relations to intentionality.

2.1.3 Reconsidering action by its effects: the works of Pierluigi Crosta through pragmatism

Pierluigi Crosta has developed a unique perspective on urban planning, urban policies and urban practices. He introduced contributions from other fields in the Italian urban planning debate, like policy analysis, pragmatist philosophy and pragmatic sociology. He mixed works from overseas (Lindblom, Hirschman, Schön, Dewey, Park, Elster), from Europe (Bourdieu, Boltanski, Thevenot, Crozier, Giddens) and from Italy (Donolo, Melucci, Dente), offering a unique and eclectic combination. His works have been widely influential on Italian scholarship in the last 30 years, but the lack of international publications and translations of his works limited the diffusion of his oeuvre.

To understand Crosta’s perspective on citizen initiatives, we have to place it in the context of his broader theoretical reflections.

In the 1970s and 1980s Crosta’s empirical inquiry focused on the processes of urbanization of the Milan metropolitan area (Crosta, 1983; 1988). In these researches, Crosta explores the concrete systems of action for the transformation and production of the territory, focusing on the constellations of involved actors beyond their formal roles.

Crosta (1983) observes the generation of unintended effects through some of these planning actions⁴. He argues that planning - at the time - is “obsessed” with control, through the assessment of effects (intended and unintended) of the planning action. The (not so implicit) normative aspect in planning

⁴ Considering planning actions (“Azioni di piano”) as the actions performed around the construction of urban plans

prescribed to try to limit the unintended effects. The general assumption was that this action of control - as limitation of unintended effects - would ensure the effectiveness of the planning action itself (ibid: 40).

The effects are measured through the lens of the plan and its intentions: the ex post effects are assessed through ex ante objectives and a priori rationality (Crozier and Friedberg, 1977). The implicit assumption of this approach is that, facing a problem, a rational solution “exists and it is identifiable a priori” (Crosta, 1983: 42). And that, since the definition of this solution is a cognitive problem rather than a political one, it can be attained through technical and scientific reasoning. The divergence between intended and unintended effects can therefore be reduced increasing the knowledge informing decisions a priori.

But rationality and preferences are not predetermined (Crosta, 1983: 44) : they are discovered in action through mutual adjustments (Lindblom, 1959), and identified a posteriori (Crozier and Friedberg, 1977). The relevant knowledge is interactive (“generated in action”) rather than analytical (“generated for the decision”) (Crosta, 1998; Lindblom and Cohen, 1979). Effects coherent or divergent from the intended aims are not negative or positive per se (Hirschman, 1975). The efforts to impose an a priori rationality to the interpretation of unintended effects constitute a loss in terms of chances of learning and adaptive change.

The shift from knowledge-to-decide to act-to-know implies a critique of the traditional planning sequence of “knowing/deciding/intervening” (Crosta, 1986: 276), that saw planning as method to decide how to solve problems (Webber, 1963). Crosta argues that planning consists instead in processes of re-definition of problems (Crosta, 1990b: 279), through an empirical system of multiple interaction (Crosta, 1986: 271), with a multiplicity of relevant actors interactively influencing the construction of the plan in its different phases. The effects of planning action are not intentionally designed by a single collective actor, but are the outcomes of the interactions of multiple views (ibid: 281; 1987: 120).

The understanding of this interactive system as a predetermined system of roles and functions, prescribed by functionalist and methodological individualist interpretations (Crosta, 1987), describes only a part of the plan. In reality roles are never so clearly defined (Boudon, 1979, in Crosta 1987), and actors have margins of freedom and autonomous action where to construct their actorship (Crosta, 2010: 8). This interdependent system generates unintended effects, that are not included in a functionalist and deterministic analysis (Crosta, 1987: 119). The planning process is therefore observed not as the interaction of actors performing their prescribed roles, rather it is “constituted by interactions that eventually take the shape of joint action if the subjects demonstrate the ability of reframing the shape and rules of the interaction” (Crosta, 1990a). Crosta argues instead that roles are constructed through transactions (Crosta, 2010: 8), introducing the distinction between interaction and transaction developed by Dewey and Bentley (1949 in Crosta, 2010: 81-83). Interactions are performed by objects and subjects

whose characters are predetermined and are not mutating through interaction, generating previsible outcomes on the basis of roles and functions. Transactions are instead processes where roles are generated in the process, as actors develop their actorship by mutually determining their constitutive elements (2010: 111).

In this interactive perspective, then, the ability to learn and to construct common shared frames - through interactive knowledge as trial and error - is crucial for the absorption of diverse positions (ibid: 14) in order to generate the worlds-in-common necessary for the plan to be a joint action (Crosta, 1998).

Rather than providing easy answers, the path developed by Crosta complexifies the questions posed at the end of the last subsection. Intentional action can generate the desired effects, but it can also result in unintended effects. And if the effects do not (necessarily) match the actors' intentions, the analysis of the effects and impacts of action should not focus on the actors' a priori intentions, rather on the effects - intended and unintended - generated interactively. In this perspective, to focus on the aims of autonomous spaces disregards the potentials for innovation generated in the experiences and anomalies is a loss in innovation. Furthermore, actors can not be exhaustively classified in predetermined functional roles, since their involvement has to be explored through the interactions, where they construct their actorship.

Crosta also adopts the concept of "practice" (Pasqui, 2001; Schatzki, 2001). Practices are "collective unintentional and routinized actions" (Crosta, 2010: 128). They are "what the people do" (Veyne, 1978, in Crosta, 1998: 63). Practices can be seen as routines: collective, frequent and repetitive ways of acting. People perform practices "without questioning them every time, because they already did it and that's how it is done" (Crosta, 2010: 131). Practices are not intentionally constructed as collective, but rather become so through interactions of combination and adjustment of multiple actors.

Focusing on the construction of plans, Crosta advances the interpretation of urban planning as a diffuse and plural practice (1998: 61-64), performed not just by professional urban planners claiming the ownership of expert knowledge (knowledge-to-decide) and the supremacy of analytical problem solving. Instead, Crosta argues that a plurality of actors are involved in interactive problem solving, using interactive knowledge (act-to-know). This perspective furthers the refusal of the analytical (and political) distinction of actors who plan and actors who are planned, beyond a functionalist understanding of roles.

The traditional functionalistic urban planning perspective sees planning as the localization of functions on the territory, acknowledging the territory as the object of planning practices (Crosta, 1998: 40). But the functions distributed through planning practices define just partially the activities and uses performed on the territory.

Crosta advances a reconceptualization of the object of planning, from “the territory” to “the uses people make of the territory” (Crosta, 1990: 115; 2010). The analytical focus is therefore expanded to include social practices of use of the territory (following Martinotti’s (1993) notion of “city users” (in Crosta, 2010: 91; 110)).

These practices of use of the territory are relevant in planning and public policy as they can be considered processes of eventual production of public goods (2010: 142). To understand this claim, we have to introduce the concept of public, deriving from Dewey (1927): “the public, for Dewey, is “making public”, meaning a process, variable in time and space” (Crosta, 2010: 97). It is a concept rooted in the consequences of actions. The unintended consequences of transactions are public when they affect other people beyond the ones directly involved in the transaction (Dewey, 1927: 12), “to such extent that it is deemed necessary to have those consequences systemically cared for” (ibid: 15).

The public is at the same time an object and a subject: the public - as a subject - is constituted in the process of construction of the public - as an object (Crosta, 2010: 58n): the content and nature of the perceived consequences - positive or negative - are socially defined in the interactive process of constitution of the group of people affected by these consequences and willing to act in relation to these effects.

In this sense, the public can also be considered as a process of inquiry, shifting a situation from indeterminate to determinate (Dewey, 1938). The effects are initially acknowledged, but their determination requires a process of interactive learning and experimentation. The public character of actions can not be intentionally designed, rather is learnt and “proved” a posteriori (Crosta, 2010: 15-16; 98).

In the common sense approach, we mean public actions as the ones performed by public actors, as the state, whose actorship is defined a priori (Crosta, 2010: 14-15). In Crosta’s and Dewey’s interpretation, the State and all institutions usually considered as “public actors” are decoupled from public action: the public value of an action is a character that does not emerge from specific actors, but from the own effects of action, a posteriori.

Practices of use of the territory have the potential of generating public goods. For example public spaces are constructed through social interactions: they can be considered public if different people, performing different activities in the same place, acknowledge the effects of reciprocal limitation generated by their simultaneous presence on site (Crosta, 2010: 18-19). The public nature of these public goods derives from the uses people make of it, and the learning processes taking place. It is the eventual outcome of social interactions (ibid: 16; 54), and it is “proven” in use (ibid: 165).

Social practices as processes of production of public goods also have a dynamic nature, rooted in the cognition of actors. Like inquiries, they emerge by recognizing a problematic situation - “something is wrong” - and feeling the need to act directly to change said situation (Crosta, 2010: 17). Practices emerge as collective interactive constructions, incrementally identifying a problem and testing its viable solutions in a specific environment. The practices progressively shift into routines and institutional form: the uses are objectified and get more rigid, requiring less attention in interaction (ibid: 143). The public effects are taken for granted, since every cycle of the practice is a “test” of its effects (ibid: 165-166). Their eventual breakdown (Lanzara, 1993) generates uncertain situations, requiring a high level of social inventive and mutual learning, but at the same time allowing greater autonomy of action (Crosta, 2010: 145-146).

Crosta’s pragmatic approach to practices and publics is linked to his understanding of the concept of public policy, influenced by a policy analysis approach. Crosta understands public policies as “the set of actions performed/undergone by an set of subjects (the actors) in some way related to the solution of a collective problem - be it a need, an opportunity or an unanswered demand - generally considered of public interest” (Dente, 1990, from Dunn, 1981). Public policies are interactive constructs (Hecl, 1972) of intentional and unintentional actions around a specific problematic situation, performed by different actors exchanging and generating effects. They are both processes and products (Wildavsky, 1979): they are processes of becoming (Crosta, 2010: 168-169) and testing in practice the public effects into stable solutions.

As the definition implies, public policies are seen as constructs developed not just by public administrations, but also by society: social practices can be considered public policies as they verify in practice their production of public effects and public goods (ibid: 22).

The understanding of society as direct producer of public goods marks a shift from the “political demand” model, that sees the State as the actor charged with the definition and resolution of social problems and needs (ibid: 38), and the generation of public goods. In this model, the state, through experts, identifies needs and formulates solutions to be implemented upon a passive society (ibid: 39). It gathers consensus around proposed courses of action envisioning their expected public outcomes, in order to reach shared decisions (ibid: 114).

But in our contemporary society of differences, plural conceptions of public good coexist and clash. The unitarism of public administrations’ actions - with the unitarism of solutions and univoque and rigid democratic decision-making procedures - tends to ignore the differences present in society (ibid: 22), reducing a plurality of visions of public goods in a unique and univoque public good (ibid: 41). The

recognition of the existence of a plurality of publics and public goods requires - both analytically and normatively - the recognition of the multiplicity and differentiation of spaces of democratic social interaction, beyond participatory or representative democracy (ibid: 115).

The multidimensional approach developed by Crosta leads to broad shifts of established analytical categories. In the first two subsections we explored theories that stated the essential difference of citizen action with institutional action. Crosta, while recognizing that social practices produce plural public goods through alternative modes (ibid: 16; 115), puts public administrations' and citizens' actions on the same level, exploring them for their production of public effects, and not on predetermined actorship. Policy-makers and policy-takers are not fixed categories: every interaction can potentially generate public effects, recognizing the plural, multiple and different processes of production of public goods in our societies of difference.

As a result, this approach understands public administrations as less powerful: not all actions performed by the State are generating public effects, and not all public effects are performed by the State. Furthermore, exploring public administrations in their cognitive and normative functioning, we can discover their institutional flaws (De Leonardis, 2001; Douglas, 1990), with internal inertia, consolidation of roles, inability to learn and threatening implications of their actions on the social production of publics (Schön, 1989 in Crosta, 2010: 99).

The category of citizen initiatives relevant for planning research is expanded. The reason to observe and analyse them lies in their eventual public effects, rather than in the intentions motivating them, their political claims or their antagonistic approaches. The bottom-up actions Crosta focuses therefore on are not the intentionally revolutionary actions, but the ones interactively producing public goods, be they openly-conflictual actions or unintentional routinized practices of use of space.

Social transformation in this approach is not primarily linked with deliberate choices or specific ideologies. Change is primarily adaptation and adjustment, not always deliberate. It can be seen as an eventual outcome of processes of learning, with the recalibration of actions by the effects.

This perspective opens to a micro-sociological approach to the exploration of bottom-up practices of everyday use of space, and of processes beyond the agenda of public institutions and explicitly-conflictual or politically-motivated actors.

2.1.4 Italian empirical focuses on citizen initiatives

Resonances of Crosta's approach - in particular in relation to his perspectives and linkages of public policies, practices and the public - can be found in the works of several Italian scholars in the last decades.

While Crosta's late publications focused on theoretical issues and related indirectly to citizen initiatives, other researchers focused empirically on these initiatives in the Italian context. It is probably excessive to affirm that Crosta generated a specific approach in urban planning research, but we can nonetheless argue that he developed an innovative and lively analytical framework.

This subsection introduces the empirical researches and the analytical perspectives developed by other Italian scholars in the last decades, focusing on contemporary perspectives and debates. The Italian context is particularly suitable for an approach based on citizen initiatives based on everyday practices, because of the diffuse engagement of citizens in bottom-up and self-organized actions. Institutional public policies in Italy are not able to cover the demand of public goods (both quantity-wise and quality-wise): citizens therefore experiment frequently with social production of public goods beyond public administrations (Donolo, 2005: 34-37; 47-48)

In this rich context, authors developed different definitions and categories to observe citizen initiatives, sharing a similar empirical approach by observing initiatives in their micro-sociological dimensions. The subsection cuts across the different categories focusing on the public value of citizen initiatives and on the dichotomic understanding of public administrations and citizen initiatives.

One of the main points of contact of Crosta's reflections with other scholars is the use of the notion of "the public" from pragmatist philosophy.

Presenting a research on over 40 cases of citizen initiatives in the city of Milan, Balducci (et al, 2004) interprets them as experiences of "bottom-up production of urban public goods", playing a relevant role in the treatment of public problems (2004: 7). Warning about the excessive weight assigned to public administrations in the analysis and tackling of public problems, he expresses the need for a more focused analysis of these practices (2004: 10; Cognetti et al, 2004: 21).

These initiatives do not fall under a unique institutional or administrative category, including social actors, private actors or third sector actors. They are youth social centres, environmental associations, charity foundations, neighborhood committees, volunteering associations. Their production of public effects emerges as they increasingly engage in direct action for the resolution of the problems they face (Cognetti et al, 2004: 20): for example, an environmental association starts to manage a urban park instead of advancing claims of responsibility of public administrations, a volunteering association develops cultural activities beyond its initial activities, and so on. Their aims (obtaining public services and goods), instead of being objects of claims for intervention of other actors, are directly pursued in practice (Vitale, 2007: 12).

These experiences organize interests, needs and capacities and they are able - often unintentionally - to treat public problems experimenting innovative solutions (Cognetti et al 2004: 17), between their local contexts and metropolitan networks. These experiences produce public goods and mobilize social capital, with an approach alternative to the reductionism of public administrations (Balducci, 2004: 10). They operate in an intermediate space between private and institutional action (Lanzara, 2004: 32). This autonomous social production of public has always been practiced in cities (Cellamare, 2018: 13), but is today particularly noticeable because the public effects of these actions are more significant in a context of welfare cutbacks (Cellamare, 2011: 148).

Similarly, Paba defines self-organized social experiences as “direct and autonomous initiatives of elaboration and management of projects and processes of transformation emerging from civil society [...], and more generally the bottom-up development of social practices able to generate common goods and collective services” (Paba, 2011: 68). He understands practices as “the skillful art of making things happen” (ibid: 105): following Hamdi (2004) and Sandercock (1998) he argues that self-organized practices have the innovative potential of transforming cities through incremental changes.

The bottom-up production of public goods is seen as “bottom-up public policies” or “self-organized public policies” (Cellamare, 2011: 104). For Paba these policies are “profoundly different” from traditional public policies (ibid: 108). These experiences seldom invent unconventional public services and goods (Paba, 2011: 111). These inventions, like the social reuse of abandoned buildings, often emerge by reframing problematic situations into opportunities, generating public effects through the treatment of yet unformalized tacit needs (Cottino and Zeppetella, 2009: 55).

On the other side, not all practices are innovative. Some of them make up for the shortcomings of public administrations on basic needs, for example squatting housing for people unable to afford market rents and not included in public housing, or by managing the maintenance of parks. (Cellamare, 2018: 12).

Focusing on the processes of interaction rather than on the effects, many authors assess the existence of a fundamental difference between citizen initiatives and the actions of public administrations (Cognetti et al, 2004). Crosta roots this difference in different characters: these citizen initiatives have a plural dimension, while public administrations tend to be unitarist; public administrations and social practices require different types of knowledges for action. Public administrations are often plagued by institutional inertia and inability to adapt and learn⁵, while citizen actions are more free.

⁵ For an extensive debate, see section 2.3

The discussions on the differences of public administrations and citizen initiatives in the Italian context focuses on this last point: citizen initiatives are seen as non-institutionalized actions, while public administrations are observed for the backwardness of institutionalized dimensions. Research focuses on the cognitive and normative differences of these two types of actions, even beyond the disciplinary boundaries of urban planning.

Lanzara (1983, 1993, 2004) explores the responses of citizens and institutions in situations of routine disruption. One of his main fields of research was the 1980 Irpinia earthquake, where he observed the generation of new senses and ways of organizing by citizens' direct action (1983). In these contexts of increased complexity, where ordinary experience is useless, informal and horizontal direct action can be an effective style to establish operations. Through negative capability, actors generate actions "that surge from the void, from the loss of sense and order, but are open to the enactment of possible worlds" (Lanzara, 2016: 7). By redefining the relation of their practice with their environment, they shape their practice and their formative context (Lanzara, *ibid*: 26), developing new capacities and competences to answer social demands beyond institutionalized expertises (Cottino, 2009).

At the same time, this logic of action clashes with formal institutions, whose intervention may be lethal for these direct actions (Lanzara, 1983: 84-87): their urgency for formalization, accountability and recognition may generate perverse effects, reducing citizens' motivations and commitment to act (Lanzara, 2004: 32).

Cellamare also explores this difference, focusing on re-appropriation practices in Rome. Re-appropriation practices are practices of use and activation of abandoned or underused spaces and buildings by local citizens. Acknowledging that the meaning of places is continuously produced and reproduced through their use (Cellamare, 2008: 134), these practices can be seen as spontaneous and bottom-up processes of organizing and production of shared meaning (Weick, 1993 in Cellamare, 2011: 33).

Cellamare describes the divergence between public administrations and social practices through Castoriadis' (1975) difference between instituted and instituting society (Cellamare, 2011: 142). The instituted society is composed of rules, fixed structured relations, procedures regulating social life, that over time tend to detach and become autonomous from the experiences and evolutions of society. The instituting society is the set of social dynamics continuously evolving and shifting the meanings embedded in institutions into new forms (*ibid*: 142).

This divergence has a relevant political dimension. Escaping the cognitive and normative dimensions of institutional rules, citizens develop autonomous social organizations, open new paths of definition of the political, and contribute to the opening of new imaginaries of different plural cities (Cottino, 2003: 111).

Their political value lies in their lack of predetermination, generating “practices of freedom” (Foucault, 2001, in Cellamare 2014: 22) based on emergent interactive and spontaneous participation (Cottino, 2003: 111), beyond established forms of conflict and government (Cellamare, 2014: 24).

This approach understands processes of emergent and interactive sensemaking as processes of autonomous action. Differently from the approach adopted by the theorists of “autonomous spaces”, they also explore the individual level of autonomy. Some researchers argue that these experiences aim at constructing anti-institutional experiences without reaching consolidated rules (Cellamare, 2018: 11n), therefore pursuing a permanent state of sensemaking. Empirical research on long-existing experiences - such as Italian social centres - assess instead the emergence and presence of institutional routines and actions even in experiences explicitly pursuing individual autonomy (Mudu, 2012).

The value of social practices of urban action as alternative ways of producing space goes beyond their opening of spaces for the definition and experimentation of alternatives.

Beyond this processual level, social practices of use of space have been understood as alternative for their motivations and consolidated ways of operating. They are generally described as resistance practices against dominant logics of production of space (Cellamare, 2011: 66), like the marketization of the city or the privatization of public buildings and spaces (Cellamare, 2016). These self-organizations are actions not only of resistance, but also of construction of alternatives (Cellamare, 2018).

While some characterize the alternative nature of these practices in their process of reframing of norms and ways of operating (Cottino, 2003: 112), other explore it through their explicit aims, analysing their alternativeness on the basis of their intentions. They aim at generating non-institutionalized spaces (Cellamare, 2018) practicing “intentionally and explicitly alternative management processes” (Cellamare, 2016: 11). These radical alternatives are linked with social change as spaces of debate and elaboration of projects, or as prefigurative practices.

Researchers also underline the limits of these analyses. Some authors already criticized the reductionism surrounding self-organization, pointing out the ambiguity and ambivalence of these practices between public effects and privatized action. These experiences are private actions, often privatistic, yet they generate public effects (Lanzara, 2004). The eventual public effects of these actions can not be a given, but have to be verified in practice with a critical approach (Cellamare, 2018: 13), avoiding simplifications and dichotomies (Ostanel and Attili, 2018: 14). Processes of appropriation have the risk of creating borders, limiting the publicness of spaces and reducing diversity (Ostanel and Cancellieri, 2014: 48).

Lanzara (2004) also underlines how, while these experiences show great promise, research focuses on limited and unstable experiences, often in their initial emergent phases, lacking a long-term perspective on processes of emergent organizing.

2.1.5 Emerging analytical and political perspectives

The previous four subsections provided an overview of the empirical and analytical approaches on citizen initiatives of urban transformation, focusing on their analytical perspectives to assess their effects and their relevance for social change.

Two perspectives emerge from the multiple approaches of the previous subsections. The first perspective emerges primarily from the first two subsections, and the second from the third and fourth subsections - with some notable exceptions. For example, advocacy planning and the characterization of reappropriation practices as alternatives based on their intentionality are linked with both perspectives in different ways.

The first perspective empirically focuses its inquiries on processes of planning, social mobilization and uses of space and territory. These actions are deemed relevant for planning research according to their coherence with the predetermined analytical framework adopted by scholars. This framework assumes the generation of social changes on the basis of the way the actors perform their actions - the direct action of citizens out of state procedures - or by their intentions (on ends and means) - generating a common, creating an intentional community, creating an autonomous space.

Researchers often position these processes into broader normative theories of systematic social transformation - post-anarchism, municipalism, the Common. These theories are based on critiques to the current institutional settings and on their support to the construction of radical alternatives. Actors define what constitutes “public interest” (not just in its unitary form, but also in its plural conception) and “common good” (Crosta, 1998: 8), identifying normative visions of ideal societies. This approach understands social change as a process aimed at the achievement of such desired static state, be it the recognition of pre-determined and static identities, the establishment of counter-hegemonic systems of power or collaborative systems of planning.

This intentional dimension is visible both in the logic of researchers and in their empirical understanding of the citizen initiatives they inquire. In the cases, actors are described to contribute to social change through their definition of an ideal state embodying their vision of “good”, which they then implement in action. Often, their a posteriori interpretation of actions focuses on the comparison of the effects action with the apriori intention of action. (ibid)

Empirical research in this perspective is limited to practices that fit the political and theoretical frameworks adopted by researchers - even if actions are not moved by the same idea of “good”. As we saw in Meth (2010) and in my subsequent critiques at the end of the first subsection, this approach tends to take for granted the generation of certain emancipative effects on the basis of the presence of certain characters of action - be it their conflictual relation with public authorities or the ideologies moving them.

Another limit of this approach is its focus on the assessment of effects as intentional products. Researchers assesses successful or unsuccessful cases of implementation of ideal states on the basis of the evaluation of their effectiveness (as coherence of intentional effects with resulting effects). Research results often in the revision of the predetermined idea of “good” with the theorization of new normative theories of “good”, based on philosophical and political coherence.

The second perspective focuses on empirical cases of everyday practices, urban practices, policy-making processes, social movements and in general social interactions. Their relevance for urban and planning research is not based on the a priori coherence of some of their characters to scholars analytical frameworks, but it is discovered assessing their effects. In this perspective, effects and changes exist only in the interpretations of the actors⁶: empirical research focuses on the perception of intended and unintended effects (and the lack thereof) perceived and subsequently interpreted by actors in their process of interaction.

This perspective adopts a phenomenological, pragmatist and social constructivist approach. Analytically, research programs are designed around the perspectives and interpretations of actors, and on their a posteriori sensemaking. In this perspective, the acknowledgment of unintended effects and learning processes is one of the main points of research.

Instead of focusing on static and pre-determined goals (as ideal states), this perspective postulates that preferences are dynamically discovered (Lindblom, 1990) via mutual adjustment (Lindblom, 1959) with other actors and with the environment in general. As Crosta (1998) suggested, any initial idea of “good” shifts and is contested in action: the “good” common to a group is the eventual product of their interaction as meaning-in-common, not defined a priori. It is a situated “good”, emerging from the field.

In this second perspective researchers rarely formulate normative visions of society based on the establishment of a univoque and static ideal state. Acknowledging instead the presence of plural and evolving notions of “good” in society, they argue for an ideal processual state based on pluralist dialogue and on the presence of specific democratic processes of communication and interaction.

⁶ This approach bears similarities with an interpretive and constructivist approaches to social science (Yanow, 1996; Wagenaar, 2011)

Arguing that social change develops primarily through experiential and interactive learning, researchers in this perspective criticize the cognitive and normative influence of institutions on the ability of individual and collective actors to learn and to change. The works of Lindblom (1990) on impairment and Donolo (1997) on the “intelligence of institutions” are part of this category. Adopting a liberal and pluralist perspective (Allmendinger, 2002: 125), this approach argues for the removal of the cognitive and normative constraints that institutions set upon society, facilitating the diffuse enactment and assessment of changes.

As mentioned in the introduction and discussed in the previous subsections, these two perspectives draw different boundaries around the empirical phenomena they deem relevant for research and practice. The first perspective focuses on intentional actions and on the pursuit of desired effects. Crosta instead recognized the existence of a wide range of intentional and unintentional actions and effects, which we can not and should not ignore.

But this analytical difference is not caused only by the existence or non existence of these actions and effects: it is also closely informed by the (often implicit) normative political and moral values embedded in the systems of thought adopted by the researchers. Both perspectives are in fact normatively oriented towards the pursuit of an idea of “common interest” or “good”.

In fact, analytical and political dimensions are intertwined in our ways of looking and naming the world. For example, considering the IRA as terrorists or freedom fighters “points to a socially constructed framework or paradigm with which we view the world” (Allmendinger, 2002: 9).

In the first perspective, “common interests” and “common goods” are known and defined a priori. Researchers adhere to systems of thought and critique, arguing for the relevance of a right or another, and construct their research program accordingly. Research takes a programmatic dimension, aiming at verifying through empirical research hypotheses of political action.

In this perspective, the focus lies on the actions intentionally and explicitly pursuing the political goals supported by researchers, like in the generation of Commons and autonomous spaces. Alternatively, researchers also qualify as relevant actions if they assess the presence of certain characters of action.

In both cases, though, the evaluation, judgment and qualification of these actions is conducted by the researchers themselves. Researchers engage directly in political debates by supporting specific claims and defending partisan ideas of “public interest”. The researcher formulates moral judgments about what material aspects of society are good or evil, what is right and what is wrong. Capitalism, neoliberalism and racism are interpreted as intentional projects of control and oppression, and the actors involved in their promotion and reproduction are accused and blamed.

This programmatic dimension shows its limits when actions considered to be emancipatory on the basis of their intentions are instead proven to (at least partially) perpetuate systems of oppression (Meth, 2010). The simplification of considering insurgent actions emancipative on the basis of their intentions instead of focusing on their concrete practices hides the limits of these practices. The political aims (supporting emancipation and self-determination) are therefore weakened by the analytical tools used in their support. To consider these oppressions in their research, scholars have to shift their analytical focus from narratives and intentions to actions and practices per se.

In the second perspective, “common interests” and “common goods” are interpreted as outcomes of dynamic processes of social interaction. This liberal approach promotes the development of a pluralist society, acknowledging the existence of multiple legitimate conceptions of “good” in society.

While in the first perspective the main limit to the fulfillment of these “public interests” are the opponent’s ideas of “good”, in this perspective scholars focus on the cognitive limits of social actors to reach agreements bridging across their diverse ideas of “good”. Authors focus on the frames (Schön, 1979; Schön and Rein, 1994) that affect the actors’ policy positions, their political visions, and in general their engagement with the world. In this perspective research aims at facilitating dialogue across frames - through manipulation, reflection, and learning - in order to construct worlds in common to the different positions, often finding blame in institutions’ inability to bend their frames. Researchers do not explicitly support a unique political position but instead promote the development of democratic processes of dialogue (communicative, frame reflection, critical pragmatism, etc).

In this perspective, the acknowledgement of unintended actions and effects is included in the processual dynamics of social interactions. “Common goods” are socially produced through interactions (Crosta, 1998), with little (or no) relevance of the intentionality of said interactions. Furthermore, since the focus lies on the interactions between actors, unintended effects are considered as long as they are appreciated by the actors themselves.

This perspective is similarly rooted in normative political values, focused on the processual development of diverse and plural ideas of good rather than a univoque conception.

One of the main critiques to this perspective is its limited ability to consider the presence of structural relations of power in social interactions. The blockages of institutions are interpreted as cognitive issues rather than deliberate choices of oppression. While the first perspective exceeded in inductively interpreting them as intentional (and therefore execrable), this perspective often places too little attention to the powerful use of frames and constructions of reality by certain actors.

In this perspective, research is oriented to the generation of knowledge to support public administrations in tackling public problems. More or less implicitly, these public institutions are recognized as the legitimate authorities to govern society. The aim of research is often to improve current processes of decision-making, by bending institutionalized frames and facilitating participation.

How to position myself, considering the critical aspects of these two perspectives (as idealized extremes)? Having recognized the embedded political nature of these analytical approaches, the choice of an analytical perspective over another can not be justified solely with arguments of coherence, but has to be supported as well by a political choice by the researcher. That is what I will do in the next subsection.

2.1.6 Towards a plural and dialogical analysis of citizen initiatives

In this subsection I am at explicating my analytical perspective on citizen initiatives of urban transformation, based on the debates of the previous sections and on the awareness of the political value of this choice.

Firstly, the choice of conducting research on citizen initiatives of urban transformation is not politically neutral. The choice stems from the value I place on citizen action, self-organization and political autonomy. With my research, I aim at advancing knowledge on experiences of citizen direct action out of public administrations. It could also provide useful informations, learning points and external advice directly to the organizations object of research, or to other citizen initiatives aiming at reproducing or scaling up these experiences.

While public institutions can learn from these processes, the research was primarily designed to facilitate peer exchange of knowledge across citizen initiatives. Following Friedmann (1987), my approach is akin to the idea of planning as a linkage of knowledge and action in the public domain. In particular, I aim at focusing on the applications of planning for social transformation rather than societal guidance. I believe that public institutions should reduce their area of direct influence, avoiding limits to citizens direct actions. Conducting research on certain situations can also shed light on contexts that we think should be more valued in the political and social debate. If we just focused on institutional policies, we would think that it's the only process of development of public goods. Exposing instead the social production of public goods by citizen initiatives, we have a clearer picture of the actual powers of citizens and the limitations of institutional action.

While I support a program of social transformation through citizen action, I also acknowledge the ambiguous and complex situations composing society and social life, which are interpreted and constructed through a plurality of perspectives by different actors (Rein, 1976: 257). Social facts are assessed through multiple perspectives, plural motivations orient action, and different effects (intentional and unintentional) are appreciated by social actors.

Living in a complex, plural and diverse world, I place more value in mediation than in the pursuit of ideological coherence. I value the experiences intentionally generating political alternatives, but I believe that it is crucial to observe and inquire the ways how people from different contexts and backgrounds can find dialogue and compromises across cultures and frames. While I find interesting to observe and criticize how citizen initiatives develop and find internal coherence, I believe that it is even more pressing to understand how these initiatives can spontaneously coordinate with others, without top-down or constrained transformations.

This approach follows the reflections of anarchist theorists on the relation between means and ends in the pursuit of a free and equal society (Berti, 2013). Anarchists highlighted the incoherence - often accepted by marxists and other radicals - of creating a free society with coercive means, in particular through violent revolutions and through the seizure of state power. Their position can be summed up in the question: "How can someone be forced to be free?". Opposing any form of power, anarchist progressively argued for a voluntaristic process of social and cultural transformation, based on the spontaneous will of individuals to take part in a different kind of collective social system (Goodman, 1968).

Instead, change develops through the will of people and communities, and in particular through processes of social learning. The focus of research therefore lies not only in the exploration of these citizen initiatives, but in particular in their effects of social learning. A cognitive perspective is crucial in the assessment of these social learning effects, and in the exploration of the conflict between emergent/institutionalized frames in these citizen initiatives.

Following anarchist thought, I believe that effective change in society can not be the result of an effort of governing through authority or power. In this approach, oppression and power are not considered to belong only to the state and public authorities. Rather, as stated by Landauer, "the state is a condition, a certain relationship between human beings, a mode of behaviour" (Lynteris, 2013). Relations of authority and oppression are embodied and practiced through social relations.

This open consideration of authority, combined with the anarchist focus on coherence of ends and means, requires to a critical assessment of the means of experiences aiming at the creation of new social

systems. As observed in the researches in this section, scholars often considered mobilized and oppressed communities as their “clients” (Friedmann, 1987). But if we consider oppression to come into existence in social interactions rather than to be fixed into specific social groups, we have to shift our idea of “client”. Researchers and planners should not therefore only support a particular (oppressed) community, but expose the oppressive interactions developing in these communities as well.

Adopting a value-critical approach (Rein, 1976: 256), while I support the values some of these citizen experiences promote (and enact), I believe it is crucial to be critical of the practical enactment of these values in practice by each single experience. In my research I therefore observe these initiatives to assess the effects they generate, including their ambiguities and incoherences, focusing in particular in the relation between emergent and institutionalized actions. While many scholars assess these initiatives as emancipative and open to self-determination, I believe that this aspect has to be better inquired in practice, beyond the narratives.

These political perspectives translate in a specific analytical approach. I choose to adopt a situated and internalist perspective (Lemieux, 2018: 18-20), where actions and effects are defined by social actors through their perceptions of the situations they find themselves in. Reality is not externally defined by the researcher, but by social actors.

This approach is complemented by a grounded and empirical stance: exploring the specific situations, I do not define what constitutes a positive or negative situation, allowing the emergence of ideas of “good” from the field. My research therefore does not focus on the determination of situations on the basis of external criteria, but on the exploration of the situated perspectives of multiple actors, and in particular on their interactions.

This cognitive and situated perspective is integral to the definition of the relevant actions for my research. While the first perspective focused on the intentional processes, the second opened to different and plural types of action. Continuing on the line traced by this second perspective, in my research I consider meaning and action to be closely linked in the situations the actors face (Wagenaar, 2011; Weick, 1993).

Exploring citizen initiatives of urban transformation as complex and ambiguous processes, I do not focus on static meanings, but on their evolution and on processes of learning and adaptation. Following Crosta’s arguments, I explore the plural ways of acting of social actors, assessing the situated understandings of their relations to the world. In my inquiry, I adopt a dialogical perspective, arguing that

their understandings and interpretations are not solely constructed through social interactions, but also through the engagement of actors with their reality (Wagenaar, 2011: 41).

In order to consider these plural ways of acting, I choose to adopt a perspective rooted in pragmatic sociology and its understanding of the processes of revision of courses of action seen as “tests” (Boltanski and Thevenot, 2000: 212-213): moments “when the relationship between a definition of reality and the materiality of the world is put to test” (Lemieux, 2018: 26). Actors develop tests of coherence or incoherence of their course of action with the materiality of the world, reflecting (more or less consciously) on their established ideas of reality on the basis of the feedbacks generated by their engagements. Through these engagements of actors with their environment (Thevenot, 2006), it is possible to explore their learning processes and their reflective adaptations. The effects of their actions are instead to be observed in the situated perspective of other actors, who mobilize and act upon them.

Discussing the differences of the two perspectives, we problematized the difference between intentional and unintentional action. Crosta (2010) adopted a perspective focused on the concept of practice (intended as “collective unintentional and routinized actions” (ibid: 128)) to include unintentional actions.

Focusing on the ways how actors engage with reality, Thevenot (2006) observed the presence of recurring patterns, which he called “regimes of engagement”, or “pragmatic regimes”. They are “social devices which govern our way of engaging with our environment inasmuch as they articulate two notions: (a) an orientation towards some kind of good; (b) a mode of access to reality” (Thevenot, 2001: 75). “Engagements” include material and moral dimensions (ibid: 68), while focusing on the “cognitive forms of a human being’s relation to their physical environment, to other people and to themselves” (Citroni, 2017: 45).

Each way of engaging with the environment implies specific constructions of agency, reality, conceptions of good and formats of information to be used (Thevenot, 2001: 76). They are basic conventions for coordinating with the environment and with more or less others, generating common actions. Engagements are known ways of acting in a specific situation (Thevenot, 2010).

Engagement regimes are an example of the analytical pluralization of action, and can be used as baseline for other pluralizing theories. In the following chapters, I will complement this approach with other elements such as: acting at operative, collective or constitutional level (Kiser & Ostrom, 1982), engaging with multiple design actors (Schön and Rein, 1994) and bridging across situations and design domains (Schön, 1992).

Over the course of the section, I explored multiple perspectives arguing for the relevance of specific categories of citizen initiatives of urban transformation. Assessing their divergences, I rooted my analytical perspective in my political values, opting for a grounded, internalist, situated and dialogical approach, influenced by a pragmatic and a value-critical approach.

2.2 Learning and innovation between institutions and citizen initiatives

In the first section of this chapter I explored the different analytical perspectives focusing on citizen initiatives of urban transformation, and their political references. Ultimately, I expressed how, from my political and analytical point of view, I would adopt a cognitive approach, and how a theory of action would suit in this approach.

Knowledge, its generation, adaptation in action, and reproduction, are crucial elements of planning theories. As expressed by Friedmann (1987) and Crosta (1998), linking knowledge to action is a primary element of processes of planning. As we saw in Crosta's theories, this connection is not limited to the use of knowledge to act (knowledge-to-decide), but also includes the generative role of action (act-to-know). The adoption of a dialogical approach follows this circular connection of knowledge and action, considering the engagement with reality as a continuous process of revision, adaptation and learning.

Through these cognitive lenses, we can explore the debate around the theories interpreting the processes of interaction of citizen initiatives as spaces of experimentation. These scholar works have been shortly introduced in the first section of the chapter, with different analytical approaches, but will be extensively discussed in section 2.2.1.

These theories focus in particular on the differences between citizen initiatives and institutional actions. Public administrations (seen as institutions) are explored for their rigid and routinized dimensions, while citizen initiatives are described as spaces of freedom, and praised for their potentials of freeing energies, producing public goods and generating alternative imaginaries.

I choose therefore to dive into the concept of institutions: in section 2.2.2 I introduce the neo-institutionalist sociological approach, and its normative and cognitive notion of institution, focusing on the processual dynamics of institutionalization (Berger and Luckmann, 1966).

Having a comprehensive interpretation of the notion of institution, I advance a critique to the interpretations of citizen initiatives as non-institutional. As noticed by Lanzara (2004), in fact, research focused on limited and unstable experiences, often in their initial phases, lacking a long-term perspective on citizen initiatives. A long-term empirical focus would test the dualistic and binary vision of citizen experiences and public administrations, exposing the eventual emergence of processes of institutionalization in citizen initiatives. My first research question is therefore structured around this literature gap: (if and) how do long-existing citizen initiatives present institutionalized dimensions in their processes of organizing? Consequently, I present the analytical tools that, integrating the analytical approach from section 2.1, will support the analysis, focusing on the cognitive dimensions.

These citizen experiences were described as places of autonomous action and spaces of freedom, which would analytically translate into continuous processes of sensemaking. Instead, observing them after years of adaptation in their environments, we find institutionalized organizations, in which objectified ways of operating and a wealth of experience and knowledge normatively influence the framing of new situations and operations. These citizen initiatives, emerging from the direct resolution of public problems, consolidated into alternative institutions able to continuously produce public services, but lacking an emergent dimension.

These knowledges are linked with the specific situations the actors constantly face in their routinized organizing processes. Metaphorically, they define a path to follow in order to get out of a forest. But, when the path doesn't work anymore, or the situation of action shifts, actors have to construct new paths, by establishing a learning dialogue with their environment and other actors composing it (Ciborra and Lanzara, 1994; Lanzara, 2016).

These alternative institutions might face the same problems rooted in the institutional dimensions of public authorities, often explored by scholars through a cognitive and learning approach. In section 2.2.3 I introduce scholar debates on learning and innovating institutions in urban research. These debates have historically focused almost exclusively on public administrations and their cognitive limits, but I argue that many of these concepts can be translated upon these new alternative institutions. The discussion will lead to the formulation of the second research question: How do long-existing citizen initiatives generate learning and innovations in problematic situations out of their routinized activities? This question is not narrowly limited to the relation of internal learning and innovation of the organizations, but expands to the generative learning and innovative effects of these new situations for other actors. To conclude the subsection, I will introduce the analytical tools which will support the exploration of these situations.

2.2.1 Citizen initiatives as spaces of experimentation

In the last decades citizen initiatives have been extensively studied by urban and planning scholars. The discussion around the relevance of these experiences for scholars has seen the emergence of different positions. While in the previous section we focused on scholars (predominantly) exploring these initiatives for their potential of social transformation out of the order of public administrations, several authors observed these actions from the perspective of public administrations. In particular, research focused on the effectiveness of these initiatives in relation to institutional action, on the lessons public administrations could draw from them and how these institutions could promote policies to facilitate their emergence (Healey, 2004; Uitermark, 2015; Boonstra and Boelens, 2011; Edelenbos et al, 2016). This perspective is rooted on an analysis at a macro level, on a quest for efficiency and on urban and

territorial planning as governmental routines of transformation of the territory rather than on practices of use.

Being aware of these contributions, I focus instead on works of scholars assessing these initiatives as transformative per se, not just in relation to governmental action. I aim at explicating the arguments regarding the intrinsic value of these experiences, and introducing critiques leading to the identification of gaps in these reflections.

In particular, I explore the interpretations of these experiences as non-institutional actions, on the basis of their emergent sensemaking practices. Some authors described them as spaces of freedom (Cellamare 2014: 22), free zones (Groth & Corijn, 2005), autonomous spaces (Pickerill and Chatterton, 2006: 738), ephemeral organizations (Lanzara, 1983; 1993). These different authors develop their claims on the difference between institutional/non-institutional action from different empirical observations: from explicit intentions or beliefs, from the emergence of the initiative out of the government, from a series of patterns of interaction.

Citizen initiatives emerge in our cities in all kinds of shapes and logics. They are not a new phenomenon, as they have historically been part of urban life (Cellamare, 2018).

Before further engaging in the discussion of these arguments, we ought clarify the meaning of the term “citizen initiative”, and the decision to prefer it over other categories, such as “self-organization”.

To a first approximation, I initially define “citizen initiatives” as the empirical category of community and citizen actions developed or initiated out of governmental control. This same definition has been used to define the category of “self-organization” (Ostanel & Attili, 2018: 7) in its empirical sense; but “self-organization” has also been interchangeably used by scholars to refer to an empirical category, to an explanatory concept and to a political ideal (Uitermark, 2015), contributing to a relevant ambiguity in scholar debates about its meaning (Pizzo, 2018). While I will make use of the scientific works adopting this ambiguous concept, I opt to avoid the specific term, and to translate its different dimensions into specific and distinguished categories and concepts.

Following the discussion of the previous section, I do not limit the category of relevant initiatives to the ones intentionally transforming spaces and the territory through formalized intentions and claims, but I also consider practices with weaker, indirect or unclear intentions.

As it is now defined, the “citizen initiatives” category is still blurry and unstructured. In order to reach a clearer and empirically operationalizable conceptualization, I choose to look at these actions through the vast literature on public problems: we can interpret these initiatives as particular processes of definition

and treatment of problematic and uncertain situations, in the context of an ecology of experience (Cefäi, 2016).

Contrary to the understanding proposed by functionalist and positivist approaches, social problems are not “social ills” objectively rooted in facts, but are the product of processes of social definition (Blumer, 1971). Situations are problematic not because they differ from a supposedly normal state, but because they are socially labeled as such (Cefäi, 1996: 46). The use of scientific analysis of social problems is useless if not positioned in the field of interactions and in the context of the ordinary knowledges informing them (Lindblom & Cohen, 1979). Facts - objectively perceived as such - are understandable only in the horizon of the interactions building legitimation and reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966 in Cefäi, 1996).

In our discussion of citizen initiatives, the discussion about social problems is relevant in relation to what scholars consider the normal career of social problems. Before engaging with this topic, we should first understand the socially interactive framing of problematic situations into problems and the legitimation of the public dimension of problems.

Following the approach of the school of Chicago, a situation is considered to be problematic as “the usual reactions of an organism to the solicitations of its surroundings no longer provide the satisfaction of its needs and desires” (Cefäi, 2016:27). These issues emerge as some habitual and routinized dimensions of this relation face a breakdown. The organism affected by the consequences of the situation begins its inquiry aiming at determining the problem and resolving it (Dewey, 1927). People, groups, organizations, institutions, mobilize and concur in the examination and definition of the situation, in its causes and its possible solutions (Cefäi, 2016: 27).

While problems are usually considered to be “given” as riddles to be solved, the way we interpret them is the result of an ongoing process of framing. Problems are constructs dependent on the interactive path that actors take to frame them (Gelli, 2002: 145). We should therefore focus not just on the technical solutions available for problem solving, but also on the way problems are contested in their interpretations and how actors make sense of situations (Schön, 1979): “To convert a problematic situation into a problem”, actors must “make sense of an uncertain situation that initially makes no sense” (Schön, 1983:40 in Von Hulst & Yanow, 2014). Through social interaction, social problems are progressively defined (Blumer, 1971). Through these exchanges - which can happen in different spaces, times and geometries - social problems are set combining or clashing the frames of different actors (Schön and Rein, 1994).

At the same time, moments of problems-setting and problem-solving in the real world are never fully separated. Considering social problems to be “socially constructed” might lead to the idea that the cognitive and normative issues of public problems (in their setting) are indefinitely manipulable (Cefai, 1996: 48). Instead, we should be aware that problem-setting and problem-solving are part of a dialogical process of clashing hypotheses with reality (Wagenaar, 2011), in a pendulum-like movement between problems and solutions (Crosta, 1983: 40n). While the understanding of reality is socially constructed, we should be aware that it is developed through a reflective process (Schön and Rein, 1994: 41-45; Lemieux, 2018: 25-27), as a “test” of a definition of reality against the materiality of the world (Boltanski and Thevenot, 2000: 212-213)⁷. This approach is consistent with Schön’s interpretation of the deweyan inquiry, as “interplay of thought and action” (Schön, 1979), through which ideas of reality are restructured and reframed.

Through this processual interpretation, the tests of solutions to social problems are developed in the process of understanding the problems themselves. These tests lead to the generation of effects (desired and undesired) upon which to assess the effectiveness of the action, and the eventual reframing of the problem (Crosta, 1983: 40n). Problems are never fully solved, they are just progressively reframed.

Until now, we discussed the treatment of problems focusing on their framing and potential solutions in relation to the materiality of reality. But the frames, their potential combinations and the available solutions are all to be considered in the light of their relation to the concept of “public”.

Moving on from the discursive and deliberative approaches inspired by Arendt (1958) and Habermas (1962) (Cefai, 1996: 52-53), we can instead adopt a pragmatist approach to the notion of “public”, which I introduced in section 2.1.3⁸.

In their simplest terms, we could say that problems are public when they are object of engagement of a multiplicity of actors. Public problems are not just the product of a collective labeling, rather a collective activity in the making (ibid: 49). Collective actors (the subjects of the public) are mutually constituted in the process of confrontation and development of practices, discourses, arguments: they are configured by what they configure, as they come into existence in the dramatic and narrative configurations of the collective activity (ibid: 50).

⁷ I discussed this approach in section 2.1.6

⁸ from section 2.1.3: “the public, for Dewey, is “making public”, meaning a process, variable in time and space” (Crosta, 2010: 97). The unintended consequences of transactions are public when they affect other people beyond the ones directly involved in the transaction (Dewey, 1927: 12), “to such extent that it is deemed necessary to have those consequences systemically cared for” (ibid: 15). “Public” then refers both to a subject and an object: the content and nature of the perceived consequences - positive or negative - are socially defined in the interactive process of constitution of the group of people affected by these consequences and willing to act in relation to these effects (Crosta, 2010: 58n).”

Doing so, they make both the problem and themselves observable and describable in a constructed “public arena” (ibid:58), considered to be a “place of production, circulation and exchange of arguments”(Cefäi, 2007: 117). Public arenas are constituted across several institutional fields and public scenes”. This collective constitution of a public arena is not exhausted by collective discussions and deliberations, as it is a matter of institutional, juridical and political ecology, linked to dynamics of social inquiry and experimental methods (Cefäi, 2016: 43).

Actors engage in these arenas to define problematic situations not just through their creativity and emergent sensemaking, but making use of pre-existing and institutional repertoires (as the different “orders of worth” considered by Boltanski and Thevenot (1991)), where multiple realities, rationalities, frames and legitimization strategies are available (Trom & Zimmermann, 2001). Public problems are never developed “in the void”, as actors are influenced by the failures and successes of previous public problems constituting their “public culture” (Gusfield, 1981 in Cefäi, 2016: 31). For instance, through the categorization of public problems around existing categories, or arguing for their treatment along existing procedures (Cefäi, 2016: 31).

This “public culture” does not only influence the way problems are framed, but it also affects the underlying logic actors follow in concrete political regimes for their treatment.

In his seminal works on the public and public problems, Dewey (1927) first connected the process of publicization with the institution of officers and representatives: “the lasting, extensive and serious consequences of associated activity bring into existence a public. In itself it is unorganized and formless. By means of officials and their special powers it becomes a state” (ibid: 67). Dewey here described the emergence of officials and the State as a new process of institution of the State. We can recognize here the seeds of the dynamics of a representative democracy, based on delegation to political representatives and State officials.

Observing researches and models of the “natural history” of public problems in western democracies, we can observe how these dynamics are instituted and how they influence the treatment of public problems. The analysis of their publicization process can shed light on the way these democracies work (Cefäi, 2016: 56).

Blumer (1971) initially described the career of social problems as processes of collective definition in five different phases: emergence of social problem; legitimation of the problem; mobilization of action with regard to the problem; formation of an official plan of action by public administrations; transformation of the official plan in its empirical implementation.

Cefai (1996: 57-60) detailed a more concrete process in four steps: conversion of private ills into public issues through public argumentations and actions; identification and stabilization of the public problem in public arenas; intervention of public administrations; resolution of the public problem through a public program or through direct action by collective actors.

In these analyses, as the problem gains legitimation and rises in generality, officials of the public take care of the interests of the affected public (Dewey, 1927:19). Officials seize the problem, pursue the inquiry, organize debates and imagine solutions, organizing electoral campaigns, and translate the theme on the agenda, in order to tackle the problem under the public eye (Cefai, 2016: 37).

In these processes collective actors “aim at transforming private problems, experienced by individuals separated from one another, into public problems, which concern a community” (Vitale, 2007: 11-12). Their strategies and actions are oriented on the basis of the structure of political opportunities (ibid: 17), and on the basis of instituted repertoire of possible actions in current democratic regimes. The countless previous acts of delegation to officials of the resolution of public problems follow and reinforce such logic of action for the treatment of public problems. The process of publicization as described by Cefai (1996) and Blumer (1971) is an institution specific to representative democratic regimes, as it is a required step to reach a formalization of the problem that makes it treatable by public administrations (Cefai, 2006 in Crosta, 2010: 156-157).

The logic based on the intervention of public authorities is undoubtedly widespread, and leads to the treatment of the most pressing public problems in current democratic systems, in particular in policy fields where public administrations already have established effective precedents. But a variety of situations and problems are susceptible to other logics. Some problems fail to gather public attention - as it is a scarce resource (Bosk & Hilgartner, 1988: 55 in Cefai, 1996). Other problems, even if treated by public administrations, leave some actors unsatisfied. For example, in the description advanced by Cefai (1996), collective actors develop their own strategies after the unsatisfactory response of public administrations. Others still are problems which - for ideological reasons - public administrations refuse to recognize and act upon.

In these situations, mobilized actors invent and adopt alternative logics of action to tackle problems. A minor repertoire of logics of action exists, based on alternative constructs linking ideas of legitimacy, authority and action⁹. Mobilisations perform three types of actions: protest, demand and production (Vitale, 2007). The first two actions are conflictual interactions with public administrations considered

⁹ The political value of these constructs is often disregarded by their enactors. For example, citizen initiatives operating to solve public problems through direct action might be interpreted as actions undermining the authority and the legitimacy of the State as an institution tasked with improving citizens' lives. While many participants don't ask this question, from the standpoint of political philosophy, the question “Why does the State exist?” lies around the corner.

responsible for a certain public problem aiming at influencing the creation of a plan of public action and its content for the resolution of the problem. The third logic consists in non-conflictual mobilizations, focusing on producing public goods for the resolution of the public problem, directly practicing their objectives (for instance, practices of mutualism, poverty reduction, culture and sport out of the market system, commoning, etc). Mobilizations tend to orient their action towards directly producing public goods when the structure of political opportunities is perceived as closed and when the historical phase is not characterized by an intense and widespread protest cycle (ibid: 17).

Among these repertoires, I focus on strategies of direct action, intended as actions that “directly transform some specific aspects of society by means of the very action itself” (Bosi & Zamponi, 2015: 369), instead of advancing claims to the state or other public administrations. Translated into the discussion of public problems, these actions - performed out of the actions and routines of public authorities - generate effects on public problems.

We should note that the assessment of the effects generated by direct actions on public problems is not limited to their material dimension. As these problems are increasingly focused on cultural codes, the form of the movement itself is part of the message: these mobilizations can be forms of action practicing the desired change through their own organizing processes (Melucci, 1985). Through their ways of organizing, naming and categorizing, they can also challenge the construction of systemic public problems on symbolic and cultural grounds. Actions are fields of meanings constructed through social relations, evaluating resources and constraints (Melucci, 1991).

I preliminarily defined citizen initiatives as “community and citizen actions developed or initiated out of governmental control”. Integrating the discussion on public problems and direct actions, I interpret citizen initiatives as “community and citizen actions developed or initiated out of governmental control that generate effects on public problems by means of the very action itself”. These initiatives are assessed by the effects they are judged to generate, not by their initial intentions or their programmatic goals.

I should also clarify that these initiatives are not necessarily performed without the support of governments, as they often end up collaborating with public administrations. Actions and projects are never performed in total isolation, as collaboration, competition and conflict with other actors are part of current processes of governance. But in these initiatives citizens (and their organizations) bear the responsibility of the action: they carry these processes and manage them. In processual and iterative terms, it means that the revision of courses of action, the generation of meanings and the evolution of strategies is (mainly) developed by citizen organizations rather than by public administrations.

While the literature on the treatment of public problems through institutional processes of representative democracy is widespread, research on the effects of these initiatives is still limited. For example, while we know that the publicization of a problem is a prerequisite for its treatment by public administrations, and that it is an institutional part of our democracies, what role does it play when citizens develop strategies of direct action? Is publicization still a prerequisite, or might it be an effect of practices of use, to be proven in practice (Crosta, 2010: 165)? Furthermore, while institutional strategies often develop responses to problems after they have been formalized and they acquired legitimacy and consensus, these citizen initiatives often acquire legitimacy through their practice of the solution of the problem.

Italian and international scholars have explored these citizen initiatives in the last decades, comparing in particular their processes of sensemaking in situations of uncertainty and evolution with the answers that public administrations put forth in these situations.

Several scholars argue that in these processes of inquiry and experimentation into problematic situations, citizen initiatives are not restrained to the institutionalized procedures of public administrations, and their evolution is determined autonomously through internal self-regulation. As public administrations are riddled with institutionalized cognitive backwardness, these citizen initiatives have the ability to flexibly generate new meanings, and to bend the pre-established institutional routines to effectively treat public problems.

This line of thought started emerging in the 1980s, with seminal works and reflections on the relationship between institutionalized and non-institutionalized dimensions in urban research and management studies. In the 2000s and 2010s, also following to the “practice turn” (Schatzki et al., 2001) and the emergence of the “insurgency” approach to planning theory (Sandercock, 1999; Holston, 1995), these works have been rediscovered and applied to interpret citizen initiatives emerging in this specific era.

Lanzara’s research in the field of organizations and management has been deeply influential on Italian scholars of urban and planning fields. His works - spanning over four decades - focused on disruptive events, “as opportunities for change and redesign, for exploration and innovation, but also as holes for penetrating into the underlying fabric of a practice” (Lanzara, 2016: 3)¹⁰.

¹⁰ The intuition to observe these situations emerged during his volunteering activities in the 1966 flooding of Florence, as he recalls it: “At the time, I felt as if I were watching an unplanned social experiment taking place in a natural though stressed setting. The city became a sort of social laboratory, where people rediscovered the experience of what it means to both face a seemingly impossible, or even unthinkable, event and try to get things done with the few resources that were available. The question for each and everybody was: What can I do here and now? In spite of the difficulties, new forms of organizing emerged, and behaviors could be observed that are not much seen in the ordinary, non problematic situations of daily life. In the aftermath of the flood, the city turned into a large experimental setting where new ways of doing things were tried out in spite of the disrupted situation—or, perhaps, precisely because of it. [...] The river brought destruction, but it also opened a

In these situations, new forms of organizing emerge, as the established settings become spaces of experimentation. These events destroy but also open spaces for innovation and learning.

Lanzara initially focused on the behaviour of organizations in response to extreme events, like the aftermath of the 1980 Irpinia earthquake. In these unexpected situations, formal organizations lose effectiveness. Formal organizations are used to operate in coherent and stable environments, with clear rules and procedures to fulfill their role of routinized everyday problem-solvers. As the environment sustaining their norms and procedures abruptly changes, “they have a hard time in changing or adapting their normal way of doing or seeing things” (Lanzara, 1983: 73).

Formal organizations are shaken in their decision-making structures and they are unable to respond to contextual inputs. New spaces for action are opened, and are filled by ephemeral organizations. Exploring two different actions - developed by an individual and by a group - Lanzara argues that these ephemeral actions are not simply filling the gap of formal organizations, but they are developing “creative acts of organizational design” (ibid: 76), defining alternative models of reality through their actions. In these acts, they reinterpret the environment by enacting upon it a pre-existing repertoire of organizational rules and procedures. Through their intervention, they are not just executing procedures, but also self-expressing and demonstrating their capacity to act and their visibility as actors.

The contact of these ephemeral organizations with formal organizations (meaning: public administrations) is often troublesome. As their different modes of intervention and legitimation clash, so do the frames they used to represent their environment. Public administrations, having the upper hand in the relation, force an interpretation of the environment which generates limits to the action of ephemeral organizations. These organizations are required to perform through pre-established roles, integrating into institutionalized routines, and reducing their actorship into bureaucratic schemes (ibid: 80).

In these extreme cases, Lanzara shows how the situation of breakdown of formal organizations reveals the constructed nature of their routines, and opens a latent possibility to generate new processes. In this possibility, actors construct new environment on the basis of their ability to act. Implicitly, formal organizations limit the possibility of expressing this ability to act both in their stable state and in their effort to regain control after breakdowns. This capacity - later connected to the concept of “negative capability” (Lanzara, 1993) - allows actors to express and develop their own experiences.

space for innovation and opportunities for social discovery and learning. New forms of community action emerged at the street and neighborhood level: special long-term loans with low interest rates were offered by the local banks to help local businesses; new techniques were invented for the recovery and restoration of paintings, sculptures, ancient books, and antique furniture; and a deeper understanding of the flood regimen of the river Arno was developed together with the installation of an early warning system” (Lanzara, 2016: 2)

In the following decades public administrations progressively rolled back part of their services. As a result, old and new public problems are left unanswered, opening uncertain spaces for the action of other actors. In this shift from *government* to *governance* scholars often focused their analytical attention on the transformations occurring in public administrations: Balducci (2004) argued for a shift in research attention, stressing the importance of exploring social practices of treatment of public problems instead of limiting research to actions of formal public administrations.

Through the analysis of the context of Milan in the first years of the 2000s, Balducci describes the mechanisms of social practices engaging with public problems in the city. These practices are the products of actions of existing or emerging organizations, who develop new forms of actorship and establish new roles in the process. These practices develop new format of territorial aggregation, which localize in specific urban areas but are not limited to their territory. Their relations with the public administrations are limited or conflictual (Lanzara, 2004).

Exploring these practices in detail, scholars argue that they are “public policies de facto” (Cognetti et al, 2004): they generate new territorial relations and they have the potential to effectively treat public problems. Actors engage in these practices of direct production of public goods after they recognize the ineffectiveness of actions of protest and demand (see: Vitale, 2007). The energies they used in the past to openly conflict with public administrations are used to experiment and research a meaning for urban action.

These practices often develop “unconventional services”, generating systems of “welfare from below” (Piazza et al, 2016; Montagna, 2007). These services address needs not yet formalized into institutional responses, that require explorations and incremental inquiries in order to be effectively treated (Cottino & Zeppetella, 2009).

At their micro- level, these citizen initiatives can subvert usual rules and spatial uses, generating new ways of relating with the city. The territory is constructed (Crosta, 2010) through the actors’ direct actions, generating new meanings conflicting with the established and instituted ways of interpreting and accessing urban spaces (Cottino, 2003: 112). These actions often answer emergent needs of citizens, which they discover as they contingently develop alternative expertises (Cottino, 2009).

In their divergence from the instituted systems of norms and values, these practices of dissent generate alternative meanings. In particular, they exploit the latent space of uncertainty - previously described by Lanzara - to support their approach to overlooked public problems. In their processual dimension, they go beyond the sense of impotence generated by hetero-directed norms, and allow the empowerment of citizens through their autonomous experience of desires and choices (Cottino, 2003: 123).

Contemporary cities abound of abandoned or underused spaces. Formal urban planning procedures consider these spaces as urban voids or waste spaces in the modernist evolution of cities, as they often fail to recycle them. While they are formally framed as “empty”, they are often lived and experienced by informal actors engaging in unrecognized practices (as the “urban interstices” studied by Tonnelat, 2003), to satisfy their unanswered problems and needs (of housing, green spaces, public spaces) (Cellamare, 2018).

Through the use of these spaces, citizens and actors reshape the meanings attributing them new significations (Cellamare, 2008: 134). As they incrementally generate a shared environment of action, these bottom-up and spontaneous processes of organizing lead to the generation of shared meanings (Weick, 1993 in Cellamare, 2011: 33). The aforementioned environment is not to be intended only in its concrete sense, but in the double coupling of physical and symbolic, material and immaterial, as these processes resignify spaces and produce places (Cellamare, 2018).

These processes allow the emergence and development of the creative abilities of inhabitants, as they actively construct their actorship and roles in the production of urban spaces. Framing these processes as “re-appropriation by citizens”, or “restitution to the city”, Cellamare argues that this social aliveness is a response against the mercification of the city (2016: 16) and to the alienation embedded in the production of urban spaces (2014: 21).

As they generate new meanings, they construct latent spaces of self-determination, allowing the emergence of autonomous social organizations beyond the hetero directed processes of contemporary cities (ibid). These experiences are “practices of freedom” (Foucault, 2001), where citizen are free to give meaning to their own experiences of use (ibid: 22).

Pushing forward this dichotomy, citizen initiatives are interpreted as part of “instituting society” and “magma of significations”, breaking through the established frames of the “instituted society” (Castoriadis, 1975 in Cellamare, 2014: 26), which is mostly identified with formal public administrations. According to Castoriadis, the instituted society is composed of rules, fixed structured relations, procedures regulating social life, that over time tend to detach from the lively experiences and evolutions of society. The instituting society is the set of social dynamics continuously evolving and shifting the meanings embedded in institutions into new forms (Cellamare, 2011: 142).

Cellamare advances therefore an interpretation of citizen initiatives (and in particular the ones practicing the direct use of spaces) as experiences directly answering their problems through the reappropriation of spaces, making sense of their needs, their spaces and the connected meanings. These initiatives are framed as processes in constant evolution and continuous production of new meaning. On

the other side, public administrations are considered as “instituted society”, with fixed meanings detached from their society. In his perspective, politics should refocus on the instituting dimension of society and on the basic problems and experiences of citizens, therefore building alternative and inclusive contexts (Cellamare, 2016: 18). Some of these initiatives develop new links between instituting and instituted society, as in the “constitutive processes” of Teatro Valle Occupato and its efforts of instituting a Foundation as an alternative institution (Cellamare, 2016: 18). While this attempt failed, Ostanel and Cancellieri (2014: 49) used this case to wonder if new possible relations between citizen initiatives and institutions (intended as public administrations) could be possible, through processes of institutional learning.

Across this exploration of the researches interpreting citizen initiatives as processes of emergent sensemaking in the response to public problems, scholars outlined the constitutive difference between these initiatives and public administrations. Mirroring Cellamare’s reading of Castoriadis, the first are the expression of a world of emergent meanings, while the latter are associated with fixed meanings.

Citizen initiatives are considered as innovative and in shift, allowing its involved members to take part in the process of self-determination (even with the risk of privatization (Ostanel & Cancellieri, 2014)). In these initiatives, groups and individuals develop practices of autonomy (Castoriadis, 1998), as they self-regulate and act. They are considered to have these characters per se, because they are processes emerging from society. On the other hand, public administrations are institutions: formal organizations with fixed (or inert) routines and knowledges. While citizen act-to-know, institution use pre-existing and formalized knowledge to act (Crosta, 1998).

This dualistic and binary interpretation originated from the empirical exploration of new and upcoming citizen experiences in their initial phases. Empirical research extensively focused on the phases of generation of new meanings and on the processes of recalibration and enactment on the environment. Urban research has rarely observed these experiences in their long-term development, focusing instead on limited and unstable experiences (Lanzara, 2004). The lack of long-term observation might be due to the rarity of stable and lasting experiences in Italy, where most of the empirical research was conducted.

While authors refer to “citizen initiatives”, “self-organized actions” and “re-appropriation practices” as emergent processes of sensemaking in general, we have extensive research only on short and brief experiences.

To understand why this gap in empirical research might potentially open a gap in the binary interpretation of public administrations and citizen initiatives as institutions and non-institutions, in the

next section I will clarify the sociological concept of “institution” in its dynamic and processual dimensions.

2.2.2 Institutions and institutionalization

The concept of “institution” has been at center stage of different disciplines since the 1960s and 1970s. Neo-institutionalist approaches have reviewed the concept: historical institutionalism, rational choice institutionalism and sociological institutionalism all inquire into the role of institutions in social and political outcomes, formulating different analytical interpretations of the political world (Hall & Taylor, 1996). Without summarizing all their differences, in my discussion I will provide a brief account on the theories of sociological institutionalism, and in particular on the microanalytical approaches focusing on the processual and subjective dimensions of institutions (Lanzalaco, 1995: 47 in Gualini, 2001: 197).

The term “institution” has multiple common sense meanings. Intuitively, we can associate the term with the State, family, the market, the church, prisons, schools, museums, hospitals (de Leonardis, 2001). To understand what these institutions have in common - and therefore to understand what institutions are - we have to shift the focus from the common sense notion of “institution” (which has extensively been adopted by urban and planning scholars) and insist instead on a conceptual level of discussion.

The aforementioned objects are “some kind of human aggregate, shared by some community, more or less broad and limited” (ibid), with a constitutive supra-individual existence. These aggregates last over time, they are stable (even inert), they structure and channel individual actions by providing constraints and resources, they release regulatory force and have some form of power thickening in them.

In its minimal elements, an institution is “just a convention” (Douglas, 1990: 81), positing that “actions of type X will be performed by actors of type X” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966: 72):

For example, the institution of the law posits that heads shall be chopped off in specific ways under specific circumstances, and that specific types of individuals shall do the chopping (executioners, say, or members of an impure caste, or virgins under a certain age, or those who have been designated by an oracle) (Berger & Luckmann, 1966: 72)

Institutions are “intentional human artifacts” (de Leonardis, 2001), produced and reproduced by human actions. At the same time, human actions unfold in a field structured by institutions, as actors draw from instituted repertoires of practices as “recipes” of action.

They are cognitive and practical routines that guide action along established paths. Actors use institutional routines and frames to orient themselves and to organize experience: they define the options in specific situations, as well as the criteria actors use to assess them (ibid). They are “collective, dynamic, coevolutive constructs, as outcomes of experiential processes, defined by their belonging to a determined social reality and, at the same time, constitutive of their own reality” (Gualini, 2001: 198). Nonetheless, actions are not directly determined by institutions: in their concrete processes, actors can draw from different repertoires and combine different institutional frames and categories.

Institutions are objectified versions of the world, as they define what we perceive as reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). In this cognitive framing, institutions limit what we consider possible and real, without being aware of the limitations: as we use these institutions, we are not conscious of their influence on our cognition, as we perceive our visions of the world as “objective” (de Leonardis, 2001). Institutions categorize and classify reality: they orient the memory and the perceptions of actors to fit into their established relations (Douglas, 1990: 142). What doesn't fit into the institutional frames poses a cognitive problem.

Institutions define in which situation we are in, and inform us on how to act accordingly: they have practical, cognitive and normative layers (de Leonardis, 2001). The practical side consists of the content of the information being communicated. The cognitive layer refers to the fact that this communication is accessed through our cognition. Finally, the normative dimension informs us that this action X is the proper one for that specific situation X. This information is firstly conveyed through a cognitive level - limiting the perception of what is possible - and only secondly through mechanisms of sanctions (Berger & Luckmann, 1966: 72). The divergence from this habitus implies the violation of a rule framed as legitimate by the institution. “What can be done” is cognitively linked with “what have I the right to do”. Legitimation is understood as a “second-order objectivation”, explaining the institutional order through normative and cognitive justifications (Berger & Luckmann, 1966: 93).

Through these dimensions, institutions as systems of norms make up for the gaps in human rationality: as they stabilize a structured field of conventions across a social group based on rules, incentives and limitations, they allow or forbid certain actions (de Leonardis, 2001). Through these shared rules, actions of others are predictable and conventional, reducing mutual uncertainties. In this sense, institutions increase the abilities and the knowledge of actors, providing a repertoire of routines and interpretations of the world.

At the same time, though, institutions reduce the cognitive flexibility of actors. Crystallized routines are objectified and repeated, regardless of the feedbacks provided by the environment. As the environment

shifts and evolves, routinized actions lose their effectiveness, and generate anomalies and other (unintended) effects. Institutional dimensions often limit the flexibility of individuals to seamlessly learn and absorb these anomalies, as they interpret the world through objectified frames (as we'll explore in detail in section 2.2.3).

Institutions are not only rules, procedures, but also conventions, rituals and symbols (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

Institutions influence and are influenced by human action (de Leonardis, 2001). In this double relation, they provide information and knowledge on how to act. At the same time, human actions are able to generate institutions through processes of institutionalization, moving from a subjective to an objectified construction of reality.

Institutionalization “occurs whenever there is a reciprocal typification of habitualized actions by types of actors” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966: 72), generating taken-for-granted knowledge and nullifying the reflexive dimension of knowledge (Gualini, 2001: 213).

As actions are replicated over time, they become routinized and habitualized, allowing considerable cognitive economy to individual actors. Crucial in this process of habitualization is the feedback that the environment generates as actors engage with it: actions are habitualized if the actor doesn't perceive feedbacks anomalous with the initial categories of the action. Actions get habitualized if they are perceived to be effective and not problematic. An habitualized action is part of a repertoire that allows its repetition in the future with the same economical effort. The narrowing of choices relieves the individual from defining situations and taking decisions again and again (ibid: 71).

Habitualization is a prerequisite for institutionalization, but while the first can insist on single individuals, institutions exist in situations of social interaction. In institutions not just actions are reciprocally typified, but also actors. Reciprocal typifications are the product of shared histories of actors (ibid: 72) and their collectivities (ibid: 73). While habitualization insists on all human action (ibid: 70), institutionalization is incipient in every social situation continuing in time (ibid: 73).

Berger and Luckmann (1966) exemplify this mutual typification through cases of binary and triadic social interactions. Through mutual typification of actions and roles, actors are able to predict each other's actions and interactions through taken-for-granted routines, leading to the construction of a common social world (ibid: 74-75).

Habitualizations generated in these interactions acquire over time a quality of objectivity: these institutions are perceived “as existing over and beyond the individuals who happen to embody them at the moment” (ibid: 76). Institutions “acquire a reality of their own” (ibid: 76). While this objectivity is still

weak among the creators and initiators of habitualizations, the objectivity of this social world “thickens” in the transmission to a new generation, becoming an opaque given and intersubjective reality (ibid: 76-77). The existence of a third actor beyond the two creators of habitualization transforms subjective actions in objectified relations and links of hierarchy.

