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

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

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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
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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 Dijckmeester, 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.

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