Trying the impossible

Urban agriculture as an alternative planning reality



Paul A. de Graaf

Propositions

1. Allowing bottom-up initiators into the municipal planning process democratises the imagination of the spatial future of the city.
   (this thesis)

2. The future of the city cannot be predicted, but it can be tried out.
   (this thesis)

3. The problematic integration of the external PhD into the academic system is an integral part of its scientific value.

4. Theorising is in essence a practical affair.

5. The cooperative as an organizational structure is a Trojan horse for a healthy dose of anarchism in our hierarchical society.

6. At a time when virtual media seem to offer unlimited access to an infinite number of imagined realities, it is all the more instructive for humans to realise something in the real, finite world.

Propositions belonging to the thesis, entitled

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Urban agriculture as an alternative planning reality

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"The possible has been tried and failed.
Now it's time to try the impossible."
Sun Ra

"We're living the dreams, delivering dreams
We're planting some trees and look up to see
Write on leaves and hope to tread clouds, lightly"
Ray Fuego, 2020 (translation by the author)

"Whatever; in the end practice (as ever) will
outshine theory."
Iain M Banks (Sun-Earther Iain El-Bonko Banks
of North Queensferry) , 1994



Foreword

Between 2006 and 2016, I participated in the development of Rotterdam's urban agriculture scene as a designer and researcher and later as an initiator, and I witnessed the development (and winding up) of the municipal urban agriculture policy in Rotterdam.

The emergence of bottom-up urban agriculture initiatives in the first decades of the 21st century presented a challenge for Rotterdam's spatial planning department. These initiatives came up with innovative ideas for the design of the city and thus ventured into the field of spatial planning. Supported by Alderman Van Huffelen, a number of planners and like-minded civil servants from other departments attempted to support and stimulate urban agriculture initiatives between 2010 and 2014, but in doing so they came up against the limits of the municipal organisation and their own profession.

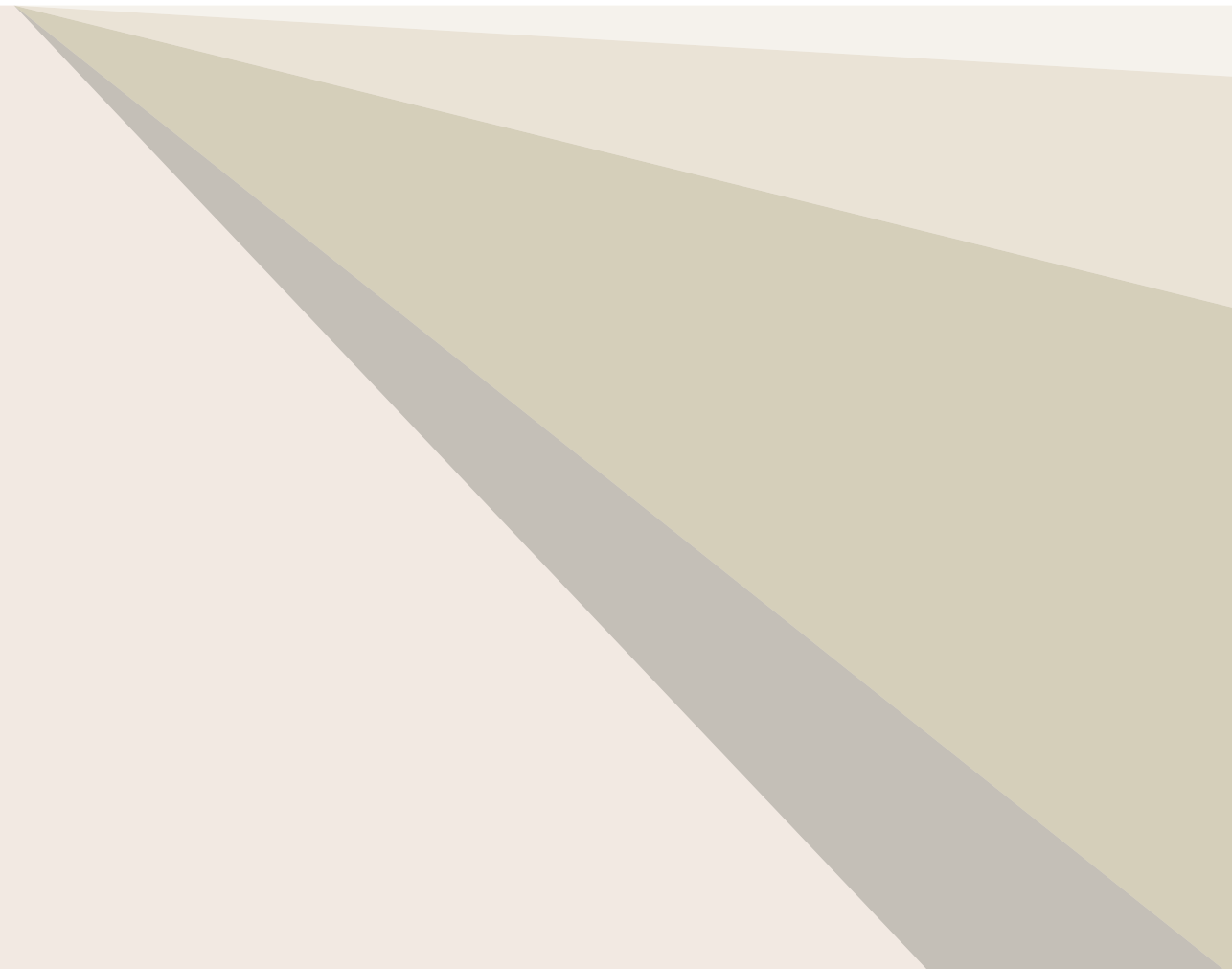
In this study, I delve back into that world and look back with those involved at what actually happened in the processes surrounding the creation of these urban agriculture initiatives. The research studies the practice, but also looks at how the participants think about and reflect on that practice; how each of them formulates and tests theories.

I could not have done this without the openness of all those interviewed. Whether I was standing in a park, listening to an initiator expounding on his work and philosophising in front of a changing audience of volunteers and passers-by, or sitting at a table with a planner in 'De Rotterdam' office tower where municipal planning is based, each interview was a visit to another world, not so much physically, but intellectually; from everyday to spiritual, from formal to idealistic, from pragmatic to philosophical, from committed to (sometimes) openly angry, I was presented a range of worldviews. All these testimonies form the basis of this study, supplemented with information I was able to find in (online) media, in research studies and from my own archive and that of others.

What all these people have in common – perhaps without knowing it – is that they take a step outside the normal, the conventional and the achievable to try something different that they did not know was possible. Trying the impossible, in practice, to 'live the dream', to exemplify how they think we should live, or simply to make the city a little better is all the more important in times like these.

This study is hopefully an ode to their endeavour by taking it seriously and questioning it with curiosity. Whether this has been successful, I leave to the reader.

Chapter I
Introduction to the research



1.1.1 The growing role of bottom-up civic initiatives

The role of bottom-up civic initiatives in urban governance and, more specifically, in urban spatial planning is growing, and there are increasing expectations of the contribution these civic initiatives will make to society. On the one hand, this is a bottom-up development in which citizens, confronted with major social issues in the areas of sustainability, climate and health, decide to work together on concrete solutions in the areas of energy, care and welfare, food, nature, etc. On the other hand, expectations also come from above. In the Netherlands, for example, the government policy based on the ideas of the 'enabling state' and the 'participatory society' places great faith in civic initiative.

The 'enabling state' ('faciliterende overheid' in Dutch) is a term for policy in which the government serves initiatives from society that contribute to social goals. Although the term has been in use for some time, it took on a new meaning when a trend towards decentralisation of government policy began at the start of the 21st century. The enabling state should 'try to remove barriers to private and small-scale initiatives as much as possible and, where possible, introduce incentives to promote these initiatives' (Buitelaar et al. 2012). The exact details of this were not clearly defined and there was (and still is) a great deal of uncertainty among the various parties involved about what the term means. The aim was to strike a balance between regulation and laissez-faire (Buitelaar et al. 2012), but this proved difficult. Although the government wanted to support and guide, it was still perceived primarily as a regulatory authority(Langelaan, 2016).

The idea of the participatory society ('participatiesamenleving' in Dutch) was introduced by the Dutch government during the crisis of 2008-2014 (and was included in the 2011 Speech from the Throne *). The idea was that the welfare state was under pressure and had to change towards a participatory society in which everyone contributes more and participates in the classic tasks of the welfare state. The government took a step back and citizens were called upon as individuals to take on more voluntary tasks, such as informal care, and to contribute to and participate in tasks that had been assigned to the government in the welfare state. Hand in hand with this idea of social participation, there was a decentralisation of government tasks to the municipal level (Putters, 2014). However, the municipalities were only equipped to do this to a limited extent and did not receive sufficient resources from the central government to take over these tasks (Kromhout et al., 2020). In practice, this resulted in a gap in government services. This gap created space for self-organisation and bottom-up societal initiatives.

** The Dutch government announces its plans for the coming year in the Speech from the Throne, delivered by the King at the opening of the new parliamentary session of the States General (which encompass the two Houses of Parliament in the Netherlands*

The outsourcing of government tasks has its origins in the international wave of neoliberalisation that began in the 1980s under the leadership of Reagan and Thatcher and continued in the 1990s in

the Netherlands under the government coalitions Paars I&II * and in the UK and US with Blair and Clinton's Third Way (Giddens, 1998). In this Third Way, the opposition between market and state ceased to exist (or so it was declared), and the privatisation of government tasks became part of social democratic thinking. A market-oriented government facilitated commercial initiatives to take over government tasks, because they could do so more efficiently. At the same time, business thinking made its way into the government organisation itself, with the introduction of New Public Management in government and public institutions in the areas of healthcare, education and the environment. When the first cracks in this market-driven Brave New World became apparent during the crises of 2001 and 2008, the centre-right government appealed to the civic spirit of the Dutch people to do more themselves, where the government would be unable to do so in times of economic adversity. Out of a mixture of discontent, commitment, idealism and a certain opportunism, more articulate and active citizens in particular started bottom-up societal initiatives. These initiatives differed from earlier forms of citizen participation in their relative autonomy and self-organisation (Boonstra & Boelens, 2011; Rauws & De Roo, 2016; Mens et al., 2021)

** Coalitions named after their unusual political colour (combining (red) social-democratic and (blue) liberal parties but excluding (green) christian-democrats) that since have become the symbol of the acceptance of neoliberal policy across the political spectrum.*

Although criticism of the idea of the participatory society soon arose (Tonkens, 2014; Peeters & Ham, 2025), particularly the shifting of government tasks onto vulnerable citizens, and in the last ten years within the government, the idea of the enabling state has once again given way to that of a directive government, these types of civic initiatives have since become a permanent part of civil society. In a shift that has been referred to as 'from government to governance', civic initiatives have taken on a growing role in all kinds of decision-making processes in recent years (Putters, 2014). Experiments are being conducted with various forms of co-creation, with citizens' initiatives increasingly taking matters into their own hands. These initiatives have undergone a process of professionalisation over the past 15 years (Mens, 2021); they are increasingly organising themselves in larger associations at the urban or national level, there are various platforms to support these types of initiatives, and their social value has been investigated in numerous studies. However, this does not resolve many of the inherent problems in this form of participation in governance.

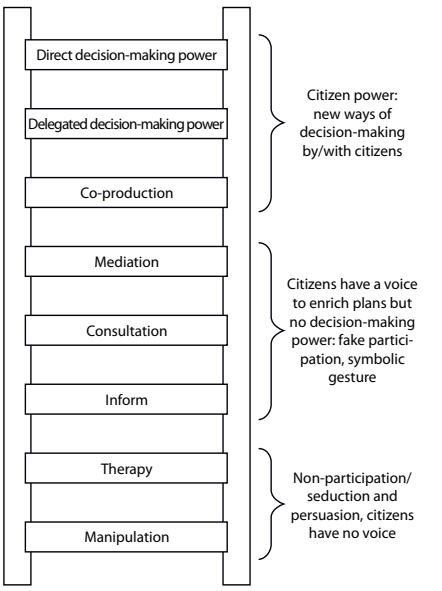


Fig. 1.1 Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation

In 'Ladder op, ladder af: 50 jaar participatie' (Up the ladder, down the ladder: 50 years of participation), Tan et al. use Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation to describe the dilemmas that this trend poses for spatial planning:

*"The third generation of citizen participation sees citizens as independent developers and consumers. In planning, whether by the government, citizens taking the initiative or market parties, we still ask under the Environment and Planning Act * : how do we shape participation and how do we ensure that we involve every relevant stakeholder and that participation processes do not reproduce social inequalities?" (Tan et al., 2019)*

** A much discussed new act that took 10 years to prepare and came into force in 2024, and reshapes the way the Dutch government handles permit procedures in planning of the (built) environment*

What is the mandate of these initiatives, who do they represent? What is their status and their agenda? Where does their expertise lie and how do they complement the government in this new field of tension between government and society? How do you deal with the diversity of ideas from these civic initiatives in the light of the common interest?

Tan et al. demonstrate that the concept of participation is not new in itself, pointing out the similarities between co-creation and the co-production of public services in the 1970s. However, with the introduction of co-creation, "a trend is becoming apparent in which responsibility for shaping a process is shifting to citizens." Edelenbos et al. therefore place third-wave civic initiatives one step higher on Arnstein's ladder: these initiatives take control of a (former) government task (Edelenbos et al., 2020). Boonstra & Boelens go a step further by stating that if the initiative lies with the citizen, it is a case of self-organisation rather than participation (Boonstra & Boelens, 2011).

This step from participation to self-organisation can be interpreted as positive. Boonstra & Boelens describe how previous forms of participation have often ended in disappointment. But it also raises the question of the extent to which citizens are equipped to bear this responsibility (Tonkens, 2014 ; Tonkens & Duyvendak, 2015). It should be added that it is questionable whether the perceptions of government and bottom-up initiatives regarding who bears responsibility are the same. One of the starting points for this research is that the mutual misunderstandings and misconceptions between (top-down) planners and (bottom-up) initiatives are related to these questions and that we still do not sufficiently understand the dynamics between the two (Boonstra & Boelens, 2011; Horlings et al, 2021).

1.1.2 The changing role of the spatial planner and the changing division of roles in planning practice

In planning theory, there has been an ongoing discussion about the role of planning, which even extends to the question of whether the profession still exists and whether planning still makes sense; there is considerable disagreement about the direction planning should take in order to remain relevant (Allmendinger, 2017; Alexander, 2022). In practice, too, the question of the role and raison d'être of planning regularly recurs (Roggema, 2022). Planning as a discipline finds its

raison d'être in finding solutions to societal problems and the role of expert that the planner plays in this. Research into planning practice shows that the discipline often succeeds only to a limited extent in finding these solutions because it has to deal with future uncertainties (Roo, 2018; Roggema, 2017) and with different ideas about what the problem actually is, which can be traced back to different worldviews (Allmendinger, 2017). The growing role of bottom-up civic initiatives with their different visions of the city contributes to this debate, in which the professional authority of the planning discipline and traditional modes of representation are being questioned (Boonstra, 2015; Horlings et al, 2021; Davoudi, 2022).

The idea of a shared, objective reality is increasingly being problematised in sociological theory, and the question of how to deal with this is central to the debate between different schools within planning theory. The lack of a shared vision on this makes it difficult to even have a conversation between these schools. This fragmentation is also reflected in society, where differences in how people experience reality are given more and more space. On the one hand, this ensures broader representation in social and political debate. On the other hand, it undermines the shared collective basis for this debate and increases political divisions. At the same time, the ecological crisis is increasing the pressure to come up with sustainable solutions for the future, thereby bringing to light complex 'wicked problems', 'situations which are inherently fuzzy, fluid and uncertain and therefore impossible to comprehend fully' (Rittel & Webber, 1973; Rauws & De Roo, 2016), which must be taken into account when planning for the future. The political crisis also seems to be an expression of this fragmentation. Growing recognition of the diversity in society and the uncertainties that planning for the future entails calls for a different approach to spatial planning (Healey, 2007; Hillier, 2017; Roo, 2018). It requires different qualities from spatial planners and a different attitude towards actors involved in urban planning (Healey, 2003; Boonstra, 2015; Savini et al, 2022; Lamker & Schulze Dieckhoff, 2022).

In the Netherlands, which once enjoyed worldwide fame as an example of 'plan-led' planning (Faludi & Van der Valk, 1994; Needham, 2007), the discipline of spatial planning has been under pressure since the 1980s. As part of the outsourcing of tasks from the central government to lower levels of government, planning policy has also become increasingly decentralised. In the period from 2010 to 2024, there was no independent Ministry of Spatial Planning. At the local level, planning policy had already been undermined by the national government through 'planning by exemption' (Janssen-Jansen, 2016), whereby it was not the plans of the national government that were leading (plan-led), but project development from the market (development-led), and whereby municipalities facilitated these project developments from local interests by granting exemptions from the guiding planning policy from above. As a result, planning is increasingly threatening to withdraw from top-down political decision-making and policy at the national level.

In addition, there is a development of regional partnerships between municipalities and (sometimes) provinces that focus on the spatial planning of cross-municipal area developments. These partnerships are not subject to democratic accountability and political control, because it is unclear to whom this administrative layer is accountable and the administrators are not democratically elected (Peters et al., 2022). There is no cross-municipal representation of the people to monitor the administration of these partnerships, which means that many decisions are taken outside the municipal councils of the municipalities involved.

Nevertheless, these partnerships are often appreciated by those involved because of their results-oriented approach. The strength of a partnership lies in the cooperation itself and the consensus (and satisfaction) of the participating partners (Raad voor Volksgezondheid en Samenleving, 2022; Boogers et al., 2016). They are therefore both part of the problem and an attempt at a solution. The partnership contributes to the depoliticisation of planning and focuses on 'neutral' expertise (two aspects that will be discussed in section 2.2). However, by linking this to broad stakeholder participation, support is sought and found among civil society organisations in a different way. Depoliticisation offers scope here for the search for a shared basis that is specific to a particular time and place.

At first glance, the emergence of bottom-up initiatives fits in with this socialisation of the planning debate. Planning sought 'flexibility' through 'organic development' and the Planbureau voor de Leefomgeving (Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency) introduced the term 'invitation planning' (Buitelaar et al., 2012; Tan et al., 2019). These approaches relied heavily on civic initiatives (from citizens or businesses). After 10 years of preparation, the Environment and Planning Act came into force on 1 January 2024, which should put an end to overly complicated and overlapping permit procedures and give municipalities more say, both to reduce the pressure on the government and to 'be able to offer more customised solutions in order to respond to a dynamic environment and the wishes of citizens' (Raad voor de Leefomgeving en Infrastructuur, 2015), and thus also to facilitate civic initiatives in spatial planning. The question is what this means for the position of the planner and for the legitimacy of the discipline of spatial planning.

This study examines what we can learn from recent experiences with other forms of planning, such as those initiated by the emergence of urban agriculture initiatives. Limited research has been done on the changing division of roles in planning practice in relation to the growing role of bottom-up initiatives, and what research has been done, has focused more on the development or transformation of planning policy (Edelenbos et al, 2020), than on the transformation of the practice and the role(s) of the planners involved, let alone looking at bottom-up initiatives as actors in planning, or planners even (Boonstra, 2015). Recent discussions in planning theory have begun to address some of these issues (Savini et al, 2022; Davoudi, 2023) and

have (re)introduced questions about participation in planning of civic initiatives, e.g. the role of these initiatives in urban experimentation (Boelens & de Roo, 2016; Savini & Bertollini, 2019; Bertolini, 2025) and the role of conflict versus consensus in planning (Legacy, 2019; Fearn & Davoudi, 2022). How these questions are dealt with in local planning practice needs more research in the form of casestudies.

1.1.3 Urban food planning, more specifically the planning and realisation of urban agriculture, as a place of experimentation

With the emergence of urban agriculture initiatives, the food issue was put back on the urban agenda. In academic circles (Pothukuchi & Kaufman, 2000; Valk & Neuvel, 2009; Viljoen & Wiskerke, 2012) and in professional debates in planning practice (Viljoen et al., 2005; Steel, 2008), the planning of urban agriculture has since become a recurring topic of research and debate. The emergence of urban agriculture is also being studied in social geography, anthropology and sociology. As a practice, urban food planning has not yet fully crystallised and is therefore also a potential laboratory: there is a great deal of experimentation going on.

The experimental nature of urban food production planning encompasses various aspects. Firstly, thinking about food supply and food security at the urban level has long been absent from municipal planning policy (and is still not a matter of course). This raises the question of how a municipality can and wants to regulate this, and what the role of spatial planning policy is in this. Urban food planning is often approached from this perspective. For example, research has been conducted into how food production can be spatially integrated into and around the city, what contribution this makes to the city's food supply (and food security) and how planning tools such as zoning and land-use plans can be used to make this possible (Schans & Gebbink, 2014; Wascher et al., 2016; Roggema, 2016).

However, for urban agriculture in the Netherlands and/or (large parts of) Europe, it is more relevant to look at its contribution to (the planning of) a sustainable, social and liveable city. This is the second experimental aspect of urban agriculture: food production is being reintroduced as a function in the city. The focus here shifts to the physical, social and cultural impact of urban agriculture (initiatives) on the city, and research into the contribution that food initiatives (from food production to preparation and avoiding food waste) can make to social cohesion, health and eating habits, but also to the physical liveability of the city *. At the same time, questions arise about the position this function may occupy in the increasing competition for scarce space in the city and about the conditions under which food production can take place in the city in terms of environmental nuisance, public health, etc. in a society with ever-increasing regulations in this area.

Thirdly, bottom-up initiatives in the field of urban food production are being introduced as actors in urban planning and in decision-

** This perspective is also promoted by Stadslandbouw Nederland, a network of governmental and non-governmental organisations that a.o. commissions research into the impact of urban agriculture, (Stadslandbouw Nederland, n.d.)*

making processes concerning the spatial planning of the city. This third aspect is the subject of this dissertation. It examines the contribution of the emergence of urban agriculture (policy) to planning practice.

Planning and implementing urban agriculture as an act of planning challenges the way we understand and organise planning, and can be seen as an alternative way of participating in the debate on the design of the city and its actual implementation. Urban planning of food production is therefore an experiment in planning itself. It raises the question: what if we reconsider the idea of planning as a discipline based on a pluralistic reality with more planning actors and uncertainties about the future? What kind of planning practice would this result in? And more specifically, what kind of planning practice has it resulted in so far?

The combination of an action perspective – the space to do something yourself – and a focus on solutions – the focus on positive alternatives – makes urban agriculture a phenomenon with great appeal for both citizens and policymakers. It is very suitable for projecting all kinds of expectations onto it. But when it comes down to specifics, when initiatives are launched that claim public space and when urban agriculture policy is developed, expectations, ambitions and perceived possibilities often turn out to diverge greatly.

How does a municipality deal with this? What happens in the interaction between planners and a diversity of initiators with all kinds of ideas about the city and about agriculture? What can we learn from this? And what is the relevance of these lessons for the discipline of spatial planning, for bottom-up initiatives and for municipalities, other authorities and social organisations that want to facilitate them?

Recent research into urban agriculture planning looks at individual or a small selection of cases/projects and often records a snapshot or a limited period of time (see, for example: Sirowy & Ruggeri, 2024). Municipal policy and its impact on the interaction between the municipality and urban agriculture initiatives is mainly described from a top-down perspective (Cretella & Buenger, 2016; Buijs et al, 2019; Pellerey & Giezen, 2024). Where a more in-depth examination of how this interaction is experienced is undertaken, this is mainly done from the perspective of the initiators (Bronsveld, 2016; Morrow et al., 2023).

This study therefore examines the development of urban agriculture in a local context over a longer period of time, during which policy was also developed, as was the case in Rotterdam in the period 2006-2018, and looks at the interaction between planners and initiators from both sides.

1.2 Objective

The objective is to learn from the practice of spatial planning for urban food production; spatial interventions in the city in the field of urban agriculture. The study focuses on the interaction between

traditional and non-traditional actors in planning: municipal spatial planners on the one hand and urban agriculture initiatives and their initiators on the other. This is concretised in three objective:

1) To gain insight into the interaction between bottom-up initiatives and government planners in the planning and realisation of urban agriculture, and

2) the underlying views on planning that form the basis for this interaction and its results.

3) To draw lessons from this interaction and make proposals to improve it, thereby increasing the contribution of bottom-up initiatives to sustainable spatial planning in the city.

1.3 Central research question

The objectives have been translated into this central research question:

How can bottom-up initiatives, with their diversity of worldviews and action perspectives for the city and the food system, contribute to sustainable spatial planning in the city?

An important background question is: What role do different ideas about planning play among planners and initiators in this regard?

1.4 Sub-questions

Four sub-questions have been formulated to answer the central research question. Each of these questions is answered in a separate chapter The first three together form the Results section of this PhD. The fourth question is addressed in Chapter VII Discussion and conclusions.

1. How do municipal planners understand and conceptualise spatial planning and how does this influence the planning of urban agriculture in practice? Background questions are: Which conceptualisations of planning are used in spatial planning in Rotterdam and what is the role of bottom-up urban agriculture initiatives and other societal actors in these conceptualisations? Which conceptualisations of planning characterise the way in which planning policy was developed and implemented by municipal planners? (Chapter IV)

2. How do bottom-up citizen initiatives for urban agriculture understand and conceptualise the spatial planning of their initiative and their role in it? (Chapter V)

3. How do the views on planning held by municipal planners and bottom-up initiators and the strategies they use relate to each other, and do they converge or clash when it comes to the realisation of urban agriculture initiatives? (Chapter VI)

4. What lessons for planning can we draw from this interaction between government planning and bottom-up initiatives, and how can these lessons contribute to the effective involvement of bottom-up initiatives in the sustainable spatial planning of the city? (Chapter VII)

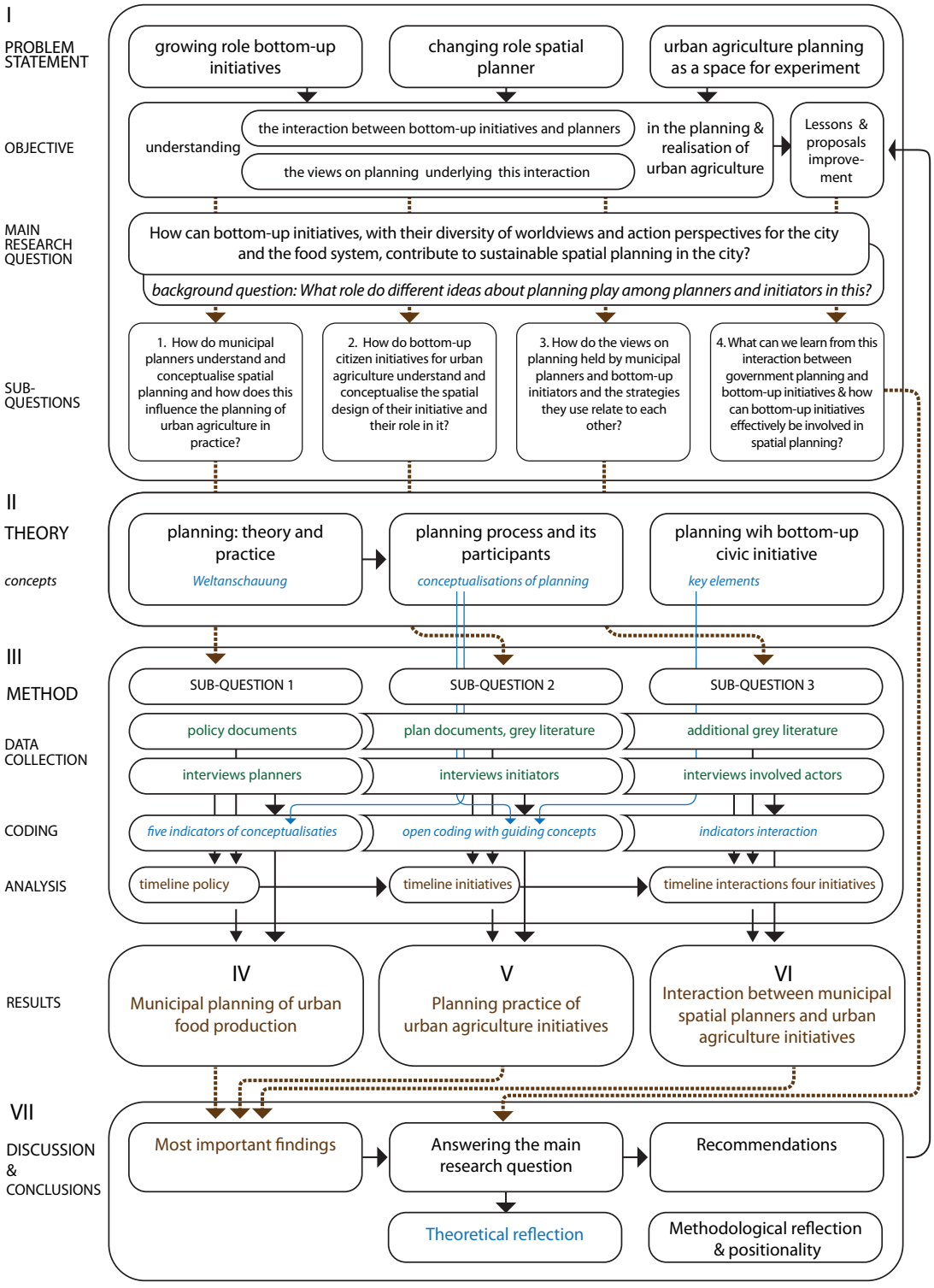
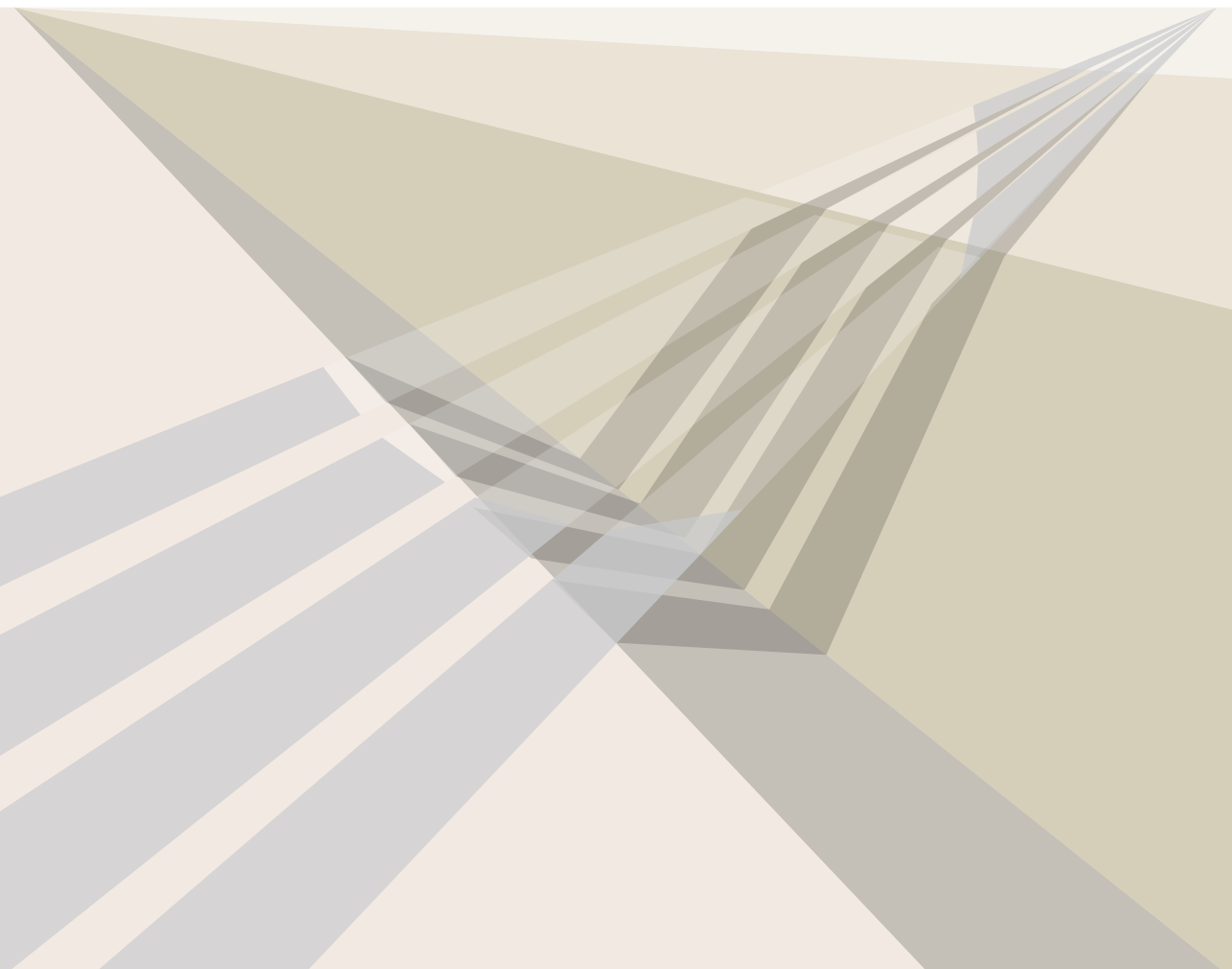


Fig. 1.2 Schematic outline of the research

Chapter II
Theoretical framework



2.1 Planning: theory and practice

In spatial planning, a distinction can be made between theory (science) and practice (discipline). Spit & Zoete define this distinction as follows: the scientific discipline of planology theorises and researches, while the practical discipline of spatial planning acts and implements (Spit & Zoete, 2006). In practice, spatial planning in the Netherlands is often referred to as 'ruimtelijke ordening' *. It is used within municipal organisations as a comprehensive term for all departments involved in this field. The municipal domain of 'ruimtelijke ordening'(spatial planning) encompasses both planning/planology (as defined by Needham (Needham, 2007)) and urban design and landscape architecture. Planology is concerned with evidence-based decision-making about the layout of the city. Urban design and landscape architecture are about the creative interpretation of that layout. This somewhat caricatural image is slightly outdated in the present day, but the tension between scientifically substantiated strategic planning and creative, design-oriented urban design and landscape architecture is still present in spatial planning (Faludi & Van der Valk, 1994).

** A distinction which is hard to translate in English. Literally it could be translated as spatial 'arranging' or organisation (cf. the German Raumplanung and Raumordnung). Often it is translated as spatial planning.*

This dichotomy is also reflected in the structure of municipal departments, but on closer inspection it appears that planners with backgrounds ranging from planology to urban design and (landscape) architecture work within the department of planning. This research focuses on strategic planning underpinned by a vision for the city. The question of who can call themselves a planner is part of the research.

This dissertation examines planning practice 'from the bottom up' and considers and uses theory in relation to its relevance to that practice. This seems obvious from the point of view of a practising planner, but planning theory "has been characterised by fragmentation and diversification with a wide range of different understandings emerging and increasingly talking past each other" (Allmendinger, 2017; p.1). This raises the question of what the use of all these theories is and whether practice needs theory at all. As a guide through the "landscape of planning theory", Allmendinger attempts to answer this question in the affirmative in his book Planning Theory. He not only provides an overview of different planning theories, but also attempts to demonstrate their relevance to planning practice, while acknowledging the imperfections, limitations and contradictions between these theories.

Allmendinger explains the current fragmentation, this lack of consensus, primarily as inherent to the nature of planning: a complex practice in which results are difficult to measure objectively, let alone establish the relationship between planning measures and these results. In this uncertainty, many theories can emerge without contradiction. Nevertheless, he argues that, in the absence of alternatives, planning theories can be regarded as assumptions about how planning might

work, on which concrete planning actions can be based and subsequently evaluated. In this way, theory can contribute to the reflective capacity of planning. In this context, Allmendinger also observes that planners "...theorise as an everyday activity whether they recognise it or not. After all, the very activity of planning is based upon a theory that the world will be a better place (however defined) with it than without it". (Allmendinger, 2017, p.3) In doing so, he touches on the essence of planning practice, firstly that planning in practice is an activity with consequences in the real world. And that theorising about what those consequences are is part of this everyday activity.

But he adds an important nuance. In a broader sense, Allmendinger says, a theory is always situated, that is to say: bound to a particular time and situation. And that is why it is important to understand where different theories come from, in and for which situation they were formulated. A theory is therefore an assumption about how planning could work in a particular context. The theories that Allmendinger describes in his book are rooted in a particular situated planning practice, which is why he calls them 'indigenous'.

Another aspect of planning theory that contributes to fragmentation, according to Allmendinger, is that planning theory is often rooted in theories from other disciplines and fields; a consequence of the practical and comprehensive nature of the discipline. In his view, these are often not so much theories as ways of understanding the world and viewing the world. "Often such Weltanschauungen can encompass and frame theories." (Allmendinger, 2017, p.4). This somewhat broader interpretation of theory is necessary to understand what "this fuzzy thing called planning theory" (Allmendinger, 2017, p.4). For the purposes of this research, this insight provides scope to study the role of initiators of urban agriculture projects as planners and to examine their ideas as forms of planning theory. Anyone who starts an idealistic project can be assumed to have a Weltanschauung, a worldview on the basis of which he/she/they develop an idea to improve the world. Without resorting to a populist 'everyone is a planner' approach, it is interesting and even necessary to delve into the ideas about planning and the underlying worldviews of this new player in planning practice: the initiator from civil society. In planology, it is not self-evident to consider actors from outside the discipline as planners (see, for example, the demarcation made by Spit & Zoete of spatial planning as a government activity (Spit&Zoete, 2007; p.15)), but in this study, a broader view of who a planner is takes as its starting point.

The influence of participants in the planning process on planning practice touches on a third reason for the current fragmentation in ideas about planning: the rise of the idea of 'theory as discourse'; the idea that theory – and the truth it attempts to describe – is socially produced. "Such a view highlights how we choose a theory amongst many competing approaches to suit the circumstances and our values." (Allmendinger, 2017; p.4). Whether you see this idea as the cause of that fragmentation or as a lens through which that frag-

mentation becomes visible, a social initiator not only has a different frame of reference than a professional planner, but will also view and act differently in the planning of the city, where they are both active, based on their circumstances and values. The question is whether they can produce a joint discourse in their interaction or whether they perpetuate fragmentation with different narratives.

Allmendinger therefore maintains a broad understanding of what a theory is in order to do justice to ideas about planning without excluding them on the basis of overly strict definitions of universal validity and applicability or the predictive nature of theory, as applied by some theorists. He speaks of a landscape of planning theory in which ideas that help to understand how planning could or should work can coexist and in which their relevance to practice depends on the local context and on the values of the planners (their worldview). These theories or ideas are therefore time- and place-bound conceptualisations of planning, conceptualised by the participants in the planning process. From this perspective, this study instrumentalises the planning theories discussed by Allmendinger in his book as conceptualisations of planning and examines their relevance in the Rotterdam context. How do Rotterdam planners conceptualise the planning of the city, green outdoor spaces and, in particular, urban agriculture? The study also examines whether these conceptualisations are also relevant to other participants in the planning process in Rotterdam in the field of urban agriculture: the bottom-up initiators.

2.2 The planning process and its participants

This dissertation examines spatial planning as a process that takes shape in practice and is largely defined by its participants and the way in which they participate in the planning process (Spit & Zoete, 2007). Planning theory distinguishes between different phases of the planning process, each with its own associated planning activities. Geddes' simple three-part division of 'survey – analysis – plan' has been further developed and refined over time. Planning literature offers a wide range of descriptions of the planning process, reflecting both theoretical convictions and practical experience. Spit & Zoete position the process within the so-called planning triangle and define seven phases. Planning begins with the formation of a vision on planning (a conceptualisation of planning) as described in the previous paragraph; an a priori positioning. However, most theoretical descriptions of the planning process begin with the formation of a vision on the subject of planning (the object) and the task it poses. Spit & Zoete refer to this as problem identification. This task may or may not be determined by politics, but always involves political and normative choices. This task is then analysed and a plan is drawn up. From the perspective of 'theory as discourse', the question is how these political and normative choices in the task are dealt with in this phase. The plan is then implemented and realised and/or enforced.

The participation and feedback of stakeholders is also increasingly becoming part of the process, as is the evaluation of the results. In addition to this series of phases, which expand both forwards and backwards, over time it has become clear that a planning process is often not linear, but iterative, passing through a number of (not necessarily all) phases, sometimes repeatedly and in varying order, depending on the circumstances (Spit & Zoete, 2007).

Moreover, this process looks different when viewed from the bottom up. This research therefore looks at the participation of bottom-up civic initiatives in the planning process, and the inclusiveness of different planning approaches and the extent to which they allow or encourage participation. Who participates, who is allowed to participate (which is not necessarily the same thing) and how are different participants involved? A bottom-up civic initiative is defined as any non-profit initiative launched by a non-governmental party, whether it be a (social) entrepreneur, an NGO or a citizen or group of citizens. *

This perspective is used to examine conceptualisations of planning from the planning landscape described by Allmendinger that are relevant to the Dutch and Rotterdam contexts. They are described on the basis of five aspects that are relevant to this inclusive perspective: the role of the planner (and especially the idealised image of that role), the underlying worldview(s) and the position of planning in that worldview, the extent to which different (or: a pluralistic variety of) social actors are involved, and what role they are assigned. For the purpose of instrumentalising these concepts in this study, Allmendinger's complex and detailed discussion of the landscape of planning theory is reduced here to a series of small vignettes that, offer a minimal characterisation of major conceptualisations of planning, touching on aspects and discussions relevant for the spatial planning practice, particularly the planning of bottom-up initiatives, while leaving much out. E.g. much of the discussion on Postmodern thought and its influence on planning theory is left out, instead focusing on Poststructuralist planning and other conceptualisations that consider the consequences in practice of postpositivist and postmodern pluralism and relativism. Similarly recent discussions about Postcolonialism and insurgency are not included, but aspects of their arguments are part of the problematisation of the interaction between planner and civic initiative. See also 2.2.10.

** In the literature societal non-governmental initiatives have had many names including citizens' initiative (Boonstra & Boelens, 2011), active citizenship initiative (Buijs et al., 2019) community-based initiatives (Edelenbos et al., 2020), and civic initiative (Rauws, 2016). All these labels emphasize different aspects of these initiatives: goals, support base, (types of) participants, and reflect the focus of the researcher as much as the nature of the initiatives. This research uses the term civic, as a more general, neutral term emphasizing its origin in civil society, and not presuming too much else. Bottom-up civic initiative, botttom-up initiative and initiative are used interchangeably throughout this PhD.*

2.2.1 Systems and Rational theories of planning

These conceptualisations of planning are perhaps the starting point from which planning as a discipline began: based on a rational analysis of the (urban) system, the planner draws up a plan according to objective criteria, which is then implemented and solves identified problems. It breaks with the idea of planning as design. Here, the planner is the expert and interpreter and representative of the public interest. Social actors are the recipients, the subjects, of this top-down

planning. They may be informed, but they are mainly confronted with the result in the form of built objects and/or rules that they must comply with. This worldview is based on a universal, objectively shared reality in which rational choices lead to the right solution. Rational Planning does, however, distinguish between means and ends; the determination of ends is placed in the political domain and this is used as input to plan the achievement of these ends by rational means. In the Netherlands, this conceptualisation of planning is associated with so-called blueprint planning (Faludi & van der Valk,1994), in which a pre-determined plan is implemented without taking into account unexpected changes that require adjustments.

Despite some differences Rational planning is strongly associated with Systems planning, that was inspired by systems thinking in ecology and cybernetics. According to its proponents modelling the city as a system would allow the planner to rationally steer the system as a helmsman (McLoughlin, 1969; Chadwick, 1971). This ambition was never fulfilled but modelling persists to this day as a tool for planning.

In fact, every subsequent conceptualisation of planning relates, albeit critically, to these conceptualisations. Although Faludi and others have attempted to rescue Rational Planning from overly simplistic interpretations (Faludi, 1987), there are two fundamental problems in this conceptualisation that form the basis for this criticism (Allmendinger, 2017). Firstly, planning practice shows without exception that reality cannot be planned so precisely and is much more unruly, complex and unpredictable than Rational or Systems planning presume (e.g. Sandercock, 2004; Healey,2007). A point later conceded by Faludi and McLoughlin (Faludi, 1987). Secondly, in the years that followed, the underlying view of the world and humanity was repeatedly and more and more thoroughly questioned, particularly in the social sciences, and/or replaced by a different idea of how the world is known and constructed, with a modified or differently interpreted role for social actors in the planning process. This 'postpositivist turn' laid open the field for a whole range of conceptualisations of planning (Allmendinger, 2017). Nevertheless, Systems and Rational planning continues to recur, sometimes in different guises, because it forms the basis of the planner's self-image and is also, to a certain extent, embedded in the organisational structure of the government.

Bottom-up urban agriculture initiatives disrupt the image of the planner as a Rational professional who knows best and who has the exclusive right to represent the public interest. Within this conceptualisation of planning, the involvement of these initiatives is seen, at best, as yet another input, often motivated by political objectives. As a result, initiatives are only taken seriously if they fit within the prevailing planning policy.

2.2.2 Critical Theory and Marxism

One of the earliest criticisms of Systems and Rational Planning was based on the critique of capitalism by Marx and his followers. The city and planning are inextricably linked to and produced by society. In their internal logic and functioning, they are determined by the economically structuring forces in that society, in many cases the capitalist system. In this worldview, the planner is a representative of big capital who only represented the wealthy upper class of citizens and subjected the middle and working classes to the spatial expression of capitalism and its representatives.

Marxism and other forms of Critical Theory did not so much offer a new approach to planning * as question the discipline's role in confirming certain power relations. It 'continues to pose key questions about the origins, character and lines of development of economic and social systems of the modern world' (Gamble et al., 1999). This criticism and the planner's (lack of) awareness of it make this approach relevant to this day. However according to Gibson-Graham through its anticapitalist criticism Marxist theory reinforced the capitalist framing of the world obscuring other alternative views (Gibson-Graham, 2008). Nonetheless, Marxism remains a relevant lens that inspires critical readings of the planning discipline in theory and practice, including recent critical conceptualisations of planning that address the global ecological crisis as well as a growing post-colonial awareness, such as Post growth planning. See also 2.2.10.

** With the exception of Habermas' work, which laid the foundations for Collaborative Planning – see Section 2.2.8.*

Bottom-up initiatives are, by their very nature, an embodiment of this criticism, or at least of certain aspects of it. They question the authority of governmental planning and through this its economic logic and agenda. At the same time, bottom-up initiatives are also susceptible to commodification, i.e. encapsulation in a capitalist system, for example when they manifest themselves as commercial entities or when they develop a revenue model in order to survive.

2.2.3 Neoliberal Planning

Neoliberal Planning opposes Systems and Rational Planning, contrasting the rational approach with market logic. Following the ideas of Milton Friedman and Friedrich von Hayek planning should limit itself to facilitating the efficient functioning of the market (Gamble, 1988). In the Neoliberal worldview, the market is central as the driving force of economic growth and thus prosperity. Social actors are free individuals who participate on an equal footing in market transactions, either as consumers or as commercial parties. While the goal of Neoliberal Planning (optimal market functioning) is relatively straightforward, opinions differ on how this should be done. In theory, there are two approaches with different roles for the government: either planning does the minimum to facilitate the functioning of the free market (roll-back) or it intervenes to promote market forces (roll-out).

Planning Theory	conceptualised (idealised) role of the planner	worldview / Weltanschauung	position / role of planning	interaction engagement with social stakeholders	role of societal actors
Systems and Rational Theories of Planning SR	Planners as rational planning professionals and expertst	rational, positivist, a shared universal reality	top-down, objective representative and interpreter of the public interest	a one-way process involving planning, regulation and public information; public interest	(categories of) subjects, recipients of top-down planning
Critical Theory and Marxism	(criticism of) the planner as a servant of capitalism / the market	Marxist, anti-capitalist, critical	tool/ instrument of capitalistic values	subjugation, commodification of labour	subjects / victims of capitalism
Neoliberal Planning NL	planner as a (proactive or passive) facilitator of market forces	neoliberal, a functioning market is the optimal planner	giving free rein to the market (roll-back) or supporting the market (roll-out)	drafting or repealing regulations; regulating or facilitating the wishes and requirements of market participants	free individuals, participants in the free market (as consumers or market players)
Pragmatism PR	planner as a committed, action- and results-oriented facilitator and problem-solver	pragmatic; experience-based; liberal (democratic), pluralistic	acting/intervening within a specific local context, situated within society	engagement through discussion and democratic means	active citizens, sources of local knowledge, communities of interest
Advocacy Planning AP	planner as an advocate for (under-represented) groups with shared interests	activist, pluralistic, subjective, political	subjective, controversial, part of the political debate	representation and support, advocacy	interest groups and communities in a pluralistic society
Post-Political PP	(criticism of) the planner as a neutralising factor, complicit in strategies of depoliticisation	(critical of) relativistic technocratic and/or cynical attitude	making political decisions apolitical by framing them as technical problems (or exposing these practices)	(disencourage or avoid) political involvement of citizens	powerless citizens, dissatisfied citizens, protesters
Poststructuralism PS	a planner as a storyteller who brings (situated) coherence to a fragmented reality	relational, pluralistic; space and truth as social constructs	establishing connections through a relational approach to space	involve stakeholders in the co-creation of meaningful spatial narratives	actors within a network of relationships who co-create and shape space through their actions
Adaptive planning / complexity planning AC	a planner who interprets patterns and sets the conditions for (desired) emergent developments	relational, systemic, complex adaptive	establishing the conditions for, and facilitating, self-organisation in planning	creating the conditions for desirable developments by societal actors	self-organising actors or communities who co-create and shape space through their actions
Collaborative planning CP	planners as facilitators in spatial planning processes within a dynamic and increasingly complex society	reformed modernist (relational, pragmatic), lifeworld versus system	a communicative or collaborative process aimed at establishing a shared understanding	involvement in the joint decision-making process	partners in achieving communicative rationality

Fig. 2.1 Overview of relevant conceptualisations of planning characterised in terms of worldviews and their relationship with civic actors

However in practice the two approaches are combined in a sometimes confusing mix of policies (Allmendinger, 2017). Both proponents and opponents might thus criticise governments for not intervening or for intervening too much, although this critique might concern different forms of interventions depending on their political views. As a result Neoliberal planning is connected to different images of government: the small government that only intervenes when necessary; the government as servant of capitalism that neglects the public interest but promotes and advances the interests of big business; or the intervening government that, by favouring large companies, actually distorts the market forces that should ensure a fair distribution. Fact is that the Dutch government like many European counterparts has since the 1980s gradually and in different waves embraced a market-oriented approach towards real estate, housing and planning in general which pervades government planning (Janssen-Jansen, 2016).