As we go beyond this microscopic examples, we can interpret society as a system of actors generating a common meaningful reality through mutual relations. This reality is based on commonly accessible knowledge, which is then transmitted to following generations through sign systems (ibid: 85) and socialized through education (ibid: 87).

Roles play a central function in reciprocal typifications. Roles are types of actors in the context of an objectified stock of knowledge common to a collectivity of actors. Individuals become part of society by playing roles, and by internalizing them the world becomes subjectively real to him. Actors in a specific role are responsible to abide the standards of that role (ibid: 91), which they learn to perform by acquiring the appropriate knowledge.

The level of institutionalization in societies and groups can be assessed in a scale between two idealized extremes: on one side a society with total institutionalization, where all problems are shared, everybody does everything and knows everything; another extreme with only one common problem in society, with role-specific knowledge and a almost no common stock of knowledge (ibid: 97-98).

Knowledge in society is distributed according to what is generally considered relevant for specific roles (ibid: 94). The performance of the role is linked not just with the knowledge of what is to be done, but also with knowledge of what is appropriate for this role.

We should also note that institutions and processes of institutionalization are immersed in interorganizational fields (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). As we focus on citizen initiatives, movements, organizations, public administrations, we should consider that they operate in a structured fabric of external constraints and support that influence them into adhering to shared and conventional standards in order to acquire legitimation, developing isomorphic tendencies.

The adoption of specific rituals and ways of organizing is not (only) the result of a pursuit of internal efficiency, but is also influenced by external pressures towards isomorphism (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). For example, cultural organizations adopting specific formalized statutes (association, foundation, etc) receive funding easier than unformalized organizations, independently of their projects and effectiveness. Institutions are the product of other institutions, as previous institutionalized patterns influence the generation of new institutions as constructs (Donolo, 1997: 227).

In this approach, an institutional dimension is not understood as a property of a specific organization or public administration, nor it is a static phenomenon. Rather, it is an ongoing and path-dependent social product (Gualini, 2001: 213), continuously produced and reproduced in practice. Institutions are “relational patterns”, and “path-dependent configurations situated in a field of typifications and roles” (ibid: 214) produced by processes of symbolic-cognitive nature. Institutionalization is a dynamic process, always open and never complete (Weick, 1993) which nonetheless orients action and actors through its normative and cognitive dimensions.

This understanding of institutions and institutionalization leads to a problematization of the interpretation of citizen initiatives as non-institutional experiences, as opposed to public administrations as examples of institutionalized action. Following this neo-institutionalist approach, a similar interpretation appears reductionist: if institutionalization is tied with the habitualization and typification of actions in roles, citizen initiatives might potentially develop over time institutionalized dimensions as they stabilize and get habitualized. They tackle public problems through direct actions out of public administrations and breaking from their pre-constituted frames and procedures, but over time, as they routinely provide answer to that problem generating public services and goods, they might develop institutional dimensions.

In order to develop this line of thought, empirical research has to focus not only on the initial phases of limited and unstable citizen initiatives (Lanzara, 2004), but also on these experiences in their *long durée*. In urban research, the topic has been explored in particular focussing on direct actions in relation to social movements as squatting and social centres.

Pruijt (2003) has explored processes of institutionalization of squatting practices since the 1980s in New York and Amsterdam, observing them in their diachronic evolution. Following Castells (1983) he saw institutionalization as a loss of identity and change in action repertoire, where movement “is channeled into a stable pattern based on formalized rules and laws” (Pruijt, 2003: 134). Pruijt and Roggeband (2014) further explain the idea of “institutionalized” orientation of social movements comparing it with an “autonomous” orientation. The former presents a “clear division of labor and authority, centralized organization, and loose coupling of ends and means”, while the latter “entails emphasizing self-management, egalitarian, nonhierarchical structures and consensus-based decision making”, with ends-means continuity (ibid: 1).

Exploring Italian social centres, Mudu (2012) sees institutionalization as a process where “a movement is channeled into a stable pattern based on formalized rules and laws” (ibid: 427), and recognized that while social centres aim at developing autonomous processes, they risk becoming institutions with organized knowledge and power structures. This risk is discussed by Membretti (2007) in the exploration

of the 30-year experience of the Leoncavallo social centre in Milan, identifying a tension between a need for structuring and a need for flexibility. This approach works both towards the creation of clearer roles and the preservation of informality and indetermination. This “flexible institutionalization” aims at “creating a dialectic between the informality of the movements and the structuring of the institutions (ibid: 265). The concrete activities of development of services by the social centre are described outlining the self-managed, open and emerging possibilities of definition of the services. The social centre is based on a lack of hierarchy, lack of fixed and assembly democracy (ibid: 261).

These works approach institutionalization in citizen initiatives, but they do so adopting perspectives which I consider incomplete. For Pruijt (2003) institutionalization consists in the adoption of already-instituted forms of action present in society rather than in the consolidation of patterns of action, be they emergent or reproduced from elsewhere. Institutionalization is therefore limited to processes of isomorphism of movements with their interorganizational field, with the integration of conventional methods into their operations. The evaluation of the level of institutionalization of a squatting movement, in this perspective, is not based on the presence of habitualized and typified systems of roles (which can exist in organizations with non-hierarchical aims), rather on the presence of habitualized roles and procedures deriving from external society.

The exploration by Italian social centres by Mudu (2012) and by Membretti (2007) takes into account not just the external pressure to conform to the environment, but also the internal consolidation of knowledge and procedures. While Leoncavallo is framed as an experience able to escape the establishment of an institutional dimension detached from the free operative flow of action, the presence of rules and formalized procedures in relation to common decision-making suggests the presence of a set of shared stock of knowledge above the operational level (Kiser & Ostrom, 1982). In this experience, the common set of rules and roles do not influence everyday action, rather they guide the procedures with which actors self-govern their operations. Research should therefore inquire not just the presence of institutions at operative level, but also conceptualize the presence of institutions at different levels of action.

Considering the contributions and the critical issues of these approaches, we can expand the body of research on the institutionalization of citizen initiatives by observing them in their *long durée*. We can understand institutionalization as “reciprocal typifications of habitualized actions by types of actors” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966: 72). In concrete terms, I consider an institution to be “an (observable) pattern of collective action (social practice)” (Czarniawska, 2009), which revolves around the presence of (implicit and explicit) stable rules, roles and ties across members. This exploration will allow the increased understanding of these initiatives in relation to their internal processes of organization, their trajectories

and their ability to maintain a relevant amount of shared knowledge in their organizations, connected to the relation with their environments.

This approach is connected to the understanding of citizen initiatives as direct actions generating effects on public problems out of governmental control. The evolution from emergent to institutionalized actions might consist as well in a shift from the exploration of a problematic situation into the continuous and repetitive organizational effort to produce the public goods and services answering said problem.

The first research question is therefore:

(if and) how do long-existing citizen initiatives present institutionalized dimensions in their internal actions and processes of organizing?

This research question will be tackled through the exploration of long existing citizen initiatives in their diachronic and synchronic dimensions. The diachronic exploration traces the historical evolution of operations, in their shifts, alliances and ties with external institutions. The synchronic exploration of activities and situated problems allows the analysis of the frames guiding actors. Through these two approaches, I will be able to assess the eventual presence of institutional dimensions in the initiatives, focusing on their normative, cognitive and practical aspects. I consider not just the internal processes of typization and habitualization, but also the establishment of relations of these initiatives with their institutional environment, observing which institutions legitimized them, with which restraints to isomorphism; at the same time, I consider which new institutions were generated by these initiatives.

In particular, the research connects this hypothesis of citizen initiatives as institutions to previous discussions on problematic situations, problems and public problems. I explore which problems they focus on, how the resolution of problems is tackled by these organizations, and how they institutionalize an answer over the years.

The eventual institutionalization of their production of public goods and services has also potential effects on the repertoire of logics of action that mobilized actors adopt for the treatment of problematic situations. If these initiatives have successfully tackled over time public problems through direct action, this strategy could have been reframed from a minor and unknown approach - generating ephemeral “experiences” - to a structural option that citizens consider in their action.

2.2.3 Learning and innovation in urban research

In the first part of this section I introduced the arguments supporting a dichotomous view of citizen initiatives and public administrations as non-institutions and institutions. Exploring the notion of institution and the nature of processes of institutionalization, in the second part of the section I suggested that long-existing citizen initiatives could also develop institutional dimensions, and I defined the research question guiding that part of empirical inquiry.

This thesis generates relevant theoretical evolutions, as it unhinges the dichotomic interpretation of citizens' and public administrations' initiatives along the institutionalization spectrum. Through empirical research oriented by the first research question, I will develop an alternative interpretation in the next chapters.

Focusing now on the situated consequences of this disassociation between non-institutionalization and citizen initiatives, I explore how we should renew our understanding of the engagement of these initiatives with problematic situations. While usually they are considered to be enacting processes of emerging sensemaking as they construct new organizing processes, we ought now take into account their eventual institutionalization, and the consequent difficulty to adapt to new problematic situations associated with institutional inertia and backwardness. In this understanding, they closely resemble the formal organizations described by Lanzara (1983: 73), which have a hard time adapting their normal way of seeing when their environments changes.

This situation has been extensively explored by sociologists, policy analysts and urban scholars in relation to public institutions. Scholars - and in particular reformists arguing for a renewal of current institutions instead of their generalized breakdown - developed lines of research aimed at finding how institutions face problems out of their routines, developing learning and innovation.

The translation of theories on the consequences of institutional inertia from public administrations to citizen initiatives opens to a series of questions on the use of institutional frames by these experiences, and their eventual ability to bend established roles, rules and knowledges when facing new problematic situations. In this section, I therefore build a theoretical path focusing on the engagement of institutions with new and problematic situations, and in particular on theories of learning and innovation in these conditions, in order to question how institutionalized citizen initiatives can learn and innovate beyond their institutional dimensions.

I start the discussion by outlining the concepts of institutional inertia and backwardness from sociological research. These concepts were introduced in the previous section, but they need further clarification to reach a full comprehension of the troublesome engagement of institutions with new and unexpected situations. Subsequently, I introduce researches from policy analysis, urban studies and

organizational studies focused on the development of learning and innovation by institutions, focusing on micro-sociological and cognitive interpretations of innovation and learning. On the basis of these theories on learning and innovation, I define the second research question and the phenomena I will empirically focus on in relation to citizen initiatives in problematic situations out of their routinized activities.

In the theoretical interpretations of citizen initiatives as spaces of experimentation, public administrations have been described as institutions unable to learn and change. They have been critically framed as inert organizations, detached from the shifts of the instituting society (Castoriadis, 1975).

As I briefly introduced in the previous section, this inability is due to the institutional dimension of public administrations. Inertia is manifested through structural aspects of institutions (with self-referential closure) and through their subjective, cognitive and cultural aspects, influencing their inability to learn. While societal pressures act on institutions to change, institutions resist adaptation through these dimensions (de Leonardis, 2001: 127).

The level of institutionalization of an organization is linked with the degree of “taken for grantedness” of the organization’s knowledge base. Weakly institutionalized knowledge is unstable and susceptible of conflict, while highly institutionalized knowledge is accepted without dispute on the basis of its legitimacy (Lanzara & Patriotta, 2007: 637): it becomes a opaque and given intersubjective reality, part of the known “facts” (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 76-77).

Institutions dominate the cognitive maps of actors through a double opacity. We can make an example on the choice of a solution when facing a problematic situation. On a first level, institutions guide us towards a specific response without making us aware of the possibility of adopting other strategies. Institutions are devices allowing us to socially “see” the world, but reducing what we see to only a few options (de Leonardis, 2001).

On a second level, institutions not only prevent us from seeing, but also from seeing that we do not see. We don’t see any other option besides the ones we perceive as “obvious” as they are part of our cognitive repertoire (ibid).

In this perspective, institutions are instrumental in the construction of reality through processes of implicit classification, that often stay invisible in our cognitive processes. Institutions are constructions recognizing specific situations, assigning them roles and knowledges, and suggesting a proper solution. Problems are processually constructed according to the available solutions.

The definition of reality through institutionalized frames often leads to counterintuitive and backward situations. In particular, when the environment shifts from the habitual conditions of existing institutions or escapes their classification, the effectiveness of institutions in the engagement with reality is reduced.

Problematic situations are transformed in unsolvable problems, with a relevant mismatch between the social construction of reality and the conditions in the environment.

For instance, Kuhn (1962) described this character of institutions in his analysis of scientific theories. When a scientific theory becomes a dogma, research is not aimed at discovering what is unknown, rather at exploring what is known. In these situations, institutions often ignore anomalies as they escape their classificatory systems (de Leonardis, 2001).¹¹ Similarly, public administrations have in particular been criticized for their inability to recognize social problems which don't align with their classificatory systems and bureaucratic procedures. Institutions have similar effects on our everyday lives as well. We enact routines based on past experience, which seem adequate to our situations as the "right thing to do" (Lanzara, 2016: 24). We do not question these routines, because we take them for granted under their double opacity.

The effects of institutions on our ability to see our environment become apparent in particular when routines face a situation of discontinuity, uncertainty and breakdown. Lanzara uses a metaphor useful to illustrate the relation between what we see and how we act, and on the cognitive inertia of institutions in relation to their environment:

When we walk along a path across the woods, we tend to see the path as preexisting our act of walking along it. We perceive our walking as guided by the path: it gives us a sense of direction. Indeed, we "follow" the path. We trust the path because we know that it will take us across the woods and, eventually, out of them, even though we may not know precisely where it will take us. Yet we know that, because of the very fact that it is there, the path leads to some destination: someone must have gone the same way before us. We can measure our mistakes or deviations with respect to its course. If we use the path often, it will become familiar to the point that it will be taken for granted. If, on the contrary, we use it for the first time, then every now and then in our journey we will have to stop and check its alignment with respect to our final destination. The path is essentially the physical embodiment of a standard program to cross the woods that has been executed innumerable times: it is by all means a routine, a sequence of local problems that have been given a solution.

¹¹ My research has faced the problematic relation with predetermined institutional categories in relation to citizen initiatives. None of the consolidated scientific categories of citizen initiatives appeared exhaustive to me (insurgent, self-organization, etc.). Section 2.1 is an effort to discuss the implicit nature of each of these categories. Section 2.2.1 instead focuses on the construction of the alternative category of "citizen initiative", which I modestly consider more empirically grounded.

The path/routine does not tell us much about the woods—about what is off the beaten track, out there in the bush, beyond the trees. But that is irrelevant to our purpose—the crossing of the woods. The path works inasmuch as it enables us to carry out a purposeful action, but it does not give us knowledge of the woods. The woods fade into the background: we put the woods in brackets and, in a certain sense, we do not see them. We only see the path as a foreground figure that stands out, while the woods are the backdrop of our action. The very existence of the beaten track wipes out the woods’ significance as a relevant domain for searching and reaching our final destination. It makes the woods non-influential. In other words, the path works for us as a simplified interface that, on the one hand, disconnects us from the woods’ overwhelming complexity and, on the other hand, integrates us with the woods on a simplified basis (Lanzara, 2016: 24-25)

The path exemplifies the enabling/limiting effects of habitualization. The path saves cognitive resources in the performance of an effective action, but it also limits our cognitive flexibility as we get dependent on it. It guides us out of the woods, but we progressively lose the ability to perform this task without its support (ibid: 25).

If we get lost in the woods, we have to determine an alternative path to get out of the woods. The woods become a rich set of information which can guide us in our search for orientation. As we engage with them

“we must be perceptive enough to be able to listen and engage in conversation with their materials—trees, clearings, passages, alignments, slopes, brooks, high grounds, and so forth. We shall try to decode and structure these as traces, signals, and landmarks that may help us to gain some orientation, proceed in a stepwise fashion, and maintain a direction” (Lanzara, 2016: 25).

Through trial and error, we construct a new route for the first time, open for others to follow. In this iterative and tentative efforts, we convert the woods into information. Over time, some of these informations are translated into an explicit new path, while others are left in the background, operating as support system for the routine. These informations constitute the formative context (Ciborra and Lanzara, 1994) of the path, constituting “a background condition for action, enforcing constraints, giving direction and meaning, and setting the range of opportunities for undertaking action” (ibid), becoming over time the taken-for-granted canvas upon which the routinized action takes place and receives meaning.

Tracing the path and building its context are mutually structuring actions. The path exists in reference to its context, which guides the action of the path itself. As we lose the path, we are left without the structured information guiding us in the performance of the routine, and we are forced to generate new informations from the materials in our environment. (Lanzara, 2016: 27). Trying to establish new paths, we structure our action instead of reproducing existing structures. To do so, we have to see our environment differently, as a medium for our search (ibid: 28).

This example illustrates how the performance of habitualized routines incrementally blinds us over time. Following a pre-established path, we take for granted the context enabling us in the performance of said routine. When the routine breaks down, the reorientation of action requires a re-engagement with our environment to establish the formative context for a new routine. This rekindling requires the recognition of failures of past routines, and the opening of new paths of experimentation for the determination of alternative processes in a new relation with the environment. As institutions habitualizations influence our interpretation of the world, we both fail to recognize these failures and to think of our environment beyond what we see as “real”. The objectification of knowledge and reality complicates a renewed engagement with our environment.

The example of the woods illustrates the difficulties of acting in situations of routine breakdown. The reconstruction of a new path is developed through a process of learning in relation with the environment. As we tentatively proceed through trial and errors to establish a new route, we learn about the woods, about cartography, about ourselves.

All these learning points are developed in the exemple by an individual actor. But since institutions are intersubjective constructs, the permanent adaptation of institutions is not limited to individual learning processes, but it necessarily entails a social dimension. If we are part of a group and we lose our path, we have to redesign our routine and its environment collectively, adding ulterior levels of complexity. The collective process of reorientation does not simply consist in the conversation of an individual with the materials of a situation (Schon, 1984: 78), but also entails the construction of intersubjective interpretations of what the environment, the problem and the materials are. Multiple designers, with their multiple frames, engage in the same situation: competing, cooperating and negotiating in the manipulation of the situation, the social process of designing inevitably becomes political (Schon and Rein, 1994: 87-88).

In situations with multiple designers, institutionalized public administrations are often one of the involved actors. In the cases observed by Lanzara (1983) during the Irpinia earthquake, institutionalized public administrations acted on problematic situations by enforcing pre-established routines and

categories, destroying the generative actions spontaneously developed by citizens. The force of habitualization in institutions often makes us ignore alternatives. Going back to the wood metaphor, institutions might be embodied in the sherpa enforcing pre-established rules “because that’s how we do” instead of adapting to the problematic situation by questioning the effectiveness of past routines.

Research on learning and innovation has focused on the conditions under which institutions are able to re-engage with their environment, learning from it and generating innovations in their institutional knowledges.

We reached a point where the definition of learning and innovation is indispensable to continue in the discussion. Providing a complete and exhaustive definition of “learning” is a daunting task, that goes beyond my abilities and the goals of this dissertation. I can nonetheless provide a review of the basic logic assumptions allowing the assessment of learning.

As Bateson (1972: 283 in Blackmore, 2010: xiii) said, “the word “learning” undoubtedly denotes change of some kind. To say what kind of change is a delicate matter”. In our ordinary speech, we usually refer to learning as “the simple receipt of information from an external event, in such a way that a similar event at a later (and appropriate) time will convey the same information” (Bateson, 1972: 289). In this kind of learning, which Bateson calls “learning zero”, an entity shows minimal change in its response to a repeated item of sensory input, often leading to habitualized actions.

“Learning I” is instead related to situation of change. In these cases, “an entity gives at time 2 a different response from what it gave at time 1” (ibid: 292), with a correction of errors of choice within a set of alternatives (ibid: 298). A basic and tacit assumption in the assessment of this change is the “sameness” of the stimulus and its context at time 1 and time 2: without the assumption of a repeatable context the concept of “learning” would “fall to the ground” (ibid: 293). If each context were different, learning as change in behaviour would have no logic background as the different behaviour would be associated with different contexts. In constructivist terms, then, the recognition of “sameness” of two contexts (or situations) is crucial to assess the eventual development of learning as a change in response to a stimulus.¹²

“Learning II” refers instead to a change in the process of “Learning I”: “a corrective change in the set of alternatives from which choice is made, or it is a change in how the sequence of experience is punctuated” (ibid: 298). Learning II develops new ways to sequence events, new ways to see reality. It is possible to continue adapting to situations substituting an item of Learning I (choosing among a set of alternatives)

¹² “Stimulus is an elementary signal, internal or external. Context of stimulus is a metamessage which classifies the elementary signal. Context of context of stimulus is a meta-message which classifies the metamessage” (Bateson, 1972: 294)

without any achievement of Learning II (as review of the choosing process) (ibid: 307). Among the potential results of Learning II are what we refer to as “human characters”: patterns of transactions of individuals with their environment.

These first two levels present a crucial distinction in their object. While the object of Learning I is the shifting stimulus or situation, prompting the generation of a changing response, the object of Learning II (and subsequent logic levels) are the rules guiding action (Bateson, 1972).

The processes of learning described by Bateson constitute a first logical reference. Even if the subsequent higher levels of learning¹³ presented by Bateson involve the revision of meta-preferential frames and constructions of reality, these processes are still limited to changes in individual perceptions of meta-preferences. In fact, learning is something that individuals and only individuals do (Freeman, 2006: 380). In order to consider the revision of intersubjective preferences, we should also consider the social and interactive dimension of learning: while individuals can review their preferences and behaviours, their habitualized and institutionalized dimensions are socially generated and adapted. While errors and anomalies in social constructs can be detected by individuals, their revision requires intersubjective transformations.

At the same time, learning as a social process is developed in interaction with others, which is in part linked with what has been previously learnt (ibid). This statement refers not only to the comparison of changes in behaviour between situations described by Bateson, but also to the fact that the changed behavior is a function of what we already know.

For instance, organizational learning “involves the detection and correction of error” (Argyris & Schon, 1978: 2) in organizations. As single members discover the error, they learn individually. Organizational learning occurs when “learning agents’ discoveries, inventions, and evaluations [are] embedded in organizational memory” (ibid: 19). If this transfer - performed by members of the organization - to an intersubjective level does not happen, individuals have learnt but the organization will not have done so (ibid: 19). Once the organizational memory is changed, it influences back the single individuals.

Organizational learning is differentiated in single- and double-loop learning: in single-loop learning “members of the organization respond to changes in the internal and external environments of the organization by detecting errors which they then correct”(ibid: 18). They successfully adapt - through processes of inquiry - the organizational routines and strategies to their changing environment in order to keep the organization stable.

¹³ Bateson also referred to processes of “Learning III” and “Learning IV”, which refer respectively to changes in processes of “Learning II” and “Learning III” (ibid: 298).

While single-loop learning focuses on routines and actions, double-loop learning occurs “when error is detected and corrected in ways that involve the modification of an organization's underlying norms, policies, and objectives” (ibid: 3). These cases often involve contrasting norms across members of the organization. The single error is connected not only to routines and strategies for effective performance, but also “to the very norms which define effective performance” (ibid: 22).

Both single- and double-loop learning can be the object of processes of deutero-learning. Organizations adopt deutero-learning strategies on single-loop learning processes - “learning for effectiveness” - and on double-loop learning processes - “resolving conflicting norms for performance” (ibid: 28).

Summarizing these reflections on processes of learning, the interpretation of learning as change allows the exploration of different dimensions of learning:

- what is being changed (the engagement with the environment/processes of learning/ underlying norms)
- who learns (individuals/organizations/...)

In uncertain and problematic situations - when errors and anomalies emerge from existing patterns of action - individual and collective actors engage in these processes of learning. Going back to the example of getting lost in the woods, we can learn about a new path, about a strategy to develop a path, about the best ways to develop strategies to create a path; and we can do so individually or socially, leading to an intersubjective revision of routines, learning processes and underlying norms. The situations of breakdown of routines and uncertainty are occasions in which inquiries are developed to learn and adapt to shifting environments.

As I previously mentioned, the revision of institutionalized underlying norms is complicated by their opacity and inertia. They are embedded in our construction of reality, in our interpretation of the world. While the norms of organizations can still be perceived as constructed and arbitrary, institutions are embedded in and constitutive of what we perceive as reality (as discussed in section 2.2.2). They also tend to persist to environmental turbulences. Their revision involves higher orders of change (Hall, 1993): the mutation of institutions requires a repositioning and reconstruction of the interpretation of the world in the community of actors referring to and using that institution. The notion of “innovation” is used to refer to conceive processes of mutation in relation to the institutional dimension of society (de Leonardis, 2001). Let’s explore this concept and its importance.

The notion of innovation has been extensively used in the last 30 years both in policy research and in ordinary political discussions. The history of the notion is usually traced back to Schumpeter (1911), which focused on the transposition of new ideas into economic activity. The term has been used in urban research alone (Gualini & Majoor, 2007; Majoor, 2009; Lingua, 2007) or in associations with other concepts, such as social innovation (Moulaert et al, 2013), public innovation (Wagenaar, 2017), urban innovation (Dente & Coletti, 2011; Dente, Bobbio & Spada, 2005; Fareri, 2004), and so forth. These diverse approaches focused on different empirical objects of innovation through different theoretical frameworks. The review of all these concepts goes beyond the goals of the thesis. I can nonetheless ascertain that debates in planning research in the last decades have used the notion of “innovation” either as an emic category (“innovative” is what the actors define to be, such as an “innovative urban project”) either as a quantitative parameter to measure the levels of innovativeness of urban contexts, policies and projects.

However, innovation is not just novelty (Lingua, 2007). Innovation is linked to the generation new ways of seeing and doing what we usually take for granted, referring with this term to institutionalized practices. As stated by Lanzara:

To produce innovation, action needs not be radically new or revolutionary in the common sense of the term. It need not set itself Faustian goals. Even simple, apparently inconspicuous actions that trespass an accepted boundary and question what we take for granted, or actions that establish new linkages and throw bridges across traditionally separate domains, can be highly innovative, leading to seeing and doing familiar things in unprecedented ways (Lanzara, 2016: 7)

Instead of adopting the previous approaches, I choose to focus on the tradition linking innovation with learning, therefore focusing on the cognitive dimension of innovation. Innovation, as the processes of learning previously described, can be seen as a process of change in response to external stimuli or perceived errors, which can be developed intentionally or unintentionally. The act of innovating is not only related to the emergence of some new practice or action diverging from established practices, but also its interpretation in a general framework of construction of reality (Donolo & Fichera, 1988: 41-42). Actors generate new game models, structuring a new field, with renewed methods, problems and results (Crozier & Friedberg 1977 in Crosta, 1990: 71).

Innovation (as Kuhn’s (1962) scientific revolutions) implies the escape from a dogmatic understanding of scientific theories, and their redefinition with the inclusion of anomalies as discoveries. Revolutions

need the presence of anomalies and errors in existing theories, but they unfold with the construction of a new reality (de Leonardis, 2001).

Innovation can also be observed across different levels of politics and society, in a continuum from emergent innovations towards general revisions of policies, themes, political phases (Donolo & Fichera, 1988: 29).

Ultimately, innovation is “the mutation of forms of rationality” (ibid: 213-214). It can be summarized as a process where errors and anomalies are not simply “learnt” or “absorbed” in existing and institutional constructions of reality, but they lead towards a renewed interpretation of the world. Innovations are strictly related to institutions and socially accepted knowledges. Innovations can be seen as the outcomes of processes of reframing (Schon and Rein, 1994; Schon, 1979; Rein, 2006), generating renewals of our categorizations of the world towards a more complex cognitive framework.

Innovation often unfolds in situations where the opacity of institutions is reduced and actors can “see their ways of seeing” (de Leonardis, 2001). Actors reach this ability in particular in discontinuous situations like the rupture of their prefigured paths of action (Lanzara, 2016: 9), in disputes between interpretive frames and thematizations of situations (Donolo & Fichera, 1988: 229; Donolo, 1997: 214), or in processes of selection of solutions (Donolo, 1997: 215).

A discontinuity of this kind is “a perceived gap that should be “filled” so that the normal flow of action or the fabric of a situation can be restored, and, simultaneously, it is a time and a place where something ends and something else begins” (Lanzara, 2016: 8). Discontinuities, as puzzling as they are, are spaces of generation of alternatives, opportunities for reframing knowledge (ibid: 8). In these situations, individuals and organizations are called to make sense of unfamiliar situations, redesigning their routines, restructuring the meaning of situations and reframing taken-for-granted assumptions (ibid: 5), as in the example of the new path in the woods.

How do citizen initiatives relate to the concepts of learning and innovation? In previous research these experiences have been assessed as sources of innovation for other institutions - in particular public administrations - which could have integrated them in their institutional operations (Fareri, 2004; Cognetti et al, 2004). Citizen initiatives were said to present an “innovation potential”, because they tackle public problems and collective issues in alternative and new ways (Cognetti et al, 2004). The innovations they would trigger are related to the eventual recognition and inclusion in institutional frameworks related to the effective resolution of public problems. In this interpretation, the task of

innovating and recognizing is linked to public administrations, implicitly suggesting that the resolution of public problems is ultimately part of their responsibility¹⁴.

The inquiry into the institutional dimensions of these initiatives (to be verified through empirical research) may disrupt these dichotomic roles. As they habitualize their action, these initiatives develop institutional dimensions in relation to their organizational routines. Furthermore, their effective operations based on direct action may promote the legitimization of this strategy, towards its inclusion in the institutional repertoire guiding actors in the selection of logics of action to tackle problematic situations.

In this renewed interpretation of institutional geometries, I consider citizen initiatives not just as the anomalies from which other institutions can learn and innovate. These alternative institutions can potentially learn and innovate as well their institutional frames, facing the same cognitive issues as public administrations.

The second research question is therefore:

How do long-existing citizen initiatives generate learning and innovations in problematic situations out of their routinized activities?

The empirical focus of the second research question diverges quite consistently from past researches focused on the connection between innovation and citizen initiatives. I do not focus on situations recognized as problematic by public administrations, neither I only focus on the emergent actions of citizen initiatives to assess their innovativeness. Instead, I choose to focus on situations recognized as experimental, uncertain, and problematic by citizen initiatives themselves. I also choose to focus on situations and processes involving not only actors from these citizen initiatives, but other actors, allowing the interaction of different frames and interpretations of the world in the intersubjective definition of the situation.

In these situations characterized by uncertainty and diversity of motivations and frames, I aim at observing how the involved actors are able to learn (as individuals) and eventually innovate (their relevant institutions). This question implicitly focuses on the use of the institutionalized knowledge and

¹⁴As I have stated multiple times in this thesis, authors often implicitly and unconditionally take for granted the role of public administrations as legitimate actors in the resolution of public problems and development of public actions (by criticizing their rollback of public services, implicitly arguing for their intervention in specific issues, and so forth). The critique of this conception would require an extensive discussion, which I will here avoid.

I will only comment stating that this interpretation of public administrations is itself a social construction, an institution, and should not be taken for granted by researchers. In particular the lack of reflection on this social construction limits our ability as researchers to appreciate the existence of other practices deviating from this interpretation: as we are influenced by the normative cognitive directions of these institutions, we are blinded to the (potential) existence and value of alternative systems.

procedures of institutionalized citizen initiatives, questioning if and how they are eventually able to innovate them through these problematic situations.

As these situations develop in public, I also consider the indirect learning of peripheral and external actors to the situation, importing knowledges and routines into their own situations.

Third Chapter: Research Design and Methods

As mentioned in the introduction, the research didn't follow a linear process from theory to empirical research. As the interest for this research emerged from the encounter with a specific empirical case, the determination of research questions and subsequent research design were conducted in conjunction with field research, and were accompanied by underlying epistemological reflections. My research questions and design have not been the guiding track for empirical research, but they have been determined in the process of dialogue between the field and literature.

In this chapter I aim therefore at explaining and justifying a posteriori the procedures I adopted in the development of my research. In particular, I want to reconstruct the coherence between research questions, research design and field operations.

In the first part of the chapter (sections 3.1 to 3.3) I discuss the broad themes of research design, focusing on the underlying logic and epistemological issues. I then proceed to explicit the empirical approaches of the research.

In the central part of the chapter (sections 3.4) I discuss the fitness of the interpretation of Citizen initiated cultural centres as citizen initiatives. I discuss the empirical category of CICC emerging from Trans Europe Halles and its connection with citizen initiatives.

In the final part of the chapter (sections 3.5 and 3.6) I discuss in detail the procedures that led to the selection of the cases, the methods of data acquisition, their unfolding on the field and the techniques of analysis. I extensively focus on the research on the field, the problems connected to gaining access to the cases and the affective and emotional issues I had to face. As I have personal attachments with the objects of research and the people involved in them, my positionality helped and limited my access to certain informations.

3.1 An abductive process of inquiry

Inquiry in social sciences proceeds through different logics. The most diffuse in positivist quantitative research is deductive logic: beginning from universal theories, researchers develop hypotheses and concepts to be tested through empirical research, deducing the singular cases from the general. Inductive logic, adopted mostly in qualitative research, inductively details general laws from particular cases (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2012: 27).

Abductive logic is a third kind of logic. Its reasoning begins with a puzzle, a surprise, which pushes the researcher into an inquiry to make the situation less perplexing: “One asks oneself, in other words, what circumstances would render an event, a word, a relationship, or whatever else one is seeking to explain more “commonsensical”—less surprising, less puzzling” (ibid: 27). The puzzle stems from a sense of “absurd”, as the contradiction between the order we expect from the world and its irrational and disorderly nature (Camus, 1942).

In this process, the research does not develop linearly and steadily along a step-by-step logical path, but follows an iterative-recursive talk between the puzzle and eventual explanations, originating in other empirical cases or in scientific literature. The research is involved in a circular process of sense-making, constructing an interpretation of the situation (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2012: 28).

The process of sensemaking and learning follows Gadamer’s idea of hermeneutic circle. Researchers start these processes with prior knowledge about their object of research, but through the interaction with other elements (cases, surprises, literature) they develop a better understanding of the situation (ibid: 31). Abductive inquiring, in its most essential form, constitutes a form of learning based on the personal connections and attachment of the researcher with his/her context of action.

Puzzles are constructed by researchers through the contrast between their expectations and what they observe and experience on the field. In some of these puzzles researchers build their expectations on the basis of their knowledge of existing theories and scientific literature, or they use these sources to build tentative explanations of their surprise. Through these processes, researchers might discover that existing literature is missing something, constructing their own specific research questions. Research questions are not predetermined, but are discovered and refined along the process of research (ibid: 34).

As mentioned in the introduction, my research stemmed from the encounter with the case of transformation of the Nová Synagóga by the cultural NGO Truc Sphérique, who managed the long-existing citizen-initiated cultural centre Stanica Žilina-Zaricie, in Žilina, Slovakia. This encounter generated a divergence my past knowledge of urban actions by CICC and this new case: I was used to

urban actions CICC developed in the close surroundings of their original premises, or temporary reuses of other spaces in their cities. This case surprised me and opened a space of uncertainty about its interpretation.

As I looked for other similar cases and conducted the first field visits, I compared these experiences and my own prior knowledge with scientific literature on these cases. This connection allowed the reframing of the puzzle from simple personal surprise to a theoretically driven inquiry, moving my research questions from practical to theoretical.

After this theoretical confrontation, the inquiry proceeded in two intertwined but distinct directions, related to distinct puzzles. The first was linked to the exploration and explanation of these new processes of urban intervention. I incrementally understood that these processes were a new phenomenon, and therefore lacked proper documentation in the literature.

The second puzzle relates to my perception of lack of complete understanding of long-existing citizen initiatives in current literature. As I confronted my experience and the field results with current theories and descriptions of citizen actions, I observed a lack of understanding of the institutionalized dimensions these organizations can assume.

The understanding of these long-existing CICC as institutions allowed also an interpretation of the first puzzle on processes of urban intervention (and in particular interventions conducted in specific situations of uncertainty and with a plurality of actors) as occasions for innovation.

While these puzzles have been developed through an abductive and erratic logic, this manuscript adopts a quite linear logic of exposition. A restitution based on my process of abductive inquiry would be both impossible for me to reconstruct in detail, and inaccessible for the reader.

3.2 Preliminary research design: case study

A research design is “a logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study’s initial research questions and, ultimately, to its conclusions” (Yin, 2009: 148). It is “a logical plan for getting from here to there, where here may be defined as the initial set of questions to be answered, and there is some set of conclusions (answers) about these questions” (ibid: 148).

While Yin and other scholars usually apply this definition to structure in a linear sequence the process of research from theory to questions, empirical data and conclusions, my linear connections between questions, empirical data and conclusions were discovered through the process of research itself. The connections were not predetermined, but they were the outcome of the process of research itself.

In this section, I will introduce the first components of my research design in relation to research methods and case study design, outlining the relation between research questions and units of analysis (ibid: 151). Other elements of the research design will be tackled extensively in the next sections.

3.2.1 Fitness of case study as a research method

Since its inception, my research focused on contemporary or recent events. These processes of urban transformation were being developed as the research unfolded, or they had just been completed. Furthermore, I had little or no degree of control over the events being researched. The puzzles I was tackling mostly concerned questions regarding “how” and “why” these processes were developed and “how” the CICC used their knowledge.

These conditions guided me in the selection of a research method - or rather, in understanding a posteriori which method I intuitively adopted.

Three conditions guide the selection of a research method: “(a) the type of research question posed, (b) the extent of control an investigator has over actual behavioral events, and (c) the degree of focus on contemporary as opposed to historical events” (ibid: 81)

Among the different research methods, the most suitable method was the case study. Case studies are empirical inquiries that “investigate a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (ibid: 118).

A case study focuses on “how” and “why” questions. Similar methods focusing on contemporary events with no direct control, like archival analysis and surveys, follow instead questions like “who”, “where”, “how many”, “how much”.

Having no control over the multiple and different elements of the field, case studies proceed through a system of triangulation of sources of evidence (ibid: 120-121). Case studies can be based on the combination of different sources of evidence, like documentation, archival records, direct observation, participant observation, physical artifacts, interviews (ibid: 418).

Furthermore, case studies are optimal to focus on practical knowledges, as the ones I aimed at exploring (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

In the conduction of the research, I determined the core issues of the design of case studies (Philliber, Schwab, & Samsloss, 1980 in Yin, 2009), which are: what questions to study, what data are relevant, what data to collect, and how to analyze the results.

3.2.2 Designing case studies: number of cases and units of analysis

The research questions guiding this research have been presented in the previous chapter in relation to current literature, and are:

1. how do long-term citizen experiences present institutionalized dimensions in their internal actions and processes of organizing?
2. how do long-existing citizen initiatives generate learning and innovations in situations out of their routinized activities?

These research questions can lead us in the discussion of the case study design I adopted. We can discuss the design through two dimensions: single- or multiple-case designs and single- or multiple- units of analysis (Yin, 2009: 221-222).

Single case studies are developed for critical, unique, typical, revelatory or longitudinal cases (ibid: 224-235). Critical cases aim at testing the validity of a theory; unique cases document rare occurrences of events; typical cases are relevant for their assumed universal validity; revelatory cases are cases where scientists have access to phenomena previously inaccessible (even if known); longitudinal cases observe a case in two or more points in time.

The logic behind multiple cases differs from the single-case studies. Yin suggests to consider multiple cases as multiple experiments, therefore adopting a logic of replication. Case studies can be selected in order to either lead to the replication of similar results (literal replication) or to predict contrasting results (theoretical replication) (ibid: 248-249).

Case studies can also have single- or multiple- units of analysis. Units of analysis are “what the cases are about” (ibid: 159; 235-242). They are what the analysis focuses on: individuals, collective entities, etcetera. Cases might be Single-unit (holistic design), when they analyse only one element in the context of the case: for example cases that follow a specific decision, or the life of a single individual. Multi-unit case studies (embedded design) focus instead on two or more units of analysis: for example, exploring an organization and at the same time analysing the lives of its members.

I initially thought that the case of the Nová Synagóga was a unique case: it was a new phenomenon, lacking theoretical explorations and out of my lay knowledge of these cultural centres. I therefore began

the research as a single-unit single case study. The single unit of analysis of the research was the process of urban intervention by Truc Sphérique on the Synagogue.

This process of research adopted an inductive reasoning, trying to generate theoretical explanations of the development of this process. In this process, I recognized the gaps in urban and planning research on long-existing citizen initiatives, which I underlined in the second chapter. In order to explain what happened in these processes by expanding existing literature, I had to revise how current scholar literature understand these citizen initiatives. I therefore chose to add a second embedded unit of analysis, focusing on the organization running the long-existing citizen-initiated cultural centres.

The two units of analysis are therefore structured as follows:

1. The first unit of analysis focuses on long-existing citizen initiatives to observe if and how they present institutionalized dimensions.
2. The second unit of analysis focuses on the problematic situations (the processes of urban intervention) faced by citizen initiatives out of their routinized activities to interactively generate new hypotheses and to describe these new phenomena in relation to learning and innovation.

Contrary to my initial suppositions, I observed the occurrence of this phenomenon in other situations, linking the puzzle to a class of phenomena: new processes of urban intervention by established citizen-initiated cultural centres. It was the class of phenomena to be new, not the single case¹⁵.

The multiplication of case studies led to a problematization of the logic of replication across cases. In fact, while the processes of urban intervention can be considered new phenomena requiring the inductive development of new theories, I considered the long-existing citizen initiatives running them as typical.

This difference leads to different logics of replication for the two units of analysis. In the first unit of analysis the replication emerges outside the cases, from inductive reasoning: on the basis of past experience and theoretical connections I expected both cases to present institutionalized dimensions, even if prior scientific literature on the topic didn't explore this dimension.

As the processes of urban intervention are new phenomena, in the second unit of analysis the inductive development of hypotheses could not be based on existing literature. While the first unit of analysis tests

¹⁵ The choice of adopting multiple case studies differs from the indications on abductive reasoning outlined by interpretive scholars I followed so far (Yanow, 2014), and requires therefore an explanation. Interpretive scholars proposed the adoption of an abductive logic in order to determine the situated meanings in organizational and policy contexts (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2012). The goal of their research is to understand "How policies mean" (Yanow, 1996). My research questions do not focus on the situated content of the meanings of a specific case and on their contrasts. Instead, they focus on the evolution of these meanings and on the knowledge associated with them. The attention is on learning and on innovation mechanisms, and on institutionalized knowledge: situated meanings can be abstracted as they are the objects of these mechanisms. The adoption of multiple case studies does not therefore aim at comparing the specific situated meanings or what has been learnt or innovated in the different cases, rather on analysing the mechanisms and interactions of these processes, abstracting them.

hypotheses, the second unit aims at developing new ones. I therefore generated hypotheses of interpretation through the continuous process of dialogue across the cases.

3.3 Empirical approach

In order to understand which type of information is relevant for this inquiry, I have to understand how the phenomena I aim to explore can be traced to specific sources of data. I have to justify how the data I acquire is the correct one in relation to the questions. This reflection opens a series of epistemological questions about what constitutes the reality around us, and how (and if!) we can describe or understand it.

The two units of analysis focus on two different empirical objects. While the first unit is centered on the organization, its evolution and its effects on different problems, the second unit explores a problematic situation and the evolution of actors engaging with it.

This analytical attention to public problems and problematic situations follows the tradition of public policy analysis (Regonini, 2001: 23-24). The centrality of public problems is reflected in the definition of public policies as “the set of actions performed/undergone by a set of subjects (the actors) in some way related to the solution of a collective problem - be it a need, an opportunity or an unanswered demand - generally considered of public interest” (Dente, 1990, from Dunn, 1981). As I expressed, the publicness of the problems tackled by these initiatives can not be assess a priori, but it is determined and verified in practice. Consequently, this assessment will determine the possible interpretation of their action in the construction of public policies.

The first research question focuses on the assessment of institutional dimensions in long-existing citizen initiatives, through a synchronic and diachronic inquiry. While the diachronic inquiry illustrates the evolution of the initiatives over the years, the synchronic exploration focuses on the current operations and situated problems. These two dimensions are crucial in order to assess the existence and explain the emergence of institutional dimensions in these initiatives. The second research question focuses instead on learning and innovation effects of problematic situations faced by these initiatives.

The diachronic exploration of the first research question focused on the construction of my interpretation of the history of the initiatives, through interviews and documents. As institutionalization

is a “reciprocal typifications of habitualized actions by types of actors” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966: 72) which develops in social situation continuing in time, the diachronic inquiry aimed at providing the context upon which these processes unfolded. In particular I explored the habitualization of actions, the situations of crisis in the organizations, their sources of legitimacy and their relations with pre-existing institutions. Documents and narratives tracing the history of the initiatives a posteriori were useful in understanding the sources of public legitimacy and justification.

The synchronic exploration of the first research question and the whole second research question adopted similar empirical approaches, as they both focus on present-day phenomena.

An institutional dimension is an intersubjective construct, which cognitively and practically affects actors. This collective dimension is relevant only as it normatively influences the actions of actors: while I explored and assessed the presence of explicit rules and norms in the organizations, they were relevant only if actors were influenced by them in their actions. Explicit norms and rules exist, but only some are accepted and followed. Rules can also be unwritten and implicit: they are not formalized but are part of the internal body of knowledge of these organizations.

Similarly, learning can be conscious or unconscious, and it can be either assessed by observing the mutation of practices by actors or by inquiring the evolution of their conscious knowledges. Intersubjective learning and innovation similarly exist in their use, as actors adopt in similar situations different institutional frames and categorizations.

Three empirical approaches were suitable to assess the existence and influence of institutional dimensions, and to assess learning and innovations. The first consists in the observation of practices and actions, looking for recurrences and questioning actors on their meanings. This approach requires considerable ethnographic experience.

The second and third approach are based on interviews and conversations. The second one aims at stimulating reflections on normally invisible institutionalized knowledges and routines that members of the initiatives (eventually) interiorized, and their revision in the new problematic situations. This line of questioning requires interviewing skills and a trusting connection with the interviewees.

The third approach focuses on tracing the processes of socialization of knowledge in the initiatives and the problematic situations. For the initiatives, it focuses on recent newcomers in the organization, eviscerating their learning process of the implicit and explicit codes of the group, assessing the normative pressures to adhere to pre-existing approaches. A variation of this approach focuses on the conflicts and disputes in the organizations, asking the meaning of the different approaches.

Adopting a similar approach to the problematic situations, I traced how knowledge was socialized and interactively exchanged between the different actors, questioning them about what they learnt in the

process, from whom and in which situations. I also inquired how these learning points would relate to their eventual previous institutional normative references, and how they could be eventually integrated to generate innovations.

3.4 Citizen-initiated cultural centres as citizen initiatives

The research focuses on citizen-initiated cultural centres, observing them as citizen initiatives. In order to understand how these two categories are related, it is useful to start from my direct encounter with the category of CICC in Trans Europe Halles, moving on to scholar works on these experiences and proceeding to the analysis of the category and its conventional situated understanding by the members of Trans Europe Halles.

In my activities in Interzona, a dimension was always - and still is - blurry: Interzona self-defined as an “independent cultural association”. Did the “independent” label refer to the cultural products we host - preferring independent and emerging artists - or to our governance system - which has no ties with public administrations, neither from a political nor economic point of view?

Finding no answers in the internal definitions of the association, I shifted this query to a broader level: Interzona is part of Trans Europe Halles, the European network of citizen-initiated cultural centres. Taking part in the activities of the network, I discovered the category of “citizen-initiated cultural centres” (from now on: CICC), and how our definition of “independent cultural centre” was related to it.

Trans Europe Halles is a network composed of over 100 centres across Europe. It aims at supporting, connecting and advocating for citizen-initiated cultural organizations across Europe. It has two membership levels: full members and associates. The former include cultural centres fitting all the membership criteria of the network, while the latter reunites organizations who don't meet at least one criterion.

Taking part in the activities of the network, I progressively acknowledged the presence of differences between Interzona and other TEH members. Many of them receive funding or political support by public administrations, while we had no public support and lacked political aid. Some don't have shared governance structures, with top-down decision-making structures, while we - at least nominally - are mostly horizontal. Some members have a paid staff, while only a few centres - like Interzona - are run by

volunteers. And even some of the ones based on volunteering do not have the same activist perspectives: while Interzona aims at promoting an alternative cultural offer against the institutional lack of attention to contemporary and experimental arts, centres like Manifatture Knos in Lecce worked in collaboration with institutions - like the Puglia Region - to promote arts and community activities.

Trans Europe Halles self-define as the network of Citizen-initiated cultural centres, but the definition of what constitutes a CICC is vague. The membership criteria state:

“Only citizen-initiated cultural centres can apply to become TEH Members and they have to meet the following criteria:

- 1) To be an independent and not-for-profit centre arising from a citizen’s initiative with a legal structure*
- 2) To be based in a repurposed building*
- 3) To present an autonomous, multidisciplinary social, artistic & cultural program that supports a democratic and pluralistic society and to show a commitment to Equal Opportunities”* (Trans Europe Halles. (n.d. a, b)

Through different examples in the network these criterias proved to be insufficient analytical lenses to explain what constitutes the common ground across the members of the network.

As a scholar, the first intuition in the process of understanding of the commonalities of these centres is to browse across previous literature. An exploration of scholar works focused on members of the network will provide a panoramic view of the categories in which they are inserted and the commonalities they found.

Lehtovuori and Havik (2009) focused on TEH member Kaapelitehdas, in Helsinki. The researchers position their work in the scholar debate revolving around the connections of urban space, creativity and innovation. The authors argue that place-based alternative strategies constitute a peculiar approach to the generation of urban innovations.

The establishment of the Kaapelitehdas cultural centre is categorized as an alternative process of planning cultural spaces, through an intuitive and ordinary understanding of “cultural spaces” and “alternative” not defined in the research. We can infer that the “alternativeness” of the plan is linked to its

divergence from “mainstream” planning practices, in terms of procedures and types of policy actors involved.

Krivý (2010; 2012) research focuses on the ideas and meanings exchanged through architectural designs and urban plans drafted by Kaapelitehdas and the Municipality of Helsinki. In particular, he argues that the architectures promoted by Pro-Kaapeli movement “consisted less of an actual design than of trying to put forward a new sensibility of the space” (2010: 13).

Krivý (2012) then explores the effects of this shift in policy regime analysing the planning process of the Suvilahti complex. In 2008 Kiinteistö Oy Kaapelitalo has been trusted by the City of Helsinki to manage the cultural re-use of the Suvilahti abandoned industrial complex. Exploring the uses of the concept of “culture” in the planning process, the author argues that it has been used as a governmentality instrument for the development of the area. The project was influenced by Kaapelitehdas directly - looking at its renovation as a success story - and indirectly - by adopting objectifying meanings of culture as a “viable instrument for the regeneration of obsolete urban spaces” (Krivý, 2012: 13).

The TEH member Stanica, in Žilina, Slovakia, is classed by Jagodzińska (2019) as an art institution in a refurbished building. The author does not provide a definition of “art institution”, leaving its meaning implicit. The category of is used in a broad sense, including “museums and art centres; large and small; situated in capital cities and in the province” (2019: 20). Tentatively, “art institutions” can be understood as the nexus of spaces where artistic activities (permanent or temporary; from different disciplines and arts) are organized and the organizations developing the aforementioned activities (be they public or private; self-managed or part of broader organizations).

In other researches, scholars do not categorize unequivocally the TEH centre object of research. Gainza (2018) explores the relations between industrial spatiality and grassroots creative activities, focusing on the role of the TEH member Zorrotzaurre Art Work in Progress (ZAWP) in the peninsular neighborhood of La Ribera, Bilbao. The author uses intermittently different terms to refer to ZAWP - cultural agents, alternative cultural spaces, cultural cluster, indeterminate spaces, cultural brownfields. “Cultural brownfield” is the most frequent term, which defines the presence of cultural activities in refurbished industrial spaces.

Some researchers prefer to focus only on a specific dimension of these centres rather than advancing a broad and ambiguous (and ambitious) framework. Cottino and Zeppetella (2009) adopt this approach,

understanding experiences like TEH members Kaapelitehdas, UfaFabrik in Berlin and Wuk in Wien as “creative practices of social reuse”. With this category, they mean processes of reuse of abandoned spaces activated by social actors - with or without the support of public administrations - adopting a creative approach, therefore deviating from usual processes of use of the territory.

French members of Trans Europe Halles - as Confort Moderne in Poitiers, Mains d'œuvres in St-Ouen and La Friche Belle de Mai in Marseille¹⁶ - have attracted extensive scholar and institutional attention.

A 2001 the Ministry of Culture finalized a report (Lextrait, 2001), structured around 30 cases of spaces emerged in the 1980s and 1990s “that pose in original and singular fashion the conditions for production and reception of the artistic action”. The labels were kept vague, referring to these spaces as “fabriques”, “lieux”, “project”. But it is the “friche culturelles” category that often emerges, referring to their collective movement as the “Nouveaux Territoires de l’Art”.

The research identifies some key points of commonality across these experiences, like the renewed connection between the public and creators, mixing artists and population. (Lextrait, 2001). The approach is rooted in the idea of creativity as a human trait: artistic and cultural production is not to be considered an activity restricted to experts, but open to all citizens, beyond the separation of culture-makers and culture-takers. Through a similar approach, these spaces reframe their connection with the territory, and with the spaces they use, proposing unformalized ways of engaging with the transformation of large industrial spaces.

Researchers from different disciplines focus on these spaces in France, generating a mixture of approaches and vocabularies. Urban and territorial researches on these spaces imported artistic terms, like “cultural production”, “creation” and “diffusion” (Auboin and Coblenz 2013). On the other side, researchers coming from the world of the arts also focus on the territorial, spatial and governance dimensions of these spaces (Henry, 2013; 2010).

Vivant (2006; 2013) categorizes these experiences as “off spaces”, through a distinction based on the dynamics of an “in/off” system of the art world, based on the conflictual but mutually defining relation between an avant-garde movement and artistic dominant model. “Off spaces” are cultural and artistic practices lacking institutional support and a univoque market positioning. On the other side, “in spaces” are integrated in cultural policies and in their development (Vivant, 2006: 5). These practices are therefore once again categorized on the basis of their otherness and outsidership to public institutions. TEH member Mains d'œuvres, in existence since 1998, is described as a space “between in and out” (Dumont

¹⁶ La Friche Belle de Mai has been a member of Trans Europe Halles until 2017.

and Vivant, 2016: 204). Trans Europe Halles, as a whole, is instead still considered as a network of off spaces (ibid: 199).

Andres and Gresillon (2011; 2013) defended the use of the “*friche culturelle*” concept (“cultural brownfield” in english) as a scholar analytical category, arguing the ability of this french concept to bridge different terminologies. With the “cultural brownfield” term, they refer to “organic, bottom-up alternative cultural projects settled on derelict sites which differ from any squatting activities” (2013: 42). The category is therefore based both on the specifics of the site of action, on the activities being developed and on their legal status.

Exploring three different cultural brownfields in europe, among which the then-TEH member La Friche Belle de Mai, the authors define three emerging types of cultural brownfields transformations “alternative cultural brownfields”, “branding cultural brownfields” and “creative cultural brownfields” (Ibid: 51). The authors argue that the categorization derives from the analysis of their transformation paths and the nature of cultural and urban policies they are related to. Implicitly, this subclassification is rooted on other basis. The first two categories are evaluated on the basis of the ideologies adopted by these experiences: alternative cultural brownfields “sit within an ideology of opposition to a dominant capitalist model” (Ibid: 53), and branding cultural brownfields adopt a frame based on the “wider acknowledgement of the economic benefits of culture, the recognition of the ‘artistic dividend’ and the perception of artists and art centres as real contributors to the economy” (Ibid: 55). Creative cultural brownfields’ specificity is that initially they are “not organically driven but implemented within a partnership between public authorities and cultural actors”, with the integration of ideas and aesthetics of alternative spaces in institutional strategies of cultural development (Ibid: 56).

The transformation paths and the nature of cultural and urban policies they are therefore descriptive elements of cases defined by other analytical categories, based on the typologies of actors involved (institutional/non institutional), their approaches to action and their ideological framework.

This exploration of scholar categorizations of members of Trans Europe Halles provided an acknowledgement of the broadness of the scholar understandings of these spaces. Each of these categories focuses on different aspect, ranging from a broad understanding to a stricter definition of the object of analysis, basing their classification on the characters of the processes, or on their effects.

More importantly, some of these researches have been based on the ordinary self-definitions developed by the spaces themselves, while others adopted their own categorizations. The latter include “off spaces”,

“art institutions”, “creative practices of social reuse”, “alternative process of planning cultural spaces”. The former are instead the so-called “cultural brownfields”, rooted in the french understanding of “friche”.

None of them focused on the grounded category of CICC. In order to understand the category of CICCs and the implicit commonality of members of Trans Europe Halles, we could observe the construction of the category in the network itself, interpreting the category as a situated convention (Borghi and Vitale, 2006).

To understand this convention, we ought to look at processes of internal evaluation and judgment, which I describe through a personal experience.

In March 2019 I was asked by the coordination office of Trans Europe Halles network to visit Ovestlab, a cultural centre in the city of Modena, Italy, as a representative of the network. The visit was part of the process of application by Ovestlab to become a member of the network.

The process starts with a direct contact of the applicant with the coordination office. It is followed by a talk over Skype, and the completion of a questionnaire providing general and detailed informations on the centre. If the coordination office finds the applicant to be a suitable potential new member, they inform the Executive Committee, which can invite them to attend one of the upcoming biannual meetings of the network, in order to get in touch with other members and understand the functioning of the network. After the meeting, the potential member can fill the application form, and send it to the coordination office. The applicants are then invited to the following meeting, where they present their centre to all the members, and, if all members agree in the General Assembly, are approved as a member.

The process of evaluation is distributed across the coordination office, the members of the Executive Committee, the General Assembly and in general to all the members of the network. Along the process, each of these types of actors has the chance of formulating an evaluation of the fitness of the potential new member to the conventional understanding of the membership criteria.

The procedure here described is the one prescribed by rules, but is always implemented with a certain degree of flexibility.

A representative of the network is tasked with a visit to the potential members to collect information about the applicant centre and to present and discuss with representatives of the centre about what it means to be a member of Trans Europe Halles. The information is then transmitted, via a written report, to the Executive Committee and the General Assembly, to assist them in the approval or refusal of the application.

During the visit, the representative of the network is tasked with the evaluation of the coherence of the applicant with the membership criteria. He is tasked with looking into topics broadly following the

criteria, like: the characters of the context, the former uses of the building, the origins of the organization, the mission, vision, legal structure, governance, funding, international relations, and so forth.

OvestLab is a project managed by Associazione Amigdala and Archivio Architetto Cesare Leonardi, located in a former carpenter workshop in the Villaggio Artigiano industrial area of Modena.

As the traditionally artisan activities of the Villaggio artigiano were progressively discontinued in the last 30 years, the municipality of Modena developed plans and proposals to regenerate the increasingly abandoned area. They created participatory processes, and plans to develop artistic, cultural and artisanal “districts”, promoting the direct involvement of residents. However, these plans proved ineffective.

In 2015 the municipality and the Consorzio Attività Produttive (CAP) initiated a plan to regenerate the area. The CAP is a private-public company, running and developing artisanal and industrial areas in the Modena province. It is co-owned by the Municipality of Modena, and it is presided by the Urban Planning alderman of the municipality.

The plan was based on the facilitation of the conversion from artisanal uses to tertiary or housing uses, with the limit of preserving 30% of surface for artisanal uses. As part of that strategy, the CAP rented from a private owner a building, with the aim of using it as a community hub to facilitate the process of urban regeneration. The CAP called this space “OvestLab”. According to members of Amigdala, this community hub wasn’t effective, as it was lacking a strong and solid methodology.

Association Amigdala was founded in 2005. It’s a “multidisciplinary group of young professionals in the fields of contemporary theatre, dance, music, visual arts, urban recovery and social innovation”. Until 2016 they mostly focused on the production of artistic projects, like performances and art installations. Or as Periferico, an annual festival focusing on suburban and under used urban areas, that changes location and format every year.

In 2016 Amigdala stumbled on the Ovestlab space while organizing the Periferico festival in the Villaggio Artigiano. Amigdala proposed CAP to use the space for cultural activities, in relation to the local community. Instead of giving them the space directly, CAP launched a public call for its use. Amigdala applied with its project, supported by several local residents, users and associations. Amigdala won the call. Since then, the association runs the space and organizes activities and projects with other associations, in particular Archivio Leonardi.

In my evaluation of Ovestlab, I focused on exploring the aspects of the centre linked with the “arising from a citizen’s initiative”. In my interpretation, even if the centre did not precisely meet the criterion, it should nonetheless become a member.

Amigdala is not officially the initiator of the project “Ovestlab”. At the same time, though, the association took over the “Ovestlab” project and completely transformed it. They imported their own methodology of work and their philosophy into the goals of regenerating the Villaggio Artigiano neighborhood. They are not simple “implementers” of an idea of the municipality or other institutions: even if they kept the name, they shifted the project and its methodologies.

In this specific situation, the formal criteria of the network, based on the “initiator” frame, is stressed on the basis of the meaning we give to this label. Trans Europe Halles assumes that if citizens are initiators, they have control over the development of the project, while if they are involved after the initiation they don’t. In this case, I saw a citizen organization reversing the course of an institutional project, with its own autonomy and ideas, transforming the uses of the space. We could say that they re-founded OvestLab.

Furthermore, my positive evaluation was also based on the perception of a harmony between the approaches of Ovestlab and Trans Europe Halles. This human feeling of consonance is always important in Trans Europe Halles.

My evaluation was based not only the rigid interpretation of the criteria of the network, but on a series of other dimensions rooted in the culture of Trans Europe Halles, which inform the conventional definition of Citizen-initiated cultural centre.

According to Raffin’s (1998) research on the network, TEH members are linked well beyond their professional domain, including cultural and social dimensions (Ibid: 130). The members recognize the other members through their involvement in similar situations of action. For example they all are directly involved - or have historically been involved - in socio-economic difficulties, either to establish the centre or to make public institutions support it (Ibid: 131). In particular, the centres mutually recognize the similar direct interactions between citizens and problematic situations, defining a specific political perspective based on citizen actions uniting the network (Bogen, 2018: 13).

In the mutual recognition, they focus also on the passionate engagement of people from centres in these situations and in the activities of the centre, valuing the lack of functionalist rationalities as justifications to perform these actions. Furthermore, the centres share a direct and pragmatic engagement, based on a DIY and spontaneous culture of action (Raffin, 1998: 131).

The focus on similar situations and approaches was observed by Raffin (1998) over twenty years ago by attending the meetings of the network. But it is a character that can be found as well in the words of one the founders of the network. Organizing the initial event of the network in 1983, they “quickly realized that, hundreds of miles away, our respective stories were similar in many aspects. We were confronted with the same subjects, the same difficulties, the same passions too (Grombeer, 2011: 27).

These dimensions are still present and reproduced in the network, and they played a relevant role in my evaluation of Ovestlab: I recognized the fact that Amigdala was facing a series of situations similar to the ones faced by many cultural centres in TEH (for funding, community building, artistic programming, international relations), and in particular they were facing them through an approach resonating with Trans Europe Halles approach.

These dimensions complement the official membership criteria of the network as interpretive frames. They provide a conventional understanding of what is a “citizen-initiated cultural centre”. They dispel the ambiguities I expressed at the beginning of this section.

Observing this conventional understanding joining official criteria and cultural dimensions, we can see that CICCes mutually recognize on two levels of definition. The first is based on the recognition of a commonality of potential problems: centres face similar situations and struggles. In concrete terms, this commonality recognizes the engagement of the members of the network in a plurality of fields of action, like: organization of artistic and cultural activities, architectural refurbishment, social and community engagement, self-governance processes. The convention normatively defines CICCes as organizations engaging in a plurality of fields of action rather than simply operating in one field.

On a second level, the convention defines the way centres engage in these situations. Centres are defined as CICCes if they root their engagement with the world on DIY culture, passion, direct action, and independent decision-making. These specific ways of acting prioritize an unplanned and non-strategic way of acting, focusing instead on the disintermediation of action and its direct performance. The disintermediation involves also the processes of governance, preferring horizontal and direct processes of self-governance.

The recognition of CICCes around the direct engagement with a multiplicity of fields of practice can be seen as a refusal of functional specialization in the organization, of processes of rational planning and of the delegation of action. Trans Europe Halles does not normatively rank a field of practice as more relevant of the others for CICCes, rather it gives more worth to the presence of a simultaneous multiplicity of fields of action in these experiences. They defend the value of horizontal and familiar engagements (Thevenot, 2006; 2007) against regimes of engagement based on plans and functionalist rationalities. They value the direct engagement with their situations going beyond the formulation of requests and needs to representative public institutions, constituting a challenge to established forms of authority in their local contexts.

We should note that this is not a convention guiding the evaluation of the identities of each single member: as reported by Bogen (2018) many of them don't self-define as CICCes, giving more attention to

the associative or cultural dimension. Or, in the case of Ovestlab, to peculiar identities like “civic factory”. In their situated and localized experiences, the members of the network publicly justify their actions through different orders of worth, related to the local grammars and the level of legitimacy they can activate, informing their identities - as constructs (Crosta, 2010).

The convention on CICC is used instead in the evaluation of the elements considered to be common between the members of the network, focusing on the mutual evaluation of the shared fields of practice and the ways of approaching them. Summarizing, the category does not represent a common identity, but on an identity of commonalities.

The commonalities of the members of Trans Europe Halles lie on several levels. On an operational level, we can define them as the experiences evaluating and being evaluated through the Trans Europe Halles CICC convention itself. As a result, on a perspective situated in the network, the members are understood to have in common the dimensions prescribed by the conventional understanding of CICC. The evaluation provides a test of the interpretation of the members as CICC: the content of the category does not define what these experiences are, rather what they are judged and proved to be in the specific situation of evaluation.

Furthermore, the members of the network, evaluated and evaluating through the CICC category, support, at least in the operations of the network, the normative dimensions embedded in the CICC convention. Another point of commonality is therefore their support of this order of worth.

They are therefore objects of the convention and reproducers of the convention itself.

The majority of scholar understandings of these experiences from urban and planning research tackles them in relation to their creative and artistic activities, seldom touching governance dimensions. Empirically, the approaches usually focus on plans, projects and policies, dedicating little or no attention to the perspective situated in these centres.

This situated convention instead allows the observation of these experiences as “citizen initiatives”, and in particular to class their urban projects as “citizen initiatives of urban transformation” (Crosta, 1990b), focusing on their effects of transformation of their surroundings and the uses of their spaces, comprising multiple regimes of action.

Understanding them as “citizen initiatives” - an hypothesis I will verify in research - and not just as artistic practices, I aim at giving more relevance to the political self-organized and bottom-up dimension of these initiatives.

This dimension is recognized and verified by the members of the network themselves through the processes of judgment and evaluation, as it is an integral part of the internal convention of CICC's.

3.5 The research journey

3.5.1 Which citizen-initiated cultural centres? Case selection

After the encounter of the Nová Synagóga project in summer 2017, I embarked in the identification of other cases of urban intervention of long-existing citizen-initiated cultural centres beyond their original premises.

In this first round of research of other cases, I followed three criterias of identification, that I defined on the basis of my preliminary understanding of the Nová Synagóga case:

The urban intervention was managed by a CICC: since I had a facilitated access to this kind of citizen initiatives, I first tried to identify projects in this sub-category of citizen initiatives. Other citizen initiatives, while equally relevant, would have been harder to get access to.

The urban intervention was managed by a long-existing CICC: as the research aimed at observing the eventual presence of institutionalized dimensions in long-existing CICC and the innovations these interventions might generate, I avoided new initiatives as they would lack institutionalized knowledges and routines.

The urban intervention was carried out of the original premises of the CICC: these cultural centres often focus their spatial activities in their original buildings and their surroundings. Instead of focusing on processes of expansion, renovation or improvement, I aimed at exploring interventions where the organization faced a new (spatial, urban, social) context of action. My hypothesis was that in these new contexts, the organizations would face an unknown situation, or a break from their routinized practices, therefore requiring the adaptation of some of their institutionalized knowledges. Processes of expansion, renovation or improvement of original venues, while they mobilize the knowledges of the members of the organizations, do not constitute a break from past experience, as they insist on the same contexts.

During this phase, I activated connections I established in Trans Europe Halles and beyond to identify other cases. After this first round of inquiry, I identified five potential cases: B2 Creative Space, developed by Beat Carnival, in Belfast, UK/Northern Ireland; Earth renovation, developed by Village Underground in Hackney, UK; Espace Imaginaire project, developed by Mains d'œuvres in St-Denis, France; the Nová Synagóga renovation, developed by Stanica Žilina Zariemie, in Žilina, Slovakia; Suvilahti transformation, developed by Kaapelitehdas in Helsinki, Finland.

Each of the potential cases was further explored to assess its fitness for the purposes of the research. Between summer 2017 and spring 2018, I conducted Skype interviews and field visits in all the potential cases. A short summary of each case will provide the context of the subsequent selection.

B2 Creative Space, developed by Beat Carnival, in Belfast, UK/Northern Ireland

Beat Carnival is an independent arts company creating and producing carnival arts, organizing and directing performances, training and developing artists and encouraging community participation and ambition (Beat Carnival, n.d.). The Beat Carnival Initiative was created in the 1990s as a Carnival Arts organization promoting intercultural and interconfessional dialogue in the context of the Northern-irish conflict.

The organization is structured around its founder and director, David Boyd. They have four full time employees, and several external artists. The Beat initiative organizes hundreds of workshops a year in preparation to the 3-4 main annual parades. Beat Carnival mostly operates in the area of Shankill Road, a protestant popular neighborhood in Belfast.

In spring 2017 Beat Carnival got a 2-year temporary lease of the Nelson Memorial Presbyterian Church, an historical building near Shankill Road. The owner had no plans for it, and was looking to lease it to charity organizations, in order to have tax reductions on property taxes. Furthermore, having users in the building would prevent decay and occupations.

The Church has a big central hall, and a couple of smaller rooms. It is in the middle section of the Shankill Road, strategically positioned near the Spectrum Center and is easily accessible for all the community.

Since they have the building only for two years, at the time of my visit in 2017 Boyd was planning to develop the church as a cultural center (called “B2 Creativity space”) with a low budget, offering cheap spaces for artists and organizing events. Having no time to directly take charge of the management of the new place, Boyd planned to share responsibility with a committee of local artists and citizens, in the context of a broader citizen participatory process.

Over the course of two years, the space was used intermittently by artists and by Beat Carnival. In March 2019 the arrangement came to an end, as the owner received an alternative proposal of full-time use of the building.

EartH renovation, developed by Village Underground in Hackney, UK

Village Underground is a space for creativity & culture in Hackney, East London (Village Underground, n.d.). It is located in a turn-of-the-century warehouse; four recycled railway train cars have been transformed into rooftop artist studios.

The centre has been created in 2006 by the founder, Auro Foxcroft, with the aim of providing affordable studios to creative people in London. Over the years, the centre expanded from the original train cars to a closeby victorian warehouse, transformed into a live music venue. Village Underground is now not only a studio space, as it hosts live concerts and electronic music events alongside theatre, performing arts and visual arts (Fitzgerald, 2019: 33-35).

The organization running the centre coordinates the studio residents, the cultural program and the rental of the venue to external companies for private or public events.

Foxcroft's idea of transforming former train cars into studios has been reproduced in other cities in Europe, with the creation of Village Underground Lisbon and other tentative projects in Berlin and Barcelona. These organizations worked in close relationship with the London organization to learn from them.

In 2016 Foxcroft started working on a project of transformation of an art deco cinema into a multipurpose art space in Hackney. The space was initially named Hackney Arts Centre and was then rebranded EartH - Evolutionary Arts Hackney in 2018. The space opened in autumn 2018, and now offers music, theatre, performance art, lectures, talks and more.

In my initial exploration of the case, developed in 2017, the renovation and development of this new space appeared to be carried out mostly by Foxcroft himself, or through professionals with experience in the development of this kind of projects. Thanks to this previous extensive knowledge and the activation of private capitals, the process developed swiftly in just over two years.

Espace Imaginaire project, developed by Mains d'œuvres in St-Denis, France

Mains d'œuvres is a place for artistic and citizen imagination, located in St-Ouen-sur-Seine, in the Seine-Saint-Denis department of the Ile-de-France region. This cultural space has been developed since 1998 by F.Bo. and C.P., who had extensive experience in the field of cultural centres and reuse of abandoned buildings.

The 4000 sqm building hosting Mains d'œuvres is owned by the St-Ouen municipality. The renovation was developed between 1998 and 2001 on the basis of the past knowledge acquired by the two initiators, in the fields of building regulation, fundraising, self-construction, with a total investment of over 4 million euros.

Each year Mains d'œuvres assists over 250 artists in residence, in the fields of dance, theatre, music, visual arts, digital arts and arts and society. Beyond hosting and supporting these artists in their artistic processes, the organization links their activities with their local territory, and curates an artistic program in these different arts. The centre is supported by several institutions like the Ministry of culture and the department. It counts around 15/20 employees. Over the years the organization progressed towards a rigid and bureaucratic form of organization, with clear roles and tasks.

In 2014 Mains d'œuvres began a long process of conflict with the municipality of St-Ouen-sur-Seine. After over 60 years of Communist leadership, the 2014 election saw the victory of a centre-right mayor, who cut subsidies to all cultural organizations in the city. In the following years the Mayor tried to push Mains d'œuvres out of the spaces, aiming at installing the local conservatory in the building.

