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Disconnected innovations : new urbanity in large-scale development projects: Zuidas Amsterdam, Ørestad Copenhagen and Forum Barcelona

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Publication date
2008

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Majoor, S. J. H. (2008). *Disconnected innovations : new urbanity in large-scale development projects: Zuidas Amsterdam, Ørestad Copenhagen and Forum Barcelona*. [Thesis, fully internal, Universiteit van Amsterdam]. Uitgeverij Eburon.

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'In solemn moments such as this I have put my trust'
Leonard Cohen, *Memories* (1977)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study was conducted in the period between the end of 2001 and mid-2007, under the supervision of Prof. Dr W.G.M. Salet of the University of Amsterdam and Prof. Dr E. Gualini, now of the Technical University of Berlin. It was carried out as part of the program entitled: 'Institutional Conditions for Multiple Intensive Land Use', sponsored by Habiforum, the Netherlands Expertise Centre on Multiple Land Use. Parts of the study have been conducted as an element of the EU 5th framework project COMET, Competitive Metropolises, coordinated by Prof. Dr A. Borsdorf from the Austrian Academy of Sciences in Vienna. It is important to mention that this study was also financially supported by the van Eesteren-Fluck van Lohuizen Stichting, the provincial authorities of North-Holland, the Zuidas project bureau and via a *European Union Cost Action Short Term Scientific Mission Grant*. I would like to express my thanks and appreciation to all the financers that made this study possible.

After almost six years of work it is quite difficult to describe exactly how I feel. Quite honestly I can say that it was a real privilege to work on this book. Firstly because it was an almost unprecedented opportunity to pursue my academic interests. I really appreciate the freedom I was given by both my supervisors to explore and organize my work the way I wanted. It was probably not the recipe for the most effective research, but it gave me opportunities to pursue other intellectual endeavours in the meantime. When I was asked to do this study, I was quite afraid that being a PhD candidate would only mean long days in the office or library. I cannot deny that that was a part of my job during the last few years. However, there was also so much more to it than this. It was an opportunity to explore places, to travel, to network, to live abroad, to interview people and to observe practitioners at work. It might sound like an awful cliché, but it was also an opportunity to find out more about myself and that turned a long research project into a multidimensional and interlinked personal and intellectual experience. What I will remember most are the great friendships I established with other young people exploring the world whom I was able to meet in different places. With all these privileges, comes a duty of course and the most significant is to report your findings. I hope that this book does just that. The more personal aspect which, from my point of view is just as important, is hidden between the lines of this book and present in quite a disorganized fashion in my head.

Among the most memorable moments were the many interactions I had, nationally and internationally, with wonderfully gifted people who helped to structure my ideas, who encouraged me and who gave up their valuable time to explain all my questions. My promoter Willem Salet proved to be much more than just a very supportive academic

Acknowledgements

guide. His humour and down-to-earth character, combined with the enormous encouragement and trust he gives to young people overwhelmed me sometimes. In one of the first weeks of my job he told me, “Stan, this institute is a very busy and active working-place!”, pointing to the ever-growing disorganized piles of paper on his large desk. Almost six years later I can only say that I fully agree with him and I enjoyed almost every aspect of it.

I had the pleasure of work intensively with Enrico Gualini when we together gave a course on policy analysis. We made quite a name for ourselves at European level! Enrico combined sarcastic humour and sharp observations with solid academic advice on the direction my research should take.

Apart from my two promoters, a special word of thanks is due to some other academics who helped me to structure my ideas during the course of this research. I would like to thank Patsy Healey, Paul Kantor, Tim Marshall and Morag Torrance especially for their valuable discussions or comments on my work. The study group on multiple intensive land use from the Free University / Technical University Delft supervised by Frank Bruinsma and Erik Louw, with Caroline Rodenburg, Karst Geurs, Sahid Suddle, Jan Jacob Trip, Ron Vreeker and Sebastiaan de Wilde expanded my Dutch network of researchers and gave me new opportunities to discuss findings and publish results. I am proud to see how most of them have moved on to interesting post-PhD career paths!

A crucial part of this study involved in-depth case studies on ongoing large-scale development projects. Because of their frequently closed nature, a lot of effort was required to gain access to their networks and to build relationships of trust. The help of key informants was crucial. In Amsterdam these were Ben Teunissen, Robert Dijkmeester, Remko Schnieders and in a later stage Jaap Korf. These were all hard-working people who were willing to spend time outside their busy jobs to discuss my preliminary analyses and hypotheses and to give me access to the inner world of the Zuidas project. I received additional valuable support from Jan Stoutenbeek, Pi de Bruin, Douglas Grobbe and Jan Doets. Gregor Heemskerk and Han Joosten were perfect sparring partners in the critical discussion on the progress of the Zuidas project.