From a critical, Marxist perspective, the danger is that planning either remains aloof in protecting citizens and non-commercial parties, or, conversely, facilitates certain groups and their commercial interests more than those of the more vulnerable parties. After an initial proclamation of the triumph of market forces following the fall of the Berlin Wall in Germany at the end of the last century (by Fukuyama, among others), there has since been increasing attention to the shortcomings of capitalism in ensuring broad access to transport, housing and other basic necessities. In a sense, the introduction of the term 'participatory society' is a neoliberal response to these shortcomings.

Bottom-up initiatives can be seen as a societal initiative that steps up in the absence of a retreating neoliberal government, and depending on how you look at it, this is either a libertarian occupation of the space that Neoliberal Planning leaves 'rolling back', or a societal critique of the consequences of this policy. From the perspective of roll-out capitalism, we can regard bottom-up initiatives as implicit criticism of the way in which the government stimulates and supports certain commercial parties, for example in healthcare. But they can also take on the role of competitors for this position (as a private party providing a particular service).

2.2.4 Pragmatism

The Pragmatic approach to planning can be seen as a reaction to the grand meta-narratives and claims to a single truth of previous conceptualisations of planning (and thus as an early form of Postmodern criticism). It contrasts this with an action- and results-oriented approach, in which the planner is an engaged connector and problem solver, situated in a specific local context. Pragmatic planners focus on 'what works' based on 'common sense', an attitude that can be traced back to its origins in the United States, with philosophers such as Dewey and Rorty as its main proponents. The planning theorists

that embraced this philosophy, such as Hoch and later Healey and Forester, had a strong commitment to planning practice and to making sense its practitioners (Hoch, 1984; Healey, 2009; Forester, 2025). Experience is more important than theory in the pluralistic society that these philosophers and their followers envisage in planning, in which independent, self-reliant citizens, whether or not united in interest groups, actively participate and choose the most effective and popular ideas. They represent local knowledge and planners involve them through discussion and democratic participation. However, this appeal to social actors and the emphasis on solving problems without looking at their underlying causes can also be seen as a stopgap for the shortcomings of a (neoliberal) government. The criticism of Pragmatic Planning is that it ignores underlying differences in skills and power and is politically uncritical of structural inequalities in society. However Healey and Forester argue for a more personal ethical and reflective attitude, situated in practice, rather than an apriori moral framework (Healey, 2003; Healey, 2009; Forester, 2006). This does leave a lot of responsibility with the planner and his or her personal integrity.

Pragmatism offers planners who often are not in a position to exert political influence a workable attitude: they make do with whatever mandate they have and offer their commitment and involvement to compensate for the limitations of the system. In doing so, they might take the presence of the market as a co-determining force for granted – see Neoliberal planning.

Bottom-up initiatives can be fitting partners within this conceptualisation of planning, as they match the action-oriented and reflective orientation of the Pragmatic planner. At the same time, they are more than independent citizens, they often have a political agenda. While Pragmatic planners see and present themselves as neutral, humanist, independent professionals, they might instead be regarded as representatives of the system, to which bottom-up initiatives are opposed and for which they want to present an alternative.

2.2.5 Advocacy Planning

Another American approach that emerged in the shadow of Anglo-Saxon capitalism is Advocacy Planning. Paul Davidoff looked at the idea of the locally involved planner in a pluralistic society (as advocated by Pragmatism) from a political perspective and argued that a planner could not be neutral in this context and, in fact, that they should take a stand and commit themselves to groups with similar values in order to represent and support them (Davidoff, 1965). In other words, the planner as an advocate of subjective, spatial interests. Davidoff thus raises fundamental questions about the nature of planning and who it represents (Allmendinger, 2017). This worldview links the idea of a pluralistic society to a struggle for justice,

which is ideally conducted through competing plans, with the plan with the best arguments emerging as the winner. Advocacy Planning thus ignores the need to arrive, sooner or later, at a plan that everyone can agree on to some extent. Viewed critically, it paints a sharp picture of a fragmented world.

In the Netherlands, the so-called 'Stadsvernieuwing' (Urban renewal) can be regarded as a related approach. In this approach, architects employed by the municipality identified with the residents of working-class neighbourhoods in large cities and worked with them on drawing up alternative plans for these neighbourhoods focused on renovation and preservation of social structures (Janssen-Jansen, 2016; Maandag, 2019). Thereby they opposed the municipal planners that pursued the demolition and new construction of these neighbourhoods. The polemical, political nature of this professional dispute makes it a form of Advocacy Planning, but the interests of the residents of working-class neighbourhoods transcend the level of a subjective interest.

The image of the planner as a neutral, independent expert is overturned in Advocacy Planning, but the question is to what extent the planner can achieve a more just and equal representation of social actors from a political perspective using this approach. And whether Davidoff's political commitment is being fulfilled.

Bottom-up initiatives set up or supported by professional planners have the advantage that they have a good understanding of the world of planning and how it works. It varies per initiative whether the planner, with his professional experience, is a guide and insider in the complex planning process, a catalyst for other visions and ideas, or whether, as an entrepreneur, they pursue their own professional and commercial goals, thereby possibly suppressing less privileged initiatives. In the latter case, the battle for ideas may once again come to resemble market forces.

2.2.6 Post-Political Planning

Where Pragmatism and Advocacy Planning attempt to define a new pluralistic normal as a backdrop for a practice-oriented approach, the field of Post-Political Planning, inspired by thinkers like Zizek and Ranciere, takes a critical look at the consequences of increasing pluralism, particularly in Western societies, and at the consensus seeking response to this of the government. In particular it investigates how political decision-making on planning in governance practice is increasingly withdrawing itself from political debate and democratic control. It describes how 'the political', as a democratic ideal and foundation on which society is shaped, in 'politics', the daily practice of governance, is deferred, displaced and dispersed (Swyngedouw, 2011; Allmendinger, 2017). The first involves postponing politically sensitive decision-making to an indefinite time in the future, in the hope that it will receive less attention then. In the second case,

decision-making is moved outside the political arena, for example by referring it to intergovernmental administrative levels (Allmendinger et al, 2016), or by framing the problem in technocratic, apolitical terms. In the third case, a political task is fragmented and diluted by disconnecting it from the directly affected community (e.g. residents on whom the planning has a direct, physical impact) and linking it to vague general communities such as 'future generations' or 'the public interest', allowing planning to select which interests it takes into account. Chances are that these will mainly be the powerful interests and stakeholders. Like Critical Theory, the critical approach of Post-Political Planning offers a lens through which to analyse contemporary planning, rather than a new approach to planning, but an important one for understanding planning in the light of current political developments. Also the Post-Political analysis has spurned the debate about its consequences for practice, the legitimacy of the discipline (Janssen-Jansen, 2016; Fearn & Davoudi, 2021) and planning approaches that address these consequences (Legacy, 2019).

The Post-Political lens offers an explanation for the dissatisfaction of many social actors with the current political system. Interestingly, bottom-up initiatives can be seen as both part of the problem and part of the solution. Bottom-up initiatives can be a means for a select, privileged group of articulate citizens to influence politics outside of representative democracy. On the other hand, bottom-up initiatives can be seen as a necessary addition to the democratic system that gives marginalised groups a voice that is denied them by the Post-Political strategies of administrators.

2.2.7 Post-Structuralism

Post-Structuralism views space as a social construct and offers a lens on aspects of planning that take place outside or beyond the boundaries of physically defined space (territorial space). The relationships and flows between people, materials and knowledge that are relevant to planning form networks that extend across multiple spaces: local, international and also virtual. Building on the philosophy of Deleuze & Guattari theorists from planning related disciplines like McCann & Ward and Jessop have applied their ideas to planning policy and governance. (Allmendinger, 2017; Jessop, 2016; McCann & Ward, 2012)

According to the strictest interpretation of this approach to planning, territorial space (such as a municipality, province or country) becomes virtually irrelevant. However, as Allmendinger points out, this attitude is not tenable in the strict sense in everyday planning practice, given the persistence of physical space and its administrative and political role in the current social structure.

A more relational approach to space offers insight into aspects of today's fragmented, pluralistic reality that would otherwise remain hidden, such as the influence of globalisation (Jessop, 2016) and the formation of new, alternative layers of government that are not

subject to democratic accountability (Allmendinger et al, 2016) such as the intergovernmental regional partnerships that have become commonplace in Dutch planning (Peters et al., 2022). It offers planners the opportunity to develop other forms of planning in response to these kinds of challenges, particularly at the regional level. By starting from an assemblage of relevant networks, a planning question can be defined differently, leading to more relevant proposals or interventions that are better embedded in the geographical context. This may seem rather abstract, but Post-Structuralist characteristics can be found in the emergence of planning visions based on regional or landscape identity: a connecting narrative that is not bound by (hard) spatial boundaries, an emphasis on broad support for this narrative among various actors, not only in a passive sense but also in the sense that these actors co-create this narrative. This also offers concrete opportunities for active citizens and civil society organisations. However, in planning practice, the responsibility for who is included in this open relational approach to space ultimately lies with the planner. This makes the Post-Structuralist approach vulnerable to neoliberal instrumentalisation (Allmendinger, 2017). Here, the shared narrative becomes a means of city marketing or city branding, which subjects classic territorial spaces to neoliberal redefinition. In this marketing of place, bottom-up initiatives can also be used for so-called 'placemaking' or, rather, 'place branding'.

Post-Structuralism redefines the role of social actors and argues that they help shape the space (or rather multiple spaces) through their actions. Bottom-up initiatives can be considered examples of this in the way they influence that space, whether or not in collaboration with a planner. The extent to which this succeeds depends in part on the political, social and economic freedom to shape their space as civic actors, and this freedom is not equally distributed, even in the Netherlands. Also the virtual, constructed nature of Poststructuralism can weaken the position of bottom-up initiatives; they could be marginilised from official narratives and imaginaries of they could become appropriated as protagonists in a governmental or commercial narrative without improvement of their position in the real world.

2.2.8 Collaborative Planning

Collaborative Planning is a relatively recent attempt to regain a certain degree of Rational objectivity in an era of Postmodern and Post-Structuralist criticism. This conceptualisation is based on what Habermas calls 'communicative rationality', i.e. open and free communication without external pressure. Whereas postmodern thinkers such as Lyotard believe that in a complex, pluralistic world, objective knowledge, and therefore rationality, is impossible, reformed modernists such as Dryzek see Habermas' 'communicative rationality' as the basis for political decision making (Dryzek, 1990). In Collaborative planning (or Communicative planning) the planner acts

as an equal partner and, in consultation with those involved, arrives at a plan based on a jointly formulated shared reality in a shared living environment. Communicative rationality contrasts with an instrumental approach, in which people reduce others to a means of achieving their goals. It has been developed by planning theorists with a background in Pragmatic Planning, like Forester, who turned to Habermas to develop what he called a critical pragmatism, and Healey, who wrote the seminal work "Collaborative Planning" (Forester, 1989; Healey, 1997; Forester, 2025).

Over the past thirty years, Collaborative Planning has gained a prominent role in planning practice in the Western European context, including in the Netherlands in the so-called integrated area development. In this practice, Collaborative Planning is often primarily pragmatic in the way it seeks to reconcile the – seemingly inevitable – rational role of the planner as representative of the public interest on behalf of the government with a relational approach that is aware of the limitations of modernism and the instrumental rationality that underlies Rational Planning (theory). Collaborative or Communicative planning's orientation on practice allows for different interpretations. Many planners use it as a neutral blueprint for better decision-making. However, this participatory democratic approach can be difficult to separate from the overarching societal structures (that are shaped by instrumental rationality). Because of this ambiguous attitude towards instrumental rationality, Collaborative Planning is seen by Post-Political critics as politically naive because it denies the inevitability of power differences in planning (Purcell, 2009). However, Healey sees Collaborative Planning as a way of involving diverse groups in a pluralistic multicultural society and, looking back on her book "Collaborative Planning" (Healey, 2003), she emphasises the critical, investigative side of this approach: how does the 'governance of place' work in different places for different people? What is their agency within different (power) structures? In line with this approach, in recent years, more attention has been paid to power and agency in co-creation and co-production processes. Healey describes the role of agency as follows: "Engagement in governance processes shapes participants' sense of themselves. It generates ways of thinking and acting that may be carried forward into subsequent episodes of governance"(Healey, 2003).

Indeed, the increasing demand from social actors for influence in planning has been driving planning at the local level in this direction (with all the associated challenges). According to Healey, this requires planners to have a clear idea of the possibilities and limitations of the collaborative approach: to what extent do they have the power and mandate to reach decisions on an equal footing with social actors? And in relation to this: what expectations does the communication process create about the material result? If the planner is not aware of this and does not communicate clearly about it, the same misunderstandings as mentioned earlier in Pragmatic Planning are likely to arise, with ingrained disappointment about the degree of influence.

The collaborative approach seems tailor-made for engaging bottom-up initiatives and their points of view. A communicative process on equal terms allows civic initiatives to be heard and taken seriously. The question is wether the current municipal planning structure with its inherent power imbalance between state and civic initiative allows for truly equal terms. In relation with this, the discrepancy between expectations and real influence and the time consuming nature of this deliberative process pose a risk for disappointment and resentment.

2.2.9 Complexity or Adaptive Planning

Complexity has been a recurring theme in planning, since McLoughlin tried to tame it in the procedures of Systems planning. Hayek and his followers in Neoliberal Planning saw reality as too complex to plan, and placed their faith in self-regulation of the free market. Poststructuralism with its relational understanding of reality ignited a new interest in complexity in planning (Healey, 2007; De Roo et al, 2012).

Complexity or Adaptive Planning applies knowledge from ecology and cybernetics, such as the theory of Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS), and related concepts like self-organisation (Rauws & de Roo, 2016) to the planning process in response to the uncertainties and instabilities that Poststructuralism made apparent and the complex, pluralistic world the relational turn in planning has opened up to. It looks at planning instruments beyond the plan that can deal with a dynamic 'world in becoming' (rather than a static, complicated world) (Boelens & de Roo, 2016)

But instead of the helmsman that McLoughlin envisioned to steer complexity or the guardian of the free market that Hayek advocated, the Adaptive planner takes a more modest role. Adaptive Planning studies patterns in spontaneous urban developments in order to understand and influence the conditions in which favourable patterns occur in specific contexts. Through this it seeks to increase the capacity of these contexts to respond to change, and become more resilient and adaptive. How this is translated to planning practice is still an open question (De Roo, 2018). One line of thought is that, by planning beneficial conditions, certain desired developments will be more likely to take place within these conditions, such as (desired forms of) self-organisation and self-governance (Boonstra & Boelens, 2011; Rauws, 2016) as well as beneficial urban self-coordination (Moroni et al, 2018). An important point is that these conditions do not steer towards one favoured outcome, but rather allow for a range of possible outcomes to emerge. Adaptive planning thus addresses the inability of planning to plan for an unknown unpredictable future, stating instead that the likelihood of preferable outcomes can be increased by understanding the conditions that lead to such outcomes. Also it opens up planning to dynamic interaction with civic initiatives.

Bottom-up initiatives in this complex adaptive conceptualisation of planning can both be examples of self-organisation of civic actors within the larger societal system and partners in producing planned spaces for self-organisation and self-governanc, and other forms of social experimentation within planned conditions. In this conceptualisation civic initiatives are expected to organise themselves (or do this in more conducive ways to planning goals) if the right set of conditions is created by the government. The underlying idea is that, within the right framework, initiatives can and should be given much more freedom to shape the city themselves (Boonstra, 2015; Rauws, 2017)

2.2.10 Recent conceptualisations for experimentation in planning

In recent years the interest in experimentation in planning and planning theory has grown as a response to contemporary societal challenges that demand planning approaches that can deal with instability, uncertainty and ambiguity and that question and transform the existing social order (Bertolini, 2025). The Post-Political crisis of planning poses the question how planners can affect change from within this social order and how planning can become politically relevant again in a system of governance that is depoliticizing the role of planning in political questions such as how to respond to climate change, how to reduce growing inequality and how to give voice to a plurality of communities (Legacy, 2019).

Post Growth planning and Prefigurative planning are nascent conceptualisation-in-becoming, that build on earlier anticapitalist and feminist critiques in social theory and planning theory to address this question of relevancy and legitimacy of planning by siding with the projects and initiatives that not only propose alternative futures but also perform them in the here and now.

Post growth planning explores ways in which planning can function outside of the pervasive growth model and within planetary boundaries. To do this planners have to step out of dominant (capitalist) imaginaries to look for hopeful practices in the interstices of everyday lives (Davoudi, 2022). These experimental practices both in and outside the field of planning can be seen as prefigurations.

The notion of prefiguration and prefigurative politics in social theory as its roots in the sixties (Yates, 2021). Prefiguration conflates means and ends; you act out the concrete utopia you want (to explore) in the here and now (Davoudi, 2023; Bertolini, 2025). It is an embodied practice that is different every time and in each place that it is enacted (Maeckelbergh, 2016).

In recent years this notion has challenged different planning theorists to imagine what a prefigurative planning might look like (Hillier, 2017; Davoudi, 2023; Bertolini, 2025).According to Davoudi it involves first of all the courage to dream up alternatives to the status quo, and secondly to perform these alternatives in the here and now.

Following Mouffe, she stresses the need of an agonistic pluralism (Mouffe, 2005; Davoudi, 2023). A place for alternatives and their dissenting views has to be democratically argued for and claimed by planners who dare to engage with prefigurative projects such as bottom-up civic initiatives that prefigure alternative food futures.

Rather than make plans, it is the task of the planner to explore ways of providing an agonistic discursive space (Legacy, 2019), and to open up space and create conditions for prefigurative projects to take place in. This raises questions on conflicting interests and appropriation of space (Van de Sande, 2024) and the relation between prefiguration and other forms of politics (Maeckelbergh, 2016; Bertolini, 2025).

Bottom-up initiatives can be considered prefigurations and this conceptualisation of planning aligns itself with these 'embodied practices', acknowledges their role in planning as experiments of what might be (the Not Yet) and wants to negotiate space for them. This would allow these initiatives greater autonomy to develop alternative spaces, but it also comes with a responsibility to live up to the ambitions that a prefiguration embodies, and to remain a critical alternative to the status quo, a hopeful practice, with all the practical and ethical challenges this entails.

2.3 Urban food planning and urban agriculture

The academic discourse on urban food planning ranges from urban planning research into the degree of self-sufficiency that a city and its surrounding city region food system can achieve, through economic analysis of possible revenue models and sociological studies of food governance, to anthropological research into the value of vegetable gardening for urban dwellers (Viljoen & Wiskerke, 2012; Wiskerke, 2020; Schans, 2012, Schans, 2015, Veen, 2015). It is not self-evident that urban agriculture should be approached as a bottom-up activity, i.e. as an initiative originating from society. The definition of urban agriculture once used in the Cities Feeding People programme of the then authoritative Canadian IDRC (International Development Research Centre) was:

"An industry located within (intra-urban) or on the fringe (peri-urban) of a town, a city, or a metropolis, which grows or raises, processes, and distributes a diversity of food and nonfood products. It (re)uses on a daily basis human and natural resources, products, and services largely to that urban area."
(Mougeot, 2006)

Urban agriculture is part of a reorientation of top-down urban planning towards a more local urban food system as part of a sustainably organised, circular city, with city-oriented farmers and/or agricultural enterprises that are market players in a city-region food system. The more recent definition of RUAF places less emphasis on the commercial side and also introduces non-food-related services that urban agriculture can provide:

"Agricultural production (of crops, livestock, fish, and trees) in urban and peri-urban areas for food (e.g. vegetables, milk, eggs, poultry and pig meat) and other uses (e.g. herbs, flowers, fodder), the related input supply, transport, processing, and marketing of the agricultural produce and the provision of non-agricultural services (such as agritourism, urban greening and water storage)" (RUAF, 2019).

In addition to this, Wiskerke points to the intertwining of urban agriculture with the urban socio-ecological system:

"A defining characteristic of urban and peri-urban agriculture and a key difference with rural agriculture is that it is an agricultural production system that is closely intertwined with the urban socio-economic, ecological and legal system. This means that urban and peri-urban agriculture makes use of urban resources, delivers produce and services to urban consumers and is influenced by urban laws and market forces." (Wiskerke, 2020)

In European countries such as the Netherlands, there are major differences between peri-urban urban agriculture in the form of agricultural businesses and intra-urban urban agriculture within built-up areas in the form of non-profit bottom-up initiatives that contribute to physical and social liveability (Schans, 2011). Initiatives that want to engage in urban agriculture on a commercial basis focus primarily on high-tech forms that can take place indoors, in greenhouses or buildings, but even this vertical cultivation is failing to gain a foothold due to high energy requirements and poor connections to urban logistics. Therefore, research into intra-urban urban agriculture initiatives focuses primarily on the benefits that food production and the social activity of producing food together offer to the city, and less on the contribution to food production itself (Bronsveld, 2014; Veen, 2015; Bronsveld, 2016; Ilieva et al., 2021).

To understand the contribution of urban agriculture to the city, Mougeot's idea that urban agriculture initiatives are opportunistic in a positive way (Mougeot, 2006; p.5) is helpful. It offers a perspective for understanding how the benefits of urban agriculture for the city arise. Urban agriculture initiatives seek opportunities in the city, which are found in places where urban resources (space, waste streams, volunteers) are available for agriculture and where agriculture contributes to the city as a (social, spatial, ecological) resource (Graaf, 2011). Urban agriculture as a problem solver that emerges where there is an opportunity for improvement. Experience in Rotterdam has shown that the use of waste streams is both legally and technically difficult. In practice, urban agriculture initiatives therefore mainly contribute to urban policy objectives such as social cohesion, greening the city and raising awareness of healthy food.

However from a post-positivist perspective there is more to say about the contribution of urban agriculture than its compliance with policy goals or how to optimally plan it for this purpose. Bottom-up initiatives such as urban agriculture initiatives have their own agenda(s) and an agency of their own. Engaging such initiatives in planning can not be a oneway street. It might change planning and the role of the planner.

2.4 Spatial planning for and with bottom-up societal urban agriculture initiative

In theory, planning can engage bottom-up urban agriculture initiatives in a more targeted way to reap their benefits for the city, but how does that work in practice? How does planning deal with urban agriculture initiatives and the potential benefits they offer for the city? In this context, Cohen talks about the need to move from 'planning to support urban agriculture' (aimed at preserving agriculture around the city and allowing agriculture in the city) to 'the design of urban agriculture to support planning goals' (thinking about and designing forms of urban agriculture that contribute to city planning) (Cohen, 2020). From a slightly different angle, Buijs et al. put it as follows:

> *'How can harnessing the desire, enthusiasm and capacity of citizens to shape their living environment help local authorities (...) to deliver the benefits of urban green infrastructure?' (Buijs et al., 2019).*

The examples above could be identified as Pragmatic with their apolitical, action-oriented approach to make the city better with bottom-up initiatives. But bottom-up urban agriculture initiatives can also have political agendas and views on how to make the city better that diverge from existing policy frameworks. As we have seen in section 2.2 different conceptualisations of planning offer different possibilities or pathways for engaging bottom-up initiatives. And, equally important, for bottom-up initiatives to engage in planning! This participation of bottom-up initiatives brings up particular dilemma's in planning.

2.4.1 Participation of bottom-up initiatives

If on Arnstein's ladder of participation "the bottom steps focus on persuasion and convincing others, the middle steps on enriching plans, and the top steps on new ways of decision-making" (Tan, 2019), participation in Rational and Neoliberal planning most likely would be found on the lower steps, Pragmatic planning on the middle steps and Collaborative and Post-structuralist planning on the top steps. However these differences are not as clear cut. For example in Neoliberal planning the level of participation would depend on whether you are an entrepreneur or a consumer, in Pragmatic planning a lot depends on the engagement and ethics of the planner and in Collaborative planning the way the communicative process is designed may or may not incorporate structural power relations.

Bottom-up initiatives pose particular questions about what participation means in terms of representation, democratic inclusion and power. (Tonkens, 2014; Boonstra, 2015; Visscher et al, 2023). Bottom-up civic initiatives have been on the rise worldwide since the beginning of the 21st century. In their study of the emergence and characteristics of 'community-based initiatives' in various countries, Edelenbos et al. distinguish these community-based initiatives from earlier forms of civic engagement in that the initiative comes from the

bottom up: citizens take the initiative and do so from within the local context of which they are a part. This third wave of civic engagement (often) focuses on local goals and involves volunteers from the local community. Bottom-up civic initiatives offer an alternative form of public services, facilities and/or products and in doing so enter terrain that used to be the exclusive domain of the government. In the Netherlands, this has also been actively encouraged by the national government, as described in section 1.1.1. In fact, bottom-up civic initiatives often emerge in interaction with government. And how this interaction is organised affects the democratic significance of this form of participation (Tonkens, 2014).

2.4.2 Interaction between planners and initiators

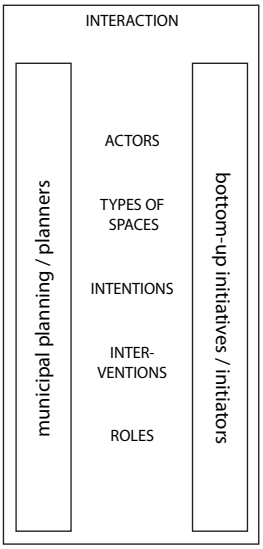


Fig. 2.2 Characterisation of interaction between planners and citizen initiatives through five key elements

So how (and to what extent) is this interaction between planners and civic initiatives organised in the spatial planning for and with bottom-up initiatives? In their literature review on 'the roles and practices of collective citizen engagement in spatial planning', Horlings et al. define spatial planning as 'the coordination of policies and practices regarding the organisation of space, which is firmly embedded in (urban) governance as such' (Horlings et al., 2021). In line with Allmendinger, they note that in recent decades, spatial planning theory has evolved from a more technocratic and top-down perspective to Collaborative and Post-Structuralist Planning approaches that address the relational and complex nature of planning. In their analysis of these approaches, they distinguish 'five key elements of spatial planning': 1) Actors, 2) Types of Space, 3) Intentions, 4) Interventions and 5) Roles. These key elements are then used by Horlings et al. to discuss and characterise different examples of collective citizen engagement in spatial planning.

The broad and general nature of these key elements, which are themselves not connected to specific conceptualisations of planning, makes them useful as guiding concepts for a grounded approach to the second research subquestion: How do bottom-up citizen initiatives for urban agriculture understand and conceptualise the spatial planning of their initiative and their role in it? In the following paragraphs these five key elements are discussed and problematised as guiding concepts, reflecting on their relation to the conceptualisations discussed in Par. 2.2, the possibilities of these conceptualisations for engaging civic urban agriculture initiatives in general and urban agriculture initiatives in particular.

2.4.3 Actors: who can engage in planning?

As discussed in Par. 2.2. each conceptualisation has embedded presuppositions about civic initiatives: who they are and who they represent, in relation to the public at large. Research shows that there is variety of actors involved in bottom-up initiatives. These include citizens, but also non-profit organisations and social entrepreneurs

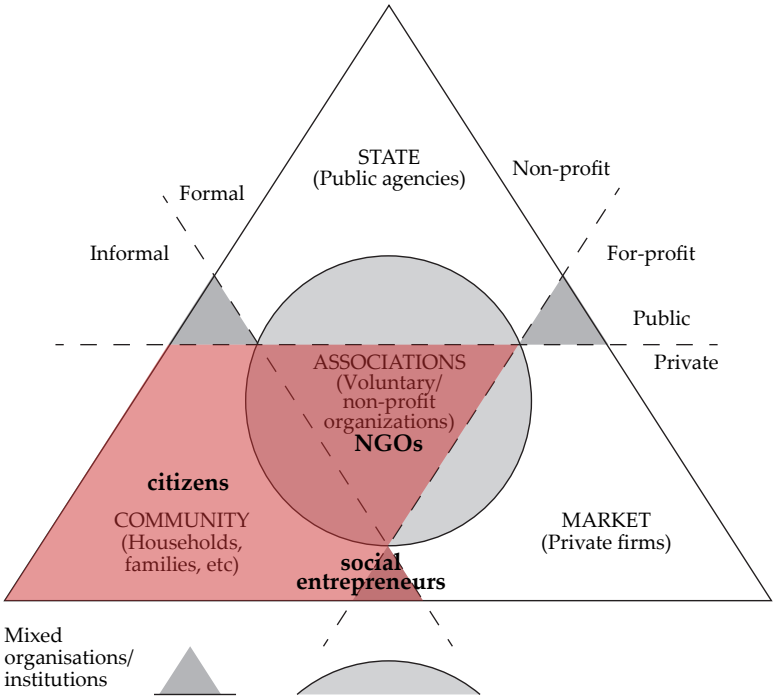


Fig. 2.3 Positioning of social actors in The Welfare Mix. Adapted from Evers and Laville (2004) afterPestoff (1992)

(Tonkens & Duyvendak, 2015; Bronsveld, 2016; Horlings et al., 2021). The Welfare Mix model (Figure 2.3) distinguishes between government, market and citizens and places them in a triangle with the so-called third sector consisting of non-profit organisations in the middle (citizens are the unnamed fourth sector in this model). Bottom-up initiatives are linked to citizens and, secondarily, to the third sector. Mens et al. also position social entrepreneurs at the intersection of citizens and the market, the second sector (Mens et al., 2021).

Many studies lack a more detailed picture of the participants in the initiatives under investigation. Horlings et al. refer to a few examples: a study of (among others) 'guerrilla gardeners', which shows that the so-called 'creative class' is overrepresented (Douglas, 2014), and another that emphasises the emancipatory nature of informal, urban bottom-up initiatives, in which, in principle, any citizen can participate by taking action. (Groth & Corijn, 2005). More recent research on co-production in Rotterdam shows that people with a higher SES (Social Economic Status) are overrepresented (Cornips et al, 2023). *

How these actors are perceived, characterised and treated is a different question. The framing of a civic initiative as an citizen initiative can be problematic as it often presumes a classic, hierarchic state - citizen relationship, e.g. in the Dutch "bewonersinitiatief" (residents' initiative). The people who start a civic initiative often are both citizen (resident) and professional in some capacity. In the Dutch context, the term 'city maker' has been coined for active citizens, often with a

** In my experience as initiator and practitioner in Rotterdam this is true for urban agriculture initiatives as well, in the sense that the people running them have a higher SES. However, the projects set up by these initiators attract a broader and more diverse group of people.*

relevant professional background, often from the 'creative class', who set up and coordinate a community project that contributes to the creation of the city. Sometimes they play an intermediary role (Buitelaar et al, 2012) connecting different realms of the public, private and civic as 'boundary spanners' (Meerkerk & Edelenbos, 2014). However, limited research has been done into possible differences between residents/volunteers, professionals and (social) entrepreneurs as actors in planning, particularly in urban food planning, although it is mentioned in a number of studies (Buitelaar et al., 2012; Bronsveld, 2016; Edelenbos et al, 2020). In her dissertation Boonstra (2015) proposes a 'flat ontology' in which planners and different kinds of civic actors are considered equal participants in planning. An understanding of the diversity between bottom-up actors in planning and the ensuing differences in status is necessary to navigate power relations and create conditions for pluralism and agonistic discourse (Legacy, 2019; Davoudi, 2023).

This raises the question that Horlings et al. (2021) also ask: when can you take initiators seriously as planners? Is this only the case if they see themselves as such and have a certain expertise in this area? Or are citizens who more implicitly demonstrate a vision of the city through their actions also partners in planning? And how far can and are professional planners themselves willing to go in recognising other forms of knowledge and expertise? And to what extent can and are initiators themselves willing to participate in or collaborate with the system?

2.4.4 Types of space: where can urban agriculture engage in planning

The definition of space differs between different conceptualisations of planning. This in turn might influence how the role of urban agriculture in the city is defined within the city: as a function fitting Rational spatial policy goals (or not) , as an economic force that needs to be stimulated or not e.g. as part of city branding (Cretella & Buenger, 2016)), as an integrating theme for planning a neighbourhood (Jansma & Wertheim, 2022) ; as a place shaping practice (Horlings et al, 2020), or as a prefiguration (Minuchin, 2021; Davoudi, 2023; Bertolini, 2025). This is visible in typological classifications of urban agriculture (Lohrberg, 2016; Jansma et al, 2024). Typology is an urban planning method for organising the infinite variety of spatial forms of a phenomenon, in this case urban agriculture, on the basis of a number of distinctive characteristics, reducing and abstracting them to a manageable number of types. These characteristics may be spatial such as: the degree of openness and accessibility, the scale on which the initiative operates and its location in the city (relative to, for example, the city centre), the size of the site itself, the (perceived) potential of a space for improvement, and the spatial quality of the intervention: the vegetable garden or field, the food forest, the growing beds, the aquaponics installation.

Urban agriculture is primarily a physical location in the outdoor space or in a conditioned indoor space, but in a typology, non-spatial characteristics such as cultivation methods, organisational forms and revenue models may also be relevant. Many typologies for urban agriculture are hybrids, determined by the researchers' perspective and the goals of their research, as well as their conceptualisations of planning. The distinction made by a typology is therefore never neutral and, in the worst case, can produce pigeonholes that no one fits into.

The study 'Ruimte voor Urban Agriculture in Rotterdam' (Room for Urban Agriculture in Rotterdam), based on the ideas of Eetbaar Rotterdam (Edible Rotterdam) *, proposed a matrix of possibilities along two axes (from land-based to building-integrated, and from self-organising organism to controlled cultivation), defining a field rather than categories. This relational, in some respects Poststructuralist typology, defined types in relation to possibilities the city offers and to how they can connect with these possibilities, whether they be social capital, waste heat or excess stormwater flows (Graaf, 2011).

** This study, conducted by bottom-up initiative Edible Rotterdam (of which the author was a part), will be discussed later in Chapters IV and V*

The reason why typologies and the categories they create continue to be developed is because they meet a need. They make the diversity of urban agriculture initiatives manageable for planning policy and fit the phenomenon into the institutional thinking of the government. By organising, categorising and assessing/evaluating diversity, the government can (top-down) estimate and steer the potential contribution of urban agriculture to existing policy objectives (Jansma et al, 2024). The bottom-up typological approach proposed by Edible Rotterdam did not match the needs and possibilities of the municipal planning department at the time, but received some interest in the field of urban planning and design.

This research does not aim to arrive at a new typology, but it does look at the different ways in which urban agriculture initiatives are spatially situated and embedded, because this is where the initiators' thinking about planning materialises. See also 2.4.6 Interventions.

2.4.5 Intentions: worldviews and their representation in planning & governance

As Allmendinger points out relativism is a recurring theme throughout different conceptualisations of planning (Allmendinger, 2017). Conceptualisations differ as in how far they allow for pluralist worldviews and how they aim to overcome the ensuing difficulties in decision-making and representation.

Initiatives have their own intentions and underlying motivations. These motivations and the worldviews from which they arise often receive less attention from the government and municipal planning. This can lead to blind spots among planners (Van Assche and Verschraegen, 2008).

Fruitful interaction between the government and bottom-up initiatives can contribute to good governance and the effective use of knowledge, decision-making power and financial resources.

If the government is able to align its policy effectively with bottom-up initiatives, this can give rise to 'governance capacity', enabling joint action that would not be possible without this interaction (Boonstra, 2015; Edelenbos et al., 2020). However, this emphasis on cooperation and coordination with government can also obscure the fact that bottom-up initiatives can not only complement existing planning practices, but also be independent of them or, in some cases, even criticise them.

Many initiatives express a worldview and ideas about the future direction of the city and agriculture. This may be a vision from a particular subculture or local community, which demands space for the wishes of this subculture or community. It can thus give a voice to marginalised groups (Smith et al., 2014; Bronsveld, 2016; Horlings et al., 2021). Or to an unexpected, underexposed school of thought that is not given a chance in the thinking frameworks of the traditional institutional system (Horlings et al., 2021). The extent to which planners as representatives of (local) government allow for dissent and disagreement, for agonism, determines whether this voice is heard. In this way planners can contribute to a better representation of voices from outside the mainstream (Smith et al., 2014, Legacy, 2019).

Buijs et al. (2019) introduce the term mosaic governance to describe a more flexible and diverse range of governance arrangements (forms of interaction between active citizens and government). This diversity is reflected, among other things, in differences in the way actors are met and treated, but also in the way the dialogue between government and initiatives is conducted (discourse). The question is how far you want to go in designing tailor-made governance or whether, as Adaptive planning suggests , you should offer more freedom for self-organisation (Boonstra, 2015; Rauws & de Roo, 2016; Rauws, 2017). In all cases it is a challenge not to stifle the political nature of planning but to leave room for diverse worldviews that can be discussed and disagreed upon.

2.4.6 Interventions: desired futures & strategies for achieving them

The worldviews of urban agriculture initiatives are reflected in the projects they realise. An urban agriculture project is an intervention in the spatial environment, and sometimes also in planning as an institution. By designating part of the city as a place for food production, they claim the right to participate in the design of the city. But that physical intervention is sometimes also a means of bringing about change, as an example of how things can be done differently, as a form of prefiguration (Davoudi, 2023). The completed project, the garden, shows and 'performs' how this could be done: an alternative food future that challenges conventional ideas about the city, agriculture and the food system (Tornaghi & Dehaene, 2020). For example, by redefining urban outdoor space as commons *, a spatial resource (for accommodation, for food) accessible to everyone, in a society where this accessibility is under pressure due to privatisation.

** A space that belongs to everyone in principle, but where regulatory agreements are made from a practical point of view (Schans, 2012); for example, regarding the distribution of harvests, manners, and so on.*

In combination with other strategic interventions, such as protest or the development and promotion of alternative visions of the city, initiatives with realised physical interventions influence the city's policy and decision-making (Horlings et al., 2021; Bertolini, 2015). In this way, initiatives implement their intentions in different ways. Precisely because they explore possible alternative futures, initiatives complement the strategies planners use to deal with an uncertain future. The question is how planners can constructively incorporate the future value of initiatives and their interventions in the current planning of the city. According to Ilieva, urban food planning can be seen as a niche for social innovation (Ilieva, 2016; Smith et al., 2014). The multilevel perspective on transitions places innovative niches in relation to a regime that they can change under the right circumstances (Geels, 2011). To accelerate this change, niches can be managed, i.e. stimulated and supported by targeted policy, or facilitated.

The danger is that in managing niches, the planner continues to take a top-down steering role, and confirm rather than confront the existing social order. Experimentation from a transitions perspective often is interpreted in terms of viability limiting the experiment in terms from the existing order (Bertolini, 2025). In this sense the prefigurative lens on civic initiatives allows them a greater freedom to divert from the norms of society in order to explore alternative futures.

2.4.7 Roles: action perspective

There is a growing body of research into the various roles in which bottom-up social actors are involved in urban planning (e.g. Boonstra & Boelens, 2012; Rauws, 2016; Wittmayer et al, 2017; Mens et al., 2021), that try to assess what roles civic initiatives should (be allowed to) have. But as Horlings et al (2021) point out civic initiatives also choose themselves what role they want to take, which is an intervention in the social order in itself. A role can be defined as a set of actions that follow a certain pattern. By choosing different roles, actors shape their action perspective, their 'agency'. Initiators take on tasks that remain unaddressed in areas where the government and the business community leave them unaddressed. This offers scope to fill them in a different way. In doing so, they seek out the niches of spatial planning (Horlings et al., 2021), in the sense that they seek out the margins of planning practice.

As was illustrated by introducing the bottom-up perspective in each conceptualisation of planning in Section 2.2, what roles civic initiatives should (be allowed to) have is interpreted very differently, and this is also true for urban agriculture initiatives. Where researchers such as Cohen & Ilieva see the potential in urban food planning to change the role of cities and urban planning in the agri-food system (Cohen & Ilieva, 2015), in the case of urban agriculture initiatives it can be argued with equal reason that this potential lies in their role in changing cities and urban planning itself, as Tornaghi & Dehaene argue (Tornaghi & Dehaene, 2020).

So the initiatives take roles and are appointed roles by planners, through theoretical conceptualisations and typologies, that directly or indirectly affect the interaction between planner and initiative. And this is where political choices and questions about decision-making and representation come into play.

2.4.8 The politics of interaction between planners and civic initiatives

The more relational and complex approach to planning outlined by Horlings et al requires both initiators and planners to position themselves in relation to questions of power and responsibility. This involves choices regarding the political, democracy and representation.

Bottom-up initiatives are faced with a number of choices – whether consciously or not – in how they position themselves in relation to government planning. Do they try to operate autonomously or do they commit themselves to (and make themselves dependent on) the government? Mens distinguishes three stages of social entrepreneurship that increasingly relate to and connect with the government. This increasing connection with and dependence on the government is associated with growing professionalism and influence (Mens et al., 2021); from stubborn pioneer to influential part of the system. There is a danger here that initiatives will lose their critical, political character in a process of professionalisation, which goes hand in hand with conforming to the system. Various studies point to the problematic aspects of niche management as a way of using experimentation to achieve policy goals. This type of policy can be used as a 'politics of niches', as a means of power to transform, assimilate, marginalise or allow niches to die a natural death (Savini & Bertolini, 2019). Jansma & Wertheim describe how, even with the best of intentions, the planning of such niches can go wrong due to 'misalignment of policy goals with planning instruments and the needs of practitioners in urban agriculture' (Jansma & Wertheim, 2024). Savini & Bertolini show how the way in which bottom-up initiatives are facilitated is a deliberate attempt to neutralise their political agenda and are therefore critical of this Post-Political Planning approach to urban experiments. (Savini & Bertollini, 2019).

One may wonder whether a transition management approach, with its roots in the study of changes in the market, leaves the capitalist system untouched, even though it is precisely this system that contains structural flaws. In other words, if the regime starts managing the niches, will those niches still be used to change the regime? Savini shows that these are legitimate questions to ask.

This requires planners to be aware of these dilemmas and to have the skills (and policy space) to deal with them. In relation to this, initiatives are confronted with the question of whether to adopt a more ideological or more pragmatic * approach in their interaction with the existing system. This has both a principled side: what do we stand for, and a pragmatic side: how far do we go along with the municipality in order to achieve our goals.

** For clarity: when I use "pragmatic" with a lowercase letter, I am referring to the general concept. When I use "Pragmatic" with a capital letter, I am referring to the Pragmatic conceptualisation of planning. This is usually clear from the context.*

McClintock points out the danger that even idealistic initiatives can easily be instrumentalised in practice as an extension of capitalism. For example, in order to keep your urban agriculture initiative running, you start selling your products to the highest bidder. Or a self-defined commons inadvertently becomes a kind of 'gated community' for like-minded people. It is a dilemma that every initiative encounters that wants to exemplify a desired future in a society (the current one) that it wants to oppose or change (Smith et al., 2014): the dilemma between acting as if the future is already here and acting to bring about that future (Swain, 2019). McClintock first and foremost advocates awareness of this paradox and addresses both initiators and critical researchers and policymakers when he proposes embracing this paradox as inevitable, as long as those involved are aware of it and keep their goal in mind (McClintock, 2014).

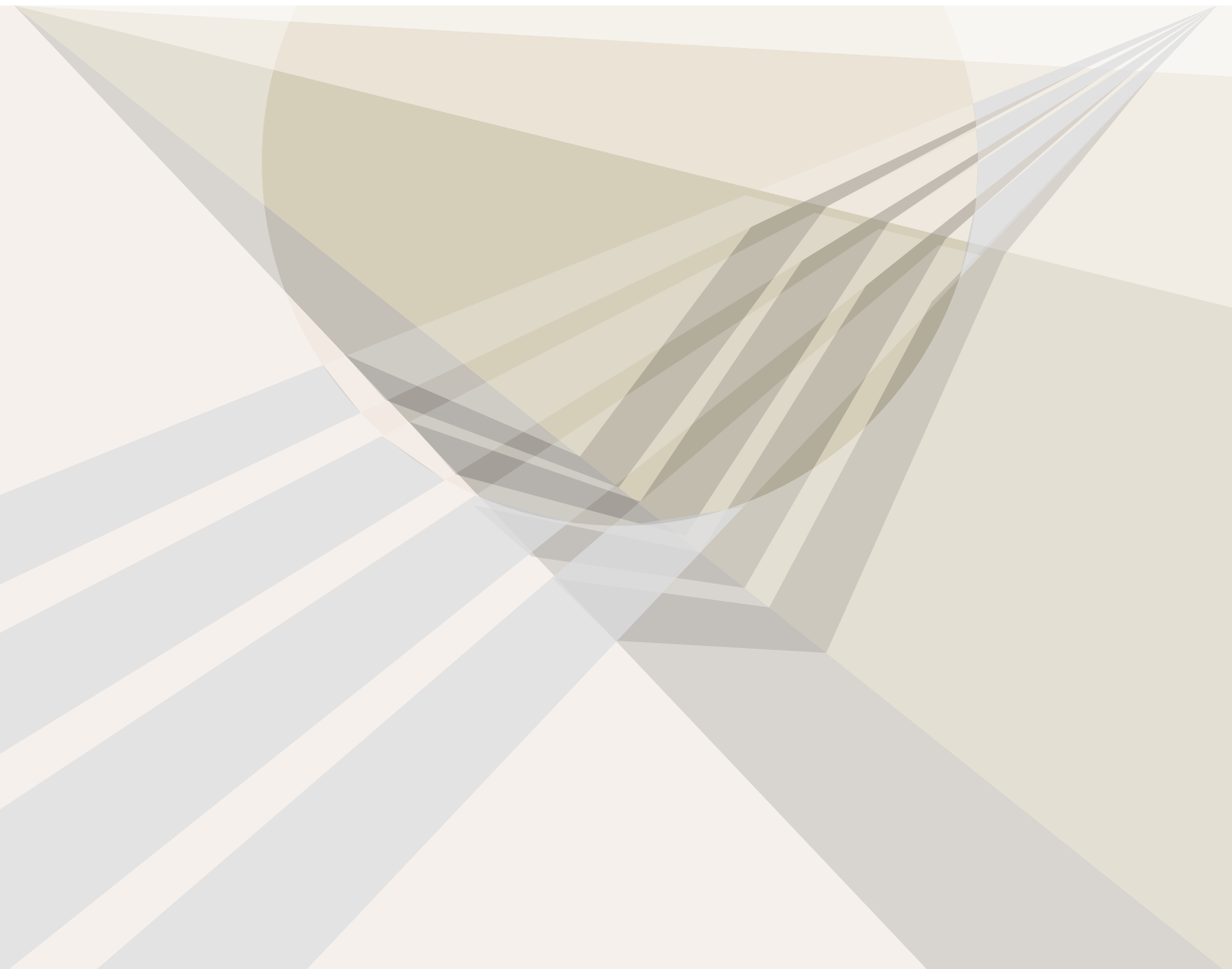
Prefigurations embody and embrace this paradox by performing the future in the here and now and seeing the resulting conflict as productive and necessary (Maeckelbergh, 2012; Davoudi, 2023). Impatient with incremental approaches to food planning, Tornaghi & Dehaene argue for a politically and ideologically driven agro-ecological urbanism in which urban agriculture initiatives and their practices initiate radical change that disrupts and undermines the current food system and its 'food-disabling modes of urbanisation' in favour of more inclusive agro-ecological practices (Tornaghi & Dehaene, 2020).

Visscher et al (2023) point out the need to understand that different understandings of democracy meet around civic initiatives: the representative and the do-democratic, and that this understanding is crucial for a constructive discussion about the democratic value of civic initiatives

2.4.9 Theory and practice: spatial planning for and with bottom-up societal urban agriculture initiative.

Planning for and with initiatives thus becomes a complex interplay between these positions, which is made even more complex by the diversity of initiatives, their worldviews and how they express these in their practice. This thesis will dive into the empirical data of 12 years of urban agriculture planning to see how theoretical conceptualisations of planning and insights in the civic engagement of bottom-up initiatives can be applied to the reality of Rotterdam urban agriculture practice, and what theoretical insights this case study can give in return.