In this context of incertitude about the future of the venue, J.B., the director of the organization, developed the idea of creating new cultural venues in the whole Seine-St-Denis department, working in collaboration with other municipalities. If the situation in St-Ouen would collapse, they would have other venues in which to move the organization.

One of the first experiences was the Espace Imaginaire project. In 2016 Mains d'œuvres took part in a public call by the St-Denis municipality for the reuse of an abandoned open field. The organization, under the coordination of M.G., developed the Espace Imaginaire project, focused on a methodology of co-conception, co-construction and co-management of a cultural and ecological cultural centre. Involving artists and residents, the project aimed at developing a shared horizontal governance where people could experiment their own projects.

In the following years the Espace Imaginaire had organizational issues, and saw the emergence of divergences between M.G. and J.B., and between the municipality of St-Denis and Mains d'œuvres. In december 2018 the centre counted around 60 co-managers, with several self-constructed spaces. At that point, Mains d'œuvres withdrew its economic support because of internal financial issues. The Espace Imaginaire then constituted an alternative association and continues its operations.

Following a judiciary decision in July 2019, in October 2019 Mains d'œuvres was evicted from its building, as requested by the Mayor of St-Ouen. The organization is currently without a building, and is launching a public campaign to pressure the Mayor to allow them back in.

In this case, the Espace Imaginaire process was focused more on the methodology of transformation rather than on the final spatial outcomes. It was conducted by the long-existing organization, but with the crucial support of external actors. It is considered to be a never-ending process of reuse and self-management, whose outcomes derive more from the creation of an alternative system of interaction than from a specific spatial configuration.

Nová Synagóga renovation, developed by Stanica Žilina - Záriečie, in Žilina, Slovakia

Stanica Žilina - Záriečie is a cultural centre operating in a functioning railway station in the city of Žilina, Slovakia. The cultural centre is a combination of cultural spaces, art laboratory and a team of activists.

The organization behind Stanica, called Truc Sphérique, emerged in the mid-1990s from a group of teenage friends aiming to energize the art and culture scene in the small city of Žilina. After the experience of management of a small space, in 2003 they took over the Žilina - Záriečie railway station, and called the cultural centre “Stanica” (which means Station in Slovak). In this multifunctional venue the members of Truc Sphérique organize over 200 events per years (concerts, theatre performances, literature debates, cinema nights) with over 20.000 visitors. They mostly focus on cultural and artistic diffusion rather than production.

When Truc Sphérique took over the building from the Slovak Railway company ZSSK, the building was in a dire state. They invested more than 400.000€ for its refurbishment in the following seven years, covering half of these expenses through european grants and the other half through donations of materials and services. In 2009 Truc Sphérique expanded its venue with the construction of a second concert hall. In this processes of transformation, they were supported by Trans Europe Halles, from which they learnt how to manage a cultural centre.

Through Truc Sphérique, the founders of the organization tried to create an alternative way of life mixing art and everyday life. Following this aim, the organization is based on principles of responsibility and personal autonomy. Each member of the organization develops autonomously his/her projects, with an emerging and contested coordination.

In 2011 Truc Sphérique was asked by the Jewish Community of Žilina to take over the use of a local Synagogue, formerly used as cinema. The building was a national monument, owned by the community, and would be endangered by an eventual prolonged abandonment. The organization, and in particular the director M.A., assembled a team comprising members of Truc Sphérique and other actors orbiting around the organization. The aim of this group of initiators was not limited to the reuse of the building, but was directed towards its restoration and conversion into a contemporary art space.

Their chaotic approach to the process of transformation worried architects and historians. After criticizing Truc Sphérique's actions, they chose to support them by constituting an Advisory board, with the goal of providing a space of debate and reflection. The renovation developed nonetheless through spontaneous and unconventional solutions. The process of restoration, as the renovation of Stanica, was developed half with EU funding and the other half through donations and sponsorships.

This process of transformation focused the attention of the actors on the final outcome of the project - the architectural configuration and the program of the building. The organization of this outcome was emergent, and resulted in a public process open to different actors beyond the original organization. While Truc Sphérique had experience in managing architectural transformations, they had no idea on how to manage the restoration of a national monument, and therefore went beyond their consolidated knowledge.

Suvilahti transformation, developed by Kaapelitehdas in Helsinki, Finland

Kaapelitehdas is a cultural centre located in a former Nokia plant, along the western coast of Helsinki (Kaapelitehdas.fi, n.d.). At the beginning of the 1990s in Helsinki artists started renting spaces in Kaapeli, a former Nokia cable plant. When the municipality developed a plan to demolish the building, they organized a Pro-Kaapeli mobilization to block the redevelopment project. The pro-Kaapeli initiative succeeded, and the municipality approved the establishment of the cultural centre Kaapelitehdas in the former industrial buildings.

Today Kaapelitehdas is the largest cultural centre in Finland, with over 56,000 square meters of cultural spaces. They host architectural studios, dance studios, exhibition rooms, three state museums and several other institutions and creative industries (Lehtovuori and Havik, 2009; Krivý, 2010).

The cultural centre is run by Kiinteistö Oy Kaapelitalo, a city-owned, non-profit, real estate company, with a board of directors consisting of artists and representatives of the municipality. The organization focuses on the management of the spaces of the cultural centre, their (long-, medium- and short- term) lease to tenants, and the organization of events.

In 2008 Kiinteistö Oy Kaapelitalo was entrusted by the municipality of Helsinki to manage the cultural re-use of Suvilahti, a former industrial estate, with an overall floor area of 12500 sqm (Krivý, 2012; Suvilahti.fi, n.d.).

In the following years Kiinteistö Oy Kaapelitalo reused the area using the knowledge and the procedures constructed through previous experiences of space management, spatial transformation and refurbishment. Furthermore, the process was developed mostly through internal procedures rather than through processes determined by the interactions of the organization and external actors.

The major external actor is the municipality of Helsinki, which owns the complex. The municipality seldom pressured Kiinteistö Oy Kaapelitalo to develop the area in a certain direction rather than others, focusin for example on hosting festivals or large events.

Suvilahti is today a relevant cultural space in the Helsinki landscape. It hosts several artists in residents, and numerous summer festivals. Its future and definitive use is still being developed, as Kiinteistö Oy Kaapelitalo continues a dialogue with the municipality.

The selection of the suitable cases proceeded analytically, and intuitively between 2017 and 2018. In the process of inquiry, I identified additional dimensions relevant for the successful development of the research, reported in table 3.1. Cases “coalesced in the course of the research though a systematic dialogue of ideas and evidence” (Ragin 2004: 127 in Della Porta, 2008: 209).

The first case I excluded was the B2 Creative space. The choice was mostly of research convenience. Beat Carnival, lacking the organizational capacity to invest in the transformation of the space, had a low commitment to the project. When I visited the space in 2017, the process was being developed slowly and without a clear direction. The eventual choice of focusing on this case presented too many risks of having little or no useful informations, so I preferred excluding it.

The EartH case was excluded because it was mostly developed internally by the Village Underground members, and eventual external collaborations were structured through professional and formal ties. In my research I wanted instead to focus on cases where the renovation was a public and social process, where collaboration developed at the border between the members of the organization and new actors taking part in this process.

As mentioned, Kiinteistö Oy Kaapelitalo, the organization managing Kaapeli, is a real estate company. Processes of space management, spatial transformation and refurbishment are more integrated in their organizational routines than in other cultural centres. Therefore, the renovation of Suvilahti was just the last of a larger set of cases of space management carried out by the organization. The repetitive nature of this action of spatial transformation makes each action less problematic in the eyes of the actors performing it, as the course of action has been tested multiple times. Simplifying the case, we could say that the members of Kiinteistö Oy Kaapelitalo were quite confident about how to develop the transformation of Suvilahti. I understood that in this research I wanted to focus on cases where the organizations develop these processes incrementally and tentatively, having no certainty about the success of their transformative action. I excluded the Suvilahti case for this reason.

By exclusion, I was left with the potential cases of the Espace Imaginaire and the Nová Synagóga. I opted to begin the research focusing on a single case, and then expand the research to the eventual second case.

	B2 Creative space	Earth	Espace Imaginaire	Nová Synagóga	Suvisahti
Developing cultural centre / organization	Beat Carnival	Village Underground	Mains d'oeuvres	Stanica Žilina - Záríečie / Truc Sphérique	Kaapelitehdas / Kiinteistö Oy Kaapelitalo
City (and eventual metropolitan area)	Belfast	Hackney (Greater London)	St-Denis (Grand Paris)	Žilina	Helsinki
Typology of city	Medium-sized city	Metropolitan area	Metropolitan area	Medium-sized city	European capital
Country	UK/Northern Ireland	UK	France	Slovakia	Finland
Urban position	Confictual residential area	Semi-central	Industrial area	Historical core	Industrial area
Former use of space	Church	Cinema	Open field	Synagogue	Industrial area
Year of beginning	2017	2016	2016	2011	2008
Year of end	2019	2018	Ongoing	2017	Ongoing
Major participation of external actors in development of project	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Development of project out of organizational routines	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Commitment of organization to the development of the process	Low	High	High	High	High

Table 3.1 - Comparison of potential cases. In green, the selected cases.

Elaboration of the author

3.5.2 Gaining access

As mentioned several times, I encountered the cases through my active participation in Associazione Interzona in Verona and in the Trans Europe Halles network at the european level. But encountering a case and gaining access to the field are quite different tasks, as discussed in ethnographic literature (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995).

Stanica Žilina - Zariecie - Nová Synagóga

The establishment of links with the organizations running Stanica and developing the Nová Synagóga project began in 2015, at the first TEH meeting I attended. In that occasion, I met R.B. deputy director of the cultural centre.

When I visited Stanica in summer 2017, I stayed at R.B.'s house for two days. We didn't have a personal relation before this encountered, as we just exchanged greetings during Trans Europe Halles meetings. But I was nonetheless perceived as a peer (Marzano, 2006), as I was involved in a similar cultural centre in Italy.

After I chose to focus on this case in autumn 2017, I kept in contact with him via email in order to organize the logistics of my field visit in spring 2018. Since those first months, R.B. has been my main source of logistical support and informations for the Stanica/Nová Synagóga case.

During my field visits, R.B. hosted me in his house and introduced me to the rest of the organization. As I already met some of them during Trans Europe Halles meetings and as the organization was used to visits from other Trans Europe Halles centres, my presence was not seen as alien. This high turnover rate of foreign visitors and volunteers also had its indirect effects, as some in the organization acted cold and disinterested towards newcomers. Through my continuous presence in meetings and common spaces of the cultural centre I was able to establish connections with them over the following weeks.

R.B. and M.A., director of Truc Sphérique, supported me in gaining access to actors out of the organization, in particular those with whom an email in english initially proved unsuccessful. R.B. directly contacted foundations and ministerial bureaucrats in order to set up interviews with me. His support facilitated the access to other actors otherwise unattainable. At the same time, it might have influenced some of them in the perception of my role as researcher, as being "part of" or "close to" Stanica. During the interviews I had to clarify this distance.

To avoid rooting my research only on contacts provided by R.B. and M.A., I also directly established contacts with other actors through snowball sampling.

In the Stanica/Nová Synagóga case, I was highly limited in gaining access to some actors because of my lack of Slovak proficiency. In some specific cases, R.B. and other members of the organization supported my interviews by translating from Slovak to English and vice versa. My observation on the field and informal dialogue with Slovak speakers were also limited. I contacted a professional translator to translate the main project documents (natively in Slovak) in order to be able to analyse them. The press review was instead supported, in its basic elements, by google translator.

Mains d'œuvres - Espace Imaginaire

Even if I knew Mains d'œuvres to be one of the historically relevant cultural centres in Trans Europe Halles, the first personal encounter with a member of Mains d'œuvres took place in May 2017 at the Trans Europe Halles meeting in Pula, Croatia. In that occasion I met M.G., head of the “arts and society” artistic pole of the centre. As we discussed the activities of our organizations, I discovered she was also the initiator and coordinator of the “Espace Imaginaire” project, a co-managed space out of the original premises of Mains d'œuvres. M.G. was trained as a urbanist, so we shared discussions about urban reappropriation and regeneration in relation to cultural uses.

After the encounter with the Nová Synagóga case, I reassessed the Espace Imaginaire project (along with the other projects discussed in section 3.5.1) to understand how it would fit my research. I planned a two-week field visit between October and November 2017, where I had the chance to observe the original cultural centre and the new project.

In October 2017 I also met J.B., director of Mains d'œuvres, at a Trans Europe Halles meeting in Kiev. In that occasion she introduced the general situation of the cultural centre, and her efforts to institute a real-estate company to acquire buildings in the Seine-St-Denis department. She appeared interested in my research as I mentioned the upcoming field visit.

During the 2017 stay, M.G. was my main reference on the field. I kept in touch with her since summer 2017 in order to prepare the stay. I hoped she would facilitate the access to other members of the organization and the individuals and organizations involved in the project. Contrary to what happened with Stanica, Mains d'œuvres proved to be difficult to access: M.G. being constantly scrambling between the Espace Imaginaire and Mains d'œuvres, she found only little time to assist me in the research. Furthermore, differently from R.B., she was not a central element of the organization. J.B. was instead focusing on her daily work, and didn't answer to the messages and emails I sent.

This field visit discouraged me about the possibility of conducting research on this case, as I felt that while I could gain access to the Espace Imaginaire co-managers, it would be difficult to get in touch with other members of Mains d'œuvres. After the 2018 field research in Žilina (and another TEH meeting in May 2018 where I discussed my research with J.B.), though, I visited the Espace Imaginaire again in June 2018. This second stay discouraged me even more about the feasibility of completing a case study about the Espace Imaginaire project, as it also appeared to proceeded easily and without any implementation problem.

In September 2018 I met M.G. and J.B. in Paris for the Trans Europe Halles meeting, and I discovered about the financial difficulties of Mains d'œuvres. I re-established contacts in December 2018 with M.G., who told me that to avoid further financial difficulties the organization decided to fire her (along with two

other employees) and to discontinue the support to the Espace Imaginaire project. These evolutions convinced me of the interesting nature of the case, and so I committed to it.

I then conducted a longer field visit in January and February 2019, with the aim of establishing contacts in Mains d'œuvres and with external actors. At the beginning of the stay M.G. supported me, provided contacts with institutions and other members of the organization and shared archive documents about the Espace Imaginaire project. I suppose that in this period she saw me as someone who could shed light on some of the processes that led to that situation, and was probably more willing to help me than in the past. Compared to the previous stays, she was also more explicitly critical to J.B., to the way of working diffused in Mains d'œuvres and to the way the Espace Imaginaire was developed.

J.B. supported my work of research by legitimizing my presence to meetings with the Mains d'œuvres team and with institutional partners.

Nonetheless, J.B. and M.G. were away from Paris for most of my stay. In my daily work of identifying relevant actors in the organization and out of it, I was supported by AP and C, two civil service employees of Mains d'œuvres, which had the role of bridging between the mother organization and the Espace Imaginaire. Their support (in understanding who is who, in tracking contacts but also in spending evenings together at concerts, events and in the Espace Imaginaire) was crucial for the success of the research.

During this stay I was also supported by Prof. Cefäi at the EHESS, where I was hosted as a visiting PhD student. He provided useful methodological advices on ethnographic inquiry, and also relevant contacts in the context of broader urban planning policies for cultural uses in the Grand Paris context.

As in the Nová Synagóga case, I established contacts with actors through the initiators, but also autonomously (through emails, facebook, etc) or snowballing through actors.

My presence on the field was initially limited by my difficulty in expressing myself in French. But having extensively studied and practiced the language in the past, after a couple of weeks I was able to conduct interviews in French. I had no issues with written documents in French.

3.5.3 Approaching the field: sources of evidence

As previously discussed, case studies adopt a plurality of sources of evidence, triangulating their sources and types of sources (Yin, 2009: 120-121). In my research, data was collected through unstructured interviews, semi-structured interviews, participant observation, field notes, archival records and press review.

Unstructured interviews

Unstructured interviews have been conducted as preliminary sources of data in the preliminary visits on the field, in order to have a more comprehensive picture of the cases and the contexts they are operating in. In these conversations I posed broad and general questions, allowing the spontaneous emergence of themes.

These conversations were usually not recorded, and I noted relevant themes and topics on a journal in order to structure the semi-structured interviews.

Participant observation and field notes

Participant observation is the core method of ethnographic research (Atkinson, 2015). It aims at “collecting informations on the culture or everyday life of a certain social group, by directly observing the ordinary activities of the individuals and the group, at times taking part directly” (Marzano, 2006: 3) (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1994; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Through participant observation it is possible to study social actions and the people performing them in their “natural” environments of everyday life (Marzano, 2006: 35).

In my research my participation in the activities of the processes of urban intervention and the CICC's were quite limited. My participation mostly consisted in my active engagement in organizational meetings, by presenting my past experience in Interzona and Trans Europe Halles (TEH); or in volunteering during events. Both organizations are used to host visitors from other TEH cultural centres, therefore I took a position that was recognized and legitimized by the members.

Participant observation was supported by the collection of field notes. I kept a field journal with (almost) daily logs. I logged formal and informal meetings, reflections, observations, emotions and impressions.

I used a paper journal to take notes during meetings, and the “notes” app in my smartphone to write down ideas in more informal situations. These notes were then systematically transcribed every evening on a digital field journal on my laptop.

Following Crosta's (2009) reflections on direct and indirect interactions, we can observe how through these indirect interactions I produced a relevant byproduct: participation in the organization life also led to my familiarization with the context and the members of the organization. Even if I my presence has always been recognized as legitimate, I lacked personal connections with the individual members of the organization. As I took part in the activities of the organization I increased the occasions of exchange with them.

These interactions were not - at least initially - aimed at the direct production of knowledge. Instead, these first interactions were lacking a clear intentionality, as I tried to make sense of my environment generating a shared context with the members of the organization. Furthermore, as I mentioned the reason of my stay, I had the chance to gather first bits of information on their involvement in the projects and on the organization. After this initial process, approaching them for interviews didn't feel forced or too direct, but emerged as a naturally organic evolution of these informal conversations. Through this process, I was able to reach deeper levels of interaction and exchange.

Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews have been the main source of evidence in this research. In semi-structured interviews the researcher usually guides the conversation on the basis of a predetermined list of questions. I posed questions following the evolution of the conversation, as I tried to steer it organically towards deeper levels of reflection. These interviews are particularly useful in generating rich and in-depth data (Charmaz, 2006), as they produce detailed and concrete informations (Wagenaar, 2011).

These interviews provide data regarding the personal perspectives of the interviewees on their individual experiences, and on their interpretations of social facts. As research questions were guided by the assessment of innovations, it was possible to observe them through the way actors reflected a posteriori on their practices, eventually learning and orienting their actions according to these new informations. Interviews were perfect to reflect with the respondent.

Interviews were recorded through the "Audio memos" app in my smartphone. I took notes on my journal during the interviews in order to formulate follow-up questions.

As this research was my first real experience of conducting interviews, the quality of the data improved as I experimented new techniques and approaches. Interview questions were informed by the literature review, by previous interviews and by participant observation, through an incremental process of tuning.

I progressively recognized that pre-formed questions risked introducing an excessively formalized tone in the interviews. I opted therefore to avoid pre-structured questions, choosing instead to follow a list of predetermined themes or topics to be touched during the interviews. According to the evolution of the discussion, I plugged these themes organically in order to avoid breaks and to accommodate the flow of the conversation. The ability to plug the themes grew incrementally over the course of the research.

Interviewing is in fact not (just) about asking questions, but about working with the interviewee to produce useful data. Interviews are “a partnership between the respondent and the interviewer” (Weiss, 1995: 65 in Wagenaar, 2011: 252): information is co-produced by interviewer and respondent.

In this research, the establishment of partnerships changed accordingly to the type of respondent I was facing. As the research progressed, I understood that I was to interview different typologies of actors. The partnership with each typology was based on the activation of different common grounds. As mentioned in the discussion of participant observation of the CICC, the interactions with the members of the organizations led to the creation of a basic shared context. During the interviews I used my experience as member of a similar organization, I activated some experiences shared during my volunteering activities in the CICC, I referred to well-known Trans Europe Halles members to compare their activities.

The construction of a partnership with actors that didn't belong to the CICC was based on other elements. In particular, I had the chance to activate different aspects of my personal, professional, and cultural selves in order to establish a connection. As stated by James, “a man has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognize him and carry an image of him in their mind. [...] We may practically say that he has as many different social selves as there are distinct groups of persons about whose opinion he cares. He generally shows a different side of himself to each of these different groups” (James 1890 [2007]: 294). In the dialogue with architects and historians I was able to use my training as an architect and engineer to understand their positions but also to question the theories they were mobilizing. The dialogue with bureaucrats and institutions was instead filtered through my role of researcher, with a higher degree of formality.

The presence of these multiple selves also opened an ethical reflection: how did respondent see me? Were they talking to their friend/colleague in confidentiality or were they responding to the researcher? These questions will be tackled in section 3.5.5.

Archival records

The exploration of the archives of the organizations (both online and on hard copies) was a secondary but relevant element of the research. It focused on the reconstruction of the main points of evolution of the processes of urban intervention and on the history of the initiatives.

Press review

The press review focuses on the reconstruction of the perception of the CICC and the processes of urban intervention spread by local and national press outlets. It functions as a reference point for the

chronological evolution of the processes. Furthermore, it leads to the understanding of the communication campaigns of the organizations.

3.5.4 On the field

Stanica Žilina - Zariecie - Nová Synagóga

The field work in Žilina was conducted in two separate stays. The first started on 1st March 2018 and finished on 31st May 2018; the second started on 1st April 2019 and finished on 1st May 2019.

During both of the stays I was hosted by R.B. in his house in Žilina, in a neighborhood between the city centre and Stanica. I shared the house with R.B., J.G and L.G., two artists working in Stanica and in the Nová Synagóga.

Name of the project	Nová Synagóga	Espace Imaginaire
Location of project	Žilina, Slovakia	St-Denis, France
Name of CICC	Stanica Žilina-Zariecie	Mains d'œuvres
Location of CICC	Žilina, Slovakia	St-Ouen, France
Stay 1 (2017)	2 days	2 weeks
Stay 2 (2018)	12 weeks	4 weeks
Stay 3 (2019)	4 weeks	6 weeks
Total	16 weeks	12 weeks
Number of conversations and interviews	40	36
Pages of field observation	34	56
Press articles	75	25
Documents form archives	50+	50+

Table 3.2 - Summary of the fieldworks

Elaboration of the author

In the very first days of my first stay I observed a team building workshop, where members of the organization expressed their difficulties in working for Truc Sphérique. In that occasion, I first had the chance to recognize and map the core members of the organization.

In the first month I organized my stay to facilitate my familiarization with the members of the organization and with the context in general. It was a preliminary step in order to acquire richer and deeper informations about Stanica and the Nová Synagóga project during the interviews.

I therefore attended the weekly meetings of the Stanica and Nová Synagóga teams. The Stanica meetings are historically held in English, which helped my work. In Nová Synagóga meetings Slovak was instead the main language, so I tried to be present just to observe the interactions.

After the first week in Žilina I was included in the Slack organizational tool, which the team used for digital communications. In the following months it proved useful in tracking debates and discussions, and to gain access to the minutes of meeting.

I took part in social activities with the teams in the venues, in bars, in restaurants and in their houses. In particular, I mingled with the group of international EVS volunteers, which were more open and more curious about newcomers.

Living with members of the organization also facilitated this process, as I incrementally acquired shreds of information through daily interactions. In all these social occasions I took notes whenever possible. (for a detailed list of the participant observations, see Annex B)

During these weeks I also conducted the press review, constructing a preliminary map of actors and a timeline of events for the Nová Synagóga project. I also identified some themes to be discussed in preliminary unstructured interviews.

At the end of March 2018 I conducted a first unstructured interview with M.A., director of Truc Sphérique and de-facto leader of the Nová Synagóga reconstruction project. This conversation provided an extensive overview of the history of the organization, its current practices, and the development of the Nová Synagóga project.

After this first interview, I began conducting semi-structured interviews. I progressively grouped relevant actors in different categories: participants in the processes of urban intervention; members of the CICC; actors active both in the process of urban intervention and in the CICC; external partners of the processes of urban intervention; informed individuals. For each of those I developed different lines of questioning and discussion.

Between March and April 2018 I conducted 9 interviews. In May 2018 I increased the pace with 25 additional interviews, for a total of 34 interviews. The number of interviews for each category was set according to the number of available respondents and to a spontaneous feeling of completeness of the data (for a detailed list of the interview setting, date, and type of respondent, see Annex A).

During this first stay I also acquired relevant documents on the Nová Synagóga project, on Žilina and on Stanica. The documents were provided by different sources, internal and external to the CICC (for a detailed list of the documents, see Annex C).

During the transcription and analysis of the data acquired in 2018, I noticed how some facts were interpreted differently by different actors. I wanted to acquire additional data on these contradictions to be sure that these emerging differences were not due to a poor questioning on my part or to miscommunications with interviewees. The second field visit in April 2019 had therefore the aim of conducting additional interviews. Furthermore, I knew that the organization was evolving, and I wanted to observe it in practice.

During this second stay I conducted two additional semi-structured interviews and several unstructured conversations. As I improved in my observation abilities, in this second stay my notes were more detailed.

After the end of the field, I kept in touch through email and through the Slack application. Through this digital platform I had access to the internal discussions even after my departure from Žilina.

Mains d'œuvres - Espace Imaginaire

The field work in St-Denis was conducted in three separate stays. The first started on 23rd October 2017 and finished on 3rd November 2017; the second started on 7th June 2018 and finished on 3rd July 2018; the third started on 17th January 2019 and finished on 23rd February 2019.

Differently from the Nová Synagóga case, the field was structured in two short and one long stay. As previously mentioned, the first two visits aimed at gaining access to the field, and to try assessing the degree of importance of the case. The third visit was instead focused on conducting interviews after the decision of including the case in the research.

Another major difference was that I did not have the chance to live with members of Mains d'œuvres or actors of the Espace Imaginaire project. I found accommodations autonomously, changing location at every stay. In the first stay I rented a room in St-Denis; for the second stay I had the chance of being hosted in Paris by the director of another TEH centre in the Parisian area; during the third stay I rented a room nearby Mains d'œuvres in St-Ouen.

As the Espace Imaginaire case was still underway when I first visited the field, I focused my initial observations on the site of the project. During the first week in St-Denis I attended the daily building

activities of the Espace Imaginaire, collaborating in construction of a DIY phytodepuration plant and supporting a collective of architects in the construction of wooden mobile kitchens. I supported the organization of an artistic event in the public spaces of the neighborhood.

I also attended a co-management assembly, where I first had the chance to identify the relevant actors taking part in the project (which I later categorized in the groups developed in the Nová Synagóga case).

During this first stay I also conducted an unstructured and a semi-structured interview with the coordinator of the project, M.G..

The second stay focused on the Espace Imaginaire and on Mains d'œuvres as well, as I attended the annual general assembly of the cultural centre, and conducted an unstructured interview with M.G. and J.B., the director of Mains d'œuvres. I also supported the logistic organization of a public space festival in St-Denis by the Espace Imaginaire and some local partners, allowing me to learn about the context and its inhabitants.

Walking around the Plaine de St-Denis neighborhood with other members of the Espace Imaginaire supported me in exploring this urban landscape and developing my own personal map.

Differently from Žilina, I recognized a posteriori that in this metropolitan context I felt overwhelmed. Through the guidance of these actors I had the chance of exploring this context through their eyes, filtering the incredible amount of informations I would have had to assess.

Strong of the explorations and observations of the first two stays, I conducted a third and longer stay. During this field research I focused on interviewing the main actors of the Espace Imaginaire project, and of the Mains d'œuvres organization. Thanks to the improved relations with J.B., I had greater access to the internal operations of Mains d'œuvres.

In this final third stay I fully immersed in the field, thanks to my willingness to explore the local context and to engage with actors using the french language. I was also facilitated by the presence of AP - a native italian speaker - in the team bridging between Mains d'œuvres and the Espace Imaginaire, which supported me in understanding some internal situations and procedures.

Interviews were conducted starting from the core actors and snowballing in the following weeks to include other members of Mains d'œuvres, co-managers of the Espace Imaginaire, institutional partners, informed individuals. The number of interviews progressed exponentially: of the 30 total semi-structured of this third stay, 12 were conducted in the last week on the field.

I also had to adapt my research methods in order to gather informations on some of the co-managers of the Espace Imaginaire. I encountered difficulties in particular with the members of the association of

homeless people operating on site, as they would avoid seating down for long conversations. I noticed instead that some of them liked to exchange short chats over a coffee or a cigarette. Instead of posing my questions all in one take, I asked them over the course of several coffee and cigarette breaks. I also had to train my memory to remember the useful informations, as the use of a recording device would have made the situation too formal.

During this stay I also conducted a press review on the project of the Espace Imaginaire, and on the story of Mains d'œuvres. M.G. and institutional actors also provided documents on the development of the Espace Imaginaire project (for a detailed list of the documents, see Annex C).

3.5.5 Ethics: Doing research with/about your friends

My feeling of belonging to the field of citizen-initiated cultural centers led to multiple advantages and to accessing informations inaccessible to others. At the same time, this belonging to a common community charged me with a fundamental ethical commitment to respect the people involved in the research not just as human subjects, but as members of my community.

As mentioned in the discussion of the semi-structured interviews, I faced ethical questions in particular in relation to the way the people I interacted with interpreted my role on the field. Were they chatting to their friend/colleague in confidentiality or were they responding to the researcher's interview questions? While this uncertainty might potentially allow access to important and useful informations, it might have lead to the involuntary disclosure of sensible informations.

In order to minimize the consequences of this ambiguity, I chose to explicit the multiplicity of my presence on the field and of my research: I was at the same time a researcher for Università IUAV of Venice, and a member of Interzona. I was a member of a similar organization, but also someone who was going to eventually write and publish analysis of the work of these organizations. The expression of this multiplicity was usually expressed at the beginning of each semi-structured interview, or, when I conducted participant observations, I introduced myself with both identities.

I also tried to take these precautions in more informal situations, for example in participant observations or in chats over dinner or lunch.

But ethics is not limited to the activities on the field, it is an ongoing responsibility that continues all along the research process (Fujii, 2012). The data I acquired, even it was explicitly stated that it was going to be analysed and published, led to ethical dilemmas. As I developed critical interpretations of the actions of some of the actors I was close to, I didn't know how to reconcile the conflicting commitments emerging from friendships, profession and group belonging.

My different social selves (as described by Mead and James) were at the origin of these commitments to different social groups. My professional role as researcher positioned me in the scientific community, therefore pressuring me to avoid being influenced by emotions, friendships and other personal links. The fear of losing personal friendships pressured me towards avoiding public critiques of these people. I was also paralysed by the idea of critiquing some members of Trans Europe Halles, as I felt I belong to the same group and I wanted to avoid being uncomfortable in these circles.

Reflecting on this internal moral conflict, I found my voice and the position upon which to root my critiques. I gave priority to my personal values above the loyalty to friendships and groups. I based my critiques on values as the value of work and the avoidance of oppression, rooting them on solid empirical grounds. For example, I described how in Stanica the complex system of organization through spheres of autonomy has both emancipatory and repressive dimensions.

While I expressed these critiques, I avoided to assign blame and to objectify social relations as oppressive. I saw my research not as the definition of a right or wrong, but an interpretation of the complexity of a specific situation, where different actors, through their positionality, make different experience of the same situation. I believe that these critical descriptions, if they avoid assigning blame, can lead to processes of learning. Through critique, it is possible to evolve and solve issues.

In order to allow the social actors learn from critiques, I engaged with them during the writing process. I shared with some of them reports and working papers where I expressed my critical opinions, asking them a feedback. I received just a few answers, but the ones that engaged with me were supportive and provided useful insights.

This approach followed the idea that knowledge is co-produced between researcher and respondent: the continuous dialogue helped also broaden the legitimacy of the critiques, generating shared ethics between me and the respondents. This approach facilitated the relation to the broader field of Citizen-initiated cultural centres, as the results of research were co-constructed.

3.6 Developing an interpretation: linking, analysing and writing

This section explores the procedures and processes I developed to transform the informations acquired on the field into this piece of research. These processes consist in the reinterpretation of the data, with the development of my own perspectives and connections between empirical findings and existing literature.

This section could be referred to as “after the fieldwork”, as the analysis of data should logically emerge after its creation. But in my research, following the abductive approach outlined in section 3.1, the processes of analysis and interpretation were not spatially and temporally separated from the procedures of data acquisition. Already during the fieldwork I developed tentative interpretations of the phenomena I was exploring, aiming at integrating this understanding with my theoretical and practical knowledges.

The procedures here outlined should therefore not be interpreted as part of a phase of research following the empirical procedures on the field. Rather, they are a different kind of procedures, developed on the field and beyond, separated from data acquisition in their orientation. While the processes of data acquisition were focused on the expansion and broadening of informations in order to reach a sufficient level of representativity, the processes here outlined were oriented towards the synthesis of the evidence. As we will see, these processes aimed at connecting dots, finding themes and constructing interpretations beyond the empirical evolution of cases.

3.6.1 Linking evidence to units of analysis

Following the empirical approach outlined in section 3.3, the body of evidence was linked to the two units of analysis and respective research questions.

The first unit of analysis, focused on the institutional dimensions of long-existing citizen initiatives, was structured around a synchronic and diachronic analysis of the initiatives. The synchronic exploration aimed at assessing and describing this institutional dimension in current organizing processes: the main sources of evidence I used were therefore participant observation of the initiatives and interviews with their members. Participant observation focused on the organizational routines and rituals. Interviews explored instead the meanings associated with these rituals, their historical origins and processes of socialization in the organizations.

The diachronic exploration has drawn from archival records, press review and interviews. Archival research of the initiatives and press reviews were used to outline the history of the initiatives from their emergence until present times and their economic evolution. Documents from the archives of public institutions (like grant applications, conventions, policies, regulations, etcetera) were used to assess the relations of the initiatives with other organizations and institutions. Interviews with longtime members of the initiatives were used to gather their interpretations of the history of the organizations. Interviews and conversation with external actors (from cultural, political and ordinary backgrounds) provided the backdrop to assess the production of services by these initiatives in their local context and their eventual perceived effects over time.

The second unit of analysis focuses on the generation of learning and innovations in problematic situations out of the routinized activities of long-existing citizen initiatives. While the first unit was based on the initiatives and their members, this unit of analysis included the variety of other actors revolving around this shifting situation. Archival records and press reviews were used to outline the history of the processes of urban intervention, and to build a biography of the main actors. Archival photos were used to date the evolution of spatial interventions over time.

Evidence of learning and innovation was drawn from participant observation and from interviews and conversations. Participant observation provided a first-hand reference on the divergences between the operations in the long-existing citizen initiative and in the new situation, allowing the researcher to directly assess the eventual evolution of practices. Interviews and conversations - focused on actors taking part in the development of the processes, members of the initiatives, external actors - provided evidence on the learning and innovations that these situations generated. The line of questioning during the interviews focused on stimulating reflections on what was learnt through the engagement in these situations, how actors themselves changed through the participation in the processes and how they eventually transferred these evolutions onto situations they perceived as similar.

The two units of analysis were object of two different trajectories of analysis. The first unit of analysis has the goal of verifying and testing existing theories and revise them. The second unit of analysis aims instead at generating new hypotheses to describe these new phenomena. Both units were explored by comparing them across the two cases in order to reach a joint interpretation.

3.6.2 Data analysis

During the fieldwork I acquired multiple formats of data. The most substantial type was audio files from interviews, followed by texts (field notes, archival documents, press articles, web pages), photos, and videos. The most important interviews were transcribed from audio formats to text through the F5 software. The textual form facilitated the analysis and the connection of pieces of text across sources of data.

To analyse the evidence I mostly worked through the Atlas.ti software. This software allows the integration of different sources of data, from audio to text and from photos to videos. The software was also useful to review literature.

The work on this software was structured in four different project files. The first is the “Literature review” project, which I used to review the literature and scholarworks connected to the themes of my

thesis or empirically focused on the same objects. The second file is the “Methodology” project, which supported me in the definition of a proper methodology to develop my research, identifying research themes and questions and conducting field work.

The two last contained the empirical data associated with each of the two case studies, and were named “Case study Žilina” and “Case study St-Denis”. The choice of separating the literature review from the empirical evidence is due to the desire of letting the evidence “speak” for itself instead of superimposing my interpretations and my categories to the data. I wanted to let emic categories and discourses emerge in the analysis, and observe how they would relate to each other.

In the development of the analysis, I tentatively adopted a constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006; Wagenaar, 2011; Allen & Davey, 2018). But the process of coding (composed of different stages, with open coding, selective coding, theoretical coding, and constant memoing and comparisons) proved to be too time-consuming. While the analysis of all the evidence through this approach to reach a consistent level of data saturation would have made the analysis more robust (Allen & Davey, 2018: 6), I chose to reduce this methodological rigidity in order to complete the research on time.

The process of analysis I developed can be ultimately described as an heuristic process (Abbott, 2004). Methods were used to explore the complexity of the phenomena I was inquiring, but without subsuming them under a given framework (Lanzara, 2016: 23). Qualitative data analysis strategies were loosely used to develop the analysis. Coding was adopted to scan through the mass of evidence and develop themes and categories (Ryan & Bernard 2003; Bazeley, 2009, 2013; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003; Dey, 1993); memoing was also crucial in connecting different parts and elements of the research, and to develop theoretical reflections (Charmaz, 2006).

In this heuristic process, I was oriented by some initial intuitions and expectation. But I was also attentive towards the eventual emergence of ideas and interpretations during the progress of research. The things that unexpectedly emerge from research are the most important ones, as they often are the ones we could not name beforehand. Through these discoveries, our knowledge is expanded beyond what we expected (Cefai, 2014: 16-17).

The initial research questions were therefore rekindled as the analysis unfolded; as I discovered new connections and interesting sides of the cases, the research questions, hypotheses and conclusions were sharpened and conclusively defined.

3.6.3 Visualizing networks and situations

The data analysis process has been supported by the use of graphic representations able to connect multiple forms of informations. These instruments have initially been developed spontaneously to grasp the complexity of the research materials and to generate new interpretations. During fieldwork and data analysis I used my notebooks and field journals to express interpretations and systematize what I was observing and analysing. Among the different representations I sketched out and tested in this process, two have been particularly useful: schemes of evolution of domains of situations and strategies, and graphs of social networks. In this section I outline their emergence, their links with different theoretical approaches and their role in this dissertation. As the situation and strategy analysis schemes result from analytical perspectives I will present in detail in section 5.3, here I will focus on the analytics behind network graphs.

The graphics of social networks were among the first representations I used. I sketched them during the preliminary phases of field research to understand the connections and relations among actors, in order to select the most crucial ones to interview or to have conversations with.

As the networks represented connections that changed and evolved in the situations I explored, I recognized their limited fitness in summarizing the whole processes. Instead, they could be particularly useful for the visualization of diachronic change. The sequence of the networks of actors associated in different moments with the citizen initiatives (in the first unit of analysis) and with the processes of urban transformation (in the second unit of analysis) would facilitate the appreciation of the expansion and reduction of the networks, the evolution of types and intensities of links among actors, the emergence of new groups and organizations, the type of groupings involved, and so forth.

Networks play different roles in the first and second unit of analysis. The first unit focuses on understanding the processes of institutionalization of these citizen initiatives. Since the adoption of specific ways of organizing and their consolidation in institutions can be influenced by external pressures towards isomorphism with neighboring organizations (Meyer & Rowan, 1977) and because institutions are the product of other institutions, as previous institutionalized patterns influence the generation of new institutions (Donolo, 1997: 227), I used network graphs to map the interorganizational fields (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) of these initiatives in their year of foundation and in 2019. These representations assisted me in analysing the level of density of these interorganizational fields, their homogeneity and the geographic distribution of its nodes. While these representations offered insights regarding the type and intensity of these connections, the analysis of the institutional dimensions and isomorphism focused mostly on the content of these links, and in particular on the knowledges, recipes,

constraints that moved from other organizations towards the citizen initiatives. The comparison across two moments of time allows to reflect on the evolution of the initiatives and of their field, as well as on the reproduction of these initiatives in other emergent organizations.

The second unit of analysis focuses on the generation of learning and innovation by these initiatives in new problematic situations. Differently from the first, this second research question is more focused on shifting, emerging and micro-sociological phenomena, with the interaction over time of actors from different organizations, institutions and public administrations. In this context, then, I adopt insights from social network analysis (Piselli, 1999; Hanneman & Riddle, 2005), centering the exploration on the dynamic and processual elements of the linkages between individuals. Social network analysis is particularly useful for its focus on the differentiation of orders of links that actors establish, including structural relations and groups, as well as emergent and ephemeral networks (Piselli, 1999: XXXIV-XXXV). The sequences of six network graphs for each case study allows then the observation of the evolution of the interactions of individuals and organizations, their mix of different types of organizations involved, the new groupings being established. Furthermore, mapping out all the connections in the process, it is possible to analyse which actors were able to have greater influence over the process, as they brokered and manipulated resources (financial, informations, legal and political) that other actors couldn't reach.

It must however be stressed that, differently from sociological researches on social networks, this second unit of analysis does not have the social network as its main object of analysis. In fact, my research does not aim at developing new sociological insights on social networks, rather it uses networks as analytical instruments to understand the role of active connections, their geometry, the flow of resources and the positional influence of certain actors on processes of learning and innovation.

In their graphic form, networks have a primary use for their ability to map out the geometry of relations. I also integrates additional variables, linked with the themes emerging from my analysis. Both types of network (in the first and second unit of analysis) present: the type of organization actors formally belong to (academia, citizen initiative, for-profit company, public administration and other social actor), in order to assess the homogeneity or heterogeneity of rationalities involved; the territorial context of action (from neighborhood to international level), in order to understand the scale of operations and the geographic distribution of actors; the field of relations (relations within the field of activity of these initiatives, out of these initiatives or both); and the type of relations (professional relations, friendship or family relations, or both): these last two are useful to understand how connections often shift from one type or field from the other, with processes of activation.

In the second unit the research focuses on a finer grain of analysis, requiring also a better representation of the evolution of group belonging along the process and the level of influence that single actors could exert on the social network. These networks are particularly useful to inquire the internal development of the process and to assess the diffusion of innovations beyond the actors directly involved. I therefore integrate two other dimensions: the first is the presence of emerging groupings, beyond the organizations or institutions actors formally belong to. To assess and visualize the second (the level of influence), I delve into the parameters of social network analysis methods (Hanneman & Riddle, 2005). Actors in a network could be influential for their number of connections (measured with “degree centrality”), for their position closer to a higher number of other nodes (measured with “closeness centrality”), and for their position between different nodes that do not communicate directly (measured with “betweenness centrality”). Among these parameters, I opt for betweenness centrality: this measure allows me to visualize which actors have been able to mobilize resources through connections unavailable for other actors. In fact, nodes with high betweenness have influence in their network because they control the passage of information and resources between others.

Both these types of networks have originated as hand drawn sketches, and then moved to digital representations in order to manipulate effectively their different variables. I have used Excel to organize the characters of each node (name, group belonging(s), territorial context of action) and the characters of each linkage (type and field of relations) for each of the networks graphs. I then imported these tables in Gephi, an open source network analysis and visualization software, where I was able to compute the betweenness centrality of each node. Finally, I used Adobe Illustrator to perfect the coloring and the graphics of the networks.

In the second unit of analysis I also use another type of representation. This unit focuses on processes scattered across multiple dimensions and themes of action. In order to grasp this complexity and connect them to research questions on learning and innovation, I adopt multiple analytical frameworks to highlight different dimensions of the cases (as discussed and presented in detail in section 5.3): I focus on the multiple domains of action of the processes (Dewey, 1938; Schön and Wiggins, 1992), the presence of different actors in each situation (Schön & Rein, 1994), the presence of multiple engagement regimes in each domain (Thevenot, 2001, 2007, 2010), the different levels of action (Kiser & Ostrom, 1982), as well as the presence of different opinions and different ways of acting. Underlying all these analytical aspects, the research focuses on the strategies developed by the actors, their revision and their learning processes within and across domains.

While the sequences of social networks are useful to understand the geometries of these processes and the type of connections established, they fail to gather and visualize the complexity of cycles, spillovers and multiplicities. In this second unit I therefore develop schemes representing the evolution of the domains of situations and strategies. As I adopt a situated approach to research, these representations are based on the situations of action that actors constructed along the process and the strategies they developed. These schemes allow the integration and visualization of the different analytical approaches to the cases, summarizing them graphically.

These representations lead to a better understanding of the presence of different phases of the processes, their turning points, the concentration or diffusion of actors. From them, I have been able to interpret (in section 5.4) the effects of learning and innovation in the processes of urban transformation. Learning has been understood as an individual or social process of engagement of actors with their situation(s), moving across domains and rising in generality into institutional rules and transferring innovations to other actors.

I initially hand draw these schemes, but as they gained in complexity I moved to digital instruments like Adobe Illustrator.

These two types of representations are integrated in the second unit of analysis, observing the distribution of the domains of the situation in the social networks of the two cases at their moments of maximum expansion (see figures 5.30 and 5.31). A further step in this direction would be to create dynamic networks, in order to visualize them as videos on digital platforms. This would offer additional insights on the processual evolution of the cases.

3.6.4 How to compare

While the first units of analysis were not object of extensive comparison since the beginning, the analysis of the second units of analysis (the processes of urban intervention as problematic situations) developed through a comparative approach since the inception of the research.

A posteriori, I can recognize that my research followed a case-oriented approach instead of a variable-oriented one: the “understanding” I was pursuing was related to dense knowledge of cases rather than at generalizable knowledge of relations among variables (Della Porta, 2008: 207). I explored and selected the cases - again, mostly by intuition - to observe paradigmatic cases, exploring their diversity, looking at temporal sequences (ibid: 208). This approach is strong in developing theories and in the exploration of the actors’ cognitive understanding of situations (McKeown 2004: 153 in Della Porta, 2008: 211).

Comparative research has been object of a revival in recent years in urban research (McFarlane & Robinson, 2012). In particular, urban geographers developed a “comparative urbanism” approach, criticizing the western-centric academy and proposing a dialogue between different urban sites and processes in a postcolonial discourse (McFarlane, 2010; Robinson, 2011; McFarlane & Robinson, 2012). Cities are the core empirical focus of this comparative approach, pursuing a “more global approach to understanding cities” (Robinson, 2015).

Contrary to the “comparative urbanism” approach, the object of my understanding were not cities in general: in fact, the comparison between a global metropolis and a small town in the eastern-european mountains would have required a totally different approach (if it were ever possible). Instead of taking a position in the planning offices of the public administrations, I looked at practices, projects and interactions developing around citizen initiatives and their urban transformation processes: the cases referred to problematic situations, organizations and their evolution over time.

The question of comparison therefore relates to the comparability of practices, projects and interactions in Žilina and in St-Denis? While people in St-Denis and in Žilina actually do different things (there is no metro in Žilina; there are no mountains in St-Denis) and in different ways (multiple languages and codes), I recognize the citizen initiatives and the processes of urban transformation as belonging to the same category, as they are all rooted in the ideas of problems and problematic situations.

Without adopting the political economy approach of the proponents of “comparative urbanism” and their effort towards the identification of local urban effects of global forces, their slogan ‘thinking cities through elsewhere’ slogan (Robinson, 2015) metaphorically summarizes my approach to comparison.

The comparison between the cases was developed initially through intuition. As I proceeded in the exploration of the Nová Synagóga project, I referred some of its elements to other cases in an unstructured way. In the process of understanding of each case I used knowledge from the other as a resource mobilized to deepen the inquiry (Jullien, 2018). The cases are explored in their distances, not in their differences (Jullien, 1998; 2011).

This approach allowed the identification of themes and aspects that I initially took for granted in each case. For instance, I discovered that the two cases have opposed process-oriented or product-oriented aims: while the Nová Synagóga project starts with a clear architectural goal and defines its modes of interaction as the actors pursue their aims, the aims of the Espace Imaginaire were more related to the predetermined modes of interaction rather than on the architectural output.

Incrementally, I was able to construct a framework to assess and compare the cases, which includes dimensions like: the presence of multiple design domains; the presence of multiple designers across situations; the unfolding of actions across scales; the conflict across engagement regimes; the emergent or

pre-determined concrete goals and modes of interaction. These dimensions are complemented by classic territorial and urban dimensions such as the type of urban settlement and urban position of the processes, and former use of the transformed spaces.

This comparison of the cases was later connected with the categories emerging from the scholar literature on institutions, learning and innovation.

3.6.5 Writing the thesis

Writing down the thesis was a complex matter.

Firstly, I initially struggled in finding my own voice in this research. A PhD is a complicated path, which subjects to great psychological pressure the doctoral students. One of the most perilous psychological traps is the “impostor syndrome” (Clance & Imes, 1978), when you hold the belief that you are not intelligent as the people surrounding you, and that your opinions are not worthy of attention. I fell into this trap myself: as a result I have been unable for long periods of time to construct and develop my theoretical interpretations engaging with the evidence and the results of the analysis.

I circumvented this syndrome - also with the support of psychological help - by focusing on short-term and smaller goals, such as holding public presentations of my cases or my theoretical framework, organizing educational sessions about these themes, orally discussing with friends my perspectives on the cases and ultimately writing papers for academic conferences. Adopting those strategies I realized my perspectives were valid and appreciated by my peers.

A second element of difficulty was my closeness with the involved actors. As I explained in section 3.5.5, I opted to defuse any potential conflicts by engaging with them during the writing processes. I shared reports, papers and presentations about the cases with them, asking for feedbacks and backtalk (Lanzara, 2016).

The thesis has been drafted in its final form between May 2019 and January 2020. The writing process develop iteratively between empirical and theoretical chapters. I started from the empirical chapters - using parts of paper developed for conferences and seminars; as I developed my interpretations of the cases, I drafted and assembled the theoretical framework, which finally informed the re-drafting of the empirical chapters in order to reach a robust connection. In between I wrote the research design and methods chapter. I wrote introductions and conclusions last.

Fourth Chapter: from Citizen Initiatives to Institutions

4.1 Stanica Žilina-Zaricie: history, practices, organization

4.1.1 Overview of the history of Truc Sphérique and Stanica Žilina-Zaricie

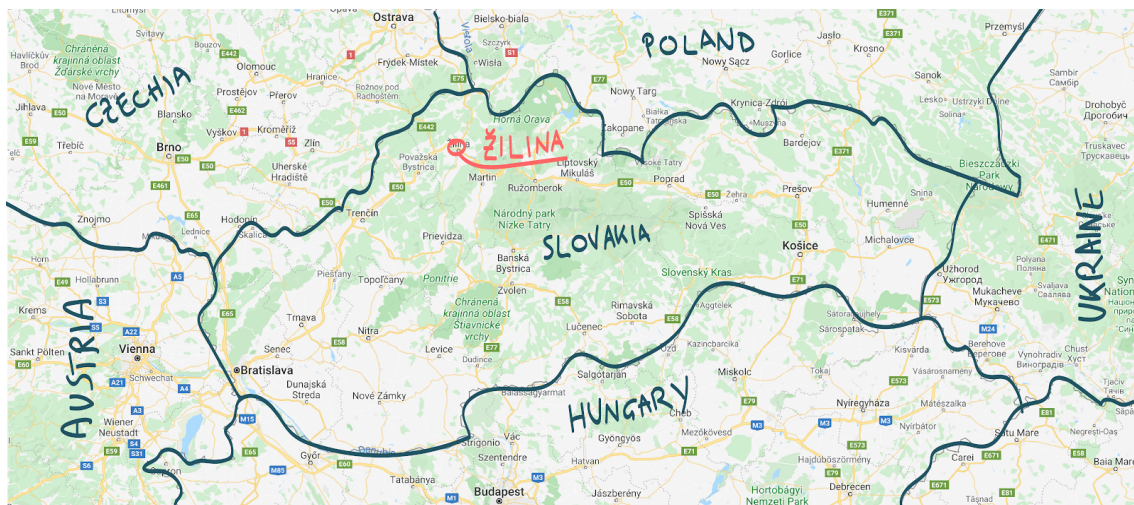


Figure 4.1 - Location of Žilina in Slovakia - Elaboration of the author from Google Maps

The history of Stanica Žilina-Zaricie begins with a group of teenagers in the medium-sized city of Žilina, in central Slovakia. In the mid- '90s, during their years of high school, they started to organize cultural and artistic activities in the public spaces of Žilina and its surrounding villages. They were into the local art scene, and experimented with different artforms, from 8mm films, to photography, to music (Blaško, 2016). For example, one of their artistic performance was - in its simplest elements - to “just wave at trains”.

The artistic and cultural activities emerged as a response to the perception of a lack of alternative and fun cultural activities in Žilina. The city was seen as a boring mid-sized city in post-communist Eastern Europe. And it was also considered to be a nationalistic hotbed: since 1990 (until 2006) the municipality was ruled by Ján Slota, a nationalistic mayor (co-founder and at the time the president of the extremist nationalist party “Slovak National Party”).

The teenagers tried to escape this context by organizing their own alternative cultural activities, mixing contemporary arts in their everyday life. In these initial phases, the artistic activities were excuses to have

fun with friends experimenting something new, learning and discovering new artistic practices. As they grew up and started their university studies, they continued these cultural activities, keeping the link of their friendship. Each of them focused on different subjects, like education, cultural management, and art.

Over the years, their activities slowly progressed from amateur performances with small audiences to a relative success in the circles of friends and in the local art scene. The artistic activities of the group increased in number and in quality. They started to focus on the diffusion of artistic works produced by other artists rather than directly engaging in the production of performances and forms of art.

From this success, a part of the group of friends started considering the possibility of scaling up the activities, creating an official organization to shift this voluntary action into a paid job. The group discussed and fought: many were worried that making this activity a job would affect their friendship. For some, this was a step not worth taking, and they left the group. For others, it was instead the path to follow: as a result, in 1998 the group founded the cultural NGO Truc Sphérique. The choice for a legal representative was between M.A. and R.B: they had been leading the organization in tandem. M.A. took the role, given his outspoken and passionate character (Blaško, 2016). The third founding member was H.L..

The development of the activities of the group received also external inputs. In 1999 M.A. spent three months with the European Volunteer Service at KulturFabrik, in Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg. KulturFabrik was an established cultural centre, existing - in its various forms - since 1982. The centre organized concerts, theater performances, workshops and lectures. During this experience M.A. had the chance to explore the multiple dimensions of these centres, collaborating with technicians, programmers, managers and the other professionals involved.

During those months KulturFabrik also hosted a meeting of Trans Europe Halles. In that occasion M.A. had the chance to first-hand meet all the actors in Europe in the field of cultural centres, and to learn about their experiences.

These contacts proved fundamental for the evolution of Truc Sphérique. Even before M.A.'s departure, the team had been dreaming about creating a cultural centre. They weren't sure it was possible to realize this utopia in post-communist Slovakia, as there were no experiences of similar spaces, nor official resources for funding. Furthermore, the concept of "independent cultural centre" was a new idea, excluded by cultural policies.

When M.A. went back to Žilina, he told about the existence of this kind of spaces somewhere else in Europe, shifting the framing of the project: since somewhere it was real, their utopia was feasible. Moreover, each of these projects had to endure fights with municipalities and institutions for years to

create their centres, often without money. The group understood that their success didn't depend on money, but on enthusiasm and energy (Blaško, 2016).

In 2000 Truc Sphérique opened its first cultural space, called Atelier. They rented a space in the central square of town, and transformed it into a multifunctional cultural space. The biggest room was the size of a living room (7,4 m x 4,4 m) (ibid). In this space, they developed their artistic activities, ranging from concerts to exhibitions, inviting artists from the city and beyond. It was still far from the ideal cultural centre, but it was the first space they concretely had to managed.

Since the beginning of this experience, their activities were organized spontaneously. Having as a goal to mix their everyday life and their work, the organization followed the spontaneous action of its members, avoiding intermediation and the creation of planned and bureaucratic systems.

On a practical level, Truc Sphérique didn't invest in the formalization of its procedures into routines, or in the creation of formal roles in the organization. In particular, administration and coordination was decentralized across all members: no one was tasked with the coordination or direction of activities, it was supposed to naturally emerge from mutual adjustment.

The organization operated as a platform of friends developing their projects and their ideas. Each member of the organization proposed its ideas, and was responsible for finding funding to make them sustainable.

Kids art workshops were one of the first artistic activities to be developed professionally by Truc Sphérique. The choice was linked to a passionate interest of some members of Truc Sphérique to these activities and to the fact that - at the time - funding for these workshops was the easiest to access, both from philanthropic partners and direct revenue. The "Children of Slovakia Foundation" provided financial support for educational activities to children and kids, without complex application procedures or co-funding responsibilities. Furthermore, the parents of the kids were willing to pay for the classes. In 2001 there were around 60 kids attending 8 creative workshops on regular basis.

As the members of Truc Sphérique progressively completed their studies, they had to increase their sources of funding. At the time, direct funding for arts and culture in the Slovakian context was limited to small grants from the ministry of culture or from the municipalities: to increase their funding, they looked into national funding from other sectors, and into international funding. Different international foundations provided support and funding, like the Open society Foundation, the Orange Foundation and the European Cultural Foundation. These philanthropic foundations saw in Truc Sphérique an organization promoting values linked to freedom and democracy, in the context of a post-communist Eastern Europe.

Truc Sphérique continued to pursue the dream of creating a cultural space similar to Trans Europe Halles members in Žilina: a centre for cultural activities, and at the same time a public space. Atelier was too small, limiting the potential simultaneous uses. Its use was also based on a rental contract with monthly payments, limiting the possibilities of long-term development.



Figure 4.2 - Location of Stanica Žilina-Zariecie in Žilina - Elaboration of the author from Google Maps

One of the spaces was Stanica Žilina-Zariecie, a secondary train station in the outskirts of town. The trainline was still in operation, with a train every hour both directions. The building of the station was instead derelict, limiting its use by passengers (Blaško, 2016). Only a small portion was still in use: the residence of the keeper and his family. The station was located in the centre of an elevated roundabout, divided from the city centre by the railway lines and an inter-urban road. The only pedestrian way of access was a poorly lit underpass.



Figure 4.3 - Exterior of Stanica Žilina-Zaricie in 2003 - Credits: Robert Blaško

The building was owned by the State-owned Slovak Railway Company. Truc Sphérique had good relations with the local branch of the company, but any proposal of this kind had to be approved also at the national level in Bratislava. The people from the railway company didn't have confidence in the members of Truc Sphérique, because of their young age. M.A.'s father helped them attending meetings with them: they trusted him and granted Truc Sphérique a ten-year lease for just one room in the station (Blaško, 2016).

In 2003 Truc Sphérique took possession of the room. Instead of limiting their activities to that space, they started renovating the whole station, without permission. They continued lobbying to get a longer lease for the whole space. The negotiations went on for two years. During this process, Truc Sphérique received additional support in Bratislava. I.H., who served as the Secretary General of the SDKU-DS party, lobbied to an acquaintance working in a high position at the Railway Company for the approval of Truc Sphérique proposal: he had the chance to meet the group because his child attended the kids art workshops and he had a strong understanding of the value of young artistic activism.



Figure 4.4 - Interior of Stanica Žilina-Zarietie in 2003 - Credits: Robert Blaško

In the final contract the Railway company leased the station to Truc Sphérique for 30 years. In return the NGO had to pay a token fee and invest at least € 400,000 in the first ten years to refurbish the building. They also had to provide a waiting room in the station for the train passengers.

The cultural centre took the name of the station, and was named “Stanica Žilina-Zarietie” (“Stanica” means “Station” in Slovak).

Even if Stanica opened its doors for public activities just after a few months after the beginning of the renovation, the completion of all the construction works required more than five years. The renovation was developed with incremental interventions on spaces or architectural elements of the building, splitting the works across several smaller processes instead of developing a complex unique construction process. In this engineering effort, Truc Sphérique was supported by the fathers of R.B. and M.A., which had extensive experience in the building sector.

The choice of adopting this approach was primarily due to the lack of initial available funding. Architectural projects are usually designed as unitary wholes, to be implemented all together, taking for granted the stability of the flow of funding supporting the effort. The Stanica renovation was instead to be developed in a context of flexible and unpredictable resources: the division of construction in separate

and autonomous units allowed their progressive implementation with the requirement of reaching smaller thresholds of funding instead of a single large investment.

To adopt this strategy, Truc Sphérique had to bend building regulations, in particular in relation to the implementation of construction plans and security measures. As the members of Truc Sphérique correctly believed, the railway company - which supervised the works - did not point out the bureaucratic shortcomings of the reconstruction.

Resources for the reconstruction were found through different channels. Instead of looking for cash, M.A. and R.B., coordinating the fundraising efforts, integrated goods and services sponsorships and donations by local companies in the process. More than half of the costs were covered by the sum of sponsorships in goods or services, recycled materials, and the voluntary work of friends, families and supporters. They succeeded in engaging young people and professional workers in a self-supporting reconstruction, with the contribution of a relevant number of people.

The other half of costs was covered by philanthropic Foundations and European funding, with two “Interreg” grants plus several “Youth in action” grants. These European grants presented advantageous conditions, because of the favorable exchange rate between the Euro and the Slovak Crown. The 2004 Enlargement of Minds Award from the European Cultural Foundation also provided 20.000 €.

The development of the project of the cultural centre, with its specific spaces, uses and technical requirements was strongly influenced by the lessons acquired from other centres in the Trans Europe Halles network. Stanica became a member in 2004. The members of the organization felt a strong connection with the other experiences from Europe. As R.B. said: “We were a bit mad, and the people we met from other parts of Europe were mad in a similar way” (Blaško, 2016). At each meeting of the network, the members of Truc Sphérique explored the host centre to understand how they managed the bar, how they did the lights, how many people worked there, how they organized, and so on. In Trans Europe Halles they learnt solutions on how to operate a cultural centre. Coming back to Stanica they mixed these solutions: M.A. metaphorically said that they worked as djs, mixing different things to create something special that would work on their specific reality in Slovakia.



Figure 4.5 - Exterior view of Stanica Žilina-Zaricie in 2018 - Author: Francesco Campagnari



Figure 4.6 - Outdoor space of Stanica Žilina-Zaricie in 2018. Author: Orsi Varga

Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/stanica/40661179475/in/album-72157695102018994/>

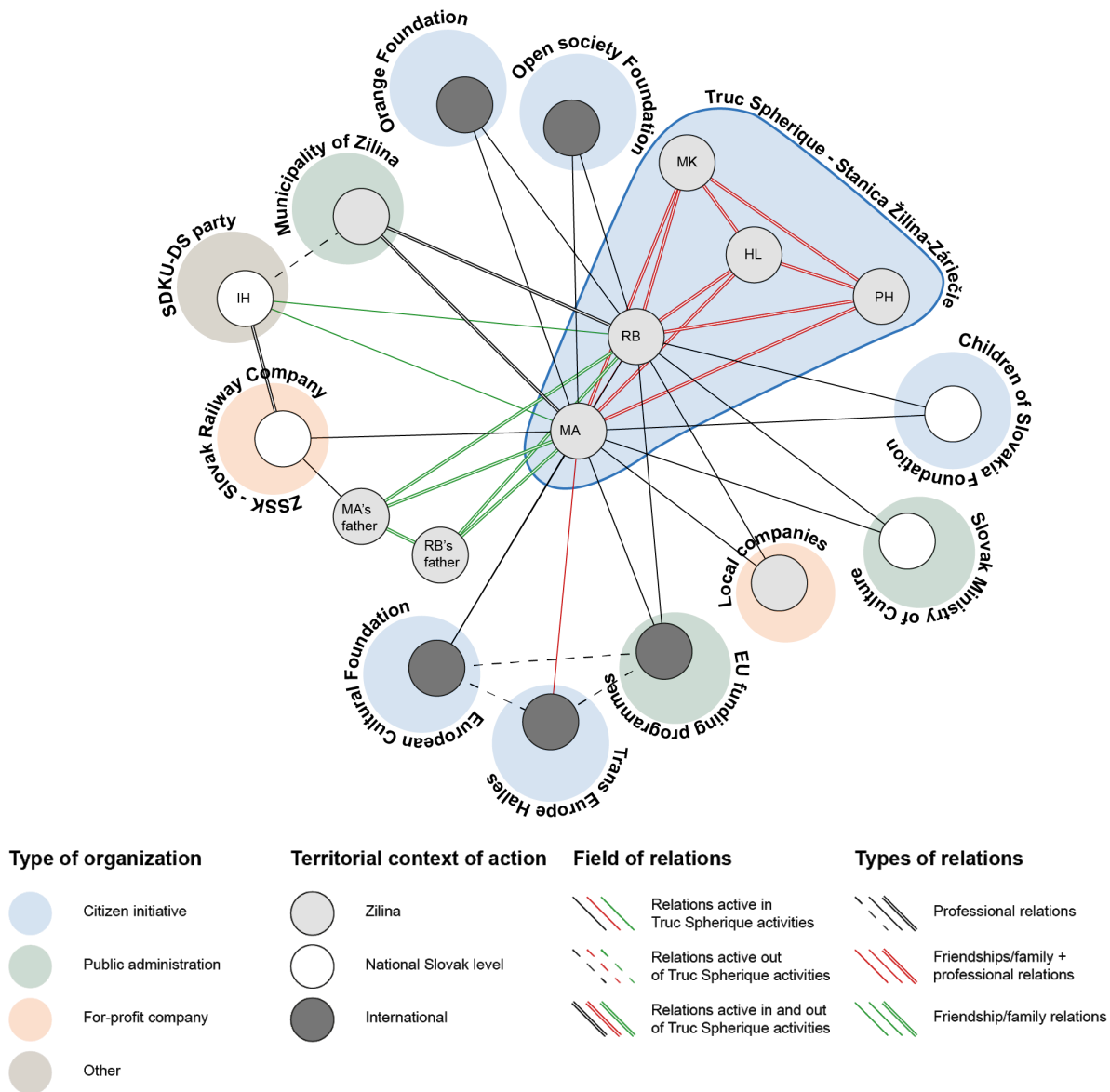


Figure 4.7 - Interorganizational network of Stanica (2004) - Elaboration of the author

As the reconstruction of Stanica unfolded, the organization further expanded its sources of founding: they increased sponsorships with local companies, and the size of european projects. They also received funding from the Slovak Ministry of Culture, whose grant system was based on the funding of single artistic projects. For organizations developing several different projects like Truc Sphérique, this system bore organizational difficulties. Furthermore, funding was dependent from political directions of the Ministry, with no full artistic independence.

At the time, other cultural centres emerged in Slovakia, like A4 in Bratislava and Bona fide – Tabačka Kulturfabrik in Kosice. Taking inspiration from TEH, in 2008 these centres created the Slovak network of independent cultural centres, called Antena. The network aims at promoting the development of these centres, lobbying for them and facilitating knowledge-sharing across experiences. Through Antena, they

lobbied for the reform of the grant systems of the Ministry. They supported the creation of FPU - “Fond na podporu umenia” (“Slovak Arts Council”) an institutional body autonomous of the Ministry of Culture. In their lobbying effort, they also succeeded in creating a specific program to support big and small cultural centres. Through this grant system, cultural centres are evaluated for all their cultural activities in cycles of three years, providing medium-term sources of funding making these initiatives more economically sustainable. Antena also promoted the exchange of experiences and organization systems across the projects. Antena counts today over 18 full members across the country, with a cultural centre in every major Slovak city. These centres emerged and developed in the last years, as institutions started recognizing the value of these experiences and facilitated their creation by citizens.

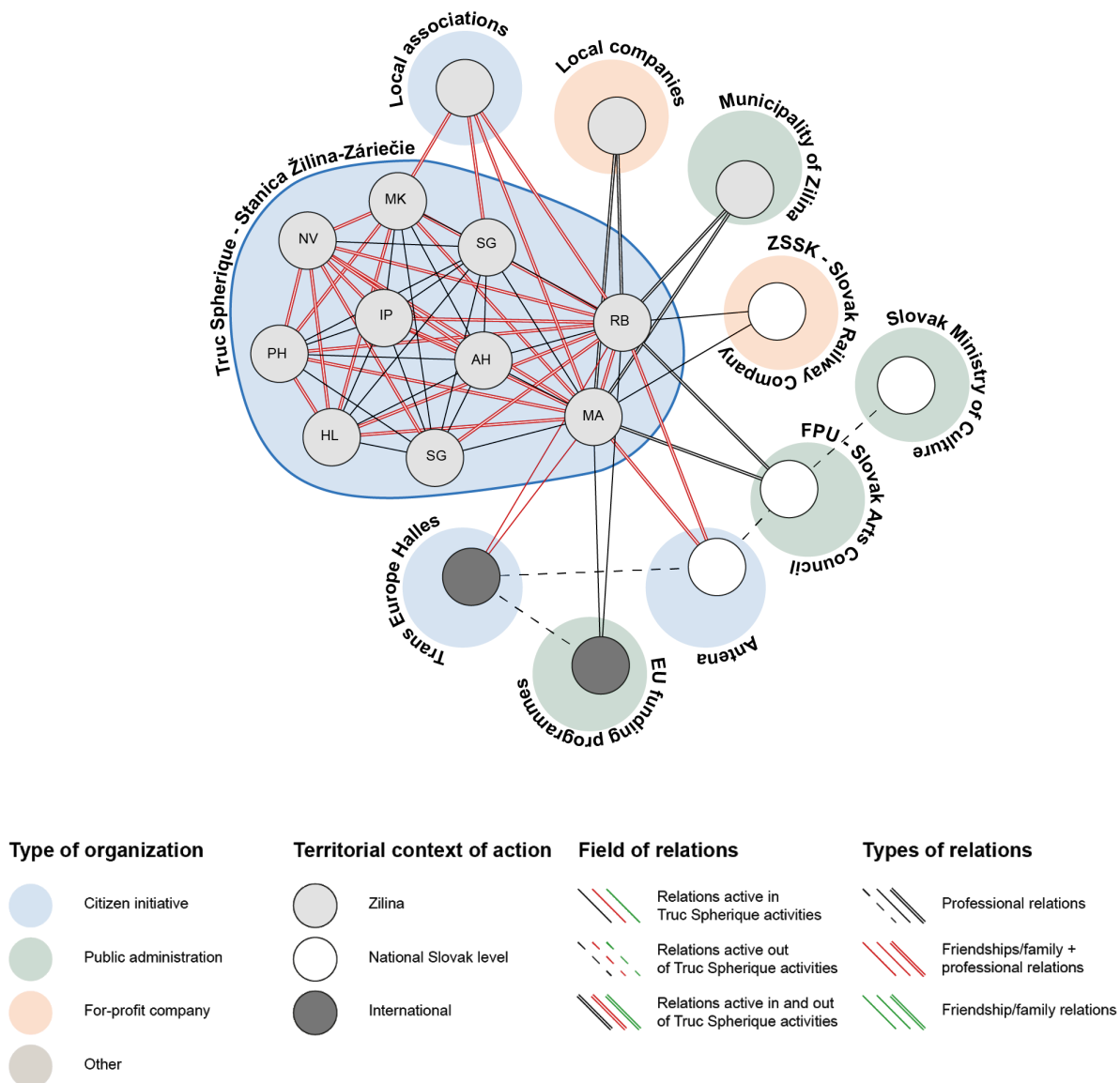


Figure 4.8 - Interorganizational network of Stanica (2019) - Elaboration of the author



Figure 4.9 - S2 after the fire in 2019

Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/stanica/46971829535/in/album-72157707175305691/>

In 2009, Stanica planned to host a Trans Europe Halles meeting, but the station lacked a venue big enough for all the members of the network. M.A. proposed to create a new venue - called S2 - under the underpass, without legal permissions. The external walls were built with beer crates, straw bales and mud. The cost of the venue was around 10.000€ (Rex and Kimbell, 2019). Construction was done with the voluntary labour of the members of the organization, friends and people interested in learning this technique. The materials were obtained through sponsorships with local companies.

The venue was opened by the new mayor, I.H., during the Trans Europe Halles meeting in Stanica. S2 burnt down in May 2019, for causes still unclear. The fire caused minor damages to the underpass. Truc Sphérique was the object of public outrage for the construction of a building without permits, even if the organization argues that the venue was an architectural experiment, that didn't require these permits.

Stanica also transformed the area surrounding the train station. Over the years, they transformed the outdoor spaces in a terrace, an outdoor event space, and a garden, used for camping during festivals. They also facilitated the access to the area. As mentioned, Stanica was separated from the city centre by the railway, the inter-urban road, with only a the poorly-lit underpass to cross them. Truc Sphérique intervened on the pedestrian underpass, until then perceived as dangerous, installing neon lights, and encouraging continued attendance by the local graffiti community.

With positive feedbacks from these experiences, the interventions of Truc Sphérique in recent years have expanded beyond the direct proximity of the station. The organization has installed land art works in places near Žilina, such as the Zrakova Pyramida (Sight Pyramid) in Sulov, attracting 30000 visitors and tourists a year.