The international comparative nature of this research was made possible by two extensive periods of foreign fieldwork. First, during a two month period (November-December 2004), I was able to use the office and facilities of the Kgl. Veterinær- og Landbohøjskole (KVL), Center for Skov, Landskab og Planlægning (Royal Veterinary and Agriculture University, Centre for Forestry, Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning) in Copenhagen. I would like to express my gratitude to John Jorgensen of KVL and all the other charming people like Birte Munch Jensen and Høgni Kalsø Hansen who made my stay in Copenhagen so pleasant. A special word of thanks is also due to Jesper Buch Jakobsen from the city hall for sharing his network and Dan Christensen for his time and very personal accounts about the origin of the project. Many others, like Anne-Grethe Foss, John Andersen, Kurt Bligaard Pedersen, Jan Liliendahl Larsen, Lars Nielsen and David Rehling, gave very insightful interviews about the Ørestad project. All the respondent are mentioned in the Appendix. Laila Ruttel, a planning student from the University of Amsterdam who was at Roskilde University at the time played an important role as regards translations.

Less than half a year later (May-June 2005), I was able to carry out in-depth fieldwork on the Barcelona case thanks to a two month stay at the Institut 'd Estudis Territorials. I would like to express my sincere thanks to Francesc Carbonell who made this possible. During the fieldwork, Marc Pradel was an excellent translator of documents and a helpful source of 'local knowledge'. A special word of thanks are due to Maria Buhigas, Marisol García, Marc Marti, Francesc Munoz, Antoni Ollé, Arturo Rodriguez and Miquel Sodupe for their help during the study period. A complete list of interviews conducted for this part of the study can again be found in the Appendix.

AMIDSt – the Amsterdam institute for Metropolitan and International Development Studies has proven to be a very 'homey' place for me. This was already the case when I was a graduate student there. It is impossible to acknowledge everybody here personally, but I would like to refer to some people who were very important to me. First of all my roommates Stefan Metaal, Marjolijn van der Klis and in the last period Thea Dukes. It was Stefan who introduced me to the research milieu, and helped me to acquire a totally refreshing perspective on office life, long before David Brent. Marjolijn facilitated a strong cultural change to the atmosphere in the room, with more personal talks and consideration for the 'female side' of things.

It was a pleasure to work together with other gifted and enjoyable people over the last years. I would particularly like to thank Sylvia Breukers, Lianne van Duinen, Cordula Rooijendijk, Manuel Aalbers, David Evers, Ralph Ploeger and Frans Schrijver, from 'the old days'. However, new and wonderful people continued to appear on the scene! I really felt privileged to work with colleagues on all these interesting topics and to discuss life outside university with them. A special word of thanks are due to some of my friends and colleagues who make the institute such a comfortable working environment: Tineke Lupi, Annika Smits, Maarten Wolsink, Francesca Michielin, Amanda Brandallero, Perry Hoetjes, Albertine van Diepen, Ewald Engelen, Els Veldhuizen, Leonie Janssen-Jansen, Luca Bertolini, Joos Drooglever Fortuijn, Wouter van Gent, Frans Thissen, Jochem de Vries and Virginie Mammadouh and to everybody else I have forgotten. Puikang Chan, Marianne van Heelsbergen and Guida Morais e Castro cheered me up when I complained about office supplies or a lack of diversity in tea flavours. I look forward to seeing you all again when I return from Hong Kong, although some of you might have been embarked on new career paths by then.

One person deserves a special word of thanks, namely Dick Schuiling. A lot of good things started after he asked me to be his assistant back in December of 1999. Since then, he has been an excellent mentor during my endeavours to understand the world and, in particular, as regards understanding the university. His trust provided a foundation upon which I was able to build an ambitious teaching career. We recently explored Asia and this led me to Hong Kong. It was due to his own 'creative chaos' philosophy that I really started to appreciate the university.

During my many travels on behalf of this study, conferences or my volunteer work for the InterFuture foundation, I was extremely fortunate to meet all kinds of new people. I talked about this book to most of them as being some very distant objective that I would sometime achieve. I am happy that I can now finally show them the fruits of my labours. I would like to thank Eliza Pozzoli, Vania Erby and Francesca Frassoldati for the great fun we had at conferences and the enjoyable visits to Italy. My travels to the

Acknowledgements

West brought me into contact with Charlie Tocci, a dedicated connoisseur of baseball and other fascinating aspects of American culture, and the wonderfully gifted Emma Nishimoto. In the East, I really wish to thank Mee Kam Ng for facilitating my current position as visiting assistant professor at the Centre for Urban Planning and Environmental Management at Hong Kong University. In the last two months it has proven to be the perfect place to hide away and finish my writing and editing work!

Closer to my Dutch home there were my old friends who have probably been wondering where I was all the time. They always retained a refreshing scepticism of my progress. Michel van Wijk was my fellow explorer of 'multiple intensive land use'. Jasper de Fockert, William Smit, Gordon de Munck and Koen Vervoort amused themselves about me probably but this never bothered me. With Erik van Rijn I shared many sporting highlights and long train rides. I would like to thank Karen Heinsman and Ditte Valk for helping me to explore and discuss life both in their very own unique ways.

I am blessed with a large family of wonderful and supportive people. There are too many to all thank individually. A special word of appreciation to Michel Jansen, the self-proclaimed chairman of my 'fan club'. I am happy to follow his academic footsteps. I am sure my two wonderful grandmothers would have been proud to see this book. My brother Joris and my parents Els and Wim have followed my progress and frustrations from very close by and I am thankful for their endless support. I am especially grateful to my parents for letting me explore the world and for allowing me to satisfy my curiosity. Apparently I was full of questions from the moment I was able to talk...

And finally, I would like to thank Daniela...because love is so powerful.

Hong Kong, September 2007