Chapter III
Methodology



3.1 My position in the triangle of method, theory and empiricism

The methodology in this research is a result of its interaction with theory and empiricism. My role and background as a researcher also play a part in this interaction. As an external researcher with a background in landscape architecture and urban design and a hybrid practice in which I combine design and research with a role as an initiator in various partnerships and projects, I bring practical experience into the academic world, as it were.

The research question and the underlying problem statement are informed by my own experiences with and participation in the urban agriculture movement. The choice to investigate the development of the urban agriculture movement in which I participated myself during a specific period and in a specific place offers special opportunities but also methodological challenges.

My involvement offered both a unique entry point – as a posteriori 'participant observer' – and challenges for the scientific objectivity of the study and my positionality.

An important motivation was precisely to transcend the narrative in which I was then involved as a participant and to develop a more objective – or intersubjective – perspective. I adopt an academic position to allow myself to investigate aspects of my work in practice. The Department of Rural Sociology provided the academic environment, the sociological perspective and the methodological basis for this.

In order to obtain a thorough and as complete a picture as possible, the case study approach was applied. The original idea was to compare the Rotterdam case with one or two other cases, but as the project progressed, it became clear that this single case offered sufficient material for a doctoral thesis. However, the research did attempt to develop ways of looking at the subject that could also be applied to other cases.

In order to give direction to the analysis of the case study material and embed it in the scientific discussion, a theoretical framework was defined that combines planning theory with theories from the social sciences on bottom-up initiatives in the field of food and sustainable transition. In a sense, the theory follows the method: it offers concepts and guiding concepts for the analysis of largely empirical data (see section 3.3).

The choice for a rich empirical analysis and a relatively light theoretical framework is meant to keep the PhD accessible to an audience outside academia, specifically planners in practice and bottom-up initiators.

Also the approach is meant to keep an open mind to theory from the bottom-up. In this sense this thesis aligns itself with Gibson-Graham's call to academics to engage as academic researcher in the practices one studies, and to use 'weak theory' in order not to reproduce dominant theoretical assumptions about the world (Gibson-Graham, 2008). This thesis applies the same theoretical caution to planning practice. Which is all the more pertinent to me as a representative of this

bottom-up movement crossing over into academia. However after retrieving this theory from bottom-up, in the discussion the results found in this way are placed back in the context of the theoretical framework and the discussions it refers to. In this way grounded results find their way back into the academic discussion.

3.2 Case study design

3.2.1 Choice of case study method

The research focuses on understanding the interaction between bottom-up initiatives and government spatial planners, the worldviews and conceptualisations of planning that underlie their actions, and how this interaction shapes planning, in particular the urban agriculture policy developed by the municipality. To this end, the research is designed as a retrospective case study of urban agriculture spatial planning practices in the city of Rotterdam between 2006 and 2018. It is based on interviews with stakeholders looking back on this period.

The case study offers the opportunity to go into depth, to examine and compare different perspectives and thus – on the basis of rich empirical data – to arrive at new insights. It therefore complements studies that thematically examine a number of cases at project level (often in different cities) or studies that take a more quantitative approach to urban agriculture as a phenomenon.

This case study is distinguished by its examination of a fairly complete collection of initiatives over a longer period of time in a defined geographical context. The case study includes the study of urban agriculture projects developed by bottom-up initiatives during this period and the actions, plans and policies of spatial planners with regard to urban agriculture. Bottom-up here means that the urban agriculture initiatives were started and/or developed and implemented by non-institutional social parties.

Where possible, interviewees are named, partly because this makes the case easier to understand, and partly because in a case study such as this, the protagonists occupy unique positions that are easily traceable to individuals. Moreover, this provides an opportunity to obtain additional feedback from the interviewees when presenting quotes, for example (Yin, 2009).

Based on the richness of the case and the practical knowledge that emerges from it, it is expected that more general lessons can be drawn from the particulars of this example and that the insights will give rise to both theory formation and further research (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

3.2.2 Choice of Rotterdam

The urban agriculture movement in Rotterdam during this period was known in the Netherlands – and in the European context – as a

pioneer with high-profile projects, and the policy on urban agriculture developed by the municipality of Rotterdam was an early example of municipal food policy. This status is reflected in the number of national and international studies that have examined Rotterdam's policy and projects as case studies, but all these studies lacked a more complete picture of the development of policy and initiatives in those years, certainly in relation to the research question of this thesis: the interaction between planners and initiators.

On a more subjective level, it is a case to which I, as a researcher, have exceptionally good access, both through experience and through my network, as indicated in section 3.1.

3.2.3 The period of study

The period of study runs from 2006 to 2018, spanning three council periods of the municipal government. It is centred around the council period 2010-2014 in which an urban agriculture policy was commissioned and developed in response to the rise of urban agriculture initiatives during the financial crisis 2008-2014. The period leading up to this urban agriculture policy (2006-2010) is included as here the first urban agriculture initiatives appeared and the first interest among civil servants was spawned. Also the council period following it (2014-2018) was included to study what happened with the urban agriculture policy when a different council took over government in Rotterdam and the effects of the financial crisis wore off (more or less). These three periods present a rounded story, which allow for a certain critical distance from the present. However, in the interviews both consciously and unconsciously some relevant considerations of more recent date were expressed that were relevant to include, if only to emphasize that a story is never finished.

3.2.4 Selection of initiatives

Based on the case study approach, it was decided to examine a broad, representative range of initiatives. Ultimately, 10 initiatives were selected for study, based on the following criteria:

1) food production is one of the central objectives of the initiative

2) their project (or collection of projects) is located in public outdoor space and is (semi-)publicly accessible

3) they are bottom-up initiatives launched by non-institutional social actors and are led by citizens of Rotterdam, with or without a professional background.

4) the initiatives serve as examples; they are well known within the urban agriculture movement itself, have a certain scale and ambition, and – in the case of multiple similar projects – are exemplary of a particular approach. Some initiatives have multiple locations. The initiatives are further introduced in Chapter V.



Fig. 3.1 Rotterdam in the Netherlands

Characterisation City of Rotterdam

Rotterdam is a port city in the west of the Netherlands, in the province of South Holland. With 600,015 inhabitants (1 January 2023), it is the second largest city in the Netherlands in terms of population, after Amsterdam. The entire municipality of Rotterdam has 672,464 inhabitants, and the larger metropolitan region of Rotterdam-The Hague has more than 2.4 million inhabitants. In terms of area, Rotterdam is the largest city in the Netherlands, covering 319.4 km².

The city lies on the river Nieuwe Maas, which is fed by water from the Rhine. The port of Rotterdam was the largest in the world for a long time and is still the largest and most important in Europe. Partly because of the port industry, Rotterdam has the image of a working-class city and has a very diverse population.

After the historic city centre was largely destroyed during the second World War, it was rebuilt during the so-called Wederopbouw (post-war reconstruction period), which reinforced the image of Rotterdam as a city of hardworking people. In this post-war reconstruction period Rotterdam became a testing ground for innovative architecture and Modernist urban design.

As a City Region Food System (CRFS) Rotterdam is characterised by its history.

"In this traditional trading nation (the Netherlands), situated in the fertile estuary of the river Rhine, Dutch cities grew large through the trading of agricultural products, especially grain. The availability of fertile land close to waterways allowed for agriculture to remain regional in its use of natural resources. At the same time, with cities serving as logistic centres and drivers of demand, agricultural products were shipped all over Europe since the rise of the Hanse trade network in the Middle Ages."

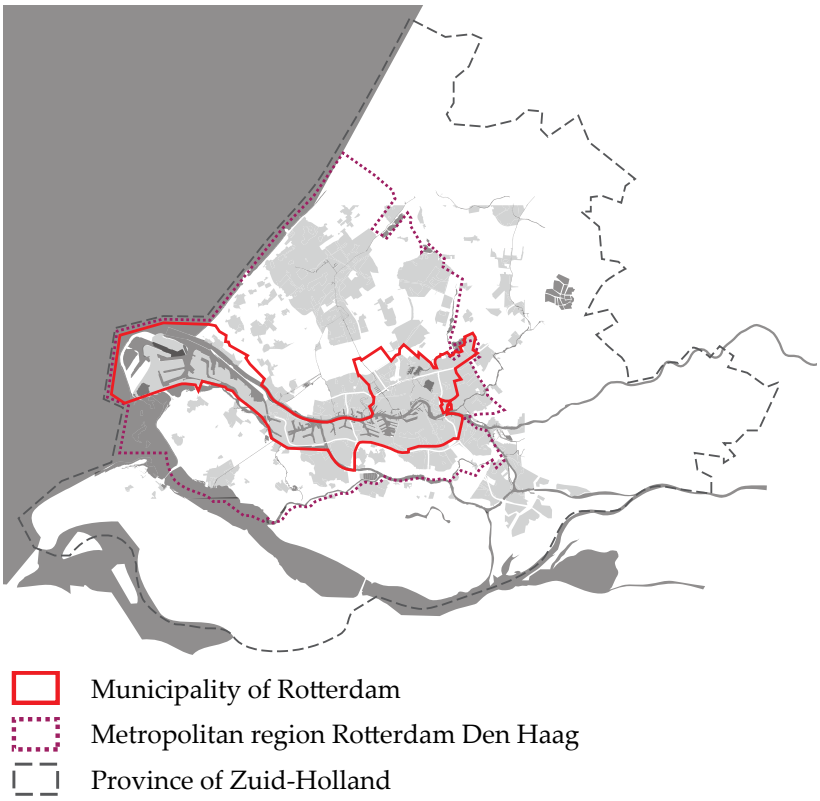


Fig. 3.2 Rotterdam in the region

"Because of its port and the intricate Dutch waterways transport network, Rotterdam will to a large extent remain a food system 2.0, characterised by a larger dependence on national and international trade, as well as by a more centralised, consolidated supply chain with greater global integration, reduced reliance on local production and greater consumption of processed foods.. However, due to political and economic pressure on the one hand, and citizen movements on the other, Rotterdam city region may be moving a little towards a food system 3.0 (a more regionally embedded food system). For this reason the current Rotterdam food sector is quite diverse, with a large number of big players (large food production, processing and retail) alongside some innovative start-ups and a number of active NGOs and social entrepreneurs. At the same time, and as more city dwellers become more actively engaged in the food system, a more diverse set of private urban players and non-traditional food players also find their place in the City Region Food System (CRFS). These players include, for example, social housing corporations, real estate businesses, private land owners and care organisations that have become engaged in supporting the local food system whilst their main tasks remains the provision of housing, health care and other basic services for citizens." (Schans & Graaf, 2016)

3.3 Operationalisation of the research questions

Urban agriculture practice in Rotterdam in the period 2006-2018 was examined at three levels: 1) Conceptualisations of planners in municipal urban agriculture planning 2) Worldview, action perspective and strategies of bottom-up initiators; 3) Interaction between planners and urban agriculture initiatives. Each level represents a step in the research and corresponds to a sub-question within the research as defined in section 1.4. The fourth sub-question is answered in the discussion of the results.

1. How do municipal planners understand and conceptualise spatial planning and how does this influence the planning of urban agriculture in practice? Background questions are: Which conceptualisations of planning are used in spatial planning in Rotterdam and what is the role of bottom-up urban agriculture initiatives and other social actors in these conceptualisations? Which conceptualisations of planning characterise the way in which planning policy was developed and implemented by municipal planners? (Chapter IV)

2. How do bottom-up citizen initiatives for urban agriculture understand and conceptualise the spatial design of their initiative and their role in it? (Chapter V)

3. How do the views on planning held by municipal planners and bottom-up planners and the strategies they use relate to each other, and do they converge or clash when it comes to the realisation of urban agriculture initiatives? (Chapter VI)

4. What lessons for planning can we draw from this interaction between government planning and bottom-up initiatives, and how can these lessons contribute to the effective involvement of bottom-up initiatives in the sustainable spatial planning of the city? (Chapter VII)

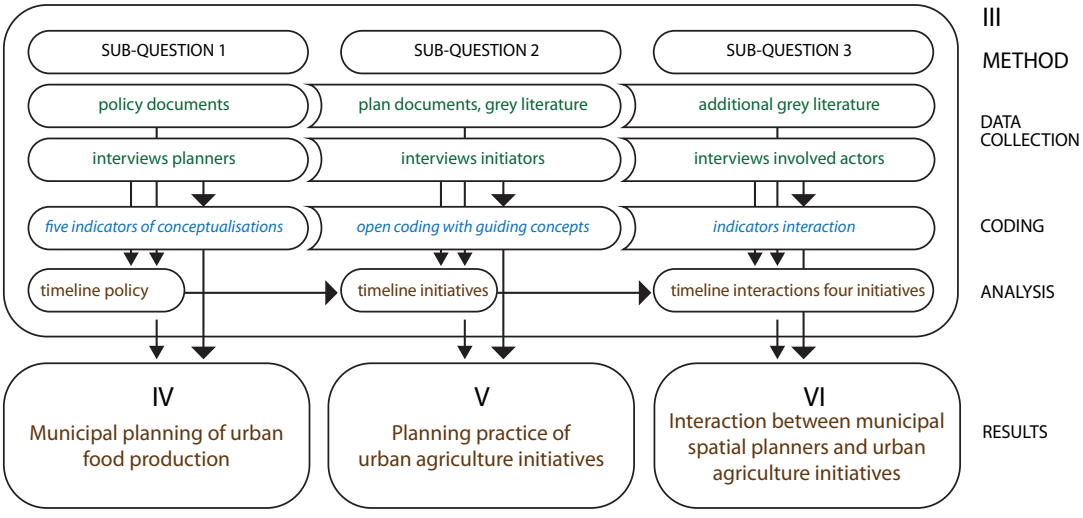


Fig. 3.3 Schematic outline Methodology

3.3.1 Conceptualisations of planners in municipal urban agriculture planning

First, I analysed the general planning context in Rotterdam to 'set the scene'; a background against which urban agriculture planning can be assessed. To this end, I studied municipal policy documents on planning from the research period to establish a timeline of events, and I conducted four semi-open exploratory interviews with municipal planners. The planners in question held various positions, both in terms of rank and task, within the municipal spatial planning department and were all involved in forms of planning with civic actors, albeit not necessarily with urban agriculture. The aim was not to obtain a complete overview, but to provide context for the subsequent interviews with the two planners directly involved.

For the semi-open interviews, an interview protocol was set up with guiding questions, which were designed to establish facts and gauge views and opinions (see Appendix 1). With 'conceptualisations of planning' as the guiding concept, derived from planning theory (see section 2.2), the interviews were coded thematically according to five categories: 1) the role of the planner (and what this should ideally be), 2) the (degree of) interaction with social actors, 3) the role of social actors in this interaction (according to the planners), 4) the underlying worldview(s), and 5) the position of planning (in this worldview). Based on these sources (interviews, literature review and timeline), I identified different conceptualisations of planning in the thinking of Rotterdam planners and their development over time, using Fig. 2.1 as coding scheme. To limit hindsight bias by projection the recent conceptualisations discussed in 2.2.10 were left out of this analysis.

Once this background had been outlined, I conducted in-depth interviews with the two planners who worked on the urban agriculture policy, using the same interview method but with additional questions specifically related to urban agriculture policy. In parallel, I studied grey literature in this field, such as policy documents, websites and presentations, and further elaborated the timeline. Additional interviews with civil servants involved in the realisation of urban agriculture initiatives and with think tank members provided further insights into the policy-making process and helped to triangulate facts and paint a more complete picture.

3.3.2 Worldview, action perspective and strategies of bottom-up initiators

The second research question focuses on the role of bottom-up initiatives. Here, I used a more open approach to interviewing (see Appendix 1) and coding, inspired by grounded theory methods and a 'weak theory' approach, in a conscious effort to minimise the influence of preconceived ideas about urban agriculture and planning, both among the interviewees and the researcher (see also section 3.4 Positionality).

Dec 2019 - Feb 2020	Planners Rotterdam	
	4 interviews with planners (P)	planning context Rotterdam; ideas about planning
April 2022	Planners urban agriculture	
	2 interviews with planners (P)	realisation urban agriculture policy; ideas about planning; planning context Rotterdam
June 2022 - Dec 2022 / May 2023 / April 2024	Initiators	
	10 interviews with initiators (I)	worldview; ideas about planning; planning strategies; realisation projects
June 2024 - Aug 2024	Additional interviews	
	4 interviews with civil servants (A)	realisation projects and policy; ideas about planning
	1 interview with external member Thinktank (E)	realisation projects and policy; clarification
	2 follow-up interviews with one planner and one initiator	clarification

Fig. 3.4 Overview conducted interviews

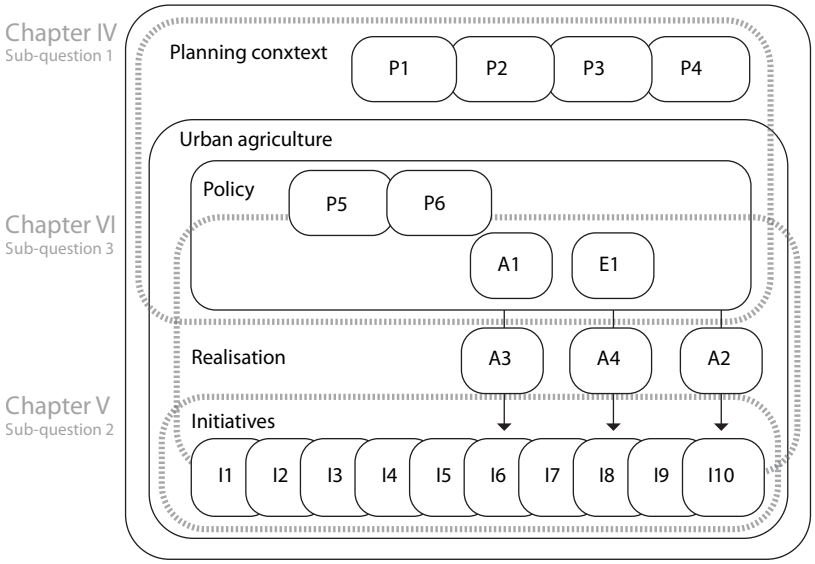


Fig. 3.5 Use of the interviews in relation to sub-questions (and related chapters)

Representatives of ten initiatives were interviewed in a semi-open interview, similar to those with the planners, but without using planning jargon. To allow for diversity in worldviews and professionalism, the questions were more open and no knowledge of planning was assumed. The coding also used more open categories informed by Allmendinger and Horlings et al.: 1) worldview (intentions), 2) objectives (the concretisation of intentions), 3) action perspective (actors and their roles) and 4) strategy (interventions / types of space), see Fig. 3.6. During the coding process, a number of subcategories were added (see Appendix 2).

The number of initiatives was chosen to ensure that the main urban agriculture initiatives during that period were covered. The projects were selected on the basis of spatial criteria applied to the project (or

projects) of the initiatives. In addition to a prominent place for food production, these criteria included: presence in public outdoor space (which excludes projects in buildings) and public accessibility. These criteria, and a number of deviations from them, are discussed and justified in more detail in Chapter V.
Where possible, the initiator of the initiative was interviewed. In the few cases the initator had since left the project, their successor was interviewed. An important critierium was that the person interviewed was seen to personify the initiative.
Some initiatives simply had one initiator (or one that stayed on after the initial idea was developed). Sometimes there were two or more initiators. If these represented different perspectives or worldviews, then attempts were made to interview at least a second initiator. However, in the one case I deemed this necessary there was no response to my interview request. In order to triangulate the subjective reports of the initiators, I studied documents (annual reports and plans) and websites of the initiatives and other grey literature (websites, annual reports and plans of initiatives, news articles, applied research by other researchers).

In addition, I conducted a spatial analysis of the projects to map spatial traces of worldview, objectives and strategies. In this analysis, I combine a classical spatial analysis with a more poststructuralist, relational approach to space and place, describing the coherence between intentions, vision and physical interventions.
Finally I triangulated the findings where appropriate with my own experience and contacts with the initiatives and initiators over time, as well as the impressions I received of others involved in urban agriculture during the period of study; in other words, the discourse in the movement I engaged in, as I perceived it. See also 3.4 Positionality.

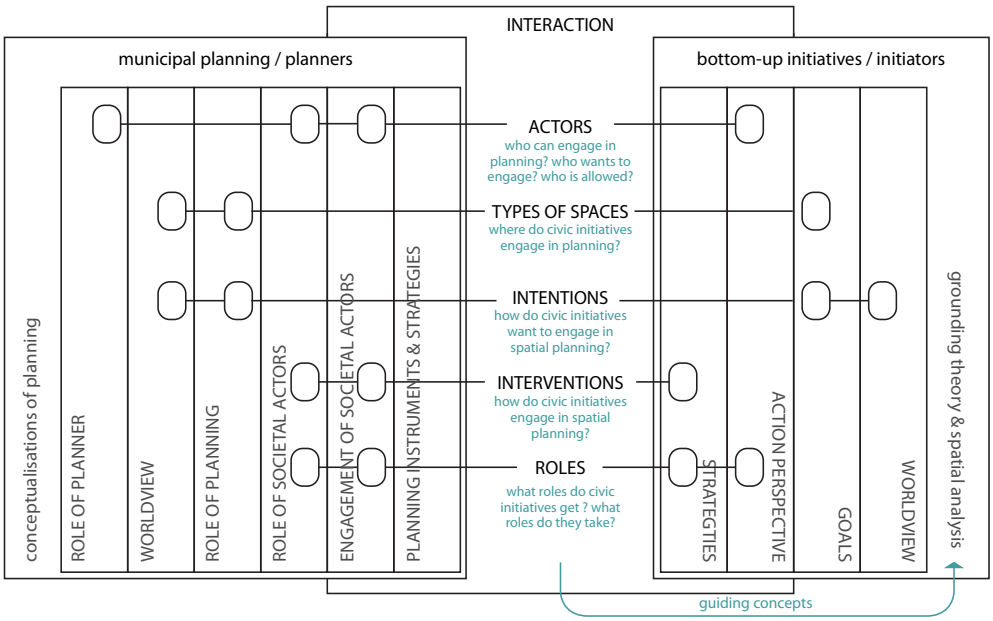


Fig. 3.6 Relations between guiding concepts and planning theory

3.3.3 Interaction between planners and urban agriculture initiatives

Based on the analysis in the previous steps, I re-examined the data to identify examples of interaction between planners and initiatives. Four initiatives were then selected in which there was clear interaction in the realisation of the project, beyond the granting of temporary permission. In these projects, the council helped to find a location, set requirements for the layout, collaborated on a design, and/or provided support in obtaining permits and overcoming other bureaucratic hurdles. In short, the council was genuinely involved in the project and its realisation. I conducted four additional interviews with civil servants (process managers) who were involved in the planning process for these initiatives. These interviews were aimed at gaining a more detailed picture of the various forms of interaction, the roles (positioning) that both initiators and planners assumed in this interaction, and the tension, friction and dilemmas that this interaction caused. In addition I had a follow-up interview with one initiator and one of the two planners involved in the urban agriculture policy process.

3.4 Positionality

3.4.1 Position as a researcher

As indicated in the introduction to this chapter, my role as a researcher is inextricably linked to the subject of the research. I was myself part of the urban agriculture movement in Rotterdam during the period in question. I had a visible position in that movement and – often – strong opinions. This position as an insider gave me unique access to people and information during the research, including my own experiences, but also made me vulnerable to professional and personal biases. Moreover, I am still active in this scene today, as are most of the initiators and planners who were interviewed. Even though I started the research out of curiosity with the aim of understanding and learning, rather than being confirmed in my version of events, I must take into account both conscious and unconscious and implicit biases on my part, as well as inhibitions on the part of the interviewees. To counterbalance this, I have taken the following measures:

1) I have tried to be as clear and transparent as possible about the aims of the research, my position in it, and any other roles I am or have been involved in in Rotterdam that were professionally relevant to the interviewee. In this thesis, I have clarified my own position in specific events where necessary.

2) I combined interviews with other sources so that facts and events could be verified using timelines and opinions could be placed in a broader context.

3) To avoid situations in which the interviewee would feel obliged to give the desired answer, the questions were formulated in an open manner so that they could be answered in different ways. The combination of interviews and other sources also helped to verify the interviewees' stories.

4) All interview summaries were sent to the interviewees so that any factual inaccuracies could be corrected.

5) The quotes in this study were also presented to the interviewees along with the relevant chapters in which they appear. This also provided an opportunity for feedback on the factual representation of events and, to a certain extent, on the interpretations of those facts.

3.4.2 Position in the field of planning theory

Educated as an architect and active in the field of landscape architecture and urban design I am a relative outsider to the planning discipline. The field of planning theory was largely unknown to me when I started this PhD and I still feel like a visitor.
If I should explicate my position I would say I favour conceptualisations of planning that leave more space for bottom-up initiative. At the same time as a designer I still have an affinity with the notion of the planner as expert. My interests as a designer have long included ecological design and (eco) systems thinking. As an initiator and designer of living systems I have been open to relational thinking in practice, and as a systems thinker working on sustainable transformation I believe that change has to be set in motion systemically by pushing at the right points in the system, which would fit the Complexity and Adaptive planning conceptualisation. The notion of prefiguration was introduced to me in 2019 by fellow initiator Rutger Henneman and has since stuck as an interesting and inspiring way to look at urban agriculture experiments, including my own experiences with forest gardens and food forests.

I have tried to keep an open mind to what I would find both in theory and in the case study. However this position has undoubtedly coloured my analysis. Reversely, this research and studying planning theory, first (predominantly) Allmendinger and later the recent debate on engaging civic initiatives in planning, has changed my ideas about planning. I will return to this in Chapter VII, Section 7.4.

Hoofdstuk IV

Municipal planning of urban agriculture



4.1.1 Rotterdam and its intertwined relationship with food

Like many Dutch cities, Rotterdam originated as a settlement at a river crossing. At the end of the 15th century, the fishing village grew into a port city due to the increasing trade in fish and grain. In the Rotterdam of that time, food was everywhere: in the markets where livestock was traded and slaughtered, and in the vegetable gardens on the outskirts of the city. This is reflected in the names of streets and squares. The advent of the Industrial Revolution and the arrival of cheap transport gradually put an end to this in the period leading up to the Second World War. With one exception: Rotterdam's role as a transit port grew during the same period, with the construction of new, larger ports. And with the growth of the port, workers came to the city to work in the port or in related industries. Due to the poor living conditions for these workers, 'NV Eerste Rotterdamse Tuindorp' was founded in 1913 *, which from 1919 onwards realised the Tuindorp Vreewijk, where workers could grow their own food in their back gardens. In the 1920s, during the recession, the first allotment associations were set up. Meanwhile, horticulture in the nearby Westland region, which had once started on the estates of the nobility and urban elite, developed into modern greenhouse horticulture that now serves an international market. Where vegetable growing in combination with dairy farming once took place on the outskirts of the city **, agriculture specialised in separate sectors that clustered in different areas around the city.

** Inspired by the international Garden City movement based on the ideas of Ebenezer Howard.*

*** Where the dairy farm was close enough to the city to deliver fresh milk without the need for refrigeration, in accordance with the pre-industrial logic of the Von Thunen model. The cow manure produced was used in local fruit and vegetable cultivation.*

4.1.2 Dutch post-war planning tradition

Internationally, the Netherlands is known for its strong planning tradition. This tradition has its roots in its inhabitants' relationship with water: from the water boards, where - in an early form of democratic decision-making - people worked collectively to defend their land against flooding, to the development of polders, initially by private parties, but from the 1920s onwards by the state. In response to the accelerated development of urban areas after the Industrial Revolution and especially after the Second World War, a plan-driven, top-down planning approach developed from the national government. The post-war reconstruction (Wederopbouw) of Rotterdam, based on modernist principles, was an example of this Rational Planning approach.

The Dutch planning landscape is characterised by three levels of government: national, provincial and local, each with its own instruments and jurisdiction/area of influence. The role of these planning levels and their interaction changes over time. At the national level, consideration is given to the spatial planning of the country and guiding concepts are developed (known as planning doctrines) which are elaborated in policy documents.

While these planning visions were developed at the national level from the 1960s to the early 2000s, the implementation and enforcement of the plans was largely left to the local municipal level. As a result, the ambitions of national plans were often thwarted by conflicting interests at the local level. Local authorities draw up legally binding plans, assign functions and building designations, and also have the power to grant exemptions. If national policy does not correspond to local realities and interests, a municipality can always fall back on this approach. As Janssen-Jansen describes, this happened on a large scale from the 1960s onwards. While successive national plans produced a number of planning doctrines to steer urban development in the right direction (bundled decentralisation, growth centres, green heart, compact cities), these were, at best, only partially implemented, while undesirable developments were able to continue at the municipal level.

4.1.3 Rotterdam as an urban planning laboratory

With the post-war reconstruction, Rotterdam embraced the modernist vision of the future. Rotterdam was redesigned on a large scale and what had not been destroyed during the war was demolished after the war if it stood in the way, to make way for a functional zoning of city life, in which the car took a prominent place. Rotterdam was the city where the future was being built, the city that was never finished.

In the 1970s, the technocratic, modernist approach to post-war reconstruction, which focused on demolition and rebuilding the city, met with resistance from residents in the pre-war working-class neighbourhoods. In keeping with the spirit of the times, this resistance resonated with the architects within the municipality who were responsible for the renewal of these neighbourhoods. With the backing of a responsible councillor, they developed a participatory planning approach, working with residents and stakeholders to renovate the existing housing stock. This approach became known as Urban Renewal. Meanwhile, the arrival of the first migrant workers in the working-class neighbourhoods in the south led to tensions that even resulted in riots. Poor living conditions played an important role in this.

In the 1980s and 1990s, planning became more market-oriented, partly due to the austerity measures during the crisis of the 1980s. Public-private partnerships were established. Investors and property developers worked together with municipal property departments and planners on new developments. Municipalities used their planning powers to control land and land prices in order to develop new homes and office space in collaboration with market parties. This provided a source of income for municipalities to invest in public goods such as green spaces. As a result, municipalities became active market players. In Rotterdam, the port became increasingly large-scale and moved towards the sea. Land that became available in the city where port activities ceased was developed into the Kop van Zuid

district by a public-private partnership led by urban planner Riek Bakker. The district was intended not only to attract higher income groups to Rotterdam, which still had a relatively poor population, but also to connect the districts south of the river with the northern centre. Here too, Rotterdam was once again an international example of urban transformation. Meanwhile, Rotterdam's city centre was falling into disrepair. And in 2001, the all-powerful Social Democratic Party (PvdA) was defeated in the municipal elections by Leefbaar Rotterdam, the party of populist Pim Fortuin.

4.1.4 Brief outline of the organisation of the spatial planning department in the municipality of Rotterdam

** Virtually all the planners I spoke to found the structure of the municipal organisation and the changes to it very confusing.*

During the period of research, the departments and divisions directly or indirectly involved in the spatial planning of the city regularly changed their names and were clustered differently *. However, at a glance, there are broadly three 'blocks' – each with its own culture – that recur under different names and in different constellations (departments, clusters): technical implementation and management (Ingenieursbureau / Projectmanagement en Engineering), real estate management and development (OBR / Ruimtelijk Economische Ontwikkeling) and spatial planning. See Figures 4.1 and 4.2 (p. 72-73). The exact classification has changed slightly over time, but broadly speaking, these cultures are still recognisable in current urban development. Each block has its own focus, agenda and concerns, which help shape the field of influence within which urban planning takes place. Today, they fall under the Cluster Stedelijke Ontwikkeling (Urban Development Cluster). Within this study, the organisation and position of the spatial planning 'block' are particularly relevant as the context in which urban agriculture was planned and realised during the period under investigation. When we refer to the spatial planning department in this study, we are referring to this block, which used to be called 'dienst Stedebouw en Volkshuisvesting' (dS+V, dept. of Urban Design + Public Housing in English) and is now called Stedelijke inrichting (Urban Design & Planning), and in particular to what is now called Ruimte & Wonen (Space and Housing).

*** Strictly speaking, four distinct areas can be identified within the department: in addition to planology and urban design & landscape, there are also "Verkeer en transport"(Traffic and transport) and "Vergunningen" (Permits), but the latter two support rather than shape policy and play a subordinate role in this study.*

Within this department of spatial planning, two distinct groups can be identified: urban-regional planning (planology) and urban design (urban development and landscape architecture) **. Or, in short: planologists and designers. The interviews reveal both mutual respect and differences between the two groups. For example, planologists see themselves as 'setting the task' and designers as those who design the task and supervise its implementation. Planologists often moved from design practice to planology because it better suited their interests and skills or because they expected to have more influence as planologists, 'on the right side of the table'. Planologists are interested in strategic action based on an overview of the whole. They identify trends and developments affecting the city, define the relevant questions and formulate the resulting task, and determine what to do where and when.

"What is the question? What is our situation? What is happening and how should we deal with it? So that you can give it to a designer and let them develop it, or make plans with citizens. But you do have to establish: this is the film we are in." - Marije ten Kate

During the research period, the planology department was divided into three levels: Centre; City (as a whole) and Region. The planologists who worked at the regional level did so under the administrative partnership Stadsregio (City Region), which later became part of the Rotterdam-The Hague Metropolitan Region. In practice, planologists are sometimes called upon on an ad hoc basis and, based on their overview of the big picture and the long term, are asked to quickly advise an alderman on a current issue or a proposal from the private sector.

The designers in municipal spatial planning consist of urban designers and landscape architects. They formulate the differences slightly differently. In planology, research is conducted and policy is formulated, while landscape architecture and urban design are design disciplines within the municipality, according to (former) Head of Landscape Architecture Annemieke Fontein. But her job also has a strategic, policy-related side.

"It's about setting the agenda, formulating policy and quality assurance for projects, from the very large to the very small: is it well put together? In the end, it's out there in the streets. But next to this it is about strategically looking at the tasks you identify in the city, and to get them done." - Annemieke Fontein

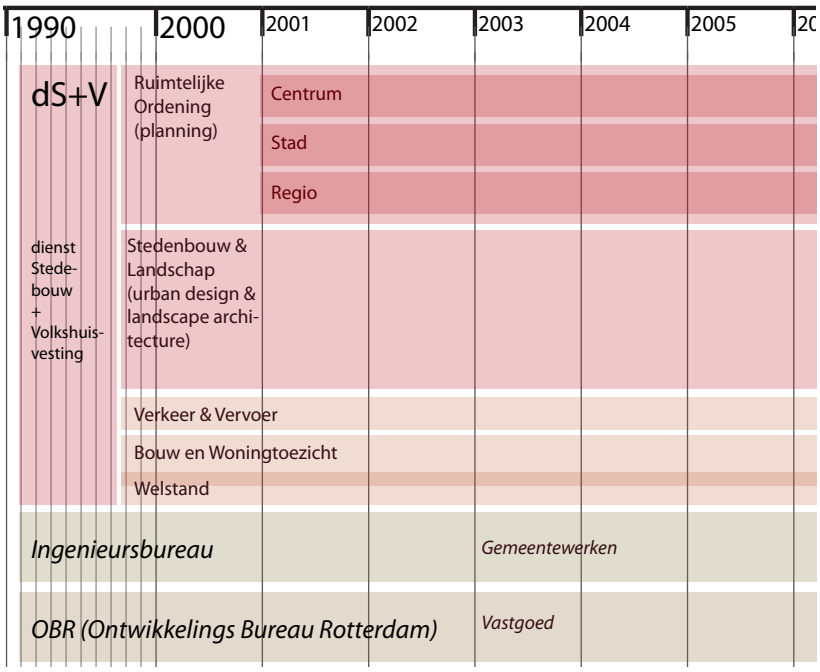


Fig. 4.1 Compartimentalisation of the municipal organisation for spatial planning since the 1990s

Designers are at the intersection of policy, implementation and management. This requires coordination between municipal departments and social partners in the city. The quality of public spaces is central to this. This primarily concerns the design aspect, but also requires an integrated urban vision, which was introduced in 2005 with the Stadsvisie 2030 (City Vision 2030).

There is both exchange between the two groups – partly because some people switch from one to the other – and a certain amount of competition. They follow each other's work, but also emphasise each other's limitations, in the sense that they claim certain roles for themselves. Planologists emphasise that they have a better overview and strategic insight than designers, while designers point out that design is more in touch with everyday reality and that this is also where many strategic choices are made. And where one sees the introduction of an integrated approach to the city in the City Vision 2030, the other sees a framework in which previous developments were laid down.

One planologist recounts how, during the development of a green map for the Groenvisie (Green Vision), the planners were criticised for thinking too big. They had also failed to involve the design side. When they then started drawing together, the result was broadly in line with the first version, but now the designers also felt a sense of ownership. Differences of opinion remain, however.

"Sometimes someone would think: hmm, why is he sitting with the councillor and I'm not? There is also a lot of politics within such an administrative apparatus." - Nico Tillie

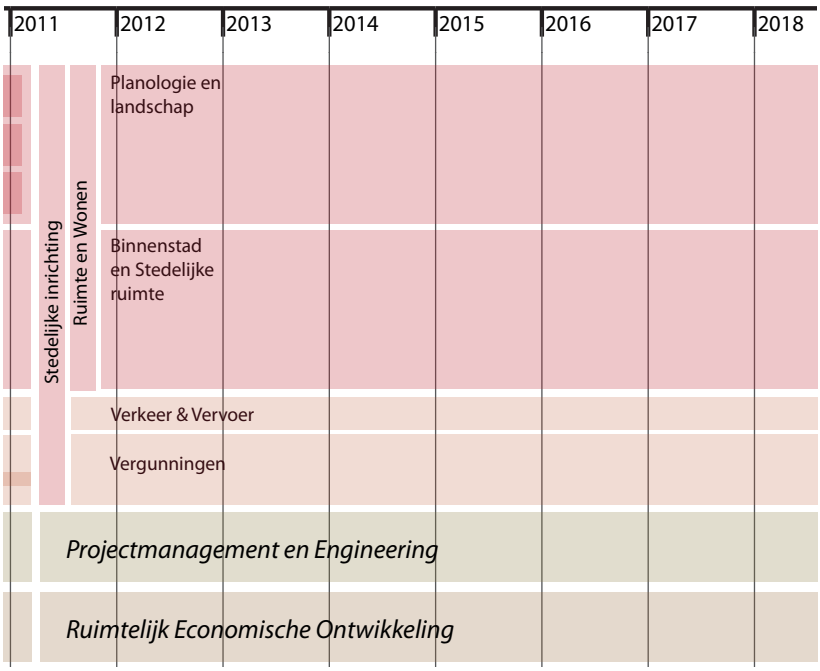


Fig. 4.2 Compartimentalisation of the municipal organisation for spatial planning from 2011 onward

A large municipality such as Rotterdam consists of many clusters, services and departments, each with their own agenda, budget and responsibilities. This often leads to compartmentalisation: a focus on one's own goals and demarcation of one's own responsibilities at the expense of cooperation. This applies at the level of the clusters, the aforementioned 'blocks', but also on a smaller scale between the services and departments that are part of them. A large government organisation such as the municipality of Rotterdam seems to encourage compartmentalisation.

Compartmentalisation was a problem in 2005 and still is 20 years later, but there do seem to be some shifts. In 2005, the then director of urban development established, among other things, a biweekly consultation with all the heads of all departments, chaired by herself, with the aim of working more integrally. She also tried to give spatial planning a more prominent position. When the real estate department started working with project developers at that time, landscape and urban design were always cut back in the important initial phase. Almost twenty years later, in 2022, the head of landscape architecture, Annemieke Fontein, says that she consults weekly with other experts within the municipality from various disciplines and services: planology, urban design, mobility, housing and the environment.

"It's difficult, especially for new people, to know who to involve and where. And people sometimes think: 'I need to figure it out myself first and then I'll talk to the world'. That's kind of how things work within the municipality."
- Annemieke Fontein

The weekly consultations between departments within Urban Development contribute to a cultural change. However, it still happens that plans are developed without involving crucial departments.

In addition to internal coordination between departments, good contact with other clusters is important. For example, support from and cooperation with the City Management cluster is essential for the realisation of designs for public spaces. According to those involved, clear policy documents are essential in this regard. This provides a framework within which common goals can be worked on over longer periods of time.

Clear policy offers some continuity in the face of political changes, but a good relationship with politicians is also important. Typical of the Rotterdam administration is that it embraces plans made with other parties in the city. And there is a culture of moving forward fairly quickly. This image is confirmed in several interviews. In general, politicians give civil servants relative freedom to do their work as they see fit, as long as they perform their basic tasks well. In order to put new ideas on the political agenda, spatial planners also seek support in the social field. For example, through events in which civic parties and other levels of government are also involved, such as the International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam. The 2005 edition, with the theme 'The Flood', showed the planners involved how, as a department, you can think about trends and find a niche that offers the opportunity to make a proposal without an administrative mandate.

At the time (during the first period of Leefbaar Rotterdam), there was no political urge to think about long-term developments. By using the Biennale to draw up a substantive plan, 'Rotterdam Waterstad 2035' (Rotterdam Water City 2035), with all kinds of parties involved, this was put on the political agenda and laid down in Water Plan 2. The councillor opened the exhibition and saw the models. The directors of the three services involved stood around them. And the minister was there. They were given a five-minute explanation of the plan. In this way, 'Rotterdam Waterstad 2035' and the whole way of thinking was taken up in no time by the councillor and cluster director. Normally, within such a large municipal organisation, it must first appeal to the councillor, then the cluster director must go along with the story, and only then does the task come to the planner. If the councillor does not ask the director or civil servant for anything, then there is no assigned task. Only when the councillor asks for a vision can planners sit down and advise.

'The Biennale was an excellent opportunity – both in 2005 and 2012 – to dream and to put down on paper: in our opinion, things have to be completely different.' - Nico Tillie

4.2 Conceptualisations of planning in municipal spatial planning 2004-2020

In section 2.2, a number of relevant conceptualisations of planning are described in more detail and characterised on the basis of five aspects: the role of the planner (and especially the idealised image of that role), the underlying worldview(s), the position of planning in that worldview, the extent to which different (or: a pluralistic variety of) social actors are involved, and what role they are assigned. How are these reflected in the stories and opinions of the planners interviewed? How do they conceptualise spatial planning and the role of social actors in it? Historically, the planning culture in Rotterdam is still strongly rooted in Rational Planning, with a growing influence of Neoliberal Planning since the 1980s. However, over the last 20 years, the challenges of an increasingly complex and pluralistic society have been increasingly recognised. The friction that arises between different interests is seen by planners, on the one hand, as part of a Rational Planning. But the increasing complexity and fragmentation of society into different interest groups motivates planners also to develop new strategies and a changing attitude towards social actors. This reflects elements of other conceptualisations of planning. In the following paragraphs the conceptualisations that come across in the accounts of the interviewed planners are discussed. Critical conceptualisations such as Marxist & Critical Theory and Post-Political planning do not appear to be part of the narrative of the planners. Neither does Advocacy planning. In general the planners try to stay away from political observations. Elements of Adaptive planning can be discerned in Poststructuralist considerations by some of the planners and are discussed there. More recent conceptualisations postdate the period of study.

4.2.1 Roots in Rational Planning

In 2005, the planning department still seemed deeply rooted in the idea of Rational Planning: introverted, convinced of its own righteousness, technocratic and compartmentalised. Just like the other departments within the Urban Development cluster. The Rational Planning tradition has its origins in the post-war reconstruction period, but has since become firmly embedded in Rotterdam's planning culture. The planners interviewed distance themselves from this image of the self-important, top-down planner who knows better, but do recognise it.

"As [the spatial planning department], we increasingly take the attitude: what is actually going on and how can we translate that, rather than: we know how the world works, only the rest don't know it yet. I think we have made progress in that regard. (...) But of course it is still in Rotterdam's DNA."
- Pieter de Greef

At the same time, they still cling to the self-image of the discipline from the Rational or System Planning approach: the planner as an expert, as a professional, representing a shared public interest based on analysis of an objective reality. Planners must weigh up public versus collective interests. Decisions about the planning of the city as a whole are 'inevitably a bit top-down'. The Rational Planning tradition is also reflected in the shared belief that planners can formulate clear policies based on sound, objective analysis that guarantees continuity in changing political circumstances. And that clear policies can always be explained well to politicians.

4.2.2 Framed within a Neoliberal system

The interconnectedness of city, port and industry has also made Rotterdam a fertile ground for market-oriented planning choices. This Neoliberal Planning approach is reflected in the current planning culture and especially in the system in which it is embedded. This manifests itself in various ways. Firstly, in the choice of who to involve in decision-making and in the public debate. When involving social actors in the City Vision in 2007, the initial focus was on commercial and professional parties such as project developers, architects, and trade organisations for shops and the hospitality industry. When a narrative for the city was developed in 2013-2014 to reverse the city's decline, this was done in collaboration with Rotterdam Partners (the department that manages and coordinates Rotterdam's city marketing). Smart city marketing attracted attention in foreign media such as the New York Times and Lonely Planet, after which the image of the city in the Dutch press was also adjusted.

A second example of a neoliberal attitude within planning is the economisation of value discussions. Social and cultural values are often translated into economic value in Rotterdam in order to count. For example, green spaces are seen as a cost item within the municipality. In response, planners feel compelled to monetise and

instrumentalise the value of green spaces for the benefit of property values or health gains.

"You could see that green spaces were the weak sector when it came to making money." - Nico Tillie

Thirdly, the municipal organisation also exhibits a business-like mindset that can be labelled neoliberal: from working on an hourly basis with invoices between municipal clusters to the important role of real estate in the planning process. After the crisis, the growth of the spatial planning department ran parallel to increasing economic growth. The fate of the department is thus closely linked to building construction output.

4.2.3 Pragmatic attitude

All interviewees displayed a Pragmatic attitude: the planner as a problem solver who engages with society by listening and involving social parties. The image of the planner who identifies issues and puts them on the agenda at the right time and place, as described in section 4.1.3, fits in with this.

"You don't remedy feelings of insecurity with more police on the streets, but with good-quality public space, with people on the streets" - Astrid Sanson

"There are many aspects that you give a place in public space. (...) But you don't automatically have financing, so you have to make connections, for example with a sewerage plan or the biodiversity goals." - Annemieke Fontein

Since the emergence of citizens' initiatives in the early 21st century, these have increasingly been seen as partners in putting new ideas on the agenda for administrators, so that they can give planners the political mandate to get started on them. A Pragmatic attitude allows Rotterdam planners to distance themselves somewhat from the system or politics and, to a certain extent, to chart an independent course. In this way, planners can maintain their position as neutral advocates of the public interest in a pluralistic world by linking this role to a specific local context and by joining forces with local interest groups, such as green initiatives. An example of this is the area-based approach that was introduced after the administrative centralisation in 2014 *, with neighbourhood teams that identify problems in public spaces that can be solved with relatively minor interventions, by supporting local initiatives..

** Up to that time the city was administratively divided in so-called 'deelgemeentes' (boroughs), that had a high degree of independence and decision power. Rotterdam and Amsterdam were the only Dutch municipalities where this governance level was established. When this government layer was abolished in 2014 the relation between municipality and citizen had to be redefined.*

4.2.4 Post-Structuralist narrative

Planologists are increasingly combining this Pragmatic attitude with a Post-Structuralist conceptualisation of planning. This development seems to be driven by the increasing complexity of spatial challenges in light of necessary transitions, for example in the areas of climate change and the economy. The planologist's characteristic way of thinking on different scales in relation to trends and developments

appears to be fertile ground for this way of thinking. In this approach, planners define different spaces formed by actors and flows in relation to complex spatial challenges and describe scenarios for these spaces in 'stories about the city'. These planners see themselves as connectors who work at the intersection of various disciplines (both within and outside the municipality) to bring these disciplines together and thus arrive at good stories. In response to challenges in the field of climate change and energy security, a Post-Political, somewhat technocratic systems approach to flows (focused on environmental sustainability) initially emerged. However, between 2005 and 2018, this systems approach developed into a more integrated relational approach in which social networks are just as important as flows of water, energy and materials, and flows are also defined more broadly in terms of knowledge and capital. The plans for 'Rotterdam Waterstad 2035' (Greef, 2005) and 'Rotterdam Energy Approach & Planning' (Tillie et al, 2009) * are examples that mark this development, as is the development of urban agriculture policy from 2008 onwards.

** REAP. See Section 4.3.2.4.*

The increasing complexity calls for a different way of looking at things. In 2015, the departments of Planology and Urban Design together created the vision document 'Kaart van de Stad' (Map of the City) based on a number of myths about Rotterdam and investigated whether they were still accurate (Rotterdam, 2016). On the one hand, the document still reflects a Neoliberal facilitation of market parties, but on the other hand, civic initiatives are defined more broadly and embraced:

"New developments require more flexibility, smart frameworks and a government that supports initiatives that advance the city. The SO Framework indicates how we are fulfilling this new role. We are using our knowledge of the city to strengthen its capacity for investment, organisation and innovation." (Kaart van de Stad, 2015, p.8).