4.1.2 Organizing (in) Truc Sphérique and Stanica Žilina-Zaricie

To understand the current operations of Stanica, we can start by understanding the spatial characters of the building. In its current version, it comprises two office spaces, an art workshop, an artist residency studio, a multifunctional venue, a waiting room for rail passengers, and a café. The centre also includes an external outdoor terraces, a garden and a bike workshop. The centre included until recently a second venue, S2, which was destroyed by a fire in May 2019.

Stanica attracts over 20.000 visitors per year. Events and activities are organized in the spaces of the centre with different rhythms and formats, limiting the possibility of providing an exact number of events. Stanica organizes eight kids workshops per week, resulting in more than 350 lessons a year. They host 60 theatre performances, 30 concerts, 10 art residencies, 70 presentations and short workshops, plus 100 cinema screenings, plus some festivals and community activities – such as the Vegan Sunday.

Activities take place in different spaces. Some of them are characterized by a unique use (offices, ateliers, toilets, storage spaces), while others are multifunctional (the café, the multifunctional venue, the waiting room).

The art workshop is used for weekly children art education classes, with classes for each age group, from one to ten years: Stanica is one of the few places in Žilina offering art activities for children in pre-schooling age. The room is also used for adult DIY training workshops, and for internal Truc Sphérique meetings.

The two office spaces are used by the members of Truc Sphérique for their office activities, like project-writing and reporting. While in the first years of the centre they used the offices every day, many of them increasingly work from home.

The artistic residency studio, located in the basement, was rented for a long time to a local artist, that contributed by designing the monthly posters of the activities of Stanica. At the moment it is used as a ceramic workshop studio offering workshops for groups of children and adults

The multifunctional venue is used for concerts, discussions, film screenings and for theatre and dance performances and rehearsals. Each of these different events usually takes place once a week.

The waiting room is the central corridor of Stanica, connecting the front and back doors. In this broad space people can sit and wait for trains or friends on large benches. Ticketing for events hosted in the

multifunctional venue takes place between the waiting room and the venue, allowing the presence in Stanica of people not interested to the event.

The café is located next to the waiting room. The café is the most versatile and polyfunctional space of the cultural centre. It evolved through different incarnations over the years, shifting from an exposition space with a small bar to a large café. The café is today an open space, where people can stay and relax all day from morning to evening. It is a space of encounter and interaction, where people interested in the artistic program, people waiting for the train and people interested in drinking with friends all meet in one place, fulfilling the idea of Stanica as a public space. The space is also used for events, community activities - like Vegan Sunday meals - and for the weekly team meetings of Truc Sphérique.

The bike workshop is located in a container in the garden of Stanica. It is run by a separate association, called Recykel, led by a member of Truc Sphérique. The association promotes sustainable mobility and organizes bike repair activities.

Given the rigid winters, the external spaces are mostly used during summertime as extensions of the bar, or to screen movies and host performances.

Before the recent fire, the S2 venue was mostly used during spring and summer time. It was used for dance and theatre events and rehearsals, and for public discussions and events. S2 was also the core space of the festivals organized in Stanica during the summer, like Fest Anca - International animation festival - and Kiosk - festival of Slovak theatre and dance.

The economic dimension side of Stanica operations is also relevant to assess the current functioning of the organization. As I mentioned, Truc Sphérique avoided the creation of a centralized coordination system, limiting the bureaucracy to one accountant. But over the years the multiplication of projects of increasing sizes, the focus on the renovation of the Synagogue, the chaotic management of multiple bank accounts, and the development of multiple artistic programs, almost led Truc Sphérique to a bankruptcy in 2013. The founders of Truc Sphérique had to fire some members of the organization, and the remaining members had their salaries reduced to minimum-wage.

This financial crisis was an occasion for adaptation, learning and evolution, leading to a shift in the management of economic resources in the organization. They chose to concentrate their resources in a single bank account; they developed an online tool to register all the expenses, to control the cash flow and to easily make grant reports; they also reduced the number of projects they were involved in.

Truc Sphérique Revenue Structure	2017	2016	2015	Average %
Public sources (ministries of SR, VÚC, ÚPSVaR, FPU, EU resources ...)	€ 477.587,40	€ 381.536,00	€ 186.749,40	56,46%
Slovak Foundations	€ 159.282,12	€ 52.729,52	€ 63.267,50	14,57%
Foreign Resources (Embassies, Foreign Donors)	€ 44.036,80	€ 8.000,00	€ 20.477,04	3,89%
Sponsors	€ 0,00	€ 10.800,00	€ 10.000,00	1,46%
2% - Annual income tax donations	€ 18.822,66	€ 18.822,66	€ 20.709,03	3,55%
Membership donations (public collection)	€ 30.735,57	€ 10.000,00	€ 10.290,01	2,64%
Income from own activities	€ 99.709,40	€ 60.000,00	€ 59.520,15	12,35%
Revenue from commercial activity	€ 2.430,48	€ 30.000,00	€ 30.429,02	4,37%
other	€ 17.896,98			0,70%
Total annual budget	€ 850.501,41	€ 571.888,18	€ 401.442,15	

Table 4.1 - Truc Sphérique Revenue Structure

Source: Truc Sphérique Application for Grant subsidies - City of Žilina. 2017 and 2016. Elaboration of the author.

They also restructured the logic of their cultural program. Žilina is a medium-sized town, where the audience for experimental art is rapidly growing, but still limited. Before 2013 their choice of events to produce didn't include the assessment of audience potentially attracted, evaluating instead the artistic value of the event. From then on, to avoid financial risks, they tried to reflect on combinations of their experimental program and their audiences. As a result, they mitigated the radical nature of the program by concentrating experimental artistic performances during the festival season, when bigger audiences are drawn from other slovak cities (Blaško, 2016).

In this mitigation, they also had to consider the directives of the Slovak Arts Council: the fund provides considerable resources to Stanica, with the aim of promoting a high-quality art program. The recalibration had therefore to balance quality of artistic programme and its popularity (Rex and Kimbell, 2019). The cultural program was structured into specific thematic days: for example, concerts are on fridays, kino club is on tuesdays and thursdays, parties on saturdays. travel movies on sundays, and so on. They also started investing in communication campaigns to improve their outreach to existing and potential audiences, by organizing the communication of the program in monthly posters and leaflets. In the past events were mostly programmed offhand, and communicated inefficiently. Since 2013 events are mostly programmed in great advance, in order to be included in these communications.

In the last three years (2018, 2017 and 2016), the annual budget of Truc Sphérique has fluctuated between 800.000 € and 400.000 €. While these fluctuations were also linked with the ongoing renovation of the Synagogue, the numbers are representative of the activities of the organization.

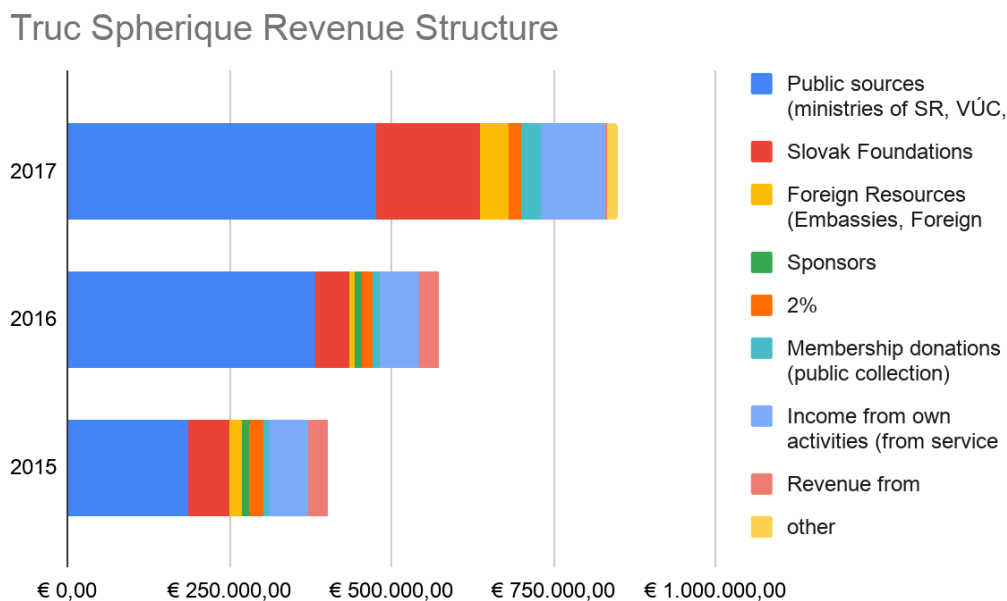


Figure 4.10- Truc Sphérique Revenue Structure in 2015, 2016 and 2017

Source: Truc Sphérique Application Grant subsidies City of Žilina - 2018. Elaboration of the author.

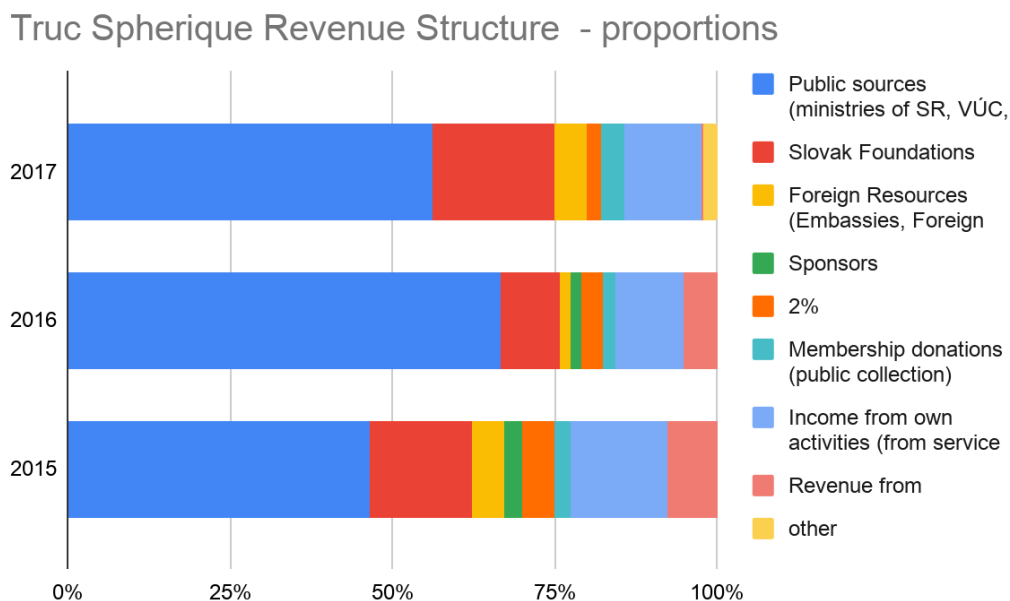


Figure 4.11 - Truc Sphérique Revenue Structure in 2015, 2016 and 2017. Proportions

Source: Truc Sphérique Application Grant subsidies City of Žilina - Grant Form 2017. Elaboration of the author.

More than 50% of the budget of Stanica is usually covered by public institutions, with an additional 15% from grants from private Slovak foundations. The FPU grant system awarded them 250.000€ for

each of the three years of the program. Truc Sphérique members told me they could obtain more resources from FPU, but they prefer limiting public funding to a level they could survive without.

In the last years the self-generated revenue (bar, tickets) has been increasing. Also, they increased the number of citizens donating 2% of their annual income tax to Truc Sphérique, thanks to extensive communication and fundraising campaigns.

Truc Sphérique has always focused on fundraising through sponsorship, developing strong links with local companies - large and small - like KIA, whose largest european plant is located in Žilina.

The core team running Stanica counts today fifteen people. Nine of them work on the cultural program, three on technical production, three on administration, fundraising, two on the bar. Additionally five to six EVS volunteers are hosted in Stanica each year, providing technical, communication and organizational support.

Understanding the organizational dynamics of Stanica requires a full immersion in the processes of the organization. In my empirical research, I focused on the situated perspectives of the members of the organization, in order to determine through a grounded approach the presence of shared and consolidated routines and frames. I begin by introducing the current dynamics of the organization and its cultural frames, followed by the perspectives of members of the organization on the normative dimensions of Stanica.

Since the origins as a group of friends organizing activities, Truc Sphérique has always resisted specialization, trying to involve all members in the development of all activities. In the beginning everyone was involved in every aspect of the organization. Today, in Stanica every member is involved in variety of different tasks, but is at the same time the main responsible for one specific area of the cultural centre.

To understand the practical implications of this principle, we have to look at how work is organized. Rex and Kimbell (2019: 12) explored these dynamics focusing on the use of the concept of “personal responsibility” by the organization. Each member of the organization is deemed responsible for a specific aspect or activity of the cultural centre (Rex and Kibell, 2019). For example, J.G. is responsible for the children workshop, and it is considered his responsibility to organize it every week. This sphere of responsibility can also be seen as a sphere of autonomy, where members can decide (almost) autonomously on matters affecting their personal field of responsibility, like event production, programming, or workshop management.

These spheres of action cover most of the activities of Stanica: the selection of artists, the development of the program, its communication, the technical organization of events, are often developed by

individuals or by small teams. These work processes are conducted simultaneously in the different spaces of Stanica without conflicts or clashes between persons or groups, thanks to the architectural conformation of the station, composed of a series of small multifunctional spaces.

These spheres of responsibility/autonomy do not have rigid boundaries, as members are also encouraged to take action on dimensions beyond their direct responsibilities. The engagement across spheres of responsibility is visible in particular in the processes requiring the coordination of multiple members, like assembling a stage for a concert or organizing the ticketing office. In many of these situations, the organization operates without established rules or routines. Coordination is instead the result of emerging interactions through mutual adjustment and public argumentation.

Over time, a few processes of coordination have nonetheless acquired a routinized and normative nature: for example to program an event members of the organization have to submit a proposal into a shared calendar, with specific deadlines for last edits. These routines have been established with organization-wide efforts to improve communication and programming. They are periodically enforced by some of the senior members of the organization.

Coordination in other aspects of the organization is still contested. In the past some actions might have been coordinated, but without resulting in conventions. Rex and Kimbell (2019) interpret this lack of clarity as an inefficiency of the organization. While it is true that these uncertainties generate certain inefficiencies, we also have to understand them in the context of the practices and values of autonomy of Stanica: these spaces of coordination are intentionally left undetermined in order to encourage the members of the team to take initiative, as processes of autonomous role-taking.

The team running Stanica meets every week to discuss their activities. In these meetings members reflect on past events, and inform other members of their current projects. New ideas are presented in meetings not to obtain collective approval through formal deliberations, but to get informal feedbacks. The collective meetings - and the myriad of one-to-one or small-team meetings - are internal public spheres where members can criticize and provide feedback on the other members' ideas and projects. Critical feedbacks do not directly constitute a valid definitive deliberation for a course of action', but a recommendation: the proposing member can then either abandon the project, under the pressure of negative critique; or, it can push forward, improving the project with the critical inputs and taking responsibility for eventual failures. The authority to evaluate situations does not lie in the collective dimension of the organization, but in the decentralized individuals who take responsibility.



Figure 4.12 - Truc Sphérique team meeting in 2018. Author: Sarah Massardier

Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/novasynagoga/39898804044/in/album-72157692355789781/>

The team rarely takes collective decisions. In these rare occurrences, deliberations are still subject to personal adaptation in implementation: if they have effects on personal activities, members may operate autonomously, taking responsibility for their divergent actions. For example, the team might approve a collective policy on how to deal with homeless people in the venue, but it is then up to every member to autonomously evaluate the situation.

The organization is based on a specific approach to organization, which can be seen as a way of life, based on personal relationships. Since the beginning of the organization, the founders dreamed not just of creating a cultural centre, but of doing so with friends, through an alternative way of life. The relational aspect was therefore an integral part of the aims of the process.

This dimension can be seen in the metaphor - used by some members - of Stanica as Mafia (or as a sect). It is an organization based on strong connections, rooted in shared experiences and in the perception of being separate from the outside world.

In this way of life, activities are based on short-term contingent opportunities, rather than long-term planning. Through the decentralized system of responsibility and autonomy, and the promotion of entrepreneurship, the organization is able to acquire the resources and the opportunities emergent from their environment. Their way of operating resembles more a familiar way of engagement than a planned

one; at the same time, the organization has an internal public sphere, where members also have to justify their actions (Thevenot, 2006).

Stanica current way of organizing is the result of decades of adaptation of the preferences of its members to the organizational environment. Over time, they produced implicit and informal conventions, which are communicated either explicitly through rules and procedures, either implicitly through practices.

The general conventions of the organization do not prescribe how members of the team should perform their actions, instead they normatively prescribe how to be autonomous, both in the personal spheres of action and in the coordination across members. These conventions prescribe the appropriate way of generating autonomous operations, leaving considerable degrees of freedom to team members. They enable individuals to learn and discover autonomously. At the same time, they limit their freedom by defining which is the right way to be autonomous.

To further understand the normative dimension of these conventions, we should look at the interpretations provided by the members of the organization, focusing in particular on the processes of socialization.

According to the members of the Stanica, the way of operating learnt in the organization evaluates enterprising approaches as the most valuable. People are required to defend their ideas, to push for their agenda against the criticism advanced by others, and to take responsibility for it. Some members of the organization perceive this embedded normative evaluation as oppressive, requiring a strong personality in order to be heard and positively evaluated.

Furthermore, the specific mixture of professional life, friendship and way of life generates a peer pressure to fully commit to the organization. Since the border between work and passion is blurred, working hours are not fixed, and extend well beyond the 9-5 routine.

As already noted by Rex and Kimbell (2019), not all the members of the organization are equally committed to this approach; some of them operate at the borders of these dynamics, avoiding the engagement in new projects and sticking to stabilized routines. Some of them are frustrated by the perceived never-ending nature of the efforts of coordination beyond personal spheres of autonomy.

Rex and Kimbell (2019) also notice that some members perceived a lack of trust in their efforts of taking responsibility by senior members of the organization, in particular M.A.. Junior members of the team perceive their harsh criticism as a sign of lack of trust, while for senior members it is an integral part of the spirit of the organization, resulting in improvements to projects and ideas. This perception of criticism presents the risk of alienating the development of new proposals.

M.A. is usually the main defendant and promoter of the traditional conventions of the organization. He is the director of Stanica, the public face of the cultural centre, and its longest serving member (the other two founders left for certain periods of time). His charismatic ability of defending his proposals, his willingness to take responsibility for new projects and his strict work ethic makes him a perfect suit for the way of organizing of Stanica. At the same time his strong will risks alienating or discouraging other members, who are not assisted in developing their will.

These conventions are continuously reproduced by M.A. and the other members of the organization, through their practices and their interactions. In particular they are perceived and perceivable through their socialization on new members when they enter the organization.

In the past Stanica expanded its workforce organically. To become a working member of Stanica, individuals had to start by volunteering for the organization. In this first phase, potential new members slowly acquired and learnt the tacit culture of Stanica, and tried to reproduce it in practice hem. At the same time, other members could judge and evaluate the affinity of a person with the organization. After a certain period of time, volunteers could express their interest in working in the organization, filling vacancies or developing new projects. The proposal of new projects was also supported by a structured research of resources: new projects required the generation of additional resources for the organization. New members also constructed their roles in the organization on the basis of their personality and their work interests.

In the last years, this approach has been partially remodeled. The positions molded around some long time members of Stanica has been filled by calling directly some people orbiting around the organization, like artists, friends or volunteers. In these cases of direct entrance to substitute an established member, new members didn't take part in the process of experiential learning through volunteering, therefore entering the organization without having interiorized its way of working. As we will see in the discussion of the Nová Synagóga project, this lack of interiorization generated the emergence of specific organizing issues.

4.2 Mains d'œuvres: history, practices, organization

4.2.1 Overview of the history of Mains d'œuvres

In 1998 three organizations joined forces in the northern suburbs of Paris to create a cultural centre focused on artistic and civic creativity. The two main organizations were Trans Europe Halles and Usines Ephemeres, mobilized respectively by F.Bo. and C.P.. The third organization, Europe 99, guided by V.P., took part in the development of the centre, but had a limited role in the following years.

The organizations and their coordinators were already well known in the french and parisian context. Usines Ephemeres, an association created by C.P. at the end of the 1980s, focused on the reuse of abandoned factories and warehouses through art interventions. After a few small sized projects, from 1990 to 1998 they managed the “Hôpital Ephemere” project, creating a 15.000 m² centre for artistic production in an abandoned hospital (Lextrait, 2001). Financially, Usines Ephemeres aimed at generating sustainable projects able to self-generate revenue. Artists themselves contributed monthly to the financial sustainability of the spaces, with a common and shared responsibility, avoiding the “infantilization” of the artist generated by subventions (Lextrait, 2001).

Trans Europe Halles is the european network of citizen-initiated cultural centres (as discussed in chapter 1). The experience of F.Bo. was not limited to this organization. In the 1980s she was among the founders of Confort Moderne, a cultural centre in Poitiers. The cultural centre was one of the first “cultural brownfields/friche” in France, promoting a vision of art as a practice open to every citizen, not just artists. A few years after its establishment Confort Moderne became a member of Trans Europe Halles. At the beginning of the 1990s F.Bo. took the position of coordinator of Trans Europe Halles. In this role, she shaped several aspects of the network: she developed its governance structure and expanded its membership to eastern and southern europe. During her tenure, the network increased its budget and created the first paid positions in the coordination office.

F.Bo. and C.P. shared the goal of supporting artists, and wanted to create a cultural centre after their previous experiences. In 1998 C.P. found an abandoned building in St-Ouen, owned by the municipality. The building was a former Valeo recreational facility, with a total surface of around 4000 m².

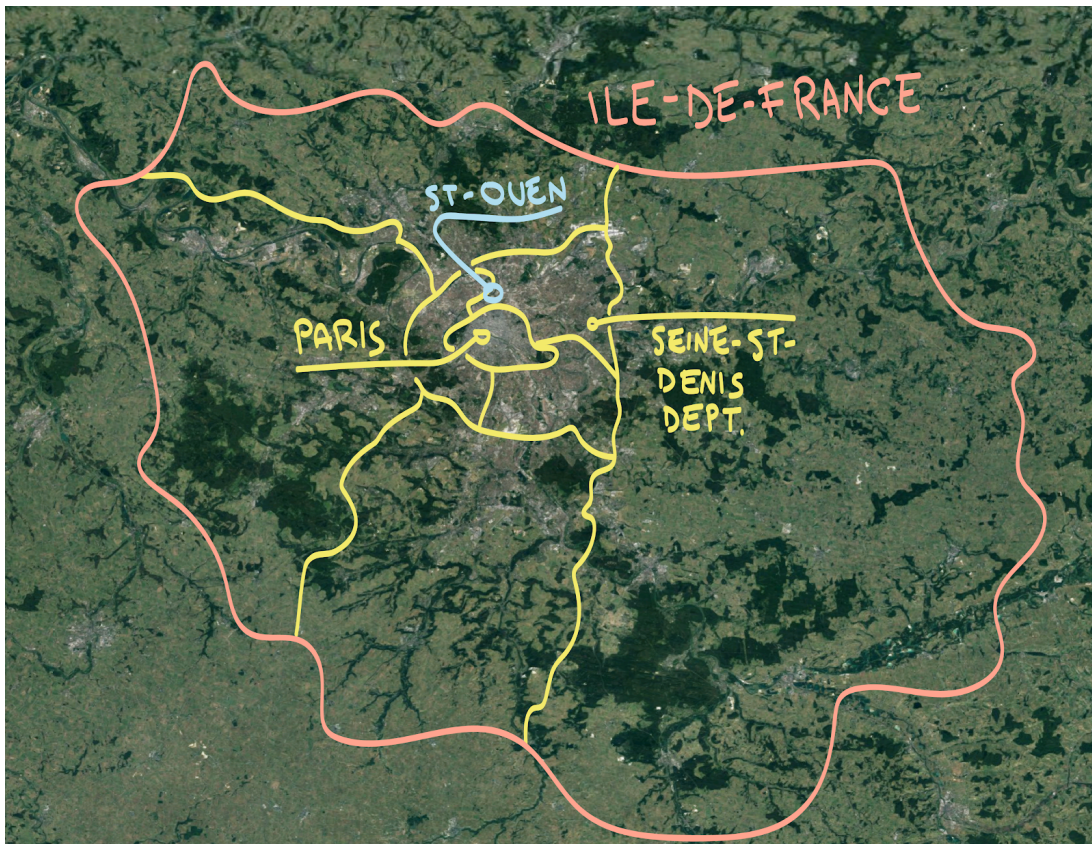


Figure 4.13 - Location of St-Ouen in the Ile-de-France
Elaboration of the author from Google Maps

The municipality, controlled by a communist majority, negotiated with the initiators of the project. The municipality previously refused all the proposals of artistic uses of the space. In this case, the approach of Trans Europe Halles and Usines Ephemeres was instead perceived to be well integrated in the cultural policies of the municipality and beneficial to the local context (Lextrait, 2001). The municipality appreciated the development of services for local residents, the synergies this new centre could stimulate with local public cultural institutions, the assistance they would offer to artists in residence, and the expansion of the cultural offer to local youngsters and innovative actors. Furthermore, they offered to pay a commercial rent to use the building. As a result, the municipality agreed to support the project.

The notoriety and reputation of the initiators helped them attract investors to kickstart the project. The Caisse des dépôts, a public financial institution, offered a donation to cover one year of expenses of the centre. F.Bo. and C.P. also successfully obtained the support of other public institutions for the renovation of the building, like the Seine-St-Denis department, the Ile-de-France region, the Ministry of culture, and private foundations. In May 1999 they organized a roundtable with these organizations to present the project.

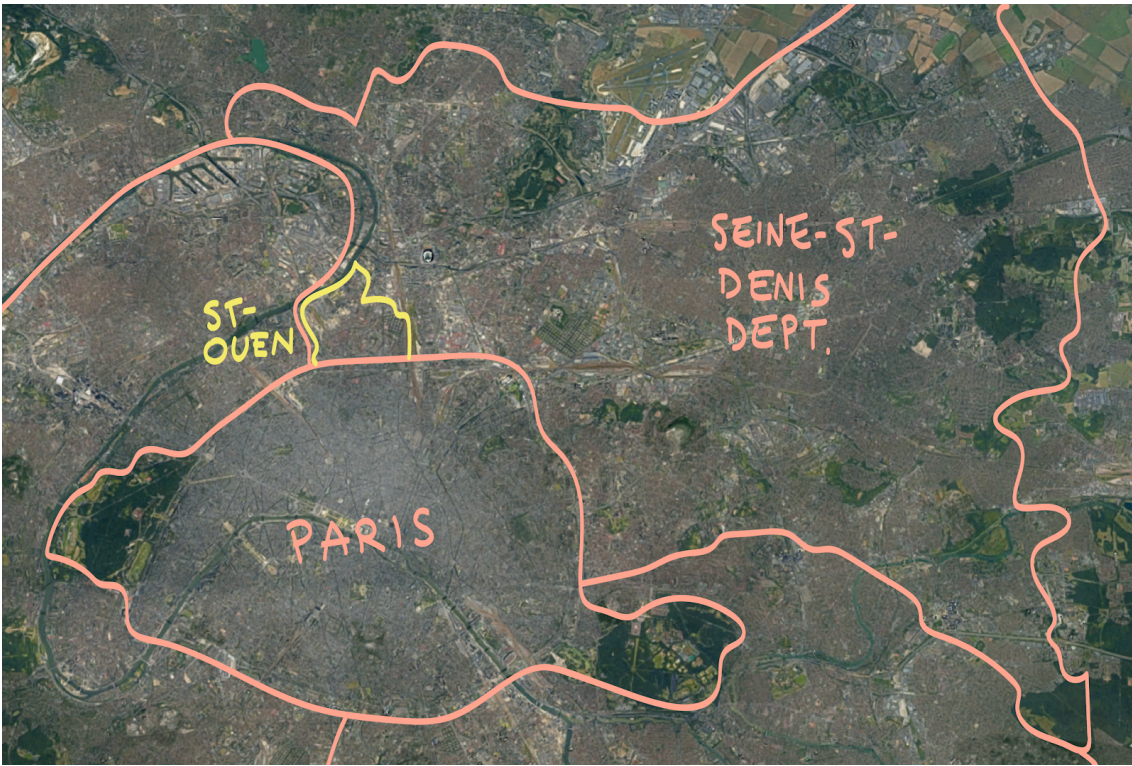


Figure 4.14 - Location of St-Ouen in relation to Paris and Seine-St-Denis department

Elaboration of the author from Google Maps



Figure 4.15 - Location of Mains d'œuvres in St-Ouen

Elaboration of the author from Google Maps

With an initial capital of 2.5 Million Francs (around 380.000 €) gathered from these public institutions, and 1.5 Millions (around 230.000 €) of loans with the bank (with the guarantee of the municipality), in September 1999 they initiated the refurbishment of the building. Coming from the experiences of Confort Moderne and Hôpital Éphémère, they followed all building regulations.

Adopting an hands-on approach - focused on the direct reuse of spaces - the initiators avoided major architectural transformations. They integrated materials from previous projects of Usines Ephemeres in the building, and relied on self-construction. This approach allowed the reduction of costs: with total expenses around 600.000 €, the initial minimal renovation came at a cost of 150 € per square meter, considerably less than market prices. In the following 20 years, they would continue investing in the improvement and maintenance of the building, for a total of 4 million euros.

In January 2001 Mains d'œuvres was opened to the public. The space was carried by four joint associations - Usines Éphémères, Trans Europe Halles, Europe 99, and the newly created Mains d'œuvres association. The name of the centre comes from the pluralization of the french word “Main-d'œuvre”, which literally means “workforce” or “labor”, but also bears connections with the handcraft and DIY world.



Figure 4.16 - Exterior of Mains D'œuvres. Author: Vinciane Verguethen

Mains d'œuvres focuses on the development of citizen and artistic creativity. The centre tackles this mission through different types of activities, like artistic diffusion, artistic education and artistic residences. The organization offers tutoring and cheap spaces for projects of artists and citizens, organizes artistic educational and professional courses for the cultural sector, and proposes a multi-disciplinary cultural and artistic program. The center operates in the fields of music, visual arts, numeric arts, performing arts and arts and society.

Instead of hosting established artists and projects, the centre promotes emerging artists, offering working spaces and opportunities for professionalization. Furthermore, renewing the approach that was inaugurated in the 1970s and 1980s by the Nouveaux Territoires de l'Art mouvement, the centre promotes artistic reflections on the relationship between art, society and territory: art is not just an end to be pursued, but also an instrument for social transformation. The centre always tried to have a strong connection with its local context, with multiple different strategies and approaches.

Since its beginnings, the centre was animated by the figures of C.P. and F.Bo.. The two embodied two different approaches to cultural action. C.P. was more commercial and focused on the practical side. F.Bo. was instead - and still is - a dreamer, inspiring people to support her projects voluntarily and with an optimistic approach. Regardless of these differences, the two were able, through their previous experiences, to establish a fruitful collaboration.

The approaches of the two figures are visible in the activities of the centre. C.P. focused on the creation and establishment of the music studios in the basement, which bring constant sources of revenue to the cultural centre. F.Bo. instead took the responsibility of coordinating the activities of centre, keeping Mains d'œuvres on track with their initial vision.

Having successfully established the centre and its activities, in 2008 F.Bo. left the position of director of Mains d'œuvres to start a new project in Le Havre. C.P. had already started creating a new space with Usines Ephemeres, called Point Ephemere, in Paris. He left for good in 2011.

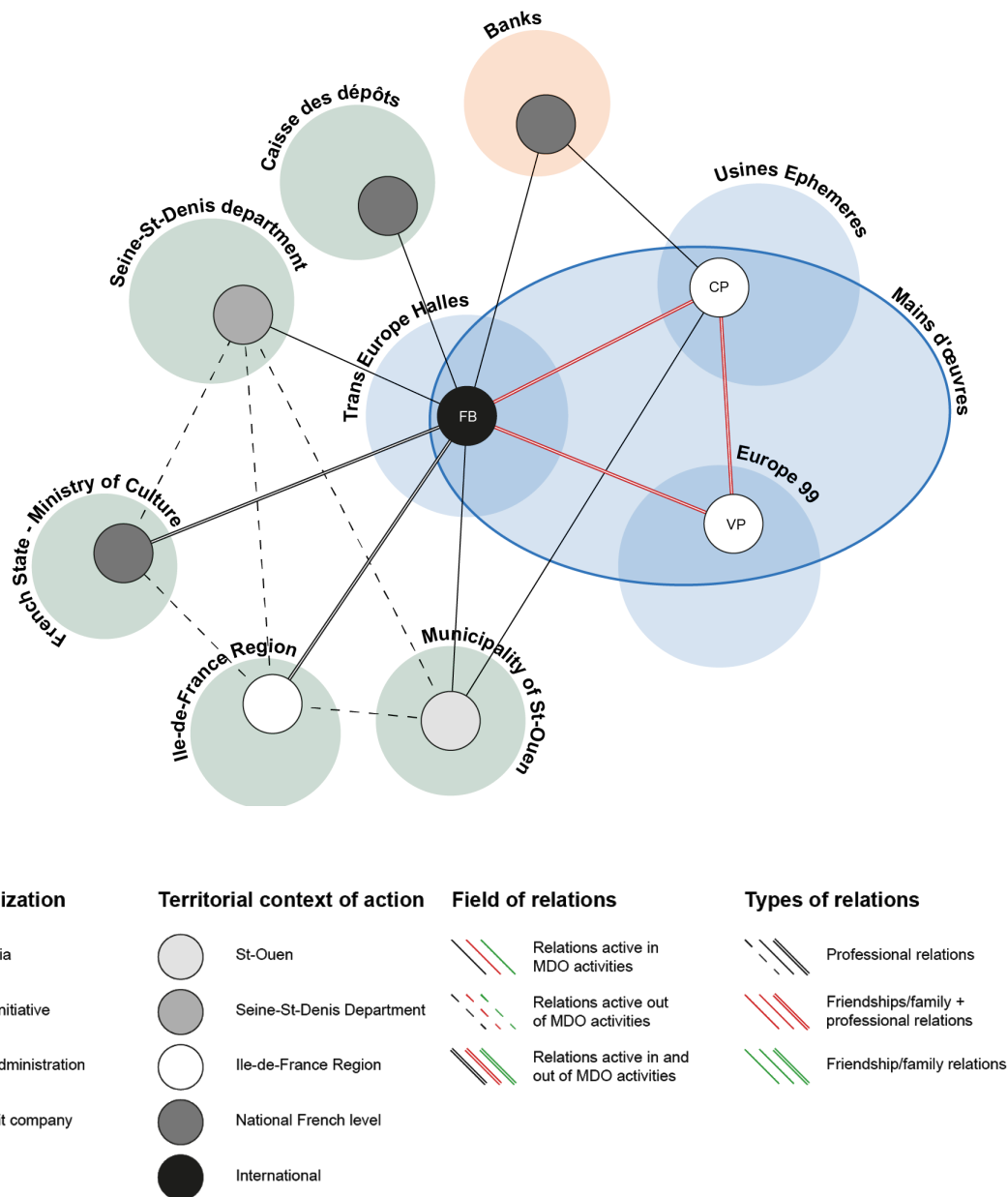


Figure 4.17- Interorganizational network of Mains d'œuvres (2001) - Elaboration of the author

F.Bo. held the position of President of the association, and they hired a new director, CDW, to take over. The new director continued and perpetuated the cultural dimension of Mains d'œuvres, but was fundamentally different from F.Bo.: while F.Bo. was an experienced and senior authority, with an international relevance in the field of creative brownfields, de Wit was a youngster, trying to fill the big shoes of her predecessor and lacking her legitimacy.

Over the years, Mains d'œuvres established links and collaborations with multiple other organizations and institutions. In the 1990s and 2000s in France this type of cultural centres was seen even by the Ministry of culture as an interesting experimentation for their connection of art, society and territorial action (Lextraît, 2001).

Since its beginnings, Mains d'œuvres started to acquire funding and support from public and private institutions: the Ministry of culture, the Department of Seine-St-Denis, the Ile-de-France region, the city of Paris (because of its proximity with the city and its services to Parisian artists), the Plaine Commune intercommunality. These institutions orient their support to cultural actors on the basis of their cultural policies: the projects and activities managed by cultural actors have to fit into the financing axes of institutions, and to respect their basic operational regulations (timing, reporting, etc.). The funding agreements are officialized through pluriannual conventions, offering a degree of stability. Nonetheless, the reduction of these income streams in the last years has been a problem for Mains d'œuvres. The public administrations supporting Mains d'œuvres are included in the governance of the association (see figure 4.18). Every few months the director and the president meet these public partners to review the budget of the association, its future evolution and the potential sources of support. In these occasions, public partners can ask Mains d'œuvres justifications for certain expenses, verify the regularity of some project and voice the disapproval for other actions.

The relationship between the municipality and the association Mains d'œuvres swung between collaboration and conflict over the years, in particular regarding the use of the building of the centre.

The municipality of St-Ouen originally granted a long-term lease of the building. During the 2000s the Communist majority - ruling the city for decades - asked to review the long-term lease, proposing a simplified form of contract granting them the possibility to take possession of the building after the expiration date of the contract. In exchange, the municipality provided Mains d'œuvres additional funding to cover part of the rent expenses.

In 2012, a fire in a neighboring building extended to Mains d'œuvres, causing serious damages to the structure. The repairs were responsibility of the owner of the building, the municipality. Instead Mains d'œuvres had to deal itself with the reconstruction investing their own resources. The fire also caused a reduction of revenue for the association, since it caused the temporary closure of ateliers usually rented to artists.

In 2014, the center-right candidate William Delannoy won the municipal elections. The new mayor swiftly cut the municipal grants to Mains d'œuvres, accusing it of being an elitist space, attended only by parisians and without positive impacts on St-Ouen.

This political shift, combined with financial difficulties, opened a period of political, financial and organizational crisis for Mains d'œuvres. They faced at the same time the risk of losing their venue and going bankrupt. Between 2013 and 2015, Mains d'œuvres saw a reduction of its revenue by hundreds of

thousands of euros. Their annual budget was placed under “Redressement judiciaire”, requiring a restructuring plan for the association.

Since 2014 Mains d'œuvres engaged in a confrontation with the Mayor regarding the rent and the grants. The lack of municipal grants led Mains d'œuvres to stop paying rent, generating an increasing debt with the municipality. During these engagements, the municipality agreed to Mains d'œuvres request of reducing the value of rent. On the other side, the Mayor expressed the will of taking possession of the building after the expiry of the contract in december 2017, to host the local conservatory. The confrontation was temporarily solved at the beginning of 2015 when Mains d'œuvres signed a protocol with the municipality: the municipality would cancel the debt accrued by Mains d'œuvres, which in exchange agreed to leave the building at the end of the contract.

In 2015 the association opted for a change at the position of director. Mains d'œuvres hired J.B., who drafted a new 10-year plan for the “Redressement judiciaire”. She engaged in a legal dispute with the Mayor to avoid the implementation of the protocol, arguing that the association was forced into signing it because of its financial problems. They are currently in the middle of a legal and mediation dispute with the municipality.

To avoid the departure of Mains d'œuvres from its venue, she also promoted actions and projects aiming at expressing the value of Mains d'œuvres for the community of St-Ouen. For example, the association launched the Momo, a school of music based on collective classes, primarily oriented towards the kids of the neighborhood.

Recognizing the volatile situation in St-Ouen, since 2016 Mains d'œuvres, and in particular the director, have been working on a contingency plan for the cultural centre. J.B. and the team developed the idea of a cultural centre on the move, “a venue without a venue”.

From this idea, they started being more involved in the cities surrounding St-Ouen primarily in the Seine-St-Denis department. They developed projects and proposals for new cultural spaces linked to Mains d'œuvres. The Espace Imaginaire in St-Denis project was one of the first projects (see section 5.2), followed by others in Nanterre and Montreuil.

These processes allowed a progressive reflection on the value of the tools, materials, knowledges present in Mains d'œuvres, that could be shared with other local contexts. J.B. launched therefore a cooperative, called La Main 93.0, to develop processes of “cultural engineering”. This cooperative has two aims: creating a system of mutualisation and support across existing cultural actors in the Seine-St-Denis department; supporting the creation of new cultural spaces - initiated both by public authorities and by citizens - exploiting the skills present in the network.

This cooperative aims at mutualizing a broad range of services. These activities - like organizing the rentals of spaces for companies or external organizers, managing the restaurants, etcetera - are not directly linked to the mission of the cultural spaces, and require professionals that each centre could not fully sustain by itself. By mutualizing the salaries these professional figures they aim at developing new services and improving the existing ones across venues.

Regarding the support to new experiences, the cooperative also aims at formalizing a service that Mains d'œuvres has been providing for years - through unofficial and informal channels - to organizations aiming at starting similar experiences. On average, every week they present their space to three institutions or organizations willing learn from the Mains d'œuvres model: the creation of a mutualistic platform will help the association capitalize on its know-how.

In 2018 the organization faced another financial crisis, after their project for the European Social Fund was not funded. They faced a 58000 € deficit, and they had to fire three employees of the association.

This financial crisis, combined with the ongoing dispute with the mayor, led to the opening of two processes of intentional change in the organization. Since the 2018 fall, Mains d'œuvres is then developing two parallel processes, for the short-term and long-term stability of the centre. The first was referred to as “restructuration”: after the dismissal of the two employees (both of them head of their departments), the organization is adapting in the short term with rapid operative changes to replace them. It is developed through incremental adaptations, without collective deliberations.

The “refoundation” of Mains d'œuvres is the second process. It refers to the intentional process of collective formulation of a new vision of the cultural centre, from its way of organizing to its business model. The aim of this process - developed with open discussions and involvement of the different stakeholders and categories of people involved in the cultural centre - is to collectively define a version of Mains d'œuvres faithful to its origins and spirit - connecting art, society and territory - in the context of reduced public subventions.

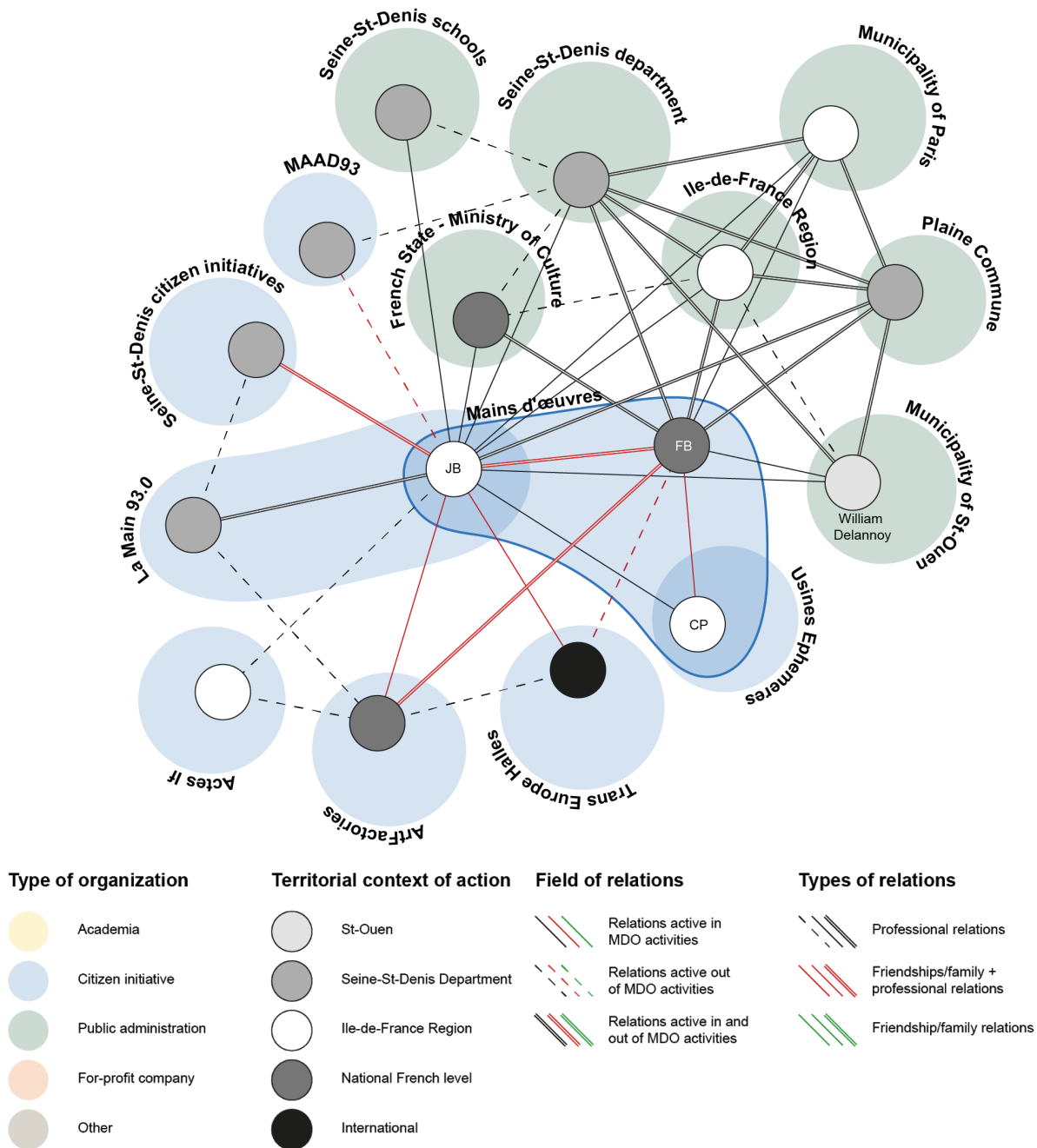


Figure 4.18 - Interorganizational network of Mains d'œuvres (2019) - Elaboration of the author

Beyond its operative activities, Mains d'œuvres is also part of several local, national and international networks. Trans Europe Halles still is the main source of international connections. Artfactories/Autrepart, a french network of “friches” developed by F.Bo., has always been close to Mains d'œuvres and its perspectives. “Actes if” is the network of independent cultural spaces in the Ile-de-France region, counting over 30 members. Actes if facilitates the exchange of knowledge and skills across the members. “MAAD93” is instead the network of cultural operators in the field of music in the

Seine-St-Denis department. It gathers over 20 structures - institutional and associative - working on the education, practice, recording and diffusion of contemporary music.

Following a judiciary decision in July 2019, in October 2019 Mains d'œuvres was evicted from its building by police. The action was requested by the Mayor of St-Ouen. The organization is currently without a building, and is launching a public campaign to pressure the Mayor to allow them back in. At the moment the organization has discontinued its main activities.

4.2.2 Organizing (in) Mains d'œuvres

As with Stanica, we can explore the current operations of Mains d'œuvres starting from the uses of the spaces of the Mains d'œuvres venue. The building spreads over a surface of around 4000 m².

The basement of the building hosts 19 music rehearsal studios and 1 recording studio. The studios range between 28 and 50 m², hosting different styles of music. Bands and artists can rent the studios by the hour, month or year. These spaces are open all year long, and are equipped with the basic technical infrastructure.

The ground floor is the level of entrance of the cultural centre, where most of its public spaces are located. The café/restaurant is positioned in the corner of the building, surrounded by its service spaces (kitchen, bar, warehouse). It is a space open for multiple uses: in its everyday rhythms, it is open from morning to evening, serving meals and drinks. It hosts also people working in the building (from Mains d'œuvres or artists) eating their home cooked food. On special occasions, the café is used for artistic performances and presentations. It is the beating heart of the cultural centre.

The ground floor also hosts spaces directly linked to artistic and cultural activities. Next to the café, the concert hall, with a maximum capacity of 280 people, hosts events on a weekly basis. Events include art performances, music concerts, screenings, rehearsals. The dance studio hosts rehearsals of dance companies in residence, with a surface of 100 m². The exposition space hosts every kind of event, from ephemeral art exhibitions to performances, from concerts to presentations. It is the most multifunctional space of the venue.



Figure 4.19 - The café of Mains d'œuvres

Source: www.princessepetite.over-blog.com/2019/09/mains-d-oeuvres-site-culturel-a-saint-ouen.html

The Superette is also located at the ground floor. This space is a “proximity art gallery”, aiming at facilitating the engagement of citizens with creative work, and supporting the development of their creative professional skills. This space is directly accessible from the street.

The first floor is used for public and semi-public activities. The Gymnase, the largest space in the building - being able to host over 500 people - is used for events, parties, performances. Its lack of full security requirements limits its full use for crowded activities.

At the same floor, several ateliers and studios host the artists in residence. Each room is usually shared by different artists, and workstations can be shared as well.

A large meeting room and small rehearsal room are located in the first floor. They are used for educational and artistic activities, both by the members of the Mains d'œuvres association or by the artists in residence.

The second floor is the smallest in the building. It hosts a small meeting room, the Star Trek room and the coordination office. The small meeting room is used for the weekly team meetings, the institutional meetings and other official activities. The Star Trek room is an iconic conference and event room with fixed seating, hosting all the general assemblies and public events requiring a medium-sized attendance.

The coordination office is the place of work for most of the employees and civic services of the Mains d'œuvres association. In this office are hosted the parts of the organization whose work is primarily focused on administrative, coordination or curatorial work. Other nodes of the organization, more linked to the maintenance of the building and its direct set-up are spread in the building. The music department is localized in the basement, where they provide assistance for the music studios.

Being located in a high density neighborhood, Mains d'œuvres originally didn't have outdoor spaces. The 2010 a fire destroyed part of the external ateliers, leaving a portion of the lot empty. In 2017 Mains d'œuvres proposed to reuse these spaces creating the Cour des Myrtilles, a "common" managed by the association and the neighbors. The space was designed, built and managed through participatory strategies, encouraging the co-management by citizens.

The association Mains d'œuvres is today the only organization managing the cultural centre. Usines Ephemeres, Trans Europe Halles and Europe 99 took off after the consolidation of the organization.

The 2001 budget - the first of the fully operating venue and shared by the four organizations - reported expenses for around 10 million french francs (around 1,6 million euros), with a loss of 23000 francs (around 3600 euros). Staff costs consisted of 60% of the expenses, for over 6 million francs (around 900.000 euros).

At the time, public grants (from different Ministries, the Region, Department) provided a total of 7 million francs (around 1 million euros), around 70% of the income of the newly established cultural centre. Other relevant sources of income were the rental of spaces and music studios.

In the following years, the budget of the organization fluctuated around the figure of 1,5 million euros. In 2017 - the last official budget available - the association balance settled at 1,32 million euros.

As of 2017, public sources of funding cover more than half of the annual budget of Mains d'œuvres. The rental of music studios is another relevant source of revenue, along with the bar and tickets.

According to some members of the organization, these proportions are quite rare in the french context of artistic and cultural spaces. Usually, these spaces are willing to be completely dependent from public institutions, without a clear effort (like the music studios) to self-generate relevant quotas of revenue.

At the same time, these public grants have been progressively reduced over the years, and no alternative and steady source of funding has yet been identified. This shift is exposing the fragility of this economic model, that the organization is trying to reformulate in the next years.

The reformulation of the business model is also focusing on the massive weight of Staff costs on the budget of the Association. The already mentioned departure of three senior members of the organization

at the end of 2018, while providing a short-term economic relief to the annual balance, fits into the reorganization of Mains d'œuvres. Since the organization assists artists in the development and production of their projects, production costs are another relevant source of expenditure

MDO Revenue Structure	2017	%
Project grants	€ 363.000,00	27,50%
Operating grants	€ 323.400,00	24,50%
Music studios	€ 198.000,00	15,00%
Membership fees	€ 66.000,00	5,00%
Tickets	€ 66.000,00	5,00%
Bar and restaurant	€ 66.000,00	5,00%
Investment grants	€ 52.800,00	4,00%
Professional education & theatre atelier	€ 52.800,00	4,00%
Rentals and events	€ 52.800,00	4,00%
PAF & coworking	€ 26.400,00	2,00%
Philanthropy	€ 26.400,00	2,00%
Employment aid	€ 26.400,00	2,00%
Total annual revenue	€ 1.320.000,00	100,00%

Table 4.2 - Mains d'œuvres Revenue structure in 2017

Source: Mains d'œuvres Journal d'activités 2017 - Elaboration of the author

Mains d'œuvres - Revenue 2017



Figure 4.20 - Mains d'œuvres Revenue structure in 2017 -

Source: Mains d'œuvres Journal d'activités 2017 - Elaboration of the author

MDO Expenses	2017	%
Human Resources	€ 739.200,00	56,00%
Technical costs	€ 132.000,00	10,00%
Administrative costs	€ 79.200,00	6,00%
Project dissemination	€ 66.000,00	5,00%
Project production	€ 250.800,00	19,00%
Communication	€ 26.400,00	2,00%
Purchases studios	€ 13.200,00	1,00%
Purchases bar	€ 13.200,00	1,00%
Total annual Expenses	€ 1.320.000,00	100,00%

Table 4.3 - Mains d'œuvres Expense structure in 2017

Source: Mains d'œuvres Journal d'activités 2017 - Elaboration of the author

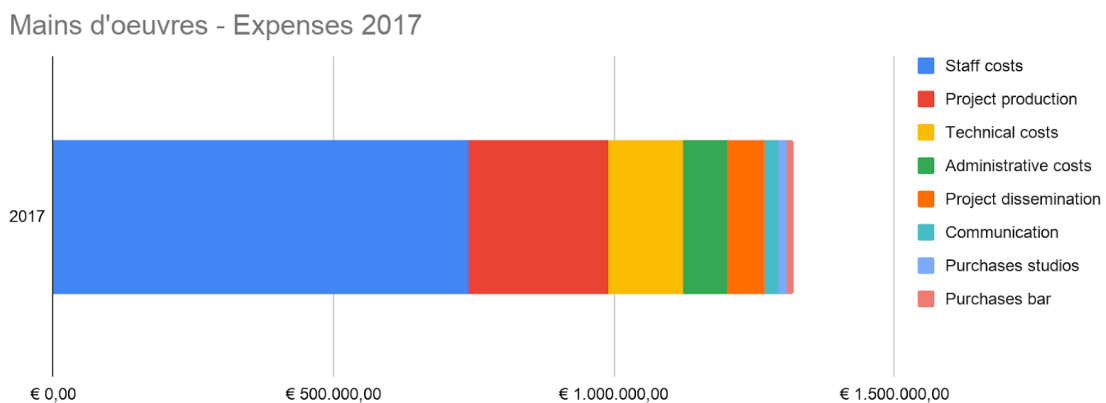


Figure 4.21 - Mains d'œuvres Expense structure in 2017

Source: Mains d'œuvres Journal d'activités 2017 - Elaboration of the author

Organizing processes in the Mains d'œuvres are more composed and complex than in Stanica. We described Stanica as an horizontal platform where individual actors organize more or less autonomously, and where they eventually have to coordinate with peer members of the organization. Organizational processes have short careers, and are developed mostly by one or two members of the organization.

In Stanica the membership statuses and roles are blurry, and are left to evolution and continuous determination. Roles are linked to the activity of single individuals, and are only marginally part of intermediate categories like “board of directors”, “direction office”, “technical staff”, etcetera. The only exceptions are the three macro-categories of “volunteers”, “European civil service volunteers” and

“members of the organization”. As we mentioned, this last category includes individuals who are not even working anymore for Stanica, but are linked to it by a strong familiar relationship.

Mains d'œuvres is instead more structured and rigid in the definition of the roles in the organization, even if - as we will see - this rigid roles do not always limit the activities of role-taking of members of the organization.

Organizational processes are developed with complex interactions between specialized members of the organization, belonging to different categories of roles. In the organizational structure of Mains d'œuvres - defined by the statute of the association and the internal operational dynamics - we can identify five categories of roles: members of the “Conseil d'administration” (CA), members of the association, employees of Mains d'œuvres, Civil service employees, and volunteers. These categories often overlap, but in other instances have rigid boundaries. Each of these different types of members is prescribed with different roles and responsibilities, that have been consolidated and reviewed over time.

The CA is the board of directors of the association. It has the role of formulating the strategic decisions of the association, approving the budget, naming the president and supporting the director.

The “Conseil” is elected every two years by the members of the association. Its components are the founders of the association and other members of the association interested in supporting its development. Usually, they are resident artists, local neighbors, and also relevant artistic figures, who devote their energy to support the organization. It is composed of a maximum of 20 members.

As in many organizations instituting themselves as associations, in Mains d'œuvres the CA is considered to be the ultimate decision-making body. It has full authority on every aspect of the organization, from strategic to operational.

The members of the association are defined as the individuals and organizations sharing the explicit values and goals of the Mains d'œuvres. In practice, the members of the association are the groups considered fundamental for Mains d'œuvres: the artists working in residence in the venue, and the neighbors (and, more generally, the people inhabiting this territory). Since the beginning the philosophy of F.Bo. and C.P. focused on the inclusion of ordinary citizens in the creative processes - with the breaking of the distinction creator/public - and on the responsabilization of the artists including them in the management of the space. These groups are the “publics” for which the cultural centre came into existence, and for which it operates.

Since the foundation of the cultural centre, the relationship with these core publics has been mediated by the presence of employees of the organization. These employees have the role of implementing strategic decisions and executing operative instructions of the CA in the different sectors of Mains d'œuvres.

As of spring 2019, before the “refoundation” of Mains d'œuvres, the organization was composed of around 20 employees. The team was structured across five different artistic poles and three additional supporting poles. The artistic poles were: Art and society, Performing arts, Music, Digital arts, Visual arts. The support poles were the administrative office, the communication office and the technical office.

The artistic poles mainly had the double role of supporting the artists in residence, both in their artistic productions and in the organization of public presentation of their artistic products. Their help to artists consists in the organization of their schedules in the shared spaces of the venue, the research of sources of funding, the organization of public events. They also programmed artistic events with partner organizations, hiring external or internal artists.

The supporting poles take instead a secondary role in their relation with artists, focusing on providing support to the artistic poles in the development of their activities. The technical pole, for example, focuses on the maintenance of the building, the construction of temporary installations for artistic performances, and in general the safety of activities in the centre. They interact directly with residents in relation to their technical needs, not for general assistance like the artistic poles.

The role of each employee of the organization is defined by a specific job description and a weekly amount of working hours. They are tasked with specific operations, defined in their contracts.

The director of Mains d'œuvres is positioned between the CA and the team of employees (and subsequently volunteers and Civil service employees). Even if the CA has the legal authority over the association, the director is the final decision-maker on the operational aspects of the organization. She has the role of guiding strategies and plans for the organization, both on the artistic and financial side.

The “Civil service” employees are usually youngsters who just finished or who are about to finish their university career, and who apply to the french “civil service” program, spending ten months in Mains d'œuvres. In this category we can also include the interns spending their time in the organization as part of their curricular internships.

Civil service employees are paid a symbolic sum for their presence in the organization. Their workload is also legally limited. Each year, around 20-25 interns and civil service employees are welcomed in the organization, matching the number of employees.

Mains d'œuvres also welcomes other volunteers, like local neighbors willing to invest their time in the association. They usually take a limited role in the organization of activities. Even if their material contribution is limited, their presence is considered vital for the organization.

Beyond this simple description, these categories of roles are linked with normative ways of engaging with Mains d'œuvres. The members of the CA, members of the association and volunteers (three categories who often overlap) engage with the operations of Mains d'œuvres as activists.

On the other side, according to the legal instruments put in place over the years (job descriptions, working hours, etc) employees and Civil service volunteers should engage with Mains d'œuvres as professionals, simply performing their job description and implementing the decisions of their superiors.

Observing the operations of the organization and listening to the stories of its employees, we can understand that while this approach is in theory required, in practice was never practiced. Since the initial phases of refurbishment of the cultural centres, employees have dedicated extra time to the cultural centre, engaging as activists for its survival. Some employees spent up to 70 hours a week in the venue.

Civil services go through selection processes as in any other french association, and should have assisting positions with limited responsibility. Nonetheless, after the departure of three heads of artistic poles, Civil services had to take responsibility of several projects and events.

Nonetheless, while the formal dimension of the organization prescribes these aspects (mainly for legal reasons) the organizational culture pushes employees and civil services to do an “extra mile”, becoming activists in the organization, by working longer hours and taking responsibilities beyond their assignments.

This voluntaristic and activist dimension embedded in the culture of the organization is demonized by some, and normalized by others.

The ones criticizing this dimension argue that over the years this dimension led to the departure of several professionals who grew in Mains d'œuvres and were not retained for lack of funding or lack of horizons of professional development. Furthermore, the continuous push to dedicate extra time to work has the effect of depriving employees of a life out of the organization, leading to multiple cases of burnout.

Recognizing the limits of this model, in the last years they succeeded in introducing the official and formal job requirements, like legal working hours and salary grids, and retaining some employees for more years.

On the other side, the ones normalizing it argue that in associations the militant dimension can never be removed, and therefore a job in Mains d'œuvres will always require flexibility and devotion to the cause. For them, it would be better to spend maximum five years working for the association, in order to avoid the establishment of routines and an ordinary dimension in the cultural centre. They recognize that

Mains d'œuvres couldn't survive without this "extra mile" work by the employees, because it would require extra expenses on salaries.

However, the militant dimension of Mains d'œuvres is not the result of a voluntary decision of the employees and the civil service employees, since the organization normatively promotes a specific behaviour. In particular, people working in the organization has been continuously pressured to be more flexible by superiors (in particular the director) to increase working efforts. These calls to engage with the activities of the organization in a specific way, by a figure charged with authority, limit the freedom of the employees to choose if and how to dedicate their extra time to the association.

Concluding, this confusion between professionalism and militantism is source of internal distress for the organization.

Today, the "refoundation" of Mains d'œuvres aims at renewing the relationship between the team of employees and the members of the association, in particular the artists. The goal is to go beyond a position of service delivery from the team of employees to the artists, with the responsabilization the artists themselves.

This refoundation is part of an effort towards a "shared governance" of Mains d'œuvres. Since 2015 the organization has tried to shift its operations towards a participatory model, with the involvement of employees and members of the association in the decision-making process. Nonetheless, the concept of "shared governance" is in itself object of discussion, as its interpretations are diverse in the organization. On one side - in particular from the employees - the "shared governance" model is intended as an horizontal decision-making process, where final decisions are taken collectively through these processes. On the other side, some members of the CA argue that the "shared governance" only provides additional informations to the director and the CA, which are the actual decision-makers.

The two interpretations of the concept are ultimately rooted in different theories of authority in the organization. The first interpretation links authority to the collectives working in the organization; for the second interpretation the authority resides in the formally responsible associative bodies. The lack of clarifications about this concept in the organization has lead to misunderstandings and conflicting expectations.

4.3 Citizen initiatives as institutions

Stanica Žilina-Zariecie and Mains d'œuvres are two long-existing citizen-initiated cultural centres developed over the last two decades by groups of artists and citizens. Their description in the previous sections provided an idea of the complexity of their actions - both in their historical evolution and in their present operations.

Following the theoretical reflections and the first research question formulated in section 2.2, these cases allow us to reflect on the eventual presence of institutional dimensions in these initiatives. Institutions have cognitive, normative, and practical dimensions, which inform their subjects on the performance of specific and proper actions. In the first subsection I focus on the internal and organizational operations of the initiatives to assess the presence of this typization, discussing the origin of these patterns and the perception of internal actors. Following existing theories on the difference between public administrations and citizen initiatives, I discuss if and how the cases suggest the presence of these or other differences.

Going beyond their internal organizing processes, I relate their operations to their social context in order to assess their effects and roles. Drawing from the definition of these citizen initiatives as “community and citizen actions developed or initiated out of governmental control that generate effects on public problems by means of the very action itself” (see section 2.2.1), I assess what effects they generate on which public problems.

Continuing the reflections on direct action and public problems, I also assess if and how these initiatives have contributed to the strengthening of direct action in a shared repertoire of logics of action for the treatment of problematic situations and the production of public goods (diverging from protest and demand (Vitale, 2007)).

4.3.1 The institutionalization of internal operations

From an analytical standpoint, a definitive judgement on the eventual presence of an institutional dimension in these long-existing citizen initiatives has to focus more on the cognitive processes of the members of the organization than with their actual actions. We can assert the presence of an institutional dimension not just if all the members perform the actions prescribed for their roles, but if they orient towards said actions (consciously or unconsciously) as a result of normative institutional pushes.

While we look at the cognitive dimension of institutions, we should also consider them in their enactment in action. This consideration allows us to reveal the evolution of institutions: even if we look at

habitualized and routinized actions, deviations potentially lie in the horizon of the situation (Lemieux, 2018: 42). Furthermore, we have to consider that concrete actions are not always the result of single institutional normative forces, but they might stem from several different institutions. The members of the initiative could therefore perceive multiple normative pushes by different institutional dimensions, constructing their operations mediating between them. Institutions exist therefore in the cognition of actors, and are continuously reproduced and shifted as they are translated in action.

In Stanica we can observe the presence of an institutional dimension in relation to the spheres of autonomy of the organization: the “reciprocal typifications of habitualized actions by types of actors” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966: 72) perceived by the members of the organization does not insist on an operative level, where it would pressure towards the performance of specific actions in specific ways. Rather, it regulates the autonomous determination of actions and operations in the general framework of dialogue and critique of the team. The institutional dimension of Stanica therefore institutes autonomous action, rather than prescribing specific actions; the operative routines shift and evolve as people enter and exit the organization: consequently, most of the operative knowledge in Stanica is attached to each single member of the organization, rather than being socialized at institutional level. This way members experience higher levels of autonomy in their own work, having freedom of experimentation. At the same time, the operative knowledge developed by each member is not socialized and shared.

The different roles in the organization are not linked with the prescription of different ways of performing autonomy, rather they are associated with different fields of operations where each member focuses on, and upon which they have control. The fields of operation can evolve as each member develops personal projects in the organization. The major exception to this structure are the founders of Truc Spherique, who operate as managers of projects and of the organization : their “materials” of action are not just their projects, but also the operations of the other members of the organization.

The institutional dimension of Stanica is mostly the result of the consolidation of organically-evolved operations. The association emerged and still operates in a thin institutional environment: public administrations, foundations, third sector organizations were being rebuilt in Slovakia in the 1990s and gained stability only in the 2000s. The institutional dimension of Truc Sphérique developed without strong external pressures for isomorphic adaptation from local institutions, receiving instead a weaker support and control by international institutions like Trans Europe Halles and national institutions. As a result, the operations of Stanica do not align with local organizations, institutionalizing instead a self-defined deviation from the norm in their organizing processes and in their construction activities. For instance, they are just one of the very few organizations in the Zilina region operating entirely in english.

Even if marginal, public administrations and their regulations have effects on Stanica, in particular on the financial management of the association. However, these regulations do not affect the core operations of the organization; instead, Stanica developed operations of “translation” between these institutional worlds in order to keep its autonomy. For instance, the renovation of the Synagogue (explored in the fifth chapter) followed regulations on urban transformation only selectively, and as a result the structures lacked for a long time the proper permits. Only now, at the end of the process, they are remedying what could be considered a “building permit violation”, translating their operations into the regulative framework of public administrations.

The possibility of not respecting these norms stems from a somehow anarchist spirit from the founders of Stanica and from the lack of pressure on Stanica from public administrations. Some of these administrations - like the Municipality of Zilina - opted to avoid enforcing regulations as they recognized the value of the activities of the organization. These administrations recognized the fact that, while the lack of enforcement would delegitimize their regulations, their enforcement and subsequent clash with Stanica would generate issues in terms of local political consensus. As a result, they often closed their eyes on what Stanica was doing. Other public administrations, instead, did not apply pressure and control because of a lack of administrative strength.

The institutional dimension of Stanica - in its different material enactments - informs the operations of its members. However, we should acknowledge that they do not internalize or translate it into practice directly or without contestation. Some of them perceive its normative force and formulate critical judgments about it. Over the years, several voices have formulated critiques against the operations of the cultural centre, against its peer-pressure culture of mixture of friendship and work and against the difficulties in learning and revising its operations. Some members choose to operate at the border of the organization, showing loyalty to the cultural centre but avoiding strong critiques to this institutionalized way of operating. Others, instead, have opted to exit the organization out of frustration (Hirschmann, 1970). While the institutional dimension of Stanica has been challenged, its critics have not developed alternative institutions, advancing only weak structural critiques.

In Mains d'œuvres we can instead observe the presence of a struggle between two sets of normative instructions: on one side, an implicit institutionalized activist culture, which pushes individuals towards the trespassing of formal roles and tasks. This culture is increasingly contested by many employees of Mains d'œuvres, who claim instead the need to formalize roles, tasks and to establish boundaries between work and activism. These voices supported the second institutional dimension, based on a structure of formal typifications of roles, associated with specific tasks, responsibilities and ideas of authority, resembling the classic bureaucratic operations of organizations and institutions in the local context. In

this system, the members of the organization receive and perceive specific instructions on the performance of their operations; they receive instructions to relate with other members of the organization on the basis of the relations of authority that exist between them.

The activist institutional dimension results from the history of the founders of the organization, and in particular from F.Bo. It is linked to the network of similar organizations developed in France in the 90s (the “friches” of the “nouveaux territoires de l’art”) and is in particular relevant for their political discourse and their claims of producing social transformation. It presents traits similar to Stanica, as they both are linked to the approach of Trans Europe Halles. Over the years, this approach has been reproduced but also diluted: as founders left their position to managers, the activist and visionary dimension started to lose strength internally.

The formalized institutional dimension has emerged from the isomorphic pressure of the dense interorganizational field (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983) of public administrations with whom Mains d’œuvres has worked with over the years (as explored by literature on the institutionalization of mobilizations (Pruijt, 2003)) and from the internal efforts of some employees to establish this model in order to improve their working conditions. The interorganizational field of public administrations pressured Mains d’œuvres into abiding specific organizational regulations and institutional rules. The influence of this field has been greater in Mains d’œuvres than in Stanica for several reasons. Firstly, because the interorganizational field of public administrations with whom Mains d’œuvres interacts is denser and has a more solid institutional background than the network of organizations linked with Stanica (see Image 4.8 and 4.18). Secondly, because these public administrations have been integrated in the internal governance of the association through conventions and agreements, and they directly provide feedbacks on its internal operations and financial status. Thirdly, because these public administrations have greater reasons to enforce regulations, and minor capacities to bend their frames to assess the public utility of these projects. Fourthly, because differently from Stanica, most of the budget of Mains d’œuvres covers employees’ wages: not abiding a rule and losing a public grant could result in the loss of jobs and employees, not just in the end of an artistic project. Finally, during the dispute with the Mayor of St-Ouen Mains d’œuvres had to reduce any vulnerability to criticism, and was further pushed to abide to all regulations.

This institutional dimension was also supported from within the organization. The employees of Mains d’œuvres saw in greater regulation and bureaucratization a way to improve their working conditions. The activist dimension of the organization, as in Stanica, had as side effects the lack of balance between work and passion, and it led to high burnout rates. Additionally, the low salary and lack of social security discouraged employees to remain in the organization beyond their 20s: Mains d’œuvres was a

formative place, but senior positions were to be pursued elsewhere. As a consequence, the organization continually innovated its operations by changing people but also lost human resources. The introduction of greater regulations on working hours, tasks, job descriptions and roles has led to longer careers in the organization, reduced turnover rate and (critics say) to less innovative artistic research.

Bureaucratic and activist dimensions mix today in the organization. Mains d'œuvres mixes the bureaucratic permanent roles to open-ended specific ways of performing each role. The activist dimension is perceived as crucial for the survival of the organization, as employees are pushed (and required) to work more than what their job description states. While this approach favors the association, it causes stress in employees, who still face the risk of burnouts. However, the complete revision of this dimension would require an adjustment of the business model of the initiative, more stable sources of funding.

In both Stanica and Mains d'œuvres the normative strengths of the institutions are socially reproduced through internal interactions. Ultimately, the directors (and the members of the CA in Mains d'œuvres) play the role of vocal enforcers of the “right” ways of being members of the organization. As we will see in section 5.4, their role and power becomes particularly important when efforts to revise the instituted operations of the organizations emerge.

Summarizing the analysis of the internal operations of these initiatives, we can say that they present institutional dimensions because the operations of their members are guided and informed by normative cognitive frames. Nonetheless, they are not yet taken for granted and naturalized, as multiple perspectives on these institutions coexist in the organizations, often with competing and integrated approaches. These two organizations also present different paths of evolution of institutional dimensions in citizen initiatives, as a result of the different strength of isomorphic pressures from local institutions (Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

4.3.2 Problems and their publics

These initiatives emerged from the perception of problematic situations by their initiators. In both cases, the initial problematic situation was related to the desires of the initiators to offer cultural services beyond governmental action. As citizen initiatives, they generated effects on the situations they perceived by directly engaging with it.

The recognition and construction of these problematic situations into enactable problems differed in the two cases in relation to the richness of the repertoire of actions of the initiators and their contexts. F.Bo. and C.P. had previously developed other cultural centres, they had played a central role in the french movement of “friches”, and were already well connected with other european centres from Trans Europe Halles: they had a rich repertoire of actions they could enact in order to effectively manipulate the

situation. Many of the problems they wanted to tackle were in part already formalized into needs intelligible by their local environment, which they combined into specific services and goods.

The Slovak teenagers of Truc Sphérique were instead newcomers in this field, and their immediate close context didn't provide formalized categories of problems and needs they could manipulate to make sense of the situation. At the beginning they spontaneously manipulated their situation by following their desires, and developing actions incrementally. The encounter with Trans Europe Halles expanded their perceptions of what was possible, and provided an external repertoire of actions (both in terms of underlying logics and in concrete operations) which they imported into their context. Their operations incrementally discovered unvoiced or dormant local needs (Cottino and Zeppetella, 2009), which were shaped or woken up by their cultural offer.

Both initiatives began by proposing solutions to what the initiators perceived as problems, such as the lack of local cultural activities, the lack of spaces and assistance for artistic development. The public dimension of these problems - which in the normal career of a public problem is seen as a requirement for the formulation of actions by public administrations - was instead discovered and verified through the enactment of these actions. Going back to Dewey's concept of "public" - understood as those indirectly and seriously affected for good or for evil from the unintended consequences of transactions (Dewey, 1927: 12; 35) - the public dimension of these issues emerged as the effects of the solutions the initiatives proposed were perceived and learnt by other actors¹⁷.

The scale of these publics is limited, involving hundreds of people rather than millions. We can refer to them as "minipublics" (Fung, 2003). Regardless of their size, they are important to improve the public sphere, as they constitute constructive efforts for civic engagement. Their proliferation and betterment can generate large-scale publics more effectively than aiming directly at one big public (ibid: 339).

The public effects of some of the actions of these initiatives were perceived in relation to the transformation of the built environments surrounding their venues, in the restructuring of the local cultural offer, in the generation of alternative and innovative welfare and education services. In the last years Mains d'œuvres also developed training social services for youngsters in the Seine-St-Denis department. Stanica instead had a series of minor services related to sustainable mobility and entrepreneurship.

¹⁷ Differently to the usual usage of Dewey's definition of "public", I am here adopting it in relation to the "good" rather than "evil" effects. The initiatives develop proposals and projects, and their public effects are often related to the "good" they generate. While these proposals were responses to problematic situations perceived by the members of the organization, the effects are related to the *solutions* to the *problems* rather than to the problems themselves. Interestingly, it would be possible to reflect on the definition of public policies and its relations to the notion of public problems - framing it not just in relation to the "evil" but also the "good" public effects.

In the St-Ouen case the proof of publicness came both from the engagement of artists and audiences, and from the support of public administrations and other institutions. In Žilina instead the public dimension of the services emerged through the development of an increasingly broader audience. These “proofs” of publicness range across the different levels of participation (Arnstein, 1969), from the direct engagement of citizens in their activities and efforts of renovation, to the passive attendance of cultural events. Certain actors in different minipublics generated different effects and exerted different influences in these process, by virtue of their level of commitment.

Some of these public services were developed in connection with public administrations. Over time, these spaces have been playing the role of intermediary between citizens and public administrations, providing services to citizens and voicing needs and concerns to public administrations. This instance has been particularly relevant in Mains d'œuvres, where the isomorphic pressure of institutions is more prominent and where the dialogue between the initiative and public administrations is more structured.

The crises that both initiatives lived should also underscore the distance between the idea of effectiveness guiding these initiatives and the effective publicness of their routinized services. Mains d'œuvres somehow lost its connection with its territory, losing part of its legitimacy; Stanica ran into financial troubles for its lack of attention to its audience. As practices (public or not) are routinized, they are less and less object of revision and evaluation, with no or little feedback from the beneficiaries of the services. As a result, while they were effective in establishing new services to tackle (formalized or unformalized) problems, afterwards they had difficulties in adapting their actions as social problems shifted. This blindness might be due to the business models of these initiatives (funding is mostly provided by other institutions and organizations rather than by the audience) and to their disinterest in exploring their own effects. The continuative verification of their effects of publicness and the synchronization with local needs requires a repetitive effort of learning and engaging with audiences, involved social groups and stakeholders, being aware at the same time that fixed and quantitative measuring might provide simplistic interpretations.

4.3.3 Institutionalizing direct action in the arts and culture fields

Over the years, other initiatives imported lessons from Mains d'œuvres and Stanica. We can distinguish two dimensions among those lessons. The first relates to the sequences of operations that they developed to face their situation and that became part of their internal institutional dimensions: the process of reconstruction of the venues, their audience engagement strategies, their relations with the owners of the buildings, etcetera. These “recipes” focus on the operational level, and provided normative and practical guidance to conduct specific actions to new initiatives.

The second dimension is instead related to the logic underlying the construction of the operations in these initiatives, based on direct action as strategy to face problematic situations.

These initiatives generated considerable effects in relation to the establishment of direct action in the cultural and artistic fields. It must be firstly noted that the following assessment of the effects is not related to a statistical sample of a general population - it would require a research of its own - but on the exploration of the artistic and cultural fields in the origin countries and beyond. Similarly to the internal operations of these initiatives, the assessment of their effects on the institutionalization of direct action is based on the perceptions of direct action as a viable option by citizens.

Mains d'œuvres has embodied - with Friche Belle de Mai - the model of the "friche" in the last decades (before the advent of temporary urbanism). It has been and still is taken as an example by many across France; the organization is periodically visited by organizations and institutions, that desire to understand how the centre is run and how it was established.

Stanica has been among the pioneers of citizen-initiated cultural centres in Slovakia. It was one of the first in the country, and it has long been the most active and vocal, as it has always focused on the effective communication of its projects. It has inspired many of the centres that emerged in the country in the last decades. The initiative has also played an active role in opening a field of possibility in the country, by developing the Antena network and by lobbying for recognition and financial support of citizen-initiated cultural centres by national institutions. They established a way of doing that can be (and is being) replicated by others, but differently from Mains d'œuvres the context from which they started was poor in existing policies to connect to.

The two initiatives have contributed in different ways to the affirmation of direct action in the fields of arts and culture. Mains d'œuvres was developed in a context already rich of experiences, where the ways of operating were being tentatively established incrementally. This experience was a stepping stone for the successive initiatives because it raised the level of what was possible to accomplish through citizen initiatives. The creation of a permanent cultural centre of a 4000 m² venue with just a little initial capital, with a visionary and peculiar programme, and with the aim of creating a sustainable business model not entirely based on public funding (but still dependent on it) demonstrated that it was possible to go beyond ephemeral spaces. By demonstrating the effectiveness of direct action in a long-term effort and in complex problematic situations Mains d'œuvres - and the other french friches of the turn of the millennium - have expanded the boundaries of the field of situations where direct action is considered suitable to be adopted.

Stanica, on the other hand, has single-handedly instituted direct action as a strategy in the arts field in Slovakia. The members of Truc Sphérique didn't believe in the feasibility of their vision before meeting

Trans Europe Halles: their actions demonstrated the possibility of creating these projects through direct action in Slovakia, by transferring knowledge from similar situations (Schon and Rein, 1994). They drew from other institutional repertoires of action, and socialized them in their local context. They expanded the field of what was perceived to be possible in Slovakia, and instituted a way of tackling these situations.

Fifth Chapter: Learning and Innovation in Processes of Urban Transformation

After the empirical exploration of long-existing citizen initiatives in the previous chapter, this chapter focuses on the cases of urban transformation these organizations developed out of their premises and with the support of other actors.

Their exploration is linked with the second research question, focused on learning and innovating effects of these processes. In these processes, actors adapted their ways of operating to shifting environments, faced uncertainties and confronted each other across conflicting values and constructions of the world and ways of engaging with it. These situations have been chosen for their potentialities in developing processes of learning and innovation.

The first two sections respectively outline the two case studies: the project of the Nová Synagóga by Truc Sphérique/Stanica in Zilina, Slovakia and the project of the Espace Imaginaire by Mains d'œuvres in St-Denis, France. The discussion is enriched by the representations of the diachronic evolution of the network of actors involved, in order to understand the relations used and developed in the situations of action. I use six network graphs to represent the evolution of the networks along the processes, summarizing types and intensities of relations, group belonging, geographic position and level of influence over the process, following the reflections discussed in section 3.6.3.

The third section incrementally develops a general framework adopting different analytical perspectives. I explore each case and propose a general understanding of their unfolding, using the graphic representations of the domains of the situations and strategies to summarize the two cases.

On the basis of these empirical and analytical explorations, the fourth section links the discussion to the learning and innovation literature explored in the second chapter, arguing that these experiences develop innovation and learning processes at individual and social level, but they often fail to translate them in long-term changes in the mother organizations.

5.1 The case of the Nová Synagóga

This section focuses on the process of renovation of the Nová Synagóga in Žilina, Slovakia. The process was carried out by the cultural NGO Truc Sphérique, who also manages the citizen-initiated cultural centre Stanica Žilina - Zarietie (See section 4.1).

The section is divided in five subsections. The first five outline the process of urban intervention through its diachronic evolution, outlining the context of interaction. Each section details a phase of the process, defined by a dominant approach to the situation in relation to the objectives and frames of the actors. Considering the case as a constant coming and going between problem setting and problem solving, each section explores a stable state between frames of action, inquiring the reasons for its stabilizations and its subsequent overcoming.

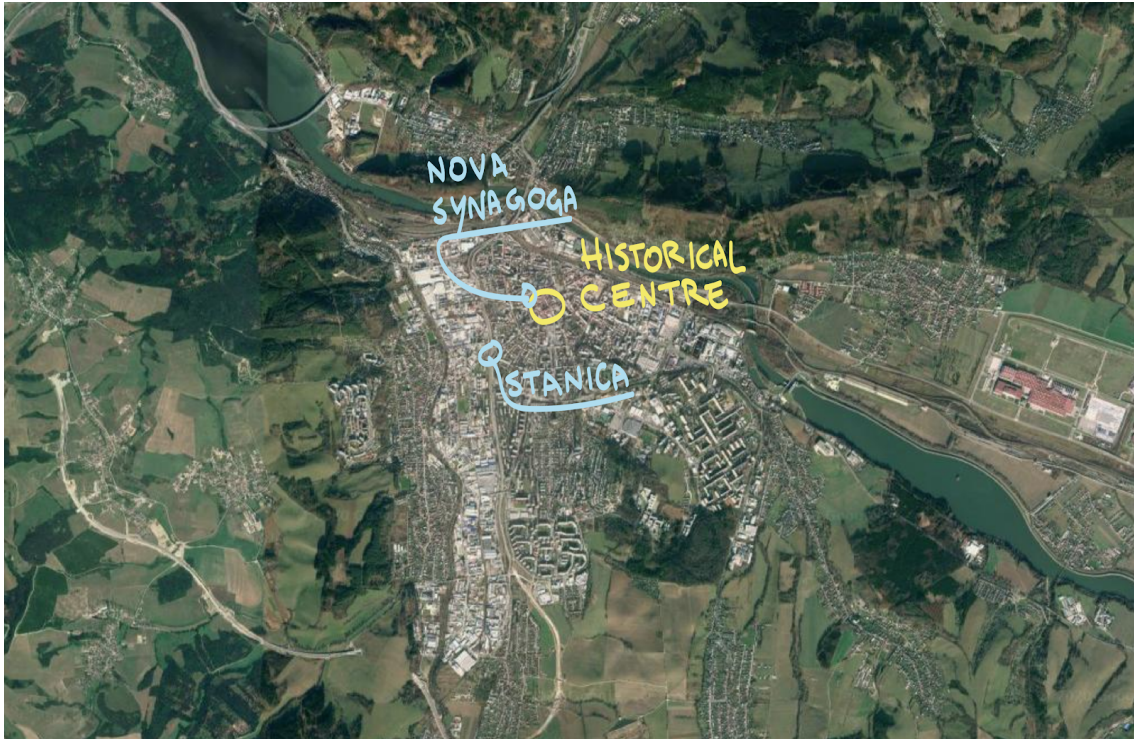


Figure 5.1 - Location of Nová Synagóga in Žilina
Elaboration of the author from Google Maps

5.1.1 A preliminary setting of the situation (2011)

In the first months of 2011 P.F., the president of the Jewish community of Žilina, faced a problematic situation: at the end of 2010 the community regained possession of the Neolog Synagogue, which had been a cinema for decades. It was listed as historical heritage, and needed constant maintenance: a long period of abandonment risked accelerating the deterioration of its structures and decorated surfaces.

The history of the Neolog Synagogue is intertwined with the history of the Jewish Community of Žilina. The number of Jews grew rapidly in numbers and in economic relevance in the city by the end of the XIX century. The advantageous location of the city and presence of a developed railway system favoured their industries and financial enterprises (Frankl & Frankl, 2008).

At the end of the First world war there were 1680 Jews in Žilina, counting for 14% of the population (Frankl & Frankl, 2008). Between the two wars, Jews contributed to the cultural life of the city and had extensive influence in Žilina (Dulla, 2004: 200).

As the number of Jews grew, the existing Synagogue could not host the whole Jewish community. At the end of the 1920, the local Neologue (Hungarian Reformed) congregation - the major group at the time - opted to build a new Synagogue (Szalay, 2016).

In 1928 the Community ran an international design competition for the new synagogue (Dulla, 2004: 200). Several local and international architects took part in the competition, which saw Peter Behrens victorious over Lipót Baumhorn (a Hungarian architect famous for his Synagogue designs) and Josef Hoffmann (the famous Secession architect).

At the time, Behrens was among the most famous modernist architects. His proposal for the Synagogue aimed at creating a modernist monumentality, while retaining the symbolism and exoticness of Jewish religious architecture (Borsky, 2005: 160). The structure had a central domed structure - the main place of worship - and a secondary volume - a smaller synagogue (Dulla, 2004). The construction of the Synagogue was finished in 1931 (ibid: 204).

The building was used as a Synagogue only for a decade: since 1939 the Slovak State - a close ally of Nazi Germany - introduced a series of discriminatory and restrictive regulations against Jews, progressively depriving them of their rights (Frankl & Frankl, 2008). 2,688 Jews out of the 3,500 living in Žilina before the war have been victims of the Holocaust (ibid). During the war the Synagogue was used as storage and warehouse (Szalay, 2016). After the war, only 800 Jews were present in Žilina, and only 100 were members of the Jewish Community. In 1949 the number of Jews had further decreased to 150 people, as many of them moved abroad.

The community used the Orthodox Synagogue as temple, and the Neolog Synagogue was seized by the Municipality of Žilina. In 1950s the Synagogue was converted into a city theatre by the municipality. The orientation of the central space was turned to north-south, the windows were walled, the dome was scaffolded, and the small chapel was completely rebuilt (Dulla, 2004: 204; Novasynagoga.sk, 2015b). In the following decades, the building was used for different functions: theatre hall, university hall for the Žilina University of Transport and Communication, and then cinema. During the communist period, the building was also listed as a national monument, the first modernist architecture to be included. At the end of the cold war the Jewish community got the building back from the municipality, and they continued renting it to the Cinema company Tatra Film.

Today, the Jewish Community of Žilina counts 55 members. Youngsters move to Bratislava, Prague, or other European capitals to pursue their careers. The Community is responsible for the maintenance of all its properties.

For these reasons, P.F. believed the Community could not bear the responsibility of reusing the Neolog Synagogue by itself. Given the lack of empty spaces in the semi-central area of Žilina, it would have been easier to rent the space to a commercial activity. Nonetheless, he didn't want the building to be used for activities incoherent with its monumentality, quality and history.

P.F. preliminarily assessed the interest of the City and District of Žilina in using the building. The two public administrations officially refused, but the Mayor colloquially proposed to use the building. According to P.F., this offer was not backed by reassurances about the actual capacity of the municipality to maintain the building, as it was already failing in preserving its heritage buildings. The municipality was also financially and politically unstable.

In an act of interconfessional cooperation, P.F. offered the Synagogue to the local Christian community, that refused.

After these attempts to involve public administrations and institutions proved unsuccessful, P.F. resorted to his other local contacts and launched a public call for anyone interested in taking over the building.

Truc Sphérique was one of these contacts, as they previously cooperated with the Jewish Community for cultural events, focusing on Jewish music, and oral heritage. P.F. appreciated the approach of Stanica, the energy of the group of young people and the activities they developed. Furthermore, they had experience in transforming an historical building and managing considerable budgets.

P.F. proposed to M.A. - director of Stanica - to use the Synagogue for some cultural activities. M.A. contacted other colleagues and friends: M.J., an architect, and F.B., a philosopher and curator. M.J. collaborated with Stanica for architectural workshops and for the design of a third venue. F.B. instead developed ideas and content in relation to memory and heritage. The three were aware of the cultural value of the Synagogue, and started considering how a cultural reuse could be successfully implemented. He also contacted R.B., who left the organization a few years before, to attend the financial effort of the project.

M.A. also discussed the offer with the other members of Stanica. The majority of the team considered the idea too risky, and only a minority decided to collaborate in its development. M.A., R.B. and the others decided to take the risk even without a full organizational support. This risk-taking action was of

course facilitated by the fact that its actors were the founders of the organization, without a strong internal opposition.

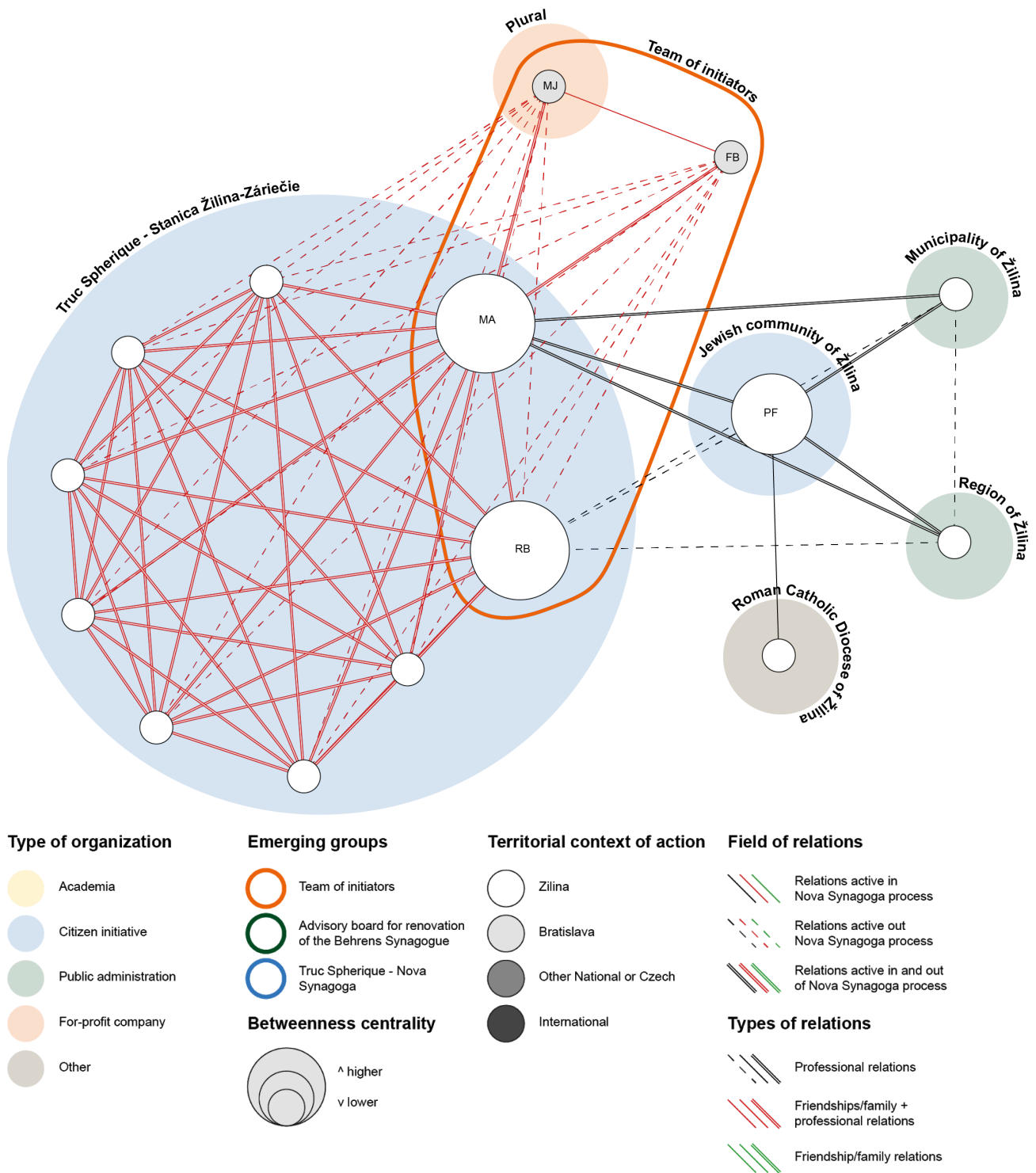


Figure 5.2 - Nova Synagoga network in March 2011 - Elaboration of the author

In March 2011 M.A. accepted the offer of P.F.. Truc Sphérique obtained a 30-year lease of the Synagogue with a 1€ yearly rate, promising to cover the costs of ordinary and extraordinary maintenance.

While P.F. thought of the Synagogue as a container ready to be used for cultural activities, M.A., R.B., M.J. and F.B. - the team of “initiators” - were interested above all in its historical and architectural value. Their projectual ideas were therefore aiming not just at the development of a cultural program, but also at the valorization of the heritage of the building through architectural interventions.

5.1.2 Failure and recalibration of a general strategy (2011-2012)



Figure 5.3 - Exterior of the Neolog Synagogue (2013). Author: Peter Snadik.

Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/novasynagoga/34805222760/in/album-72157681088053433/>

The team accepted P.F.’s offer without a clear and detailed plan for action. They had a vision about what constituted the relevant value of the building but no idea or detailed strategy on how to transform it in practice. They faced an indeterminate situation on multiple levels.

While they had no detailed plan, they had previous experiences in fields close to the themes they wanted to tackle in this process of reuse. M.J. was a young architect, but already with relevant experience in architectural design, construction, and bureaucracy. F.B. had the ability and cultural references to develop a strong vision and narrative for the project; living in Bratislava and being acquainted with the social and cultural milieu of the capital, he held connections with national politicians and funders. M.A. had extensive experience in the cultural sector, thanks to his activism in Truc Sphérique. During the construction of Stanica he also developed skills in building management. Being the public face of Stanica, he had an extensive network in Žilina, from ordinary citizens to administrators, from entrepreneurs to politicians. R.B. had broad experience in financial management, in the application procedures for

European funding and in grant writing. Thanks to his time away from Stanica curating the communication of local and national politicians, he also knew how to talk to politicians and to organize an effective communication campaign.

Looking at the initial aims of the members of the group of initiators, their personal motivations and public justifications for action are so intertwined that it is difficult to assess a posteriori their reasons. For sure they desired to work on the Synagogue process for a multiplicity of motivations linked to the discourses surrounding the building itself: to value and respect its architectural monumentality, to give relevance to the importance of its architect and for its connections with Jewish culture and history. But at the same time because it was an interesting adventure, it was a professional opportunity, a chance to have another space to manage and grow. All these elements were present at the same time, and the accent was strategically put on one of the different elements according to the audience they were talking to.

In 2011 the group detailed its ideas of action by conducting preliminary research, formulating action plans and testing the availability of some key funders. The main topic of debate was the future program of the building.

They advanced the idea of transforming the Synagogue in a Kunsthalle. A Kunsthalle is an exhibition space for contemporary art, usually without a permanent collection, and focused on high-level art exhibitions. In the previous years the Slovak art community had been debating extensively the need of a Kunsthalle in the country, pressuring public authorities to take action instituting one but - at the time - without results.

The vision of the Synagogue as a Kunsthalle clearly and rigidly framed both the cultural program and the architectural characters of the future cultural space. The team was aware of the less-than-optimal adaptability of Synagogue for its use as a Kunsthalle: its monumentality and lack of internal partitions strongly characterized the space, with the risk of limiting the expressiveness of expositions. At the same time, the program of a Kunsthalle is mostly focused on contemporary art exhibitions, which had limited audience in Zilina. Nonetheless, the group considered the Kunsthalle program suitable - both for the construction of a narrative, and to gain the support of the arts community.

They named the renovation project *Nová Synagóga - Kunsthalle*. The “*Nová Synagóga*” part referred to its previous religious use of the space, nodding to the Neolog community, but at the same time underlying the novelty of the project with the “*Nova*” (“*New*”, in Slovak) term.

They initially formulated a general strategy for action to implement their vision for the Synagogue. They envisaged a renovation procedure differing from how Truc Sphérique renovated Stanica. This choice was due to the scale and importance of the renovation: they estimated - through rough intuitions - that the project would require at least 1 million euros. Furthermore, the Synagogue was listed in the national heritage list, requiring complex bureaucratic procedures.

They also thought that the relevance of the building could bring positive effects. The renovation of a building like the Synagogue, with its multiple cultural connections, its relevance as a national monument, and its local stature, would attract relevant investors and sources of funding.

The result of these considerations was an hypothesis of action based on the idea that the renovation would be developed as a classic heritage intervention, hiring professionals and developing state of the art architectural interventions. Funding would be secured a priori from a few big donors, like national and international foundations, the Slovak Ministry of culture and foreign Jewish donors.

The attempts of M.A. and F.B. to secure these funds proved unsuccessful. The largest companies in Slovakia are often corporate multinationals, who avoid devoting funds for local philanthropy. Jewish organizations and donors also had no interest in investing in a small Slovak city.

The Slovak Ministry of Culture, while appreciating the efforts of the team, had no funding program matching the type of project they were developing. Most of their funding for heritage restoration was intended to projects of public administrations or to NGO projects on publicly owned heritage. The Synagogue was owned by the Jewish Community and was being restored by Truc Sphérique - two NGOs. The Ministry found a secondary grant, which awarded them 25.000 €.

After these failed attempts, they adapted their general strategy. They opted to renovate the Synagogue as Truc Sphérique renovated Stanica: an incremental approach based on a variety of sources (sponsorships, small/medium grants, donations from private citizens, volunteering, material goods), complemented by larger EU grants. The choice was also influenced by the feeling that the professional approach was not in line with their style, preferring a more adventurous and hands-on initiative.

To gather support from private citizens and medium-sized companies, they had to publicize the project to make it a public issue. In February 2012 they presented the project in a press conference. They framed the project as a valorization of the Synagogue, focusing on the return to the Behrens architecture, and on the creation of the Kunsthalle. With this approach, they made the reconstruction of the Synagogue a public issue. Advancing solutions, they also limited the emergence of alternative and competitive solutions, channeling the public attention towards their project. In the timeline they presented, they planned to complete the project by 2014.

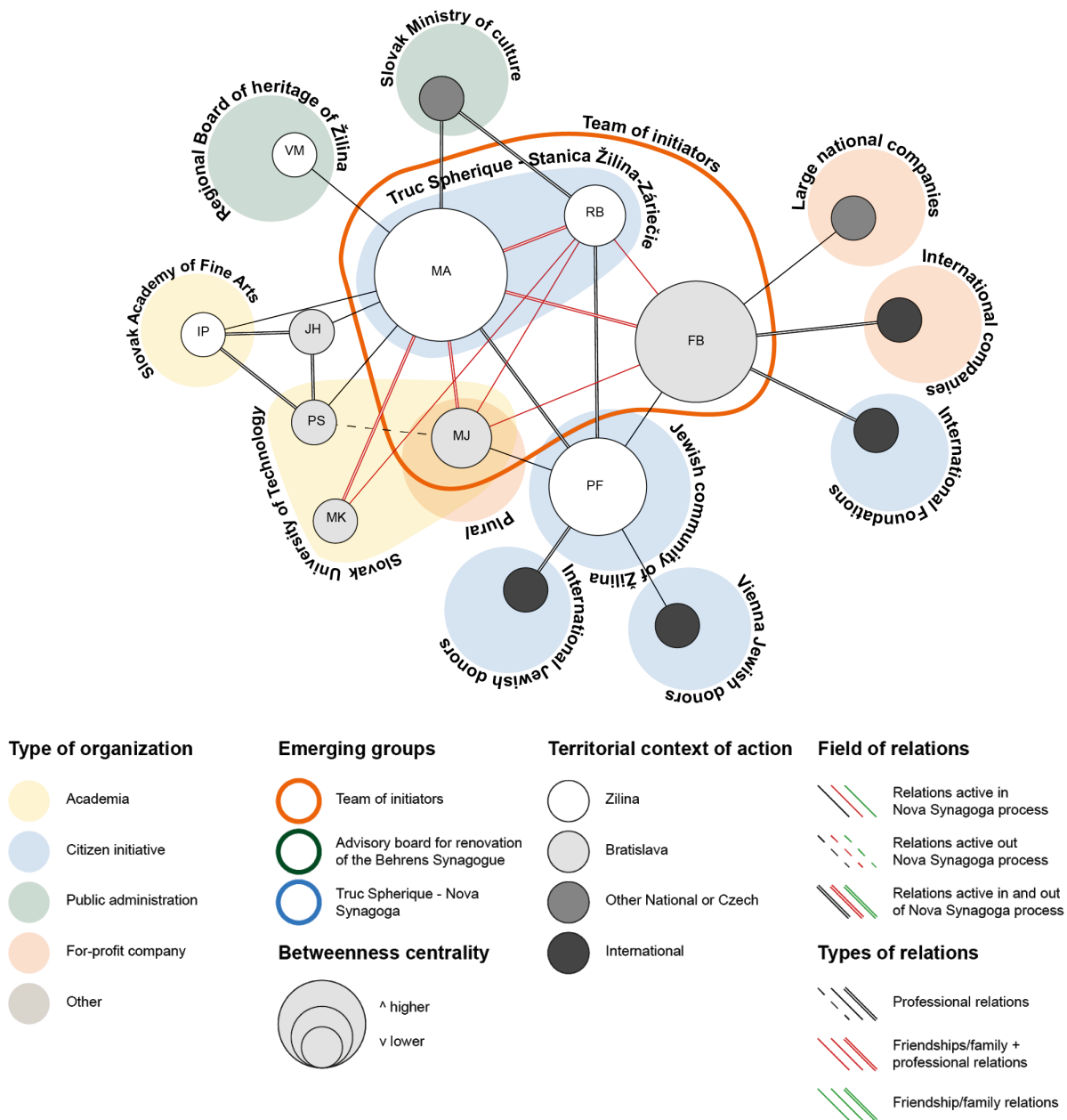


Figure 5.4 - Nova Synagoga network at the end of 2011 - Elaboration of the author

In 2011 the group started to obtain the support of other actors, from spontaneous initiatives or by leveraging pre-existing links.

M.A. contacted M.K., professor at the Faculty of Architecture at the Slovak University of Technology, to carry out the historical research on the building. This preliminary research has to be approved by the Regional Board of Heritage before drafting the architectural project and before starting construction. M.K.'s father in law was M.A's scout leader when he was a kid.

M.A. informally talked about the project with V.M., an old acquaintance, who worked at the local Regional Board of Heritage. Beyond approving preliminary projects, this Regional Board has also the role

of providing advice during the restorations and verifying the coherence of the approved project with the evolution of the building.

The group was also contacted by J.H. and P.S. of the Institute of Construction and Architecture of the Slovak Academy of Sciences and I.P. of the Slovak Academy of Fine Arts. They were conducting a research on insulation techniques for modern architecture. Knowing about the Nová Synagóga project, they contacted M.A. to ask if their research could help the project.

5.1.3 Multiplication of domains of action (2012-2014)

When Truc Sphérique took over the Synagogue, Behrens' design of the interior had been completely altered. In the 70 years since its construction multiple interventions changed the interior. Following the idea of restoring the building back to what was perceived to be Behrens' original design, in March 2012 M.A. began the removal of suprastructures and additions.

The idea also came as a result of the economic situation of the project, lacking funding to start the proper construction. Waiting for evolution on that side, they opted to start by doing the works they could do themselves or involving non professional volunteers.

The removal of the layers concerned historians of architecture who were starting to interact with the team of initiators. In particular Prof. H.M. (P.S.'s boss at the Institute of Construction and Architecture of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, director of national Docomomo¹⁸ chapter and M.J.'s Doctoral supervisor at the Faculty of Architecture at the Slovak University of Technology) made alarmist critiques about the removals. Prof. H.M. is a well-known public figure in Slovakia in the field of modern architecture.

P.S. and H.M. were used to a classical process of restoration, closer to the initial hypothesis with large donors. These restorations usually begin with a process of research and documentation, followed by a detailed phase of planning of construction and implementation. Additionally, they were critical about the idea of placing emphasis only on Behrens and not on the other eras of the building. They argued that each layer should have been preserved in order to expose the history of the building and the traces of time.

The team of initiators was able to see this criticism as a positive addition to their effort, and tried to transform this attention of a public figure into a resource for the project. M.A. - through the advice of M.J. and F.B. - approached H.M. proposing her to take an advisory role in the project.

¹⁸ Docomomo is “a non-profit organization dedicated to documentation and conservation of buildings, sites and neighborhoods of the Modern Movement” (Docomomo International, n.d.).

This proposal resulted in the creation of the “Advisory board for renovation of the Behrens Synagogue” (from the Slovak “Rady pre obnovu Behrensovej synagógy” abbreviated in ROBS). The idea of establishing a board came from the recent restoration of Villa Tugendhat in Brno.

The board was composed of H.M., P.F., M.D. (Head of Regional board of heritage), I.C. (director of Villa Tugendhat), J.K. (professor of restoration at the academy of fine arts in Kosice).

The Board was intended to be a forum to discuss the renovation and its process of development, in order to avoid what they would perceive as mistakes. The Board was intended to support the work of the team of initiators by formulating normative advices. In the initial formulations and intentions of the creators of the Board, all changes to the building had to be approved and critiqued by the Board. Operationally, they aimed at periodically reviewing and discussing the work carried out on the building and the plans for the following steps. This review would then generate comments and normative recommendations that the team of initiators - more focused on the operational aspects of the renovation - would have to follow. As we will see, these intentions clashed - in terms of ideas of authority and knowledge - with the approach of Truc Sphérique.



Figure 5.5 - Partial opening (2012). Author: Marek Jančúch. Source:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/novasyagogoga/34347519334/in/album-72157681088053433/>

Following the team's plan for action based on the acquisition of small and medium donations, they needed to keep constant the attention of the public on the project. Furthermore, they had to demonstrate their effectiveness in the restoration.

To do so, the team came up with the idea of opening the Synagogue for a "partial opening" during the summer of 2012. During the opening the team presented the state of the reconstruction, and the research that was being developed on the building. The opening attracted over 2000 visitors in one month.

This first partial opening generated relevant discoveries. While it provided the public attention needed for the project, it was also a productive test for the limits of the building in terms of program and architectural solutions. Partial openings became an annual routine of the renovation, used to test architectural solutions before their final implementation, and to test the program, with exhibitions, concerts, and other artistic events. In these events, the team of initiators was supported for technical and manual work by the team of Stanica.

In this phase P.S. conducted extensive research on the materials, architectural techniques used in the building and original architectural details. He and his team could count on different sources, like historical photographs, the memory of people, and the original blueprints, none of which exhaustively described Behrens' original Synagogue. The removal of historical layers by M.A. also provided useful informations: discoveries came from the building itself, working on its walls.

In October 2012, the team launched - with the support of an advertising company - a public fundraising campaign, with the slogan "Buy immortality": playing on the idea of immortal works of art, the campaign proposed the inscription of the name of donors on the external pavement of the Synagogue. While the collection was initially slow, by the end of 2014 they had collected € 100,000.

The team also got creative to find resources. Knowing about the lackluster attendance of home games of the local soccer team MSK Žilina, the team proposed the owner to curate an art-themed communication campaign to increase attendance, in exchange of a percentage of the revenue.

Companies operating locally were also involved. P&P, a software and computer hardware retailer, donated € 100.000. P&P's founder knew personally some members of Truc Sphérique since their youth, and had a good relations with them. KIA Motors Slovakia, who runs a large production plant in Žilina, already funded the activities of Stanica since 2008. When M.A. and R.B. approached KIA for the restoration of the Synagogue, D.D., the Head of Public Relations department, initially saw the project impossible, but decided to gave them a € 30.000 grant and the possibility of integrating KIA volunteering program with the reconstruction. The team also got in touch with several companies to get discounts on

the construction materials as sponsorships. The project received another € 20,000 grant from the Ministry of culture, and more than €100,000 from Interreg funds.

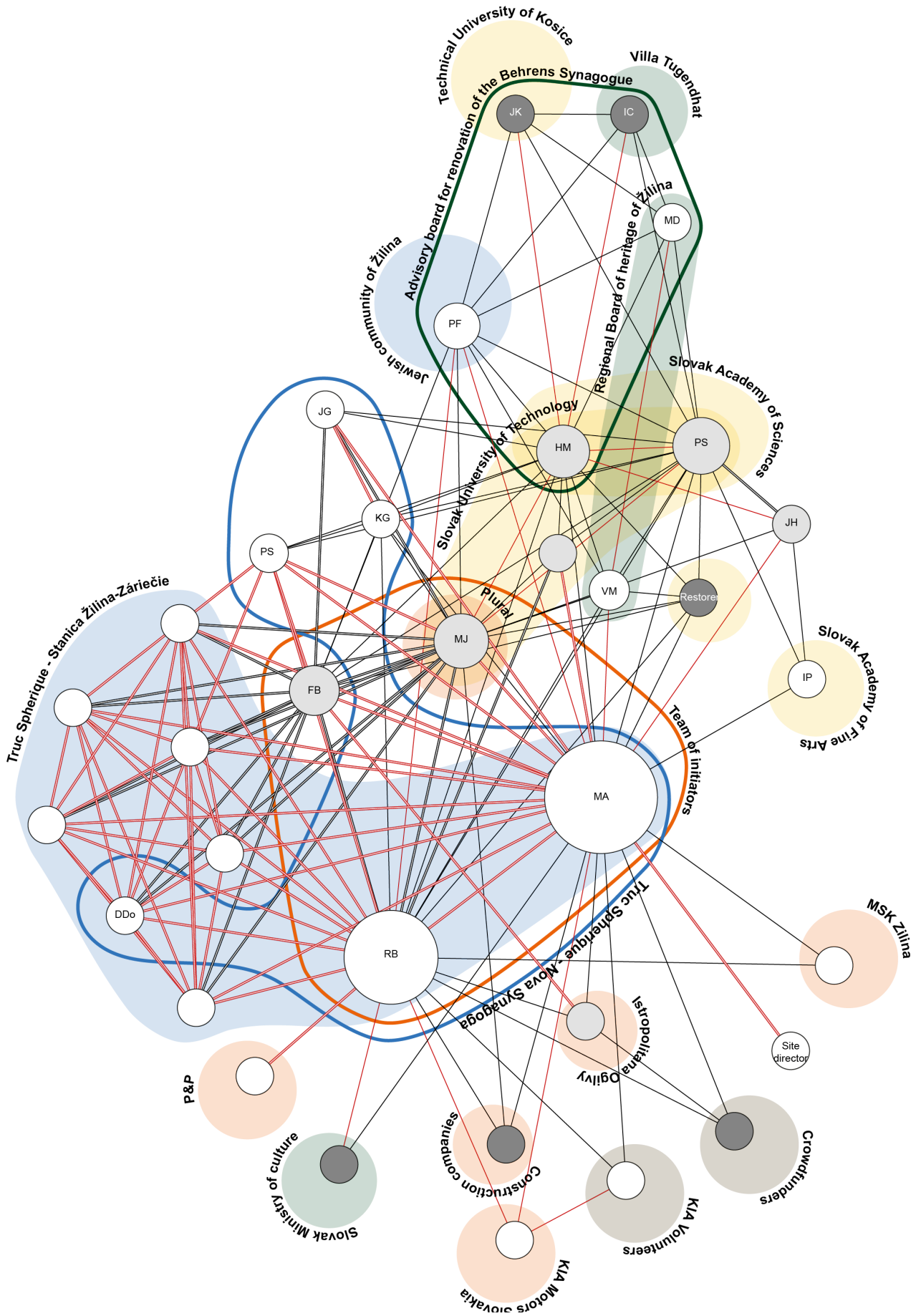
In 2013 and 2014 the removal of internal layers continued, and was followed by the first major construction works. The order of construction didn't follow a predetermined procedure (as is usually done in construction works), but was based on contingent opportunities of sponsorships and discounts on materials.

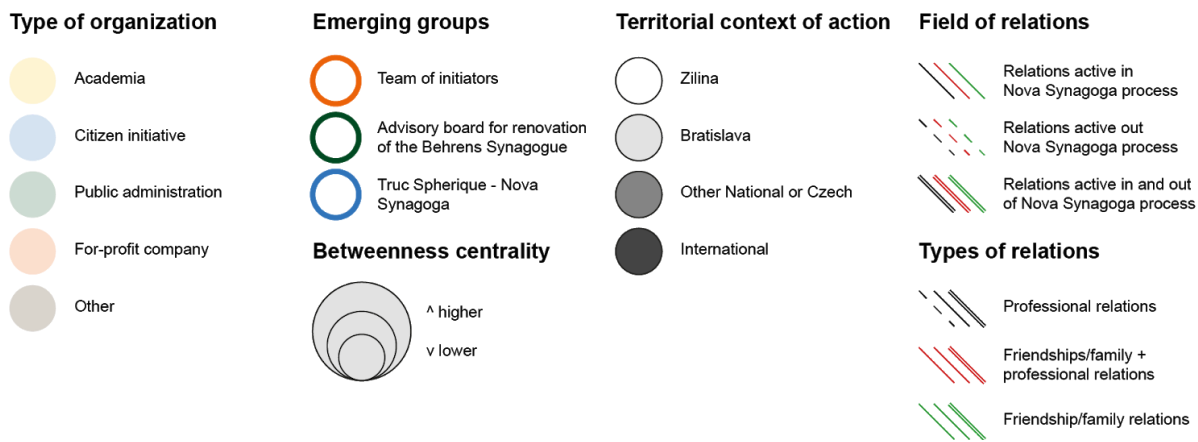
The internal decoration of the dome, funded by an Interreg project focused on the collaboration between Slovak and Polish restorers, was among the first points of discussion in the team, debating about its style and color. Being the one coordinating the construction from the site (and bearing the legal responsibility), M.A. had last word on these decisions: debates in the team started to be structured around him, trying to convince him of one position or another.

The renovation of the metal roof exposed the different approaches adopted by M.A. and historians. While the former supported the use of titanium-zinc roofing, for which the Rheinzink company would provide a 50% discount, the latter argued for the use of copper roofing, which was the historically coherent material. In this case M.A.'s position as "man on site" allowed him to take the final decision, choosing the titanium-zinc roof.

Other opportunities were also considered when selecting what elements to reconstruct. For example, the internal flooring was among the first elements to be financed, in order to facilitate the organization of the "Partial openings"; windows and doors were installed in 2014 as well, in order to increase the security of the construction site at night. The reconstruction also focused on the complete transformation of the northern annex, to be used by the Plusminusnula art gallery.

In this phase the team also started to consider how and by who the future Kunsthalle will be operated. While the Stanica team resulted of an incremental process originated from personal affinity, in this case M.A. tried to create an organization by involving individuals close to Stanica. In 2012 the team expanded with the arrival of K.G., J.G. (both artists and curators) and P.S. (photographer). After the 2013 financial crisis in Stanica, P.S. left the project because of budget cuts.





In the previous page: Figure 5.6 - Nova Synagoga network in 2014

5.1.4 Side effects of accelerations (2015-2017)

In 2015 and 2016 construction works expanded in all their intensity and complexity. J.G., curator of the Plusminusnula gallery (trained as an artist, but with experience in architecture) incrementally took the role of construction coordinator. He coordinated the day-to-day operations, while R.B. focused on the financial management and M.A. on the general coordination. M.J. and F.B., based in Bratislava, reduced their presence on site.

By the end of 2014, the flow of resources had reached a slow but constant speed. Resources came from diverse sources: public collection, material sponsorships, donations and small grants. It was seen as the right speed to test hypotheses in an experimental and exploratory process before their definitive construction. Architectural designs were tested and revised through the partial openings. Solutions relating to heritage (like the roofing of the dome, or the Jewish Stars) were extensively debated. As we already noted, discussions were conducted in different spheres, at different speeds and with different results: while the Board met and deliberated, the team of initiators - coordinating the operations - proceeded through incremental adjustments guided by M.A..

At the end of 2014, the Nová Synagóga project was awarded a € 328.743 EEA and Norway grant. The grant was then increased to € 445.182 in 2016. EEA and Norway grants are funded by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway¹⁹. Grant programs are negotiated and designed by the EU, the donor countries and the national government of the target country in five years cycles. In the 2009-2014 period the EEA and Norway grants in Slovakia had a focus on Cultural heritage reconstruction, to increase the number of visitors of these spaces.

¹⁹ The countries are part of the European Economic Area but not of the EU. The objective of the Grants is “to reduce social and economic disparities in the EEA, strengthen bilateral relations between the donor and beneficiary countries, and to put the beneficiary countries in a better position to make use of the internal market” (EEA Grants, n.d.)

The program focused on Jewish Heritage. The aim was to tackle the growing anti semitism in Eastern Europe by reviving historical roots of Jewish culture, fostering collaboration between governments and Jewish Communities. Several Synagogues were reconstructed in Slovakia through this grant system.

Granting organizations focused on the future uses of the cultural monument. They realized that architectural works are not enough to make a monument lively again, requiring a cultural program and an use able to eventually generate income. The proposal of using the Synagogue as an exhibition space was considered in line with these requirements because of the experience of Truc Sphérique in organizing exhibitions, performances, and other events.

The use of the funds had to follow regulations on public procurement. Truc Sphérique was able to hire a specialist in public procurement thanks to the Creative Lenses project, a TEH-backed european project on business models and organizational development (Rex and Kimbell, 2019: 14). The grant system also set a strict schedule for implementation. The monument had to be open by April 2017.

Considering the time needed for the public procurement, the team had to accelerate their operations, hurrying decisions and debates. The treatment of the interior walls is the most relevant example of the side effects of the acceleration. In the previous years the architectural configurations designed by M.J. and his architecture firm - oriented towards architectural coherence and quality - were tested in partial openings. Feedbacks came from the Advisory board and the Regional Board of Heritage for the historical coherence, from the Truc Sphérique team for the functionality of use, and from the restorers.

After several rounds of revision between internal ramps, temporary volumes and partitions, M.J. proposed an “Half-white” solution, which was experimented for the Dan Perjovschi exhibition in 2014. It is an open solution, with limited architectural interventions. The “half-white” solution divides chromatically the central volume in half, coloring the bottom half in white providing a neutral background for exhibitions. The treatment of the top half of the building was yet to be decided. H.M., P.S., M.J., F.B., argued in favour of a progressive restoration, keeping the historical layers in ruin and exposing the complexity of the building. Their idea of restoration did not aim at defining an order of worth between historical layers and traces but at allowing the visitor to discover the historical evolution of the building through its traces. The Palais de Tokyo in Paris was a reference project.

This position was opposed - among others - by V.M. and P.F.. In their opinion, an order of worth existed between the historical layers, with the Behrens original design as the most important. V.M. and the Board of Heritage based this evaluation on its historical and artistic relevance. P.F. opposed the conservation as a ruin, because it would associate the Jewish Community with destruction. Furthermore, restoring the Behrens design would commemorate the golden age of the Jewish Community of Žilina.

The restorers curating the project also supported the idea of going back to an original state. M.A. wasn't convinced of adopting a ruinous industrial esthetics, because he feared the local public would not understand - considering the initial attention on Behrens - the difference between history and ruins.

The return to Behrens' design would require the addition of new paint over the successive layers, because only a minor portion of the initial interior decorations were left on the interior walls. This position was criticized by the "progressive" side, arguing that it would create an artificial restoration. With this solution, the history of the building - and of the Jewish community - would be erased, creating the illusion that the local Jewish Community wasn't decimated by the Fascist Slovak State and then deprived of the building by the Socialist regime.

The confrontation between these two positions - mixed both in the Advisory Board and in the team of initiators - didn't unfold orderly. F.B. and M.J. didn't visit the site for months. The Advisory Board didn't meet for over 16 months between January 2015 and June 2016. In the meantime, Truc Sphérique and M.A. had to rapidly advance with the implementation of the project to respect the deadlines of the program. With the support of P.F. and the Regional Board of Heritage (which were, we could say, the main stakeholders) in March 2016 M.A. decided to proceed to the repainting of the Behrens interior decorations.



Figure 5.7 - Half-white solution in ruin (2014). Author: Richard Köhler. Source:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/novasynagoga/34383062183/in/album-72157681088053433/>

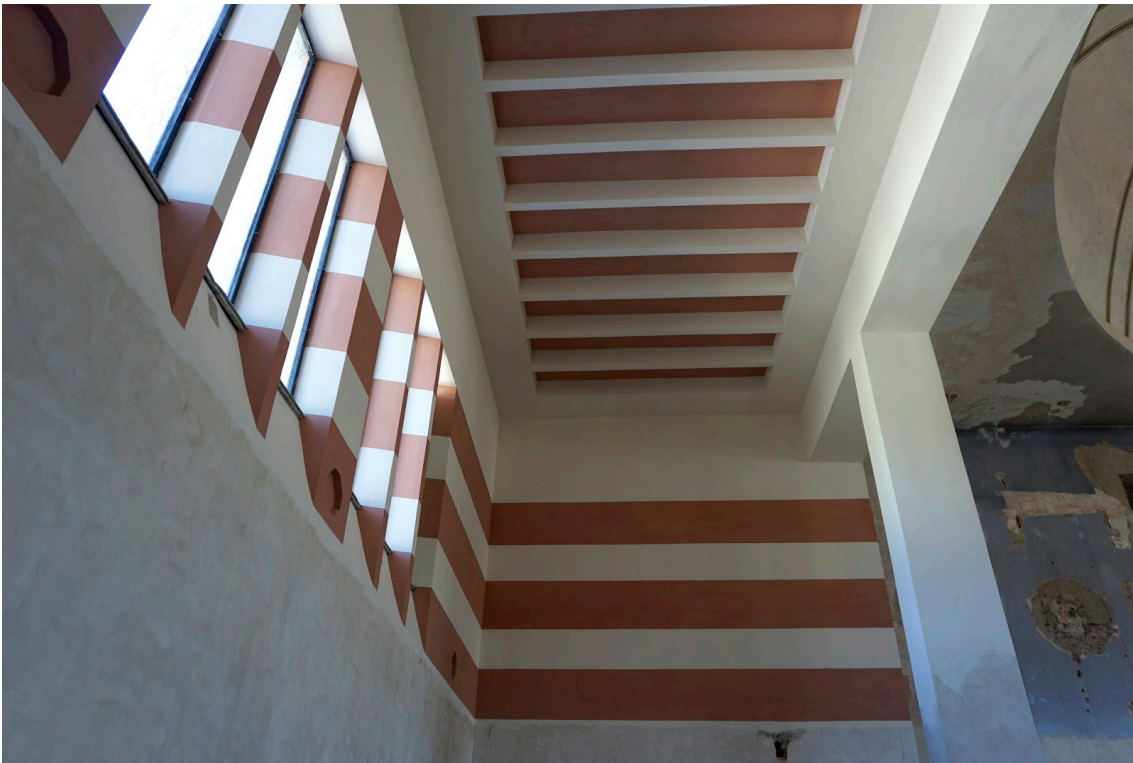


Figure 5.8 - Detail of the painted stripes (2016). Author: Dalibor Adamus. Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/novasyagogaa/34383113493/in/album-72157681088053433/>

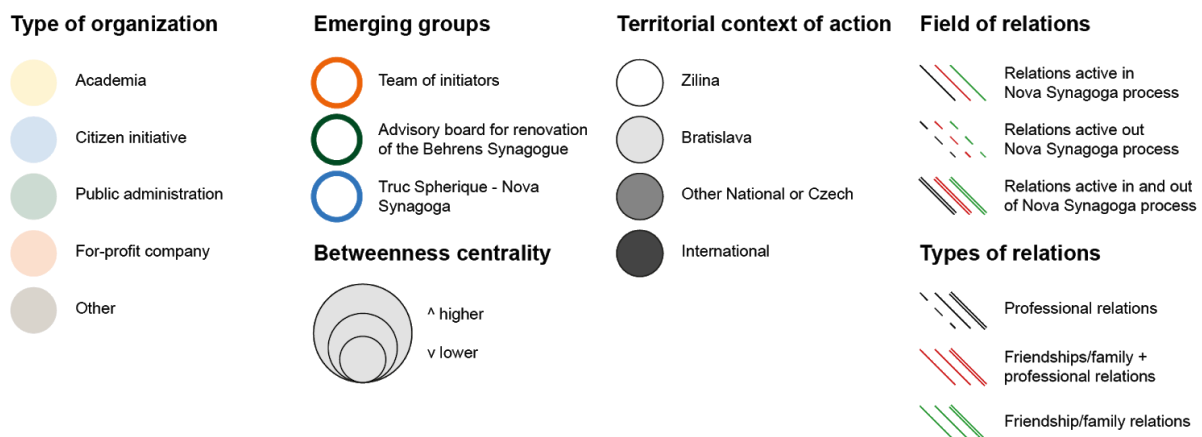


Figure 5.9 - The painted stripes after the contrast reduction (2019). Author: Francesco Campagnari

This choice was highly criticized by the other initiators and the members of the Advisory Board. In the June 2016 meeting, H.M. and I.C. argued that the solution of repainting the stripes was a “violation of the authenticity of the Synagogue” and “a trivial solution”²⁰. The Board also attested the presence of stylistic incoherences in the reconstruction, and the contradictions between the materialization of the project and the Board’s previous recommendations. V.M., M.A. and the restorers tried to justify their position. In order to mitigate the mistake, the Board suggested to reduce the contrast of the stripes.

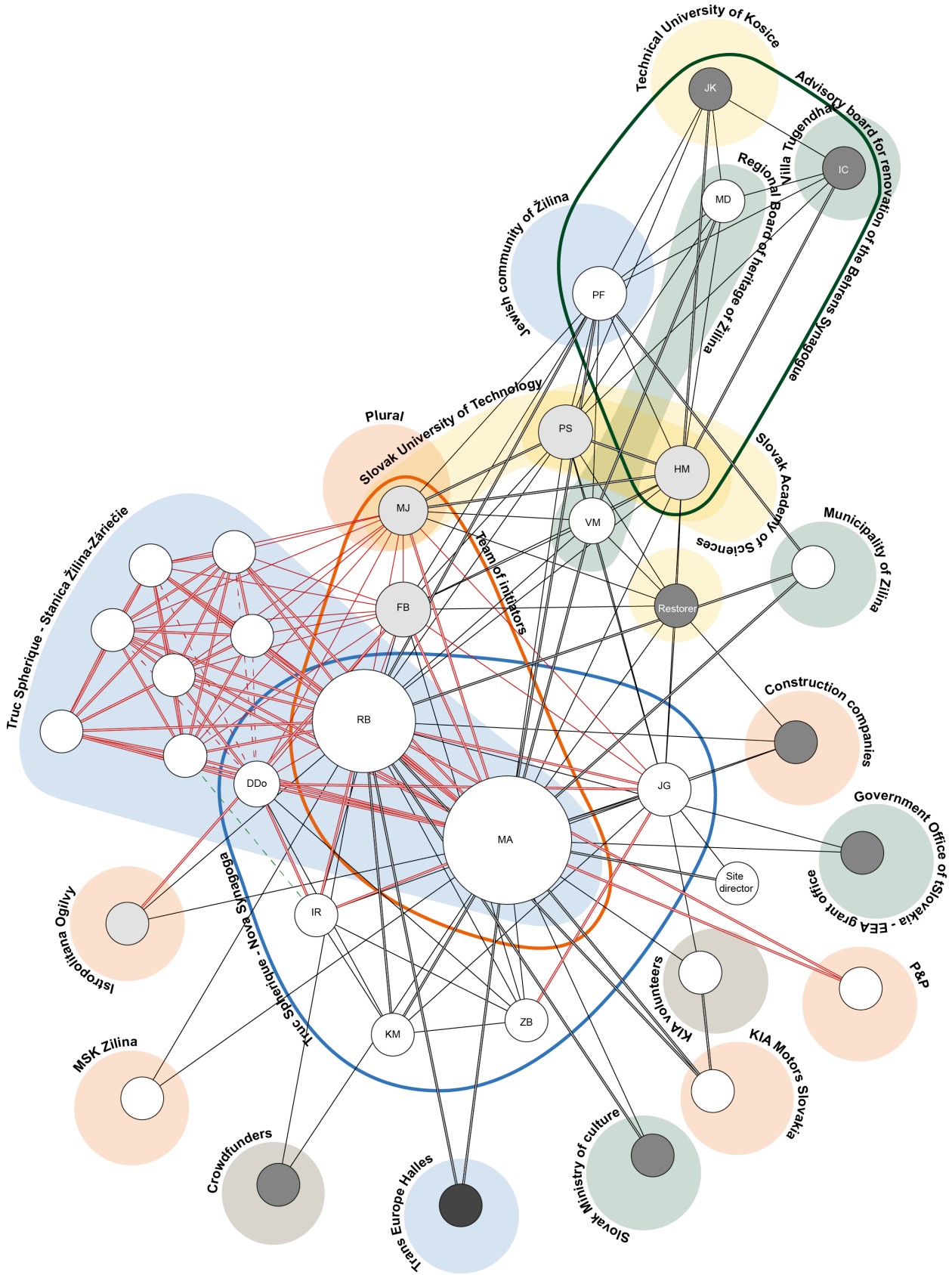
At the end of 2015 the “Kunsthalle” term was officially discontinued. The term was initially used because it was malleable enough to describe the initiators’ idea of a program focused on exhibitions (but without being a classical art gallery). But as two other Kunsthalls opened in Bratislava and Kosice, the term acquired connotations beyond the control of Truc Sphérique. As a result, the team didn’t want to be associated with these two other experiences: they felt their interpretation of Kunsthalle didn’t fit with the other two institutions, and they didn’t want to mix their grassroots initiative with public administrations.

The program of the Nová Synagóga was already deviating from the idea of a rigid exhibition space like a Kunsthalle, into a more multidimensional cultural institution. The deviation occurred incrementally, as a result of several factors. On a first level, the building presented important differences with classical white box exhibition spaces: the power of the central space (as a volume and as a decorated space) became even more apparent after organizing the first major exhibitions. Secondly, with partial openings - exhibitions, concerts, popular events - M.A. and the Truc Sphérique team realized that big contemporary art exhibitions would attract a limited audience from Žilina, detaching the cultural space from its local context. Popular events like markets and concerts, could instead attract people with different interests. Nonetheless, others like F.B. proposed a program more focused on contemporary art.



In the next page: Figure 5.10 - Nova Synagoga network in 2016

²⁰ Minutes of the meeting of the Restoration Board of the Behrens Synagogue, 14/06/2016



The Nova Synagoga officially opened in May 2017. The construction wasn't completed in detail, but it was enough to open the space to the public. The musicians of the Octet Singers choir and the musicians from the Žilina State Chamber Orchestra played the "Concert for Immortals" composition of Marek Piaček. The two-hour song lists the names of the over 2800 "immortal" donors who helped with the restoration and reconstruction of the synagogue in the previous six years. The song was also recorded, and now plays 24/7 in a niche in the external eastern wall of the Synagogue.



Figure 5.11 - Opening of Nová Synagóga (2017). Author: Kathrine Thude. Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/novasynagoga/34472673982/in/album-72157681864351990/>

5.1.5 Testing the program and the organizing process (2017-today)

The Nova Synagogue is today a multi-disciplinary cultural institution, focusing on contemporary visual arts and hosting several major exhibitions per year.

The main space is the Central Hall, an open space which hosts the main events, such as exhibitions, concerts, markets, and educational sessions. The Hall is composed of a ground floor and a mezzanine: the two are sometimes used separately for major and minor exhibitions.

The complex has a series of secondary spaces. The information centre - with its autonomous entrance - has hosted from 2014 until 2018 the Plusminusnula Gallery. The Gallery hosted ten small exhibitions a year, organized by J.G. and Z.B.. Now it serves as a support space for artistic residencies.

South of the central hall, the Winter Hall was transformed into a café, with a podium to host small public events like debates, book presentations, concerts.



Figure 5.12 - The café in the Winter Hall (2019) - Author: Francesco Campagnari

Perpendicular to the Winter Hall, a two-story volume hosts a warehouse, the toilets and office spaces used by the Nová Synagóga team, the Jewish Community and a local independent publishing company.

The external spaces of the Nová Synagóga, paved with white concrete stone, is currently used for parking, but it is planned to become an outdoor terrace for the café.

The cultural program of the Nová Synagóga is structured around the organization of 3/4 major exhibitions in the central hall per year. Each exhibition requires an 18-months planning before opening.

During exhibitions, the café hall is used for smaller events, often unrelated with the main exhibition and co-organized with other cultural organizations. These events, requiring less planning, are often organized informally and without a comprehensive and structured programming.

The educational program of the Nová Synagóga has been developed out of the intuition of some members of the team. It aims at reducing the distance between the general Žilina public and contemporary art, and it is divided in the educational sessions for school groups and in interactive visits

for adults (nicknamed “Interpretation paradise”). Both reflect on the multiple potential interpretations of contemporary visual arts.

Between exhibitions, the team organizes concerts, events and markets in the Central Hall. In these periods the venue is also rented to external companies for private events.

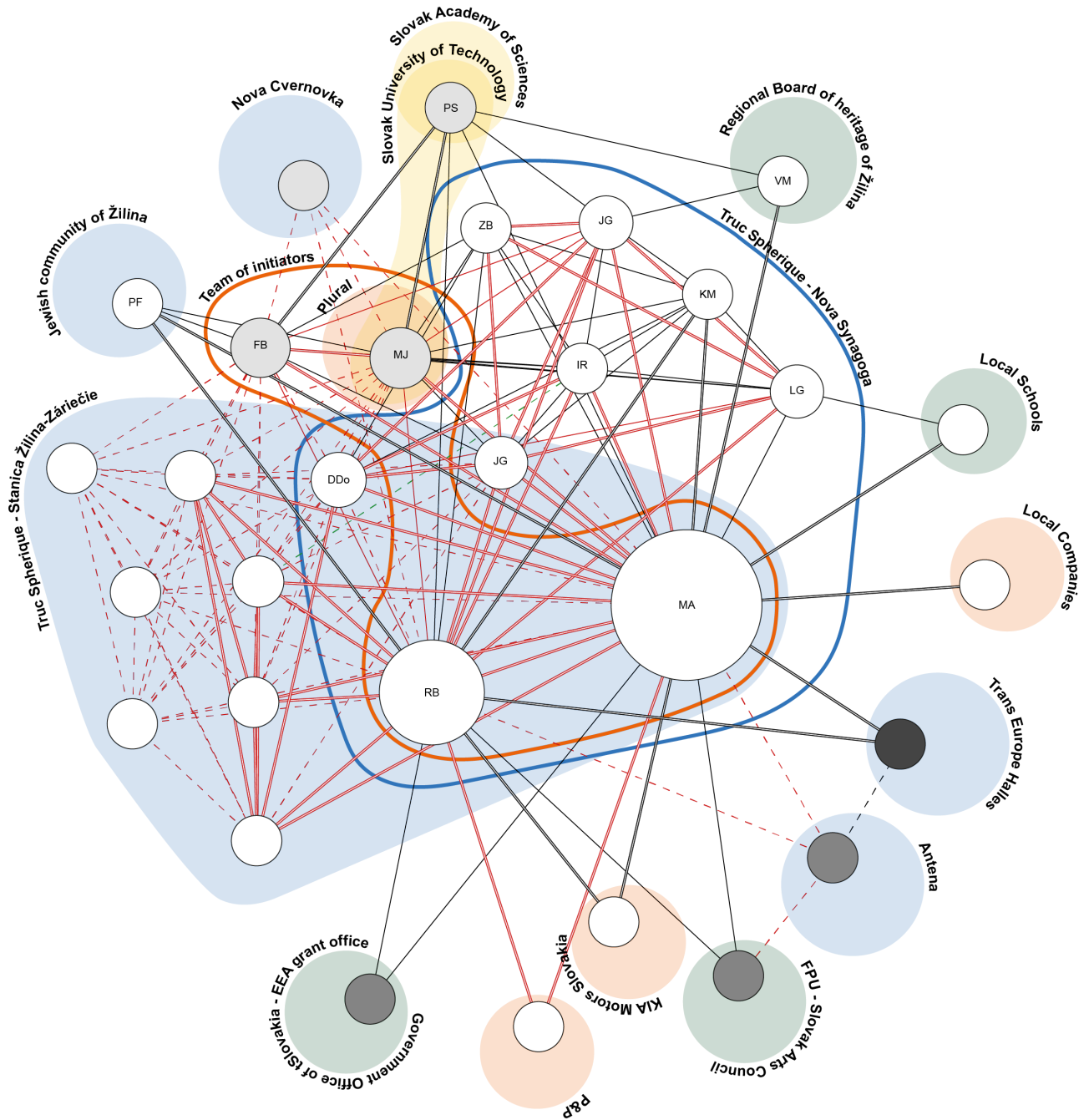
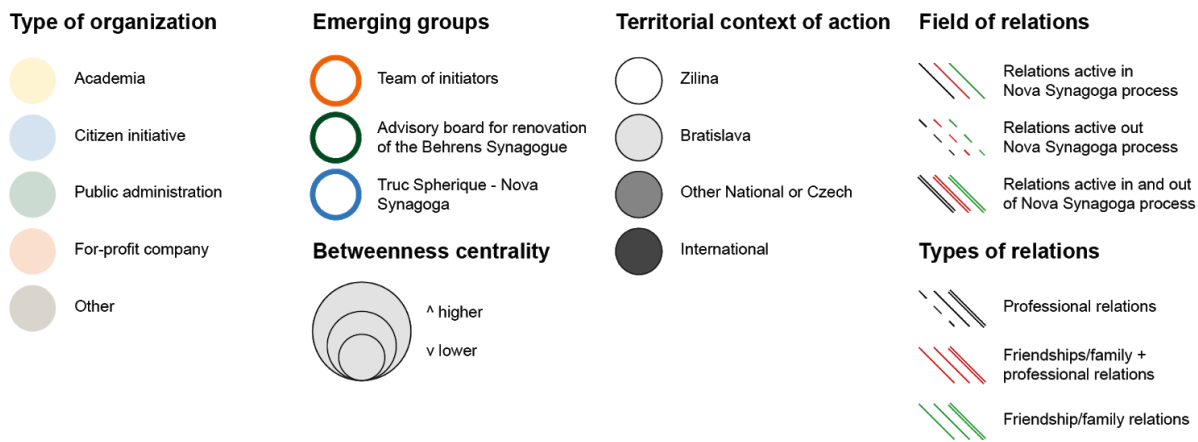


Figure 5.13 - Nova Synagoga network at the end of 2017



The Nová Synagoga is financially linked to Stanica under Truc Sphérique. The organization is operating the two venues as an umbrella organization. The exhibitions are financed by the Culture Fund by the Ministry of Culture, and KIA foundation funds the educational program.

The Synagogue also generates its own revenue with rentals to external companies or for institutional events. These rentals can be lucrative and cover additional architectural works.

As the Synagoga was officially opened, the broad field of actors engaged in the reconstruction left the organizational processes of the Synagogue. For instance, the Advisory Board ceased to exist. Others are still involved in the Nová Synagoga, collaborating in the artistic and cultural program.

The team active in the Synagogue today is focused on the artistic and cultural program. The number of people active in the Synagogue grew during the reconstruction works, and in the last two years fluctuated between six and twelve. The team, tentatively engineered by M.A., saw the presence of artistic curators, educators, music programmers, and technicians. This team is a mix of people migrating from Stanica - with extensive experience with Truc Sphérique way of organizing - and others entering Truc Sphérique for the first time - plugged directly in the organization.

After two full years of operations, the Synagogue team is struggling. The struggle originates in particular from the different opinions of members of the team on the effectiveness for the Synagogue of Stanica's way of organizing.

A part of the team - in particular J.G. and Z.B. - advanced strong critiques to this way of organizing, arguing that the unclear roles of Stanica's way of organizing are a limit for complex organizing processes such as the creation of contemporary art exhibitions. Furthermore, the spatiality of the building does not allow the autonomous development of the initiatives of single members without coordination, as it is in

Stanica. They suggested instead the creation of clearer and more professional roles, similarly to other cultural institutions, with specific figures for coordination.

While others recognize the fact that this way of operating is not working, they attribute the problem to the lack of experience of Stanica way of organizing by some new members, resulting for example in a lack of responsabilization or absences in the direct management of the space.

These divergences generated personal conflicts. Z.B.'s criticism was perceived to be excessive and not propulsive, diverging from the constructive critiques usually developed in Stanica. She was accused of formulating criticism without advancing proposals to move beyond what was perceived as a problem, or directly practicing the change she wanted to see. As a result, she was fired by M.A.. J.G. - her partner - also left. Others followed - for different reasons - in 2018 and 2019.

While this conflict emerged within the curatorial team, other conflicts were related to the coordination across different cultural activities, as the clash between curators and educators. This clash originated from the lack of coordination across the two sectors, which is in particular needed by educators to effectively conduct their visits.

The team of the Synagogue is perceived not to be a team, lacking a shared way of operating. While M.A. argues that he desired the team to find its own way of operating, it's also visible that he strongly pushed for the adoption of Stanica's way of operating. He - with his authoritative role - strongly criticized the ones who advanced critiques to his ideas. This approach mirrors the lack of support to the proposals of new members we saw in section 4.1. His approach can also be related to the burnouts he suffered during his long involvement in Stanica and in Truc Sphérique.

Beyond these organizational issues, the team is also experimenting with the cultural program. They are trying to find the best way to balance between high end exhibitions (which attract little local audience), popular events and arts education. They are receiving feedbacks from multiple sources on this balance, like artists, audiences and funding institutions, like the Slovak Arts Council.

After two years of continuous use of the Synagogue, the team has also developed critiques of the current architectural configuration of the building. In spring 2019 they have been debating internally the alteration of the architectural distribution of the Synagogue, to be then approved by the architect M.J..

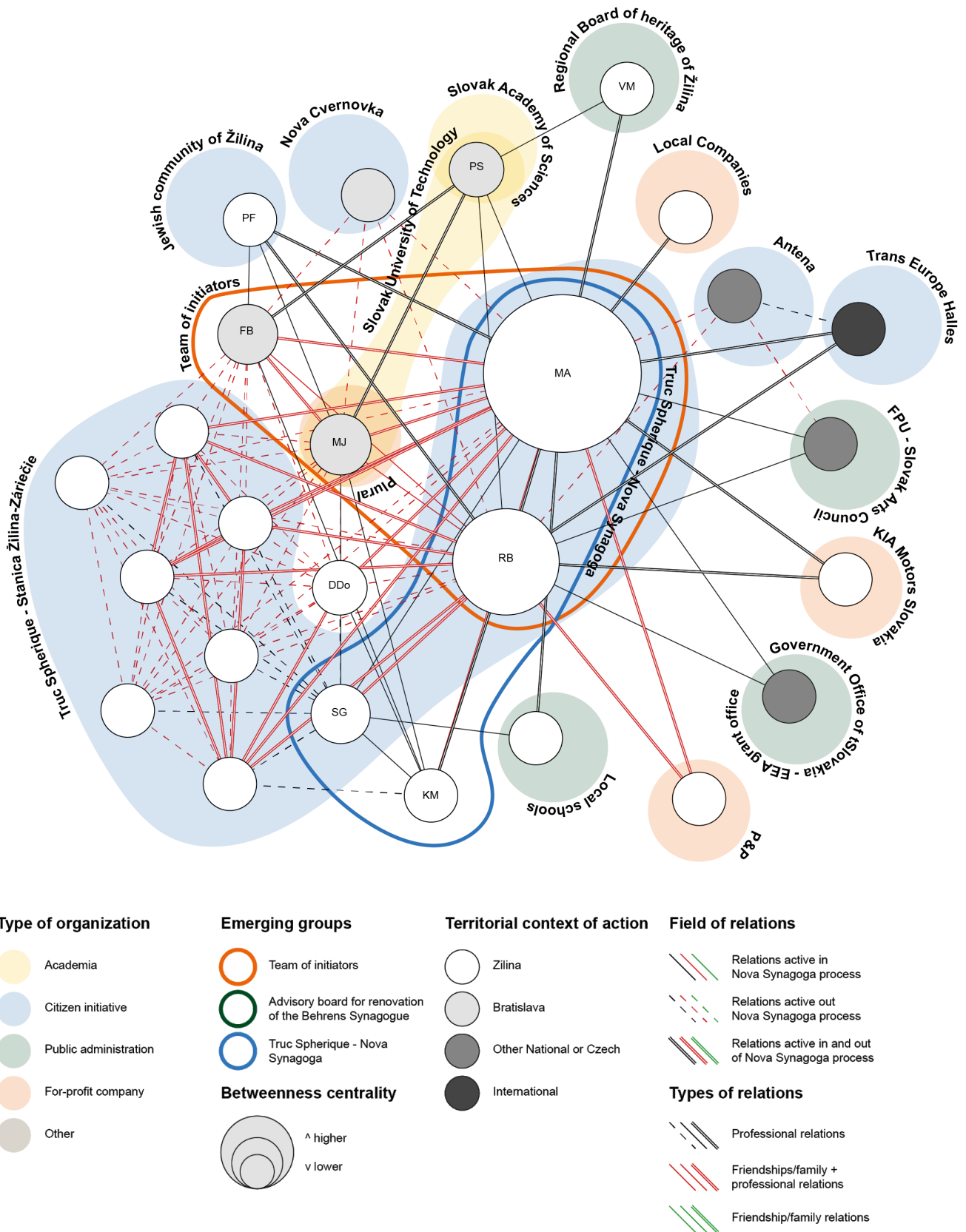


Figure 5.14 - Nova Synagoga network at the end of 2019

5.2 The case of the Espace Imaginaire

This section explores the Espace Imaginaire project in St-Denis, Greater Paris, France. The project was developed and supported by the association Mains d'œuvres (see section 4.2) who manages the homonym cultural centre in the neighboring St-Ouen.