The Next City programme was a result of this. This programme (Rotterdam, 2019) ** is about the future of the city and the complex transitions that lie ahead. In the accompanying vision, the planology department states that rapid social changes, for example in the economy, place different demands on the city, its layout and how it functions.

*** Although this programme strictly considered was developed after the period of study, it is included here because it is a response to experiences from the preceding years (and is referred to as such by two of the interviewed planners).*

"How do you deal with these kinds of things that are so big but also so intangible?" - Marije ten Kate

These are precisely the questions that a Post-Structuralist conceptualisation of planning attempts to fathom. Aspects of a complex, multifaceted reality that would otherwise remain hidden, such as the influence of globalisation and the formation of new, alternative layers of government that evade democratic accountability (such as regional partnerships), are made visible from a Post-Structuralist perspective and identified as challenges. In order to work with this in planning

practice, Next City distinguishes between two 'lines'. Blue lines represent classic planning that directs and controls from the top down and maintains the Rational Planning approach on which the current system is based. Opposite these are yellow lines, which allow room for experimentation (Rotterdam, 2019). Here, other approaches to planning are given space and are also recognised as 'other', as different. Yellow lines also offer possibilities for a more fluid way of looking at organisational structure and process. Concrete projects show what is possible. Sometimes, therefore, you first have to start working on the projects when the goals are roughly clear, and the vision will follow later.

"You don't always have to create a vision first; I believe much more in doing both at the same time." - Pieter de Greef

The experiments within the yellow line are not so much initiatives of the municipality but are based on initiatives from the city. Many planners consider this initiative to be socially valuable, and the planner can identify, facilitate and, where necessary, connect these initiatives. Not by waiting behind a 'blue' desk, but by actively engaging with people as a planner. Water Sensitive Rotterdam (later renamed as: Rotterdams Weerwoord) is an example of a robust line in which climate and water-related initiatives are bundled.

4.2.5 Collaborative ambitions

The need to work more on an equal footing with stakeholders – 'developing the city together' – was already evident in the process surrounding the 'Stadsvisie 2030' in 2007.
The idea behind the 'Stadsvisie 2030' (City Vision 2030) was to create an integrated vision with citizens on the development of the city, focusing on housing and the economy (Rotterdam, 2007). The quality of the outdoor space – as public space was called in Rotterdam at the time – was mentioned as one of the important preconditions for this development. The large scale and ambition of this integrated City Vision is characteristic of Rational Planning. However, the fact that commercial social parties were primarily involved at the outset anchors the vision in market thinking. The vision that emerged from this and the studies that supported it were summarised in a thin booklet into a handy, compact story. Then, with nothing but that little book, they went through the city for six months, telling stories everywhere and talking to people. The question they asked developers, investors, architects, citizens and shopkeepers was: what can you do? This reflects a collaborative ambition to do more than just inform citizens about the result. For the planners involved, the term 'participation' does not cover the full scope of the process; it is about having a say in the discussion. Despite this ambition, the process seems to confirm existing power relations rather than being a conscious attempt to arrive at a shared communicative reality as equals.

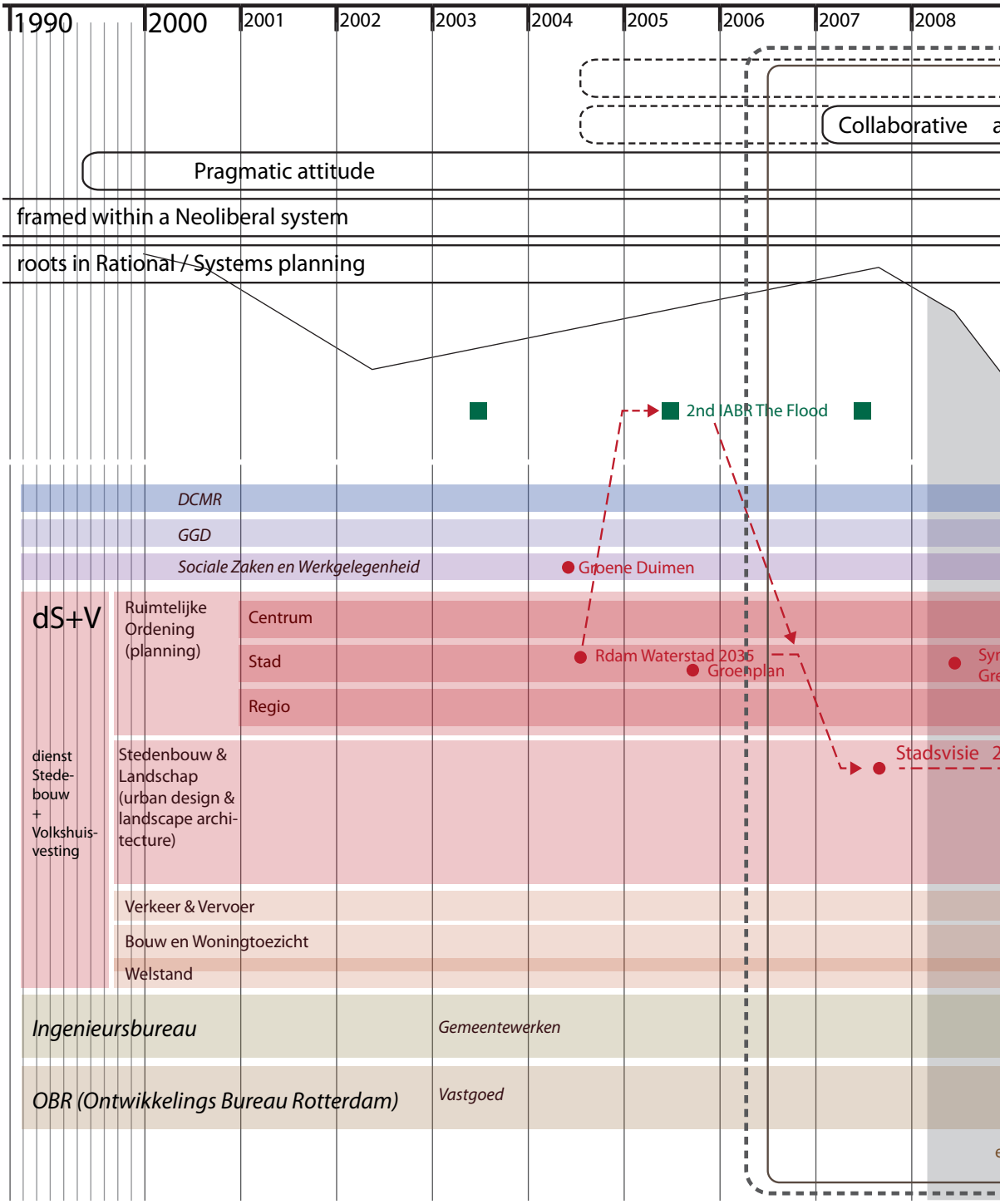
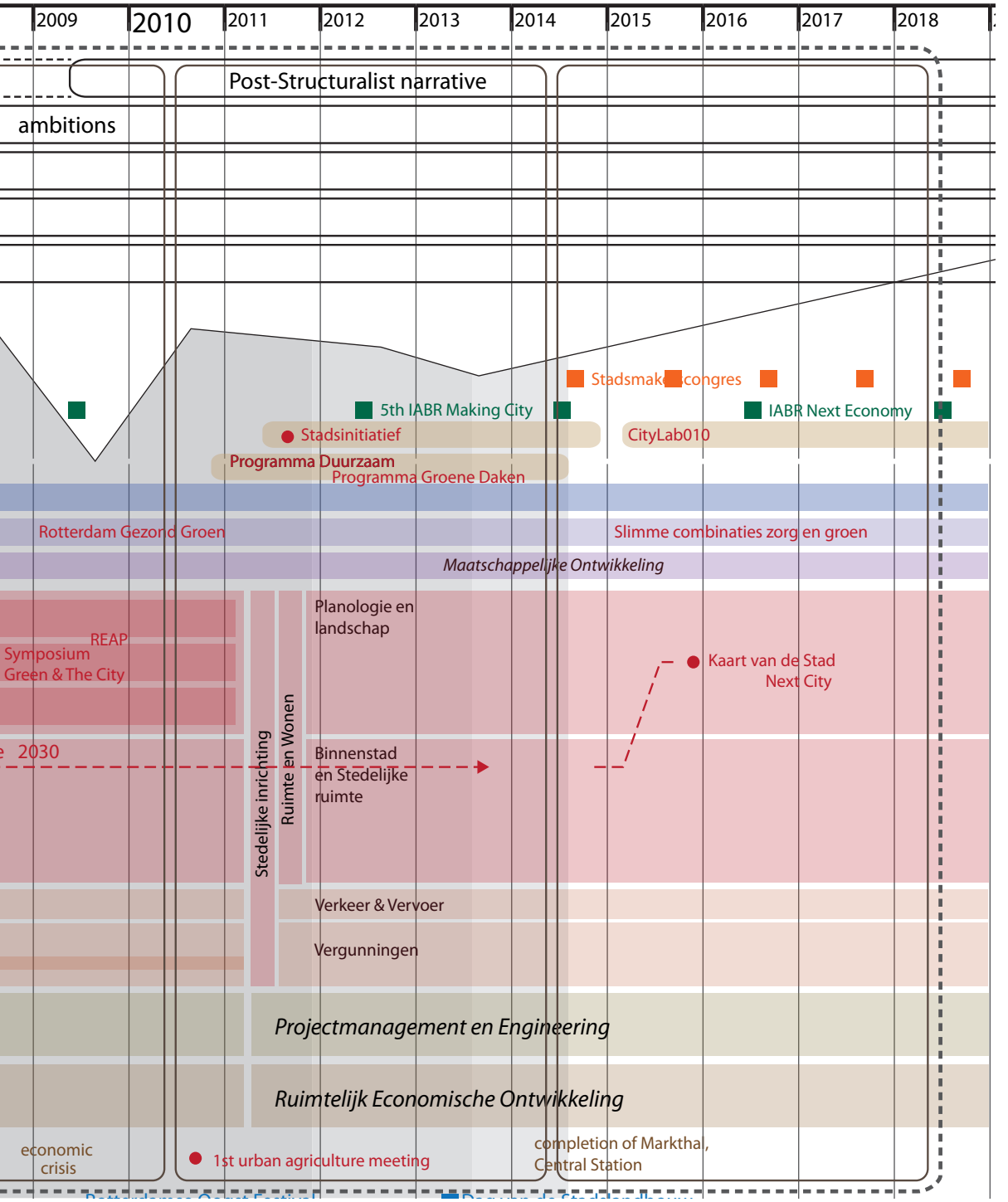


Figure 4.3 Timeline of the development of conceptualisations of planning in relation to policy and social developments. This diagram builds on Figures 4.1 and 4.2 and is based on the structure of the department of spatial planning. The crisis of 2008 and 2014 is shown in the background with a grey area linked to an indicative graph of the state of the economy (based on GDP growth). In addition to the spatial planning department, the Social Affairs and Employment



department and semi-governmental institutions DCMR and GGD are also included, as their policies also stimulate green initiatives. Relevant policy documents and the relationship between them are shown in red, while social manifestations concerning the planning of the city are shown in green and orange. The emergence of different conceptualisations of planning on the Rotterdam planning scene, as described in the text, is shown indicatively at the top.

The yellow lines of Next City also carry this risk if 'signalling, facilitating and connecting' is not embedded in a structure that also discusses identified developments in an open process and bases planning policy on this. The commitment of the planners involved can make a difference here. In certain projects, an almost collaborative approach seems possible:

"The ideas that I have learned to embrace, the ideas for the rivers, were developed together with enthusiastic and committed Rotterdam citizens and entrepreneurs." - Pieter de Greef

The yellow lines of Next City are monitored by programmes with a specific duration, often led by certain prominent civil servants. The Rotterdam Weerwoord was set up as a 'movement'. Under the leadership of a committed civil servant with decision-making authority, there is much that can be done here to support civic initiatives. Without a certain degree of independence on the part of those involved, this form of (planning) policy can also lead to disappointment among civic actors.

4.2.6 The role of civic initiatives in municipal conceptualisations of planning

In summary, the period from 2005 to 2018 shows a development in approaches to planning and the way planners understand it. This development is driven by social trends and developments, as well as by reflection on those developments and a rethinking of the role of planning. The role of the planner as guardian of the public interest remains virtually unaffected, despite the important role played by market parties. However, partly as a result of the crisis of 2008-2014 and the subsequent rethinking, there is a growing recognition among Rotterdam planners of the increasing complexity of a society in which more and more different interests are competing for priority. Civic initiatives that seek to serve this public interest are increasingly being taken seriously as partners. And conceptualisations of planning that offer scope for cooperation with civic actors are becoming increasingly prominent in the thinking of Rotterdam planners during this period.

4.3 Municipal spatial planning policy in the field of urban agriculture 2005-2018

How and to what extent is urban agriculture spatially planned in Rotterdam during this period? How and to what extent is this planning informed by different conceptualisations of planning as described in section 4.2.3?

4.3.1 Introduction of key figures

The policy on urban agriculture was broadly shaped by two civil servants: a designer, Annemieke Fontein, and a planologist, Kees van Oorschot. They did this with the support of Alderman Van Huffelen and in collaboration with a group of civil servants and an external expert gathered in the so-called Denktank Stadslandbouw (Urban Agriculture Think Tank). Three overarching civic initiatives (Rotterdamse Oogst, Eetbaar Rotterdam, Transition Town Rotterdam) were involved in policy-making at various stages (and are also mentioned as such in the Food & the City policy document). Various administrators within the boroughs and housing corporations supported the policy at district and neighbourhood level.

Annemieke Fontein was head of Landscape Architecture and thus a representative of the design side of the cluster. She was responsible for both setting the agenda and formulating policy for the challenges she identified in the city, as well as for ensuring quality in projects from design to implementation, from the very large to the very small. Her role within the cluster was also to pick up on new phenomena and try to give them a place within the cluster.

"Everyone thinks that constructing a square is only an aesthetic design challenge, but of course it is about much more: it is about biodiversity, about water management, about meeting people. There are many aspects that you give a place in that public space. That are given opportunities to develop there."
- Annemieke Fontein

She also played a role in connecting various tasks and the responsible services in order to achieve joint financing for integrated tasks. In addition, she was the driving force behind the development of the Handbook for Public Space, which attempts to bring a 'Rotterdam Style' line to the multitude of design styles in the network of streets and canals. She retired in 2024.

Kees van Oorschot worked as a planologist at the regional level, partly for the city and partly for the regional partnership Stadsregio. Trained as a landscape architect, he worked in practice for a number of years, where it became clear to him that policy work in the field of recreation, landscape and nature conservation was more to his liking.

"I saw (...) that my strength lay more in connecting people and the administrative process." - Kees van Oorschot

Rotterdam offered him more opportunities to develop in this area than a smaller municipality. Van Oorschot is proud of projects in

which he has been a link in the realisation of a greater ambition, even if this is less visible. A public interest, defined within a broad group of stakeholders, forms the basis for a process in which feasible solutions are sought. Since the end of 2016, he has been working as a project and process manager in the Project Management department of Urban Development for the northern part of the city centre (Rotterdam Central District).

From 2010 to 2015, Fontein and Van Oorschot were supported by the Denktank Stadslandbouw:

"The think tank includes representatives from municipal services, the municipal programme office Duurzaam and an expert from the Agricultural Economics Research Institute (LEI) / Wageningen University & Research (WUR). If necessary, they are supplemented by experts from the regional environmental service DCMR and other relevant organisations." (Food & The City, 2012)

The services represented were: Public Health (GGD) (Josine van den Bogaard), Social Affairs and Employment (SoZaWe) (Cees Bronsveld) *, Public Works (Gemeentewerken) (Joop Zwiep). Hendrik Jan Bosch (programme office Duurzaam (Sustainable) ** and Leontine van der Meer (DCMR) was also a regular attendee. Other officials, such as Daniel Goedbloed (Green Roofs programme), also joined on an ad hoc basis. Jan Willem van der Schans, an expert from the Agricultural Economics Research Institute (LEI) / Wageningen University & Research (WUR), was also a member and co-founder of the civic initiative Eetbaar Rotterdam (Edible Rotterdam). He was the first to draw Fontein's attention to urban agriculture as a theme. He saw his role in the Think Tank as twofold: as an action researcher and as a committed, activist Rotterdam resident. In the Think Tank, he did not speak on behalf of Eetbaar Rotterdam, but he did form a connection with this group.

Eetbaar Rotterdam (Edible Rotterdam) was one of the overarching initiatives (with a focus beyond the scope of individual projects) that influenced the development of the policy at an early stage, or at least gave it credibility and public support. Eetbaar Rotterdam was founded in 2007 as a self-appointed expert group on urban agriculture by six professionals from various disciplines (agricultural care, agricultural economics, hospitality, communication, architecture, urban design and landscape architecture) ***. Eetbaar Rotterdam promoted the idea of urban agriculture in the Netherlands, among other through a blog, and developed a vision of how this could work in Rotterdam. One of the founders was already working on the idea of what would become Uit Je Eigen Stad (From Your Own City). In 2010, Eetbaar Rotterdam became an association until its dissolution in 2017.

Rotterdamse Oogst (Rotterdam Harvest) was founded in 2009 by Nicole Hoven ('Stichting Van de Boer' and one of the founders of Eetbaar Rotterdam) and focused on realising short supply chains. First through festivals, later through a periodic market, the organisation gathered a community of local producers and processors around it.

** Commissioned by the Think Tank, Bronsveld conducted two studies, on the social effects of urban agriculture projects (Bronsveld, 2014) and on Rotterdam residents who start initiatives in public space (Bronsveld, 2016) that offered a valuable background for this research.*

*** Programma Duurzaam (the municipality's Sustainability Programme) as the name indicates was a (temporary) programme rather than a municipal service.*

**** The full list of founders of Eetbaar Rotterdam is: Marja Versteeg, Rien Bongers, Cesare Peeren, Nicole Hoven, Bas de Groot, Jan Willem van der Schans and me. Besides being co-founder I was writer/editor of the blog of the same name (eetbaarrotterdam.nl), as well as a board member of the association from 2010 to 2017.*

A third movement was Transition Town Rotterdam (TTR), which was founded in 2008, inspired by the Transition Town movement in Great Britain. TTR consisted of citizens who wanted to work concretely towards a sustainable society, among other things through the application of permaculture. From 2010 onwards, this gave rise to various urban agriculture initiatives.

Alexandra van Huffelen (D66) was politically responsible for urban agriculture policy as alderwoman for Sustainability, Inner City and Outdoor Space. She was part of the 2010-2014 council consisting of a coalition of D66, CDA and VVD. Van Huffelen's predecessor was Lucas Bolsius (CDA), who was already very supportive of green initiatives. After Van Huffelen, Joost Eerdmans (Leefbaar Rotterdam) took over this portfolio, but he was not interested in the subject of urban agriculture.

Until 2014, the municipality was divided into 'deelgemeenten' (boroughs), each with its own coucil and administrative office. These local councillors were often the political point of contact for individual urban agriculture initiatives. Enthusiastic councillors in Prins Alexander, Noord and Feijenoord played a significant role in supporting local initiatives.

Finally, the role of housing corporations such as Havensteder * and Vestia should also be mentioned. As owners of housing and sometimes also the associated outdoor space, they were partners and clients in various urban agriculture initiatives. A study into the involvement of the private sector in Rotterdam's 'city region food system' shows that housing corporations provided both access to land and financial support (Schans & Graaf, 2016). Havensteder in particular was actively involved in the persons of Jan van der Schans ** (involved in Uit Je Eigen Stad) and Mark van der Velde (client of NuHier). In 2012, Jan van der Schans, as a board member of Eetbaar Rotterdam, organised the meeting 'Het rendement van stadslandbouw '(The return on urban agriculture), to which the then director of Havensteder, among others, contributed.

** Havensteder was formed in 2011 from a merger between PWS and Com.Wonen.*

*** Not a direct relative of Jan Willem van der Schans, although there was a family connection somewhere further back in time.*

4.3.2 2006-2010 The seeds of an urban agriculture policy

To understand how urban agriculture became part of municipal policy in the 2010-2014 council term, the run-up to this and the underlying motives and conceptualisations of planning are outlined in this section.

4.3.2.1 Economic crisis as an opportunity

In a sense, the space for a policy focused on societal urban agriculture initiative arose from the shortcomings of top-down Rational-Pragmatic Planning embedded in a Neoliberal market-oriented local government when the economic crisis of 2008-2014 struck. During this period, the planning department was working hard to revive a dilapidated city. The City Vision 2030 focused broadly on improving public space in the city, together with – above all – market parties.

A number of iconic projects – the new station, the multifunctional high-rise building De Rotterdam, the Markthal, which combined a covered food market with housing – were under development. However, due to the crisis in 2008, these projects were delayed and many construction activities came to a standstill. The market parties on which the municipality depended withdrew. All over the city, sites lay fallow, with no clear indication of when they would be developed.

At the same time, there was growing attention for social challenges in the areas of sustainability and health. Challenges in which public green space could play a role. The planning department was aware of this role of green outdoor space. A Green Plan had already been drawn up in 2005, but it was mainly an internal document. According to one of the planners involved, they tried to give the green plan more substance and also to substantiate it ecologically, but at that time there was not much information available about green space and health. Around the same time, the 2005 Biennale was used by planologists to make proposals for climate adaptation. Through the landscape-based, narrative theme of Rotterdam Water City 2035 (this edition of the Biennale was called 'The Flood'), they linked the water challenge (how do we deal with sea level rise and heavier rainfall as a result of climate change) to concrete interventions in public space.

The innovative and interdisciplinary nature of this challenge was a challenge for the bureaucratic government apparatus. It required a different way of thinking and working and, with that, different conceptualisations of planning (as discussed in the previous paragraph). The change in mentality that this required from the government, from planning to implementation, could not be achieved overnight. It is worth noting that the solutions presented at the 2005 Biennale were not realised until 2022. Nevertheless, the stagnation of traditional urban development opened the door to experiments with the temporary use of vacant land and the facilitation of civic initiatives in public space.

4.3.2.2 Green Year 2008: voices from society penetrate planning

In 'Green Year 2008', which coincided with the start of the crisis, the planning department initiated the major green research project that was presented at the Green and the City symposium. Green Year 2008 was an initiative of the municipality of Rotterdam and prompted the department to evaluate the approach to public green space in Rotterdam (Green Research 2008). The green study not only looked at the state of neighbourhood and community green spaces and parks, but also at the appreciation and perception of green spaces, linked to lifestyles, among other things (according to an approach that was used for the housing market at the time). Although the theme of urban agriculture was not included in the study, it was discussed at the closing symposium. At the symposium, Fontein referred to urban agriculture as an unforeseen trend. She was particularly interested in the regional perspective and the role for the countryside.

*"For me and my colleagues in spatial planning, on a regional level the story was: How do we create/maintain an attractive regional agricultural landscape? How do we ensure that farmers break free from Campina's yoke * and start supplying the city directly?" - Annemieke Fontein*

** Friesland Campina is a large cooperative milk company*

She added: "That is, of course, Jan Willem's story." The inclusion of urban agriculture in municipal planning was partly the result of the discussions she had had over the past year with action researcher Jan Willem van der Schans. They first got talking in the school playground, which led to a dialogue about the importance of agriculture in and around the city. Fontein saw a spatial importance, particularly at the regional level: How do we create routes to the countryside? How do we add biodiversity?

At the same time, she saw this movement emerging, including Eetbaar Rotterdam and "all those designers who were out of work" who started occupying vacant lots at a very local level and engaging in urban agriculture. She and her colleagues had more doubts about this form of agriculture in the city: were these food initiatives just a trend or a real movement?

4.3.2.3 Professional questions: openness, aesthetics and temporariness

According to Van Oorschot, inner-city urban agriculture in particular led to internal professional discussions. Suddenly, residents were laying claim to temporarily available land. This interference from outside the domain of planning was perceived as problematic. Underlying this professional discomfort were a number of professional considerations, both practical and more fundamental in nature, in which different conceptualisations of planning can be recognised. Urban agriculture initiatives raise the question of who owns public space and to what extent urban agriculture is a public function. This is particularly true when it comes to parks and public space.

"The land itself was available, but then we had to consider: Do we think that's okay? In the beginning, of course, that was not a very popular or desirable use." - Kees van Oorschot

"You are privatising land and thereby excluding other uses – even if these are currently limited." - Annemieke Fontein

There is a fundamental, critical consideration behind this regarding fair planning, but also the Rational assumption that the planner, as a neutral representative of the public interest, can determine this. In their practice, planners are seeing increasing pressure on public space. There is an increasing demand for space for everything from electricity substations and heating networks to charging stations. This also raises the issue of distribution. What do you give space to? From a Pragmatic perspective, planners such as Fontein seek solutions to the problems this creates.

"There is a dilemma between appropriation and public access. You want to keep the space open and available to people. But then you run the risk of people stealing your tomatoes or someone urinating on your strawberries. We are looking to see if we can combine the two, but it has to be the right fit." - Annemieke Fontein

Urban agriculture leads to a different use of space. In doing so, it disrupts the usual planned order in public space and raises questions about ownership and public health.

The cultivation of land in urban agriculture also raises aesthetic questions. The modern, rational idea of the planner as an expert in what is beautiful and appropriate is challenged. In that idea, vegetable gardens are messy and the black earth in winter is boring. As Fontein phrases it:

> *"In terms of visual quality, vegetable gardens look less attractive in winter. There's not much to them then." - Annemieke Fontein*

Finally, there is a concern about management. For example, when Fontein wanted to introduce fruit trees in the green wedges near the garden cities, it always led to hassle: Who maintains the fruit trees? Won't fruit that falls on the ground attract rats? According to her, the idea was not really embraced. This example also illustrates how the rational and pragmatic role of planners arises and is confirmed in the practice of municipal planning and management, in an interplay between planners, implementers and residents and their (assumed) expectations. According to Fontein, this has changed over the years, and city management has become more embracing.

A specific and new challenge for the planning department was the temporary nature of the use of vacant land. The property department and the project developers within the municipality did recognise – when the crisis lasted a little longer – that temporary use offered a good form of management in places that would otherwise become cluttered, but they did not want any hassle. Their biggest fear was that a project developer would come along and that people would then no longer want to give up the land, but according to Fontein, this has hardly ever happened, with a few exceptions. The attitude of the real estate sector confirms the image of a neoliberal, market-driven planning context.

In practice, it was also confrontational for the civil service to deal with citizens and entrepreneurs who claimed a place in the design of public space, which is pre-eminently the domain of the planning department, particularly the design side, and the municipal administrators. In response, planners sometimes fell back on a Rational-Pragmatic approach to spatial design, in which their involvement was limited to making land available or not. This classic Rational-Pragmatic emphasis on physical space seems to have limited the planning vision for urban agriculture at times – at least in that initial phase. But there was also interest among planners. Van Oorschot noticed that within the groups of designers working on the development of green plans, there were people who found it interesting and who were also active in this area themselves, or at least sympathetic to it. They saw opportunities on vacant land and argued internally for exploiting those opportunities.

"Designers said: it should be possible in this place here, and that vacant land there where a house will be built in five years' time can at least be put to use for the next five years." - Kees van Oorschot

4.3.2.4 Meanwhile in the city: social parties are organising themselves

During 2009, urban agriculture was the subject of informal, internal discussions within the planning department. However, no concrete steps towards policy were taken between the Green & the City symposium and the first urban agriculture meeting organised by the municipality in 2010. Meanwhile, the first urban agriculture initiatives were already underway. Creatief Beheer, for example, had been engaged in bottom-up participatory green management in the neighbourhood since 2001, where residents also experimented with vegetable gardening. On the Maasvlakte, just before the crisis in 2006, the Happy Shrimp Farm was started by two former Rotterdam civil servants. The Happy Shrimp Farm used residual heat from the port to breed shrimp for the local market, but went bankrupt in 2009.

A meeting organised by Innovatienetwerk at the end of 2006 on urban agriculture formed the breeding ground for the establishment of the 'urban agriculture expert group' Eetbaar Rotterdam in 2007. Around the same time, Stichting Van de Boer (Foundation From the Farmer) was established, which would later be at the cradle of Rotterdamse Oogst. In 2008, local residents created a garden on vacant land on the Mullerpier (Tuin aan de Maas). Transition Town Rotterdam was also established at that time.

A number of initiatives also involved housing corporations and project developers, who took on a role similar to that of the government based on their interest as managers of the housing stock in a neighbourhood. Havensteder (then still called Com·wonen) was particularly active in those early years. As part of a social coalition with construction company Dura Vermeer Bouw Rotterdam, healthcare provider De Stromen Opmaat Groep, Albeda College and the Rotterdam-Rijnmond Municipal Health Service, it initiated the Van Grond tot Mond (From Soil to Mouth) project, which resulted in the Dante garden in Lombardijen. As a client, it also gave the green light to the Nu Hier project and was involved at an early stage in a development in the Merwevierhavens on the Marconistrip, together with developer AM Wonen.

Urban agriculture was also included as a possible urban function in the Rotterdam Energy Approach & Planning (REAP) study, carried out by TU Delft, JA and DSA architects and the municipality of Rotterdam, as part of the Rotterdam Climate Initiative (Tillie et al. 2009). REAP attempted to intelligently link and balance the energy needs and production of urban functions in a spatial planning approach. In the form of rooftop greenhouses, urban agriculture was seen as a balancing function that could store and redistribute energy.

Many different actors came together around Edible Rotterdam. Jan Willem van der Schans remembers how Cesare Peeren organised

dinners with ingredients from the city from the office of 2012 Architects (a vacant pizzeria). Among the guests was Roel Vollebregt, CEO of project developer AM.

"He was very surprised by these gatherings. Roel called it 'an undercurrent coming to the surface', and as a developer, he wanted to do something with it."
- Jan Willem van der Schans

AM went in search of a suitable location and engaged MEI architects for design research. Merwehavens Vierhavens was chosen. At the same time, Nicole Hoven and architect Robbert Winkel (MEI architects) developed an urban farm concept for the Marconistrip. Nicole knew Winkel from the Rotterdam Municipal Building Committee (Welstand). AM decided to collaborate with Havensteder on the Marconistrip. They had good contacts with Jan van der Schans, director of special projects at Havensteder, who himself followed the phenomenon of urban agriculture with great interest. According to Jan Willem van der Schans, Jan saw it as a reference to the garden cities, where farmers' sons from Brabant and Zeeland were lured to come and work in the port; now it was Turkish and Moroccan farmers who had been lured to the Netherlands to come and work here. They would be able to meet at the various urban farming locations in the neighbourhoods where Havensteder owned houses and managed (public) green spaces.

Culturally, 2009 was also an interesting year in which urban agriculture came to the fore in various ways. In The Hague, the Stroom art institution organised the Foodprint event with an exhibition and art projects in the city, including two urban agriculture projects. On the initiative of Eetbaar Rotterdam, urban agriculture pioneers Will Allen (Growing Power) and Paula Sobie (SPIN farming) were brought to the Netherlands to give a lecture, first in The Hague and the next day in Rotterdam. This second lecture was made possible in part by the municipality. The lecture took place in the Marconi Towers, where the planning department was located at the time. And on Saturday 19 September 2009, the first Rotterdam Harvest Festival (Rotterdamse Oogst Festival) took place.

4.3.2.5 Growing self-awareness in an international perspective

From 2007 onwards, urban agriculture also attracted the attention of the planning community internationally, which contributed to the importance of urban agriculture as a theme in Rotterdam, within the municipality and among residents. In 2009, the first AESOP Sustainable Food Planning Conference was held in Almere. The second took place in Brighton a year later. These conferences attracted a combination of academics, activists and initiators. The members of Eetbaar Rotterdam were also part of this international network. Experiences and findings from Rotterdam were shared here, and there was also a great deal of exchange of ideas with other participants, particularly from North America and Europe, at both grassroots and academic levels. This exchange contributed to the self-awareness of the urban agriculture community in Rotterdam. And Rotterdam's international

reputation as a hotbed of urban agriculture probably helped lay the foundation for the municipality's later use of urban agriculture in its city branding.

4.3.3 2010-2014 Development of urban agriculture policy

4.3.3.1 Political momentum

From 2009 onwards, there was growing official interest in the theme of urban agriculture because it seemed to offer solutions to a number of current problems, some of which arose from the crisis that began in 2008. In addition, support grew among both citizens and various social organisations. This happened in the final days of the old council, with municipal elections in the spring of 2010 on the horizon. The then councillor Lucas Bolsius found the theme interesting as a link between an urban audience and the countryside, where the traditional base of his christian-democratic party (CDA) lay. But he was at the end of his term and did not want to take up this theme himself. Without political support, it is difficult to invest time and energy in innovative themes such as urban agriculture. That is why it was an important moment when the new councillor, Van Huffelen, embraced the theme. On Saturday morning, 18 September 2010, Fontein and Van Oorschot, together with Van der Schans, organised the first municipal urban agriculture meeting in the Volksuniversiteit building, during the second Rotterdam Harvest Festival, which took place a stone's throw away on Heemraadsplein *. The new councillor had been invited and had agreed to attend. As usual, the civil servants provided some background information to the councillor's staff. But they had not anticipated that the councillor would be so enthusiastic.

** Not all initiators were able to attend this meeting because they were at the Harvest Festival staffing a stall (e.g. I was at the Eetbaar Rotterdam installation).*

"And then the councillor came in and said: oh yes, this is exactly my topic for the coming period. You don't often see that as a civil servant. She embraced it. So that was the starting point for us to think: now we can do something."
- Kees van Oorschot

4.3.3.2 Dual-track policy

The councillor's support proved decisive for the municipal efforts to promote urban agriculture. With her support, developments in the city and in the region were tackled together. Those were the two lines that came together at that time. This was done as much as possible within existing frameworks, or in time that civil servants managed to free up for this purpose. In practice, little budget was made available specifically for the theme of urban agriculture. This required creativity on the part of civil servants and made the approach highly dependent on individuals, circumstances and timing.

In practice, the two lines – city and region – were sometimes two parallel tracks with their own dynamics and stakeholders, and their own dedicated civil servant, who also represented the two bloodlines within the department. The region was the domain of Kees van Oorschot and the planology department, while Fontein and the

landscape architecture department took the lead in the city. Although Fontein was higher in the internal hierarchy, the initial emphasis on the regional side of the story meant that Van Oorschot also had a prominent position, as he worked closely with the alderman responsible for this dossier in the City Region. Externally, the two lines within the policy were always presented in conjunction with each other, as formulated in the Food & the City policy document.

4.3.3.3 Municipal Think tank

At the end of 2010, an Urban Agriculture Think Tank was established on the initiative of the councillor. According to independent Think Tank member Jan Willem van der Schans, the Think Tank was "established to serve as a platform for civil servants from different departments to facilitate urban agriculture initiatives and discuss policy options. One of its activities was to organise networking meetings to bring together urban agriculture initiatives; another was to formulate policy objectives in interaction with the relevant executive councillors, in particular the councillor responsible for the management of public green spaces." (Schans, 2015) The Food & the City policy document formulates it somewhat more cautiously:

"(the think tank) advises the councillor on the promotion of urban agriculture in Rotterdam. In addition, the think tank has a function in building knowledge and exchanging information." (Food & the City, 2012)

4.3.3.4 A different approach: experiments in enabling state

Prior to the first municipal urban agriculture meeting in September, the municipality held round table discussions with researchers, agricultural entrepreneurs, urban buyers and initiators of urban projects in the course of 2010. These discussions revealed that "innovation is stagnating due to logistical and communication constraints" (Food & the City, 2012). These limitations were on the agenda at the urban agriculture meeting. At this meeting, approximately 70 stakeholders (described by the municipality in Food&theCity as farmers, entrepreneurs, residents and civil society organisations) took part in thematic discussions about these logistical and communication limitations:

- The advantages and disadvantages of a cooperative and possible alternatives;
- The conditions for sustainable agriculture around the city;
- Small-scale agriculture in the city.

In addition to the councillor's commitment, the meeting generated hopeful enthusiasm within the network of initiatives. For Fontein and Van Oorschot, the councillor's support was initially mainly an encouragement to further investigate the theme. The meetings organised by the municipality on urban agriculture were intended to inform and connect urban agriculture initiatives. And in practice, this is how it worked. The meetings gave rise to new coalitions in which people found each other, especially in the beginning. Annemieke Fontein was the driving force behind this, as head of the landscape

architecture department, but also as a connector between planology and design.

"We weren't sure whether all these food initiatives were just a trend or a real movement. That's why we changed the way we work as a municipality. We held a number of sessions in which we asked: what do you want? Connecting people and so on. What is the role of the government?" - Annemieke Fontein

"That was great fun, it was really diverse, with all kinds of different people attending, including someone from Campina. It really went in all directions." - Annemieke Fontein

Fontein and her colleagues were initially open to the idea. Was there a role for them and what should that role be? This different approach was in line with the idea of an enabling state that does not take the initiative itself but supports societal urban agriculture initiatives. It expresses a pragmatic solution-oriented approach, but it also suggests a collaborative openness to the contribution of urban agriculture initiatives to the city. The 2012 policy document puts it this way:

"The municipality's actions will mainly focus on creating favourable conditions for third-party initiatives, providing information, contributing to research and bringing parties together. Initiatives that contribute significantly to the municipal objectives can (where necessary and desirable) expect extra support from the municipality. If concrete results are not achieved over a longer period of time, the municipality will withdraw." (Food & the City, 2012)

What is expressly not mentioned are forms of financial support.

"Where necessary, the municipality is prepared to contribute ideas or facilitate matters. In the municipality's vision, urban agriculture in Rotterdam will be a unique combination of citizen initiative and entrepreneurship." (Food & the City, 2012)

This gives the new approach a Neoliberal flavour, in which urban agriculture – in addition to being a form of citizen participation – is presented as a special kind of emerging niche market.

4.3.3.5 Enthusiasm and scepticism among planners

The emerging phenomenon of urban agriculture was grist to the mill for planners who wanted to create more green space in the city, because of its broad appeal and the way it illustrated an integrated approach to green space. Planologists in particular were enthusiastic about a more integrated, Post-Structuralist view of space as a social construct: the city redefined as a fertile, edible green landscape, co-produced by its residents.

For these planners, urban agriculture was an extra important factor in the process with the Green Plan and later the Green Year. The ambition to put public green space on the map among administrators and policymakers was given an extra boost by urban agriculture. Especially when Councillor van Huffelen became involved. While the allotments at Zestienhoven initially had to make way for housing, during that period they became part of the story of Park Zestienhoven, with artist Gina Kranendonk as the driving force.

The Luchtsingel, which provided space for various urban agriculture initiatives, is another example of a grassroots movement that was given space at that time.

"All those places have remained or served as extra weight in the balance to get things off the ground elsewhere. (...) The food story was a very important angle, also to bring parties together, including groups with different backgrounds."
- Nico Tillie

But access to land in the city was not a given. Whereas farmers in rural areas have a natural position on the land, the city was virtually uncharted territory. The possibilities for urban agriculture lay in the temporary use of vacant land, the use of roofs and the participatory management of public green spaces. As outlined earlier, from the outset there were reservations about public green spaces and the management of vacant land among the municipal services that maintain public green spaces and the Real Estate Department.

4.3.3.6 Symposium Space for Urban Agriculture in Rotterdam: a polemical vision from the bottom up

During those years, Eetbaar Rotterdam organised various activities *, each of which contributed in its own way to the discussion on urban agriculture and established connections between various parties from the private and public sectors.

In 2011, a study developed by the undersigned in collaboration with Eetbaar Rotterdam was published. The presentation took place at a self-organised symposium sponsored by Innovatienetwerk. The study was received by Alderman Van Huffelen. The study views the planning of urban agriculture as a means of achieving all kinds of social, spatial and environmental goals, and to this end, opportunities were identified for a number of different promising types of urban agriculture. The idea was to use this opportunity map to deploy urban agriculture in a more targeted manner in planning by specifically supporting certain types in certain locations and linking them to urban waste streams. It was an elaboration of the polemical vision of Eetbaar Rotterdam, which proposed a policy-transcending approach to planning that linked private initiative to diverse community goals in a radical, holistic way. This approach was developed by Eetbaar Rotterdam for the Rotterdam situation: the private, civic initiative was presented as (social) entrepreneurship, fitting in with the image of Rotterdam as a city of hard-working people ('don't talk, just do it'), and the common goals were in line with existing policy documents of the municipality of Rotterdam in the areas of public green space, health, employment and social cohesion. However, the proposed planning approach proved to be a bridge too far. In a press release at the time, the councillor referred to the study as a source of inspiration, but it seems to have had little influence on the urban agriculture policy that was formulated.

** In May 2011, the Edible Rotterdam Film Festival brought together 'visitors from across the country, ranging from policymakers and project developers to students and professional and amateur urban agriculture gardeners'. In 2012, it hosted the symposium "Het rendement van stadslandbouw" (2012), an 'expert meeting for professionals from the housing corporation sector and the world of commercial property development and property investment' on the various returns of urban agriculture. (Eetbaarrotterdam.nl,)*

4.3.3.7 Interdisciplinary challenge

The innovative interdisciplinary nature of urban agriculture made it difficult to fit into the compartmentalised structure of the municipality. Within the Economy Department (the spatial-economic branch of the Urban Development cluster), policy was developed for the so-called 'food cluster', but this focused on large companies in the food chain, from processing to logistics, which were often also linked to the port and the transit of food products to the European hinterland. Both urban agriculture and the farmers around the city were not really of interest to that department, because they were too small-scale *.

** The horticultural sector was an exception, as it was large enough and a global leader in terms of knowledge and technology.*

Other policy areas, however, were interested in the multiple values of urban agriculture, particularly in terms of social cohesion and health. These policy areas came together in the Think Tank for urban agriculture. This mainly consisted of parties focused on the city: the municipal departments of Social Affairs and Employment (SoZaWe), Public Works, the municipal Programma Duurzaam (its Sustainability Programme) and regional semi-governmental institutions GGD Regio Rijnmond and DCMR (Milieudienst Rijnmond). The civil servants involved were enthusiastic about the possibilities of urban agriculture. There was a shared feeling that many interests converge in public spaces: social, spatial and environmental. According to Think Tank member Josine van den Bogaard (GGD), the Think Tank arose from the need to coordinate things. For her, the integrated approach was self-evident.

"You have the greatest influence on people's health through their living environment, much more than through behavioural change." – Josine Bogaard

In practice, the interdisciplinary nature of urban agriculture was a recurring topic of discussion in the Think Tank. Which department is responsible for what? Was promoting green initiatives, including urban agriculture initiatives, a social or a spatial task? And does it make sense to divide them up, or should the theme continue to be approached in an integrated and therefore interdepartmental manner?

4.3.3.8 Programma Duurzaam: urban agriculture as a policy objective

An important task for the Think Tank was to develop policy proposals based on the discussions and explorations mentioned above. The theme of urban agriculture was included in the Sustainability Programme in 2011 under Task 6, 'Making the city greener'. This Sustainability Programme, subtitled 'Investing in sustainable growth', exudes a left-liberal ambition. The sustainability challenge is seen as an opportunity to realise 'a clean, green and healthy city' and 'a city that is economically strong, where companies are keen to establish themselves, entrepreneurs are given space and where attractive, high-quality work can be found'. It emphasises that sustainability in Rotterdam is a joint challenge for the government and social partners. In this framework, urban agriculture is also presented as one of the solutions for making the city greener under the heading 'How are we going to achieve these goals?':

"Many residents and entrepreneurs are already contributing to the realisation of our green ambitions. Under the banner of urban agriculture, for example, groups of residents and entrepreneurs in Rotterdam are already setting up initiatives. Organisations such as Eetbaar Rotterdam, Transition Town and Rotterdamse Oogst are striking examples of this. These organisations combine the need for healthy and sustainably produced food with other needs. Such as sustainably managed landscapes around the city and urban green spaces. And involving (especially young) Rotterdammers in food production through nature and environmental education. Urban agriculture is therefore an excellent means of achieving other goals." (Programma Duurzaam, 2011)

4.3.3.9 A five-point action plan: first concrete steps towards policy actions

With the Programma Duurzaam, urban agriculture was included as an objective in Rotterdam's policy, but in fact the programme did not mention anything about the role of the municipality in achieving that objective. Within the planning department, there was a need for policy guidelines that would provide planners with clarity about their role in relation to the professional questions they had. Fontein and Van Oorschot then decided to write a vision document with Jan Willem van der Schans. This eventually became the Food & The City document, but first an Action Plan was formulated with five action points.

"Taking into account its limited budgetary resources – but also recognising that food has the power to solve urban problems (such as obesity) – the municipal government did not develop an explicit food strategy, but rather sought to encourage bottom-up community initiatives and entrepreneurial initiatives. A Five-Point Action Plan was developed to (1) increase the visibility/accessibility of food grown in and around the city, (2) organise the short food supply chain (logistics, farmers' markets), (3) take local food into account in public procurement, (4) improve the long-term economic prospects of peri-urban farmers, and (5) promote edible green roofs in the city centre." (Schans, 2015).

Annemieke Fontein formulated these five action points based on discussions in the think tank. Three of the five action points focus specifically on the regional food system and peri-urban professional agriculture. Measures aimed at the city consisted of "promoting edible green roofs in the city centre" and "increasing the visibility and accessibility of food production in and around the city". The social and environmental components represented by the other members of the think tank were not yet clearly present in the Action Plan.

4.3.3.10 Food & The City: setting out intentions in policy

Together with Fontein Kees van Oorschot developed the Five-Point Action Plan into the policy document 'Food & the City. Stimuleren van stadslandbouw in en om Rotterdam' (Stimulating urban agriculture in and around Rotterdam), which was published in 2012. The document contains several substantive shifts and additions compared to the Action Plan. For example, health has been given a prominent place, at least at first glance. The role of the government in creating

preconditions has also been further elaborated. Environmental aspects are still given limited attention.

The policy document was adopted by the council, although this was not without difficulty because there were very different views on urban agriculture within the council. Attempts to embed the policy in health and education also failed because the then councillor De Jonge, who was responsible for these policy areas, had other priorities. The choices made regarding policy themes and the actions required to implement them show how the municipal planning department and the other departments represented in the Think Tank viewed urban agriculture at the time and how they sometimes seemed to struggle with the political demand to facilitate it. According to Van Oorschot, the resulting document is a compromise that only includes feasible actions *.

** As I remember the reception among initiators was fairly positive; they saw the fact that a policy document had been drawn up as recognition. Personally, I remember being disappointed by the lack of a planning vision for urban agriculture in the city, given the ambition we were trying to achieve with Eetbaar Rotterdam.*

This tension – between the informal, Collaborative approach taken so far and its embedding in the municipal apparatus based on Rational foundations – is reflected in the policy document. How do you establish a more open, experimental and interactive approach to stakeholders in policy?

The strategy that the municipality of Rotterdam wanted to adopt to promote urban agriculture has been elaborated in three main tasks linked to three themes on which the focus is placed: health, sustainable economy and spatial quality. These goals fit in both with the City Vision 2030 and the Sustainability Programme. The three themes are explained in more detail in Chapter 1, 'What does Rotterdam want to achieve with urban agriculture?'. Theme 3, 'Improving spatial quality', is defined as follows:

'" new form of agriculture, in which agricultural entrepreneurs focus much more directly on the nearby market of urban consumers, offers additional opportunities for preserving the valuable landscapes around the city. In the city too, a greener living environment can be achieved by creating vegetable and fruit gardens. This is in addition to the existing allotments." (Food & the City, 2012)

In Chapter 2, 'Strategy for promoting urban agriculture', the tasks are broken down into sections with associated actions. Here, the clear but somewhat artificial link between the main tasks and the three themes is interpreted more loosely. Under each of the three main tasks (referred to in that chapter as Focus 1, 2 and 3), actions in the field of spatial planning are formulated. This illustrates the intertwining of the policy areas, but does not contribute to the clarity of the policy document and the division of roles in its implementation.

Whereas Focus 1 'Health' and Focus 3 'Spatial quality' can be linked to specific municipal departments represented in the Think Tank (the GGD, the department of spatial planning), this is not so clear with Focus 2 'Sustainable economy'. Most parts of Focus 2 are aimed at the spatial and logistical planning of regional, city-oriented agriculture and short chains, and at supporting social parties such as farmers and parties in the (short) food chain. According to Van Oorschot, this was done to emphasise the economic feasibility of sustainable local chains.

However, it is unclear which departments will be responsible for this. At the time, the 'food cluster' within the Economics department was not yet involved in the Think Tank. The spatial measures for 'the valuable landscapes around the city', grouped under the heading 'Vital landscape', fell within the domain of the City Region, in which Van Oorschot himself was involved.

Policy for inner-city urban agriculture is elaborated in Focus 1 and especially Focus 3. Focus 1 'Health' emphasises in so many words that social and spatial policy must go hand in hand. The policy document explicitly states that 'this main task consists of two closely related components: "healthy food" and "new community gardens". Information about 'healthy food' must be linked to increasing 'the number of care institutions with gardens where food is grown and allowing other community gardens to grow further'. This reflects the vision of Think Tank member Josine van den Bogaard (GGD) that the greatest influence on people's health is through their living environment. How the municipality intends to increase this number is not specified.