Similarly to the previous, this section is divided in five subsection. Each of them details the diachronic evolution of the project, its context and the rationalities of the actors involved. As in the previous section, the phases of the process are scanned along the evolution and adaptation of the strategies of action. The subsections therefore follow the revisions of rationalities emerging from the incremental development of the project, and the material evolution of the concrete operations of the project (partly planned, partly not).

5.2.1 The crisis of Mains d'œuvres and the opening of an uncertain situation (2014-2016)

In order to understand the inception of the Espace Imaginaire project, we first have to grasp the situation Mains d'œuvres was facing at the end of 2015, when the project began.

As outlined in section 4.2.1, Mains d'œuvres was located in a municipality-owned building in St-Ouen. After the election of a right-wing mayor in 2014, the association - which was already in financial troubles - entered a period of conflictual relations with the municipality. The mayor expressed the desire to move the municipal conservatory in the venue used by Mains d'œuvres when the association's lease would expire in 2017. The conflict was fought in courts, in town council meetings and in the dialogue with the local residents, and it finally resulted in the eviction of the association in autumn 2019.

At the end of 2015 the fight against the Mayor's plans was in full swing, with the goal of staying in the original venue in rue Garnier. At the same time, J.B., the newly-appointed director of the association, and F.Bo., the founder and president, recognized the volatility of the situation, and started developing a contingency plan for the cultural centre, considering the eventuality of a departure from the venue.

While the relations with the municipality were strained, Mains d'œuvres had good connections with the Plaine Commune intercommunality. This territorial public establishment gathers nine municipalities in the northern suburbs of the Grand Paris metropolis, in the westernmost areas of the Seine-St-Denis department. It has institutional responsibility for policy action in sectors of urban planning, urban policies, economic development and energy. Culture is instead still part of the municipalities tasks.

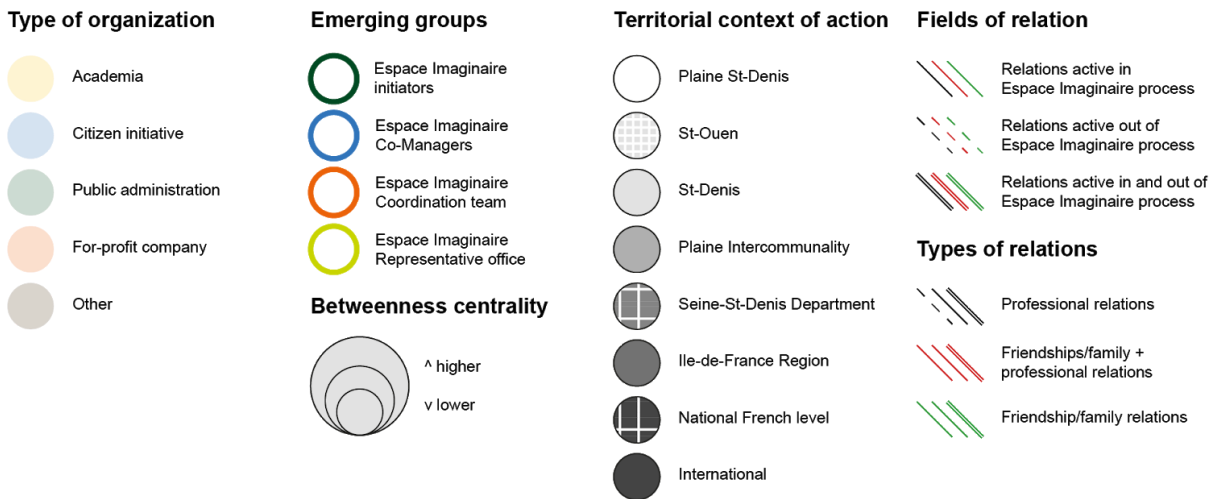
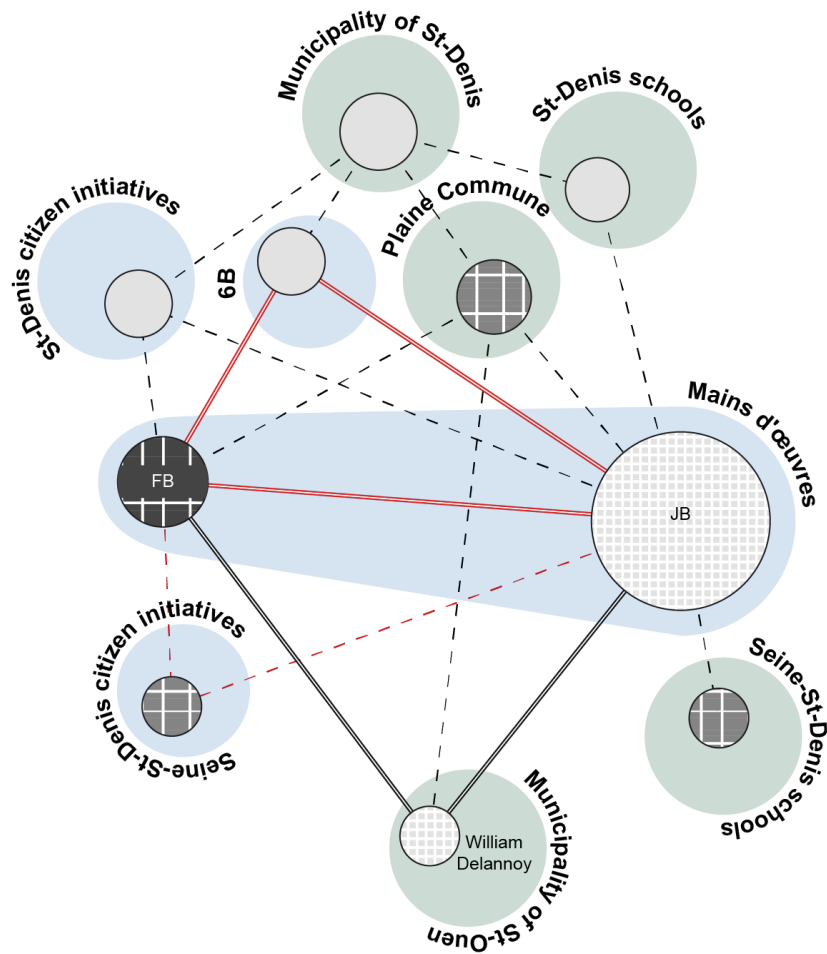


Figure 5.15 - Espace Imaginaire-Mains d'œuvres network at the end of 2015

As Mains d'œuvres was facing this crisis, Plaine Commune commissioned a research to identify vacant properties in its territory suitable for Mains d'œuvres to move in. They identified a potential venue in St-Denis, the biggest municipality of the intercommunalité and immediate neighbor of St-Ouen.

Mains d'œuvres is supported by multiple public administrations, as we saw in section 4.2.1. At the same time, the association cooperates with multiple other partners in the municipalities of the

Seine-St-Denis department, such as schools, associations, prisons. The association is strong of several local connections they can activate to gather informations regarding local contexts and to potentially establish collaborations in the development of new spaces.

Thanks to their relations with local actors in St-Denis like 6B, they knew that the municipality could be a potential ally, an institution that could support (politically and financially) the association in a new venue. The association started therefore to develop the idea of establishing their new venue in St-Denis, and desired to collaborate with the municipality in order to establish relations.

5.2.2 Designing and planning the Espace Imaginaire project (2016)

At the end of 2015, the Municipality of St-Denis launched a Call for project for the temporary reuse of a 5000 m² vacant lot in the Plaine-St-Denis neighborhood. The neighborhood is located between the northernmost Arrondissements of Paris (beyond Porte de la Chappelle and the Porte d'Aubervilliers) and the historical core of St-Denis. For centuries it had been an agricultural plain providing vegetables for the city of Paris, with small and sparse settlements. At the end of the XIX century the area entered a period of industrial development, with large chemical, metallurgical and gas industries. Many workers of these industries settled in the neighborhood, especially immigrants from Spain and Portugal.

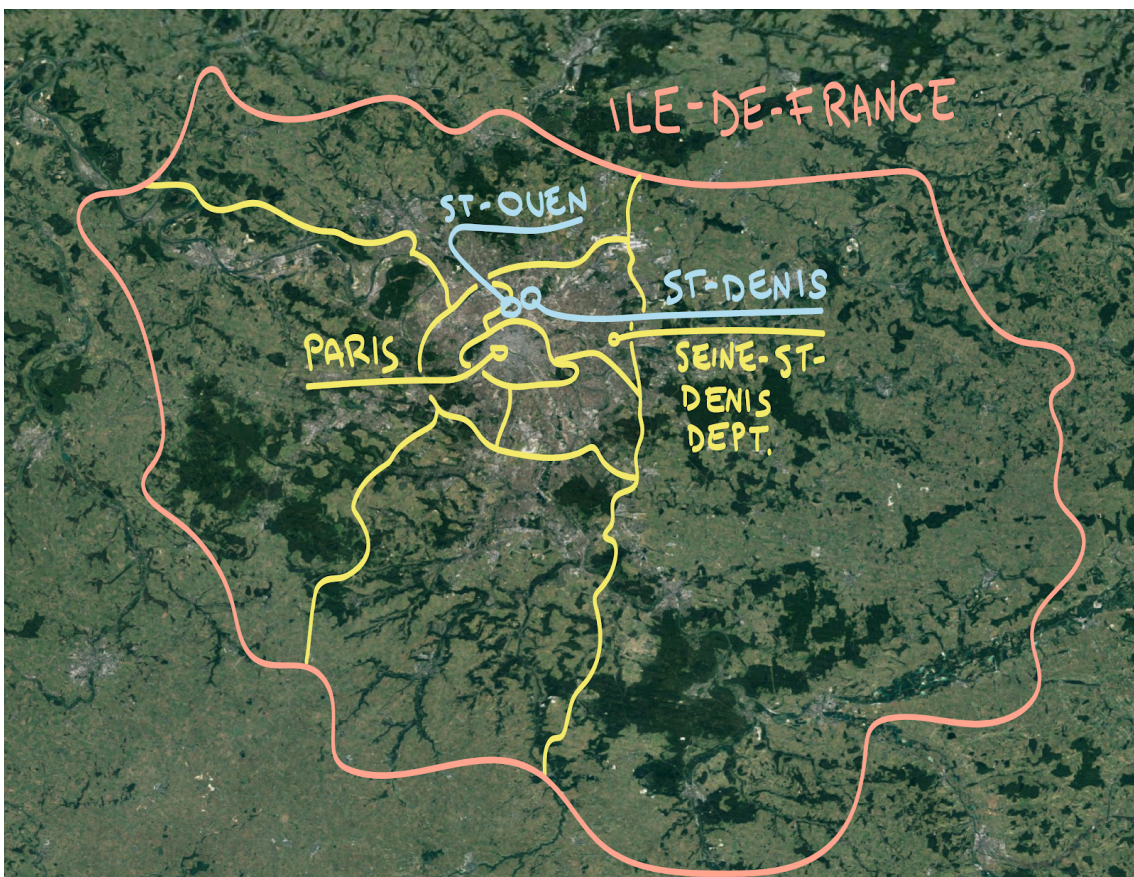


Figure 5.16 - Location of St-Denis in the Ile-de-France - Elaboration of the author from Google Maps

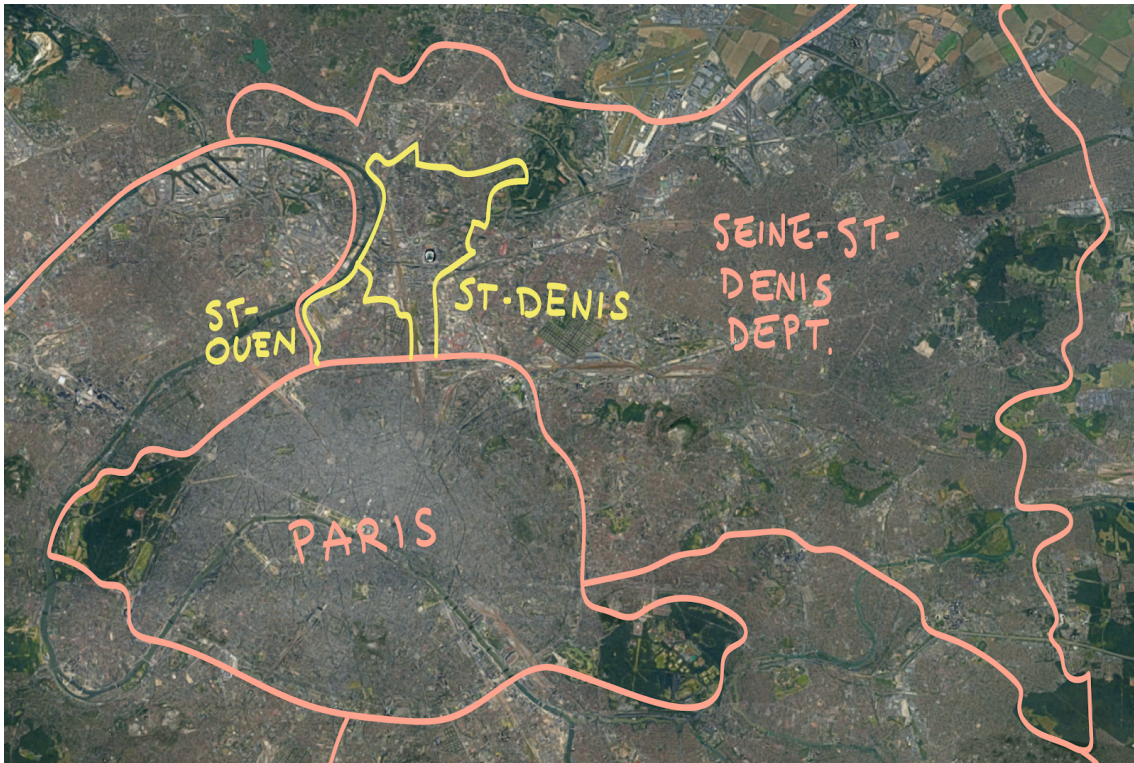


Figure 5.17 - Location of St-Denis in relation to Paris, St-Ouen and Seine-St-Denis department
 Elaboration of the author from Google Maps

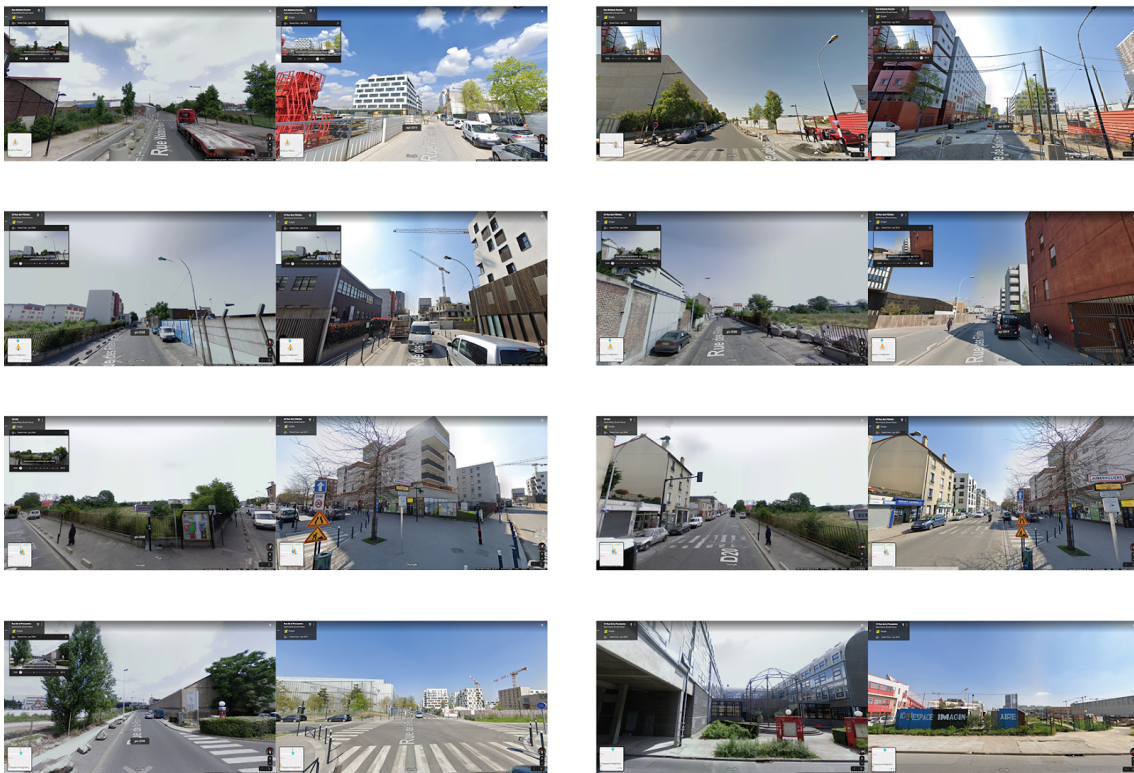


Figure 5.18 - Evolution of the urban structure in the streets of Plaine-St-Denis (2008-2019)
 Source: Google maps

Since the 1950s the neighborhood underwent a great phase of deindustrialization, as most industrial activities left by the 1980s. Since then, the former industrial areas have been progressively converted to services and residential spaces. For instance, the demolition of gas plants and the creation of the Stade de France for the 1998 Football World Cup led to relevant changes in the northern part of the neighborhood, with the cover of the highway cutting through the Plaine-St-Denis and the development of new office buildings. These offices now host the national seats of companies like Generali and SNCF, attracting thousands of commuting employees per day, and making La Plaine-St-Denis one of the largest tertiary poles in the Ile-de-France region.

In the following decades the neighborhood has progressively been redeveloped. In the central and southern sectors of the neighborhood this transformation - carried out mostly through ZACs (“Zone d’aménagement concerté” - concerted development zone)²¹ - industries gave way to (social and commercial) housing projects. On the eastern side, small industries have been replaced by the Campus Condorcet - among the largest campuses on social and human sciences in Europe - which opened its doors in 2019. The 2024 Olympics and the development of the Grand Paris Express ring metro line are also contributing to rising real estate values in the area. The closeness of the neighborhood with Porte de la Chapelle and its humanitarian camps for migrants entails the extensive presence of situations of fragility and lack of housing.

The Plaine is a neighborhood in profound shift; the uses of the territory are being redesigned after decades of industrial activity and decline; the populations using and living the spaces are shifting, with new temporalities and new cultures mixing in the area. Office workers, long-term immigrant residents, new low or middle-income neighbors, migrants, students, all cross paths in the neighborhood.

The lot object of the call is located in the central sector of the Plaine-St-Denis, in the Montjoie area. It used to host the building of the Centre national des arts et métiers (CNAM, Arts and crafts National centre). The Ile-de-France region, responsible for the activities of CNAM and owner of the building (while the lot itself was owned by the French State), decided to demolish it because there were no plans for its reuse at least for the following 4 years, it was in poor conditions and it was at risk of being illegally occupied.

²¹ A ZAC is a way of managing the planning and redevelopment process. Public administrations delegate to a developer (public or private, called “amenagers”) the transformation process of specific and bounded urban areas, and take back possession of buildings and spaces to manage them.



**Figure 5.19 - Location of the Espace Imaginaire in the Plaine-St-Denis neighborhood -
Elaboration of the author from Google Maps**

The lot falls within the ZAC La montjoie, developed by “Plaine Commune Aménagement”, a territorial development agency owned by Plaine Commune. The agency proposed to develop a temporary urbanism project under the supervision of the Municipality of St-Denis, establishing contacts with both, and in particular with the Neighborhood director²². The region subsequently entrusted the municipality with the lot, in order to organize the temporary use of the spaces while they planned for the future construction projects.

The call stemmed from the recognition by Plaine Commune that the area lacked places of conviviality. The goal of the call was to identify organizations able to animate the site, in particular with cultural activities, and to stimulate the participation of residents and new inhabitants. Artistic practices and temporary urbanism had been part of the planning processes of Plaine Commune for a few years. Artistic practices have been included in the processes of deliberation or information over new development projects. Temporary urbanism has been instead been used to give new uses to sites waiting to be redeveloped.

²² The municipality of St-Denis is divided in decentralized neighborhoods. Each elects a representative in the local municipal council. This representative is supported by the Neighborhood director - an administrative and political position - to convey the local needs and problems to the municipal council. M.R. has been the director of the Plaine neighborhood since 2017



Figure 5.20 - The Espace Imaginaire lot before intervention (spring 2016) - Source: Espace Imaginaire

In Mains d'œuvres the call was spotted by M.G., the head of the association's "Art and Society" department. Her work mostly focused on supporting artists in developing artistic projects out of the venue of Mains d'œuvres, in St-Ouen or surrounding neighborhoods. Having a background in urban planning and sociology, she was also involved by J.B. in the development of alternative venues for Mains d'œuvres. She also contributed to the development of the "Cour des myrtilles", an outdoor space in the original Mains d'œuvres venue, co-managed with the residents of the neighborhood.

As she saw the call, she approached J.B. and F.B. to assess how this call would interest the association: they recognized the potential value of this space in the framework of the contingency plan of Mains d'œuvres. It would be a first attempt to develop another cultural space, using the technical and practical skills of the association.

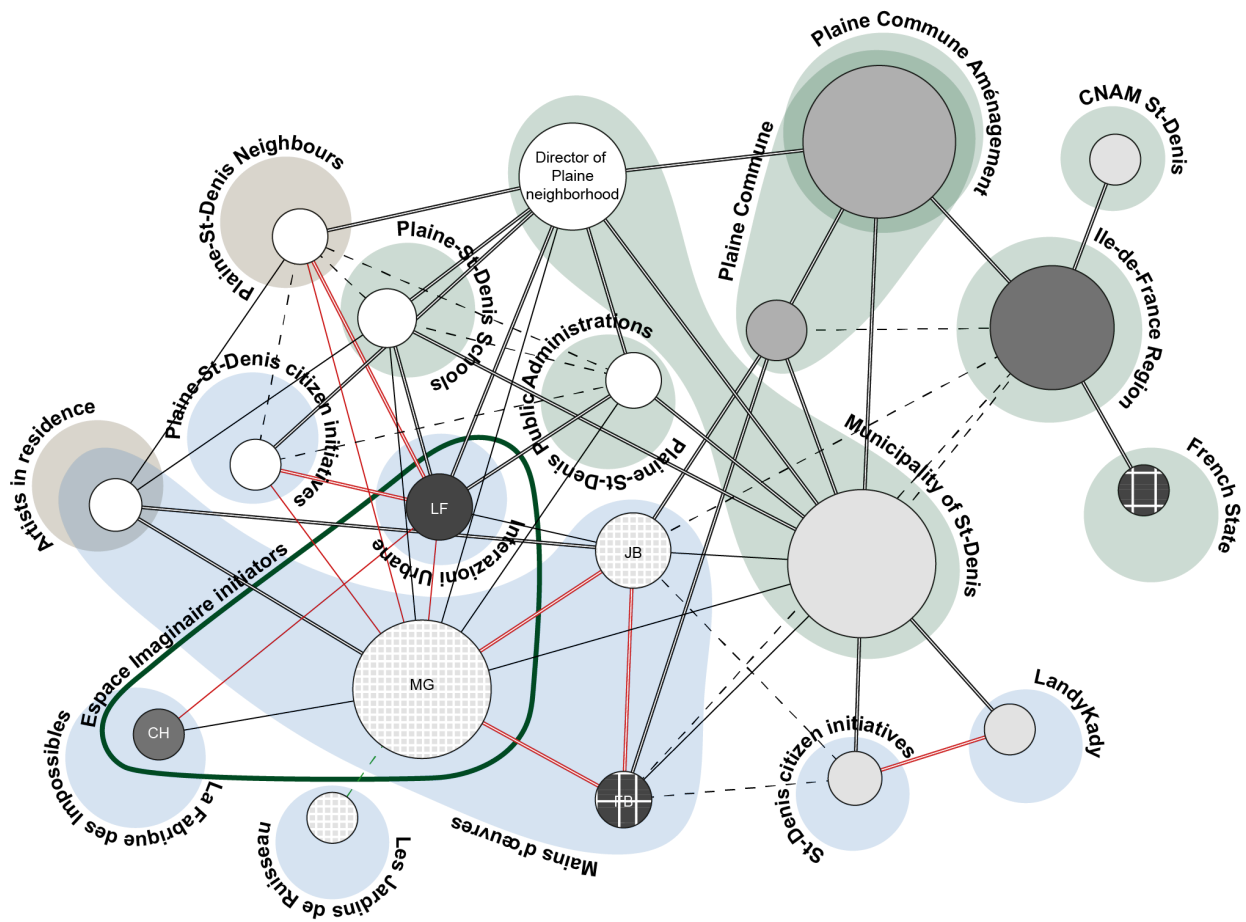
The main idea that M.G. developed was to co-design, co-construct and then co-manage an ecological cultural space shared with residents, associations, employees and users of the social, educational and health structures in the neighborhood, aiming at the re-imagination of the neighborhood. The core "dispositif" in this model is the "co-gestion" contract, with which associations, groups and individuals become co-managers of the space, where they can develop their activities and projects

This idea was inspired by the original philosophy of Mains d'œuvres, and the idea that art and culture is for and can be made by all citizens. These concepts were to be translated in a different context, with different spatial characters; she took other gardening spaces as inspiration, such as “les jardins du Ruisseau”. M.G. was informed as well by the writings of Henri Lefebvre on self-management and the right to the city.

In this phase she also developed two main partnerships. Acknowledging the need of DIY construction skills (and her lack thereof), she included Interazioni Urbane - an Italian architecture collective. The second partnership was with la Fabrique des Impossibles, experts in the conception of collective and participatory cultural projects (but that didn't take part in the following activities). She also unsuccessfully tried to establish connections with local associations.

In January 2016, after the evaluation of the proposals, Mains d'œuvres was awarded the space. The only alternative proposal had been submitted by the network Landykady. In March 2016 they signed a convention for the temporary use of the field for two years. The agreement stated that the municipality would give 10.000 € to start up the project and would cover the water and electricity costs - even if the field had no electricity or water connection at the time. Mains d'œuvres would support the project devoting half of M.G.'s working hours to the coordination of the project, searching for other sources of funding and providing materials and skills to the project. The space was called “Espace Imaginaire”.

In the following three months M.G. and Interazioni Urbane developed a diagnostic of the neighborhood, in order to identify the core needs and themes around which the project would be developed. This inquiry was carried out reaching out to institutions and citizens, visiting them in schools, social centres, public spaces, organizing participatory meetings with local organizations and adopting artistic methods, like sound portraits. The result of the diagnostic are the five core poles of activity of the Espace Imaginaire: Culture, Living Environment, Food, Mobility and Living Together.



Type of organization

- Academia
- Citizen initiative
- Public administration
- For-profit company
- Other

Emerging groups

- Espace Imaginaire initiators
- Espace Imaginaire Co-Managers
- Espace Imaginaire Coordination team
- Espace Imaginaire Representative office

Betweenness centrality

- ^ higher
- v lower

Territorial context of action

- Plaine St-Denis
- St-Ouen
- St-Denis
- Plaine Intercommunalité
- Seine-St-Denis Department
- Ile-de-France Region
- National French level
- International

Fields of relation

- Relations active in Espace Imaginaire process
- - - Relations active out of Espace Imaginaire process
- - - Relations active in and out of Espace Imaginaire process

Types of relations

- - - Professional relations
- - - Friendships/family + professional relations
- - - Friendship/family relations

Figure 5.20 - Espace Imaginaire network in spring 2016

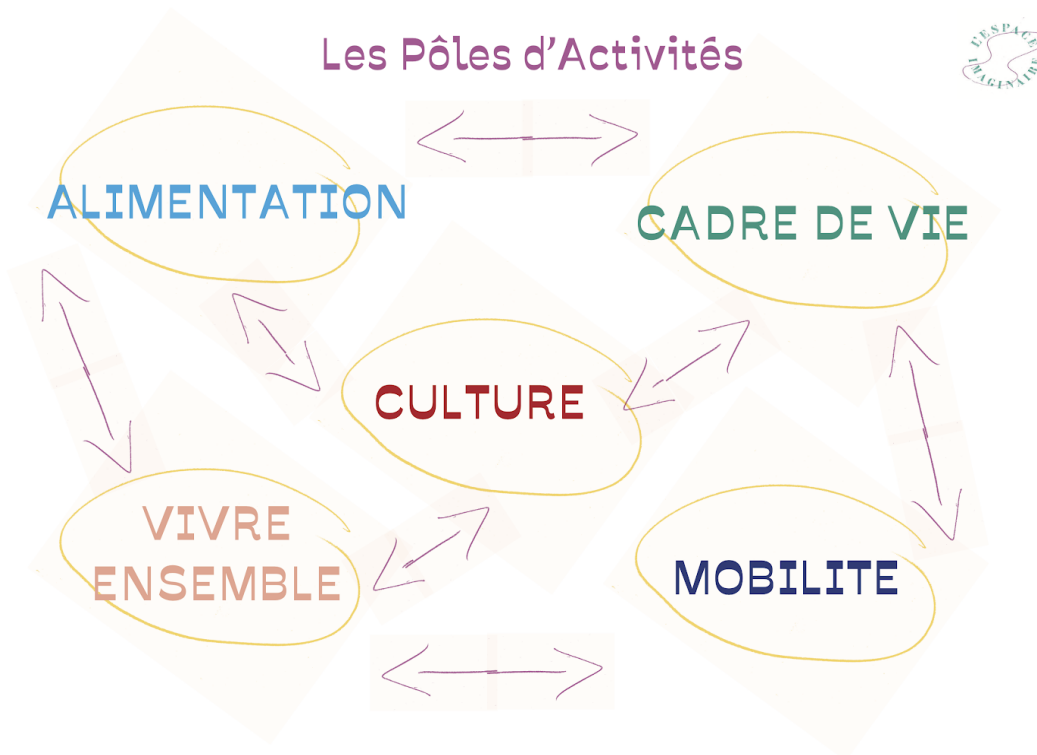


Figure 5.21 - Illustration of the five poles of activity of the Espace Imaginaire (2016) - Source: Espace Imaginaire

5.2.3 Assembling the Espace Imaginaire (2016-2018)

Having a clear - yet broad - framework for action, actors moved to the construction and recruitment of co-managers. At the end of spring 2016 the Espace Imaginaire still was just an empty field. As the diagnostic was being developed, the team of initiators conducted inquiries with local companies and construction sites to gather construction materials to be used in the space.

In June 2016 the field was officially opened, with the organization of public construction workshops and the first events. The first core spaces were built using waste materials from the local construction sites and buying used containers from local tv studios.

Material and organizational shortages made all operations difficult. The lack of electricity forced the organization to use a generator, which proved unreliable during the first public concerts and events. Construction works also suffered the lack of electricity, as operations were slowed down.

Construction operations were under the supervision of Interazioni Urbane, while the development of the artistic programme was responsibility of M.G.. Nonetheless, they all worked in connection with the members of Mains d'œuvres, who provided technical and production support in the development of the activities. The encounter between the way of operating of Mains d'œuvres and the emerging and

spontaneous operations in the Espace Imaginaire started to strain relations between the members of the “mother” association and M.G..

After the arrival of the containers and the completion of the first wooden structures, Interazioni Urbane left the project. They intended their role in the project not as co-managers, rather as initiators who developed the first spaces of the centre.

The co-managers recruiting campaign did not generate great feedbacks. Many actors were discouraged in taking part in the project as the technical limitations of the field wouldn't allow its comfortable uses. There were a few indoor spaces, no electricity, no running water and no heating.

Nonetheless, at the end of summer 2016 the “Un pas de plus” (UPDP) association became co-manager of the space. The association was mostly composed of people living in the streets of St-Denis. Even if it had more than 20 members, the association had not been detected during the participatory meetings, as they avoided formal settings. M.G. welcomed the association and its members, inciting them in using the Espace Imaginaire to develop their projects.

The association settled in the space and starting stocking waste materials that they collected throughout the neighborhood, trading it or reusing it for new functions. While they saw the potential of these materials as resources, M.G. also acknowledged that others would interpret it as garbage, and would therefore be discouraged in using the space. Furthermore, they wanted to construct housing spaces in the Espace Imaginaire, which M.G. strongly opposed as it was explicitly forbid in the convention with the municipality.

These contrasting perspectives also rested on troubled grounds. At the beginning the members of UPDP didn't trust M.G.. They didn't know her, and they feared that these contrasts would be an excuse for her to kick them out of the space if they did not follow her ideas. In order to develop a relationship based on trust, she organized meetings with them to discuss their ideas, explaining the reasons why she opposed the stockage of garbage and the construction of housing spaces.

As winter approached and they had no shelter, she allowed a group of them to spend the winter in the containers. Thanks to M.G.'s flexibility on established rules, they started recognizing that she was not against them, and she sincerely wanted to include them as co-managers.

M.G. recognized that the garbage - which she tried to limit with a constant cleaning effort - and the constant presence of only one type of actors in the space made the Espace Imaginaire less welcoming for other potential co-managers. Instead of seeing the situation as problematic because of their presence, she understood it as a situation where other actors were missing. In order to restart an activation process, she didn't throw the homeless out, but tried to fill the space with other co-managers. She acted to remove

what she thought was limiting the inclusion of other co-managers, in particular lobbying with the municipality to install an electric connection.

In March 2017 the electricity was activated. The project received 4000€ from Fondation France and from the Assemblée nationale (National Parliament). In Spring 2017 two groups of architects became co-managers: Systeme B and La Gonflée. The first association develops co-construction projects in parisian bidonvilles. The second one is focused on experimental, social and participatory architectural practices in public spaces. Systeme B was attracted to the Espace Imaginaire to stock materials and to test projects, while La Gonflée needed a space to park their inflating caravan.

After M.G. recognized and made clear that it wasn't her responsibility or part of the project to provide shelter, homeless people left the containers. One of them, L., is unofficially allowed to live on site, and became the keeper of the Espace Imaginaire.



Figure 5.22 - Co-managers discuss the co-construction of new spaces (2017) - Source: Espace Imaginaire

In spring and summer 2017 the organization of artistic residencies and events restarted in full swing, as the good season allowed the use of the open field. The containers were improved and a terrace made of pallets was built. These activities led to a revitalization of the project after a hard winter. Nonetheless, as

they required the assistance of the technicians of Mains d'œuvres, they further strained the relations with the native operations of the mother organization for the clash of ways of operating.

By then, M.G. had organized a planning system for the Espace Imaginaire, where each co-manager would say when they would use the space. Each co-manager had to organize activities in the space on a regular basis. The 20 co-managers would meet every few months in an assembly to discuss the problems and the projects they wanted to develop in the space.

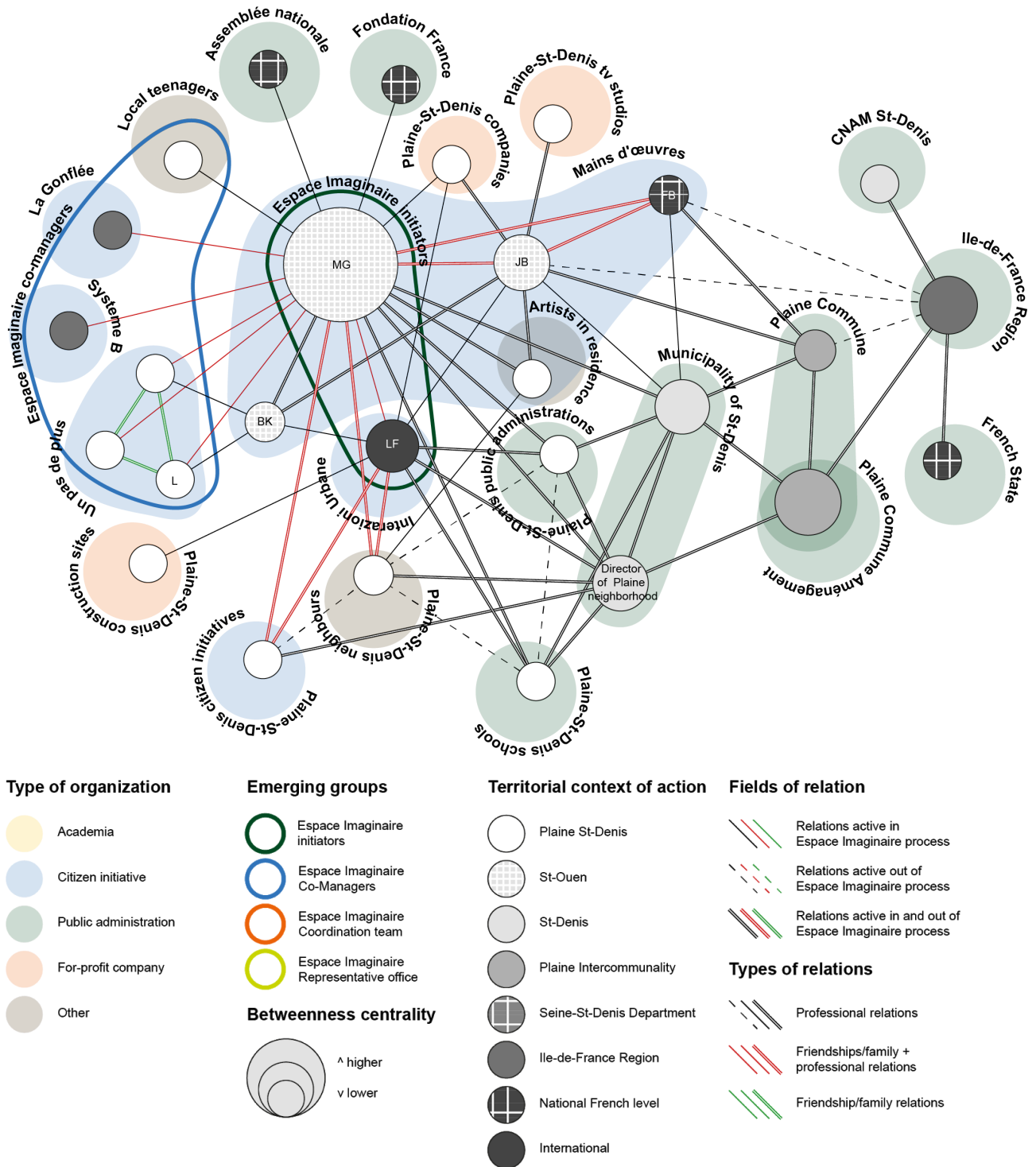


Figure 5.23 - Espace Imaginaire network at the end of 2017

In november 2017 a group of local teenagers started gathering in the space, making graffitis on all the containers. M.G. saw their actions as reappropriation practices, and explained them that this was exactly what the Espace Imaginaire was about. One of the kids took the responsibility of signing the co-management document, in order to allow all the group to access the space.

Over the weeks, as winter became spring and then summer (2018), the group of teenagers became a crowd, with over 30 teenagers meeting in the containers. The co-manager resigned, as he was having difficulties in making his friends behave according to the rules of the Espace Imaginaire. The group started to behave badly and to break rules, like being violent in the space. As a result, M.G. forbid them to use the space, and intimated them to come back after one month with a concrete proposal to become co-managers again. They continued attending some workshops organized by some co-manager, but they didn't apply to become co-manager again.

5.2.4 Clashing logics of engagement (2018)

By spring 2018 the group of co-managers had grew considerably; L. and Un pas de plus had started managing a Solidarity Kiosk, where people living in the streets could find shelter and warmth during daytime; the CityBzz project had installed a hive in the Espace Imaginaire to inform the public on the importance of bees for the ecosystem; the architectural collective "Sans Plus Attendre" started coordinating the co-design of new wooden structures; MI., a local resident, built a brick oven to make bread. Each of them developed their own project in the Espace Imaginaire, and some of them also began discussing potential collaborations.

M.G. was joined by JE, a young student doing her civil service at Mains d'œuvres. She was supposed to have a support role to M.G., but her coordination role was hardly replicable or replaceable. The role was strictly tied with the person of M.G., as it was linked to all the personal connections she had generated with co-managers, local residents, institutions and organizations. As she developed the project alone, all these relations were concentrated on one person. It was difficult to share responsibilities with others, as most of the intuitive reactions of co-managers when some issues emerged were to contact M.G.. Despite these problems, JE's presence provided some relief to M.G.. Mains d'œuvres also devoted a portion of the working hours of JO, a member of the technical team to the Espace Imaginaire, who provided a practical support to M.G..

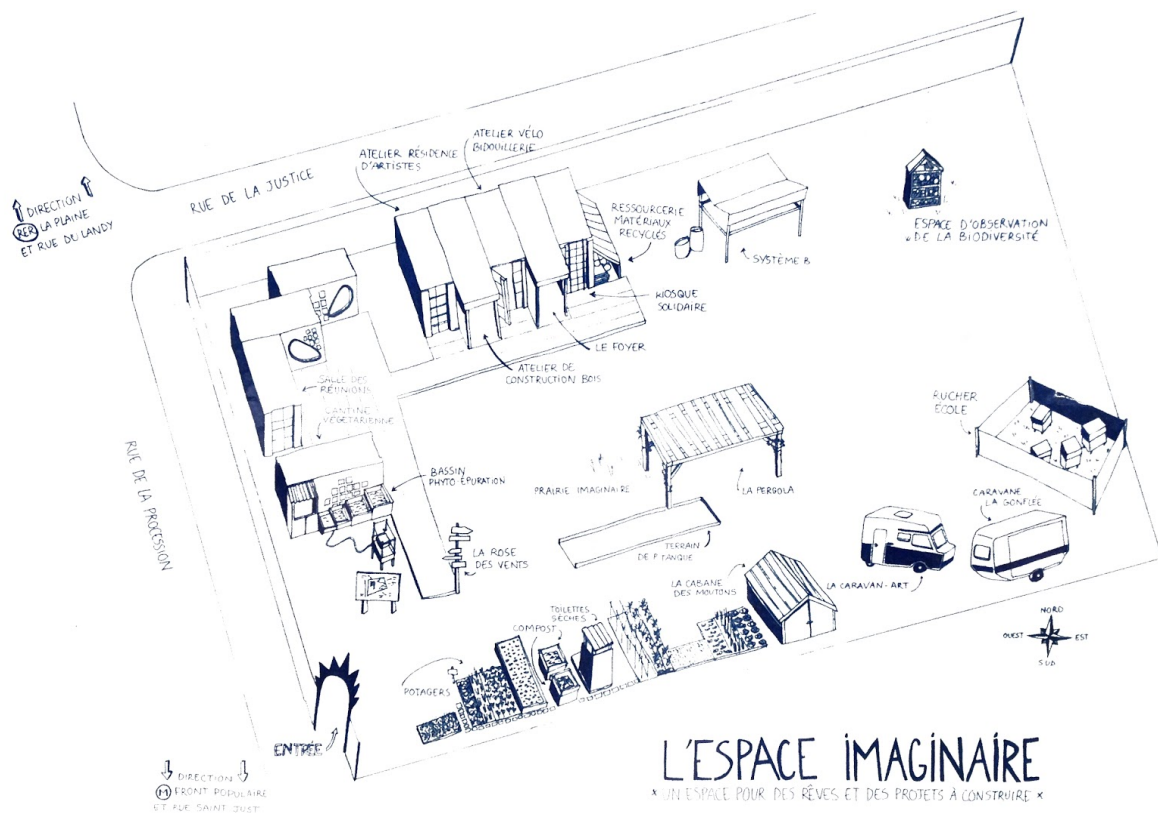


Figure 5.24 - Uses and spaces of the Espace Imaginaire (2018) - Source: Espace Imaginaire

Boiling tensions and frustrations started to emerge in this period between the Espace Imaginaire and Mains d'œuvres. Some members of Mains d'œuvres were critical of M.G. for her lack of skills in logistic management and her unclear communications, which led to conflictual expectations in organizing activities. Others criticized her for her excessive focus on St-Denis and the lack of attention towards her role in Mains d'œuvres. The technical team of the association resented J.B. to adding the task of developing the construction of the Espace Imaginaire without adding human or economic resources, resulting in feelings of abandonment.

On the other side, M.G. was highly critical of the rest of Mains d'œuvres, arguing that they were not interested enough in the Espace Imaginaire project, they didn't support her in the production of activities or attending events. She was feeling alone in this effort as well, as her work did not receive the recognition she thought it deserved.

During the first two years M.G. had worked intensively on the project. At the same time, she carried out her duties in Mains d'œuvres with the "Arts and society" department. She was also included by the director J.B. in the development of other cultural spaces across the Seine-St-Denis department, which

were then grouped under the La Main 93.0 mutualistic cooperative. As with the technical team, this additional workload did not result in a proportional reduction of other tasks. The accumulation of assignments beyond job descriptions and working hours were seen to be an integral part of Mains d'œuvres, under the activist institutional dimension I outlined in section 4.2.2.

After a phase of psychological distress and burnout related to the workload - coinciding with JE.'s departure - in spring 2018 M.G. reconsidered her commitment to this way of being part of Mains d'œuvres. She started refusing an excessive workload, diverging from the implicit institutional dimension of Mains d'œuvres. This shift of behaviour caused a change of heart of the director and other members of the organization, seeing M.G. as less committed to the cause.

Furthermore, M.G. and J.B. held different perspectives on the relation between the Espace Imaginaire project and the general strategy they were developing for Mains d'œuvres. J.B. was focused on the problematic situation faced by Mains d'œuvres in relation to the eventual departure from the St-Ouen venue. The Espace Imaginaire was seen as a project that could give Mains d'œuvres certain benefits in the framework of the Main 93.0 cooperative. Consequently, it should be developed with an instrumental rationality trying to reach goals according to a timeplan, fitting the needs of the mother association.

This perspective contrasted the core principles of the project as it was understood by M.G.. She saw the project as an effort to stimulate the emergence of self-organization and self-determination processes by co-managers: the enforcement of an external rationality or vision would have undermined the development of these processes. The success of the project depended on letting it develop by itself as an ecosystem. These different perspectives can be understood through Jullien's (1998) european and chinese strategic logics. Where europeans conceptualize strategies as the development of a plan to be then implemented in practice, chinese thinkers see strategy as the interpretation of the local potential, emerging from the field by itself.

J.B. and M.G. clashed when the enforcement of a plan constituted a risk for the emergence of the potential. In particular, this happened regarding the creation of the autonomous "Association Espace Imaginaire". J.B. wanted to create the association in order to receive more funding from the municipality of St-Denis. M.G. argued instead that the association had to be created when the co-managers were ready to take this step by themselves and that they needed more time to develop.²³

²³ The association was ultimately created in November 2018, following the co-managers' own decisions

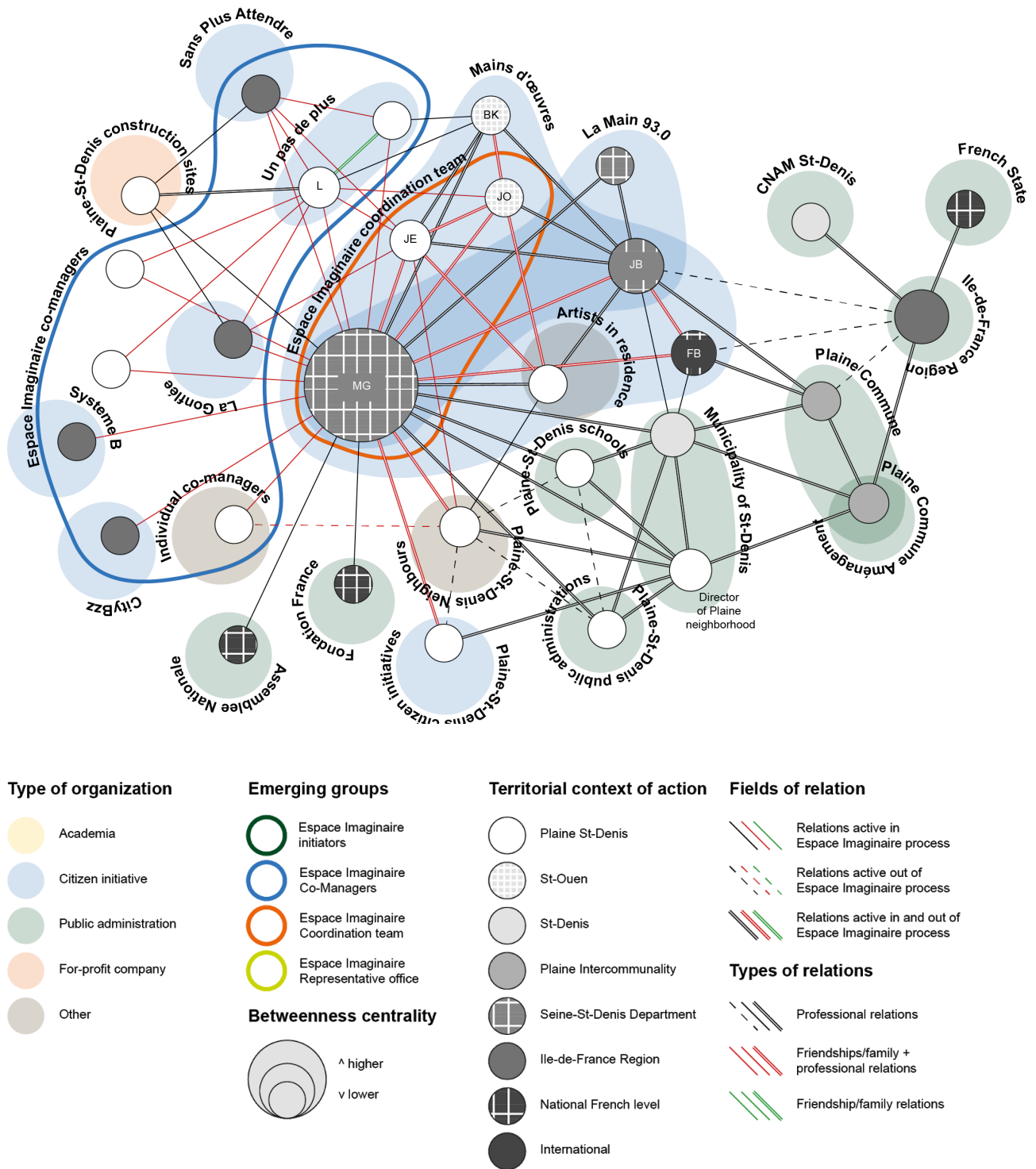


Figure 5.25 - Espace Imaginaire network in spring 2018

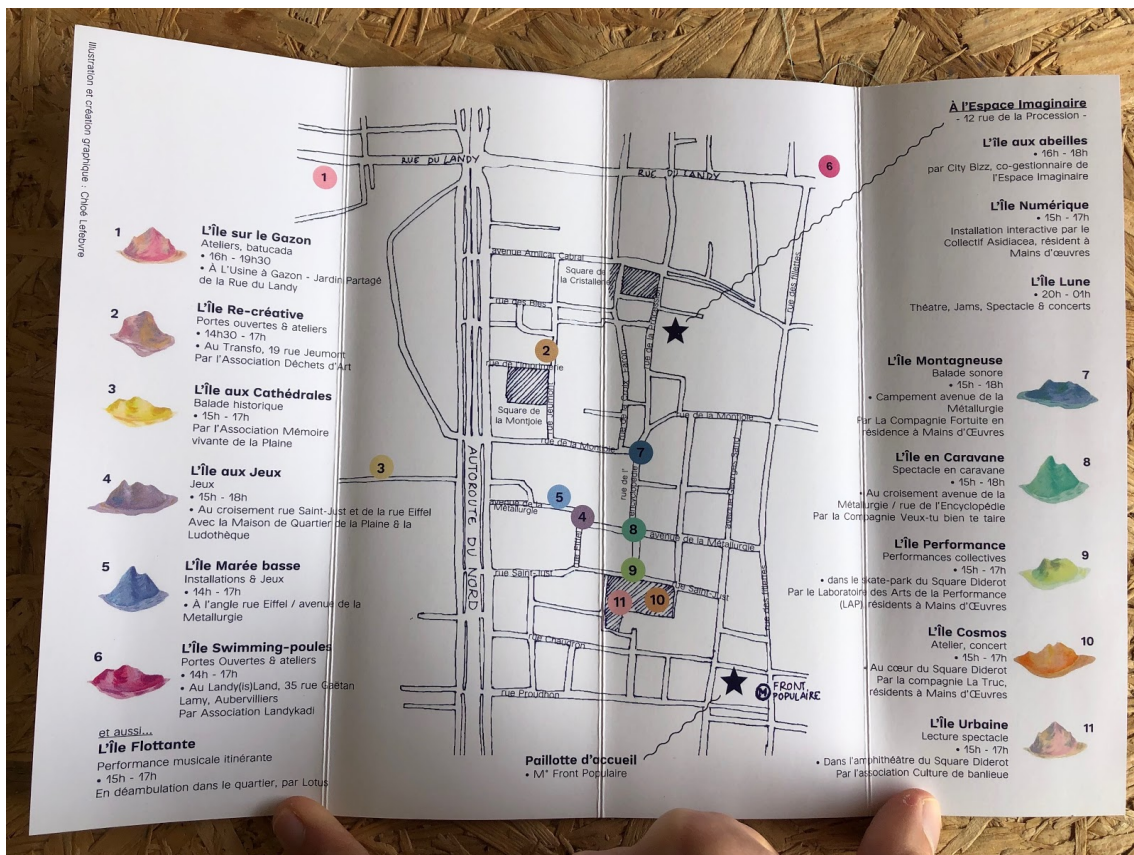


Figure 5.26 - Map of the Croisière sur la Plaine (2018) - Source: Espace Imaginaire

In the summer of 2018 M.G. launched the first edition of the “Croisière sur la Plaine” (Cruise on the Plaine), a day-long urban festival involving local artistic and cultural organizations and institutions, the co-managers of the Espace Imaginaire and artists in residence in Mains d'œuvres. Even if in the past the Espace Imaginaire developed activities in the public spaces of the Plaine, the Croisière was the biggest event out of its premises, involving a relevant local cultural network.

The Croisière was part of the artistic events organized by M.G. and the coordination team in connection with different actors. These events were curated by neighbors (for instance for birthdays, or other community activities), by co-managing artistic organizations (the Hoc Momento theatre events) or by artists in residence (the presentation of the participatory digital performance of AADN). The coordination team had the role of facilitating and supporting artists on the organizational and bureaucratic issues.

As the two years of temporary occupation expired, in June 2018 Mains d'œuvres entered talks with the municipality to continue the project. The association asked the municipality to increase their financial support up to 50.000 € a year. Ultimately the convention was renewed for two more years, with a provision of 10.000 € per year.

After the 2018 summer, Mains d'œuvres entered a financial crisis. Their European Social Fund grant was not renewed, and the association faced a 58.000€ deficit. The final solution to recover from this deficit was to fire two employees of the association by december 2018 and to restructure the organization (see section 4.2.2).

M.G. was one of them. Her relations with Mains d'œuvres and J.B. were further strained during the process of identification of solutions for the financial crisis. The CA and J.B. proposed an internal participatory process to brainstorm potential solutions, in which employees and members of the association pitched in with their ideas. Nonetheless, as time went by the communication across the different bodies of the association became tense and difficult, resulting in resentment and in the awareness of the hollowness of this process (and raising questions about the “shared governance” model of Mains d'œuvres).

Furthermore, the Conseil d'administration of Mains d'œuvres chose to withdraw the association from the Espace Imaginaire project. They only granted the part-time support of A.P. and C, two girls already doing their civil services half in Mains d'œuvres and half at the Espace Imaginaire.

5.2.5 Walking on my own - development of the independent association (2019)

In the first months of 2019 the Espace Imaginaire entered a period of uncertainty. M.G.'s salary as coordinator stopped being provided by Mains d'œuvres. In autumn 2018 she expressed the need to leave the operative role of coordination to reduce her presence on site. She became the president of the Espace Imaginaire Association, and two neighbors took the positions of secretary and treasurer.

Daily operations fell upon AP and C, the civil service employees of Mains d'œuvres. The pair struggled to fit into M.G.'s shoes. On a first level, they were split between Mains d'œuvres and the Espace Imaginaire as M.G. was in the previous years. They were tasked with M.G.'s former duties in St-Ouen and at the same time had to coordinate and be a reference in the Espace Imaginaire.

Secondly, they struggled in establishing relations with co-managers and local partners. These actors were used to work with M.G.; their relations of trust with her were not directly transferred to AP and C, who had to build for themselves these connections.

Thirdly, the transfer of relations of trust was complicated by the M.G.'s lack of responsiveness and clarity. She left Paris for long periods of time in the first months of the year, and then took another job, making operations more difficult. Even if she officially left the coordination role of the organization, she still implicitly supervised the operations of A.P. and C. and curated relations with institutional partners. As she didn't clearly invest them with her role, the other actors continued to see her as the coordinator of the project, delegitimizing the position of A.P. and C..

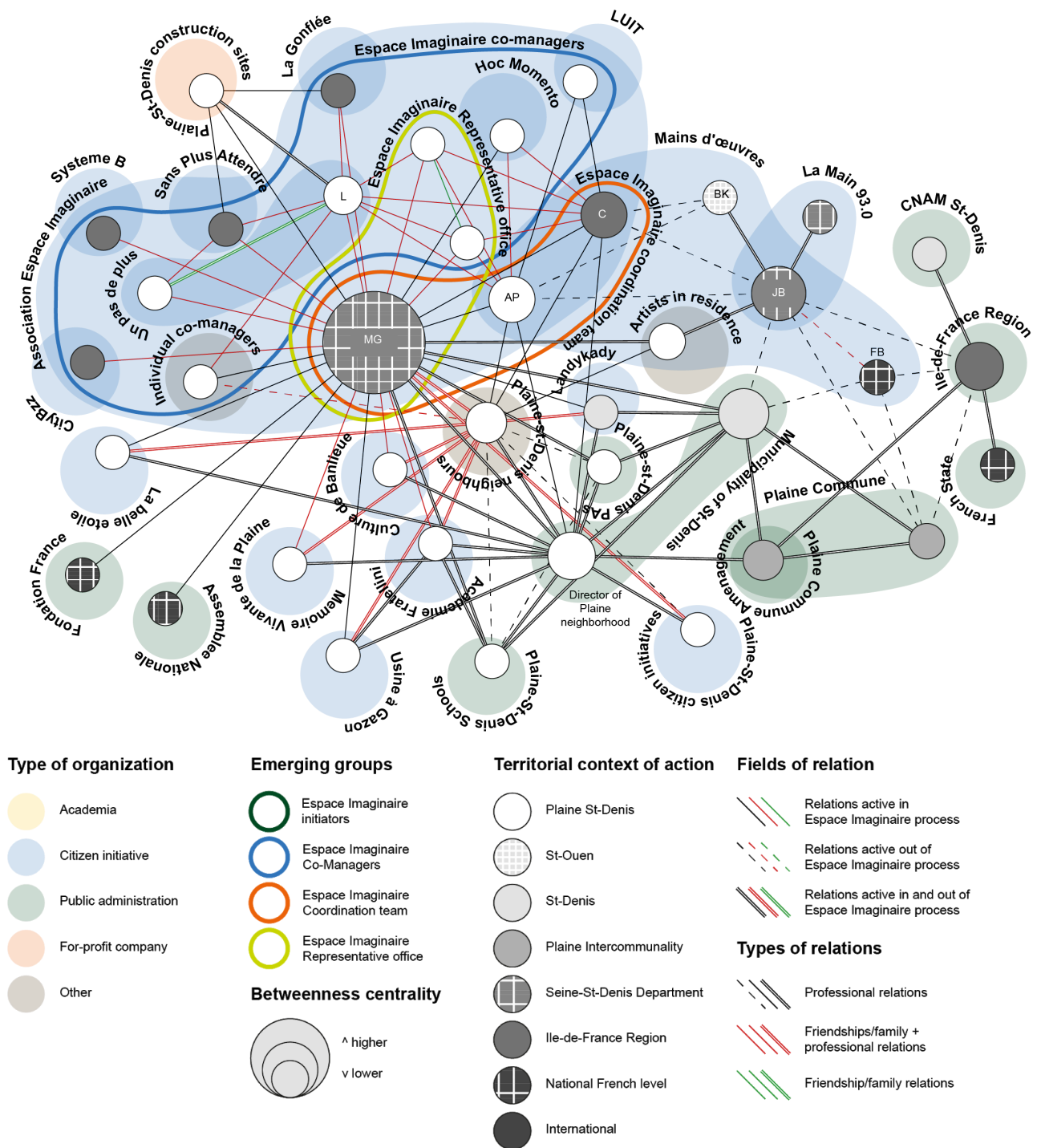


Figure 5.27 - Espace Imaginaire network at the end of 2018

During the 2018-19 winter the coordination office (M.G., A.P. and C.) wanted to attract new populations of users in the space. To do so, they included as co-managers some neighbors who desired to develop new activities in the space. Some of them wanted to offer educational activities for local kids (Association La Mauvaise École); others started micro-entrepreneurial projects, like the creation of a “The food assembly”²⁴ distribution point and the opening of an economic hairdresser for the low-income

²⁴ The Food Assembly is an online farmers' market that aims to help farmers sell their produce direct to consumers

families of the neighborhood. These new co-managers constitute a third wave of co-managers, after the pioneering co-managers and the second-wave architecture collectives. Their activities are based on the transformation of unsatisfied needs of the neighborhood into new services.



Figure 5.17 - The hairdresser of the Espace Imaginaire (2019) - Source: Espace Imaginaire

Collaborations between co-managers also materialized in the space. For instance, during the 2018-19 winter the co-managing architectural collective La Gonflée developed the project and constructed a greenhouse, to satisfy the needs of different co-managers: La Mauvaise Ecole needed spaces for educational activities; gardening neighbors also needed space for their greenery during winter time. The project was supported by the coordination office to obtain funding and by other co-managers to gather recycled materials.

In this period the Director of the Plaine neighborhood, M.R., proposed the categorization of the Espace Imaginaire as a protected green space in the process of revision of the Plan Local d'Urbanisme Intercommunal (PLUI, "Intermunicipal Urban Local Plan") of the Plaine Commune intercommunality. In the approved version of the PLUI, 85% of the Espace Imaginaire had been protected. The remaining 15% is destined to construction: even if is a limited portion of the space, it is seen as a menace for the Espace Imaginaire, as it overlaps with the areas co-managers and residents use the most. Furthermore, the

Region will soon start the construction of the CNAM in an unused part of the same lot: the association is in discussion with the Municipality regarding the outline of the construction site.

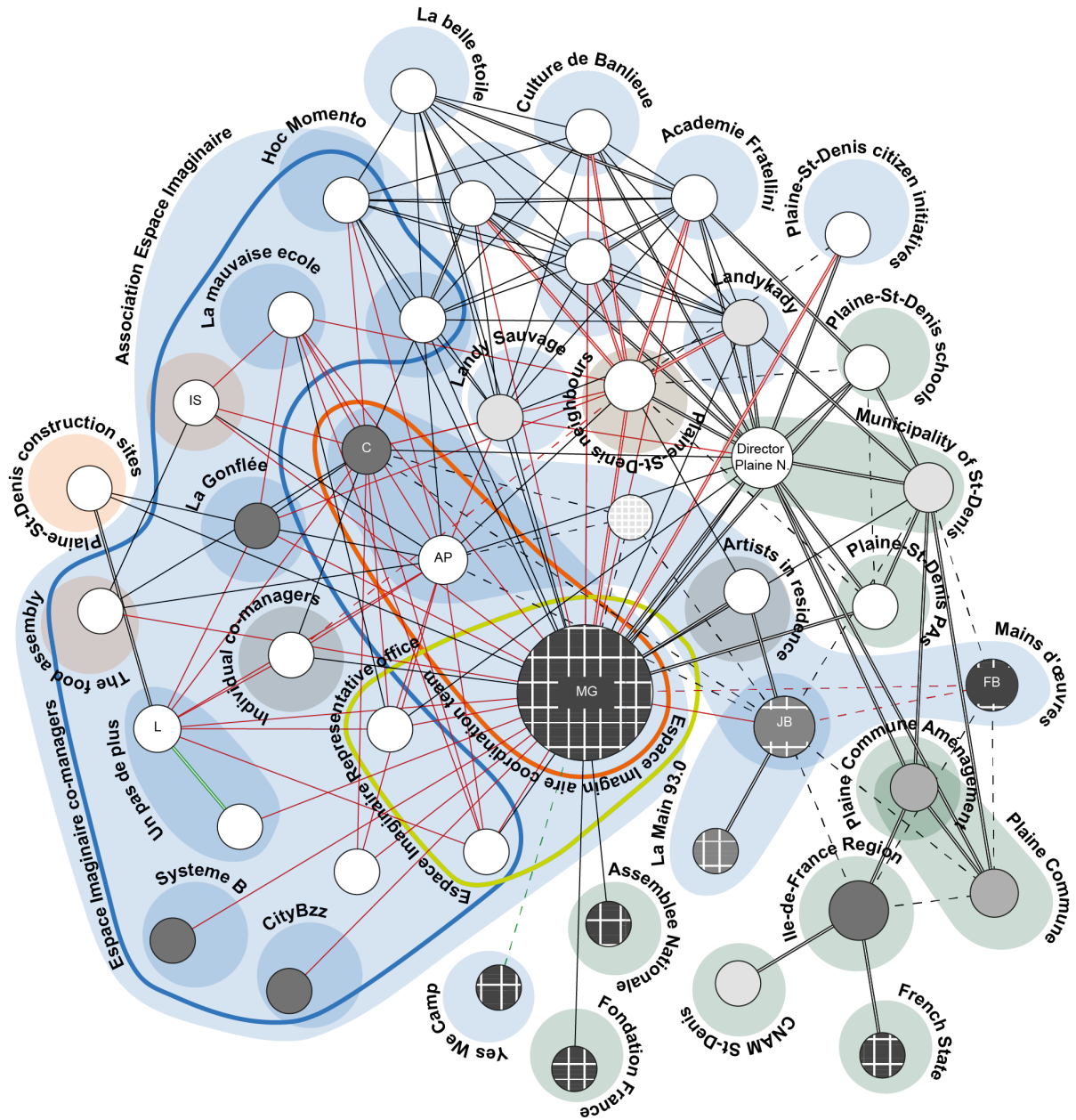
After a summer of artistic events and the second edition of the Croisiere sur la Plaine, A.P. and C. were bound to end their civil service at Mains d'œuvres, and M.G. was planning to move out of Paris. In september 2019 M.G. organized a “Imaginary Seminar” to understand how the Espace was working at the time, to explore what each co-manager desired and in which directions could the association go.

As a result, in november 2019 the General Assembly of the association approved a renewed governance model. This new structure went beyond the dualism between coordination office and co-managers, moving towards a “Holacratic” model. This system is based on the distribution of responsibility rather than its delegation and concentration in an office, respecting the core co-management principles of the Espace.

The new holacratic model is based on the creation of six thematic circles (funding/administration, internal/external communication, site security/cleaning/hygiene, programming and event coordination, construction/planning, gardening). Each co-manager has its own project, and is part of one circle. Each circle is linked with a list of tasks: some are part of its sphere of autonomy, while others require the validation by the Conseil d'Administration or other circles. The Conseil d'Administration gathers one or two representative from each circle. Furthermore, the association will not be composed only of the co-managers but also by external supporters, who wish to be part of the project without becoming co-manager.

Their economic model will be based on subventions from different institutions and on self-generated revenue. As the area starts being inhabited by students and professionals working in the newly-created Campus Condorcet, new services could increase self-generated revenues.

This new model will guide the Association in 2020. Without the guidance of the founder - M.G. - and the eviction of the “mother” organization from its venue in october 2019 - Mains d'œuvres, the Espace Imaginaire is now trying to walk on its own.



Type of organization

- Academia
- Citizen initiative
- Public administration
- For-profit company
- Other

Emerging groups

- Espace Imaginaire initiators
- Espace Imaginaire Co-Managers
- Espace Imaginaire Coordination team
- Espace Imaginaire Representative office

Betweenness centrality

- ^ higher
- v lower

Territorial context of action

- Plaine St-Denis
- St-Ouen
- St-Denis
- Plaine Intercommunality
- Seine-St-Denis Department
- Ile-de-France Region
- National French level
- International

Fields of relation

- Relations active in Espace Imaginaire process
- Relations active out of Espace Imaginaire process
- Relations active in and out of Espace Imaginaire process

Types of relations

- Professional relations
- Friendships/family + professional relations
- Friendship/family relations

Figure 5.29 - Espace Imaginaire network in autumn 2019

5.3 Comparing the cases by appreciating their multiplicities

After this brief outline of each case, we can reflect on how to analyse them in relation to the second research question. The cases of the Nová Synagóga (NS) and Espace Imaginaire (EI) fit all the criterias outlined in the case-selection process of subsection 3.5.1. They are processes of urban intervention managed by long-existing citizen initiatives out of their original premises, with the major participation of external actors in development of project, developed out of the organizational routines of the citizen initiative, yet with a strong commitment of the initiative in the development of the project. Nonetheless, the two are deeply different. At a first glance, they do not share much: their objects of intervention are a national monument in an historical core and an empty field in a suburban setting. The operations emerge as a project or as a spontaneous and intuitive process. They engage differently with public administrations and with the public opinion. They have a million-euros budget or survive on the scraps they find on the streets. They rush for the moon or they wait for the development of the internal potential.

After a territorial and spatial contextualization, in this first analytical part of the chapter I present the analytical lenses that allow the emergence of the themes and characters of the cases. I follow the actors in the development of their actions as dialogical engagement with their environment, considering the situations they face as understandable only through their own perspectives. As I introduced in the second chapter, I explore the plural analytical dimensions of action, considering geometries, mutations and evolutions. This approach allows the exploration of the processes along their major analytical dimensions, through the mobilization of some aspects of a case to unveil something about the other.

But while the first empirical chapter focused on (mostly) stable processes, in this chapter I am exploring shifting and evolving situations, that are not (yet) structured in stable and easily understandable organizing processes. While we can frame each case under the umbrella of a process of urban transformation, they can not be reduced to unitary processes. Situations are being contested, connected and explored. In the cases lies the inherent multiplicity of an inextricable complexity, as it is determined by the simultaneous presence of heterogeneous elements (Calvino, 1988).

The analytical attention has therefore to focus on how to assess the loosely connected heterogeneous multiplicity of the cases. In this section I explore the most relevant analytical dimensions of said multiplicity through the works of diverse authors and literatures. The interaction of these empirical phenomena with different approaches allows the emergence of creative reactions and generation of new knowledge. Like chemical substances, the reactions stemming from their interactions reveal something

about their nature. As we stimulate different interactions, the complexity of the constructed interpretation of the objects incrementally improves (Dewey, 1938:165).

This analytical exploration leads, in the last subsection, to the formulation of interpretations for each case. The summarization of the cases is supported by the graphic representation of the evolution of situations and strategies in each case, that gather the multiple analytical approaches presented in the section and facilitate their joint analysis.

The analysis of these aspects, in their detailed and minute parts, subsequently allows the discussion of the second research question, analysing the presence of processes of learning and innovation.

5.3.1 Territorial and spatial contextualization

The two cases, as presented in the case selection process (see table 3.1 in section 3.5.1), differ in the size of urban settlement they are positioned, in the characters of their urban contexts, and in the architectural characters of the transformed spaces. The two processes are commensurable as research questions and subsequent analysis of the cases focus on processes and interactions that are not ontologically different in the two contexts. Nonetheless, these differences influence the way interactions and processes develop in the two cases. The micro-sociological analytical tools I adopt to discuss the cases (presented in the next subsections) have therefore to be understood in the frame of contexts of action, related in particular to their urban and spatial dimensions.

An empty field in a suburban industrial area of a global western metropolis and a modernist Synagogue nearby the historical core of a mid-sized eastern european city present a broad range of differences. The first and most obvious is the stark difference in the size of urban settlements they are located in. The Nova Synagoga case is located in a mid-sized city, while the Espace Imaginaire is part of one of the largest European metropolitan areas. This difference generated important consequences on the development of the two processes, in particular in relation to the different types and levels of relations established locally.

In the Nova Synagoga case, the process unfolded since its beginnings beyond the borders of Zilina. Given its medium size, the city did not held all the resources required for the project. Two of the three initiators lived in Bratislava, establishing a first footing out of Zilina. The strategy of acquisition of resources focused on securing resources outside the city: knowledge from academics in Kosice and Bratislava, financial resources from crowdfunders across the country and from international projects. On the other side, strategic knowledge and legal resources to implement the process were highly localized. Furthermore, the protagonists of the manipulation of these resources were local actors, leaving actors

outside the city in marginal roles. In this case, the limited size of the city forced local actors to look beyond the urban borders, exploiting their links and connections but without abdicating their primary role.

Similarly to the operations in Zilina, the Plaine-St-Denis is a local context lacking rich endemic resources. The process involves therefore multiple actors beyond this local context. This involvement presents however relevant differences: the first is linked with the initiators of the process, none of which was localized in the Plaine, originating in other municipalities of the Seine-St-Denis department or from abroad. Furthermore, the external actors involved in the process were mostly located within the Ile-de-France metropolitan region, in particular from Paris or from within the Seine-St-Denis department. Local actors were involved incrementally along the process, leading to a relevant presence of neighbors and citizen initiatives at the end of the research. Mirroring this dynamic, we can recognize that both processes saw a first phase of expansion of external actors, whose subsequent reduction led to the prominent role of local actors.

The different type of urban contexts of the two processes also led to different opportunities and constraints. The Nova Synagoga benefited from its position close to the historical urban area of Zilina, which still represents its economic and social core. The amount of public space usage of this area of the city allowed the initiative to attract the attention of passerby traffic, in order to raise awareness on the project. Furthermore, its greater proximity to the city centre compared with Stanica Zilina-Zariecie cultural center led to increased accessibility by broader and more diverse audiences. On a negative side, this position contributed to a significant public scrutiny over the project; however, this scrutiny was mostly due to the cultural connection of the citizens with the former use of the space.

The location of the Espace Imaginaire in a former industrial area in rapid transformation constituted a significant obstacle for its initial development. The shifting character of the neighborhood affected the presence of stable social networks and connections to activate straightforwardly. Nonetheless, position was well served by public transportation, making it accessible by the whole metropolitan area through the RER. Furthermore, this context lacking local networks and connections allowed the Espace to influence the establishment of relations. The lack of public attention on the project eased the scrutiny over its development. The present and future opening of new large attractors of residents and commuters in the area also positions the project well in benefitting from passerby traffic and shifting demographics.

The the cultural and material architectural aspects of the spaces also impacted the two processes. The Nova Synagoga is a heritage building, with complex architectural elements and stratified cultural meanings. Its heritage nature amplified the public scrutiny over the process of reuse, with criticisms by

experts and with the involvement by law of specific actors. Its complex architectural elements complicated the works, as the actors discovered them along the process. The choice of a restoration style was among the most debated issues along the process, connected with the multiple meanings of the building. This multiplicity constrained part of the operations, as time was required to bridge and understand different positions; it also constituted a valuable resources, as it allowed the mobilization of multiple publics linked with the different meanings of the cultural heritage.

The character of the Espace Imaginaire as an open field presented important consequences for its transformation. This blank space was filled with ideas and practices, allowing the experimentation by the different co-managers taking part in its reuse and construction. At the same time, its lack of basic infrastructure (water, sewage, electricity) for long periods of time limited the participation of citizens interested in becoming co-managers. Furthermore, the contaminated soil limited the performance of gardening practices. The residual nature of the space also limited the public scrutiny at the beginning of the process of transformation, facilitating the emergence of radical and experimental practices.

After this brief contextualization, it is easier to delve into the micro-sociological aspects of the processes.

5.3.2 Multiple domains in a situation

The problematic situations that actors encountered over the course of the processes presented many facets. Developing multiple interactions with their situations, they developed more complex understandings (Dewey, 1938). As they engaged with their contexts and objects of intervention, they engaged and discovered other aspects of the situation, shifting their attention from one to another, and formulating theories on their mutual relations.

We can refer to these aspects as domains of the situation. The term has been used in design literature, but can also be adapted to situations of less intentional action. Schön and Wiggins (1992) used it in relation to the way designers translate and assess the effects (intentional and unintentional) their actions generate across design domains. For instance, they describe how in an architectural studio exercise, an inexperienced student discovers that her intentional actions on the spatial configuration of a building have consequences also on the quality of the space, its organization and potential programme. Her studio professor shows greater skills in working across these domains, easily referring to additional domains like construction technology, costs, circulation, building character (Schön and Wiggins, 1992: 72). The authors advance the idea that experience in designing can improve the “feeling” for the possible interactions across domains.

By naming and categorizing these domains - with definitions constructed in the situation through previous or emerging knowledges - actors made sense of their specific situation and opened sub-situations of action. They frame a portion of the general situation into another situation, in which other actors can interact even without being aware of the first problematic situation.

We can understand the EI and NS processes of urban transformation as constructs bridging across multiple domains of action. A list of the main domains include, for the NS case: finding suitable tenants for the Synagoga, defining the style of renovation, architectural configuration, details and the program of the building; finding financial resources, organizing a managing team, working for the citizen initiative and communicating the project. For the EI case, we can identify: designing a temporary and permanent use for the space; facing the political and financial crisis of Mains d'œuvres; designing the initial proposal, finding resources, establishing connections with the neighborhood, coordinating the project across co-managers, building the architectural spaces of the Espace Imaginaire, developing own projects at the EI, working for the citizen initiative. We can visualize the multiple domains of the two cases in the analysis of situations and strategies in Figures 5.32 and 5.33. The networks in figures 5.30 and 5.31 provide a snapshot of the distribution of the domains in the networks at the moments of maximum complexity of the processes.

These domains pertain to different aspects of the urban transformation, ranging from social to architectural dimensions. They are ways through which designers (and - generalizing - actors) construct and categorize their knowledge of a specific situation or object, making use of already-existing instituted ways of seeing and engaging with the world, or inventing new categories.

Domains are also relevant in relation to the connections and spillovers that actors can assess between them. Action on A generates effects on B. Designers often intentionally tackle one design domain at the time, mainly for reasons of complexity: students discover the other domains through the assessment of the effects of their move, allowing the emergence and assessment of complexity a posteriori (Schön and Wiggins, 1992: 72). Designing becomes a “cumulative process of discovery”, generating outputs in relation to the intentions and enriching the designer’s understanding of relations across domains (Schön and Wiggins, 1992: 73).

Having clear the compresence of these design domains, we should now problematize the social dimension of their relations. Their exploration and coordination could be tackled collectively or divided in individual tasks, with different geometries.

5.3.3 Multiple actors per situation

Schön and Wiggins (1992) explored the ground zero of design complexity, where a single designer works with materials and establishes a conversation with them. At a second level of complexity, Schön and Rein (1994: 166-169) see designing as a social process. In this situation, the designer is a “design system”, composed of multiple actors; or the design (policy) object is being judged by a larger arena in its environment. At a third level, the authors consider the divergence of action frames by the actors engaged in the process. In these situations designing is not only an effort in communicating meanings and testing solutions on a specific environment, but also bridging across interpretations of the environment itself.

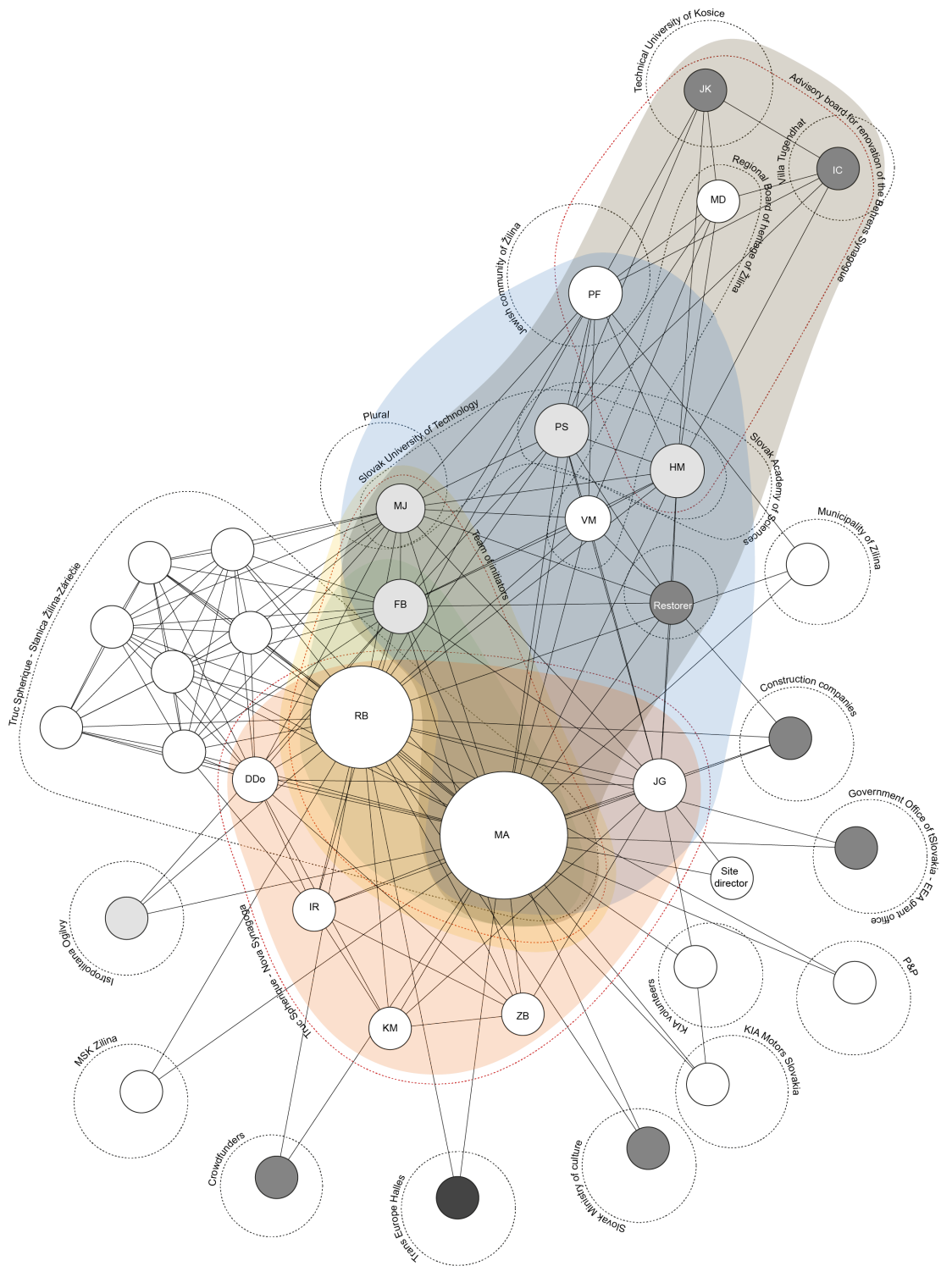
As in this third level of complexity, in our cases we can observe that a multiplicity of actors tried to influence the situation establishing their frames to interpret reality. Competing, cooperating and negotiating in the manipulation of the policy object, the social process of designing inevitably became political (ibid: 87-88).

Differently from the situations explored by Schön and Rein, in which all designers coalesced around a policy object, in my cases the multiple actors were dispersed across the different domains of the situation. As we can see in Figures 5.30 and 5.31, some focused on architectural details, others worked on the financial side. Combining the acknowledgement of multiple designers with the observation of multiple domains of a situation, we recognize how actors moved across domains developing multiple interactions.

In the Nová Synagóga case actors usually engaged in multiple domains of action. As each domain hosted several actors, interactions within them were more dense and prone to frictions and conflicts, but also to generative ideas. Furthermore, each actor was often active in multiple domains, generating a decentralized system of awareness of the different aspects of the process and its interconnected effects.

As we can see from figure 5.30, the initiators - and in particular M.A. and R.B. - were present in every domain of the project. Each initiator brought a specific expertise to a domain of the project. While the others were more focused on single dimensions, M.A. had a panoramic view connecting domains in a theory of action, as he knew a bit of every domain. He also played the role of broker of the process, exerting high levels of influence.

The process was however never fully controlled by M.A. or by the team of initiators. As they opened the process to others, decentralizing its unfolding and avoiding central coordination, control was to be exerted collectively. Along the process, actors interpreted this approach as a productive loss of control, which would allow the acquisition of resources and the invention of new solutions. Nonetheless, looking back some actors recognize that some of the most important decisions were lost in the translation between domains, like the decision to restore and repaint the stripes, since the communication in the core team of initiators and with the Advisory board didn't keep up with the speed of each domain.



Type of organization

- Established groups and organizations
- Emerging groups

Types of relations

- Relations

Territorial context of action

- Zilina
- Bratislava
- Other National or Czech
- International

Domains of situations

- Defining a general strategy of action + Defining the program of the building
- Defining the architectural configuration
- Defining the style of renovation + Defining the architectural details
- Finding financial resources
- Organizing a managing team

Figure 5.30 - Domains of situations in the Nova Synagoga network in 2016

In the Espace Imaginaire, M.G. was involved in all the aspects of the project, but lacked a support team to share responsibilities with and skills to coordinate by herself. As it is visible in the social networks in Figures 5.25, 5.27, 5.29, the civil service aides that were tasked with supporting her (J.E., A.P. and C.) were active only for short stretches of the project, and struggled to reach a status of centrality at the level of M.G.. J.B. was involved in some aspects of the Espace Imaginaire on a secondary role and on the Mains d'œuvres affairs with an authoritative approach. In the Nova Synagoga instead the core team mostly interacted on equal ground.

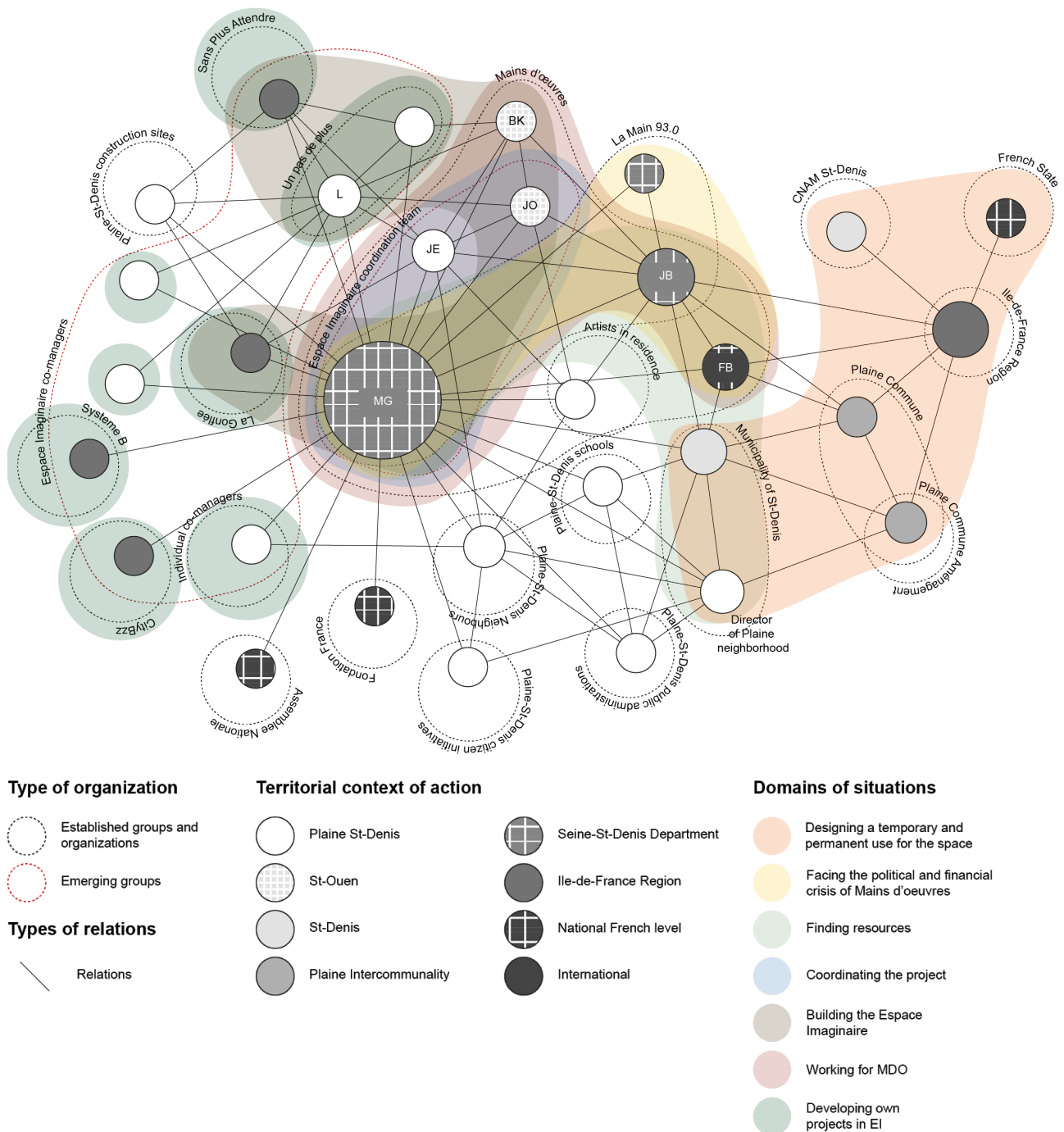


Figure 5.31 - Domains of situations in the Espace Imaginaire network in spring 2018

As shown in figure 5.31, in the actors of the Espace Imaginaire process were scattered across different domains, with just a few actors per domain and little presences in multiple domains. Co-managers mostly focused on developing their projects in the Espace on their own. Public administrations only operated at a broad policy level. This limited integration of actors in domains limited the exchange of informations, relying on central coordination (M.G. and the civil services) for communication and integration. Furthermore, given the lack of diversity and density, each of these domains had a limited level of complexity resulting in reduced potentials for learning and innovation.

The lack of density did not translate in lack of conflict. For instance, the domain of construction of the Espace saw the emergence of contrasts between the Mains d'œuvres technical team and M.G. and the co-managers.

5.3.4 Multiple engagement regimes

Considering the interactions within single domains, we can identify two types of conflicts. The first type are divergences of opinions, that can be as deep as frame controversies (Schon and Rein, 1994). These divergences take the shape of discussions and confrontation according to (explicitly or implicitly) agreed ways of behaving. As they are connected with conflicts across domains, I'll explore them in section 5.3.5. The second types is related to frictions between different ways of engaging with reality.

As we saw in the second chapter of the thesis, not all the actions we perform are the result of intentional and explicit deliberation. Practices for example are “collective unintentional and routinized actions” (Crosta, 2010: 128), that people perform “without questioning them every time, because they already did it and that’s how it is done” (ibid: 131). Designing is instead an action performed intentionally manipulating aspects of reality in a specific situation.

In the Espace Imaginaire and in the Nová Synagóga case we can identify conflicts of ways of engaging with reality, and we can explore them through the analytical lens proposed by Thevenot and pragmatic sociology.

Thevenot focuses on “engagement regimes” or “pragmatic regimes”, defined as “social devices which govern our way of engaging with our environment inasmuch as they articulate two notions: (a) an orientation towards some kind of good; (b) a mode of access to reality” (Thevenot, 2001: 75). “Engagements” include material and moral dimensions (ibid: 68), while focusing on the “cognitive forms of a human being’s relation to their physical environment, to other people and to themselves” (Citroni, 2017: 45).

Each way of engaging with the environment implies specific constructions of agency, reality, conceptions of good and formats of information to be used (Thevenot, 2001: 76). They are basic

conventions for coordinating with the environment and with more or less others, generating common actions. Engagements are known ways of acting in a specific situation (Thevenot, 2010).

Thevenot (2006) presents three different engagement regimes: the regime of public justification, the regime of planned action, and the familiar regime.

In these two cases, we can assess the adoption of different regimes by different actors across different domains and situations. In particular, we can see conflicts between a familiar engagement and a regime of engagement in a plan.

The regime of familiar engagement rests on the “accustomed dependency with a neighborhood of things and people” (Thevenot, 2001: 77). It maintains a personalized and localized idea of good, heavily dependent of the person accommodating herself in an environment in relation to other humans or things (Thevenot, 2007). In this regime, the engagement with the environment is developed through trial-and-error learning, organizing surroundings according to personal and intimate movements and gestures. This engagement leads to the generation of hardly-transferable knowledge, rooted in the intimate dimension of individuals, limiting the possibility of generating extended commonalities with others. On the other side, this familiar engagement is crucial for the relations of individuals with their work environment and materials (Thevenot, 2010).

This way of operating is typical of Truc Sphérique, and is adopted by M.G. for the co-managers. The commonality across individuals in these two groups respectively emerged and is emerging after years of common operations. The extension of commonalities is the result of prolonged sharing of environments.

In the regime of engagement in a plan, action is structured through intentionality: the environment is assessed for its functional capacities (Thevenot, 2001: 78), instrumental rationality guides the coordination between individuals. The good emerging from this engagement with the world is based on “the exercise of the will of an individual endowed with autonomy and capable of projecting herself successfully into the future” (Thevenot, 2007). This regime is crucial in the modernist processes of planning and orientation of action towards an objective. Reality is in relation to the implementation of the plan (*ibid*).

This second way of operating is visible in J.B.’s strategic understanding of the Espace Imaginaire project, and in Z.B.’s vision for a new way of operating the Nová Synagóga. It is also present in the approach behind the effort of establishing the “Advisory Board” for the Synagogue, in order to control the style of the restoration and the architectural details.

In the regime of critique and public justification actors put forth legitimate and qualified proofs and arguments (Thevenot, 2001; Boltanski and Thevenot, 1991), to be evaluated by third parties through characters of generality and legitimacy (Thevenot, 2007). In this regime, actors adopt collective

conventions of legitimate common goods, which the authors call “orders of worth”, relating them to families of political philosophy (Thevenot, 2001; 2010).

In the Nová Synagóga case, the publicization of the project in order to acquire resources was developed according to a series of codified argumentative tools, that could be recognized by the audience. This public justification engagement regime conflicted, in the end, with the emergent and familiar way of operating developed by Stanica: while they advanced arguments through established frames focusing on Behrens, during the process they discovered the value of other progressive restoration approaches. The lack of establishment of these progressive frames in the argumentative repertoire of local Zilinian society inhibited them from trying to defend in public a revision of the project.

The clashes between these ways of engaging with reality tell about different types of valid knowledge (ordinary vs expert), different valid approaches and different types of authority. The presence of several instances of conflicting engagement regimes in the domains of the situation, as presented in Figure 5.32 and 5.33, led to exchanges and learning processes about the usefulness of different engagement regimes. Nonetheless, while these frictions emerge in specific domains, they also reveal divergences of ideas of order of worth across domains.

5.3.5 Multiple levels of action

Before continuing the thread of the clashes of orders of worth of domains of action, we ought specify another aspect of these multiple domains of action, related to their level of operation.

The domains I listed at the beginning of this section are not an homogeneous category. In particular, the different types of relations between the objects of action of the domains generate an heterogeneous system of domains. While some domains are distinguished from others on the basis of temporal successions and causality (the identification of a tenant is a prerequisite for the rest of the domains), others can be discriminated according to the level they insist on.

Kiser’s and Ostrom’s (1982) Institutional Analysis framework outlines the existence of different tiers of rules in institutions: operational level, collective-choice level and constitutive level. While I do not adopt their public choice approach focused on decision-making situations, this categorization in tiers can analytically further our understanding of the relations between domains.

The operational level is the closest to the world of action. Individuals at this level take direct actions or plan further actions. This level include also social situations where two or more individuals decide together what to do.

Collective decisions “determine, enforce, continue or alter actions authorized within institutional arrangements” (ibid: 76). These decisions operate at a broader level of generality than operative decisions, as the perception of the alteration of the field of resources and constraints by these decisions have consequences on the operative decisions of individuals. Kiser and Ostrom argue that these decisions are made by officials that have the legitimate power to enforce them against nonconforming individuals. They establish institutional arrangements for individual action (ibid: 77)

Constitutional decisions are instead choices about “rules governing future collective decisions to authorize actions” (ibid: 77). They are decisions about decisions, which establish institutional arrangements and their enforcement for collective choice.

Without delving further in these distinctions, we can appreciate the levels of the domains of action of the two cases. We should be aware that these geometries across domains are (more or less institutionalized) social constructions. Therefore they are not “natural” links, rather systems of authority and theories of interpretation of reality with different degrees of legitimacy and authority.

In the two cases we can recognize the existence of collective and constitutional choices made by institutions whose authority actors took for granted (such as public administrations). The main example are the actions by Plaine Commune and the Municipality of St-Denis in developing policies and regulations on temporary reuse: they created a field of possibilities with specific rules, allowing other actors (and in this case Mains d'œuvres) to establish their projects.

The role of public administrations in the Nová Synagóga case is instead limited. Their involvement has been relevant only in terms of funding: while the municipality provided a grant without influencing internal procedures, the EEA grants (provided by the Government) also forced the adoption of specific routines and procedures.

These actions forced operations into a pre-established field actors recognized as legitimate and which they didn't contest in practice. Other regulations by public administrations - such as the no housing policy in the Espace Imaginaire or building regulations in the Nová Synagóga - were instead disregarded by actors: in their operations, they saw these rules as limits to the pursuit of their higher ideas of “good”.

As I noted analysing Stanica, this citizen initiative is also based on constitutional rules, normatively describing how to perform autonomous decision-making. While Mains d'œuvres does not have a similar perspective in its institutional dimension, we can recognize that the basic rules of the Espace imaginaire put forth by M.G. for self-management are based on a similar set of rules, operating at a constitutional level.

5.3.6 Struggles for the ordering of domains

While the authority of public administrations to generate collective and constitutional choices influencing other domains is often taken for granted, in the two cases we can recognize the presence of multiple struggles for the establishment of relations of dominance between domains.

These contrasts are rooted in diverging normative ideas of legitimate authorities and knowledges, and can be seen as a struggles to define which aspect of the situation is the most important. The definition of importance consequently would cause the structuring of a coherent rationality for action. As these different normative ideas are often linked with different ways of engaging with reality, they can materialize not just in different opinions, but also in different ways of organizing and acting in the project. The domains of the situations with these traits are highlighted in figures 5.32 and 5.33.

The Nová Synagóga case presents multiple occurrences of these contrasts. On a first level, normative contrasts emerged within the domain of the style of the renovation: the preservation of the existing ruinous state or the restoration of a “original” state related to Behrens are two opposite views on history. Each position is based on different ideas of art, architecture, and memory, and provides an order of worth of the architectural elements of the Synagogue.

Adding a second level of complexity, the conflict between these positions did not unfold through shared cultural codes. As I already pointed out, we can recognize in this domain the existence of two different regimes of engagement: M.A. and the other members of Truc Sphérique operated through a familiar regime of engagement, based on lay operative knowledges. Decisions were taken incrementally through mutual adjustments. The members of the Advisory Board, H.M. in particular, proposed instead a decision-making model based on deliberation by the Board, which was considered to be the legitimate authority to allow the enactment of the restoration thanks to its expert knowledge.

The actions of these actors also operated to influence different levels of the situation. M.A. enacted an approach based on an operative level, with little or no collective choices, as in Stanica. Authority lied in effective and emergent action. Instead, the proponents of the Board wanted to establish a collective-level authority, from which operations would be implemented. Here, authority lied in the knowledge that experts considered to be legitimate but that was instead contested in action.

Underlying these differences, the ways actors oriented their operations can tell us about their rationalities, their goals and their ideas of hierarchical structures of the domains. M.A. and the members of Truc Sphérique were focused on the continuous advancement of the renovation works. They oriented their action towards the combination of resources necessary to complete the works, often putting this orientation to emerging opportunities above considerations of architectural coherence and historical accuracy. Being the future users of the space, they also worried about the functionality of the architectural

design. The architects instead were focused on the architectural quality, the historians on the historical accuracy (with its different implications) and restorers on the historical verisimilitude. Each of these positions embodies a hierarchical structuration of the domains of the situation, normatively proposing a specific rationality to guide the processes of transformation - mostly pointing towards the legitimation of each actor's field of expertise.

The normative perspectives of architects, historians, restorers and other experts were explicit in the "public" fields of debate and discussion that was generated along the process in order to influence collective decisions. M.A. and Truc Sphérique never explicitly defended their normative perspectives in this field of collective debate. Instead, they simply continued to act at an operative level (as in Truc Sphérique, as described in section 4.1.2), controlling the renovation works and the acquisition of resources on the field, strong of their positional centrality (as we can see in figures 5.6 and 5.10)

As decisions on site were funneled through M.A. (and his associates), he had the last word in the implementation of eventual collective decisions. He combined the multiple rationalities present in the project with his own operative effort. Over time, actors adapted to this decision-making process, by trying to advise and convince him of their positions decision-by-decision instead of trusting collective-level decisions.

While actors supported different hierarchies of domains in their normative and general visions of reality, in the concrete unfolding of the project the ordering of domains depended on their capacity to legitimize them. The legitimacy of architects, historians and restorers was based on an external institutional system, and required the acceptance of a collective decision-making process. The legitimacy of M.A. and Truc Sphérique was instead based on their effectiveness. They accrued the main resources necessary for the process: they had the legal support of the gatekeeping Regional Board of Heritage and Jewish Community (which M.A. heard during the disputes) and they acquired the financial capitals. Nonetheless, they needed the experts' presence to acquire political resources, using their expertise to legitimize the project during fundraising. The simultaneous presence of these diverse two systems of legitimacy was crucial for the success of the process.

In the Espace Imaginaire process, a conflict between different ordering of domains emerged inside the ranks of Mains d'œuvres, rather than at the border between the citizen initiative and external actors, like in the Nová Synagóga. This conflict is exemplified in the contrast between M.G.'s focus on the internal operations of Espace Imaginaire and J.B.'s focus on the strategies for Mains d'œuvres survival. The latter gives more importance to these general strategies than to the Espace Imaginaire; as a logical consequence, this project would have to be conducted with a rationality accommodating the needs of the most relevant

level. On the other side, the first approach claims the autonomy and equality of the two domains, refusing a hierarchical linkage.

This confrontation was led by the authority figures of the Espace Imaginaire and Mains d'œuvres. In Mains d'œuvres J.B. was an authority figure, having explicit and implicit control over the organization, based on her role as director. Her decisions were influential, and she operated thrusting her way through the problems of the organization. As she saw the Espace Imaginaire under the umbrella of Mains d'œuvres, she understood it to be under her legitimate authority. She saw the general strategies for the association at a broader and higher level than the operations of the Espace Imaginaire. These strategies operated at a collective level, like policies operating for the development of other processes across the department.

Following the constitutional level rules designed by M.G., the Espace Imaginaire was based on self-management and distribution of authority across its co-managers. No single role in the initiative had the authority to directly enforce the performance of certain actions by certain actors. In fact, M.G. coordinated the project using a soft power, by asking and not by imposing through authority. The eventual adherence to J.B.'s pressures would require an authoritative role with a shift in her actions.

As M.A. in the Nová Synagóga case, M.G. had a role of gatekeeper for the eventual practical implementation of reorderings of the rationalities of action. The translation of new priorities into actions in the Espace Imaginaire was part of her tasks as coordinator. But while M.A. was the director of his organization, M.G. was just a young member of hers. Furthermore, pressures to adapt rationalities and priorities arrived not from actors out of the initiatives, but from the director of the organization and from its native system of authority. She was split between two opposite systems of authority, and had to mediate between their orders of domains. As she defended the Espace Imaginaire system, her position discredited the authority of J.B., director of Mains d'œuvres.

5.3.7 Indeterminate spaces between inquiries and public spaces

The exploration of the multiple domains, actors, engagement regimes, scales, and struggles for normative ordering, provided an idea of the complexity of the cases, which we can now summarize.

This summary can be assisted by the use of graphic tools, representing the *evolution of domains of the situations and strategies* along the process, identifying the actors involved in each phase, the presence of multiple ways of acting, engagement regimes and opinions, as well as the occurrences of spillovers across situations. The situations are defined through the perspective of the actors themselves. This instrument complements the networks presented in the first two sections.

We can understand the Nová Synagóga project as a social process of inquiry, intended as the transformation of a situation from undetermined to determined (Dewey, 1938). In this case, at the beginning the situation is characterized by a puzzling or problematic character, with resources (cognitive and economical) to be found and operations to be structured.

Since the beginning, the problem was set quite clearly: “How to proceed to renovate the Synagogue?”. Following initial general hypotheses for action, operations unfolded as quests to structure an answer and its material realizations. Domains of the problem were discovered, and disputes on the hierarchy of these domains quickly followed.

Actors beyond the initiators were attracted to the process by one or more of the explicit action frames used for framing the inquiry for public communications, based on ideas of civic activism, heritage preservation and development of artistic spaces.

Nova Synagoga process: evolution of domains of situations and strategies

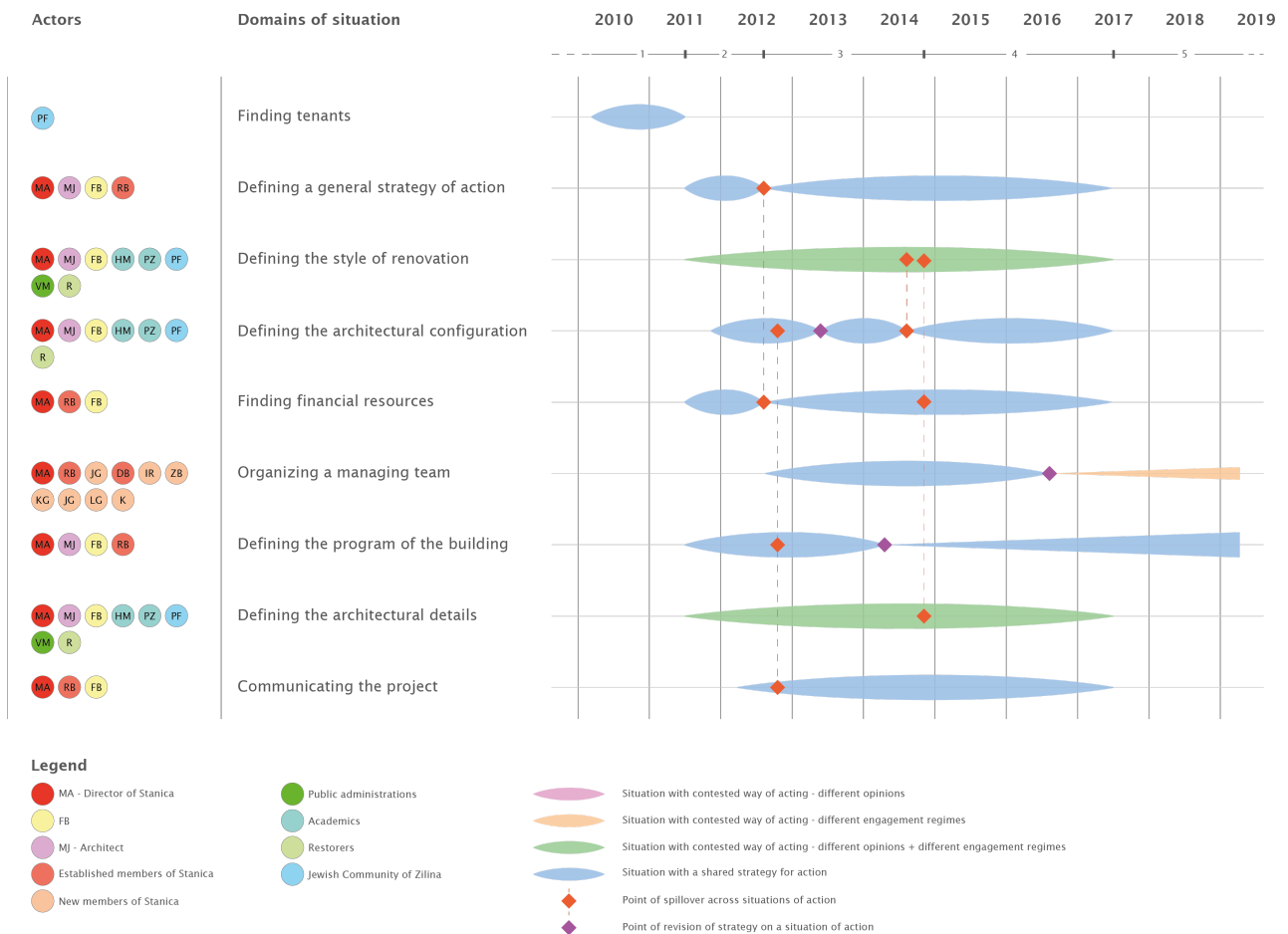


Figure 5.32 - Nová Synagóga process: evolution of domains of situations and strategies - Elaboration by the author

The process of inquiry was interactive and social. Explorations were decentralized (for instance with the role of researchers on the history of the building or of architects on the feasibility of different architectural solutions) and their results were communicated informally and horizontally (through the Advisory Board or through informal communications). The decentralization allowed the capillary pursuit of different goals. But the progressive erosion of transversal communications led to a lack of supervision on the overall process.

While the concrete goal of the process of inquiry was set beforehand, its unfolding was left indeterminate. The instituted ways of operating of Truc Sphérique mixed with other approaches, which were present both in aspects of the inquiry unrelated to the routines of Truc Sphérique (the architectural design, the historical research) and related to their routines (like the organization of expositions, with Z.B.'s critiques to the instituted ways of operating). While the underlying ordering of domains of these different ways of operating different, some of them were able to coexist, by recognizing the shared pursuit of a common goal. Through this approach, new ways of operating and to tackle problems were generated.

However, as the process of inquiry reached a (quasi-final) determination of the situation with the conclusion of the works, these differences were progressively reduced. Routines external to Truc Sphérique were discontinued and disassociated with the citizen initiative. Actors present in the routinized sectors of the organization started to leave the initiative, feeling the difficulties of changing these instituted knowledges.

Similarly, the current program of the Nová Synagóga can be seen as an inquiry into the experimental development of new publics and services. The focus on contemporary visual arts in a secondary Slovakian city might look like a limit. But they don't just offer exhibitions for the general population: they complement it with educational activities for schools and adults: in the long run, this dimension might change the local perception of contemporary arts, building the potential (Jullien, 1998) of a future public.

The Nová Synagóga case presents therefore an inquiry process with a material output as a goal, and emerging and open ways of operating being determined along the process.

In the Espace Imaginaire the ways of operating were instead designed deliberately and beforehand. The goals of the project were linked to the establishment of a co-managing process, generating effects as byproduct of designed ways of interacting. The material outputs of the project (the material realization of the spaces of the Espace Imaginaire) were instead instrumental for the development and establishment of these interactions.

This process was not driven by a pre-established frame for joint action strategically constructed in order to aggregate diverse motivations. Instead, it was based on the establishment of specific rules for

interaction in a spatially-bounded field of interaction. Participants did not become co-managers because they shared the same goals of M.G. and Mains d'œuvres, but because they could pursue their own goals and motivations in this field.

The co-managing rules of the Espace have the nature of “dispositifs”, as they enable actors to do and think in certain ways, in particular at a collective level (Latour, 1993 in Lemieux, 2018: 44).

Starting from just a few homogeneous actors, this field incrementally expanded to include a diverse membership of co-managers. Co-managers developed different projects, with different uses of the space. We can interpret the Espace Imaginaire as a “public space”, according to Crosta’s definition:

public space is the circumstance in which different people do different things in the same place, and learn diversity from their co-presence, eventually accepting the limitation effects they reciprocally exchanged in the interaction of use. This is why public spaces are a social construct (they are constituted in the interaction of use) in the sense that they do not pre-exist to social interaction (Crosta, 2010: 18)

In this public space, co-managers shared spaces while they developed their different uses. Currently, they are starting to appreciate the effects that their respective activities generate. Their compresence on site allows their (eventual) interaction, resulting in the construction of more lasting bonds. The Espace Imaginaire deliberately leaves space for the emergence of new ways of doing. It is a public space of experimentation, where co-managers can autonomously or jointly develop their activities. In this emerging publicness, the project stimulates the emergence of differences leading to productive and generative tensions (Balaï, 2018).

Space Imaginaire process: evolution of domains of situations and strategies



Figure 5.33 - Espace Imaginaire process: evolution of domains of situations and strategies - Elaboration by author

Differently from the Nová Synagóga case, joint action was not instrumentally pursued to reach a concrete common goal. Joint actions are an eventual outcome of the project, based on emergent definitions of commonalities discovered through disjointed and collateral interactions in the Espace.

Finally, we can see that the lack of a common mobilizing object generates a field of more distant and specialized domains than in the Nová Synagóga. As a result, we can recognize that not all the domains of the situation are comprised by the “public space” concept: for instance, the operations of J.B. can be understood as an inquiry of its own.

We can see that both cases are characterized by the presence of a space for indetermination and experimentation. Both cases are developed beyond the instituted routines of the citizen initiatives: these established knowledges and ways of doing are either judged to be incomplete or either purposely left behind to allow the emergence of alternative ways of doing.

As with other indeterminate spaces (Groth & Corijn, 2005) the undetermined status allows for the emergence of a non-planned, spontaneous ‘urbanity’. The peculiarity of my cases is that indetermination appears to be used as a resource by initiators to allow the inclusion of others to become actors. The indeterminate space is not just a physical space lacking a clear urban use, but an indeterminate social situation: as described by Lanzara (1993), it is a situation of routine breakdown, where negative capability can emerge to create new meanings.

While in the *Espace Imaginaire* the co-management role-taking can be seen as a way to use operative indetermination as a way to use indetermination as a *dispositif* (providing constitutional instruction on how to engage with it), in the *Nová Synagóga* both the operative and constitutional dimensions were indeterminate.

In the two cases, we can see that the initiators had the ability to break instituted routines (more or less strategically) to allow the emergence of an indeterminate space that could absorb other resources and actors. In the *Nová Synagóga* case this space was strategically oriented towards the successful completion of the inquiry, allowing the coexistence of different normative visions in the name of this shared goal. In the *Espace Imaginaire*, instead, the project was oriented towards the creation of the space of indetermination itself to encourage the participants’ empowerment.

This space of indetermination recalls the initial phases of citizen initiatives, with the emergence of new meanings and ways of operating. These cases can be seen as processes of partial deinstitutionalization, with the suspension or breakdown of established and instituted ways of operating, allowing the emergence and creation of new meanings.

As we will see in the next section, however, the citizen initiatives encountered difficulties in absorbing these new meanings, similarly to the limits that public administrations have in connecting with new and emergent processes. As the inquiry of the Synagogue ended, the space for something other than the instituted ways of operating expired, with a relevant reduction in complexity. In the *Espace Imaginaire* the project was not absorbed by *Mains d’œuvres* but cut off from it.

5.4 Learning and innovating in and out the processes of urban transformation

The second research question focuses on the exploration of processes of learning and innovation developed by long-existing citizen initiatives in problematic situations beyond their routinized activities. Empirically, I focused on two processes of urban transformation managed by citizen-initiated cultural centres beyond their premises, described in this chapter in their chronological development. In the

previous section I detailed the multiple dimensions of the cases, across multiple domains, actors, levels, regimes of engagements, forms of cooperation and conflict. The opening of this plurality of threads of analysis testifies the complexity of the cases, and the difficulty of formulating a unique interpretation.

The different themes and dimensions emerging in the previous section highlight the presence of processes of learning and innovation in the cases. In the discussion of each thread, it's possible to notice how actors (individual and collective) learnt and reframed their institutional frames; at the same time, we can recognize the presence of failed opportunities for change and evolution.

In this section I will present and analyse the most relevant learning and innovation effects emerging in the cases across the different threads. The discussion follows the theoretical dimensions of these concepts, connecting their emergence across domains. In particular, I explore how actors were able to learn (as individuals) and eventually innovate (their relevant institutions).

From a theoretical perspective, in the second chapter I outlined the characters of learning and innovation. Learning has been tackled and defined in relation to changes in the responses to similar situations. On a first dimension, learning was defined by the object of change, ranging from operative actions (single-loop learning - learning I) to the underlying system of preferences orienting them (double-loop learning - learning II) and to the processes of learning themselves (deutero-learning) (Argyris and Schon, 1978; Bateson, 1972; Freeman, 2006). Furthermore, we recognized that learning is both an individual and social process, ranging from single persons to intersubjective constructs such as organizations.

Innovation was introduced as a profoundly social process of revision of institutions, understood as the cognitive frames guiding our constructions of reality (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). The anomalies and errors encountered by actors in their operations are not simply "learnt" or "absorbed" in existing and institutional constructions of reality, but they lead to a reframing of reality. The act of innovating is not only related to the emergence of some new practice or action diverging from established practices, but also its interpretation in a general framework of construction of reality (Donolo & Fichera, 1988: 41-42).

The discussion will now focus on answering the second research question, explaining how these processes generated learning and innovations. In the first sections I explore the processes of learning generated in the course of the development of the processes, while the following sections explore the deeper revisions and innovations that involved and external actors drew from a wider assessment of the projects.

5.4.1 Adapting and revising actions from the engagement with the environment

As these processes were developed in situations of emergent sensemaking and uncertainty, actions were conducted with an inductive and adaptive approach. We can explore the adaptations that actors developed in the process as a first level of learning, as learning I (for single individuals) and single-loop learning (for the operative social dimension of the whole process).

Images 5.16 and 5.16 testify the continuous revisions of actions derived from the test of the actors' hypotheses with their environment. In the Nová Synagóga case we observed a greater number of adaptations than in the Espace Imaginaire, which instead saw only a few revisions of action.

The numerous adaptations occurred along the process can be categorized adopting a wide range of dimensions. The most direct and common adaptation was the one performed by single individuals in their engagement with operative and specialized tasks. In the Nová Synagóga case construction workers, painters, builders, individually faced some problematic situation (the breaking of a tool, for instance) that required an operative adaptation.

Many of the individual co-managers' revisions of their own projects in the Espace Imaginaire can be seen under similar eyes. They developed an idea and were given space to create it. As their idea clashed with reality, they had to adapt and revise their projects. For instance, MI. initially wanted to create a mobile metal oven but instead opted for a brick oven for its relative ease of realization.

Considering the social dimension of adaptations and revisions of operations, we can acknowledge the differences between intra-domain adaptation and trans-domain adaptations. Considering the revision of a course of action in a specific domain, the difference between the two lies in the origin of the cause for adaptation, respectively from within or from another domain.

The Nová Synagóga case saw multiple trans-domain social adaptations: the acknowledgement of the effects of the actions originally intended to produce impacts on domain A generated instead effects on domain B. For instance, the "partial openings" were discovered to generate positive feedbacks on the domain of architectural design and not just on the communication of the process. Trans-domain effects were also acknowledged to hierarchically-ordered domains: for instance the revision of the general strategy for action from a professional to informal process originated from a failure in gathering funds, and caused a subsequent revisions of the planned ways of operating in other domains.

Intra-domain social revisions were instead more diffuse in the Espace Imaginaire, for instance with the continuous adaptation of the projects of collective and associative co-managers. Trans-domain effects were initially acknowledged and communicated by M.G. and the members of the coordination office. Over time, as the number of co-managers grew and co-managing meetings became relevant, trans-domain effects started to be perceived both in operations and in collective-level decision-making.

The peculiar sensitivity to perceive trans-domain effects in the Nová Synagóga case is linked to the presence of skilled initiators (with experience in interconnected domains) but also to the density and interconnectedness of actors in the domains of the situation. In the Espace Imaginaire instead the relative clusterization of actors in domains - also operating at different levels - caused a reduced perception of spillover effects, focusing only on the internally-generated effects.

In some cases, feedbacks from the environment were not perceived as consequences of an intentional action, but they simply were acquired and interpreted by actors.

The recognition of legitimate levels of domains also caused the adaptation of operations to institutional schemes and policies. In the Espace Imaginaire, the no-housing-on-site policy was temporarily ignored, but ultimately respected. The allocation of the EEA grants came with the obligation of respecting public procurement regulations, which the initiators of the Nová Synagóga had to adapt to. More importantly, this grant established a deadline for the restoration, causing the acceleration of operations, resulting in controversial decisions.

Pre-existing routines were also disassembled into steps and reassembled to fit the normative orientation of the specific domains. For instance, architectural works in the Nová Synagóga case were not developed by following common and traditional steps of architectural renovations (structures first, technical systems, decorations, frames, interior elements, exteriors). These steps usually follow a logic based on the minimization of interferences between these processes. Instead, M.A. guided the process with a logic oriented towards the acquisition of resources for its advancement. These steps were adapted and implementing according to the emerging opportunities of fundraising and sponsorships.

In these first-loop adaptations, the emergent and fresh dimension of the initiatives allowed a productive generation of new operations. The undetermined nature of ways of operating in the Nová Synagóga facilitated the continuous revision of joint action plans. The indetermination of the concrete operations in the Espace Imaginaire allowed easy revisions within autonomous domains.

5.4.2 Rising in generality beyond single-loop adaptations in the process

In the first-loop learning we just saw, individual and social adaptations developed in direct response to the feedbacks of the environments. The eventual mismatches between intentions and effects of actions were corrected with adaptations at operational level, revising the courses of action by designing or mutually adjusting operations. But in some other instances, the perception of operative mismatches led some actors to rise in generality their efforts for revision, aiming at the underlying norms and policies guiding action. These attempts to generate double-loop learning brought to the foreground the

conflicting normative visions of members of the processes, therefore politicizing the issue (Lemieux, 2018: 49-52).

In the Espace Imaginaire double-loop learning processes had different fortunes. In the first years of the project the role of M.G. as coordinator was interactively constructed through her relations with co-managers, local residents, institutions and organizations. These ties were highly personal, and were for months concentrated in one person. As JE, AP and C began supporting her in the coordination of the Espace Imaginaire, their operations were complicated by the emerging institutionalization of the coordination office in the person of M.G.. The authority linked to this habitualization was reduced to her person, not to the organizational figure of “coordinator”. Among the consequences of this personalization, when A.P. and C. had to pick up M.G.’s duties after her departure from Mains d’œuvres in 2019, they struggled in establishing new relations with other involved actors: they referred to M.G. as the relevant contact person, and she did not explicitly delegate her full authority to the new coordinators. In this situation, A.P. and C. did not recognize the links between their operative difficulties with this implicit regulative dimension, and they did not push for double-loop learning.

In autumn 2019, instead, M.G. suggested and coordinated the development of a non-conflictual double-loop learning, which consisted in the revision of the internal regulations affecting the operations of the initiative. As the coordination office and the co-managers recognized the incumbency of a problematic situation as a consequence of M.G.’s departure and the end of the support of Mains d’œuvres, they agreed to revise their norms of organization in order to avoid difficult uncoordinated adaptations in the future. This process was also guided by the acknowledged of the incoherence between the values of the association and some aspects of the previous norms, in particular the delegation of responsibilities to a central coordination office. As a result, the coordination team was reduced in importance, introducing operative circles activated by co-managers.

The assemblage of a team to organize cultural events in the Nová Synagóga saw the emergence of similar efforts. M.A. invited different people to become members of this new branch of Truc Sphérique. Some of them were already familiar with the way of organizing instituted in Stanica, based on autonomy and a lack of comprehensive planning. Others, close to the citizen initiative but without experience of its operations, lacked this background.

The team started without a clear and prefigured way of operating, trying to determine it incrementally. While M.A. expressed the desire to facilitate the emergence of a new way of operating, there was no effort

to synthesize a new way of operating. The approach instituted in Stanica was reproduced in this context, as it was implicitly seen as the natural way of operating.

Over time, the team noticed difficulties in operating cultural activities in the Synagogue, and started to incrementally adapt their operations to the organization of exhibitions and events. Some members of the team interpreted these errors as effects of the enactment of Stanica's organizational approach. As a consequence, they advanced more structural critiques to this instituted way of operating, addressing its unfitness to guide more complex tasks requiring continuative intersubjective coordination.

These critiques can be seen as efforts to establish double-loop learning: these members recognized that the concrete operations led to mismatches in their engagement with the environment, and tried to review the principles and norms guiding action. They proposed to mold the operations similarly to public institutions, with clearer roles and tasks.

However, they faced staunch resistance. M.A. in particular advanced several harsh critiques in relation to the way these efforts were formulated. He argued that in Stanica critiques were not expressed and deliberated upon, but directly practiced: in this case instead, the critiques remained at an abstract level, waiting for others to pick them up and translate them into actions. The critics awaited a consensus before acting, while Stanica promotes the generation of consensus in action. We can recognize here a system for deuterio-learning, based on the revision of rules and norms through mutual (conflictual) adjustment, and not through deliberation. This double-loop adaptation, according to M.A., should have been developed according to this deuterio-learning system. We have to acknowledge that this formal argument might be a honest critique to the way these critiques were formulated, or just an excuse to dismiss an effort to reform the operations.

We can also acknowledge the presence of an effort to establish deuterio-learning in the Nová Synagóga process. The attempt to establish the Restoration Board originated from the negative judgment on the demolition of interior architectural superstructures. As the damage on that single issue was already irreparable, H.M. wanted to rise in generality and try to influence the way these decisions were taken. She did not simply want to change the norms and values guiding the operations (which would consist in a double-loop learning effort): instead, she tried to influence the way decisions were taken. The board was intended to supervise the operations, but ultimately it was a space for debate and advice with little direct authority.

The meetings of the board and their continuative interactions were occasions for reflective debate and confrontation, facilitating the combination of different normative positions and the assessment of the feedbacks from the environment. The establishment of this organizational body can therefore be seen as a

deutero-learning effort, since it revised the way the actors involved in the process developed social learning in action.

The board - and the idea of developing spaces for reflection - proved effective only as long as the operations developed at a slow pace. As the restoration was accelerated to comply with EEA deadlines, these double-loop learning procedures were put in the background.

Across these processes, double-loop learning had different levels of success. M.A. criticized who asked for a revision of regulations, limiting the efforts of Z.B. and not recognizing the authority of the board. Similarly, M.G. did not recognize the struggles that AP and C were facing as a consequence of the consolidated implicit rules. The Espace Imaginaire successfully developed a double-loop learning process thanks to the mediating and coordinating role of its initiator, M.G., who guided the reflection of the members regarding the way they wanted to organize in the future.

The failure and success of these different processes testify the difficulty of developing double-loop learning. In the Espace Imaginaire M.G. actively brokered the revision of the governance structure, listening to the different stances, only when change was inevitable: Mains d'œuvres was out, AP and C were leaving, and she desired to reduce her involvement as well. Recognizing that controlled change was better than chaotic change, she mobilized her authority to facilitate an evolution. In the Nová Synagóga instead there was no incumbent change, and M.A. and the other authority figures had no incentive in reviewing their course of action. Furthermore, the object of eventual revision would have been the style of the whole organization of Stanica, leading to potential challenges on that team as well.

We can recognize here that processes of learning failed to develop not just because of cognitive limitations caused by institutional backwardness, but also by blockages by figures of power. I'll continue this reflection in section 5.4.4.

5.4.3 Innovating as including anomaly in the process

The second research question focuses on the learning and innovation effects generated in these processes. The previous subsections tackled the learning effects generated on the processes themselves. While learning focuses on adaptation of operations and ways of organizing, an innovation is not just the creation of something new diverging from the customary. Innovating implies the reframing of some part of the social construction of reality (Donolo & Fichera, 1988; Crosta, 1988; Donolo, 1997; de Leonardis, 2001; Lanzara, 2016).

In the processes of urban transformation, in most aspects the actors didn't a priori share social constructions of reality. Their commonalities and their interpretations of reality were the outcomes of

interaction. As they are emergent and new, they have little or no a priori social habitualization and typification, and consequently no common institutional frames.

In some dimensions, though, the operations were developed according to designed courses of action, which determined roles and categorized reality. In these operations, innovations occurred as actors were able to reframe their categories and their structures by integrating emerging anomalies in their construction of plans.

Since its inception, the Espace Imaginaire process had been designed by M.G., with the a-priori thematization of actions and the identification of potential target groups. She formulated hypotheses of who could be interested in joining the project, and she tested this idea in practice along the implementation of the participatory sessions.

When the association of homeless people emerged, it was not a problem to integrate their proposals in the thematic axes of the project. These themes were vague enough to fit almost anything. We can nonetheless consider this integration as an innovation: it generated a shift in the construction of reality of the project, changing the meaning and the way of seeing these themes.

In Nová Synagóga instead operations mostly developed incrementally and without pre-established operative plans. We can nonetheless assess the presence of innovations by focusing on the hypotheses that actors developed in relations to the effects of their actions. For instance, the discovery of the usefulness of the partial openings to test the architectural program and the cultural programme was an innovation: they acknowledged the emergence of anomalous effects, recognized them and changed their construction of reality.

These changes have limited differences with other processes of learning occurring in the processes. The reason lies in the lack of shared consolidated institutional dimensions in the process. As we look beyond the processes and into citizen initiatives and in general in society we can recognize instead the development of innovations with wider impacts.

5.4.4 Failed learning and innovations in the citizen initiatives

Looking beyond learning and innovations in the processes themselves, we can start to explore the learning and innovation effects generated in the processes that were transferred in other social situations. In the first place, we can acknowledge what the involved actors learnt and used in situations beyond these processes of urban transformation, and how they developed innovations by reframing their constructions of reality. In particular, I start by focusing on the processes of learning and innovation of the citizen initiatives themselves and subsequently explore the effects on other actors (experts, co-managers, public administrations, etc).

On a second level, we can also explore the effects of these processes on external actors. We can inquire what kind of reframings the processes generated beyond the involved actors, in their broader communities (for instance in their national cultural and arts networks), and in their local societies.

Individual members of the citizen initiatives involved in the processes of urban transformation gained experiences that proved useful in other situations. They acquired or sharpened skills and competences: for instance, through their failures and successes, M.A. and J.G. improved their abilities to manage reconstructions and organizing events. The indetermination of the process allowed the experimentation of new ideas and the development of new roles, allowing these actors to engage with new fields of experience. M.G. and her coordination office developed skills in the management of collective processes of decision-making and the use of soft power.

While individual members may have evolved and developed new knowledges (in particular with single-loop learning), the revision of social routines and institutional dimensions of their citizen initiatives proved more difficult. Preliminarily, we can assess that almost nothing of the operative structures developed in the two processes were adopted in their founding initiatives. Organizing processes were structured, roles developed, but they were not directly transferred to Mains d'œuvres and Stanica.

The engagement of members of the organizations in the process of urban transformation led to their interaction with other ways of operating in uncertain settings. In the Nová Synagóga case, as we saw, the efforts to innovate Truc Sphérique's institutional way of operating was fought in the Nová Synagóga team, as it operated (almost) autonomously from Stanica. These efforts to reform did not involve the operations of Stanica, which continued its operations steadily.

In the Espace Imaginaire project instead the coordination team required the continuative organizational assistance of Mains d'œuvres, with a greater integration of the two teams. The technical team of Mains d'œuvres advanced several critiques to the way they were involved in the construction of the Espace Imaginaire, trying to develop double-loop learning processes. They protested the lack of material, organizational and financial support, and the excessive workload they had to carry. Differently from the Nová Synagóga, their arguments aimed at revising not only the emerging operations in the Espace Imaginaire, but the operations in Mains d'œuvres as well. They recognized the repetition of this way of managing tasks and workloads across situations, and tried to push for a change in regulations.

Their efforts were ignored at the associative level, as workloads kept being assigned with the previous stressful standards. The director of Mains d'œuvres refused both to increase the material support and to

reduce the workload. As a result, some of them refused to continue being involved in the Espace Imaginaire, withdrawing from its activities.

The director of Mains d'œuvres and the members of the CA justify that this push to expand the fields of activity of the association without increasing human and material resources invoking the activist dimension of the organization. Members should also dedicate voluntary work - beyond paid working hours - to the association. This argument is based on the fragile organizational and economic model of the association, which would in fact struggle without the extensive use of unpaid labour.

The technical team tried to correct their operational difficulties in the Espace Imaginaire by rising in generality, trying to develop a double-loop learning process on their workload and available resources. However, these rules are part of institutional dimensions of the organization, affecting even deeper and more general aspects of the association. While it's possible to change them incrementally, their full scale revision would require the development of new ways of seeing the reality of the organization.

The efforts to innovate the institutional dimensions of Mains d'œuvres and of Truc Sphérique in the Nová Synagóga clashed with the inertia of these ways of operating. However, we can not attribute a lack of learning only to actors' cognitive limits or inability to acknowledge the feedbacks emerging from their environment. We also have to assess the possibility that some actors deliberately choose to not adapt their operations and their ways of seeing the world to what others propose. Learning has therefore to be considered alongside the unwillingness to learn.

In the two cases, we can recognize the presence of blockages caused by unwillingness or incapacity to adapt. At present times it is rather difficult to distinguish between the two: we do not know if the opponents to adaptation - in particular the directors - were against it because they could not think out of this established realities or if they deliberately refused the alternative.

The adoption of new ways of organizing and the revision of institutional dimensions proved unsuccessful in the citizen initiatives. Nonetheless, some of these issues were absorbed and transposed in new indeterminate and emerging situations linked with the organizations.

For instance, while the issues with the technical team did not lead to a change in the internal operations of the association, the director of the association acknowledged their difficulties. In particular, she recognized that working in different sites and with extra work would make Mains d'œuvres weaker. As a result of these organizational failures in the Espace, she decided that in the future development of new cultural spaces in the framework of the cooperative La Main 93.0 Mains d'œuvres will only support the

process externally, providing its knowledge and expertise. Material operations on the ground would instead be developed by a native organization.

5.4.5 Learning and innovations beyond the process and the citizen initiatives

The processes of urban intervention saw the compresence of multiple actors beyond the members of the citizen initiatives. Some of the adaptations they developed in the processes were transferred to their native operations or to new situations. In this section I explore the variety of effects of learning and innovation transferred out of the processes of urban transformation by these actors.

To start, we can explore the learning processes whose outcome is the evolution of the understanding of the process of urban transformation itself. The revision of the local intermunicipal urban plan (PLUI) of the Plaine Commune intercommunality is a first example of such learning process. The urban plan updates the intended uses of the Espace Imaginaire lot, preserving it as an ecological space.

The revision developed following the proposal of M.R., the director of the neighborhood. He was in direct contact with the Espace, and he saw as positive the local effects of the project. The project was assessed as a whole, both in its cultural and ecological aspects. Through his input, the plan finally seconded the motion, even if with some reductions to satisfy other interests on the lot.

We can recognize that the object of learning was the Espace itself, and the adaptation was not expanded to a generality of similar situations (like other friches in the neighborhood): the efforts to revise the plan in relation to the effects of the Espace were limited to the mutation of frames of that specific lot. Furthermore, the plan adopts the pre-existing category of ecological reserve: it does not generate new categories or rethink the existing system of categorization. We can conclude that this process of learning, developed within the operations of an institution, was a single-loop learning process. It led to the simple adaptation of a label on a space, but it didn't develop new categories (for instance introducing the "friche" category), neither it innovated the general system of categorization and planning.

In other cases, the feedbacks originating in the processes of urban transformation led to the reformulation of understandings not only about that specific process, but also about a whole class of similar situations. This kind of learning transfers ways of doing upon other operative or constitutive situations, in single- or double-loop types of learning.

We can appreciate this type of learning in particular in the Nová Synagóga case. In this case actors engaged with uncertain situations and progressively learnt about the concrete content of the actions they

were developing (in relation to construction, restoration, financing, grant writing, fundraising), about the processual nature of the project and about effective strategies to deal with other people involved.

Actors learnt by trial and error, developing practical knowledges about their situations. These learning processes are almost tacit, as actors (individually and socially) progressively refine their ways of doing, but without having a clear and complete awareness of having learnt. This implicit dimension is particularly present in relation to soft skills, such as managing group dynamics or conflicts. Some members of the process, having left the operations of the Synagogue and found a job elsewhere, recognized their daily use these skills, developed during the Synagogue project, only as I supported them in reflecting on the topic. These capacities have been developed to adapt to the problematic situations of the Synagogue, but are today used in other contexts.

Actors also learnt about the process as a whole. M.J. and his architecture firm Plural recognized that, as architects, they were not used to losing control of the project. While this situation also led to perverse effects, they acknowledged that it had positive unintended effects, as it involved other partners and opened the process of design. Plural tried this “productive losing of control” in other projects over the years.

F.Bo. further reflected on the idea of control in these situations, linking it the idea of financial comfort. Looking back at the process as a whole, he developed the interpretation that it would have been possible to maintain control of the project (in terms of restoration coherence and artistic programme) only with greater financial stability. The lack of financial security of the project forced them to spend time fundraising and also to never be certain of the flow of capitals: as a result, they did not have the time to reflectively assess with comfort the coherence of all the moves. F.B. abstracted this interpretation to support fundraising efforts of other projects.

Financial security in projects of restoration is often due to the provision of resources by public administrations. H.M., having seen multiple processes managed by public administrations, recognized that the absence of these actors was a financial limit, but presented other advantages. The processes of discussion and decision in the Synagogue were turbulent, but they were open. The revision of projects on site were debated and, if interested, accessible to the public. On the other hand, public administrations tend to only communicate the original projects and avoid continuative debates with such a broad audience of experts and publics. In this case, instead, experts were able to influence decisions, even if not as much as they desired.

F.B., M.J. and H.M. developed double-loop learning regarding the process as a whole, resulting in an adaptation of their approach to their field of expertise and professional practice. The focus of attention lies on the positive and negative effects of the adoption of planned or familiar regimes of engagement,

which can be interpreted through the eyes of western and eastern thoughts on effectiveness (Jullien, 1998). Aiming at control, F.B. valued the pursuit of a priori goals and courses of action, eventually followed by processes of deliberation about which adaptations to integrate in an ever-evolving plan. The plan originates and is defined by the actors. On the other hand, Truc Sphérique's familiar regime of engagement - which led to the "loss of control" - was based on decentralized inquiries, with the exploration of the potentials of the situation and a lack of collective coordination. In this approach actors assess the potential of decentralized situations, and the process is determined in the multiple interactions of their processes of adaptation and learning.

5.4.6 Innovating the field of possibilities for other citizen initiatives

Like with Mains d'œuvres and Stanica before them, the processes of urban transformation I explored have had considerable effects on the perception of citizen initiatives in their social environments. In this subsection I focus on the specific innovation resulting from these processes related to the reframing of what is possible for citizen initiatives. I explore the changes in perspectives both in the actors directly involved and in external actors, who reflectively transferred informations and lessons from the cases into their own situations (Schon and Rein, 1994).

Through its continuative action for fifteen years, Stanica expanded the field of what was perceived to be possible in Slovakia, and instituted direct action as a way to tackle problematic situations in their art and culture field. The Nová Synagóga project further expanded the boundaries of the field of problematic situations where arts and culture citizen initiatives could take the lead. This expansion was due to the perception of successes in relation to the quality of the results and to the magnitude of the intervention.

H.M.'s assessments that the architectural quality of the results of the Nová Synagóga was at the same level of well-designed projects of public administrations, led her to reassess her normative vision of who should engage with these restorations. While before the project she and her colleagues were skeptical of the ability of citizen initiatives like Truc Sphérique to develop quality projects with their incremental and non-planned approach, at the end she saw it as an approach to be encouraged and supported.

Her assessment is focused on the way the project was developed, not on citizen initiatives or direct action in general. She reframed the specific engagement regime of Truc Sphérique, which developed a deinstitutionalized approach to the restoration, recognizing that this way of operating could be used to tackle this kind of problematic situations. While this citizen initiative acted through this regime, others might adopt a regime based on a plan, like the public administrations she criticized.

While H.M. and her colleagues reframed their normative interpretations of the connections between regimes of engagement and quality of the resulting architecture, others reassessed their connections between citizen initiatives and magnitude of the project. We should again stress the fact that Neolog Synagogue is not a secondary station or an abandoned factory in the suburbs. It is a national monument. Its restoration required the organization of complex procedures and the acquisition of a considerable budget.

Cultural organizations across Slovakia (both citizen-initiated or public administrations) saw this project as evidence that citizen initiatives could successfully take greater responsibilities and risks. The main materialization of this shift is the Nova Cvernovka project in Bratislava, where in 2016 a small group of artists transformed a former school into a large cultural centre. The initiators were inspired by the Nová Synagóga and other cultural centres in Slovakia (as Tabacka in Kosice).

Similarly to the Nová Synagóga, the Nova Cvernovka restoration required an investment of more than 1 million euros. The initiators had first-hand knowledge of how funding was acquired in the Nová Synagóga, and how this approach generated delays in the implementation and stress and burnout in the team. They therefore opted to avoid this type of engagement, preferring to develop a plan and take great financial risks to implement rapidly the renovation. They opened mortgages and loans to have the financial comfort that F.B. desired. While the financial institutions providing these funds were primarily convinced by their sustainable business model, the decision was taken in a renewed cognitive frame, where citizen initiatives could develop large-scale projects of restoration. This frame was innovated by the success of projects like the Nová Synagóga in effectively dealing with complex problematic situations.

The Espace Imaginaire project led to different processes of learning and innovation in relation to direct action. Its effects are more related to the present-day wave of temporary urbanism than to the “friches” movement from which Mains d'œuvres originated in the 1990s.

In 2018 one of the co-managing associations of the Espace Imaginaire opened its own co-managed temporary space in a nearby lot waiting for transformation. It adopts a scheme similar to the Espace, with the involvement of local neighbors. In the following months, two other co-managers (an association and a local resident) expressed interest in developing similar projects in the neighborhood, asking the Espace Imaginaire association to support them as Mains d'œuvres supported the Espace.

The Espace Imaginaire was not the only citizen initiative of urban reuse in the Plaine-St-Denis neighborhood. A shared garden called Usine à Gazon had been installed a few years before. Differently from this project, the Espace Imaginaire integrated ecological themes with arts and social activities. It opened its spaces to a multiplicity of actors doing different things, while the Usine was mostly used for

gardening. Furthermore, the coordination office developed an artistic programme, thanks to the support of Mains d'œuvres.

The Espace did not therefore introduce the concept of temporary urbanism and citizen initiative in the neighborhood and in the co-managers; rather, the project innovated the concept by changing their understanding of its potentialities and methods.

The Espace Imaginaire is just one of the countless projects of temporary urbanism developed in the Greater Paris area in the last five years. National-scale non-profit organizations like Plateau Urbain and Yes We Camp manage multiple sites in France, while other place-based associations develop singular local experiences. Many of these initiatives have been developed in collaboration with large real estate companies, like private developers and SNCF - the national railway company-, that instrumentally use temporary reuse to occupy buildings and spaces waiting for transformation.

Most of these projects of temporary urbanism fall between two extremes. On one end, projects where an organization coordinates the whole cultural programme of the temporary space, mostly revolving around events, workshops and public activities. We can think as Mains d'œuvres as a permanent version of this model. On the opposite end, we have projects where the organization leasing the whole complex sublets each room or space to third parties. These third parties are often artists, cultural organizations, creatives, but also refugees and homeless people. The sublet rates are reduced compared to market prices to facilitate access, to maximize the diversity and the social impact of these spaces as creative hubs.

In many of these projects, the involvement of local communities of residents has been limited. In the second end the projects are have mostly been developed with a clear division of tasks and roles between leasing organization and subletting entities, without a perspective of shared and open governance. Artists, creatives and other users are involved only by their use of their space. Refugees and homeless people were only service beneficiaries.

The Espace Imaginaire presents critical differences with these approaches. It is rooted in the needs of the neighborhood, and it involves all users of the space in collective decision-making processes making them responsible. Furthermore, it diversifies the types of activities between artistic, cultural and ecologic. These differences were noticed by the members of the organization Yes We Camp curating the “Vive les Groues” project, aiming at reusing an open field in Nanterre. Yes We Camp usually coordinates all the activities in a space (like in the first model): they were looking for ways to improve the engagement of local associations and project holders in a shared governance system. Furthermore, the classical business model used by Yes We Camp, based on the revenues generated by the bar, was failing to sustain the project. They approached M.G. in 2019 to learn more about the methodology she used to design the diagnostique,

about the practical issues of managing an empty lot, about the strategies to feel others welcome in the process and the positioning of the coordinator in facilitating co-managers in the autonomous development of their own projects.

They then transferred these knowledges to their operations. At this level, the Espace Imaginaire is leading towards an innovation in the perception of the relation of these temporary urbanism projects with their surroundings and their system of governance. In particular, it offers a breakdown of pre-established roles of service provider and beneficiary, supporting the process of role taking by actors often stuck in a role. This innovation is still limited, as the models I initially outlined are still reproduced and dominant.

Finally, the Espace Imaginaire project also led to an innovation in relation to Mains d'œuvres and La Mains. While the relation between Mains d'œuvres and the Espace was problematic, it led to the creation of the cooperative, and to a general reframing of Mains d'œuvres. For a long time the association was seen - by the members of the organization, by public administrations and the audiences - as a St-Ouen organization. After the development of the project in St-Denis and the subsequent expansion with other processes across the Seine-St-Denis department, Mains d'œuvres started to be seen as an association operating on the whole department. The association was reframed in its scale of operations, with a jump in relevance and importance. They generated new ways of seeing the association, therefore scaling up the magnitude of citizen initiatives.

In these processes, we observed how involved actors and external organizations evolved their perception of citizen initiatives. In some cases, this evolution occurred in relation to the themes of the initiatives; in others, to the magnitude of what was considered possible.

Comparing the learning and innovations developed in the processed with the innovations transpiring beyond them, we can assess that little has yet been communicated and recognized. The involved actors experimented and learnt, but most of this knowledge still has to be formalized and socialized. For instance, the Espace Imaginaire is still mostly unknown beyond its participants and their direct social circles.

5.5 Learning and innovations: geometries of indetermination

The research question guiding this second empirical chapter asked how long-existing citizen initiatives generate learning and innovations in problematic situations out of their routinized activities. After outlining the chronological evolution of two European cases, assessing their multiple dimensions and evaluating the different learning and innovation effects, we can now formulate a general answer.