Focus 3 'Spatial quality' focuses on the 'main task of making Rotterdam an attractive city to live in for all residents'. 'Urban agriculture can contribute to more varied public green space in residential areas and greater involvement of local residents in public spaces', according to the explanation under the section 'facilitating initiatives by residents and social organisations'.

4.3.3.11 Food & the City: Goals, actions and division of roles

In order to better understand the policy document and to get an idea of what the municipality meant by facilitating urban agriculture, the proposed actions have been analysed per focus and section. Chapter 2 of the document lists five ways in which the municipality wants to facilitate initiatives:

- creating favourable conditions for third-party initiatives
- providing information
- contributing to research
- bringing parties together
- extra commitment from the municipality to initiatives that contribute significantly to municipal objectives

Figure 4.4 (p. 100) provides an overview of the actions per focus/main task and compares them with the methods of facilitation.
For each action, an assessment was made of how the municipality facilitates it, whether the action has a measurable objective, whether the role of the municipality is clear and what the result of the action is.

The actions formulated are sometimes quite specific and sometimes more general in nature. Their objectives are usually measurable, but the actions that are supposed to lead to those objectives are sometimes unclear. It is also unclear which department is responsible for implementing them. This can sometimes be deduced from the list of contact persons per subject at the back of the policy document.

The policy document serves as a loose guideline for spatial planning policy in the next two to three years. It attempts to present the policy for the city and the surrounding area in a coherent manner, but on closer inspection, the policy for each area has its own dynamics, both in the policy document and in the implementation of the policy. It is therefore relevant to discuss the two areas; city and countryside, separately.

4.3.3.12 Implementation of policy in the city

This study focuses on urban agriculture initiatives. If we adhere to the proposed policy in the document, the actions under Main Tasks Focus 1 Health and Focus 3 Spatial Quality are particularly relevant to these initiatives.

With regard to Focus 1 Health, the actions seem to lie mainly with the Municipal Health Service (GGD). The 'increase in the number of community gardens at healthcare institutions' has been implemented at the Humanitas residential care complex in Noord, the Dantetuin in IJsselmonde, and the borough of Kralingen supported a garden at the Pniel nursing home (De Geheime Tuin). Since 2010, the Municipal Health Service has also been using GIDS (Healthy in the City) funds to support various green initiatives that promote greenery and health, such as the Food Garden, the Green Connection and Hotspot Hutspot.

The actions under Focus 3 Spatial Quality are largely aimed at 'creating good conditions for urban agriculture initiatives', in particular actions 1, 4, 6 and 7. An overview of the results shows that this has only been successful to a limited extent:

1) the 'overview map of available land for urban agriculture' was investigated but proved unfeasible in practice because it was difficult to keep it up to date. Another factor was the reluctance of the Real Estate Department to take potential building land off the market for temporary use (pending the recovery of the housing market after the economic crisis).

2) The intention that 'the municipality will focus its own programmes on maximising efforts to create vegetable gardens in the ten most urbanised neighbourhoods' is rather vaguely formulated. What does 'maximising' mean and how do you focus on maximising efforts? It is therefore unclear whether and how this has been achieved. According to Van Oorschot, more attention has been paid to this in the designs for public spaces created by the municipality itself. Designers in particular showed positive interest in this.

3) The municipality has produced 'a leaflet describing the opportunities and preconditions for creating vegetable gardens, including soil aspects'. In collaboration with Eetbaar Rotterdam, an expert meeting was organised and the results were incorporated into the policy of DCMR and GGD (soil and health). There was a page on the municipality's website, but it has not been available for years *. The leaflet is no longer available. In fact, it was aimed more at citizens than at initiators, who are the focus of this study.

** A page has now been put online again containing information about urban agriculture, with a helpful FAQ section. Of the initiatives discussed in Chapter V, Voedseltuin, Dakakker and Vredestuin Pompenburg (by Groengoed) are mentioned as examples (Rotterdam, n.d.)*

		Ways of facilitating: creating favourable conditions	providing information	contributing to research	bringing parties together	extra commitment to initiatives	is the objective measurable?	is the role of the municipality clear?	was the objective obtained?
FOCUS 1 Health									
1a Healthy food	extending information on healthy food		■				+	+	
1b New community-gardens	**increase in the number of community gardens at healthcare institutions**	▒			▒	▒	+	+/-	
	set up network knowledge exchange between schools		▒		■		+	+	
FOCUS 2 Sustainable economy									
2a Vital landscape	**research into the opportunities for urban agriculture in the region**			■			+	+	
	utilise own land for urban farming enterprises & encouraging agricultural land management organisations	■				▒	+	+	Polder Schieveen
	adjust rules that hinder the growth of urban agriculture	■					+	+/-	
2b Stimulate sales	stimulate sales of local products facilitate Farmers' Market	■				■	+	+	Rotterdamse Oogst Markt
	facilitate external parties in setting up logistics for regional products.			■	■		+	+/-	support to Rechtstreex
	organise networking events for producers and (potential) buyers.				■		+	+	Handels-missies
	include standard in catering tenders for regional products	■			▒		+	+	was tried but turned out difficult
2c Green labour market	inventory of green labour market and training & recommendations	▒		■			+/-	+/-	
2d Reduction foodmiles	DCMR: developing a plan with agri-food transporters in the region			■	■		+	+/-	
FOCUS 3 Spatial quality									
3a Facilitating initiatives by residents and civic organisations	**make an overview map of available land for urban agriculture**	■		■			+	+	was tried but was too complicated
	maximise efforts to create vegetable gardens in the ten most urbanised neighbourhoods	▒				▒	+/-	+/-	support to R'damse Munt
	make a leaflet describing the opportunities and preconditions for creating vegetable gardens		■				+	+	leaflet and webpage
	draw up standard contract for granting use of land to residents and civic organisations	■					+	+	
	annual competition for the best citizens' initiative in the field of urban agriculture		▒			▒	+	+	
	develop proposal for a 'multi-trip ticket' for the deployment of civil service experts	■					+	+	
	encourage the creation of rooftop gardens for food production in the city centre	■	▒				+	+	part of Green Roof programme
3b The new green	**Establish a point of contact within municipal organisation & a programme for professional knowledge exchange**	■					+	+/-	

Figure 4.4 Analysis of Food & the City policy actions in relation to ways of facilitating Analysis of policy actions per focus/main task in terms of consistency and implementation.

4) The 'standard contract for granting use of land to residents' groups and social organisations' has been drawn up, but has never been put into use.

5) The 'annual competition for the best citizens' initiative for urban agriculture' has never been held. However, the municipality's contribution to Urban Agriculture Day, which was held in Rotterdam in 2013 and where the annual Urban Agriculture Award was presented, can be seen in this light.

** A 'multi-trip ticket' card as was used in Dutch public transport in the late 20th century.*

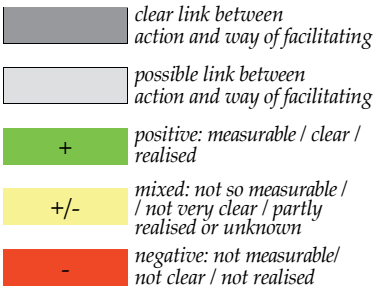
6) The proposal for a 'strippenkaart * for the deployment of civil service experts' that 'would be developed together with the boroughs' remained an intention, probably because there was little scope for civil servants to devote hours to urban agriculture anyway.

7) The creation of rooftop gardens for food production in the city centre by making knowledge available and providing a financial contribution from the Green Roofs programme has been achieved insofar as the opportunity has been provided through this existing programme, but it is not known how many edible green roofs have been realised. The best-known example, Dakakker, was originally to be co-financed through this subsidy, but was ultimately paid for from prize money when the Luchtsingel (of which Dakakker was a part) won the Stadsinitiatief (City Initiative) **. A number of 'information days' were held together with the Dakakker initiators to share knowledge about edible green roofs with the general public.

*** A yearly competition for civic initiatives that ran from 2012 to 2015 in which initiatives could win funding from the municipality based on a public vote.*

Whereas these actions focus on preconditions for initiatives, with the municipality as the expert setting the conditions, the 'new green' component focuses on the internal promotion of knowledge about urban agriculture and technical innovation within the municipal organisation. This is one of the few actions that recognise the need for the municipality to also change and reflect on a possible different position in the decision-making process. However, a 'clear point of contact for urban agriculture' has never been established, nor has the 'programme for professional knowledge exchange' been implemented, despite the concrete ambition to 'connect with Creatief Beheer'. Discussions did take place with Creatief Beheer, but it proved difficult for the municipality to align itself with their ideas. Creatief Beheert's perspective on this is discussed in the next chapter.

Legend Figure 4.4



Each action was assessed in terms of how it facilitates (based on the five ways distinguished in Section 4.3.3.11), with a distinction being made between a clear link and a possible link (where this link is less clear). In addition, an assessment was made of whether the action has a measurable objective, whether the role of the municipality is clear and what the result of the action is.

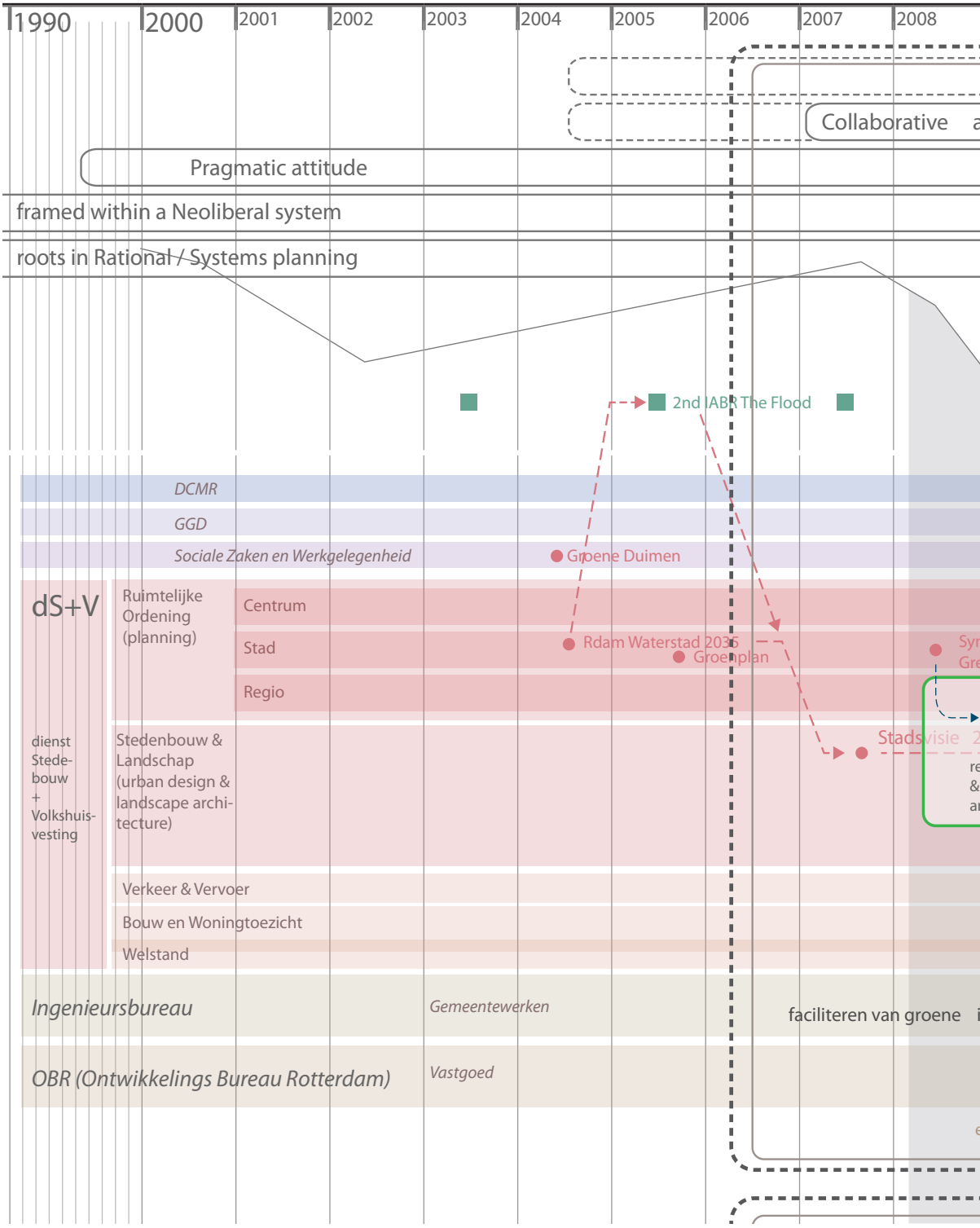
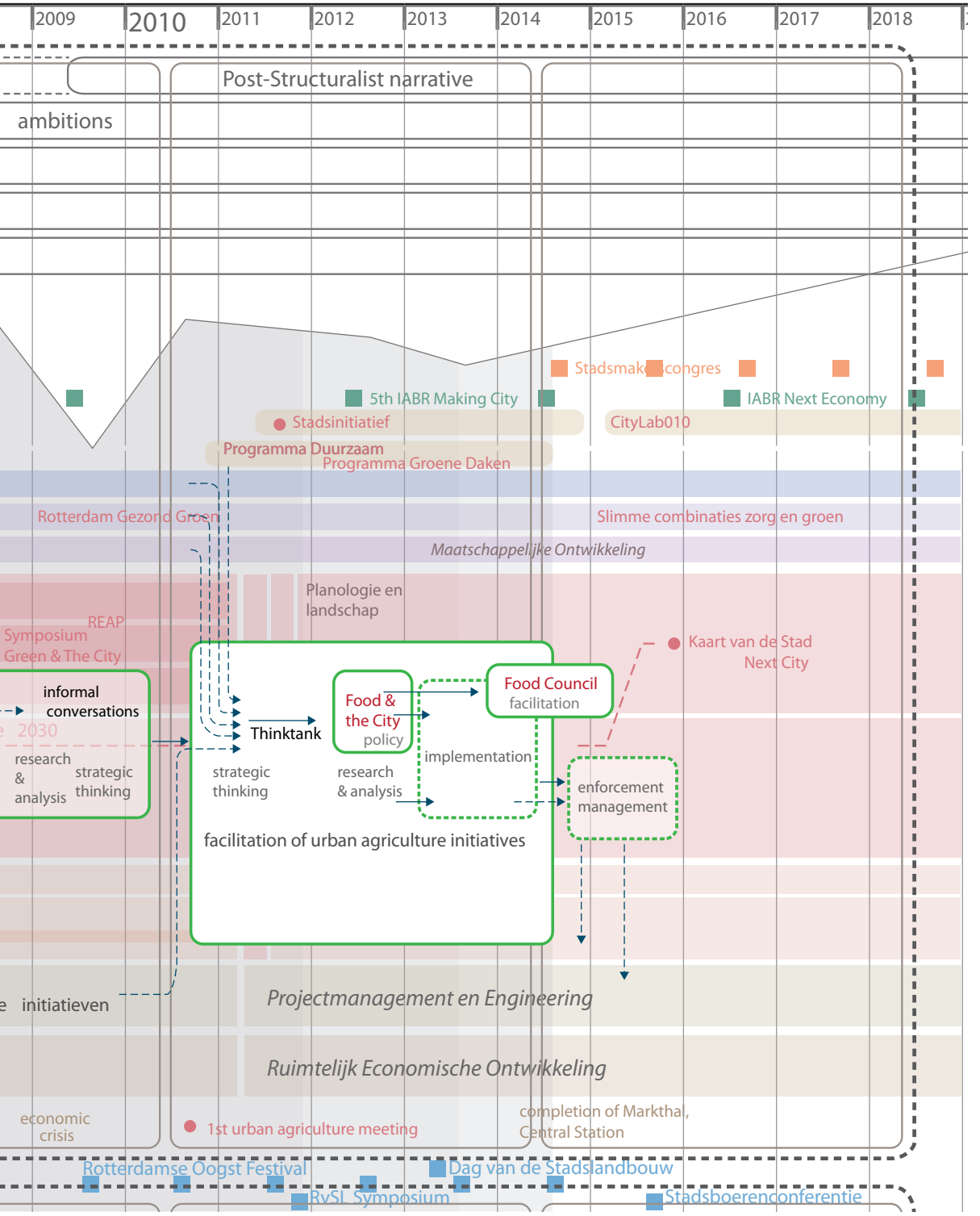


Figure 4.5 Timeline of the development of municipal urban agriculture policy in relation to planning policy and societal developments. This diagram builds further on Figure 4.3. The boxes outlined in green show the different phases in the development of urban agriculture policy. It shows how certain planning steps are repeated and that



implementation and policy development sometimes ran parallel. Policy outcomes such as the policy document Food & the City and the Food Council are shown in red. Where the green boxes are dotted, the outcome is less tangible. Civic urban agriculture events are shown in blue.

In the interviewees' retrospective view of this period, these actions play only a limited role, possibly because many of them were not implemented. When asked, Van Oorschot confirms this impression. Both Van Oorschot and Fontein do point to the many connections that were made at the various meetings organised by the municipality.

In addition to the actions discussed above, a number of projects were supported by designers and administrators from the municipality in the period 2010-2014: in particular Uit Je Eigen Stad, Wollefoppengroen and Rotterdamse Munt. In addition, support was provided at the borough level to Wollefoppengroen, various gardens of Transition Town Rotterdam (later Groengoed), Nu Hier and Rotterdamse Munt. This can be seen as fulfilling the promise made in the introduction to Chapter 2 that 'initiatives that contribute significantly to municipal objectives (where necessary and desirable) can expect extra support from the municipality', although the policy document only mentions the Boeren en Burenmarkt (later Rotterdamse Oogstmarkt) in this context. All things considered, this sometimes informal support seems to be the most substantial implementation of the spatial planning policy for urban agriculture in the city. In this context, Fontein mentions the inner-city neighbourhood initiatives supported by the Municipal Health Service (GGD) and the department of spatial planning. The initiatives mentioned above, which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, differ in ambition but represent the tip of the iceberg; an inventory commissioned by DCMR counted more than 100 community gardens. The interaction between municipal planners and the initiators of the above-mentioned initiatives will be examined in more detail in Chapter VI.

The environmental opportunities of urban agriculture, as identified in the aforementioned REAP approach (Tillie et al, 2009), are not mentioned in the policy document. Only the opportunities for more sustainable logistics with shorter chains are discussed. However, these environmental opportunities are sometimes taken up or put on the agenda by other departments. The REAP approach was included in the initial plans to transform the Merwevierhavens from a port area into a residential and working area. For example, serious consideration was given to the possibility of connecting Uit Je Eigen Stad to residual energy from a power plant located in the area. And in 2014, the Soil Department attempted to create an interactive GIS version * of the opportunity map from the study Ruimte voor Stadslandbouw in Rotterdam (Room for Urban Agriculture in Rotterdam).

** At the initiative of Kees de Vette of the municipal Soil Department, Romanian intern Vlad Dumitrescu spent a long summer gathering municipal GIS data that corresponded to the layers in this opportunity map. This proved to be very complicated. Not all data was available or up to date.*

4.3.3.13 Implementation on a regional scale

Although this study focuses on initiatives in the city, the implementation of urban agriculture policy on a regional scale provides insight into the development of the planning department and how it views planning at this time. In particular, the section on 'Vital landscapes' under Focus 2 Sustainable Economy contained spatial policy. The three actions focus on stimulating urban agriculture in the region by 1) conducting a study into opportunities in the region; 2) using

own land for urban agriculture; and 3) amending rules that hinder growth. No official study has ever been conducted * and no changes have been made to regulations. However, the council's own land has been successfully used for urban agriculture. This was realised through the work of Kees van Oorschot for the City Region. As in the city, the crisis offered unexpected opportunities.

** Although the Trade Missions (see section 4.3.3.14) and the subsequent Short Supply Chain Masterclasses (see section 4.3.4.1) could be regarded as forms of field research or action research.*

Van Oorschot was part of a group of people working on a regional and urban scale on recreation, nature and landscape developments on the outskirts of the city. In that capacity, he did a lot of work for the City Region (which has since ceased to exist and been partially absorbed into the Rotterdam The Hague Metropolitan Region). This regional partnership commissioned the municipality of Rotterdam, particularly the planology and mobility departments, to develop projects on a regional scale, such as recreational areas and cycle routes. This was often on the territory of other municipalities, as Rotterdam does not have much countryside: the Schieveen polder and the Vlinderstrik area north of Rotterdam, and a small section of the Oranjebuitenpolder in Hoek van Holland.

In his work for the Rotterdam City Region, Van Oorschot received input partly from the municipality of Rotterdam and partly from the City Region and its associated civil service. The City Region was led by Van Huffelen, as alderman for Outdoor Space on behalf of Rotterdam, and Jan van Belzen, who, as mayor of Barendrecht, was the administrator on behalf of the participating municipalities. They worked very closely together and, despite their very different backgrounds, got on very well. When major cutbacks were announced by the national government in 2010, they decided not to argue about it, but to take joint action.

This was sorely needed. Because the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, under then State Secretary Bleker (who took office in October 2010), withdrew part of the money that had been promised for new nature areas, plans previously made by the City Region had to be changed. Bleker not only scrapped ecological connection zones, but also the funding for provincial and regional nature development programmes. This coincided with the standstill in construction as a result of the 2008 crisis. The question arose: what are we going to do in the city now? And these parallel developments led to a crisis situation. There was therefore a lot of consultation with the Province, a lot of consultation with the portfolio holder, the regional municipalities, the portfolio holder and the civil service of the City Region.

"There was no great sense of crisis, no panic. But we did have our work cut out for us with the question: what are we going to do now?" - Kees van Oorschot

At the same time as the central government's cutbacks, there was a lot of substantive criticism of the regional plans within the municipal administration of Rotterdam (Urban Development), for example regarding the purchase of agricultural land for the construction of recreational areas.

Professional colleagues noted that some of these newly constructed areas were poorly visited and already outdated in terms of design, as they were based on picnics and static recreation, while in practice people were increasingly engaging in active recreation, such as cycling, running and other activities *.

"So the question was increasingly being asked in the professional world and also in our department: are we still on the right track?" - Kees van Oorschot

At that time, all these things came together: less funding, many redundancies in the department, projects being cancelled, and a great deal of substantive reconsideration. In the rural area around Rotterdam, the department tried to make agreements with farmers or stimulate developments to make agricultural land that was not managed by land management organisations such as Natuurmonumenten or the Recreatieschap ** more attractive. All kinds of negotiations about land were underway, or it had already been purchased. And then it turned out that there was not enough money to develop the land as originally intended, with a standard programme for a recreational area.

"Then the question was: okay, what now?"
"And then people came along and said, you should leave the farmers where they are and just grow vegetables in the city." - Kees van Oorschot

Within the City Region, it was difficult to simply impose this different approach on other municipalities, because it was the civil servants within those municipalities who had to sit down with the farmers again. But on Rotterdam territory, Van Huffelen was the responsible councillor and, with her support, the planning department was able to re-enter into discussions with the parties involved, such as Natuurmonumenten.

"Within our own area, this approach did lead to major changes, (...) there we also completely redesigned the entire project." - Kees van Oorschot

In Schieveen, it had been agreed with Natuurmonumenten that the area would be developed as wetland nature, to compensate for the Schieveen Business Park that was planned in this polder. Rotterdam wanted to renege on the agreements and create a completely different layout. This required "complicated and, at first, rather painful discussions" with Natuurmonumenten, but in the end they agreed, and in 2013 a new plan was adopted: the 'Schieveen Nature and Recreation Plan'. In the same year, the municipality launched a competition for farmers to come up with new ideas, for which they created an assessment framework with Jan Willem van der Schans. The plans were assessed on economic feasibility, contribution to the connection with the city and its residents, and good meadow bird management. Meadow bird protection replaced the wetland nature. Incidentally, the wetland nature reserve also proved unfeasible because of the airport, as birds that could pose a danger to aviation would nest there. So the original plan was scrapped after all.

** According to both Van Oorschot and Van der Schans this was confirmed by research conducted by the municipality of Rotterdam, which was requested, set up, and published by the Think Tank, but I have not been able to trace the study in question.*

*** Natuurmonumenten is a large nature conservancy organisation managing more than 112.000 hectares of land. The Recreatieschap Midden-Delfland managed land for municipalities in the region north of Rotterdam. Later its tasks were taken over by Staatsbosbeheer (which started out as a state-owned forest production and management organisation and now manages over 268.000 hectare of nature area.*

Around the city, the ideas behind urban agriculture had a direct influence on the planning of large-scale, ongoing projects. This led to a change in planning policy in rural areas. In the years that followed, Natuurmonumenten embraced the approach of working with the municipality of Rotterdam and farmers in the area to develop nature-inclusive agriculture. In the Schieveen polder, farmers who wanted to focus more on the city, such as sheep farmer Oosthoek, were given an opportunity, and in the Vlinderstrik area, the nature organisation is working with Herenboeren, among others. The municipality's development of this agricultural nature reserve will be completed in 2024.

4.3.3.14 Urban and regional connection: Trade missions and the Food Council

In the second half of Van Huffelen's term of office, most of the actions in the policy document had been set in motion or abandoned. Various urban agriculture initiatives were being designed or implemented with the support of the planning department. Work was underway to redevelop the outskirts of Rotterdam. Meanwhile, the term 'urban agriculture' came to cover an increasingly broad group of people, including farmers around the city and food processors in the city.

"On the one hand, you had the social entrepreneurs, who use urban agriculture as a means to achieve social goals. On the other hand, there were people who simply enjoyed having a garden with their neighbours. But you also had food producers in the city (honey, stroopwafels, fermentation, beer). And then there was a group of farmers, some specialising in milk, others in meat. And then you had a group south of the city with more arable farming." – Annemieke Fontein

The planning department's attention shifted from inner-city initiatives to the connection with the surrounding countryside. An inventory of gardens was still made. The municipality wanted to connect processors from the city with producers in the countryside. Van Huffelen and her team then came up with the Trade Missions.

"(...) after that, we focused on city-country connections, because that was a direct spatial planning issue. The Trade Missions also fit in with that." - Kees van Oorschot

"And that was the most enjoyable part, in our opinion – at least, I always thought so. We had to go on trade missions to the countryside. Just like (Mayor) Aboutaleb does to other cities. We have to bring food from the countryside to the city. So Annemieke and I had to organise bus trips to the countryside." - Kees van Oorschot

The trade missions were a way of putting the idea of local, city-oriented agriculture into practice in the outlying areas of the surrounding municipalities. There were trade missions to Westland, Midden-Delfland, Rhoon and Hoeksche Waard. Through introductions and exchanges, various parties became part of the same idea: a kind of Greater Rotterdam city region food system. The Trade Missions, where the councillor 'stood in high heels in the cowshed' and acted as a matchmaker between local farm products and restaurants in Rotterdam, made this idea tangible.

In 2013, the second national Urban Agriculture Day took place in Rotterdam, co-organised by the municipality. There, the idea for a regional Food Council was launched: the Food Council Rotterdam. It is worth quoting the press release in its entirety, as it is one of the few written sources about the intentions of this Food Council:

"The city of Rotterdam will have a food council with more than twenty experts in areas such as food, education, leisure and housing. These members will be responsible for expanding and professionalising urban agriculture and advising the city council on sustainable food chains in and around the city.

This was announced on Thursday by Rotterdam D66 councillor Alexandra van Huffelen (sustainability) at a conference on urban agriculture in Rotterdam. In principle, the members of the regional Food Council will themselves remove the obstacles they encounter in order to achieve sustainable food chains.

The participants in the council – some of whom are also producers or buyers – have been asked to contribute to the growth of the number of arable and livestock farms in and around the city, so that food no longer has to travel long distances, which is better for the environment," said the councillor. What's more, if more people eat food from the city, it will also become more profitable for producers to grow or cultivate it." (ANP, 2013)

According to Van Oorschot, the idea was that the Food Council would become a pwerful body that could take over Alexandra van Huffelen's role. Its composition was very diverse, with both inner-city food initiatives and representatives of large food processing companies and producers, as well as politicians from the surrounding municipalities. But it was difficult to find a chairperson. There was no remuneration and no clear mandate. Eventually, Agnes van Aardenne, a former politician and administrator with roots in the region, was found willing to take on the role. She had been involved in Westland in various capacities and was familiar with the regional business community.

4.3.4 2014-2018 Embedding and implementation of urban agriculture policy

4.3.4.1 Political transfer

When Van Huffelen's term of office was coming to an end in 2014, the situation was assessed and the future considered: what had been achieved, what needed to be done now and how could this be continued? A political change of guard is always a vulnerable moment in the continuation of policy and a test of its sustainability. The Food Council was set up as a way of safeguarding Van Huffelen's legacy. In addition, the civil service was already looking at where the policy theme of urban agriculture could be placed in the next council. The changing political climate played a role in this. The new alderman for Outdoor Space (Eerdmans) was not interested in urban agriculture, but alderman Struijvenberg (Employment and Economy) was inter-

ested in the theme of social entrepreneurship. In collaboration with the Social Development Department (Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling - MO) *, Fontein commissioned a study into the socio-economic role of urban agriculture initiatives (Bakker, 2016). Agricultural economist Tom Bakker investigated the economy, impact and viability of urban agriculture initiatives to see whether the demand from these types of initiatives for more structural financing and participation in tendering processes (particularly for care and welfare) could be substantiated. Based on the social and economic impact shown in the report, the civil servants involved from Social Development and the planning department argued that these initiatives should be included in those tendering processes for a certain percentage. Social Development took this further.

** previously known as Social Affairs and Employment (Sociale Zaken & Werkgelegenheid - SoZaWe)*

Under Alderman Struijvenberg, Amelia Oei and Nick van den Berg from the Economy Department took up the theme of urban agriculture as part of the 'food cluster', but they added their own emphases. Supported by Jan Willem van der Schans, they continued with Short Supply Chain Masterclasses (2015 and 2016), which mainly focused on urban farmers. They also visited the World Food Expo in Milan with a delegation of companies. The commercial approach excluded many socially motivated initiatives.

4.3.4.2 Delineation of the department's agenda

The reasons why the planning department at that moment withdrew from the subject of urban agriculture are mixed. The role of urban agriculture in policy issues surrounding vacant land in the city and alternative ways of achieving nature conservation goals around the city had run its course after the 2008-2014 crisis. The impression among many of the planners interviewed is that during that period, many of the driving forces behind these initiatives returned to more regular, paid work.

"Around 2015, initiatives began to disappear again. Around that time, a study from Amsterdam on green initiatives in garden cities was published, which also showed that without a driving force, many small initiatives were often not sufficiently embedded to continue." - Annemieke Fontein

A more permanent presence of urban agriculture in the city was much more complicated and not self-evident for many planners. The map of available space proved difficult because the department of Real Estate did not want to reveal its strategic position and influence (on the property market) and did not want to commit to a fixed period in which a piece of land could be made temporarily available. In addition, no one wanted to bear the costs of keeping such a map up to date. Also, urban agriculture focused on food production was and is seen as too monofunctional. As a physical-spatial task, urban agriculture was not a high priority: it was just one of many functions competing for scarce space. The importance of urban agriculture initiatives was recognised, but did not fit in with the spatial planning policy objectives of the time.

"There is simply a shortage of green space. In that context, urban agriculture in the sense of just a patch of land where you grow potatoes is not very likely."
- Marije ten Kate

4.3.4.3 Ambivalent attitude within the organisation

In addition to these substantive considerations and political changes, reluctance within the department itself also played a role in the planning department's retreat. From the outset, there were reservations within the department about the urban agriculture experiment. On the one hand, it was embraced, but on the other, it was not allowed to distract from what was considered the department's actual mission and agenda. Especially in the beginning, Fontein and Van Oorschot had to navigate between the expectations of the councillor and those of the management.

"Within the organisation, what Kees and I were doing at the time was also seen as unusual. We were called out on it. We weren't allowed to log all those hours. But it was also held up as an example of a new, facilitative approach by the government. It was very ambiguous." - Annemieke Fontein

"I didn't really have time for this and had difficult conversations with my manager. He didn't want me to spend time on it." "So we said to each other: how are we going to do this? We promised Alexandra we would spend time on it."
- Kees van Oorschot

So they didn't record all their hours and spent time in the evenings and at weekends. Van Oorschot, for example, regularly visited initiatives with the councillor at weekends. This personal investment was apparently part of the job. Gradually, the department began to show more appreciation. More and more value was attached to connecting with society and with the city. And Fontein and Van Oorschot were asked to share their experiences.

"The funny thing is that at one point there was also a shift within the organisation. Then we were also put on a pedestal, at times. At meetings about how civil servants could think outside the box and achieve something off the beaten track, we were always asked to explain how we did that with urban agriculture. (...) and then you just did it again and didn't complain about all those hours."
- Kees van Oorschot

4.3.4.4 Termination of the Think Tank

In fact, the spatial planning department distanced itself from the interdisciplinary collaboration between departments on the policy theme of urban agriculture. This was also insisted upon by the management: the department of planning deals with spatial planning issues. This meant a return to a sectoral approach, which was marked by the abolition of the Urban Agriculture Think Tank. This was to the dismay of those involved in the Think Tank.

"Urban agriculture and those green initiatives; that was the end of that. I felt like I had been sent back to the social domain. And I wanted to build that bridge – we had that bridge – with the physical domain." - Josine van den Bogaard

A distinction was made between the social domain, where virtually all small-scale urban initiatives ended up, and the physical domain, which dealt with the spatial integration of larger initiatives in and around the city. The same distinction was also made within the Municipal Health Service (GGD). Van den Bogaard's team was split into a Health Promotion department (focused on behaviour) and a Health Protection department (classic physical environmental themes such as soil and water). While Van den Bogaard was in Health Protection, Groen fell under Health Promotion, where other people continued to work on the theme.

According to Bogaard the GGD did make efforts to establish a more structural link between healthcare and green spaces. The new role of the municipality in the implementation of the Social Support Act (WMO) * as of 2015 should make it possible to use a small portion of these substantial resources, which were to be distributed locally, for social urban agriculture and other green projects. Social cost-benefit analyses had shown that these projects resulted in savings in healthcare expenditure (see Abma et al., 2013). To this end the GGD organised a working conference in January 2015, entitled "Smart combinations of healthcare and green spaces", which was later followed by four thematic workshops (self-management, well-being, reintegration, healthcare/individual health). There was considerable interest in Rotterdam and beyond.

** Wmo 2015 (Wet Maatschappelijk Ondersteuning) : The Social Support Act makes municipalities responsible for the care of people who are not self-reliant.*

"However, the colleagues involved in implementing the WMO found smart combinations too challenging. Nevertheless, this gave rise to initiatives such as De Groene Connectie (The Green Connection)." - Josine van den Bogaard

4.3.4.5 The Food Council fades out

Facilitating the network around food, urban agriculture and short supply chains was now the responsibility of the Food Council. However, this did not properly take off. The approach of the chair, with her background in the Westland region, did not fit well with the Food Council's original aim of connecting producers and initiators in the city with farmers and short-chain parties around the city. This sometimes led to friction between her and the municipality. In addition, several participants emphasised the non-committal nature of the Food Council and the participating parties. The diverse composition (in which the worlds that the Trade Missions were trying to unite came together) and the lack of a shared, underlying vision also played a role in this.

"And yes, sometimes I really thought, gosh, this isn't what it was all about. You got all these bigger companies that joined in for the goodwill. (...) There was an idea for a space in the Markthal where the short chain would be realised. We were quite far along with that. Local products, cooking classes, also for children, broadcasts on the local TV station. In the end, none of that happened because no one was willing to stick their neck out for it."
- Josine van den Bogaard

The Markthal did experiment with stands for local farmers, but this proved financially unfeasible for the farmers' cooperative that made use of them. The cooking classes mentioned by Van den Bogaard were to take place in the 'World of Taste', a promotional space in the Markthal that was to be run as a cooperative of local and regional organisations active in the food sector. Ultimately, this initiative did not receive sufficient support from these organisations to be implemented (Hulsink et al., 2017).

The Food Council had virtually no influence on the inner-city initiatives that are the subject of this study. The situation may be different for developments in agriculture around the city, in neighbouring municipalities such as Midden-Delfland and Westland, but this has not been investigated further.

Due to a lack of budget, support and policy embedding, the Food Council slowly died out. It is telling that the Food Council was never officially dissolved and that there is virtually nothing to be found online about the Food Council or its agenda except for the press release quoted above.

4.3.4.6 The result of four years of food policy

With urban agriculture as the catalyst, an attempt was made in Rotterdam to develop an integrated approach to food planning. The support of the councillor played a crucial role here, as did the input of citizens and the antennae of the departments of spatial planning and health to hear this input. However, none of those involved oversaw the implications of such integrated food planning. The task exceeded the responsibility of one councillor or one department. The Think Tank was a reasonably successful attempt to involve the relevant departments within the municipality and from the semi-public sector. However, the Economy Department, which dealt with the food industry in Rotterdam, was never really involved. And the councillor found little support among fellow councillors from other coalition parties and had to make way for other parties after the elections. This limited the effectiveness of the food policy as formulated in the Food & the City policy document. Much of the policy implemented took place more informally or with temporary resources, sometimes with support from the City Region, where Van Huffelen was an administrator on behalf of Rotterdam. All these limitations determined the margins within which planners could operate and this influenced the conceptualisations of their work.

4.4 Conceptualisations of planning in municipal urban agriculture policy

The municipal approach to urban agriculture was seen by all those involved as (an attempt at) a different form of policy, fitting in with the image of the enabling state. It was a different way of planning in response to a spontaneously emerging social phenomenon in unusual social circumstances: the crisis of 2008-2014. Many of the conceptualisations of planning discussed in section 4.2 can be recognised in the intentions, development and implementation of municipal urban agriculture policy.

4.4.1 Intentions

The intentions were initially Pragmatic, in the sense that urban agriculture could make a city that had come to a standstill in terms of development (temporarily) more lively and greener, thereby activating citizens who were unemployed due to the stagnant economy or who were unable to participate in society for other reasons.

In addition, there was a Collaborative intention to give more space to societal input as a government; not only from institutional parties such as housing corporations, but also from bottom-up civic initiatives. Can bottom-up civic initiative contribute to the city as an equal partner of the planning department? Could a shared vision of the role of urban agriculture be developed without (too much) guidance, but rather through open dialogue? It seems that this question was asked sincerely, but the planning department prematurely recoiled from the possible answer and the consequences of an inclusive, equal approach to civic partners in the planning process.

Finally, urban agriculture offered stories that encouraged a different way of looking at the city: the city as a landscape to be cultivated; the city and its surrounding area as a city food region where you can relax in the landscape where your food comes from and visit farmers to see how they produce healthy food sustainably; the city as a flow of energy, water and nutrients. From a Post-Structuralist perspective, these narratives had the potential to inspire a more relational approach to urban planning.

4.4.2 Policy

The tension between the Rational approach embedded in the municipal apparatus and these new, more relational approaches is reflected, as mentioned earlier, in the policy document Food & the City. Civic initiatives are partly placed in a Neoliberal market-oriented framework. Initiators are expected to have or develop a business model. In presentations from around 2015 Fontein and van Oorschot differentiated between 'commercial initiatives' (naming Uit Je Eigen Stad, Dakakker and Rotterdamse Munt) and social-economic initiatives (with Voedseltuin, Stadslandbouw Schiebroek-Zuid and Groengoed's Vredestuin Pompenburg as examples) .

There is a clear difference in dynamics between policy in the city and policy aimed at the surrounding area. Whereas farmers around the city were seen as entrepreneurs who, in their role as managers of farmland, had a clear stake in the development of the surrounding area, urban agriculture initiatives were seen as citizens who, based on a partial interest, were entering an area that was actually the domain of the planner and who still had to prove their worth. The approach to these inner-city initiators was therefore much more cautious and ambivalent. This is also because this group is more diverse, consisting of citizens and social entrepreneurs among others. In addition, real estate parties such as housing corporations and project developers were also classified as civic initiatives.

A classic Pragmatic-Rational emphasis on physical space limited the department's view of the interdisciplinary nature of urban agriculture. The value of urban agriculture initiatives was approached in a fairly unambiguous manner, despite the diverse policy composition of the Think Tank.

The first municipal urban agriculture meetings were set up with a Collaborative intention. However, a Collaborative approach in which those involved work on an equal footing towards a shared reality in a communicative planning process never really came to fruition at the city level. This was despite the intention to listen to the movement and its needs. The municipal planners stuck to their role as objective, Rational professionals who determine what is appropriate and what is not. Later, when the Food Council was set up, there was also Collaborative potential, but from the outset there were questions about its composition, which raises doubt to whether the conditions for an equal exchange were in place. And there was no prospect (financially or in terms of policy) of implementation. Financially, this had to come from the members of the Food Council themselves, which does not contribute to equality between members. And in terms of policy, there was no clear link to the municipal council.

A Post-Structuralist view of urban agriculture planning, as manifested in the creation of Rotterdam's River Landscape, where work was done on a joint cross-border and cross-disciplinary narrative, was given little space in urban agriculture policy. There were attempts to create connecting narratives from movements such as Transition Towns and Eetbaar Rotterdam (Edible Rotterdam), as well as from REAP, which was developed within the municipal Rotterdam Climate Initiative, and later the municipal contribution to the IABR 2014. However, these kinds of visions were not considered promising for the urban area (within city limits); too complicated or not important enough. There was a lack of support in the planning department for making urban agriculture too big, due to the physically modest nature of urban agriculture projects and the many space claims already placed on the city and its public space. In the outskirts, it was a different story. In the relatively small piece of countryside within the municipal boundaries, a new narrative could be developed in

which farmers, nature and the city were connected in a different way, thanks to cutbacks on new nature and the declining interest in the construction of more business parks. The idea of the Trade Missions was also a cross-border connecting narrative that offered a new perspective on the region.

But in relation to urban agriculture in the city, the image of municipal planning practice in those years remains predominantly a Pragmatic one. Collaborative intentions were gradually adjusted in light of the limitations of the prevailing Rational system. As a result, urban agriculture was mainly presented as a fun, temporary solution that could upgrade (or even 'brand') a place in times of crisis and that has societal value, but only a limited impact on the design of the city, despite the Collaborative intentions.

Retrospective view of the role of urban agriculture from the period after 2018

Looking back from the period in which the interviews were conducted (2019 to 2024), most of the planners interviewed believe that urban agriculture and municipal involvement in it did indeed have a broader impact. On the one hand, the municipality returned to normal from 2014 onwards, but on the other hand, there was a visible change in how civic initiatives were viewed. Several interviewees believe that urban agriculture has contributed to the growing attention for public green space and green initiatives within the municipality and local politics. This growing attention is reflected, for example, in the long-term programme 'Rotterdams Weerwoord' (Rotterdam climate adaptation and mitigation programme), which also supports green initiatives based on the theme of climate adaptation and mitigation, and in the programme 'Rotterdam gaat voor groen' (Rotterdam goes green). Although it has benefited less from this itself, urban agriculture has certainly contributed to the introduction of a more thematic, Post-Structuralist approach to planning in Rotterdam. Stimulating developments and concrete projects with social partners on the basis of a common narrative, such as the Rotterdam River Landscape, seems to have become part of planning practice. In the same way, urban agriculture has contributed to the introduction of a more collaborative approach to planning in Rotterdam, involving civic initiatives – the so-called yellow line within the Next City approach. At the same time, planners indicate that there is a renewed need for guidance and less facilitation. Planners want to regain control of their field, primarily in relation to market parties, but also in relation to citizen initiatives.

With its participation in the City Deal * 'Food on the Urban Agenda' in 2017, the municipality of Rotterdam re-established the link between food and the environment from the policy theme of health, a link that was consolidated in the subsequent City Deal 'Healthy and Sustainable Food Environment'.

** A City Deal is a collaboration between cities, central government, other authorities, businesses and civil society organisations that aims to produce innovative solutions to social issues and/or measures to strengthen the economic ecosystem of urban regions. (Agenda Stad, n.d.)*

Chapter V
The planning practice of urban agriculture initiatives



5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter described how urban agriculture policy came about in the period 2008-2018 and what ideas about spatial planning and the role of citizens' initiatives were expressed in it. However, the civic initiatives that emerged during that period did not allow themselves to be reduced to the passive objects of spatial planning by the government; they intervened, engaged, interfered and influenced the agenda. The urban agriculture initiatives often had a vision that transcended their own interests, and this vision had a spatial component. In doing so, they questioned or even challenged the role of planners as representatives of the public interest. In this respect, they resembled non-profit interest groups, but whereas the latter often represent the general interest, these urban agriculture initiatives were location-specific and organised from the bottom up.

In order to understand the interaction between planners and urban agriculture initiatives, it is important to take a closer look at the planning practices of urban agriculture initiatives. How are their projects developed? What are the underlying visions and ambitions, particularly in the field of spatial planning? Is this a different view of planning? An alternative conceptualisation? Or are these strategies related to existing conceptualisations of planning? These questions are addressed in this chapter.

5.2 A brief history of the Rotterdam urban agriculture movement

Urban agriculture has always been part of the city of Rotterdam. However, with the advent of the steam train and later other forms of cheap transport, the Industrial Revolution increased the distances over which food is transported. Local connections that had always been taken for granted, such as the market gardeners on the outskirts of the city who supplied fresh vegetables to the city, gradually disappeared. In the 20th century, farmers and market gardeners around the city, from dairy farmers in Midden-Delfland and arable farmers on IJsselmonde and in the Hoeksche Waard to market gardeners in the Westland, began producing for the national or international market, while urban consumers chose their food from the national and international range available in supermarkets.

In this context, the allotment complexes on the outskirts of the city form a thin thread connecting us to the past. At the beginning of the 21st century, the original function of the allotment, which was to enable workers to provide for their own food, was only partially intact. Apart from the gardens of a few skilled vegetable gardeners, allotments had become tiny country estates for citizens, where food production played a subordinate role. However, among those vegetable gardeners, there was a growing number of people with an immigrant background who had grown up in the countryside in their country of origin and had brought their agricultural knowledge with them.

Reportedly, there were even Cape Verdean gardeners who grew vegetables on an commercial basis on underutilised plots of land on the outskirts of the city. *

** Because these products grown in the city were not allowed to be traded, there was always a bit of secrecy surrounding this "illegal" cultivation.*

Meanwhile, residents in Rotterdam's neighbourhoods experienced a range of problems involving issues related to food, health, education and outdoor space. The availability of affordable, fresh food was not a problem in Rotterdam per se. There were no so-called food deserts in Rotterdam; there was a toko on many street corners, and if not, there was a supermarket within walking distance. But at the same time, fast food chains were becoming a common sight on the streets. Persistent poverty and unemployment led to an accumulation of social problems, including poor nutrition (because there was no time to cook and fast food was cheaper) and lack of exercise, which caused an increase in lifestyle-related health problems (obesity, cardiovascular disease) among the population of Rotterdam. At the same time, the public spaces in the city centre and the surrounding working-class neighbourhoods were very 'stony'; predominantly paved over. Scientists and policymakers became increasingly aware that these paved outdoor spaces contributed to heat stress and flooding and that they also affected the quality of life in these areas.

Based on a combination of social, cultural and sustainable ideals, concerned citizens in the neighbourhood started creating green spaces in neglected areas of public space or on construction sites that had been left vacant since the outbreak of the crisis in 2008. Initially, this was often done in collaboration with others to improve their own neighbourhood, such as De Tussentuin, Hefpark and Tuin aan de Maas. But in a number of cases, this practice developed into a broader vision of the role of (edible) green space for a sustainable city. Creatief Beheer (more on them later) was a pioneer in this field. Transition Town Rotterdam also worked on projects in the neighbourhood based on a broader vision (inspired by the Transition Town Movement, which originated in England). Growing food together played a role in many of these gardens (Bronsveld, 2014).

Urban agriculture did not only grow from the neighbourhoods. On the Maasvlakte, an industrial site, newly reclaimed from the sea in the port area, the Happy Shrimp initiative attempted to farm shrimp sustainably and locally using residual heat from a nearby power plant. Although the initiative was located far outside the inhabited area and the city centre, it did attempt to set up an urban community of customers and supporters, thereby creating a local market in Rotterdam. Due to various problems typical of an innovative start-up (underestimating the learning curve with this innovative cultivation method, expanding too quickly to other crops, internal disputes and excessive energy costs because the supply of residual heat never got off the ground), this project went bankrupt in 2009.

Looking back even further, there were other pioneers from the cultural sector. In 2001, artist Joep van Lieshout proclaimed a free state in the Merwevierhaven area of Rotterdam. This free state sought autonomy, among other things by growing its own food on site. After seven months, the free state was dissolved by order of the state, but the spirit of the project remained. To this day, Atelier van Lieshout is still located in the area.

In 2007, Eetbaar Rotterdam was founded following a meeting organised by Het Portaal on behalf of the Innovation Network (a government organisation that at the time promoted innovation in the agricultural sector). Eetbaar Rotterdam and Rotterdamse Oogst explicitly established a relationship with the surrounding countryside: existing and new urban-oriented farmers in the outskirts. The Buytenhof care farm near Rhoon, which also attracted many urban customers, was the most prominent example of this. At the time, urban agriculture stood for connecting the city and agriculture. Eetbaar Rotterdam emphasised the opportunities that the city offered for agriculture (in the city) and the opportunities that agriculture (in the city) offered to the city. The match between the two should form the basis for a revenue model for professional urban farmers and for the spatial planning of urban agriculture in Rotterdam. Eetbaar Rotterdam sought to take on the role of independent spokesperson for the joint urban agriculture initiatives. At the same time, it was particularly committed to the development of Uit Je Eigen Stad (From Your Own City), as the most ambitious realisation of Eetbaar Rotterdam's vision.

Rotterdam Harvest connected producers in and around the city with citizens and food processors in the city, but also had good ties with projects such as Nu Hier. The Rotterdam Harvest Festivals brought together many initiators from urban agriculture and the local food movement.

Fig. 5.1 shows the emergence of various urban agriculture initiatives over time. The timeline centres on the urban agriculture movement Rotterdam 2006-2018, including some relevant earlier projects (and excluding others such as Wijktuin het Oude Westen and the allotment garden complexes that were started before 2000)

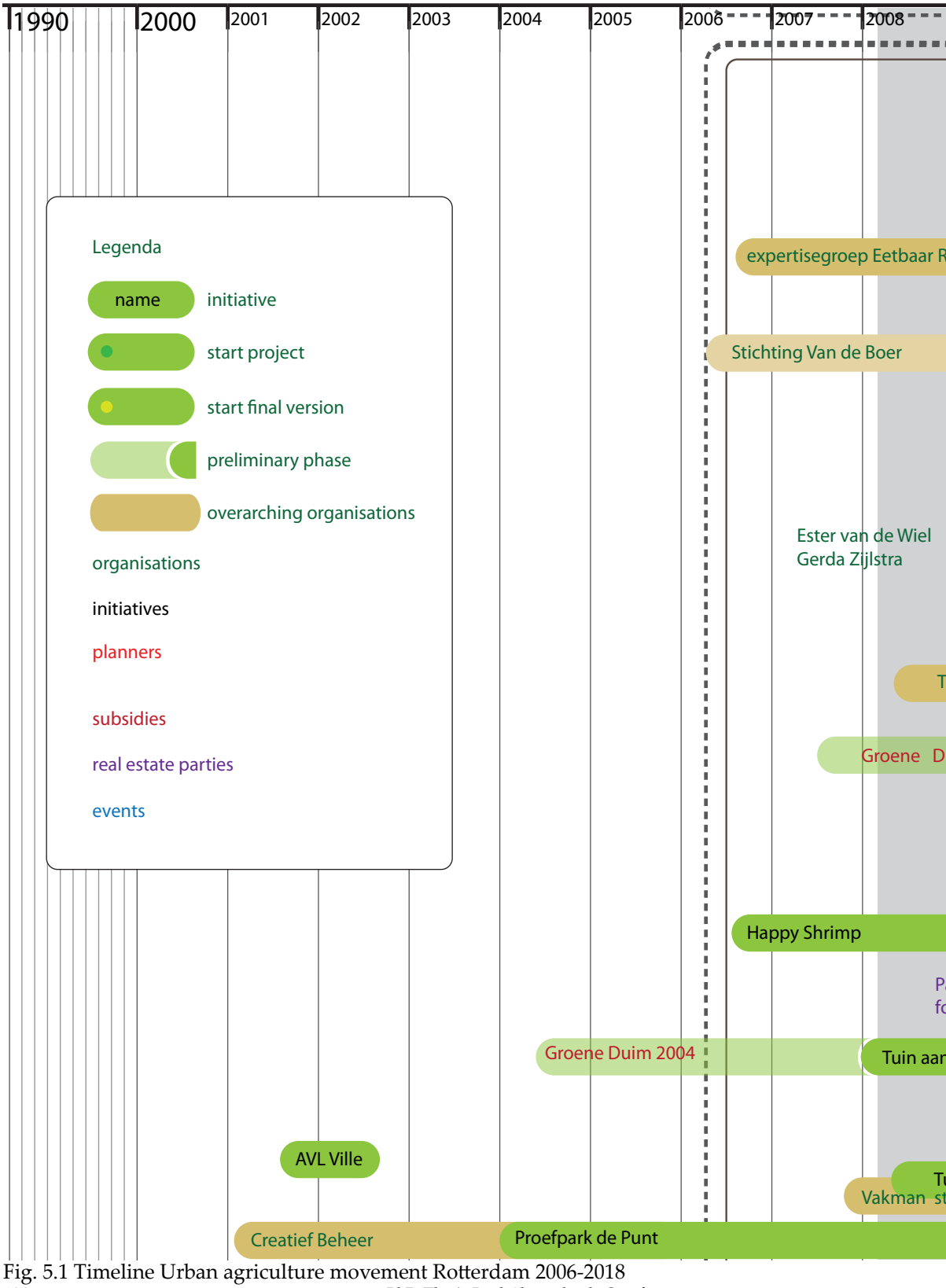
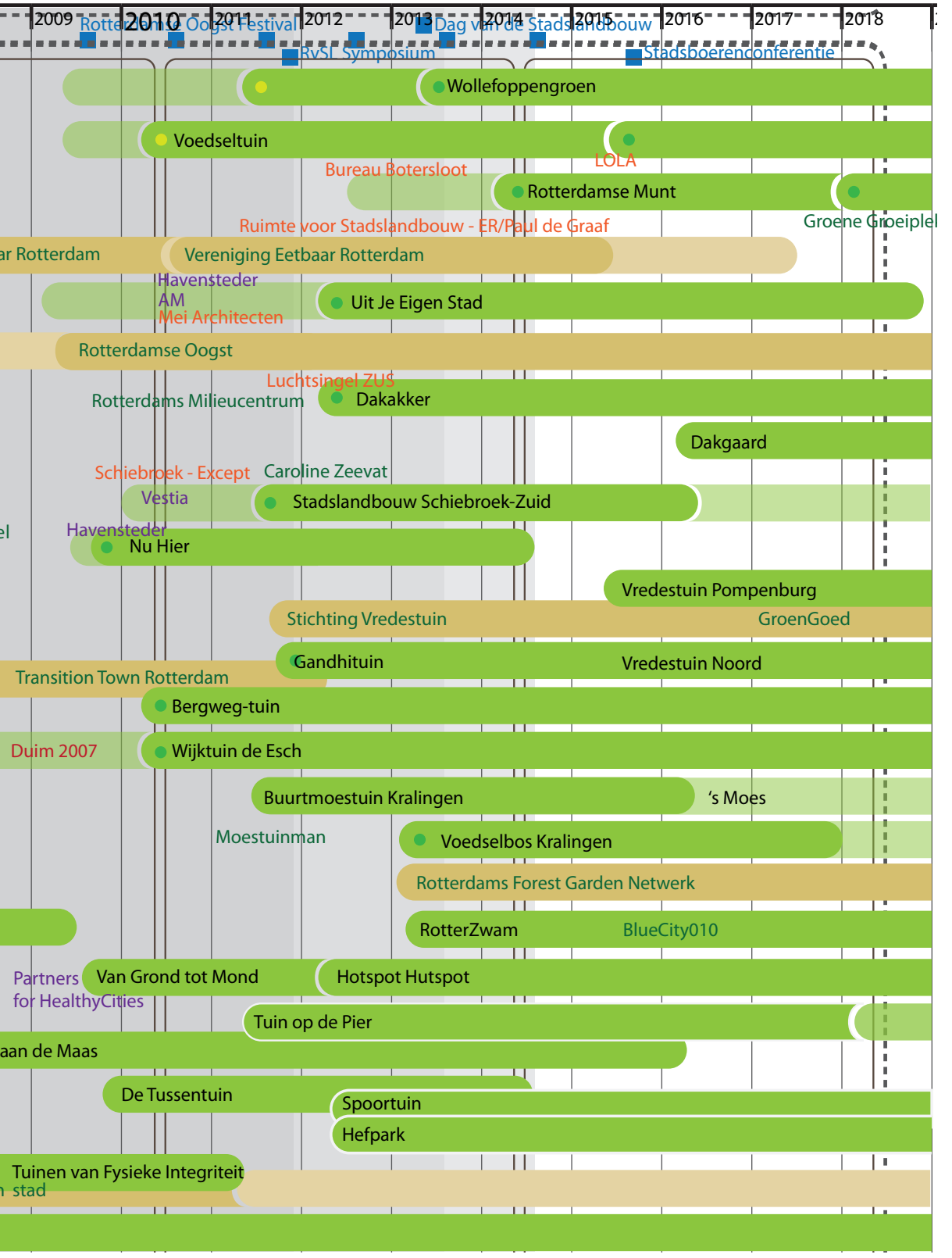


Fig. 5.1 Timeline Urban agriculture movement Rotterdam 2006-2018


2009
2010
2011
2012
2013
2014
2015
2016
2017
2018
Rotterdamse Oogst Festival
RvSL Symposium
Dag van de Stadslandbouw
Stadsboerenconferentie
Wollefoppengroen
Voedseltuin
LOLA
Bureau Botersloot
Rotterdamse Munt
Groene Groeiplel
Ruimte voor Stadslandbouw - ER/Paul de Graaf
Vereniging Eetbaar Rotterdam
Havensteder
AM
Mei Architecten
Uit Je Eigen Stad
Rotterdamse Oogst
Luchtsingel ZUS
Rotterdams Milieucentrum
Dakakker
Dakgaard
Schiebroek - Except
Caroline Zeevat
Vestia
Stadslandbouw Schiebroek-Zuid
Havensteder
Nu Hier
Vredestuin Pompenburg
Stichting Vredestuin
GroenGoed
Gandhituin
Vredestuin Noord
Transition Town Rotterdam
Bergweg-tuin
Duim 2007
Wijktuin de Esch
Buurtmoestuin Kralingen
's Moes
Moestuinman
Voedselbos Kralingen
Rotterdams Forest Garden Netwerk
RotterZwam
BlueCity010
Partners
for HealthyCities
Van Grond tot Mond
Hotspot Hutspot
Tuin op de Pier
De Tussentuin
Spoortuin
Hefpark
Tuinen van Fysieke Integriteit

5.3.1 Selection of initiatives

Ten initiatives were selected on the basis of the following criteria (see also section 3.2.3):

1) food production is one of the central objectives

2) located in public outdoor spaces and with (semi-)public access

3) bottom-up initiated by non-institutional civic initiatives

4) exemplary function.

To illustrate the scope of this selection, it is worth mentioning a number of initiatives that were considered but ultimately not included in the study.

Projects such as Tussentuin and Hefpark, which focused on a social meeting function for the neighbourhood, with food production (selection criterion 1) playing a subordinate role, were not included, even though they are sometimes mentioned in relation to urban agriculture.



Fig. 5.2 Map of selected initiatives (see Fig. 5.3 for numbering). Numbers 10 a and b refer to two consecutive locations of the same initiative (Rotterdamse Munt).

	name initiative	locations/projects	food production central	public accessibility	bottom-up / non-institutional	exemplary function	temporary/ permanent
1	**Creatief Beheer**	Proefpark De Punt (Afrikaanderwijk, Carnisse-tuin, Buitenplaats Spangen)	limited	publicly accessible / publicly accessible during opening hours	own initiative / by invitation	creative form of management with residents	temporary
2	**Nu Hier**	Nu Hier	limited in scale, but part of central objective	publicly accessible	own initiative / by invitation	development in the inbetween-time with different local actors	temporary
3	**Transition Town / Groengoed**	*Bergwegplantsoen (Gandhituin, Vredes-tuin Pompenburg, Bloklandtuin)*	vegetable production	publicly accessible / publicly accessible during opening hours	own initiative / by invitation	eco-activist gardening with residents in multiple locations	temporary/ semi-permanent
4	**Voedseltuin**	Voedseltuin	vegetable production	publicly accessible	own initiative	gardening for and with foodbank customers	temporary/ indefinite
5	**Tuin op de pier**	Tuin op de pier	beperkt in schaal, wel deel doelstelling	publicly accessible	own initiative	conceptual temporary garden in prominent spot	temporary
6	**Wollefoppen-groen & Co**	Wollefoppengroen & Co	vegetable and fruit production	publicly accessible	own initiative	residents' initiative as designer and client of public space design	semi-permanent
7	**Stadslandbouw Schiebroek**	Stadslandbouw Schiebroek	vegetable production, flowers	publicly accessible	own initiative / by invitation	organic patchwork garden approach with residents in public space	temporary/ indefinite
8	**Uit Je Eigen Stad**	Uit Je Eigen Stad	production of vegetables, poultry, fish	publicly accessible during opening hours	own initiative	innovative, professional urban agriculture	temporary (10jaar)
9	**Dakakker**	Dakakker	production of vegetables, beekeeping	publicly accessible during opening hours	own initiative	food production on a roof	temporary/ indefinite
10	**Rotterdamse Munt**	twee achtereenvol-gende locaties (Laan op Zuid; Rosestraat)	production of herbs	publicly accessible during opening hours	own initiative	neighbourhood garden with herb production by and with local residents	semi-permanent; started out as temporary
11	Schiemond	idem	vegetable production	publicly accessible	institutional initiative	initiated by municipality	temporary/ semi-permanent
12	Van Grond tot Mond	Menandertuin, Dantetuin	vegetable production	publicly accessible during opening hours	institutional initiative	gardening with residents on temporary plot	temporary
13	Hefpark	Hefpark	limited	publicly accessible	own initiative	temporary public park developed by residents with mixed	temporary/ indefinite
14	De Tussentuin	De Tussentuin	limited	publicly accessible during opening hours	own initiative	garden with creatieve programme arranged by residents	temporary
15	Vakmanstad / De tuinen van Fysieke	OBS Bloemhof (5 gardens on different locations)	vegetable and fruit production	not publicly accessible	own initiative	food production as part of an holistic vision on education	temporary/ indefinite

Fig. 5.3 Longlist of initiatives with selection criteria (numbers 1 to 10 have been selected)

With regard to location and accessibility (selection criterion 2): the Gardens of Fysieke Integriteit (Gardens of Physical Integrity) by Vakmanstad were an important and philosophically influential example, but they were not included because they were not located in public spaces. The gardens – of which the garden at OBS Bloemhof was best known– were located in inner courtyards; in the case of Bloemhof on a school playground in a block of buildings. These gardens were part of a broader vision on education developed by philosopher Henk Oosterling. His interest extended from this integrated vision to area development, but his vision can be described as socio-cultural rather than spatial. In relation to the second selection criterion, Rotterzwam also deserves a mention, an initiative that cultivated mushrooms on the basis of coffee grounds and is therefore an example of a circular approach to urban agriculture. This mushroom cultivation took place entirely indoors (first in a former tropical swimming paradise, later in containers in the harbour) and therefore did not touch on the discussion about the design of public space *.

With regard to the institutional background (selection criterion 3) of the initiative, Dante Garden and later Menander Garden in Lombardijen are relevant examples. They were realised within the Van Grond tot Mond (From Soil to Mouth) project, which was initiated by a social coalition of the housing corporation Com.Wonen (which later became Havensteder), the construction company Dura Vermeer Bouw Rotterdam, the care provider De Stromen Opmaat Groep, secondary education institution Albeda College and the Rotterdam-Rijnmond Municipal Health Service (GGD). The gardens were managed by an employee of Com.Wonen. Although it was a civic initiative, it was set up by institutional parties and therefore falls outside the definition of bottom-up used in this study.

The same applies to the Schiemond Community Garden, which was initiated in collaboration between the municipality (Social Affairs and Employment department), the borough council and the Woonbron housing corporation. Residents were expected to manage the garden, supervised by the housing corporation in collaboration with the borough's community worker, but this never got off the ground because resident involvement was disappointing. Both projects were therefore initiated and implemented by the municipality or by an institutional social party and were therefore not bottom-up. Incidentally, Grond tot Mond did give rise to the Hotspot Hutspot initiative. The emphasis shifted from the garden as a place where food is produced to the kitchen as a meeting place and learning environment for children from the neighbourhood and young people with a labour market disadvantage. Because of this shift, this project also falls outside the scope of this study.

** They do put the use and processing of organic waste within the city on the agenda, and there are spatial aspects to its large-scale application in terms of logistics and space utilisation, but that is of a different order than the alternative design of green public outdoor space that the projects studied here put on the agenda through their realisation.*

In applying selection criteria 1 and 3, a certain degree of freedom was taken in order to ensure the richness of the case study.
Three initiatives were included in which food production (the first selection criterion) was less central: Creatief Beheer, which is considered a pioneer in self-management and also a source of inspiration for many urban agriculture initiatives; Tuin op de Pier, which, together with Tuin aan de Maas, serves as an example of a community garden with vegetable gardens on vacant land, and NuHier, a project that explores temporality in an artistic way. NuHier and Creatief Beheer in particular, with their idiosyncratic vision and stance on the role of greenery and nature in outdoor spaces, were also influential in thinking about urban agriculture. For the founders of NuHier, food production and processing is also a recurring theme in their work. Tuin op de Pier had a broader objective as an initiative, but was led by a gardener with an interest in and knowledge of vegetable gardening.

Two initiatives that arose from a commission from an institutional social party, a housing corporation, were included because the commission was developed and implemented by non-institutional parties (selection criterion 3) who were given a great deal of freedom. At NuHier, initiator Ester van de Wiel was given carte blanche. At Stadslandbouw Schiebroek-Zuid, Caroline Zeevat was commissioned on the basis of a proposed approach that focused on residents. She was then given a great deal of freedom to develop and implement the project in collaboration with residents.

In addition to these initiatives, the Voedseltuin, Transition Town Rotterdam (including Bergwegplantsoen and Gandhituin), Uit Je Eigen Stad, Wollefoppengroen & Co, Dakakker and Rotterdamse Munt have also been included.

Without exaggeration, these 10 initiatives can be seen as urban agriculture icons (selection criterion 4), both in terms of attention from the press, politicians and the public, and in terms of their status within the urban agriculture movement. Together, they offer a representative sample of approaches within the urban agriculture movement.

5.3.2 Introduction to initiatives

The following section provides a brief description in words and images of each initiative, including its origins, size, scale and position in the city of the completed project (or, in the case of multiple projects, the first or most iconic project).

This study focuses primarily on social processes in the development of urban agriculture and not on quantitative aspects of urban agriculture (such as yield or space requirements). However, the spatial form cannot be viewed separately from the social processes that led to this form. Therefore, in order to understand the initiatives, it is useful to identify a number of quantitative and qualitative aspects, the basic characteristics, of the projects they have realised. These are a materialisation of the worldview, goals and strategies pursued by the initiatives, which are discussed in more detail in the following sections of this chapter. These aspects are identified by means of a basic plan analysis.

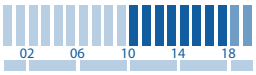
5.3.2.1 Time and lifespan

The initiatives have existed for between 5 and 22 years, with the oldest still in existence at the time of writing. Individual locations have reached an age of between 5 and 14 years, while some are still active (a number of the oldest are now also 14 years old). Often, the initiator is the consistent factor across multiple projects. In other cases, a project is led by different people over time.

Lifespan is always a relative concept in the city. Some projects have found a permanent location (Rotterdamse Munt, Wollefoppengroen&Co), but may still be asked to leave if they do not meet the municipality's requirements. Other projects have tailored their concept to the management of temporary locations (Nu Hier, Uit Je Eigen Stad, Tuin op de Pier) or have set up an organisation whose lifespan exceeds that of the temporary locations it operates (Creatief Beheer, Transition Town Rotterdam/Groengoed). Some temporary projects have a long semi-permanent duration (Voedseltuin, some locations of Groengoed and Creatief Beheer). The Voedseltuin and Tuin op de Pier projects were set up as temporary projects, with the hope that they would become permanent. In fact, for most projects, with the exception of Nu Hier, temporary status is at best an unavoidable limitation.

LEGEND characteristics per initiative

1. Location lifespan



2. Dimensions



1 block = 100m² share of food production in dark blue

3. Number of locations



1 location



several locations



patchwork of plots in a neighbourhood

4. Spatial impact



neighbourhood



district



citywide



national

5. Accessibility



public



semi-public

5.3.2.2 Dimensions

Projects vary in size from 800 m² to 24,000 m². The proportion of food production in this area also varies greatly, from 5 to 90% of the area, depending on the location, size and other functions that require space in the project.

5.3.2.3 Number of locations

Some projects have more than one location, often accumulating over time, increasing their impact throughout the city. Creatief beheer and Groengoed have locations in different parts of the city. Together, Groengoed currently manages 15,000 square metres (1.5 hectares). Stadslandbouw Schiebroek-Zuid consists of several plots spread across the neighbourhood.

5.3.2.4 Spatial impact

Most projects have an impact at neighbourhood level. Wollefoppengroen&Co are part of the local district park and, as such, have the potential to serve the entire Zevenkamp district. Due to their distribution throughout the neighbourhood, the gardens of Stadslandbouw Schiebroek-Zuid have a greater impact than the square metres of the gardens themselves.

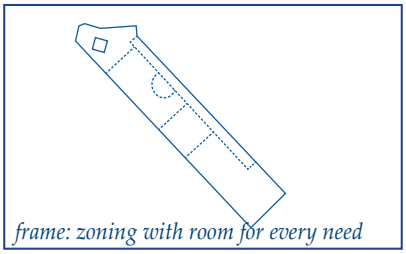
Voedseltuin and Uit Je Eigen Stad specifically mention that they welcome volunteers and/or clients from across the city. This is partly because they are located in the Merwe-Vierhavens port area, a business district without residential properties.

5.3.2.5 Accessibility

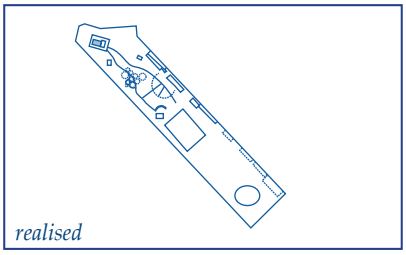
Most locations are public. Uit Je Eigen Stad, Dakakker and some gardens of Transition Town/Groengoed are semi-public, which means that they are (or were) only accessible during opening hours. In terms of accessibility for people to grow food, there is a distinction between initiatives that grow food for sale and initiatives that share the harvest with volunteers, although in practice these often overlap. Volunteers can share in the harvest in every garden. Sometimes this is combined with sales to restaurants and sometimes a surplus is shared with the Food Bank or similar initiatives. Sometimes there is also space for individual gardens. In principle, most gardens allow any interested citizen to volunteer, although there are differences in the rules that volunteers must adhere to.

5.3.2.6 Spatial strategy

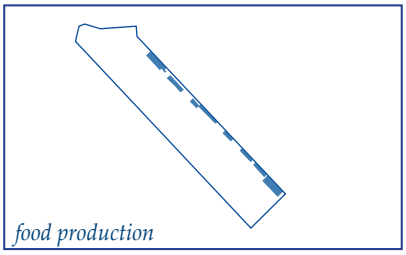
For each project, the spatial strategy envisaged by the initiator is summarised briefly. These strategies are analysed in more detail in section 5.6. The strategy is illustrated by plan drawings: the initial design or framework, the realised project and the realised area of food production.



frame: zoning with room for every need



realised



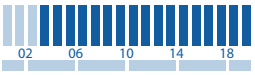
food production





Proefpark de Punt

2004-2020



Size: 8500 m2
(food production: 500 m2)



Pilot location for alternative participatory management ahead of construction of park



Local impact at neighbourhood level
National exposure



Publicly accessible



Spatial strategy

Public spaces are designed in collaboration with residents and volunteers. By taking over management from the local authority and pooling available resources (funds for green spaces, waste collection, social budgets), an area can be managed more holistically in line with the concept of urban medicine, with social and ecological value for residents.



impression



5.4.1 Creatief Beheer – Proefpark de Punt

Creatief Beheer began as a collaboration between artists Rini Biemans and Karin Keijzer. The organisation has its own vision of the city, with a financial and organisational model. Proefpark de Punt is Creatief Beheer's first major project in which they were able to realise their vision of green management. The temporary project ultimately lasted 16 years and was frequently visited by policymakers, researchers and other green initiators during that time.
The Proefpark was originally part of a social programme to involve residents in the development of the Dakpark. Creatief Beheer was commissioned to transform a vacant lot on Puntstraat. The site was renamed Proefpark de Punt and designed as a 'training ground for ecologically managed urban nature'. The idea behind the Proefpark was to experiment on a small scale with a different form of participatory management, which could then be applied on a larger scale after the completion of the adjacent Dakpark. The design principle was simple: anything is possible if local residents take the initiative to do it. Proefpark de Punt thus became a diverse green space with a vegetable garden, dovecote, cycle path, nature playground, etc.

At the Dakpark, which was completed in 2013, a section has been reserved for green space managed by residents. Creatief Beheer is no longer involved in this. The Proefpark lost its funding and was then continued by Creatief Beheer with other resources until 2020. When the Proefpark site was finally developed and built, this marked the end of the project.

Creatief Beheer is still active today and has managed (or continues to manage) many other locations throughout the city. Here, a whole series of green initiators gained their first experience of working in green spaces and learned how to take the initiative themselves based on an intentional objective.

frame: room for wishes & spontaneous action

realised

food production





Nu Hier

2009-2015



Size: 1500 m2
(food production: 300 m2)



Temporarily available space is reclaimed as public space with local residents and other parties.



Local impact at neighbourhood level
National exposure



Publicly accessible



Spatial strategy

Designing for the inbetween-time: By viewing temporariness as a permanent condition, and not waiting for a permanent solution, all kinds of possibilities open up for involving people in a place, through interventions in public space in which activity and programme are just as important as design.



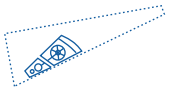


Foto's: Ralph Kämena

5.4.2 Nu Hier

Nu Hier was a small site and performance space on a piece of wasteland set up by designers Ester van de Wiel and Gerda Zijlstra on behalf of the housing corporation Havensteder (formerly Com.Wonen), which wanted to redevelop the surrounding area in the longer term. Havensteder made the site available with a budget for temporary design and the request to develop a plan for the coming year. In the last weeks of 2009, the designers developed a four-phase plan for the interim period. The temporary nature of the project was the basis for unusual strategies that circumvented or tested the limits of existing regulations. For example, they wanted to offer citizens/residents the opportunity to help shape the public space. The motto was: everyone can participate, no one can claim ownership.
The site was laid out through activities and rapid actions in response to the wishes of various stakeholders (residents, schoolchildren, local initiatives, Roteb employees, students, etc.) and the ideas of the initiators.

The temporary nature of the project offered both opportunities and limitations, especially after the (one-off) budget from the housing association had been used up. The inbetween-time was extended to five years, among other things by linking NuHier to Rotterdamse Oogst, where Zijlstra worked, to the Design Academy, where Van de Wiel was a lecturer, and to the network around Eetbaar Landschap (Edible Landscape), which she had set up earlier. The borough also cooperated and made a one-off financial contribution. After that, attempts were made to transfer it. This was only partially successful. The site has been taken over by a restaurant with a social objective that uses the site for its own purposes. The site has now been partially paved.



design



realised



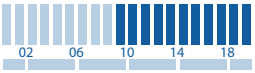
food production





Bergwegplantsoen

2010-present



Size: 600 m2
(food production: 500 m2)

By combining care & green maintenance, public spaces are designed as commons.

Local impact at neighbourhood level

Publicly accessible

Spatial strategy

By designing public space as communal vegetable gardens and managing them yourself, you can make them accessible to everyone and manage them as “commons” in which food production contributes to self-sufficiency (and thus poverty reduction) and neigbhourhood cohesion.





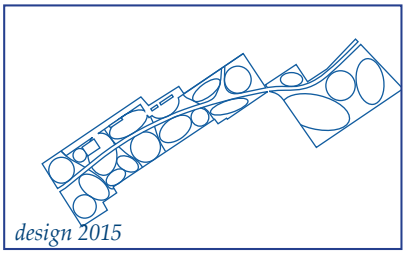
5.4.3 Transition Town Rotterdam / Groengoed - Bergwegplantsoen

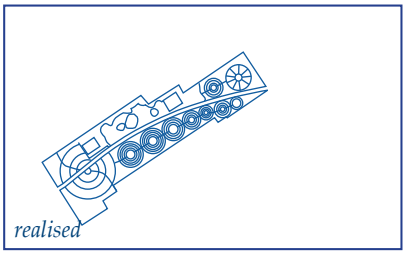
Transition Town Rotterdam (TTR) started as a local branch of the Transition Town movement from England: a broad idealistic movement that aims to activate citizens to work actively on making society more sustainable and preventing and dealing with the consequences of climate change. The founders of TT Rotterdam, Rutger Henneman and Daniel Opbroek, soon decided to focus on neighbourhood vegetable gardens. They started with a garden in the public Bergwegplantsoen (a small park).

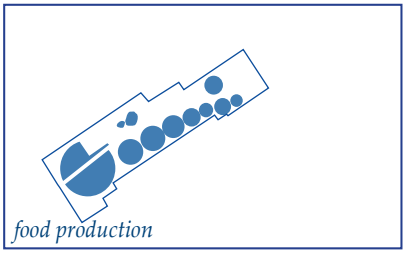
After the successful launch of this garden, more gardens followed and they developed their own approach. Sometimes, their idealistic attitude led to clashes with residents who had more traditional views on property, for example in the early stages of the Gandhituin (now Vredestuin Noord).

The management of the gardens gradually became more permanent. After a number of years, the municipality asked them to take over the management of the Bergwegplantsoen again. In order to be able to maintain this, they developed a financial model between 2016 and 2019 in which the management is paid for from a combination of budgets for welfare, green space and outdoor space management.

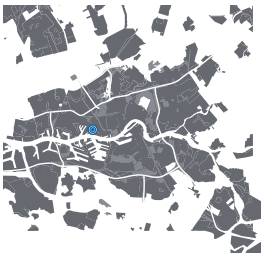
There were more gardens affiliated with Transition Town Rotterdam. The De Esch neighbourhood garden, realised in 2010, was also a member of TTR, but fell into disrepair. De Esch later made a fresh start as a neighbourhood vegetable garden (without any connection to TTR). The Kralingen-West neighbourhood vegetable garden, established in 2011, was set up by Moestuinman (Max de Corte). This garden was closed in 2016. Between 2010 and 2020, Moestuinman also provided permaculture courses and advice to other initiatives in the city and was the manager of the Voedseltuin. Since 2012, he has been active with food forests in the city as part of the Rotterdam Forest Garden Network (later Coöperatie Ondergrond). With the exception of Voedselbos Kralingen, these are not located in public spaces. Groengoed and the Gandhituin also had contacts with Wollefoppengroen & Co.











Voedseltuin

2010-present



Size: 9500 m2
(food production: 4000 m2)



Through its design and programming as an edible park, the community garden becomes part of area development.



Local impact at neighbourhood level
Volunteers citywide
National exposure



Publicly accessible

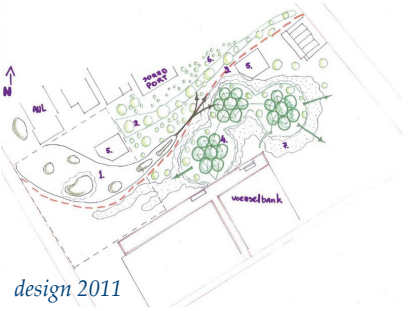


Spatial strategy

By positioning the Voedseltuin as a public facility in its environment in relation to current challenges and future developments, it can maintain itself despite its temporary status. A good network and anticipating policy play an important role in this.



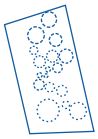




5.4.4 De Voedseltuin

The Voedseltuin is a vegetable garden on vacant land in the harbour area where volunteers people with a labour market disadvantage grow food for the Food Bank and other poverty-related initiatives. The project started with the idea of bringing overproduction from allotments to the Voedselbank (Food Bank). The founder of the Food Bank responded enthusiastically. Because the original idea encountered practical objections, he suggested growing food on a piece of land next to the then location of the Voedselbank. This piece of land was fallow and there were no plans for it. The municipality stipulated that soil testing had to be carried out. A sponsor was found for this. When the test results were positive, a foundation was set up, funds were raised and a new layer of soil was added. The first manager drew up a plan based on permaculture principles and five volunteers set to work. The original initiator disappeared from the picture fairly quickly, but by then a foundation had been established, which also included the founder of the Food Bank.

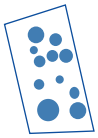
After five years of working for free and without a formal position, they were given a five-year contract with a symbolic rent. One requirement from the municipality was that they do something about the appearance of the garden. A landscape architect was hired and a plan was drawn up in consultation with the neighbours. With a municipal subsidy, that plan was implemented, with a public path through the garden. During that time, their own accommodation was also built on the site with a grant. Despite its temporary status, the Voedseltuin has been able to maintain and develop itself as a relevant place in the area and in the city to this day.



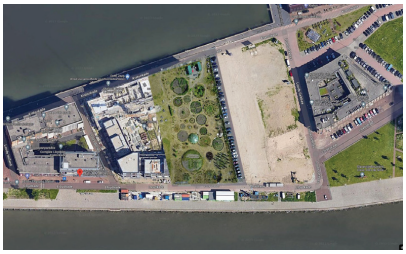
frame: a thematic circle for every need



realised



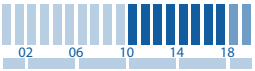
food production





Tuin op de Pier

2011-2018



Size: 5500 m2
(food production: 1000 m2)



Flexible design strategy based on circles for green needs in the neighbourhood



Local impact at neighbourhood level



Publicly accessible

Spatial strategy

By getting involved yourself as a resident, you can help shape your living environment. With a smart design principle, the initiative was able to develop the garden based on the wishes and efforts of residents, without a long-term strategy other than the hope that a good example would be followed.

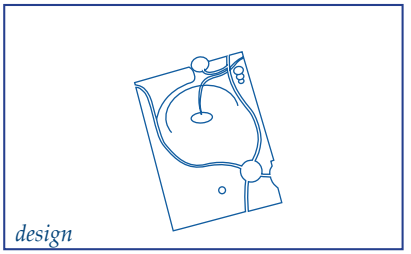


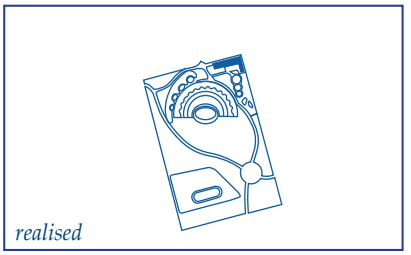


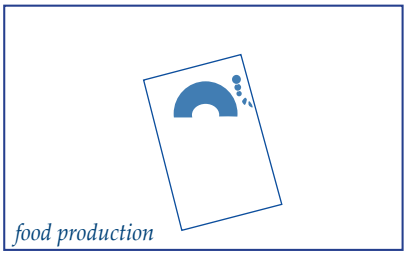
5.4.5 Tuin op de Pier

In 2008, the residents of the newly developed homes on the Mullerpier started using a vacant lot at the head of the pier as a garden. A few years later, this garden inspired residents of the adjacent Lloyd Pier to do the same. While the need for a place to get together and meet was the basis for Tuin aan de Maas, the reason for Tuin op de Pier was the deterioration of a vacant lot on the pier. In both cases, there was a driving force that managed to mobilise residents. At Tuin op de Pier, Piet de Jonge, a committed resident who was also active at Tuin aan de Maas, drew up a plan based on circles that would allow the site to be put into use in phases. This allowed the project to grow in line with demand from residents, and each circle could be given its own theme to accommodate the diversity of residents' wishes. The space between the circles made it possible to walk across the site without stepping into the themed gardens. The local council was only involved to a limited extent in this process. The layout of the site was tolerated and permission was granted for a water tap. The local council did not contribute financially, but it did remove the fences around the site at the request of the residents.

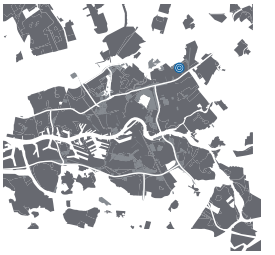
When the site was to be developed, the garden had to go. It continues to exist in a smaller form at another location on the pier and now seems to be gaining a more permanent status there.











Wollefoppengroen & Co

2011-present



Size: 10500 m2
(food production: 1500 m2)



Community vegetable garden as a driver for the development of a participatory edible park



Local impact at district level

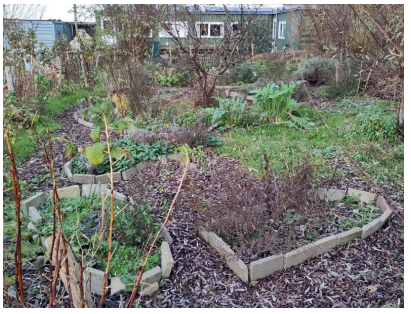
Publicly accessible



Spatial strategy

By combining support in the neighbourhood with smart, unconventional actions to attract the attention of politicians and policymakers, a single-purpose green space is developed into an edible park and then managed by residents.





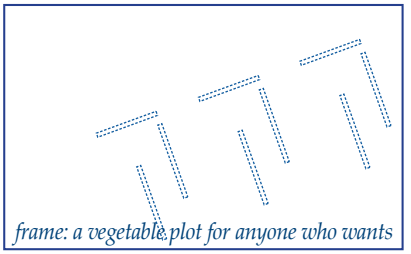


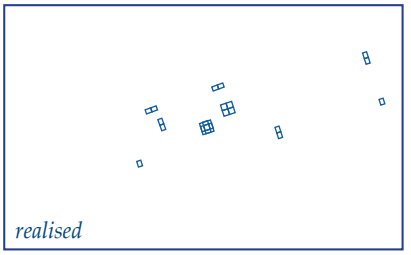
detail preliminary design (Christiane Willekens)

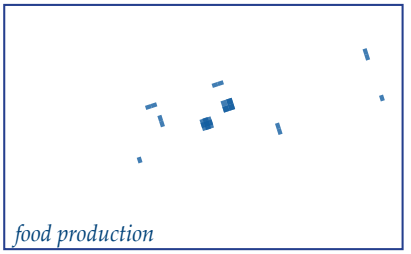
5.4.6 Wollefoppengroen & Co

Wollefoppengroen & Co arose from residents' protests against plans to build on a green space in the neighbourhood. After these plans were averted, Frenk Walkenbach and his fellow initiators wanted to channel the energy that had been released into something positive. A plan was drawn up for a park for residents. Urban agriculture was proposed by a resident as a unifying theme. After attending an urban agriculture meeting organised by the municipality, the initiators embraced this theme. This was also because they saw that this form of green space generated enthusiasm among policymakers, both in the former borough and among the municipality's planners. A new plan was drawn up. The development of an edible park was supported by the borough both in terms of content and financially, and additional funding came from the province and the city region. Urban development worked out the design based on the preliminary design of the residents' initiative, which acted as the client. The final project is the result of a collaboration between citizens, local politicians and municipal planners.

The garden is still a base from which residents develop activities, both in the garden and in the surrounding neighbourhood.











Stadslandbouw Schiebroek-Zuid

2011-2016



Size: 1000 m2
(food production: 1000 m2)

Based on a flexible design strategy, the public space is being reclaimed by residents plot by plot.



Local impact at neighbourhood level
National exposure



Publicly accessible



Spatial strategy

By actively involving and coaching residents and working with them to develop parts of the public space, greater engagement and liveliness is created in that public space.



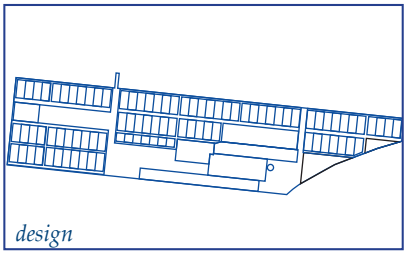


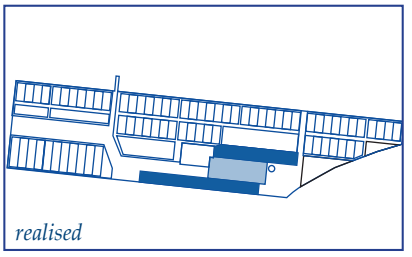
5.4.7 Stadslandbouw Schiebroek-Zuid

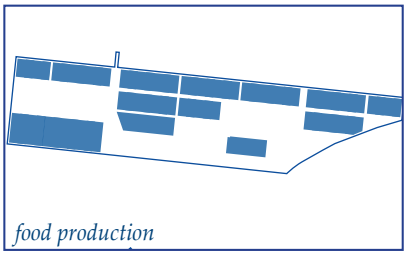
Stadslandbouw Schiebroek-Zuid has a step-by-step history. Its origins lie in a commission from the Vestia housing corporation to the Except consultancy (for integrated sustainability) to develop a vision for a sustainable Schiebroek (in 2030?). In Schiebroek, both housing and public spaces are managed by the housing association. Except's ambitious vision linked the renovation of existing buildings to a plan for the integrated closure of cycles. Local extraction and reuse of nutrients from wastewater and their application in local food production was an important part of this. The plan was seen as an inspiration by Vestia, but was not implemented as such. However, the theme of urban agriculture was embraced, albeit more as a socially connecting element than as a driver for sustainable development.

In this context, a number of people were asked to submit tenders for the development of a communal neighbourhood vegetable garden. Caroline Zeevat came up with a plan that focused on participation and (developing) personal responsibility and was awarded the contract. Residents could use a plot of land in the public space if they also worked in a collective garden. This proved to be a great success, with a steadily growing number of gardens. The gardens contributed to improving the perception of the outdoor space and strengthening social cohesion. Even though food production is an important part of the concept, Zeevat prefers to refer to neighbourhood vegetable gardens rather than urban agriculture, a term she associates with professional food production on a certain scale.

Despite the revelation of the Vestia real estate scandal shortly after the project started, the project continued until 2016. The collaboration with Vestia as the client ended when, due to a reorganisation, new people came in who had a different vision of resident participation and wanted to remove most of the gardens. After this, the project continued in a more limited form for a number of years with ad hoc funding from the municipality.





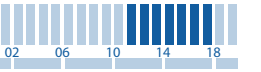




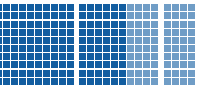


Uit Je Eigen Stad

2012-2018



Size: 24000 m2
(food production: 16000 m2)



Social entrepreneurs establish commercial urban farm on temporarily available land.



Citywide impact (customers & volunteers) National exposure



Semi-public; accessible during opening hours

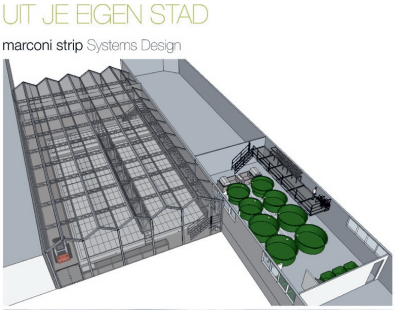


Spatial strategy

By occupying a location in the right place in the city for a fixed period of time, it is possible – with the right partners and use of local waste streams – to create a viable revenue model for temporary urban agriculture. This project can thus become part of a strategy to add value to temporarily available land in the city, with all kinds of social and environmental benefits for the city.







5.4.8 Uit Je Eigen Stad

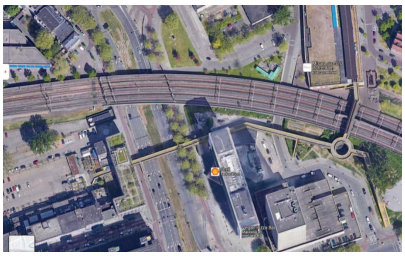
The idea for Uit Je Eigen Stad originated as Bas de Groot's graduation project for his agricultural training: an urban farm in the courtyard behind his house in the city centre of Rotterdam. Partly under the influence of Eetbaar Rotterdam, the plan developed into the concept for the urban circular farm that forms the basis of the realised project: a combination of aquaponics, chicken farm and urban market garden, each making use of the available space and urban waste streams in their own way. In a greenhouse between two existing sheds and using residual heat from a nearby power station, an aquaponics installation would produce fish and vegetables in a sustainable manner. The chickens would be housed in mobile chicken coops to occupy the land of the urban garden. Other ideas included a composting scheme whereby customers would return their residual waste to the garden. The Marconi Freezone quickly emerged as a possible location. The role of urban agriculture as a "placemaker" was elaborated in an urban design sketch for the Marconi strip by Mei Architects for project developer AM. AM was willing to pre-finance the urban farm as part of a "placemaking" strategy, but the municipality did not want to make any commitments to a project developer about the future development of the area.

Anticipating the role that the urban farm could play for the adjacent Oud-Mathenesse neighbourhood (where it owned a lot of property), Havensteder purchased the warehouses on the site with the intention of renovating them and leasing them to UJES. Other investments were financed with a loan from Rabobank at a hefty interest rate (7%), which was doubled by the DOEN Foundation. The intention was that UJES would pay off all these costs from the income of the city farm within the 10 years that they would be on site. However, due to various start-up problems, things turned out differently. The aquaponics never really got off the ground, the chicken farm was suspended and the urban farm became a backdrop rather than a business. In 2018, Uit Je Eigen Stad went bankrupt. For the rest of the ten-year period, the site was managed by event organisation Weelde.

design

realised

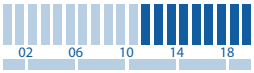
food production





Dakakker

2012-present



Size: 800 m2
(food production: 700 m2)

Food production on rooftops as part of alternative building redevelopment



Impact at district and city level
National exposure



Semi-public; accessible during opening hours



Spatial strategy

By creating an appealing example and making it accessible, involving volunteers, developing teaching programmes and setting up an international network with other rooftop gardens, the creation of more rooftop gardens is encouraged.

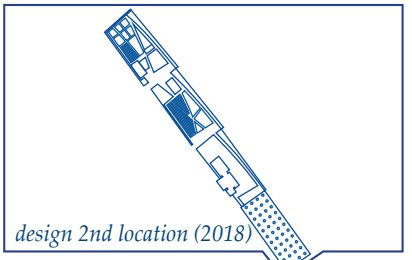


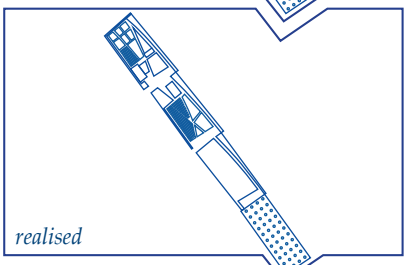


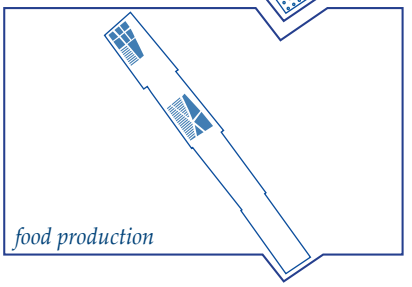
impression

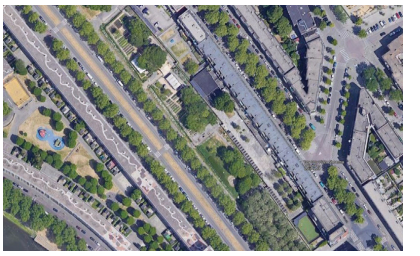
5.3.9 Dakakker

De Dakakker originated as an idea of the Rotterdam Environmental Centre (Rotterdams Milieu Centrum - RMC), inspired by North-American examples of rooftop vegetable gardens. When they moved into the Schieblock, an existing office building that was innovatively redeveloped by a combination of architects and developers, they saw an opportunity to realise this idea. The Dakakker was planned and made possible as part of the Luchtsingel, a project by design agency ZUS to redesign the Schieblock area from the bottom up. The RMC collaborated with ZUS and landscaper Binder Groen to design the rooftop vegetable garden. Initially, funding was to come from the Rotterdam rooftop subsidy in combination with other funds, but the Dakakker won the first City Initiative as part of the Luchtsingel. The prize money was used to realise the Dakakker, among other things. By combining it with a café, the roof with the garden became accessible during opening hours and thus semi-public. The garden is maintained by volunteers supervised by Wouter Bauman, an employee of the RMC. The harvest is shared and partly sold to restaurants in the area.
To date, the Dakakker is the only rooftop vegetable garden initiative in Rotterdam, apart from a number of private roofs. However, a rooftop garden with fruit trees has been initiated by RMC/Dakakker on the Hofbogen, a former railroad overpass. In addition, the Dakakker contributes to continued attention for the use of roofs as green space, for water collection and for energy generation.
Plans are underway to expand Dakakker to surrounding roofs.
In 2025 Bauman has been appointed director of the RMC.











Rotterdamse Munt

2014-present



Size: 9000 m2
(food production: 1500 m2)



A social enterprise with strong roots in the local community finds a permanent home in a public space



Impact at neighbourhood, district and city level (customers & volunteers)
National exposure



Semi-public; accessible during opening hours

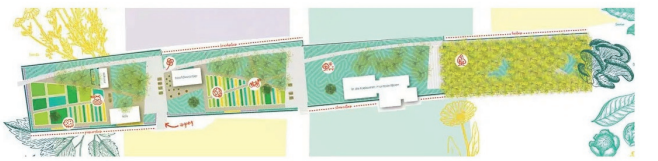


Spatial strategy

Through a combination of programming for various target groups, a hybrid revenue model and a professional design, a place is claimed in the existing public space for a different kind of green design with various functions for the neighbourhood.