Preliminarily, we can acknowledge that learning and innovation effects are the result of the indeterminate character of the processes of urban transformation developed by citizen initiatives out of their routinized activities. In both cases, this space of indetermination was instrumental to reach the goals of the processes of urban transformation; the level of intentionality behind this instrumentality was however different: while in the NS case the opening of this field was an unintended effect of a lack of resources, in the EI case it was a deliberate element of a designed strategy of engagement. In both cases, indetermination emerged within rich and complex networks, manipulated by key actors to acquire the most important resources.

In this indetermination, other actors found space to engage with the process of urban transformation, operating at multiple levels, with multiple engagement regimes, on multiple domains. It was a space of opportunity and multiplicity, where different actors conflicted, cooperated and eventually established commonalities.

The NS case was characterized by greater indetermination in the operative dimension and a clearer and predetermined common goal. In this indetermination, actors struggled to establish internal double-loop and deuterio-learning efforts. The EI case was instead characterized by a closer relation between the process of urban transformation and the citizen initiative, generating a higher number of conflicts and feedbacks between the institutional dimensions of Mains d'œuvres and the emerging learning points.

Individual actors engaging with the uncertain and problematic situation developed adaptations and learnt new skills and competences. They acquired extensive knowledges (primarily through Learning I processes) that they used to guide their operations in and out of the process of urban transformation. Individual learning developed from clashes with the environment, with other actors or across domains of the situation.

On a collective level, the NS case saw the continuous revision of collective plans for action as single-loop learning. The EI case saw similar collective adaptations in the operations of co-managers.

Double-loop learning encountered problems in both processes, resulting in successful revisions only when cognitive and power blockages were forced by impeding external changes.

Actors were able to include emerging anomalies in the course of the process, innovating their understanding of categorizations and hypotheses guiding their actions.

The individual and collective learning developed in the processes encountered difficult translations into the citizen initiatives. Proposals of double-loop learning that clashed with the institutional dimensions of these organizations failed to generate change, as the authorities of these institutions blocked them. A cognitive dimension - they can not think other ways of organizing - and political one - they choose to not to adapt to what others learnt in practice - mixed to cause this inertia. Furthermore, the constant tightness of resources in the initiatives prevented the proponents of change to receive the slacks necessary to prove in practice the effectiveness and validity of their ideas within the organizations.

The processes of urban intervention were a source for learning and innovation for other actors, directly involved or not. They developed single- or double-loop learning processes: they adapted their operations or their regulations for action, with different levels of analysis of the situation. In particular, different actors from the Nová Synagóga case reflected on what they learnt from the conflict of different engagements regimes.

These processes also generated considerable relevant innovations on the perception of citizen initiatives in fields of arts and culture, like Mains d'œuvres and Stanica before them. They led to a reframing of what was considered to be possible for these initiatives. In Slovakia the public recognition of the large reconstruction of the Nová Synagóga project led to an increase of trust towards large-scale creative citizen initiatives. The Espace Imaginaire is instead contributing to a renewal of the models of temporary urbanism in the Plaine neighborhood and more limitedly in the Grand Paris metropolitan area.

These different types of learning and innovation developed across these processes were influenced by the institutional dimensions of the citizen initiatives. On one side they they enabled actors in the performance of specific actions, on the other they limited the construction of new shared ways of operating when their inertia prevented their revision.

The different dimensions of learning and innovation across the cases are tightly linked with the different levels of density of the public repertoires of similar projects in the environments of application, and the publicization of the projects. While in Slovakia these cases are still rare and the Nová Synagóga constituted a breakthrough in the scale of operations, in the Paris area the Espace Imaginaire is apparently a common project, only known by local residents or experts of temporary urbanism.

Nonetheless, public administrations absorbed in proportion to their involvement in the processes. Public administrations in St-Denis were directly involved in the process, and actively collaborated. They only developed single-loop adaptations to the Espace Imaginaire because their regulations already include a category for this kind of projects. The public administrations in Zilina were instead a secondary presence, an afterthought, who just witnessed the project.

Sixth Chapter: Conclusion

While our cities are increasingly produced and reproduced in their material and social fabric by market and state forces, marginal citizen initiatives are relevant for urban planning and urban studies. Understanding planning as a vast system of practices of transformation (Secchi, 2000: 7-8) of the uses of cities and territories (Crosta, 1990: 115; 2010), these initiatives diverge from the institutionalized and highly-formalized routines of these sectors. Research on citizen initiatives and citizen practices can shed light on how these micro practices generate different logics and innovative ways of engaging with city making, with different geometries and new outcomes, that can eventually be learnt and reproduced by public administrations, market-driven companies or other citizen initiatives.

In current urban debates, citizen initiatives of urban transformations have often been regarded as open processes of emergent sensemaking, lacking formalization and presenting constant innovations; this interpretation of citizen initiatives offers a limited approach, as it presents an overly optimistic stance about the nature of these experiences as spaces of freedom, innovation and continuative self-organization, lacking any institutional dimension. Furthermore, they draw these conclusions from empirical research on the initial phases of citizen initiatives.

Following a tradition of research on the public effects of citizen initiatives and their role in social transformation, and considering institutionalization incipient in every social situation continuing in time, the research aimed at exploring the institutionalization of citizen initiatives, their learning and innovation processes and the effects of these evolutions on their urban actions. The research investigated the engagement of long-existing citizen initiatives with problematic situations in conditions of routinization and emergent problematization. It focused empirically on the operations of two long-existing citizen initiatives in different urban contexts - Mains d'œuvres in St-Ouen, France and Stanica in Zilina, Slovakia - and their respective processes of urban transformation - the Espace Imaginaire project in St-Denis, France and the Nová Synagóga project in Zilina, Slovakia.

The research adopted cognitive, pragmatic, grounded and value-critical approaches that allowed the exploration of the cases focusing on the situated cognition of actors. The cases were explored through two units of analysis: the first focused on the citizen initiatives in their synchronic and diachronic dimensions to explore their institutionalization; the second on the processes of urban transformation to inquire learning and innovation processes in their engagement with problematic situations out of their routinized activities.

The empirical results of the thesis provided a complex picture of these initiatives. On a first level, we can state that over time these initiatives developed institutional dimensions. On a secondary one, they were able to bend these frames to allow the compresence of diverse ways of operating, but with limited abilities to reframe their operations and ways of seeing to permanently include this diversity. Nonetheless, their ideas traveled and were adopted by others, innovating other ways of doing.

After the presentation and discussion of the empirical results of the research questions in the previous two chapters, in this closing chapter I assess the theoretical implications of the thesis. The presence of the learning and innovation effects of these initiatives directly influence a first level of theoretical reflections on institutions and citizen initiatives. Since I defined citizen initiatives through the notion of public problem, the empirical results of the thesis also contribute to debates about this topic, focusing on the relation between publicization and solutions and the institutionalization of direct action in a repertoire of logics used to tackle problematic situations. Lastly, the analytical approach of the thesis was constructed by exposing the shortcomings of current insurgent and radical planning approaches, integrating them with the works of italian scholars: I will discuss the consequences of this choice and the theoretical implications of the thesis results.

Furthermore, as the thesis focused on a practical level, its empirical results and theoretical consequences can offer a series of recommendations for the development of policies both in the explored contexts and in other situations. I finally discuss future directions for research.

6.1 Citizen initiatives between institutions and innovations

The thesis has been grounded in the analysis of the italian and international debates about the value of citizen initiatives in planning and policy making. After a first assessment of the wide range of analytical frameworks on the topic, I focused on theories interpreting these initiatives as practices of reappropriation, as self-organization, as instances of an instituting society facing new problematic situations. These practices were interpreted as spaces of experimentation, where citizens could engage and interact out of the institutionalized approaches and frames.

In these theories, citizen actions were analytically interpreted through their supposed divergence with public administrations. While public administrations were seen as riddled with institutionalized cognitive backwardness, citizen initiatives were seen as flexible generators of new meanings, able to bend existing

instituted routines to effectively treat public problems. Citizen initiatives and public administrations were seen in a dichotomy: while the former were considered to be innovative and in shift, the latter were seen as institutions unable to learn.

As we saw, this dichotomous perspective has two flaws. The first is due to the empirical focus on short-existing initiatives: since we know that institutionalization processes occur over time, this empirical limitation undermines claims of generalization of the non-institutionalization character of short-existing initiatives to long-existing initiatives. The second is linked to the conceptual misunderstanding of institutions as a “status” belonging to public administrations, derived from the use of the term “institution” in current language as a synonym of “public administration”.

Considering institutions as “intentional human artifacts” (de Leonardis, 2001), I considered them not as a state belonging to public administrations, but as products of continuously evolving processes of institutionalization, understood as “reciprocal typifications of habitualized actions by types of actors” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966: 72). As institutionalization is incipient in every social situation continuing in time, institutional dimensions can emerge in any practice, even in citizen initiatives. This approach exposes the empirical gap in current literature on citizen initiatives, that focused on the initial phases of these experiences to argue about their non-institutional nature. Instead, the eventual emergence of institutional dimensions could be exposed only with an empirical focus on the *long durée* of citizen initiatives.

The first research question aimed at complementing this gap in the literature, exploring the diachronic evolution and synchronic operations of Stanica/Truc Sphérique and Mains d'œuvres, two long-existing citizen initiatives, to identify the emergence of institutional dimensions.

The results of the thesis show that in both initiatives the members perceived the presence of institutional dimensions. In Stanica this normative push focused on recommendations over the “right” way to act autonomously, operating at a constitutional level. It instituted autonomous action rather than specific actions. In Mains d'œuvres we observed instead the presence of two contrasting institutional dimensions: an activist dimension, pushing towards the performance of roles and tasks beyond formalities; and a formal institutional dimension, trying to establish more formal and typified roles, associated with specific tasks, responsibilities and ideas of authority. In both Stanica and Mains d'œuvres the normative forces of the institutions were socially reproduced through internal interactions and enforced by authority figures.

These dimensions developed in different institutional environments, as emergent processes of sensemaking stabilized with their environment. Stanica developed its way of operating without strong external pressures for isomorphic adaptation by public administrations, while Mains d'œuvres was

embedded in a more dense interorganizational field, whose institutions pressured the initiative and provided an established repertoire of solutions for internal critical voices.

Contrary to what we would expect according to current theories, both the initiatives showed institutional dimensions, even if they were not fully naturalized and taken for granted. These institutional dimensions informed the operations of the members of the initiatives through their cognitive normative frames. They enabled the operations and at the same time limited the freedom of the members of these institutions.

In the dichotomous vision of citizen initiatives and public administrations, citizens' actions were often explored in relation to situations of routine breakdown of public administrations (for instance during disasters). In these (and many other) situations, institutions weren't able to learn and innovate from the emergent practices citizens developed to face the situation through the use of negative capability (Lanzara, 1993; Cottino, 2009). Scholars used theories of institutional learning and innovation, to understand how they could (and should) be able to include the emergent spirits of society. Combining these reflections on learning institutions with the interpretation of citizen initiatives as institutions, the second research question inquired the learning and innovation effects of these initiatives, exploring problematic situations out of the routinized activities. Focusing on two processes of urban transformation - the *Espace Imaginaire* by Mains d'œuvres and the *Nová Synagóga* by Stanica/Truc Sphérique - I observed how the processes have been indeterminate spaces of experimentation, where multiple actors engaged across domains and levels of action, with different engagement regimes and conflicting normative perspectives.

These spaces of experimentation were generated beyond the instituted routines of the citizen initiatives, allowing the emergence of non-planned and spontaneous urbanity (Groth & Corijn, 2005). This indetermination and ambiguity was used as a resource in the development of the projects, to allow the engagement of external actors.

In these spaces, individual and collective actors developed processes of learning at different levels. They adapted their operations individually and collectively through their engagement with their environments. Through these engagement they individually acquired a robust body of skills and competences, which they used to further evolve the processes or in new situations.

When learning processes turned towards the social preferential and normative level of the processes of transformation, double-loop learning often failed as it clashed with institutionalized ways of operating. Innovations and double-loop learning succeeded when they resulted in of new and emergent domains of action, with the integration of anomalous responses into the frames for action. The translation of the

adaptations from the individual levels to the institutional levels of the citizen initiatives similarly faced (more or less intentional) blockages by authority figures.

Nonetheless, other actors involved in these processes and even external actors translated some of the knowledges developed in these experiments into their own situations of action, in particular innovating their professional operations and developing projects inspired by these interventions.

For their emergent and innovative dimension, these spaces recall the initial phases of citizen initiatives, with the creation of new meanings and ways of operating. The involved institutionalized citizen initiatives also resemble public administrations, as they encounter difficulties in absorbing these new meanings. Nonetheless, they differed from public administrations as they were able to partially deinstitutionalize their routines, bend (at least temporarily) their operations and allow the coexistence of other ways of doing in spaces of experimentation.

Looking back at the dichotomous interpretation of citizen initiatives and public administrations as emergent actions and institutions (respectively “instituting society” and “instituted society” according to Cellamare’s (2011) use of Castoriadis (1975)), we can say that citizen initiatives are not always best described as “instituting society”. My cases of long-existing citizen initiatives are partially institutionalized, meaning that part of their frames and operations have been typified (Berger and Luckmann, 1966): they differ from recently-developed citizen initiatives as they institute “proper” ways to behave and to act. These are both cognitive resources and limits, as they guide the cognition of members and limit their sensemaking abilities.

Nonetheless, these long-existing initiatives still present differences with institutionalized public administrations. Firstly, differently from public administrations they are young institutions, wherein some actors are still able to deconstruct the institutional frames, bend them, suspend the validity of pre-existing routines, institute generative operative voids, and - partially - absorb innovations. The first difference is therefore on their (relative) institutional flexibility compared with public administrations: their cycles of revision and learning, while rare and conflictual, require less effort and can succeed more often.

The second (and main) difference is in terms of content of these institutions. These citizen initiatives try to institute knowledges, values, routines and roles that are profoundly different from the ones embodied by public administrations. While our public administrations are structured around principles of bureaucracy and representative democracy, these alternative institutions promote autonomy and direct action.

The presence of strong isomorphic pressures can nonetheless influence the content of these institutions: in *Mains d’oeuvres* - more than in *Stanica* - we can see the effects of isomorphism. While in

the first the relation with bureaucracy led to isomorphism, in the second the relation with public administrations did not influence the internal structure to the point of reviewing its organizational principles. In these trajectories the two initiatives resemble several other cases of institutionalized initiatives, that evolved into bureaucratic structures (as Kaapeli in Finland) or into autonomous-promoting institutions (as UfaFabrik in Germany).

The awareness of the eventual emergence of institutional dimensions in long-existing citizen initiatives can lead to improvements and adjustments in operations by new generations of initiatives. A new wave of citizen initiatives is in fact rising across European countries, like the Lieux Infinis gathered at the French pavilion of the 2018 Venice Biennale, or the Cultural spaces funded by the Culturability granting program in Italy in the last seven years. These emerging spaces could protect their nature of “spaces of freedom” adopting techniques and strategies to minimize the negative effects of institutionalization.

A new understanding of the relation between instituting and instituted society between citizen initiatives and public administrations also bears consequences to normative political arguments and ideas linked to anarchist thought. The anarchist pursuit of freedom and equality has long focused on a fight against the State and public administrations, as expressions of oppression. In this line of thought, citizen initiatives have long been understood as democratic practices of freedom, categorizing them as “instituting society” (Castoriadis, 1975); these practices have been described as the conceptual opposite of public administrations, understood as “instituted society” (ibid).

Castoriadis’ own categorization offers an analytical reference to rekindle the normative anarchist pursuit of freedom. Scholars and social movements often took for granted the “emergent” and “instituting” nature of citizen initiatives, inductively considering all citizen initiatives (both pursuing social transformation goals and not) as free experiences. Instead, in this research we recognized the presence of “instituted societies” in long-existing citizen initiatives. As we saw, citizen initiatives can become themselves institutions, and sources of instituted oppression. The anarchist quest for increased freedom has therefore to critically target not only the State, but all authority practices, be they part of the State or of their own social organizations and citizen initiatives.

Ward (2003) was among the first to reflect on the topic proposing a way forward. He recognized that all social practices, including social organizations like mutual support groups or workers unions, follow a path towards authority and institutional oppression. On these bases, he argued against the pursuit of revolution as the achievement of an ideal stable state, because in this situation would emerge again as well. Prefigurative experiences, as practices of ideal social relationships within the current system, would fall in the same path. Consequently, he advised anarchists to practice a “permanent revolution”, with the

continuous construction and destruction of their own practices, generating new organizations and ways of operating. The effort of these experiences and of society in general is therefore primarily focused on continuous learning and innovation.

Ward's recommendations bear striking similarities with pragmatist theories of democracy, focused on experimentation and evolution. Instead of proposing an ideal institutional setting of democratic governance, a pragmatic conception of democracy focuses on the constant criticism of current democratic settings, looking for useful solutions to democratic deficits and inefficiencies (Fung, 2012). Pragmatic democracy acknowledges that any "release" of democracy is highly imperfect and requires constant improvement and innovation (ibid: 623), and that democracy is more focused on an institutional inquiry rather than on an institutional fetishism.

The research, with its focus on internal and external learning, offers glimpses of practices of permanent revolution and continuous institutional innovation in citizen initiatives. As the cases of this research exemplify, a permanent revolution is no easy task, as institutionalized organizations often resist change and continuous innovation of their decision-making practices.

Closing this section, let's focus on the interpretation of the processes of urban transformation as innovative milieux, from which innovations can travel. In "Cities in civilization" Hall (1988) reviewed different urban contexts in the history of civilization to analyse the city as a breeding ground for human cultural and technological progress, as they provide an "innovative milieu". Hall explores the trajectories of different cities, as their levels of innovativeness arise, reach their zenith and decline. Among them, the case of the Silicon Valley bears many similarities with the cases of this research, and can be used to shed light on their innovative nature in an ecosystemic approach. Hall observes that the Silicon Valley is a context that has been able, compared with other innovative cities in the past, to continuously innovate. In this context, companies emerged and were able to reach a global zenith in terms of innovation, first with the era of silicon transistors, then with the personal computer era and now with the internet age.

However, these innovations have not (usually) been developed in their full scale by the same organizations. For instance, the Graphical User Interface was first developed by Xerox, but the company did not recognize its potential for the development of personal computers, being focused on its printers market. It was instead Apple who exploited this innovation, as Steve Jobs discovered about it during a visit at Xerox Parc in Palo Alto.

This event resembles the dynamic of the innovations traveling out of the processes of urban transformation in the second unit of analysis. Mains d'oeuvres and Stanica have purposely developed innovations, but more often than not they have not been able to integrate them in their operations

because of cognitive and operational limits. However, these innovations have traveled along professional and friendship networks, and they have been absorbed by other organizations who aim at fully exploiting and diffusing them.

Hall's innovative milieu is therefore not just the city, or the urban context where this exchange of innovations unfolds, but also the social network that allows the transfer and traveling of innovations beyond urban borders. As a consequence, the evaluation of innovations cannot be limited to the spatial contexts of experimentation, but also to their ability to spread and being diffused in a dense or thin network.

The evaluation of the expansion and diffusion of innovations and learning has therefore to adapt a perspective able to go beyond the single case (and cases within a first level of interaction), and assess instead the networked relations between cases. This approach would allow the analysis of the exchange of innovations across space and time. This perspective could be adapted to assess traveling innovations and narratives across networks and communities of practice, and the effects of this diffusion. For instance, the "friches" gathered in the "Nouveaux territoires de l'art", the members of Trans Europe Halles, the Lieux Infinis, or the Culturability grantees, can be explored as different networked ecosystems, in order to analyse their fine tuning, multiplication and reproduction of innovations, approaches and knowledge.

6.2 Citizen initiatives and new interpretations of public problems

Beyond the cognitive and institutional level, the results of the thesis offer insights around the relation between citizen initiatives and public problems. In my theoretical framework I defined "citizen initiative" as "community and citizen actions developed or initiated out of governmental control that generate effects on public problems by means of the very action itself". The citizen initiatives I explored in the thesis emerged as active responses to the perception of problematic situations by their initiators. These situations initially lacked a public dimension, as the problems were mostly constructed by the initiators and their immediate social circles, with some differences: while in St-Ouen the initiators had already clear the potential minipublics (Fung, 2003) to involve through direct action, in Zilina this logic was imported from other contexts and their minipublics of reference were discovered in action. In St-Ouen cultural action was already part of a shared repertoire with a series of minipublics receptive to these issues, in Zilina the team had to start almost from scratch, engaging with problems that were still not public in nature,

such as the lack of cultural activities, the lack of spaces and assistance for artistic development and the lack of opportunities for experimentation and freedom.

The two processes of urban transformation engaged with uncertain problematic situations that initially also lacked a public dimension. In the Nová Synagóga the project originated from the responsibility of the initiators to renovate the building as they saw no one was willing to take care of it. In the Espace Imaginaire the initiator desired to create a process of dialogue and co-management rather than solving single and specific problems. Nonetheless, both the processes developed public dimensions in their evolutions.

Let's focus on the relation between the publicization of problems and the actions to tackle said problems. In classic literature on the careers of public problems, the publicization of a problem is seen as a necessary step for the formulation of actions by public administrations (Cefäi, 2006 in Crosta, 2010: 156-157). In these cases instead the formulation of actions by citizen initiatives preceded the process of publicization of problems. The public dimension of these problems was discovered in action (Crosta, 2010: 165), as the effects of the solutions the initiatives proposed were perceived by other actors, who in turn engaged with the situation.

In some of these processes, the discovery emerged through the presence of spaces of indetermination and experimentation, where needs could be explored and services could be fine tuned. In particular the programme of Stanica and the Nová Synagóga works towards the transformation of the public perception of cultural activities and contemporary art, balancing their programme between the development of future potential minipublics (Jullien, 1998) and the attraction of audience for popular events. In the Nová Synagóga transformation process the public value of the project was intentionally activated through the different frames of the project (Kunsthalle/Behrens/Jewish culture) in order to acquire additional resources mobilizing different minipublics; on a side effect, this publicization led to the engagement of other actors, creating a public arena of confrontation (Cefäi, 2007).

Mains d'œuvres operated in contexts with already-formalized needs, which they were able to reframe and connect with their operations. Similarly to Stanica, Mains d'œuvres discovered its public effects incrementally over time, as the activities offered by the organizations led to the generation of considerable minipublic. The Espace Imaginaire followed a similar path, developing its public nature over the years as the ranks of co-managers increased and the space developed an internal public sphere. Problems entered the process, but were not directly tackled by the initiators: they instead focused on supporting the development of autonomous solutions by the co-managers in an internal ecology.

The public effects of these initiatives emerged both from the actions intentionally aimed to solve problems they wanted to tackle - the restructuring of the local cultural offer, the generation of alternative

and innovative services in relation to welfare and education - and from the unintended consequences of their operations - the restoration of public spaces, the transformation of the built environment.

Through these different elements, these citizen initiatives open to new understandings of the careers of public problems. The understanding of the evolution from problematic situations to problems and then to public problems might be too narrowly focused on the description of the careers of problems that are treated by public administrations. Of course, public administrations deal with most of the public problems in our societies. Minimizing this reality would be inaccurate. But from an analytical standpoint the results of the thesis lead me to advance the hypothesis that the distinction between problems and public problems is not to be made on the presence or absence of a process of publicization of problems before administrative action; this character is what defines the category of public problems that administrations are incentivized to treat: as public administrations seek political resources, already-publicized problems are the ones they can gain more consensus from, compared with the ones with no established publics. Scholars should consider as public the problems whose publicization occurs after their treatment: they are public problems because their solution is discovered in action to have public effects.

To expand this category, we have to go back to Dewey's (1927) definition of public as the people affected by the unintended consequences of a transaction beyond the ones directly involved in it. In the current use of the concept, people are considered to become a public when they perceive the effects of a problematic situation and engage with it. In this interpretation, the awareness of said effects plays a crucial analytical role in separating members and non-members of the public. You are a member of a public if you perceive certain effects and act upon it.

Following the examples of the cases I presented, it is possible that a majority of people might suffer the effects of certain actions without being aware of it. A minority might perceive these effects and develop their interpretations. As they act upon the situation, formulating plans for tackling the problem as they understand it, the effects of their actions start being perceived more extensively in a positive light. Their transactions generate a public (mini- or not), who acts to support the continuative reproduction of said actions to perpetuate the effects.

This reflection adds another dimension to the analysis of publics. Fung focused on the size of publics (ranging from large-scale to mini-publics), arguing that mini-publics are relevant in contemporary societies as they can improve the public sphere in a fragmented political life (Fung, 2003). Following the evidence of the thesis, we should also assess that publics emerge to deal with both positive or negative effects of others' actions. I propose to analytically consider these problems as public, as their solutions are

proven to be public. My interpretation of Dewey's concept of public is expanded to positive effects, not just negative ones²⁵. It is a first tentative hypothesis of definition of an appropriate terminology: it puts the ex-ante and ex-posteriori publicizations on the same analytical level as causes for the definition of problems as public. It allows connections with the notion of public policies (Dente, 1990; Dunn, 1981). An alternative would be to continue referring to ex-ante publicized problems as "public problems" and to ex-post publicized problems as "public solutions".

We should also appreciate the fact that many of the services and goods produced by these initiatives are not generated in a void, but in connection with policies and programs by public administrations. As noted in chapter 4, in some instances these initiatives operate as intermediaries between citizens and public administrations, providing services to citizens and voicing needs and concerns to public administrations.

The cases also suggest the need to better reflect about the heterogeneity and quality of publics. We defined the public through the performance of actions in response to a certain effect; we introduced the notion of "minipublic" in relation to smaller-scale publics (Fung, 2003); we can recognize that the actors of the (mini-)public have different levels of commitment and generate effects at different scales. For instance, in the Nova Synagoga the crowdfunders and the members of the restoration board both *act* in the process and therefore take part in the constitution of the minipublic of this process, but their actions require different levels of commitment and responsibility, exerting a different level of influence over the process.

Some of the participants actively influenced the process, partly controlling its development and taking unexpected roles. Their engagement can be described using the notion of transaction (Dewey and Bentley, 1949 in Crosta, 2010) as processes where roles are generated in the process, in which actors develop their actorship by mutually determining their constitutive elements. These actors transact with their situation and with other actors. On the other side, other actors simply interacted with the situation, understanding interactions as performed by objects and subjects whose characters are predetermined and are not mutating through interaction, generating previsible outcomes on the basis of roles and functions (Dewey and Bentley, 1949 in Crosta, 2010). These two ways of acting (interactions as filling predetermined roles and tasks and transactions as generating the process and its roles), are two extremes of the levels of participation in these processes.

Arnstein's ladder of participation (1969) is used to assess the level of participation by citizens in political processes, observing their disparity in influence and power with public administrations. A simple

²⁵ As expressed in footnote 1 of section 4.2.2

transposition of the ladder to these cases would not make sense, as public administrations have little to no role in these processes. Instead, an adaptation of the ladder can display the disparities between initiators and other citizens, showing how the minipublics of these processes were often silently interacting rather than actively transacting.

In the Nova Synagoga case citizen power was exerted, but mostly by the initiators of the process and in particular by M.A.. In some instances other actors are able to rise and receive certain levels of delegated power. While H.M. wanted the Restoration Board to actively control the process, its participation was closer to a consultation. In many other cases, like the donors of the crowdfunding, the volunteers and the private sponsors, their participation did not influence the general process. These differences of participation are the result of how the initiators organized the process in order to acquire the resources necessary for the success of the project. At the same time, the efforts of establishing different ways of operating failed as their proponents lacked resources and the level of centrality needed to acquire them.

In the Espace Imaginaire we can observe a strong aim at empowering co-managers. Citizens effectively control the project, but within the frames established by M.G.. Similarly, the members of Mains d'oeuvres took action in the project, but their suggestions were often left unheard. The civil service operators of the Espace Imaginaire, saw their instances follow a similar path, leaving them powerless. Many citizens were involved in consultations and in lower levels of participation, in particular in the first phases of the project.

These differences in levels of participation within these minipublics suggest that, while initiatives prove the publicness of the problems they tackle through the actions of minipublics, we always have to assess the quality of the participation of said minipublics. In particular, positions of control had thresholds that limited open participation and the extent of their potentials of change.

As long-existing citizen initiatives generated public effects and public goods, their operations routinized and took institutional form, becoming less able to adapt to their environments. Over time, though, their minipublics shifted their preferences, leading to a reformulation in the social sphere of the problem the initiative was previously tackling.

It is through this process that some of these centres detached from their context and their audiences, losing important resources of funding and legitimacy. This disconnection came to light in times of crisis, when these resources - that were thought to be a given - were discovered to be absent. In these situations, these initiatives have engaged with their context by reformulating their actions in order to reacquire a public dimension. For instance, Stanica reassessed its cultural programming after the 2013 financial crisis, and Mains d'oeuvres launched a Music school to acquire the lost local support during the conflict with the municipality.

These initiatives did not launch explicit audience development or participatory processes, rather they used their connections with key stakeholders and members of their minipublics to understand their perspectives. Similarly to public administrations, they used these informal participation instruments to improve the responsiveness of their operations and review their answer to local needs (Gangemi, 2006: 190).

6.3 Institutionalization and innovation of direct action by citizen initiatives

In the previous section, citizen initiatives and public problems were discussed in relation to the ex-post and ex-ante publicization of problems, leading to the problematization of the category of public problems and the notion of publicization.

The thesis offers yet another thread of discussion on citizen initiatives and public problems. Having observed the ex-post public dimensions of the problems these actors tackled with direct action (Bosi & Zamponi, 2015), we can now focus on the effects of these initiatives in the perception of direct action strategies in the arts and culture fields.

Mains d'œuvres has been a reference for the french arts and culture citizen initiatives for two decades. It was a model of “friche” for other organizations and institutions wishing to create artistic spaces reviving abandoned buildings. Stanica was one of the first citizen-initiated cultural centres in Slovakia, and has inspired other centres either directly or through the national network of independent cultural centres Antena.

The two initiatives differently contributed to the affirmation of direct action strategies to tackle problematic situations related to arts and culture, directly aiming at the desired goals instead of protesting or demanding action by public administrations (publicizing ex ante the issue). They demonstrated that direct action strategies existed and were viable strategies to face issues linked with publics having a “minipublic” size (Fung, 2003), like - for instance - the lack of artistic spaces or contemporary art programming. Stanica adopted this approach from Trans Europe Halles and introduced it in Slovakia: they expanded the frame of what was perceived to be possible, and over time instituted a way to tackle these situations. Mains d'œuvres instead expanded and innovated an already-existing field of rich experiences, elevating the approach beyond ephemeral uses with a permanent use and a diverse programme in a complex situation.

The two processes of urban intervention were object of processes of learning that kickstarted innovations on the perspectives on direct action. Thanks to the perception of successes in relation to the quality of the results and to the magnitude of the intervention, the Nová Synagóga project further expanded the boundaries of the field of problematic situations where arts and culture citizen initiatives could take the lead in Slovakia. The architectural results led to the innovation of the perspectives of architecture historians, who recognized the positive aspects of a familiar engagement with the project. The scale of the project and its widespread publicity instead contributed to an expansion of what citizen initiatives were considered able to do in Slovakia, facilitating the development of more planned and risky projects like Nova Cvernovka.

The Espace Imaginaire project led to the innovation of the potential of citizen initiatives in three different aspects. On a first place, the ability of Mains d'œuvres to develop projects across the department led to its reframing not just as a St-Ouen organization, but as an initiative able to operate in the whole Seine-St-Denis. Citizen initiatives could then be real-estate and urban policy actors at a departmental level. Secondly, the Espace Imaginaire led to a diffuse rethinking of the potentials of temporary urbanism in the Plaine-St-Denis local community, encouraging local residents to develop new projects. Thirdly, it offers potentials for innovation to the wave of temporary urbanism projects, to go beyond current models.

In the Stanica-Truc Sphérique case, the opening of possibilities for citizen initiatives was linked with the production of different types of trust, generated by the demonstration of the viability of a course of action (Lemieux, 2018); the establishment of Stanica and its continuative success demonstrated the viability of this logic of action: it pushed other cultural operators to trust themselves and their intuitions, to “just do it” without external reassurances from their local contexts or without strategies based on planned control. The Nová Synagóga project doubled down on this logic of action, demonstrating that citizen initiatives are worth of trust for larger projects: they generated more widespread effects, leading to a general acknowledgment of citizen initiatives and their potentialities.

In the Mains d'œuvres-Espace Imaginaire case, the proof of effectiveness did not lead to similar widespread effects of trust towards the whole category, perhaps because of the density in the local context of similar experiences to take as an example. These cases demonstrated instead that it was possible to do things *differently*, distancing their initiatives from dominant fashions and following instead ideas and dreams. These cases led to an increase of trust in idealism and dreams, deconstructing categories, expanding taken-for-granted ideas and proving that radical alternatives are possible.

Considering the situated perspectives of actors facing a problematic situation linked to arts and culture, these initiatives and processes of urban transformation contributed to institute direct action in a repertoire of strategies and logics for action. As actors can draw different legitimate argumentative frames from institutional repertoires to construct the meanings of problematic situations, they can access other repertoires to guide their tackling of the situation: demanding, protesting or producing public goods (Vitale, 2007). In this selection, they are informed by the structure of political opportunities, but they are often limited by institutionalized habits of delegating to public administrations (linked with the constructed perceptions of legitimate authority).

Through their continuative treatment of public problems - consolidated and emergent - these institutionalized citizen initiatives establish, renew and reinforce direct action (Bosi & Zamponi, 2015) as a legitimate strategy available in the cognitive repertoire of citizens for the treatment problematic situations (Cefaï, 2016) and for the production public goods (Vitale, 2007). It must be however noted the limited scale of these publics, taking the dimension of minipublics (Fung, 2003) rather than large-scale publics.

As this strategy is socialized, it can be accessed and used by different actors. In particular, it is interesting to notice the different relations that public administrations have with this approach to the resolution of problematic situations. In Slovakia this strategy is adopted outside public administrations, constructing alternative institutions and radical ways of operating based on autonomy. In France instead this strategy has been integrated in several territorial, urban and cultural politics. For instance, policies for (permanent or temporary) reuse of brownfields combine representative democracy and direct citizen actions (in a logic resembling horizontal subsidiarity). In this approach, citizen initiatives can become (and already are) instrumental in governmental projects and action, and could become intermediate bodies to whom to delegate the implementation of policies or the bottom-up formalization of needs.

6.4 Towards a renewed grounding of radical planning theories

The last major contributions of the thesis are linked to the debates of radical/critical planning scholars about citizen initiatives. Firstly, in the second chapter the thesis developed a rare confrontation between international and italian perspectives on citizen initiatives. These perspectives have mostly been developed in separate scholar debates, divided by language barriers: the thesis engages with both of them in english, allowing their dialogue.

Secondly - and most importantly - the process of choice and definition of the analytical approach of this research led to reflections about the differences between positive and normative theories focused on citizen initiatives. On this bases, I expose the positive benefits that the adoption of a more grounded approach would provide to insurgent and radical planning scholarship.

In the last fifty years, radical planning has shifted its focus from policy critique to structure critique (Sager, 2016). The citizen initiatives and urban transformations relevant for research have consequently changed from bottom-up plans competing with modernist planning processes (Davidoff, 1965) to processes of (physical and cognitive) transformation of urban spaces by citizen insurgencies defined by their critiques against phenomena perceived as dominant (Miraftab, 2009; Garcia-Lamarca, 2017; Friedmann, 2011).

Current radical and insurgent perspectives consider citizen initiatives to be socially transformative on the basis of their divergence with instituted laws and regulations. Critics argued that insurgency does not directly imply the generation of emancipative effects, either because of the possible presence of anti-emancipative insurgent goals (Davy, 2019), or - more importantly - because intended goals and effects might actually diverge (Meth, 2010). Furthermore, this approach interprets insurgent actions in a dichotomic relation between oppressed and oppressive groups, without inquiring the relations of power within insurgent practices. Researches focusing on citizen initiatives aiming both at structural transformations on ends (the hierarchy of the values and goals in society) and on means (the ways of organizing, deciding and participating) (Sager, 2016: 1272) have been similarly criticized.

Both these approaches consider to be relevant for social transformation only the processes intentionally aiming at these goals, adopting ideologies coherent with the scholars' predetermined political and analytical frameworks. Furthermore, the only considered effects of these initiatives are the ones resulting from their explicit intentions, without assessing their unintended or perverse effects (like the emergence of internal systems of power).

These approaches present considerable differences with Crosta's and other Italian scholars' attention to citizen initiatives. These perspectives adopt a broader and more grounded perspective on the relevant actions, qualifying them by the effects perceived by actors, be they intended, unintended or perverse. They open to the exploration of intentional and unintentional actions, from planning and policy-making processes to everyday practices, urban practices and in general social interactions. Researches adopts a phenomenological, pragmatist and social constructivist approach, focused on the situated perspectives

and interpretations of actors, and on their a posteriori sensemaking. Preferences and goals of action are considered to be discovered in action via mutual adjustment (Lindblom, 1990).

While in the insurgent and radical exploration of citizen initiatives scholars often advance normative visions of society based on the establishment of a univoque and static ideal state, these authors instead argue for the full development of democratic processes of confrontation between the plural and evolving notions of “good” present in society. Institutions (as cognitive frames) are considered to be the main object of limitation of the full development of democratic dialogue. Adopting a liberal and pluralist perspective (Allmendinger, 2002: 125), this approach argues for the removal of the cognitive and normative constraints that institutions set upon society, facilitating the diffuse enactment and assessment of changes.

To develop my analytical framework I assessed these two perspectives in their analytical and political values. Keeping my framework closer to the second perspective, I developed my research on the basis of cognitive, pragmatic, grounded and value-critical approaches. I focused on the situated cognition of actors, to define their situated understandings. Through a pragmatic approach, I could assess how actors tested their envisioned course of action with their environment, processing the feedbacks generated by these engagements. Through a grounded stance I allowed the emergence of themes from the cases themselves, without predefining a political analytical framework. Nonetheless, adopting a value-critical approach (Rein, 1976: 256), I recognized my support for certain values and political ideals, trying to filter my understanding of the world from my own political stances. Through this approach, I tried to observe the cases reflectively to assess the effects generated, including their ambiguities and incoherences.

My research and the second perspective are mostly concerned with the development of positive theories, exploring how the world “is” in its mechanisms and structures, allowing the emergence of anomalies and divergences from pre-established ideas. Of course, while this description aims at a value-free description, it is filtered by the implicit political ideas of researchers; the adoption of a value-critical approach can mitigate this distortions.

Insurgent scholars and scholars of spaces of autonomy are instead often not interested in exploring the complexity of reality, focusing on developing new political perspective. They deal with normative theories, defining what the world “ought to be”: empirical research is used to “test” political theories and ideologies in practice. Researchers develop argumentative constructs assessing orders of worth (Boltanski and Thevenot, 1991), defining what is more important and why.

Planning theory debates have mostly focused on normative ideas defining what planning should be (Sager, 2001). Radical planners in particular declined this normative approach by reflecting on which kind of ideal world they should build, ranging across marxist, post-marxist, autonomist, anarchist, postmodern and postcolonialist approaches to define what is “just” and what is “unjust”. In my approach instead (drawing from italian planning scholars and french pragmatists) I aimed at exploring the situated ideas of justice and their interactions.

We recognize therefore a divergence in the concerns of the two types of theories: on one side, researchers aim at describing and exploring social processes, and dedicate attention to the adherence of their theories to empirical findings; on the other side, researchers aim at constructing political theories, and orient their theorization according to political coherence and strength of their arguments.

I believe, as argued by Meth (2010), that radical and insurgent debates should develop a more attentive and grounded understanding of their contexts. This approach would benefit the effectiveness of their normative aims. On a first level, for methodological reasons, the introduction of distinctions between empirical and theoretical concepts would improve the clarity of their claims. As argued by Davy (2019), the concept of insurgency - like the concept of “self-organization” I criticized in section 2.2.1 (see also: Pizzo, 2018; Uitermark, 2015) - has empirical but also normative implications. Its distinction in different concepts between empirical and normative dimensions of insurgency would improve the level of the debate and develop more concrete theories.

Furthermore, the adoption of a grounded and value-critical approach - at least in the development of the positive theories supporting normative theory-building - would improve their understanding of the complexity of the environment, and also allow the emergence of eventual anomalies and discoveries functional to the construction of their political arguments.

6.5 Policy recommendations and lesson-drawing

Given the multiple and faceted nature of these processes, it is quite difficult to formulate policy recommendations. The processes have been influenced by a multiplicity of policies. The discussion will start by detailing policy recommendations²⁶ for issues arising in each case study and then

²⁶ These recommendations have to be considered in the framework of the definition of public policy as: “the set of actions performed/undergone by a set of subjects (the actors) in some way related to the solution of a collective problem - be it a need, an opportunity or an unanswered demand - generally considered of public interest” (Dente, 1990, from Dunn, 1981).

recommendations linked to the major issues common to both cases. I finally discuss the lessons from the cases that can be drawn and reflectively applied to problematic situations in other contexts (Rose, 1993).

The Nová Synagóga case was particularly affected by the requirements put forth by the EEA Grant system. The adoption of public procurement procedures required the organization of internal training by Truc Sphérique, which they were able to fund through European grants. Nonetheless, the granting organization could provide training and consultancy for public procurement.

Furthermore, the strict timeline of the EEA Grant system impacted the process by accelerating the operations and consequently limiting time for reflection. In order to allow the adoption of incremental renovation projects, the program could include the possibility of reviewing the timelines according to the speed of each process.

The Slovak Ministry of Culture supports the artistic and cultural programme of the Nová Synagóga and Stanica through the Slovak Arts Council. However, as verified by the initiators of the Nová Synagóga process, the Ministry has no line of funding for the renovation of private spaces for cultural use by NGOs (be they cultural heritage or not). This line of funding could be integrated in the “Cultural centres” programme by the Slovak Arts Council, or in a new specific programme for “Cultural startups”. Learning from Nova Cvernovka and its successful relationships with bank loans, public administrations could also operate as guarantors for cultural organizations to loan money for renovations.

In the Mains d'œuvres/Espace imaginaire case we focused on the effects of an excessive workload in the association. The exploitation of artistic, cultural and social labor is worryingly diffuse in NGOs in France and across Europe. Mains d'œuvres received large portions of income from public administrations, but had to keep an unrealistic level of productivity to justify its funding. These proportions might have originated from the voluntaristic and activist nature of these initiatives, that proved that it's possible to do much with little; as public administrations started providing funding, they required increases in activities, up until current levels. As we saw in Mains d'œuvres, underfunding these operations is not sustainable in the long run, as it leads to worker burnouts.

In order to tackle this issue, funding programs could review their productivity requirements to sustainable levels, either by reducing in quantity the expectations or developing systems of evaluation based on the quality of artistic activities. Since payrolls are among the main expenses of these initiatives, they could also be supported by reducing the taxation paid by employers of cultural workers. Singular agreements (like the convention between Mains d'œuvres and the municipality of St-Denis) should provide relevant portions of the actual costs that these initiatives spend to sustain their operations.

One of the main failures in the case studies was the inability of both institutionalized citizen initiatives to develop double-loop learning and to innovate their operations in response to the new knowledges generated in the processes of urban intervention. This issue requires deuterio-learning policies supporting organizations in learning to learn and innovate. It is linked not just to the cognitive dimension of institutions (inhibiting actors to see their subjective constructions of the world) but also the embedded power and hierarchical structures limiting the expression of innovations by members.

While these issues are a problem common to all organizations, citizen initiatives have not yet been targeted by policies facilitating internal innovations. Instead, they are simply seen as producers of innovations in all contexts. While it appears contradictory, this double nature was proven in the processes of urban intervention: they are able to produce innovations, but they fail to absorb them while others succeed. An innovation policy targeting them should valorize these dimensions.

Furthermore, an innovation policy should aim at facilitating the transfer and travel of the innovations these experiences generate but they are (often) unable to internalize. Such a policy would stress the need to establish local and supra-local networks, in order to facilitate the travel of informations both in and out territories. For instance, the Antena national network in Slovakia proved a crucial element in the transfer of learning points from the Nova Synagoga experience in Zilina onto the Nova Cvernovka initiative in Bratislava.

The case studies also allow the transfer of lessons (Rose, 1993) to other problematic situations. While the study of the development of the citizen initiatives call for the recommendation of developing policies facilitating bottom-up processes of reappropriation by citizens, the processes of urban transformation call for the development of more complex policies and programs.

Long-existing citizen initiatives are reservoirs of knowledges on how to develop these processes, from social, spatial, cultural, processual and architectural points of view. They could be involved as trainers to support the emergence of new organizations (similarly to what La Main 93.0 is doing in Seine-St-Denis); or they could be supported with financial and political resources to initiate themselves processes of urban transformation, generating innovations and learning by bending their frames. In order to successfully adapt over time, these initiatives should receive relevant amounts of slack, with the tolerance of experimentation both in terms of activities and ways of operating (with a certain degree of flexibility in terms of adherence to regulations).

The two cases offer a broad perspective on the objectives of projects developed by these initiatives: the Nová Synagóga demonstrates the possibility of conveying existing knowledges to renovate abandoned

spaces; the approach of the Espace Imaginaire instead can be used to allow the emergence and discovery of local problems and support minute empowerment processes through the ability of these initiatives of establishing local networks.

6.6 Concluding remarks and future directions for research

The thesis inquired into the institutionalization and the innovations generated by long-existing citizen initiatives, with two European cases. Investigating into the engagement of the citizen initiatives with problematic situations in conditions of routinization and emergent problematization, I assessed their internal institutional dimension and their learning and innovation effects. I observed how these organizations present institutional dimensions enabling but also limiting the actions of their members. Even if institutionalized, they were able to bend their frames to develop new processes of urban intervention. In these problematic and uncertain situations, they helped generating multiple learning processes at different levels both in and out the processes. Nonetheless, little has been absorbed by the initiatives themselves. Instead, these new innovations were developed by other actors, involved or not in the processes.

In these conclusions, I explored the theoretical consequences of these assessment. The current understanding of citizen initiatives as emerging practices of reappropriation opposed to institutionalized public administrations - based on empirical researches focused on newly-established projects - has to be expanded to include institutionalized initiatives. Citizen initiatives can develop the same institutional dimensions scholars argue are the causes of inertia in public administrations.

Further research on the topic could detail a categorization of the institutional dimensions of long-existing citizen initiatives, with Mains d'œuvres and Stanica as extreme cases (between autonomization and bureaucratization). Research could also focus on other situations of breakdown of the routines of these initiatives, inquiring the eventual emergence of internal learning and innovations.

We also assessed how these citizen initiatives open to new understandings of the careers of public problems. I advanced the hypothesis that the distinction between problems and public problems is not to be made on the presence or absence of a process of publicization of problems before administrative action; rather, the category of public problems should include problems whose publicization occurs after their treatment: they are public problems because their solution is discovered in action to be have public effects.

Future research on this line of theoretical reflection could expand the repertoire of empirical cases of citizen initiatives tackling public problems with different regimes of engagement. In particular, it should focus on the different strategies they used to publicize the issue after the identification of solutions. On a theoretical level, research should reflect on the generation of publics in relation to positive effects of transactions, in a dialogue with the concept of public policy.

These citizen initiatives and processes of transformation also contributed to institute direct action as part of a cognitive repertoire of strategies and logics for action used by citizens to face problematic situations. They legitimized this strategy through their direct effective treatment of public problems, expanding a repository including logics of demand and protest which are instead based on delegation to public administrations. This line of research could be further developed by conducting extensive researches on citizen initiatives in different countries, exploring their inspirations, models and references. An inquiry at European level could assess regional differences and the influence of supralocal organizations like Trans Europe Halles.

Trans Europe Halles and other networks and communities of practice (such as the “friches” gathered in the “Nouveaux territoires de l’art” and the Lieux Infinis in France, or the Culturability grantees in Italy) could be explored as networks to evaluate their role in the diffusion of innovations and learning beyond local contexts, focusing on the exchange of knowledges and strategies for urban action.

The last years also saw the diffusion of supralocal networks and organizations focused on direct action like Trans Europe Halles in Europe, La Main 93.0 in Seine-St-Denis, Trias Foundation in Germany, Maryon in Switzerland and Germany, GEN and Civicwise across the globe. A focus on these networks and organizations could also lead to a reflection on their role in instituting direct action and across territories.

Finally, the research contributed to debates in radical and insurgent planning theories by proposing an expanded understanding of effects and actions. Even if in this research I mostly focused on positive theories of planning, I advanced suggestions for the empirical and grounded consolidation of radical and insurgent theories.

In light of the answers to the research questions, the thesis advances a renewed understanding of citizen initiatives between their institutional dimensions and potentials of innovations. Furthermore, this reframing of citizen initiatives leads to generative transformations in a series of theoretical debates, opening new lines of thought and discussion.

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Annexes

List of Annexes

Annex A - List of interviews

Annex B - List of participant observations

Annex C - List of documents

Annex A - List of interviews

Stanica - Nova Synagoga

	Date	Respondent	Language	Category of respondent	Organization (if any)	Statute of interview	Type of interview	Duration
1	27/07/2017	Blasko Robert	English	Actors active both in the process of urban intervention and in the CICC	Truc Spherique	Unstructured	Non recorded	/
2	21/03/2018	Adamov Marek	English	Actors active both in the process of urban intervention and in the CICC	Truc Spherique	Semi-structured	Recorded	0.43.12
3	28/03/2018	Adamov Marek	English	Actors active both in the process of urban intervention and in the CICC	Truc Spherique	Semi-structured	Recorded	3.55.44
4	10/04/2018	Kvasnikova Magda	English - French	Participants in the processes of urban intervention	Faculty of Architecture at the Slovak University of Technology	Semi-structured	Recorded	1.31.00
5	11/04/2018	Boris, Braňo, Šymon	English	Informed individuals	Cernovka Foundation	Semi-structured	Recorded	1.19.32
6	11/04/2018	Seberiniová Beata	English	Informed individuals	A4	Semi-structured	Recorded	0.34.18
7	11/04/2018	Jancok Martin	English	Participants in the processes of urban intervention	Plural Architects	Semi-structured	Recorded	1.29.27
8	12/04/2018	Blascak Fedor	English	Participants in the processes of urban intervention		Semi-structured	Recorded	0.49.09
9	12/04/2018	Szalay Peter	English	Participants in the processes of urban intervention	Institute of Construction and Architecture of the Slovak Institute	Semi-structured	Recorded	1.11.28

					of Sciences - Docomomo				
10	17/04/2018	Adamov Marek	English	Participants in the processes of urban intervention	Truc Spherique	Semi-structured	Recorded	1.25.49	
11	22/04/2018	Gabor Juraj	English	Members of the CICC - Synagoga + Stanica	Truc Spherique	Semi-structured	Recorded	1.32.08	
12	24/04/2018	Fedor Blascak	English	Participants in the processes of urban intervention		Semi-structured	Recorded	1.11.51	
13	25/04/2018	Gasparovic Jan	English	Participants in the processes of urban intervention		Semi-structured	Recorded	1.39.23	
14	01/05/2018	Gasparicova Lucia	English	Members of the CICC - Synagoga	Truc Spherique	Semi-structured	Recorded	0.38.05	
15	01/05/2018	Blasko Robert	English	Bridging actors	Truc Spherique	Semi-structured	Recorded	1.59.58	
16	03/05/2018	Frankl Pavol	English	Participants in the processes of urban intervention	Jewish Community of Zilina	Semi-structured	Recorded	1.30.37	
17	03/05/2018	Pickl Jan	English	Informed individuals	Zilina City Council	Semi-structured	Recorded	0.10.00	
18	03/05/2018	Dobias Dusan	English	Members of the CICC - Synagoga + Stanica	Truc Spherique	Semi-structured	Recorded	1.15.35	
19	04/05/2018	Stoklosa Anna	English	Members of the CICC - Synagoga	Truc Spherique	Semi-structured	Recorded	0.40.07	
20	04/05/2018	Agathe	English	Members of the CICC - Stanica	Truc Spherique	Semi-structured	Recorded	0.30.37	
21	07/05/2018	Mojzis Jaroslav	English	Participants in the processes of urban intervention	Government Office of the Slovak Republic, Department of EEA and Norway Grants	Semi-structured	Recorded	1.12.19	
22	09/05/2018	Kovalik Jozef	English	Participants in the processes of urban intervention	Fond na podporu umenia - Slovak Arts Council	Semi-structured	Recorded	0.50.48	

23	09/05/2018	Moravcikova Henrieta	English	Participants in the processes of urban intervention	Institute of Construction and Architecture of the Slovak Institute of Sciences - Docomomo	Semi-structured	Recorded	1.12.54
24	10/05/2018	Borůvková Zlatica	English	Members of the CIICG - Synagoga	Truc Spherique	Semi-structured	Recorded	0.54.47
25	10/05/2018	Kamil	English	Members of the CIICG - Synagoga	Truc Spherique	Semi-structured	Recorded	0.44.06
26	10/05/2018	Dvorak Dusan	English	Participants in the processes of urban intervention	Kia Foundation	Semi-structured	Recorded	1.03.48
27	10/05/2018	Voorintholt Nienke	English	Members of the CIICG - Stanica	Truc Spherique	Semi-structured	Recorded	0.56.02
28	11/05/2018	Harman Ivan	Slovak-Eng lish	Informed individuals		Semi-structured	Recorded	0.37.44
29	11/05/2018	Majtan Vladimir	Slovak-Eng lish	Participants in the processes of urban intervention	Regional Board of Heritage	Semi-structured	Recorded	1.52.48
30	16/05/2018	Rumanova Ivana	English	Members of the CIICG - Synagoga	Truc Spherique	Semi-structured	Recorded	1.16.31
31	17/05/2018	Gatalova Katarina	English	Participants in the processes of urban intervention		Semi-structured	Recorded	0.59.39
32	17/05/2018	Katarina Durcikova	English	Members of the CIICG - Stanica	Truc Spherique	Unstructured	Non recorded	/
33	18/05/2018	Pily Ivan	Slovak-Eng lish	Participants in the processes of urban intervention	Slovak Academy of Fine Arts	Semi-structured	Recorded	0.50.58
34	18/05/2018	Snadik Peter	English	Participants in the processes of urban intervention		Semi-structured	Recorded	0.40.40
35	18/05/2018	Kristof Martin	English	Members of the CIICG - Stanica	Truc Spherique	Semi-structured	Recorded	0.50.02

36	18/05/2018	Hapco Peter	English	Members of the CICC - Stanica	Truc Spherique	Semi-structured	Recorded	0.30.19
37	28/05/2018	Krcho Jan	English	Participants in the processes of urban intervention	Technical University of Kosice	Semi-structured	Recorded	0.42.47
38	28/05/2018	Torhova Barbora	English	Informed individuals	Antena - Kino Usnev	Semi-structured	Recorded	0.31.07
39	28/05/2018	Marko	English	Informed individuals	Täbacka Kulturfabrik	Unstructured	Non recorded	/
40	29/05/2018	Lukas and Juro	English	Informed individuals	Hayovna	Unstructured	Recorded	1.07.00

Mains d'oeuvres - Espace Imaginaire

	Date	Respondent	Language	Category of respondent	Organization (if any)	Statute of interview	Type of interview	Duration
1	26/05/2017	Gaillard Melanie	English	Actors active both in the process of urban intervention and in the CICC	Mains d'Œuvres - Association Espace Imaginaire	Unstructured	Non recorded	/
2	25/10/2017	Gaillard Melanie	English	Actors active both in the process of urban intervention and in the CICC	Mains d'Œuvres - Association Espace Imaginaire	Semi-structured	Recorded	1.17.43
3	31/10/2017	Melanie Gaillard	English	Actors active both in the process of urban intervention and in the CICC	Mains d'Œuvres - Association Espace Imaginaire	Unstructured	Non recorded	/
4	14/06/2018	Juliette Bompont	English	Members of the CICC	Mains d'Œuvres	Unstructured	Non recorded	/
5	02/07/2018	Melanie Gaillard	English	Actors active both in the process of urban intervention and in the CICC	Mains d'Œuvres - Association Espace Imaginaire	Unstructured	Non recorded	/

6	14/02/2019	Gaillard Melanie	English	Actors active both in the process of urban intervention and in the CICC	Mains d'Œuvres - Association Espace Imaginaire	Semi-structured	Recorded	0.17.57
7	18/02/2019	Gaillard Melanie	English	Actors active both in the process of urban intervention and in the CICC	Mains d'Œuvres - Association Espace Imaginaire	Unstructured	Recorded	0.56.11
8	18/02/2019	Aurora Palumbo	Italian	Actors active both in the process of urban intervention and in the CICC	Mains d'Œuvres - Association Espace Imaginaire	Unstructured	Non recorded	/
9	21/02/2019	Gaillard Melanie	English	Actors active both in the process of urban intervention and in the CICC	Mains d'Œuvres - Association Espace Imaginaire	Semi-structured	Recorded	1.13.52
10	22/02/2019	Fazette Bordage	English - French	Members of the CICC	Mains d'Œuvres	Semi-structured	Recorded	1.26.47
11	22/02/2019	Lorenzo Fauvette	Italian	Participants in the processes of urban intervention	Interazioni Urbane	Semi-structured	Recorded	2.01.37
12	23/02/2019	Paul Citron	English	Informed individuals	Plateau Urbain	Semi-structured	Recorded	1.30.49
13	25/02/2019	Gaillard Melanie	English	Actors active both in the process of urban intervention and in the CICC	Mains d'Œuvres - Association Espace Imaginaire	Semi-structured	Recorded	1.38.58
14	25/02/2019	Juliette Bompont	English	Members of the CICC	Mains d'Œuvres	Semi-structured	Recorded	0.29.52
15	01/03/2019	Aurora Palumbo	Italian	Actors active both in the process of urban intervention and in the CICC	Mains d'Œuvres - Association Espace Imaginaire	Semi-structured	Recorded	2.30.00
16	01/03/2019	Claire	French	Actors active both in the process of urban intervention and in the CICC	Mains d'Œuvres - Association Espace Imaginaire	Semi-structured	Recorded	0.47.00

17	02/03/2019	Anthony and Guillaume	French	Participants in the processes of urban intervention - co-managers	La Gonflée	Semi-structured	Recorded	0.49.32
18	02/03/2019	Michel	French	Participants in the processes of urban intervention - co-managers		Semi-structured	Recorded	0.21.37
19	06/03/2019	Antoine Seguel	French	Participants in the processes of urban intervention - co-managers	Sans Plus Attendre	Semi-structured	Recorded	0.49.15
20	11/03/2019	Martin Rault	French	Participants in the processes of urban intervention	Directeur quartier La Plaine	Semi-structured	Recorded	1.26.50
21	12/03/2019	Issa Sylla	French	Participants in the processes of urban intervention - co-managers		Semi-structured	Recorded	0.15.59
22	14/03/2019	Valentin	French	Participants in the processes of urban intervention - co-managers	Association Mauvaise Ecole	Semi-structured	Recorded	0.55.07
23	14/03/2019	Sophie	French	Informed individuals	Association Usine à Gazon	Semi-structured	Recorded	1.20.14
24	14/03/2019	Marie-Jeromine	French	Participants in the processes of urban intervention - co-managers	La Ruche qui dit oui	Semi-structured	Recorded	0.41.38
25	18/03/2019	Arthur	French	Informed individuals	Landy Sauvage	Semi-structured	Recorded	0.31.39
26	19/03/2019	Beatrice	French	Members of the CICC	Mains d'Œuvres	Semi-structured	Recorded	1.12.55
27	19/03/2019	Jerome	French	Members of the CICC	Mains d'Œuvres	Semi-structured	Recorded	0.59.33
28	19/03/2019	Dickel et Sonya	French	Informed individuals	Yes We Camp	Semi-structured	Recorded	0.21.01
29	21/03/2019	Priscille	French	Participants in the processes of urban intervention - External partners	Landykady	Semi-structured	Recorded	0.47.12

30	21/03/2019	Laurence Laporte	French	Participants in the processes of urban intervention - External partners	Plaine Commune - Service aménagement	Semi-structured	Recorded	0.35.51
31	21/03/2019	Valentine Roy	French	Participants in the processes of urban intervention - External partners	Plaine Commune - Cheffe de projet Territoire de la culture et de la création	Semi-structured	Recorded	0.59.48
32	21/03/2019	Rachel	French	Participants in the processes of urban intervention - co-managers	Système B	Semi-structured	Recorded	0.25.16
33	22/03/2019	Thibault Saladin	French	Members of the CIGC	Mains d'Œuvres	Semi-structured	Recorded	0.55.09
34	22/03/2019	Agnes	French	Members of the CIGC	Mains d'Œuvres	Semi-structured	Recorded	1.28.11
35	22/03/2019	Jeanne	French	Actors active both in the process of urban intervention and in the CIGC	Mains d'Œuvres	Semi-structured	Recorded	0.35.06
36	22/03/2019	Diane	French	Members of the CIGC	Mains d'Œuvres	Semi-structured	Recorded	0.55.07

Annex B - List of participant observations

Stanica - Nova Synagoga

Date	Type of activity	Activity	Themes discussed	Location	Participants	
1	27/07/2017	Artistic Event	Attendance of KiOSK Festival			
2	01/03/2018	Meeting	Observation of organizational development meeting	Relation between Stanica and Nova Synagoga teams; challenges to the philosophical concepts of Stanica; cultural scheduling issues	Stanica + Nova Synagoga	200 participants
3	02/03/2018	Meeting	Observation of organizational development meeting	Identification of potential solutions to organizational problems	Nova Synagoga	1 consultant + 6 members of Nova Synagoga team of Truc Spherique
4	06/03/2018	Field visit	Visit of Plusminusnula gallery	Plusminusnula gallery	Nova Synagoga	1 consultant + 15 members of Truc Spherique (Stanica and Nova Synagoga)
5	06/03/2018	Field visit	Observation of everyday activities	/	Stanica	/
6	07/03/2018	Meeting	Observation of Synagogue team meeting	[Meeting in Slovak]	Nova Synagoga	10 members of Nova Synagoga team
7	09/03/2018	Artistic Event	Attendance of artistic event	/	Stanica	100 participants
8	12/03/2018	Field visit	Observation of everyday activities	/	Stanica office	/

9	13/03/2018	Meeting	Observation of Stanica team meeting	Recap of past events; current problems in their operations	Stanica	7 members of Stanica team
10	13/03/2018	Organizational processes	Participation in process of data analysis	/	Stanica	/
11	21/03/2018	Meeting	Observation of Synagogue team meeting	[Meeting in Slovak]	Nova Synagoga	6 members of Nova Synagoga team
12	25/03/2018	Event production	Volunteering in Easter market	/	Nova Synagoga	/
13	27/03/2018	Meeting	Observation of Stanica team meeting	Recap of past events; future events	Stanica	5 members of Stanica team
14	10/04/2018	Meeting	Observation of Stanica team meeting	Recap of past events; future events	Stanica	11 members of Stanica team
15	17/04/2018	Meeting	Observation of Stanica team meeting	Recap of past events; future events	Stanica	10 members of Stanica team
16	02/05/2018	Meeting	Observation of Synagogue team meeting	[Meeting in Slovak]	Nova Synagoga	5 members of Nova Synagoga team
17	02/04/2019	Meeting	Observation of Stanica + Synagoga team meeting	Recap of past events; future events	Stanica	15 members of Truc Spherique
18	09/04/2019	Meeting	Observation of Stanica + Synagoga team meeting	Recap of past events; future events; planning of visioning workshop	Nova Synagoga	18 members of Truc Spherique
19	09/04/2019	Organizational processes	Observation of educational workshop in Synagoga	/	Nova Synagoga	/
20	12/04/2019	Meeting	Participation in Synagogue planning meeting	Architectural configuration of the Synagogue; future program of the building	Nova Synagoga	5 members of Truc Spherique involved daily in the Synagogue
21	16/04/2019	Meeting	Observation of Stanica + Synagoga team meeting	Recap of past events; future events	Stanica	10 members of Truc Spherique

22	16/04/2019	Meeting	Observation of EVS volunteers coordination meeting	Recap of past events; future events	Stanica	1 coordinator + 5 EVS volunteers
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Mains d'œuvres - Espace Imaginaire

	Date	Type of activity	Activity	Themes discussed	Location	Participants
1	24/10/2017	Field visit	Observation of everyday activities	/	Espace Imaginaire	/
2	24/10/2017	Construction	Participation in DIY construction of Phyrodeputation plant	/	Espace Imaginaire	5 Co-managers
3	25/10/2017	Construction	Participation in DIY construction of mobile kitchens	/	Espace Imaginaire	2 Co-managers
4	27/10/2017	Meeting	Observation of co-managers meeting	/	Espace Imaginaire	15 Co-managers + Coordinator
5	28/10/2017	Event Production	Support in event production	/	Espace Imaginaire and La Plaine neighborhood	10 Co-managers + 6 artists + Coordinator + 30 people in audience
6	09/06/2018	Artistic Event	Attendance of artistic event	/	La Plaine neighborhood	Around 100 people from neighborhood
7	28/06/2018	Meeting	Observation of annual General Assembly	Financial stability of the Association, future projects	Mains d'Œuvres	Around 60 people between employees, artists in residence, residents

8	June 2018	Event production	Distribution of flyers and creation of graffiti	/	La Plaine neighborhood between St-Denis and Aubervillier	1 Artist + 1 coordinator
9	30/06/2018	Event production	Support in event production	/	Espace Imaginaire and La Plaine neighborhood	10 Co-managers/artists + 2 coordinators + 5 local organizations + 200 people from neighborhood
10	18/02/2019	Field visit	Exploration of evolution of constructed spaces	/	Espace Imaginaire	1 Coordinator
11	20/02/2019	Meeting	Observation of meeting for summer event	Evaluation of summer 2018 event; coordination for 2019 summer event	Espace Imaginaire	3 Coordinators + 3 Co-managers + 9 local cultural organizations
12	22/02/2019	Meeting	Observation of meeting with Institutional partners	Financial stability of the Association	Mains d'Œuvres	4 from Mains d'Œuvres + 5 institutional partners
13	25/02/2019	Meeting	Observation and participation of La Main 93.0 Meeting	Development of the cooperative into operative teams	Mains d'Œuvres	17 Cooperative members
14	28/02/2019	Field visit	Observation of everyday activities	/	Espace Imaginaire	/
15	28/02/2019	Artistic Event	Attendance of artistic event	/	Mains d'Œuvres	Around 100 people
16	01/03/2019	Field visit	Observation of everyday activities	/	Espace Imaginaire	/
17	02/03/2019	Field visit	Observation of everyday activities	/	Espace Imaginaire	/
18	05/03/2019	Field visit	Observation of everyday activities in common spaces	/	Mains d'Œuvres	/

19	11/03/2019	Field visit	Observation of neighborhood	/	La Plaine neighborhood	/
20	12/03/2019	Meeting	Observation of Mains d'Œuvres team meeting	Evaluation of past events; debriefs from different artistic poles; programming of future events; discussion of internal restructuring after departure of layoffs	Mains d'Œuvres	22 Members of Mains d'Œuvres
21	19/03/2019	Meeting	Observation of Mains d'Œuvres team meeting	Evaluation of past events; debriefs from different artistic poles; programming of future events; discussion of internal restructuring	Mains d'Œuvres	17 Members of Mains d'Œuvres
22	19/03/2019	Meeting	Observation of meeting Yes We Camp - Espace Imaginaire	Temporary reuse; engagement with co-managers; cultural and architectural program; relations with the neighborhood;	Espace Imaginaire	1 coordinator Espace Imaginaire + 2 Yes We Camp

Annex C - List of documents

Stanica - Nova Synagoga

	Date	Title of document	Type of document	Drafting organization / individual	Themes presented	Native language	Translated in
1	2012	Results of internal survey	Survey result	Robert Blasko - Truc Spherique	What to change in the organization; Definition of ideas of success, mission, vision, values; Assessment of level of motivation; Perspectives on the internal structure, on the Synagogue. SWOT of the organization	English	/
2	24/10/2013	Minutes of the meeting of the Restoration Board of the Behrens Synagogue	Minutes	Katarína Andrášiová	Report of first visit of the Synagogue by the Board; Presentation of current status of the works; Definition of the operating modes of the Board; Definition of relations with initiators;	Slovak	English
3	01/2015	Final procurement - Reconstruction and change in use of Nova Synagoga	Internal report	Marek Adamov	The restoration of the surfaces of the interior and exterior; Brief description and justification of the need of restoration; Restoration work and research done so far; Expected realization of internal and external restorations;	Slovak	English
4	30/01/2015	Minutes of the meeting of the Restoration Board of the Behrens Synagogue	Minutes	Katarína Andrášiová	Discussion of style of restoration of: staircases, eastern wall, winter hall, exterior spaces.	Slovak	English
5	01/06/2016	A short summary of the works carried out on the restoration of the Neolog Synagogue in Zilina since February 2015	Internal report	Unkown	Advancement of internal and external surfaces; Planned works for 2016 and 2017; Opening	Slovak	English

6	14/06/2016	Minutes of the meeting of the Restoration Board of the Behrens Synagogue	Minutes	Peter Szalay	Dissatisfaction for recreation of stripes; Progress and a planned finalisation of the restoration; Use of winter hall; Consistency of the architectural conception of restoration of internal area of monument	Slovak	English
7	21/07/2016	Extract from the articles of Civil Association Truc spherique	Associative Statute	Truc Spherique	Purpose and activities of Truc Spherique	English	/
8	31/12/2016	2016 Annual report	Annual report	KIA Motors Slovakia Foundation	Description of the foundation; Foundation activities 2016; Financial report 2016	English	/
9	07/04/2017	Application Grant subsidies City of Žilina - Grant Form 2017	Grant application	Truc Spherique	Mission, vision, presentation of the organization; Organization revenue structure in 2017 and 2016; Budget requested for support	Slovak	English
10	17/07/2017	Architecture of persistence	Presentation	Martin Jancok	History of the Neolog Synagogue; Identification of elements of continuity over time	English	/
11	31/12/2017	2017 Annual report	Annual report	KIA Motors Slovakia Foundation	Description of the foundation; Foundation activities 2017; Financial report 2017	English	/
12	13/03/2018	Cultural Policy From Amsterdam to Žilina	Viera Michalicová & Kristína Paulenová	Project Report	Description of ECF Cultural Policy project	English	/
13	17/06/2018	Nova Synagoga / Limity Komunity	Presentation	Martin Jancok	Evolution of architectural designs of the Nova Synagoga	English	/
14	23/07/2018	Application Grant subsidies City of Žilina - Grant Form 2018	Grant application	Truc Spherique	Mission, vision, presentation of the organization; Organization revenue structure in 2018 and 2017; Budget requested for support	Slovak	English

Mains d'oeuvres - Espace Imaginaire

	Date	Title of document	Type of document	Drafting organization / individual	Themes presented	Native language	Translated in
1	2015	Fiche projet: appel à projet pour une mise à disposition d'un terrain nu dans le secteur Montjoie à Saint-Denis	Project proposal	Melanie Gaillard-Mains d'oeuvres	Description of the project; Content of the project; Details of territorial activities; citizen engagement; Collaboration with other organizations; Budget	French	/
2	2016	Charte de co-gestion pour l'Espace Imaginaire	Contract	Melanie Gaillard-Mains d'oeuvres	Fondative values of the Espace Imaginaire; Registration procedure to become co-manager; General functioning of the space; Fines	French	/
3	2016	Diagnostic partagé & Propositions des Laboratoires de Quartier	Project Report	Melanie Gaillard-Mains d'oeuvres	Definition and details of the poles of activity of the Espace Imaginaire	French	/
4	2017	Mains d'oeuvres -Journal d'activités 2017	Annual report	Mains d'oeuvres	Presentation of the association; Organizational structure; Budget 2017; Report of activity by each artistic pole	French	/
5	28/03/2016	Convention d'occupation temporaire à titre gratuit d'un terrain - 12 Rue de la procession	Contract	Mains d'oeuvres - Municipality of St-Denis	State of the place; terms of the contract; Duration; Allowed and forbidden activities; required maintenance; Dialogue with the municipality	French	/
6	01/06/2016	Statuts de l'association Le Lieu "Mains d'oeuvres"	Associative Statute	Mains d'oeuvres	Objectives of the association; Organizational structure	French	/
7	06/11/2018	Statuts de l'association Espace Imaginaire - Un espace pour les projets et les rêves à construire	Associative Statute	Espace Imaginaire	Objectives of the association; Organizational structure	French	/

8	14/09/2019	Compte Rendu du séminaire du 14 septembre 2019	Minutes	Espace Imaginaire	Discussions about: common values, governance, finance; daily operations, events and residency; communication; Proposals for future evolutions	French	/
9	15/10/2019	Minutes of meeting with Martin Rault	Minutes	Michel Lemaner	Future of the Espace after Melanie's departure; Inclusion in the PLUI; Communication; Relations with the municipality	French	/
10	24/11/2019	Procès-verbal d'Assemblée Générale Ordinaire de l'Espace Imaginaire	Minutes	Michel Lemaner	Budget 2019; Associative Report 2019; Diplomatic updates; Future changes	French	/
11	24/11/2019	Procès-verbal d'Assemblée Générale Extraordinaire de l'Espace Imaginaire	Minutes	Michel Lemaner	Approval of new shared common future, with new operative functioning and governance; adoption of Holacratic model; definition of members of each circle	French	/