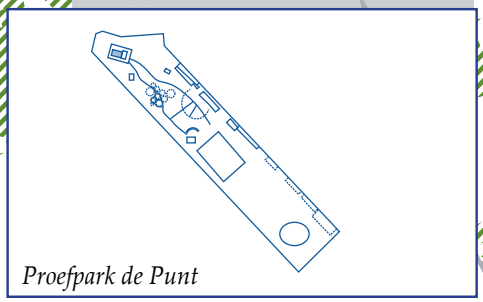




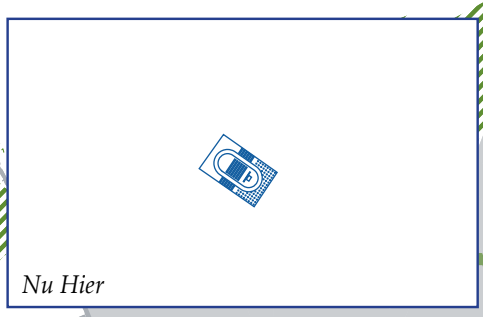


5.3.10 Rotterdamse Munt

Rotterdamse Munt is an initiative of designer Ingrid Ackermans. Motivated by her work experience at the municipality, she felt the need to set up a social project. The original idea was that she would design the concept and someone else would implement it. But while various partners dropped out, she persevered. Ultimately, she was the initiator and driving force until 2022. The garden was set up as a social enterprise: a herb garden where local people, particularly women with an immigrant background, could meet and increase their self-reliance by growing herbs. The initial idea was an entry for a competition organised by the then NAi (Netherlands Architecture Institute). The borough of Feijenoord was enthusiastic, but the idea was not (or no longer) suitable for the intended location. In consultation with Urban Development, another temporary location was found. The project operated here from 2013 to 2018. The spatial design, with a small pavilion and elongated vegetable garden boxes, was designed to be movable, as there were no guarantees about its duration.
When the construction industry picked up again after the crisis and the location was to be built on, a new location was sought in consultation with the department of spatial planning. This was found in a neglected park on the tunnel of a railway line. This location has been made available on a semi-permanent basis. With the arrival of Rotterdamse Munt, the site has been redesigned and is closed with fences outside opening hours. The business model is based on a combination of herb sales, catering, educational activities and fundraising.
In 2022, Rotterdamse Munt came under the management of the Voedseltuin.



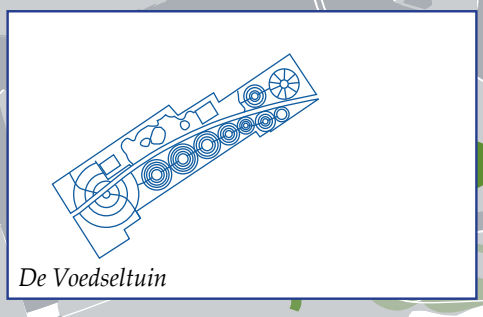
Proefpark de Punt



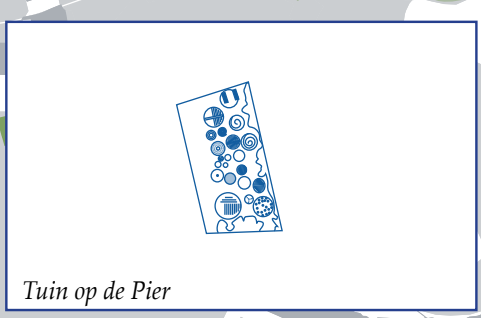
Nu Hier



TT Bergwegplantsoen



De Voedseltuin



Tuin op de Pier


6
10b
10a
Wollefoppengroen & Co
Stadslandbouw Schiebroek-Zuid
Uit Je Eigen Stad
Dakakker
Rotterdamse Munt

5.5 How urban agriculture initiators conceptualise their role in planning

5.5.1 Worldview: from theory to practice

A first step in understanding initiators as planners is to examine how they understand the world and their role in it: as an overarching framework within which their actions as planners can be interpreted, and as a set of values that motivates these actions. Inspired by Allmendinger's reference to 'Weltanschauungen', 'worldview' is used as an indicator to capture a wide range of theories and 'ways of understanding' in relation to the city and how to plan it.

Although most initiators do not claim to have a theory, a number of them do describe ideas and approaches that have influenced them. In their practice, they draw inspiration from various ideas and try to translate these into concrete action.

To understand the interaction between theory and practice, between idea and initiative, the story of initiator Rutger Henneman (TTR / Groengoed) is illustrative. Henneman was co-founder of Transition Town Rotterdam. Transition Town was an international movement that wanted to offer people an action perspective towards a sustainable society. He was particularly attracted to the practical approach of this movement. Based on their vision, the Transition Town movement had produced a handbook with a step-by-step plan. But instead of following this Transition handbook and launching TT Rotterdam as a broad movement, he and co-founder Daniel Opbroek decided at a certain point to put one of the practical ideas from the handbook into practice and start a communal vegetable garden. The garden was realised in 2010 and was so successful that they decided to continue along the same path.

"This was a really nice trick. Maybe that's our job: to encourage the neighbourhood to start a garden and then, once it's up and running, move on to something else." - Rutger Henneman

Another factor was that he did not find Transition Town radical enough. He wanted to denounce capitalism much more explicitly and was looking for a "more radical project with a more explicit ideology". Inspired by Gandhi, they started another garden (Gandhi Tuin). After a number of years, several gardens and a number of good and bad experiences, in which they had put their peace ideals into practice with occasional financial support, they decided to professionalise. This was based on the idea that they could only continue their work if they could also earn a living. Their current organisation is a practical implementation of this, in which their ideals have been applied.

"So no longer - as with the Gandhi Tuiin - first hoisting a flag with our slogan, walking down the street with it and then starting a garden. It is no longer a signboard that shouts out what we pursue, but it is completely ingrained in how we work." - Rutger Henneman

Another interesting example of the development of a worldview and the interaction between theory and practice is Creatief Beheer. Founder Rini Biemans trained as a doctor. When he developed moral objections to the curative approach of the medical industry and the associated revenue model, he decided he no longer wanted to be part of it and became an artist. While working as an artist in public spaces, he became aware of how those spaces are maintained and saw opportunities to do things differently. So, together with his partner, he started an organisation called Creatief Beheer. This brought together his criticism of the medical industry and the management of public spaces. He later coined the term 'urban medicine' for this. Nature was an important source of inspiration in this regard. Nature should be central to management, and design should serve management.

"I see the city as a rock forest. I see the soil as sacred ground. I see humans as animals. (...) We are not individuals. We are an ecosystem." - Rini Biemans

And medicine should be about keeping people and their living environment healthy, not about medication. In the management of green outdoor spaces together with residents and volunteers, care for each other and care for the environment come together. This integrated vision was developed into a practical approach in which, with a combination of existing funds for social work and outdoor space management, a neighbourhood gardener could be appointed at a location to carry out maintenance with volunteers from the neighbourhood.

But the ambitions went and go beyond taking over management. He wants to bring about a paradigm shift, among other things by setting up a course in 'Urban Medicine', possibly in collaboration with existing educational institutions. Ultimately, this form of management should become the new standard in the management and design of public spaces.

"If I succeed in separating green space management from those specifications and that cleanliness policy, then I think this will become 'new-style preventive medicine': making people's living environment healthy, socially, physically and mentally." - Rini Biemans

Not every initiative has such clear-cut ideas, but each of these initiatives tests an amalgam of ideas in practice, adjusts them and then translates them into the social practice of their organisation and into the way in which it runs its garden(s).

5.5.2 How urban agriculture shapes 'ways of understanding' the city (and its planning)

If the essence of urban agriculture lies in the reintroduction of food production within city limits – and this applies to the initiatives that form the subject of this case study – then it is not surprising that this perspective influences how initiators view the city, how they understand it, and their role in shaping it. The precise definition of urban agriculture – and especially the expectations of what urban agriculture can contribute to the city – vary greatly from person to person.

Not all locations were entirely dedicated to food production. Tuin op de Pier was a community garden where food production was one of the functions, albeit one that was of personal interest to the garden's designer and coordinator, Piet de Jonge. For Ester van de Wiel of NuHier, food production was an important part, but not the only one. Frenk Walkenbach (Wollefoppengroen&Co) saw edible gardening as a total concept for connecting people, but was not so focused on production. Rini Biemans (Creatief Beheer) saw urban agriculture as subordinate and even counterproductive to their ecological approach to the city, because it focused on controllability and control rather than spontaneous, organic development. For the other initiatives, food production was central, although it was always seen as a means to achieve a broader goal, including social goals such as raising awareness about healthy food and connecting people. For each of them, growing food in the city was a social activity.

The relationship with the larger food system is implicit. Although growing food was a main activity for seven of the ten interviewees, only one of them had the ambition to produce food professionally in the same way as in agriculture. Professional urban farmer Bas de Groot (Uit Je Eigen Stad) wanted to bring 'real agriculture' to the city, implicitly criticising the more socially oriented community gardens. Only by producing real food in the same way as in agriculture could urban agriculture be relevant to him as part of a dialogue between city and countryside.

In a 2016 interview, he put it this way:

"I felt that a real urban farm should be established in Rotterdam. There are many reasons why this is a good thing. The most important reason is that agriculture is necessary for the health of people and the health of humanity. Everyone needs to come into contact with agriculture, agricultural principles and routines at some point in their lives in order to develop healthily. But citizens are too far removed from the land. Bringing agriculture into the city can reduce the distance between the agricultural sector and citizens."
- Bas de Groot (Henneman, 2016)

Apart from De Groot, only Walkenbach and Van de Wiel explicitly refer to a broader debate about the food system and the relationship between city and countryside and the role of their urban agriculture project in this. Van de Wiel carried out projects both within the city with urban agriculture and outside the city with farmers, thus embodying the dialogue in her work.

"I often move from city to countryside, from countryside to city. And then you notice that something is changing." - Ester van de Wiel

Frenk Walkenbach felt that trying to grow your own food in the city mainly emphasised the need for professional, sustainable agriculture outside the city.

"If we see it on a small scale here, how should it be done on a larger scale?"
- Frenk Walkenbach

He therefore emphasised the importance of short chains in the food system. For this reason, they also had a collection point for the local

short-chain initiative Rechtstreex in the garden. By then, the garden was more about raising awareness of sustainability than about food supply.

In other projects, the critical agenda was more focused on the city itself as a social, cultural and ecological system. Van de Wiel (NuHier) and Henneman (TTR/Groengoed) saw food production as part of putting the commons into practice. For Henneman, this was an anti-capitalist political statement: no one pays for the food that comes from their land. For Van de Wiel, it was part of a social agenda to involve citizens and make food more accessible; a goal that is also central to Tineke van den Burg (Voedseltuin).

"We are turning it into a collective garden where you can grow food together and meet each other. Because that's what it was all about: interconnectedness – networked, relational and ecological thinking." – Ester van de Wiel

"Our core value has remained the same: growing food for people in need." - Tineke van den Burg

For Bas de Groot (Uit Je Eigen Stad) and Ingrid Ackermans (Rotterdamse Munt), urban agriculture was also a way to introduce a different economy into the city, creating social, ecological and environmental value in a local social enterprise that restores the connection between people and the food they eat. For De Groot, creating this value through food production was a meaningful activity that benefited both care patients and citizens in general. Ackermans saw urban agriculture as a driver of a neighbourhood economy that engages citizens, raises their awareness and empowers them.

"People who have no work, no daily activities, no daily routine: you can harness that potential to make the city greener and more attractive, as well as more climate-proof; to enable children to learn from nature; and to enable parents to gain work experience in a simple way and contribute to the development of their own city, thereby creating opportunities for themselves." - Ingrid Ackermans

Urban agriculture was therefore seen as a means of improving the city, both spatially and socially and ecologically. The concept stood not only for (more) space for greenery in the city, but also for a different, more productive and participatory use of that space by residents, local volunteers and entrepreneurs. Although ideas differed on how this goal could and should be achieved, these different interpretations of urban agriculture could generally be seen as complementary.

However, there are also conflicting world views that often remained unpronounced. Biemans saw urban agriculture as problematic for the development of an urban ecosystem, because agriculture would focus too much on controlling nature rather than stimulating natural processes. He formulates a remarkable criticism:

"As far as I'm concerned, urban agriculture is a completely idiotic idea. After all, it is not embedded in a different attitude towards urban nature." - Rini Biemans

According to him, we cannot determine how nature performs, so we must give nature much more space and peace, which is the opposite

of what we are doing now. He had expected that the attention for urban agriculture would help promote his own approach, but in his experience, it was actually suppressed *. He believes this was because urban agriculture conformed more to existing ways of thinking (such as a model in which the urban agriculture initiative is paid per care client or job seeker placed who is distanced from the labour market), whereas in Biemans' approach, care is included and financed from the care for green spaces.

"Then urban agriculture comes along with a specific business model and the municipality jumps on it. Why? Because nothing needs to change."
- Rini Biemans

So we see a difference in the definition of urban agriculture and in ambition, in what the initiative wanted to achieve with urban agriculture. These differences could coexist well and were sometimes complementary, like a range of possibilities, but sometimes there were conflicting ideas. This pluralism and diversity of voices was an essential part of the urban agriculture movement.

In addition, each initiative translated its ambition into the practice of starting an urban agriculture project, in which goals were made concrete. Most initiatives wanted to inspire others and always strove for local impact. In addition, a number of initiatives also wanted to set an example on a national or international scale by developing a replicable model of their garden and/or organisation and/or inspiring people to develop their own local variants. Some interviewees had the explicit goal of challenging the existing status quo and putting their vision of social change on the agenda.

** It is true that, on the one hand, we referred to Creatief Beheer with Eetbaar Rotterdam and visited the project with international guests, but on the other hand, we promoted a story focused on professional food production that is financially self-sustaining.*

5.5.3 Action perspectives

The initiator's action perspective played an important role in translating vision into concrete action. The fairly general goals relating to the city were (re)defined and adjusted in relation to local circumstances, practical considerations, chance and possible sources of funding or permits. The initiators can be distinguished by the choices they made (and make) in their positioning. In doing so, each initiator assigned themselves certain roles that determined their action perspective in relation to the government and society in general, or in other words, the capacity in which they planned their urban agriculture initiative, from idea to realisation and anchoring of the initiative.

Two types of roles can be distinguished in this action perspective:
- formal roles that positioned the initiator in society; how they financed themselves and positioned themselves in relation to categories imposed by the government and society, and
- time- and location-specific roles that an initiator took on as part of a specific strategy.

From how the initiators identified themselves in the interviews, we can roughly distinguish four formal roles: 1) the active citizen, 2) the social entrepreneur, 3) the independent design professional, 4) the NGO representative. These were not exclusive categories (as one of

the interviewees emphasised); initiators sometimes combined multiple roles, or the emphasis shifted from one role to another. But in most cases, one of the four roles was dominant in the initiator's actions.

5.5.3.1 The active citizen

The active citizens among the interviewees started out as 'objects of planning' who rebelled against this position and claimed influence over their local environment. They combined a sense of civic duty with the expectation that the government should serve its residents. They had an activist attitude and were often well versed in local government and politics. In fact, many of the interviewees were also active as citizens in their own communities, although only three of them were primarily involved in their initiatives from this action perspective.

It usually started with a protest. The origins of Wollefoppengroen&Co lay in the protest that flared up when construction plans for Wollefoppenpark were announced. Initiator Frenk Walkenbach got together with other residents as a group to stop this. And when they succeeded, the need arose to channel this energy into something positive for the neighbourhood.

"We asked ourselves: what are we actually in favour of? We researched the park. And we thought: it would be nice if we could do something constructive with the people who were involved in the protest and the petition."
- Frenk Walkenbach

In the case of Tuin op de Pier, a resident's indignation about a dilapidated piece of vacant land next to her house was the starting point for action. She had bought her flat on the assumption that the entire pier would be built up. But she hadn't counted on the economic crisis.

"So then suddenly construction came to a complete standstill. It became a place for street prostitution; drugs were being dealt; all sorts of things. It was turning into a very unpleasant area. At one point, there was even a fence around it. There was aluminium foil and condoms everywhere, dogs were pooping everywhere; it was just disgusting." - Piet de Jonge

This resident understood that it would be a long time before construction would begin, so she turned her frustration into action. She put a note in the letterboxes of everyone who lived in the neighbourhood, asking what they wanted to do with the site and suggesting a garden like the Tuin aan de Maas, says her neighbour and later chairman and head gardener of the project, Piet de Jonge. Although he also brought professional qualities to the table as an organiser of art events, he fulfilled his role as chairperson and gardener for the project in his spare time.

Tuin op de pier developed with little support or involvement from the municipality, while Wollefoppengroen&Co was embraced by various authorities, from the borough to the province. As citizens (and a citizens' group), Walkenbach and his fellow initiators invested a lot of their private time in setting up activities and gathering support,

developing plans, and involving politicians and planners. During the realisation of their initiative, they acted as clients for the redesign of the park.

"That was nice, of course. That we, as a citizens' initiative, were suddenly also the client. We were one of the first citizens' initiatives. That was just starting to happen at the time." - Frenk Walkenbach

The time investment required was a dilemma. The initiators all did the project on a voluntary basis, even though it was just a "kind of second job". They did receive some budget for expenses from the City Region. But they all paid for their own days off, etc.

"If you did it professionally, you could put more time into it. That would be nice, because now there are still things left undone." - Frenk Walkenbach

Sometimes, the active citizen's action perspective was therefore a starting point for developing into a social entrepreneur. Rutger Henneman started Transition Town as an active citizen, but he became a social entrepreneur when he put his ideals into practice and started working on them full-time with Groengoed.

5.5.3.2 Social entrepreneurs

Social entrepreneurs combined the professional attitude of an entrepreneur – and a focus on economic viability – with the commitment to the public interest of an active citizen (or a committed civil servant) in order to make proposals based on shared goals. The term social entrepreneur is used here for initiators who earned all or part of their income from their self-initiated activities. This does not mean that they necessarily identified as entrepreneurs, but economic viability was important to this group for several reasons.

Firstly, getting paid for your activities, at least in part, was a way to pay the bills and enable you to continue doing those activities, as was the case for Henneman and his partner. And when Biemans explains how difficult it sometimes was to earn a living from what he does, he does so with a sense of pride:

"I thought: either I do it well, or I quit. And then I was able to continue, but it took another two years before I had enough budget. Then I almost went bankrupt three times because of the municipality. And I'm a bit fed up with that. And now it's working and now I'm – I think – safe, but you don't want to know how difficult it is to get here in the first place and be able to do this." - Rini Biemans

This statement also illustrates a second reason for getting paid; for these initiators, payment was a form of recognition of the value they created. This value did not (only) take the form of a real and marketable product, although such a product can be seen as a tangible result of the social, cultural and ecological value created. For Biemans, his overarching identity was that of a 'city doctor' who provides 'city medicine' through his projects. For Bas de Groot, in addition to contributing to the development of sustainable agriculture, the sociocultural aspect played an important role.

"Agriculture is the only way we can 'cultivate' natural principles. Agriculture is the only way we can truly connect with natural processes in our actions, such as the continuous cycle of growth and decay. We need that."
- Bas de Groot (Henneman, 2016)

Thirdly, economic viability supported the idea that others could do this too, that this was a job and not a hobby, and that the project therefore offered a reproducible model. Eetbaar Rotterdam, which De Groot co-founded, consistently presented 'urban farming' as a job, a profession. Henneman and Biemans also refer with a certain pride to how their organisation offers work to more people.

Economic viability was therefore also a means of achieving idealistic (social, cultural, ecological) goals. Opinions differed as to whether this economic viability should be based on subsidies or commercial income. For Henneman, receiving subsidies or funding from public sources was logical and even honourable because his/her initiative fulfilled public goals.

"That's why I'm proud of subsidies. In fact, I think subsidies are one of the best sources of funding. It's an honour that the community values what you do. 'We have community money for you because you take on community tasks.'"
- Rutger Henneman

For De Groot, earning money on the market was a sign of independence. Part of the appeal of social entrepreneurship lay in this perceived autonomy. This autonomy and independence offered more freedom to follow one's own vision, without interference from the government or other parties.

"The fact that I am strongly attracted to entrepreneurship, for example, is due to an anti-state sentiment: wanting to take care of yourself out of self-esteem."
- Bas de Groot (Henneman, 2016)

"When I was 30, I thought: I'm not crazy, the whole world is crazy. That's when I quit medicine. I thought: I'm not going to spend my whole life pushing pharmaceuticals. And if you continue to grow... I wouldn't even be able to work for a boss anymore." – Rini Biemans

It wasn't always easy to maintain the balance between economics and ideals. One example of this was the use of volunteers. Due to the crisis, there were many people without work, people with burnout, who were willing to come and work as volunteers. This was a help for initiatives such as Uit Je Eigen Stad, but at a certain point, it became something that was counted on, and then it became part of the business model, without the social support that should actually accompany it. This was a dilemma that more initiators struggled with.

5.5.3.3 The independent design professional

Independent design professionals used the designer's professional knowledge to communicate on an equal footing with planners and civil servants. They looked for opportunities to experiment with different forms of planning and/or design of public space. NuHier started as an open assignment from a housing corporation to do

something with a piece of vacant land, inspired by her previous projects on the edible landscape. Social designer Ester van de Wiel recounts how she received a call on 15 December asking if she would like to draw up a plan before the end of the year, as there was still some budget left to be spent that year. By responding quickly, she then had a location and a budget to 'play with' as she saw fit and to establish a vision.

Caroline Zeevat (Stadslandbouw Schiebroek-Zuid) also received a request from a (different) housing corporation: could she start an urban agriculture project in a neighbourhood where the association owned the public space around their homes? Although she was trained as a graphic designer, her approach as a green social entrepreneur was not so different at its core. In Schiebroek-Zuid, she designed the organisation of the project and the frameworks (sometimes literally, as in the case of the garden fences) and provided space for residents to contribute their ideas.

Based on a commission from the housing corporation, both designers developed their own vision on the use of public space and how this use can be designed and supervised. Based on this vision, they set things in motion. Once the project was up and running, the question arose as to how it could be sustained. The transition from visionary design and realisation to continuation of the project was sometimes challenging. Landscape architect Ingrid Ackermans (Rotterdamse Munt) participated in a competition with a fellow designer and a sociologist. The design was inspired by the work of urban planner Jane Jacobs.

"Our design was a response to the trend in which the municipality was focusing solely or increasingly on commercial market parties as partners for urban development. Our conviction/assumption was that this would not necessarily result in the development of an interesting, liveable and inclusive city."
- Ingrid Ackermans

They won the competition and were given the opportunity to realise the plan. But from the outset, Ackermans was ambiguous about the idea of managing the project she had in mind herself.

"I have always seen myself as a participatory urban designer. So building the city together with people, developing green spaces." - Ingrid Ackermans

Her idea was that she would set up the project and someone else would take it over, but that failed repeatedly because one partner after another dropped out. That is why she became and remained the driving force behind the project and was forced to develop into a social entrepreneur. Once the project had become an organisation that was more or less financially stable, the baton could be passed on. Due to the many different tasks (which require different talents), it made sense to join forces with two other foundations: Voedseltuin and Pluspunt (an organisation that organises and supervises daytime activities). The transfer was a relief in many ways.

NuHier was intended to be a temporary project from the outset. What would happen afterwards was an open question.

Together with her partner Gerda Zijlstra, Van de Wiel wanted to 'develop the NuHier site in the meantime'. The idea was to manage it temporarily, do a lot of pioneering work and, if successful, hand over the project. The pioneering went well, but the transfer after the interim period proved more difficult than expected. They had signed up for five years, and after five years they wanted to transfer it – in the spirit of the project. But it proved difficult to find a party. The party that eventually took it over changed the project in such a way that it no longer met the original principles.

"(...) five years is temporary, right? And anything beyond that is no longer temporary. So I felt that a new project should take over; clean and new and fresh... Well, and then a new group came along. And then you have to make room." - Ester van de Wiel

Zeevat's approach (Urban Agriculture Schiebroek-Zuid) worked well, but it was dependent on her presence as a coach and driving force. Because she was aware of this, she worked at a low hourly rate in order to do a lot with a limited budget and to involve others. But when the housing corporation was no longer allowed by the government to invest in this type of project and, following a reorganisation, the contact persons and thus the vision on participation within Vestia changed, her role was forced to become smaller and the number of gardens, and thus the impact of the initiative, declined again.

The cases of these independent design professionals illustrate the confrontation between planning ideals and everyday reality. This can be part of a creative process that emphasises and explores this clash, or it can become the starting point of a personal journey that does not necessarily end in success. Looking back, Ackermans sees many things she would do differently, but she is nevertheless proud of the project. In realising an urban agriculture initiative, a designer faces the challenge of becoming a manager. These three examples show different ways of doing this, each of which explores the limits of feasibility, of the possible.

5.5.3.4 Representatives of an NGO

Representatives of an NGO (a non-profit organisation) invoked their commitment to the public interest in a similar way to designers, but took a more diplomatic stance on behalf of their organisation. Their personal commitment served the goals of the initiative, the NGO.

The attitude that emerges from the interviews with them is one of strategic professional distance or discretion. Tineke van den Burg (Stichting Voedseltuin) previously worked at the Stedelijk Bureau Ander Werk (SBAW), a semi-governmental organisation that helped civic initiatives move from idea to realisation. This gave her a large network and relevant experience, which she brought to her work for the Food Garden, and in this she differs from other initiators. Wouter Bauman was already working for the Rotterdam Environmental Centre (RMC) when this municipality-funded local environmental organisation conceived the plan for the Dakakker.

"(I) kind of fell into it, really. We had these ideas about greening the roof. When we found out that ZUS was also working on similar ideas, we decided to join forces." - Wouter Bauman

The initiative focused more on promoting a broader agenda for change than on starting new projects. The ambition was clearly formulated and defined. Bauman gives a good impression of this action perspective taken by the NGO representative when he summarises his organisation's ambition with this initiative.

"We want to inspire. We see our role primarily in sharing knowledge, rather than setting up another project ourselves. We always invite anyone who wants to do something with rooftop agriculture." - Wouter Bauman

Tineke van den Burg defines the ambitions of the Food Garden in a similar way. When asked about the future, she saw more edible green space in the neighbourhood, but she did not see a role for their initiative in the neighbourhood around the Food Garden, because in terms of management and financing, this did not fit well with the initiative. However, in 2022, Pluspunt (the umbrella foundation under which the Food Garden falls) took over another initiative (Rotterdamse Munt) because it fit in with their broader strategy of also offering welfare support in Rotterdam South.With a professional approach, a good network and strategic insight. As an independent civil servant, as Erik Sterk, a colleague of Van den Burg, once called it *, NGO representatives represented the interests of their initiative.

5.5.3.5 Time- and location-specific roles

In the practice of planning and realising their initiative, the initiators' action perspective was not only determined by these formal roles. Initiators are not stuck in one role but combine different roles. In addition to their formal role(s), initiators take on roles in – and in function of – specific spatial planning strategies at a particular place and time.

These more situational, time- and location-specific roles supported the strategies: the rebel who likes to provoke in order to make a point or who engages in civil disobedience on principle or to shake things up; the wheeler-dealer who gets things done with a mix of playful actions, protest and engagement; the pioneering visionary or inspirer who likes to challenge the idea of how this public space is defined (and wants to be recognised as such) in order to exert their influence through public or professional debate; the neighbourhood connector who combines the sense of duty of an active citizen with the professional attitude of a (social) entrepreneur in order to establish a social foothold in the neighbourhood; the diplomat-strategist who responds intelligently to the policies and needs of the municipality and other parties, based on knowledge of how those parties work; the coach who supports and guides residents to work together towards a collective goal. This will be discussed in the following section.

These situated roles are also indicative of the way in which the initiator positioned themselves within the prevailing discourse; they reveal the stance taken by initiators towards the government and the planning views it represents. We will return to this in Chapter VI.

** Sterk said this in a conversation with me as part of the 'Zelfonderzoek groene initiatieven' This self-assessment of green initiatives was part of the Living Lab Rotterdam in the Horizon 2020 project EdiCitNet (Henneman, 2021).*

5.6 Spatial planning strategies

The ways in which urban agriculture initiatives intervened in urban planning varied from the realisation of facts on the ground – projects that showed how things could be done differently – to influencing the municipal vision on (edible green space in) the city, both politically and professionally, and in the social debate. In doing so, they applied various spatial planning strategies.

Not every initiator speaks in terms of strategies, but all initiatives applied strategies: to find and claim space; to design this space and (sometimes temporarily) transform it into a place to grow food; and to find support for this intervention among residents and other stakeholders and to develop it. These strategies could change or develop during the process from initiative to realisation.

The sequence and composition of strategies differed per initiative. But broadly speaking, three different phases could be distinguished in the process:

1) Initiate: finding and gaining access to land/space

2) Shape: setting up that space

3) Anchor: maintaining and developing that space

In some cases, the phases overlap, for example when permission is only granted (phase 1) on the basis of a design (phase 2). Or when a (previous) contribution to the professional debate (phase 3) provides access to a location (phase 1).

An analysis of the use of strategies by the initiatives shows a range of different strategies for each phase (see Fig. 5.4). These strategies are then broadly categorised. In phase 1, Initiate, the strategies are categorised from conforming (to existing planning practice) to non-conforming. So if an initiator is invited by a property manager to design a location or if the initiator develops a plan and submits it to municipal authorities, this fits in with existing practice. This does not mean that the initiators in question then also make traditional plans. An invitation to a designer may, in fact, be accompanied by the expectation that an original and challenging approach will be developed. But at the process level, the order of things is respected, at least more so than when the initiator sets to work themselves and mobilises the neighbourhood or simply takes a piece of land into use without asking. A right-to-challenge also implies that the initiator takes over a task from the government by doing it in a different way. The fact that there is a regulation for this makes this non-conforming action more conforming. The classification therefore says something about the activist intentions of the initiator: to what extent they oppose the existing order. It is therefore also a measure of the positioning of the initiatives between autonomy and dependence on the government.

The strategies in Phase 2, Shape, are arranged from formal to informal. Formal designs are also more in line with what is customary in planning practice. Informal designs make the 'shaping' more subordinate to the (social) process and the active participation of residents.

Incidentally, formal designs can also be divided according to the degree of participation by users (residents and/or volunteers).

The order of Phase 3, Anchor, is the most tentative. One could say that anchoring within existing organisational structures (professional, spatial, social) is more top-down than economic anchoring in the market or social anchoring in the neighbourhood.

Visualising the strategies of the initiatives for the three phases creates a kind of signature that makes differences clear, to a certain extent (see Fig. 5.5).

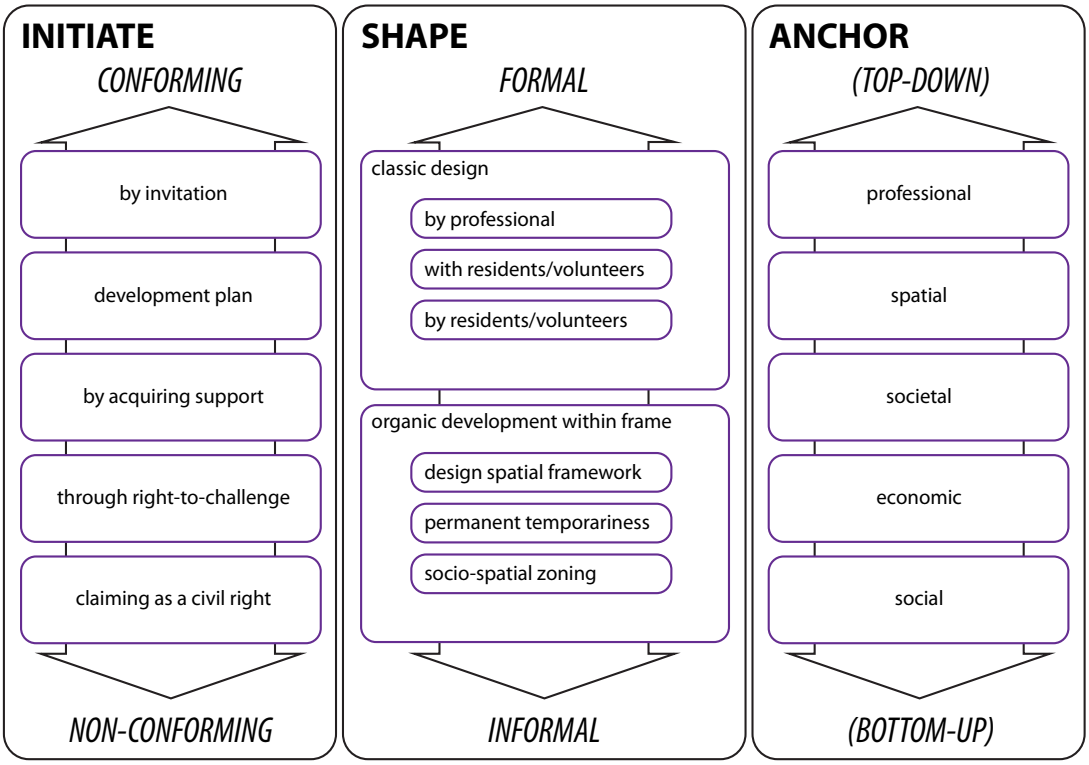


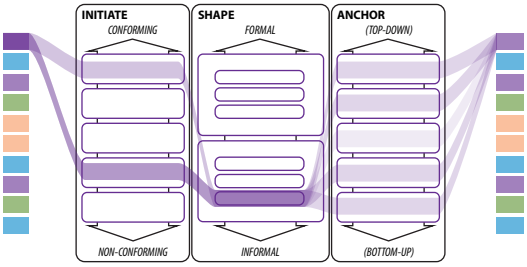
Fig. 5.4 Planning process: spatial planning strategies per phase

5.6.1 Initiate: access to land/space

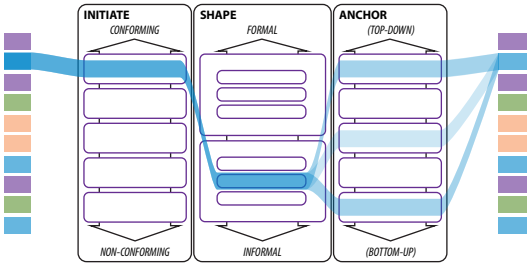
This phase of the planning process encompasses all the steps from finding a location to obtaining permission to set it up. In choosing a location, urban agriculture initiatives were opportunistic in the sense that they were usually – out of necessity – guided by the opportunities that arose, whether this was a vacant lot in the neighbourhood, a client's location or a location in the city allocated by the government. Access to land is by definition difficult in the city, and so it is a matter of seizing opportunities as they arise.

Idea and location: Initiatives had different strategies for finding a location. For some, it started with an available location from which an idea developed; in other cases, a final location was chosen based on an idea or vision.

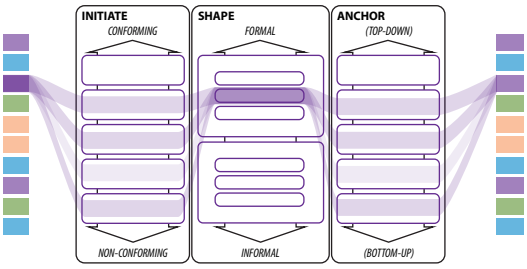
Creatief Beheer - Proefpark de Punt



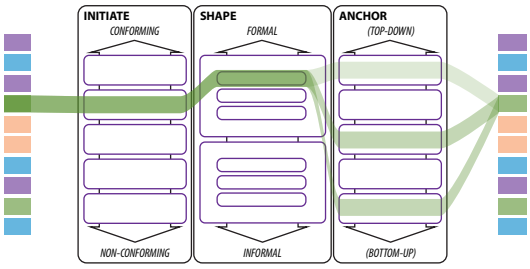
NuHier



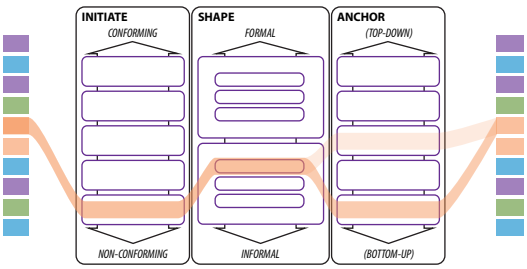
Transition Town Rotterdam - Bergwegplantsoen



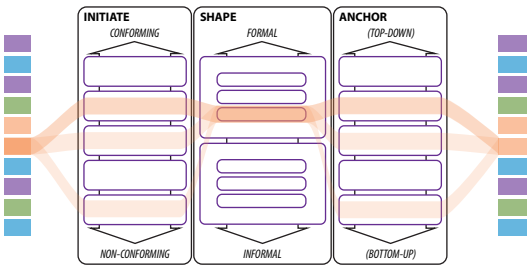
De Voedseltuin



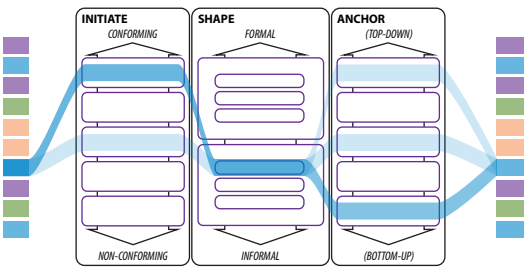
Tuin op de Pier



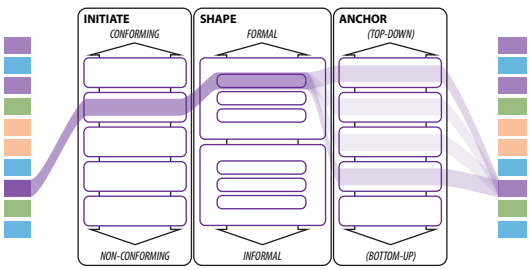
Wollefoppengroen & Co



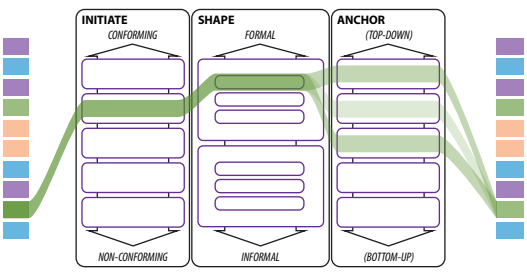
Stadslandbouw Schiebroek-Zuid



Uit Je Eigen Stad



Dakakker



Rotterdamse Munt

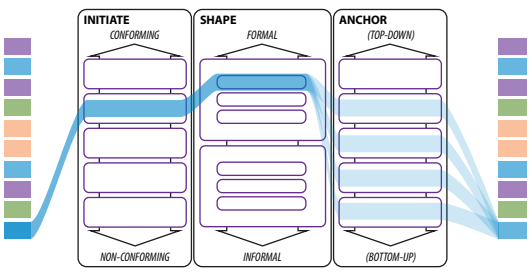


Fig. 5.5 Planning process per initiative with choice of spatial planning strategies per phase

There is often an interaction between one or more locations and an idea. Creativity and inventiveness play an important role in this.

The availability of vacant land as a result of the 2008-2014 crisis inspired initiatives to come up with innovative ideas for temporarily using this space. Urban agriculture initiatives such as NuHier (and, for example, the Tussentuin) responded to this with concepts such as the interim period. The idea of temporary use and what that could mean developed rapidly at that time and was sometimes also formalised (e.g. in the code of conduct for temporary nature).

"The inbetween-time as a way to develop (a site) more socially became a 'movement' in which I was involved, along with Iris Schutten, among others. (...) The municipality saw this as a theme they needed to address and embraced it."
- Ester Van de Wiel

The idea of Uit Je Eigen Stad: an urban agricultural business that pays for itself within an agreed, temporary period, also fitted in with this. The underlying idea was that temporary facilities could gain a foothold within existing real estate conventions and, by constantly moving from place to place, also acquire a permanent, albeit nomadic, presence in the city.

The Voedseltuin started with the idea of providing the Food Bank's customers with fresh food from vegetable gardens in the city. When this proved logistically difficult, the location next to the Food Bank was a logical place to start growing food ourselves.

Rotterdamse Munt was an idea that was developed for one location and implemented in another.

All the initiatives had an a priori idea, but in the case of the citizens' initiatives Tuin op de Pier and Wollefoppengroen & Co, it can be said that the location was the reason for the idea to be conceived.

5.6.1.1 By invitation

As discussed in the previous section, some initiators were invited by the site owner (housing corporation or municipality) or a representative thereof to start an initiative at a specific location. Design professional Ester van de Wiel and social entrepreneurs Creatief Beheer were selected on the basis of previous self-initiated projects. Van de Wiel had already been working on urban space programming for some time, including with the Sunday Adventure Club (in Amsterdam), before she started NuHier (literally: Now Here) with Gerda Zijlstra. The temporary location made available to them by PWS (Havensteder) provided the space to further develop the idea of 'development in the inbetween-time'.

"The assignment was: turn this into a place." - Ester van de Wiel

For Biemans (Creative Beheer), vacant lots were ideal testing grounds for a different approach to green space management, so when he was invited to develop a trial park as a preliminary step towards a new park, it was right up his alley.

The reason for Stadslandbouw Schiebroek-Zuid was an ambitious and visionary plan for the Schiebroek neighbourhood that housing corporation Vestia had commissioned from design agency Except. This plan included urban agriculture in greenhouses on rooftops as part of the renovation of homes in the neighbourhood. This proved too ambitious for Vestia. It was not implemented, but on this basis Vestia did want to do something with food production. A tender was issued for a participatory project with residents. Design professional Caroline Zeevat was asked to give a pitch because of her previous work with gardens, and was awarded the contract because she gave residents a major role in the approach she proposed. This then developed into the project as we know it today.

5.6.1.2 Development of the plan

Tineke van der Burg explains how the founder of the Voedseltuin, Kim Bunt, wanted to combat hunger by redistributing vegetables from allotments. These allotments often have a surplus of vegetables, and the idea was that it would be great if these could be distributed via the Food Bank. The Food Bank was interested, but did not see how they could organise this logistically. Sjaak Sies, the initiator of the Food Bank, suggested starting a vegetable garden on a large piece of vacant land next to the Food Bank. They took this plan to the local council to ask if they could use the land. All other plans in the area were on hold. After some hesitation, the council asked them to test the soil for contamination. When it proved to be clean enough, they were given permission to use the land 'for free' *.

** 'for free' ('om niet' in Dutch) means without paying rent, although in practice this often means that a tenancy agreement is concluded for a minimal symbolic rent.*

"It was (also) a piece of land where trouble sometimes occurred, so they thought a bit of activity would be good; a few eyes and ears in the area."
- Tineke van den Burg

De Groot (Uit Je Eigen Stad) started working on an idea for an urban farm with the courtyard behind his house in mind, first as a graduation project to write a business plan, then as a serious plan. Through his involvement with Eetbaar Rotterdam - and several iterations of his business plan later - he became more ambitious. He developed the plan further with various partners into a temporary commercial city farm covering several hectares. During this process, another larger location presented itself, in the Marconi Freezone, a low-regulation development zone in the port area. Other parties also became involved in the plan here. Project developer AM saw long-term development opportunities in which the city farm could function as a placemaker to make the area attractive. Havensteder expected that the urban farm could contribute to social goals in the neighbouring district, where Havensteder owned many homes. Due to the agricultural activities (particularly chicken farming), the initiative had to comply with all kinds of permits. Despite its special status as a low-regulation area, it still took a lot of time and energy to comply with the regulations.

Rotterdamse Munt started with a plan developed in an ideas competition for Rotterdam South. The idea won and the municipality was

interested in realising it, but they proposed a different (temporary) location on vacant land. Here, the initiative was realised on a temporary basis. Later, a more permanent location was found in public space.

The plan for the Dakakker was developed as part of a bottom-up redevelopment of the Schieblock building by a partnership of architects and property developers. When this alternative development consortium was allowed to redevelop the building, it paved the way for the realisation of the Dakakker on the building.

5.6.1.3 Gaining support

In addition to vacant land, underutilised public space also offered opportunities for urban agriculture. For initiatives that wanted access to a piece of public space, such as TTR/Groengoed, Wollefoppengroen & Co and Stadslandbouw Schiebroek-Zuid, it was essential to create support among residents in order to justify their claim to the public space. In these situations, they presented themselves as connectors, between residents and municipalities and between residents themselves. Henneman and Opbroek wanted to put the ideas of Transition Town into practice. They had their eye on a location in a park in their neighbourhood and went to the borough council. The borough council's executive committee asked them to demonstrate that there was support for their initiative. They organised a picnic, which attracted many residents, and subsequently received permission from the borough council.

Sometimes initiatives also made good use of their support in the neighbourhood to get things done in an unorthodox way. Wollefoppengroen & Co started as a protest against construction plans, and then used the energy that was released to do something constructive. First, they analysed the park next to the neighbourhood and then used this as a basis for a plan for the site where the construction plans were projected. They sought and created support among residents, administrators and civil servants. With clever spontaneous actions, they managed to get things done in the area. For example, they persuaded the council to improve the path structure in the park by organising a running competition.

"That guy from Sport & Recreation who was going to help us went to walk the route and said: you can't walk on this (which we knew, of course); the race can't go ahead. Then we said: yes, hello, we've organised everything. And then the Public Works Department renovated a number of paths after all."
- Frenk Walkenbach

5.6.1.4 Right to challenge

The 'right-to-challenge' is a municipal scheme in which citizens can propose to take over a government task if they think they can do it better. The scheme has been in place since 2015, and none of the locations studied came about as a result of it. However, for more recent locations, both Creatief Beheer and Groengoed used the right to adopt a new location by taking over the maintenance of the public space.

This 'right-to-challenge' gave them access through a tender process. Although this municipal instrument is also open to citizens, its economic results-oriented approach makes it particularly interesting for more professional initiatives/social entrepreneurs. Bronsveld places this scheme within a number of democratisation experiments that were initiated during the 2014-2018 council term under Alderman for Democratic Renewal Eerdmans (Bronsveld, 2016). This also included CityLab010, the successor to the Stadsinitiatief (City Initiative) initiated by the previous council.

5.6.1.5 Claim as a civil right

Sometimes, a vacant lot was just a nuisance, an unsafe place or simply an opportunity to do something with neighbours or volunteers. In this case, access to such a site was seen as a kind of civil right: the right of citizens to improve their own environment. Tuin op de Pier claimed the vacant lot in their neighbourhood out of dissatisfaction with its management and the nuisance it caused. According to their own statements, they did not ask for permission. It was a modest rebellion against a municipality that failed to guarantee a pleasant living environment.

"We actually said more: we are going to do this and we just want to say that we are going to do this. (...)" – Piet de Jonge

5.6.2 Shape: layout of the space (design and realisation)

This phase of the planning process encompasses all steps from design to realisation, management and maintenance. The strategies applied in the design of locations can be roughly divided into 'classical design' and 'organic development within frames'. When shaping a location, many urban agriculture initiatives set different priorities than municipal designers or professionals hired by them normally did. It is not that there was no design or guidance, but this was often done in a more subtle way and more in interaction with the wishes of residents. These initiatives demanded a greater role for resident participation and for flexible, organic development of a location. The end result was often less important; the design set a few parameters and within those parameters, the layout developed organically in interaction with residents, seasons and opportunities that arose. At the same time, there were initiatives that went through a fairly classic design process, whether or not to meet conditions set by the municipality. In some cases, the designer was a professional who may or may not have involved residents in the design. In one case, it was the residents themselves who created the design, with or without support from the municipality.

5.6.2.1 Organic development within frameworks

A pioneer in this field and an example for other initiatives was Creatief Beheer. The aim of Proefpark de Punt was to create a place where young people could play outside and nature could take its course.

In principle, any resident who wanted to 'play' could join the initiative, so the Proefpark had a vegetable garden, a bicycle track, a dovecote, a chicken coop and so on. The initiator guided this organic process by determining a place with the residents within a global, predetermined thematic zoning, and designing this place with them.

"We divided the park into zones: meeting place around the greenhouse, native circles, football field and hut building site, and from there it grew organically." - Rini Biemans

At Tuin op de Pier, Piet de Jonge proposed using a flexible design principle based on circles, in order to allow the garden to develop organically. This principle was inspired by a visit to Derek Jarman's garden in Dungeness. His garden grew larger as he was able to devote more attention to it and keep the rabbits away. When he had to go to hospital, the garden shrank again.

"When we started on the pier, this seemed like a good starting point to me: no boundaries and discovering how much care we can devote to the area." "I said (...) we have a very large area (...). In fact, we can physically realise all our wishes, but how do you translate that into manpower? And how do you maintain it?" "(...) if we start with one circle now. Then we'll see if we can keep it up. It's a nice open form." - Piet de Jonge

This awareness of the public nature of the location is reflected in the consideration of accessibility. The circles also offered the advantage of a continuous public space between 'private' gardens where everyone could walk.

"I found that such a limiting idea. That you take a piece of land from the municipality and then say this is ours. That's a strange kind of land grabbing that I didn't want to support." - Piet de Jonge

Initially, the circular shape raised questions among his fellow residents, amongst others about its usability, but gradually people became more enthusiastic (with a few exceptions) *. The agreement was that each new circle would be as large as people could handle and dared to take on. As a result, in a relatively short period of time, a considerable number of circles of different sizes were created, including various garden circles, a round greenhouse and even a circular pergola. Each circle had its own purpose. Paths were created between them. The stones that were unearthed during the construction of the circles were incorporated into a circular rock garden.

This interaction between design and resident input is reflected to a greater or lesser extent in many initiatives. Van de Wiel used discussions with local residents and people from neighbouring educational institutions and businesses as the basis for the programming and design of NuHier. Initially, they wanted to offer opportunities to people from the neighbourhood.

"Activating people was very important. Food was (also) a means to that end." - Ester van de Wiel

** For De Jonge, Jarman's garden is also a prototype of a truly contemporary garden. He felt it was very important that a newly built area should not feature an English landscape garden or anything else based on historical examples, but that a more conceptual approach should be taken.*

"The first thing we did was open the gate and invite people in. We arranged for a shed and spent a month on that field. We cooked soup and talked to people. To find out: Who are the people here?" - Ester van de Wiel

The intention was not to ask people to help build, because they already had enough difficulties. But anyone who wanted to do something was welcome. An important rule was: everyone can participate, no one can claim ownership. Spontaneity and quick responses played an important role. When it started to freeze, a contractor friend quickly dug out a skating rink and the local fire brigade filled it with water.

For the Stadslandbouw Schiebroek-Zuid initiative, Caroline Zeevat first consulted and listened to the residents. The women who were the first to sign up wanted a small plot under their balcony for vegetable gardening. This was the basis for a flexible development strategy (somewhat similar to that of Tuin op de Pier) with a number of simple rules.

The gardens consisted of one or more small plots. The location was determined in consultation with residents, but for each courtyard, the first plot determined the grid on which the other plots were laid out. Each plot was filled in by the resident(s) concerned. Zeevat acted as a kind of coach: she kept an eye on the big picture, but also paid attention to meaningful details such as the design of the fences around the gardens.

"The residents had a choice between a sheep wire fence or a chestnut wood fence. One resident had come up with a cross-shaped plot. I decided not to apply a choice there, because a chestnut wood fence could be associated with a cemetery, but to use the transparent sheep wire through which vines and beans could grow." - Caroline Zeevat

Word of mouth generated enthusiasm and, as a result, the number of gardens grew to a peak of forty plots spread throughout the neighbourhood.

In all these initiatives, the resulting urban agriculture project was not designed in detail in advance, but was developed in interaction with the residents involved and other stakeholders. This led to a different aesthetic and a different social dynamic. These innovations in the design of outdoor spaces contributed to the innovative image of urban agriculture.

5.6.2.2 Classic design

Other initiatives involved a more classic combination of design and implementation, with the initiative itself taking the lead. Wollefoppengroen & Co stands out in this regard because it created the initial design and commissioned the development and realisation of the design. The initiative had produced a design sketch for Wollefoppenpark. The design was enthusiastically received by the borough, city region and province, which resulted in funds being made available for implementation by the municipality. The Urban Design department (Stedenbouw) developed the plan to implementation level and the Public Works department (Gemeentewerken) realised and constructed it.

TTR/Groengoed created their design for the Bergwegplantsoen based on the wishes of the residents. The residents were involved in a playful way. For example, a group of wheelchair users from the adjacent Humanitas residential (care) complex came to the garden to determine the correct dimensions of the vegetable garden boxes on the spot. But in Henneman's experience, this participation is mainly symbolic, because people often say things that they, as initiators, had already thought of. The design was created by his colleague Daniel Opbroek with a volunteer and implemented in a weekend together with a large group of residents. Initially, they had created a design for the entire park, but the borough council thought this was a bit too much, so they limited themselves to the current garden. By reusing existing paving and planting, the costs could be limited to a small planting budget.

The first design for the Voedseltuin was created by the then manager (Martijn van Santen). When a new contract was due after five years, the council demanded that something be done about the appearance of the garden.

"It didn't have to be 'Central Park', but it did need to be a bit tidier and a paved path had to be laid through it to connect Vierhavenstraat with the rest of the harbour. So we hired LOLA landscape architects and talked to all the neighbours to find out what they thought of the garden and what was important to them. That resulted in a plan." - Tineke van den Burg

The paved path was laid by the municipality, and the garden was redesigned by volunteers and garden coordinators from the Voedseltuin. The design was fine-tuned during implementation. The oval vegetable gardens were made round by the garden coordinators for practical reasons.

At Uit Je Eigen Stad, the layout of the garden was largely conceived by initiator Bas de Groot, mainly based on cultivation considerations. The redesign of the buildings on the site and the addition of a greenhouse were carried out on a limited budget based on functional considerations. Design agencies were involved in various phases. During implementation, savings were made on a supervisor, which in retrospect resulted in a lot of extra work. The garden was designed by De Groot in collaboration with a (paid) head gardener and volunteers.

De Dakakker was part of the Luchtsingel and, as such, was designed in broad terms by design agency ZUS, with the construction of the underlying building also determining the layout; for example, trees with a thicker layer of soil were placed on the columns.

Ackermans is exceptional in that, as the initiator and design professional, she kept the role of designer entirely to herself. The neat and well-designed appearance of Rotterdamse Munt (with sleek vegetable garden boxes and a wooden shed) was part of the success of this initiative among policymakers. Ironically, she herself indicates that she had too little time for design; a recurring frustration.

"(...) there wasn't really a budget to hire a landscape architect. And I didn't really have much time. (...) There was a garden that had to be run. And I also had to earn a living, so I did (...) a lot of design work on the side. Actually, there wasn't really time to make a design, but a budget had to be drawn up and a contractor had to make a quotation, so it all happened in a kind of haphazard way with sketches." - Ingrid Ackermans

5.6.3 Anchor: maintenance and development

This phase encompasses all the steps involved in anchoring the initiative. Once the initiative had been established at a location and had secured a place in the city, the next challenge was to maintain that place and, if possible, develop it. Of course, this also included management and maintenance, but in addition, each initiative tried to embed itself in the city at a strategic level. Most initiatives had a temporary and uncertain status in the dynamics of the city's spatial development. In order to survive, they used various strategies to anchor themselves.

In terms of how they do this, these strategies can be divided into: professional, spatial, societal, economic and social anchoring.

Anchoring can be achieved in various ways, but successful social anchoring does not guarantee permanent spatial anchoring. And an initiative that has access to a space can still fail due to a lack of economic anchoring. The different forms of anchoring are therefore often interlinked and complementary. The forms of anchoring could be placed on a spectrum from top-down (professional) to bottom-up (social), but in practice most initiatives use a combination of these strategies across the entire spectrum.

5.6.3.1 Professional anchoring

Rini Biemans (Creatief Beheer) was (and is) the tireless spokesperson for his initiative, through blogs and as a speaker. His critical attitude towards the municipality did not always help the continuity of their projects, but it also earned him many fans both within and outside the municipality. By making use of regulations such as the right to challenge and thereby managing not only vacant land but also public space, he has laid a more stable financial foundation for his organisation in recent years. The approach they have developed – more than a specific location – is thus the lasting 'legacy' of Creatief Beheer, with which they have, as it were, anchored themselves in the professional debate.

"I think Urban Medicine is going to become the new standard in public space (management), and I have worked very hard to achieve that. Even if it fails... I think I have come so far now, the message is so clear and the examples so strong, that it is bound to work." - Rini Biemans

The image building of Bas de Groot as a professional urban farmer in the spirit of Eetbaar Rotterdam and Uit Je Eigen Stad as an internationally leading urban farm (the largest in Europe) * was also a form of professional anchoring.

** Amongst other via the blog of Eetbaar Rotterdam*

NuHier by Ester van de Wiel and Gerda Zijlstra was not initially focused on the permanent presence of the garden itself, but rather on dealing with temporariness in a different way. This vision of redesigning the city was shared and disseminated through the professional network of the initiators in order to gain support for this idea.

"Each project has its own website. That way, as the initiator, you don't claim it as your own. You also have to search quite hard to find our names." "(The project was) more famous around the world than locally. We had lots of visitors and received a lot of attention." - Ester van de Wiel

Meanwhile, they sought creative solutions to practical problems that arose in the inbetween-time. For example, they had to apply for a permit every time they wanted to organise something. And then they – "that was another vintage 'Gerda idea'" – wrote their own 'temporary ongoing event permit'. The question was who at the municipality would dare to sign it. A brave civil servant did so (for one year). Nowadays, Rotterdam has a similar standard permit, a kind of C-events permit for this type of initiative, says Van de Wiel. With this playful approach, NuHier gained a position in municipal policy, but also in an international professional debate about the role of designers in social issues.

5.6.3.2 Spatial anchoring

Rotterdamse Munt and Wollefoppengroen & Co have anchored themselves spatially in the city by securing a permanent location. The trial location of Rotterdamse Munt, which Ackermans initially set up, opened the door to a second permanent location. As clients, Frenk Walkenbach and his fellow residents of Wollefoppengroen & Co succeeded when the permanent layout of the edible park was completed in 2014. But spatial anchoring also depends on legal and financial arrangements. Since 2018, there has been a shed so that indoor activities can also be held. For this, they have to pay rent to the municipality. Partly for this reason, they also rent out the shed, including to the municipality, and they receive a subsidy from the municipality.

"And that's the thing: we have to pay rent for the land now that we have a building here. That's a problem, of course, because we have no income. So we're going to knock on the doors of counters 3, 4 and 5 at the municipality to pay for counter 1. The people from the municipality who come here also think it's strange that this is necessary. But that's the system, isn't it?" - Frenk Walkenbach

Expansion as a strategy is another way of spatially anchoring an initiative. Over time, Creatief Beheer and TTR/Groengoed initiated more locations, making them less dependent on the survival of a single location. While Groengoed initially repeated the process of taking the initiative themselves, over the time they were ore often invited to take over locations or start a new location in a neighbourhood or district. This eliminated the need to initiate locations themselves from the outset.

5.6.3.3 Societal anchoring

De Voedseltuin and Uit Je Eigen Stad were able to connect with local area development in Stadshavens, where all the changes in port activities provided room for innovation and experimentation. You could call this societal anchoring in spatial processes. Uit Je Eigen Stad was less active in this regard. At the time, they had an exceptional 10-year contract. De Voedseltuin, on the other hand, collaborated (and continues to collaborate) with other parties (entrepreneurs, artists and cultural organisations) based in the port area.

"No, that doesn't happen automatically. It's the result of networking, thinking along, going with the flow and also doing what you say. If we messed things up here, we would have been gone long ago, of course." - Tineke van den Burg

The municipality also had an interest in residents getting to know the area and the site. The Voedseltuin, like Uit Je Eigen Stad, played a role as a 'placemaker' in this. In addition, they have a good network in the city, with the municipality and businesses. In order to remain relevant to the funds that co-finance the Voedseltuin, they are constantly developing new initiatives and collaborations at the location.

"My colleague is quite clever in that respect. He keeps writing new plans, sometimes for new funds. And if we don't get it, we don't do it." - Tineke van den Burg

With the plan 'From Food Garden to Food Park', they positioned themselves as a relevant party in the future development of the M4H area. The redevelopment in 2015, initially at the request of the municipality, can be seen as part of this strategy. It also helps that, pending the phasing out of port-related activities, there will not be any serious construction plans for the area until 2034. By that time, the garden hopes to have a natural, permanent place and status in the area.

De Dakakker is societally anchored in the environmental organisation that initiated the project and is used for education and information, including a programme for primary school children and an international conference on rooftop urban agriculture.

5.6.3.4 Economic anchoring

Financial concerns were actually a factor in all the initiatives. A sound financial basis with one or more reliable sources of income ensures economic anchoring. Rutger Henneman and his colleague started their project out of pure idealism, carried out in their spare time as active citizens. After a number of years, this proved to be too limiting. They wanted to do more, but that was only possible if they could make a living from it, so they had to look for sources of income. After several years of ad hoc financing, they set up a professional organisation (Groengoed) that enabled them to pursue their ideals with a stable financial basis. This did not go well at first. When a large application was rejected, they were left with virtually no income for a long period of time.

"I remember that we were very depressed by the whole situation and were just hustling to make ends meet. And we couldn't abandon the gardens either, because that was our capital, of course. If you don't have gardens, you can't apply to maintain gardens." - Rutger Henneman

They had to keep working and maintain their gardens, but with virtually no budget. However, the following year, the application was approved and they were able to take the step towards becoming the organisation it is today. This involved articulating their working methods and value to the city and finding parties willing to pay for this. Their revenue model is based on their role in care and welfare and in keeping the neighbourhood clean, intact and safe, and they work together with care providers and the local council. Their presence in the neighbourhood means they can identify issues. They refer residents to other organisations if something extra is needed, and people know that they will help them if necessary by involving the right organisations.

"They feel that we are a professional organisation and that they are in good hands." - Rutger Henneman

It was very important for Uit Je Eigen Stad to develop a working revenue model because it had taken out a large loan, which it had to repay over the course of the project (10 years) from the project's revenues. This economic anchoring was linked to social and professional anchoring. In addition, their value as placemakers would also anchor them spatially, and after a successful initial period, they would be able to remain a valuable and recognisable part of a new neighbourhood. Important sources of income were the restaurant and event rentals. The project had a high status as an innovative sustainable project. Through its network of urban agriculture and sustainability professionals, a broad Rotterdam audience and social (real estate) parties, and support from politicians and the municipality, they had a lot of visitors. In addition, in its early years, the initiative was a magnet for other innovative sustainable (pilot) projects in the field of closing the loop: from composting to water purification and local food (including the local short food supply chain of Rechtstreex). However, the high ambitions put a lot of pressure on the founders. Differences of opinion led to De Groot leaving the project prematurely. As a result, the agricultural side of the initiative became increasingly sidelined. Two years later, in 2017, the initiative filed for bankruptcy. The aim of developing a replicable model had thus failed.

Rotterdamse Munt worked successfully with programming for a broad audience to gain support among residents and policymakers. In addition, it attempted to develop a viable revenue model through a combination of functions in order to become less dependent on subsidies. This was never fully successful. In 2022, management was transferred to the Voedseltuin.

The Dakakker generates some income from sales to restaurants, but he believes the roof is too small to operate commercially, which is not the main objective anyway. The relationships with various restaurants are more in line with the goal of inspiring people and making them aware of the possibilities of a roof.

5.6.3.5 Social anchoring

Tuin op de Pier hoped to use local support to secure a more permanent presence on a smaller scale. They knew that they would not be given much space in the final design, but reserving 1,000 to 2,000 m² for communal green space where residents could work and meet each other seemed reasonable to them. They also recommended this to the municipality. But when construction began, the initiative had to make way and they were given a corner of 200 m².

At Wollefoppengroen & Co, social support was the starting point. Since the project was completed, the focus has been on the maintenance and management of the communal vegetable garden. A relatively small group is active. It takes time and attention to involve (and keep involved) the neighbourhood residents.

"Until the park is threatened again. Then people will turn to us for help."
- Frenk Walkenbach

In Schiebroek-Zuid, Caroline Zeevat tried to anchor the initiative both socially and professionally. By charging a low hourly rate, she was able to be there two days a week and still have enough budget left over for construction and activities with residents. In addition, Zeevat produced an annual report, in text and images, for which she hired a photographer to document the project. A journalist also kept a blog. This ensured support from the client. At the same time, the initiative was also visible to the outside world and became a model project that the municipality was keen to show off to national and international guests.

When Vestia and other housing corporations ran into problems due to overconfident investments (and fraud in what became known as the Vestia affair), they were forced by the government to focus on their core tasks. Vestia was still very enthusiastic about the project and there were demonstrable results, but support for the project nevertheless ceased in 2014. The municipality then indicated that it was willing to support the continuation of the project, but when it came down to it (after a year of back and forth), it referred to existing local subsidies. Ultimately, the project was continued in a slimmed-down form through a municipal subsidy scheme for local initiatives (Couleur Lokaal) in collaboration with an organisation that creates green playgrounds (Ravottuh). More recently, the so called 'Right-to-Cooperate' (a model that encourages local cooperation between the municipality, organisations and social entrepreneurs in the neighbourhood) has created space for so-called garden meetings. Zeevat's role as a garden coach has thus become smaller over time, but thanks to its social anchoring among residents, the project still exists.

5.7 Roles, planning processes and strategies applied

If we revisit the formal roles as defined in section 5.5 in light of the planning process and the range of choices (for various planning strategies) in the various phases of this process, we can compare them in terms of how they position themselves. The differences in positioning can initially be interpreted as choices between autonomy or dependence (on permission, subsidies, etc.) and between a more ideological (principled) and a more pragmatic approach *. These choices can in turn be linked to the choice of certain strategies. More non-conforming strategies are expressions of a need for autonomy and an ideological alternative. However, the planning processes of all the initiatives studied also show a combination of ideological and pragmatic choices.

** For clarity: when I use "pragmatic" with a lowercase letter, I am referring to the general concept. When I use "Pragmatic" with a capital letter, I am referring to the Pragmatic conceptualisations of planning. This is usually clear from the context.*

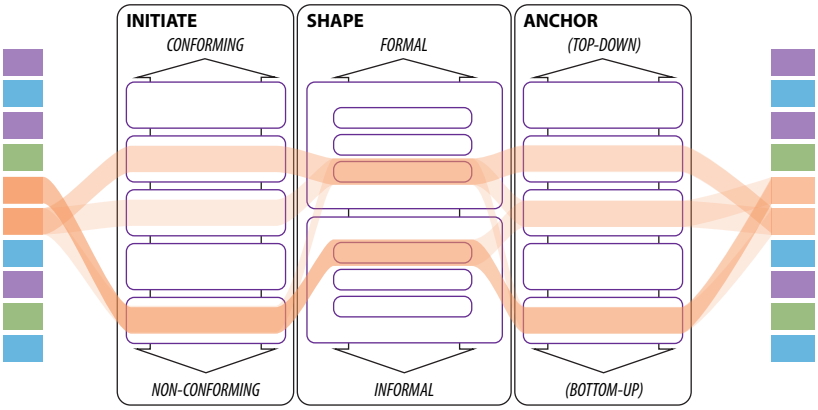


Fig. 5.6 Comparison planning process Active citizens

5.7.1 The planning process of Active citizens

Active citizens may be ideologically motivated but pragmatic in their initiative. They are autonomous in the way they present themselves to the government, but in principle they like to work together and want to be supported by their government. However, when we look at the similarities between the initiatives started by active citizens (see Fig. 5.6), we see that Tuin op de Pier and Wollefoppengroen & Co are very different at first glance. Tuin op de Pier opted for a non-conforming way of initiating and an informal way of shaping, and anchored itself primarily socially. Wollefoppengroen opted for a combination of more conforming and non-conforming strategies and a more formal, classic way of shaping and anchoring itself, primarily spatially and, secondarily, socially.

This difference can be partly explained by the different starting situations. Whereas the first project wanted to put a temporary brownfield area to use, the second project had the ambition to redesign a neglected piece of public outdoor space. But the reception of the project by the municipality (and municipal planning) also had a major influence. Whereas the first project was met with indifference,

the second project was warmly welcomed. Another factor was that Wollefoppengroen raised a planning issue that was already on the agenda: what to do with this piece of public space, and that their plan not only generated enthusiasm but also secured co-financing. These circumstances did not exist for Tuin op de Pier, where the more than temporary use of the location was diametrically opposed to the property development that had already been planned for this site (on the Lloydpier). The fact that the garden helped to draw attention to the need for more public green space in the new Lloyd district came too late for the initiative, and in any case for a large part of the original initiators.

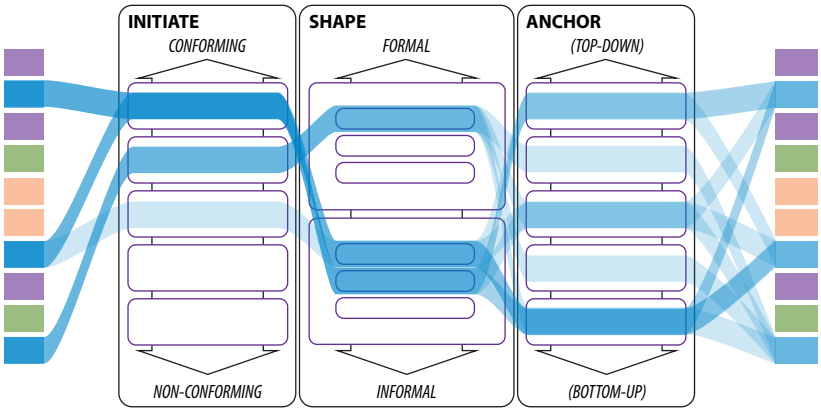


Fig. 5.7 Comparison planning process Independent design professionals

5.7.2 The planning process of Independent design professionals

Independent designers are first and foremost professionals and, from that position, they are better equipped to deal with official structures, such as municipalities and institutional organisations. However, a principled ideological stance can be part of their professional identity. In line with this assumption, design professionals are assessed as more conformist in the comparison in phase 1 Initiate. This is because NuHier and Stadslandbouw Schiebroek-Zuid started at the invitation (as a commission), and Rotterdamse Munt started as an entry for a design competition. In phase 2, Shaping, the designers who worked on commission opted for informal design approaches. This is partly because the commission already included an expectation for a different kind of approach with a major role for forms of participation. Ackermans won the competition with a design linked to a social concept. She was then invited to work on another location. Here too, as an experienced urban planner, she opted for a more classic design in order to win over the municipality and the parties involved.

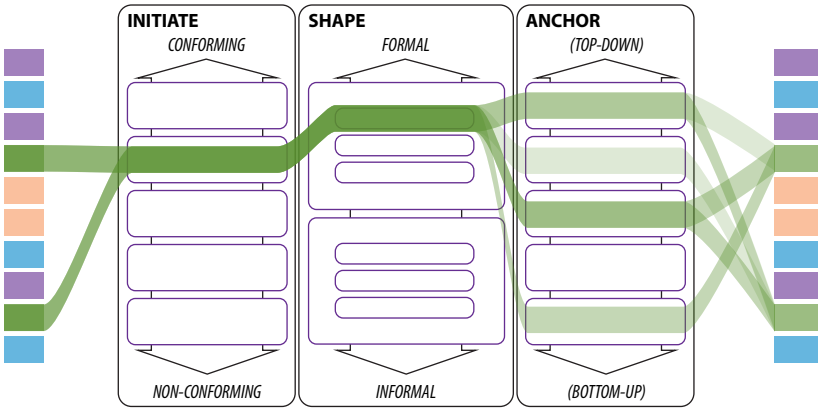


Fig. 5.8 Comparison planning process NGO representatives

5.7.3 The planning process of NGO representatives

The NGO representative works pragmatically towards the more ideological goals of the initiative and, like the designer, is adept at dealing with official structures. A comparison of NGO initiatives shows that both made the conformist choice to initiate on the basis of a plan (phase 1) and have a classic design made by a professional in phase 2, Shaping. This confirms the image of NGO employees as people who know their way around the municipal system and worked with it to achieve their goals. It should be noted, however, that in the case of the Voedseltuin, contact with the municipality was initially informal and it was only through the municipality's involvement in the renewal of the temporary contract after five years (in 2015) that a classic design was created by a landscape architecture firm. De Dakakker has its own unique circumstance in that the creation of this roof garden was part of an alternative redevelopment of a building.

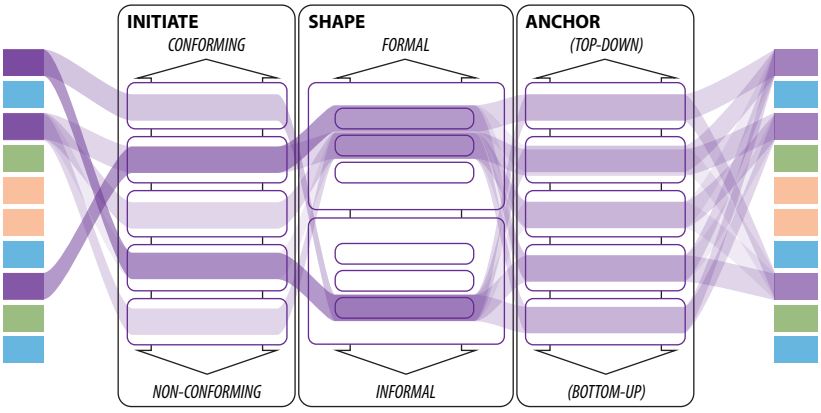


Fig. 5.9 Comparison planning process Social entrepreneurs

5.7.4 The planning process of social entrepreneurs

Social entrepreneurs are more ideologically driven and also make more principled choices in their initiatives, looking beyond their own initiative. In this respect, they are also more autonomous than active

citizens. However, this often means that dependence on subsidies is exchanged for dependence on income, such as payments for various services. If we look at the comparison of planning processes of social entrepreneurs, these vary more widely. On closer inspection, there are similarities between the initiatives of Creatief Beheer and Groengoed. Both have multiple locations where they apply different strategies. As organisations, they started with more non-conforming strategies in the Initiate phase, such as access as a civil right and creating support, but they have since then also been invited to apply the approach they have developed at other locations and also make use of the right to challenge. Their approach differs in the Design phase. Groengoed consults with others to create a design for a location. Creatief Beheer offers more of a framework in which things can happen (although the amount of space available for this varies per location). The third initiative in this category is very different in how it is set up: Uit Je Eigen Stad was a social enterprise at one location (although the initiative did have plans for more locations). The ambition and innovation lay in the planning aspect of realising a (relatively) large urban agriculture enterprise with innovative crops. This explains the choice to draw up a plan as a first step and to use a classic design that allowed the initiative to enter the process of obtaining permission and granting permits.

5.7.5 Contextual factors in the planning process of initiators

On closer inspection, the choices made by the initiators show that they interact with their environment and that formal roles are not always decisive in the planning process. The social entrepreneurs are similar in their thinking, but an initiative such as Uit Je Eigen Stad is more similar to the Voedseltuin and Dakakker in terms of the planning process. Voedseltuin and Uit Je Eigen Stad were both part of the urban development of the Merwe-Vierhaven area. And Dakakker, like Uit Je Eigen Stad, participated in the election for City Initiative, a process with its own competitive dynamics.

As mentioned earlier, the initiators also have overlapping roles. Henneman (TTR/Groengoed) is both a social entrepreneur and an active citizen. Social entrepreneur Rini Biemans is originally an artist, while active citizen Piet de Jonge is an event developer in the arts sector. Both bring skills to the table that you would also find among design professionals. And the three design professionals are also social entrepreneurs.

Further comparisons between initiatives based on the strategies used per phase do not reveal any meaningful connections. What is striking, however, is that a comparison of the initiatives mentioned by the planners interviewed in Chapter IV shows that they were all initiated on the basis of a plan and opted for a formal design approach (see Fig. 5.10). This seems to indicate that initiatives that conform to a classic approach to planning are more visible from the perspective of the municipal planner, possibly because they are more in line with

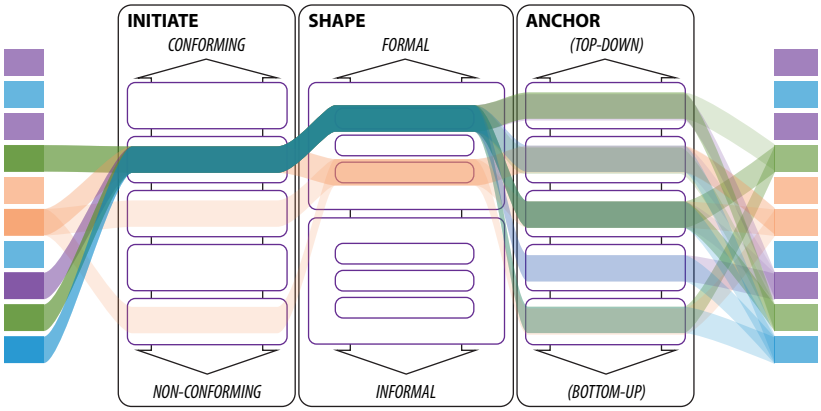


Fig. 5.10 Comparison planning process of initiatives mentioned by planners

the classic image of a spatial intervention. Considering that these initiatives were initiated from 2010 onwards and thus represent the later initiatives from the period under review, one may question the extent to which the choice of more conforming strategies was influenced by municipal policy. We will return to this in Chapter VI.

5.7.6 Positioning of initiatives in the planning process

In the strategies the initiatives applied they positioned themselves in different ways in relation to the worldviews, policy and strategies of the municipal planning department (the Rotterdam conceptualisations of planning - see Section 4.2). Fig. 5.11 gives a tentative overview of these positions. The earlier initiatives were mostly critical towards 'traditional' Rational planning and its bureaucratic structures as well as and the status quo that they encountered (Creatief Beheer, NuHier, Tuin op de Pier), or saw it as a given which they had to deal with (Groengoed and Voedseltuin). Social entrepreneur led initiatives like Creatief Beheer and Groengoed were also critical of Neoliberal Planning, although they had to navigate in a capitalist system to get paid. Uit Je Eigen Stad took its own position with their anarchist, libertarian take on capitalism; its initiator embraced a Neoliberal laissez-faire as a form of freedom, and took advantage of a municipal tendency to favour commercial, viable initiatives. Rotterdamse Munt and Uit Je Eigen Stad were helped in getting permits through the guidance of Pragmatic planners that 'got things done'. Initiatives like Voedseltuin, Stadslandbouw Schiebroek-Zuid, Dakakker en Uit je Eigen Stad were used in Poststructuralist narratives by the municipality, amongst others for the (Neoliberal) branding of 'second city' Rotterdam. Voedseltuin and Uit Je Eigen Stad each in their own way benefited from this and used it to anchor their initiatives. This was also true for Dakakker but initiator Bauman also noted the lack of real interest from the municipality, voicing a reservation many initiatives had. Later initiatives have a (potential) affinity with Collaborative planning, but only Wollefoppengroen & Co was involved in a Collabative planning effort.

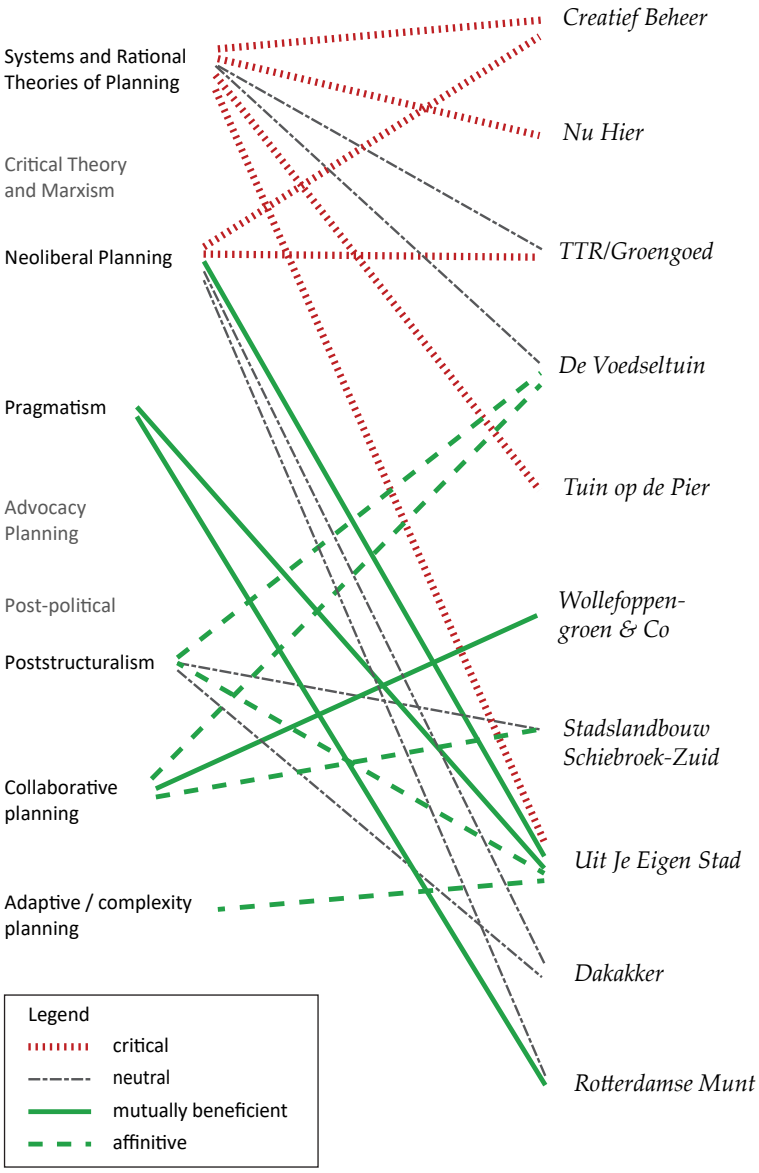


Fig. 5.11 Positioning initiatives in relation to Rotterdam conceptualisations of planning

Initiator Zeevat (Stadslandbouw Schiebroek-Zuid) and other initiators regularly attended the urban agriculture meetings organised by the municipality and appreciated the Collaborative exchange that it wanted to foster, but this did not affect the initiating and shaping of the project, only the anchoring. And Voedseltuin used their role as stakeholder in the Collaborative Merwe-Vierhaven area development to further anchor their initiative, but this was after the project was already established. Finally Uit Je Eigen Stad, informed by the ideas of Eetbaar Rotterdam, had an affinity with Adaptive planning through its aim to plug into the urban system of flows, adapting to what the city had to offer.

5.8 Worldviews, action perspectives and strategies: a different view of planning?

So do urban agriculture initiatives offer a different perspective on planning? An alternative conceptualisation? The worldviews of the initiators are as diverse and personal as the initiatives themselves. Not everyone had a coherent vision on the organisation of urban space as you would expect in a conceptualisation of planning. But implicitly, these kinds of ideas can indeed be found in the actions of the initiators and in the stories they tell about them. In their practice, they were inspired by different ideas and tried to translate these into concrete action. This was reflected in the action perspectives they chose and the strategies they applied. They positioned themselves in relation to planners (and to societal actors in the field of planning such as housing corporations), and thus also in the conceptualisations of planning as defined in this study. They did this on three levels: in their participation in planning practice through realising a garden; in setting an agenda for a vision; and in developing and implementing various strategies. Their interventions, intentions and strategies did not correspond to the conceptualisations of the planners as discussed in Chapter IV. The initiators did not so much make use of these planning-derived conceptualisations as find ways to relate to them and sometimes counter them with their own bottom-up conceptualisation.

5.8.1 Conceptualisation in practice

At first glance, most initiatives simply wanted some space to set up their urban farming initiative. By initiating, designing and establishing their projects, they claimed that space, sometimes without asking. In doing so, they challenged the government's monopoly on the programming, design and maintenance of public space, which is rooted in the Rational conceptualisation of planning, and challenged it or offered ideas for improvement. This gave their initiative a critical, ideological dimension, focused on the transition of society.

For initiatives that wanted urban agriculture to be recognised as a permanent part of planning, such as the Voedseltuin, Wollefoppengroen & Co, Uit Je Eigen Stad and Rotterdamse Munt, going through an official planning process could be beneficial.
It provided official recognition, opened doors, and enabled them to present and discuss the expected benefits, and on that basis to negotiate conditions and possibly influence planning procedures. This process helped to create some awareness within the municipality, but sometimes also forced the initiatives to scale back their ambitions.

In terms of their relationship to planning, this group wanted municipal planners to take them into account and include them in government planning, recognising their role as partners and their contribution to the city and providing space for their activities. They were willing to cooperate, but also to use their network, explore alternative

routes or sometimes just go their own way if they were not heard. This group included citizens claiming their rights and social entrepreneurs, design professionals and NGOs advocating ideas to improve the city. Although this group may have ideas about social change, their initiative was not a means to achieve it. They sought change within the existing regime. They related to Neoliberal Planning as expressed in the real estate requirements represented by Stadsontwikkeling and the Pragmatic approach to this by project managers, but were also happy to step into the Collaborative framework of the developed urban agriculture policy and into Post-Structuralist narratives in which food production in the city would contribute to policy goals in the areas of climate, liveability and health. In that sense, they were themselves a kind of Pragmatic planners, trying to deal with a larger system over which they had only limited influence. But you can also see the design professionals and NGOs in particular as Advocacy planners who wanted to fight for a place for their initiative (and the partial interest they represented) on the basis of arguments.

5.8.2 Conceptualisation from a planning agenda

Some initiatives have (or had) a more politically informed, critical agenda aimed at changing the way the city is planned. Whereas in section 2.2 it was stated that a Critical Theory and Marxist approach within planning is primarily significant as a form of awareness-raising and a critical view of planning practice, the work of Transition Town Rotterdam/Groengoed can be seen as a form of Critical Anti-capitalist planning, the Prefigurative planning of a social-anarchist alternative *. Just as the gardens of Creatief Beheer gave shape to Biemans' plea for a radical socio-ecological approach to planning. Both advocated a different distribution of power and resources. By intervening in the maintenance of public space, its design was also changed. And – perhaps more importantly – this alternative management increases the level of participation in and the social and ecological significance of this outdoor space. A kind of planning through management, which took a critical stance towards the current division of tasks between design and implementation, and what they saw as its conservative and technocratic interpretation.

With her critical agenda, Van de Wiel, like the artist Biemans, appealed to the imagination, but sought less confrontation. She used the space offered to her to show an alternative to existing practice. Her idea of permanent temporality was less political but, like Biemans and Henneman, also combined a conceptual (and in her case almost poetic) approach with a practical implementation.

The vision and ideas developed within Eetbaar Rotterdam can be seen as a challenge to prevailing conceptualisations of planning **. Uit Je Eigen Stad, which was developed on this basis by De Groot and his co-founders, derived a certain professional authority from this challenging character.

** Cees Bronsveld, Rutger and I once exchanged views on this topic for an article in the anarchist magazine De AS (Bronsveld et al, 2019).*

*** In particular, the interdisciplinary approach combining environmental, social and spatial considerations and thinking in terms of flows and relationships was still far removed from the minds of many planners when Eetbaar Rotterdam started in 2007, despite the fact that this was already being worked on within the municipality. It was not until 2014 that it was put on the agenda by the IABR Urban by Nature.*

Like the other initiatives, these critical, transition-oriented initiatives wanted municipal planners to recognise their contribution to the city and provide space for their activities. However, their conceptualisation of planning was much more comprehensive. They had ideas about the spatial planning of the city; they wanted their ideas to be taken seriously; and they wanted to influence the way municipal planners think and how municipal planning is organised. They did not want to be included in the planning, they wanted to change the rules. Although this attitude was potentially much more confrontational, these initiatives also had the capacity for systemic and long-term thinking. They were able to see the municipality as a complex organism and were usually able to place the civil servants they encountered in this larger context. Their activities were often complemented by forms of reflection that they published on blogs, in magazines or through lectures and education. This aspect of their activities can also be seen as a form of Advocacy Planning, with the caveat that these initiators saw themselves more as representatives of a collective interest than as advocates of subjective, spatial interests.

5.8.3 Conceptualisation in strategic choices

The critical approach to initiatives is also reflected in the way they developed and applied spatial planning strategies in different phases of the planning process.

During the 'Initiate' phase, there was often already a reversal of roles: citizens or entrepreneurs who saw opportunities and presented them to the municipality (or other landowner). At the same time, this is the phase in which initiators were at the mercy of the approval of municipal planners or other landowners such as housing corporations. Citizens sometimes used pressure here, but other initiators had to rely mainly on persuasion and powers of conviction. In doing so, they often conformed to existing conceptualisations of planning, as described in section 5.8.1. At the same time, initiatives with a critical vision had a certain professional authority; De Groot, Van de Wiel, Henneman and Biemans were granted access to the location(s) of their initiative partly on the basis of their innovative vision.

In 'Shaping' their initiatives, initiators questioned or criticised aspects of existing conceptualisations of planning, in particular the idea of the planner as the expert who decides the right solution, steers towards a result and has control over the final image; an aspect of the Rational conceptualisation of planning that still formed (and forms) the basis of the municipal system. In shaping their initiatives, you see that they made much more room for process and that the end result was often less important. Design professionals were adept at both meeting certain aesthetic expectations and making room for input from participants and local residents. Initiators such as Biemans and Henneman went even further and challenged the primacy of design over implementation and planning through management.

In the 'Anchoring' phase, too, you see a mixture of conforming to and questioning conceptualisations of planning. It was often a long and uncertain process in which initiatives had to meet all kinds of requirements and in which it was important to develop support. This was also the phase in which principled criticism sometimes had to give way to a more pragmatic emphasis on survival. Initiatives tried to maintain their position in regular spatial planning by moving within existing or developing conceptualisations of planning, thereby anchoring themselves in society. By agreeing to a classic, Rational Planning-informed permit process, they were able to create new precedents, for example in the area of allowing chicken farming in the city, but they were also forced to mould their initiative to the possibilities and limitations of the existing system.

For a number of initiators, their professional stance actually contributed to the status and support for their initiative. Their stories about the city contributed to a Post-Structuralist conceptualisation of the planning of Rotterdam, but sometimes also fitted into Neoliberal or Collaborative conceptualisations of planning. And sometimes initiatives withdrew from this debate and simply put their vision into practice.

Most initiatives tried to establish themselves economically and sought to connect with the existing (financial) system. In doing so, they developed organisational forms that work financially (and legally) without compromising the principles of the initiative.
A number of initiatives used alternative financial arrangements to challenge the neoliberal hierarchy of values, in which large healthcare providers were favoured over small alternatives such as urban agriculture initiatives, and in which funds were distributed sectorally, leading to fragmentation of policy. It remained difficult to maintain the dividing line between financial survival on the one hand and encapsulation in the system on the other.

5.8.4 More than planning objects: conceptualisations of planning in urban agriculture practice

What can we learn from the way in which civic urban agriculture initiatives conceptualised planning in order to shape their thinking and actions? It shows that they were more than just the objects of planning; they had their own agendas and strategies and some understanding of how planning works. They were able to use this understanding to their advantage, but most preferred to work with the municipality and were happy to be regarded as partners. They saw a role for themselves in contributing to the city and to the municipality's agenda as formulated in municipal policy objectives. Many initiators were critical of how the government plans the city, but had no ambition to transform the city's planning (methods). However, simply by their presence and by insisting on their existence, they became an active part of planning: they demanded their place in

Neoliberal and/or Pragmatic Planning; they inspired innovative Post-Structuralist and Collaborative conceptualisations of planning, and sometimes they developed their own bottom-up planning that challenged or even circumvented existing conceptualisations of planning, and tried out alternative practices to see how such a transformation might work.

The above provides a general picture of how initiators conceptualise planning and relate to existing conceptualisations of planning in their worldview, their action perspective and the strategies they apply. But how did the interaction between planners and initiators work in practice? The following chapter discusses this interaction and the use of different situated roles in it.

Chapter VI
The interaction between municipal spatial planners and urban agriculture initiatives



In this chapter, we examine the practice of urban agriculture planning and, in particular, how the interaction between municipal planners and implementers on the one hand and initiators on the other worked in practice. The previous chapters already revealed differences in the way municipal planners and initiators conceptualise spatial planning and their role in it. Chapter IV describes how planners conceptualised the spatial planning of societal urban agriculture initiatives in the period 2006-2018, and how this translated into concrete questions and concerns about the then emerging urban agriculture initiatives, into ideas about what urban agriculture is and should be, and into the formulation of urban agriculture policy. Chapter V then mapped out the worldview and action perspective of initiators and how they use spatial planning strategies to gain a foothold in the spatial planning of the city and position themselves in relation to the municipal spatial planning context.

But how did the interaction between initiators and planners work in practice? To answer this question, we once again zoom in on the creation of a number of initiatives, but now with an eye for both sides of the story, in order to map out the similarities and discrepancies in both parties' interpretation of these planning actions. To this end, four additional interviews were conducted with civil servants who were directly involved in the development of urban agriculture initiatives.

6.1 The role of the municipality in the development of individual initiatives

Urban agriculture planning in practice was closer to implementation than to the development of urban agriculture policy, which is why other municipal actors were involved. Looking at the individual initiatives, we see that the municipality is involved in different phases of the planning process (Initiate, Shape and Anchor) and in different roles: area developer, supervisor, designer (in one case), grantor of permission and/or permits, and enforcer. These roles were fulfilled by various departments within Cluster Stadsontwikkeling (Urban Development), which, in addition to planners, consists of project managers, engineers and real estate professionals who, together with Cluster Stadsbeheer (Urban Management) *, implement the planning policy.

** Responsible for municipal maintenance and management of public spaces*

In addition, the Social Development Cluster (MO) and the Municipal Health Service (GGD) were also involved in the process of establishing and maintaining urban agriculture initiatives from a social policy perspective. The fact that social and spatial policy were interlinked was not obvious to everyone. Jennie Greevink, who was involved in the design and realisation of Wollefoppengroen & Co as a project leader, remembers the reactions of her colleagues when she moved from one policy domain to another.

"It caused quite a stir, because we have very separate silos. The fact that someone suddenly moved from social to physical was a kind of error for some people. I thought it was great fun, very enriching." - Jennie Greevink

According to Think Tank member Josine van den Bogaard, it is precisely important to operate at this intersection. To illustrate how unusual this still is: in another Think Tank (on Biodiversity) she is the only member who comes from the social domain.

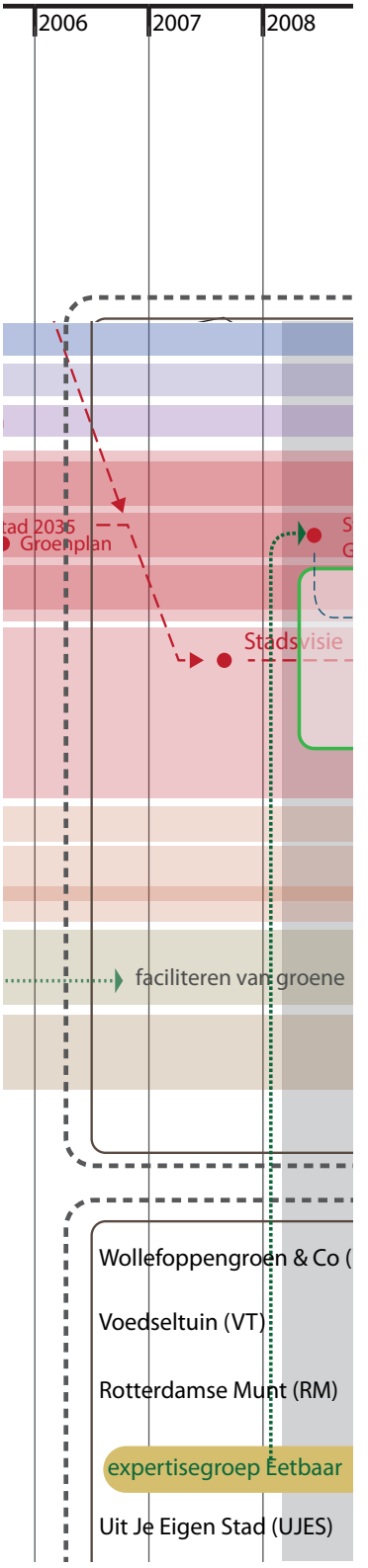
"I'm always working on the other side."(the municipal office 'De Rotterdam', on the other side of the river, which housed the so-called physical clusters, including spatial planning) "I also involve my social colleagues in this. And our team has been expanded to be able to deploy more capacity for this."
- Josine van den Bogaard

The distinction between departments and clusters was not always clear to the initiators. However, depending on the phase of the planning process, the location and the nature of the initiative, they could have to deal with any of these departments. The civil servants quoted in this chapter were all involved in the creation of an initiative. They were not always planners themselves, but they did implement spatial planning policy as managers, sometimes in collaboration with planners or designers. They were the face of the municipality in relation to the initiatives.

6.2 Development of the interaction between planners and initiators

When planners are asked about successful urban agriculture initiatives, Wollefoppengroen & Co, Rotterdamse Munt and Voedseltuin are often mentioned. Sometimes the prematurely ended Uit Je Eigen Stad is also mentioned, either as a successful example or as a 'sadly failed' project. What these projects have in common is that the Urban Development cluster was actively involved in them. An analysis of the strategies used in these projects shows that they relied on more conformist and formal strategies to initiate and shape their initiatives (see Fig. 5.10). This seems to be a consequence of the more active involvement of Urban Development. This active involvement leads to more extensive interaction between planners and initiators than in the other initiatives, where this interaction was much more limited. That is why these four projects are examined in more detail (see also section 3.3.3). This is supplemented with experiences from the other initiatives. The following section discusses the experiences of those involved. In this section, the various forms of interaction are placed in chronological order.

To start at the beginning: there were green 'bottom-up' initiatives with vegetable gardens before there was an urban agriculture policy. Before the planning department recognised green initiatives as co-designers of the city, these initiatives were already tolerated and/or facilitated by other departments, for example with the Green Thumbs subsidy scheme, which allocated money from Social Affairs and Employment to green neighbourhood initiatives, such as Tuin aan de Maas and Wijktuin de Esch. Partly under the influence of organisation like Eetbaar Rotterdam (Edible Rotterdam), particularly through Jan Willem van der Schans, the agricultural view of the city was introduced to Urban Development, and it was named as a theme by Annemieke Fontein at the Green & the City Symposium.



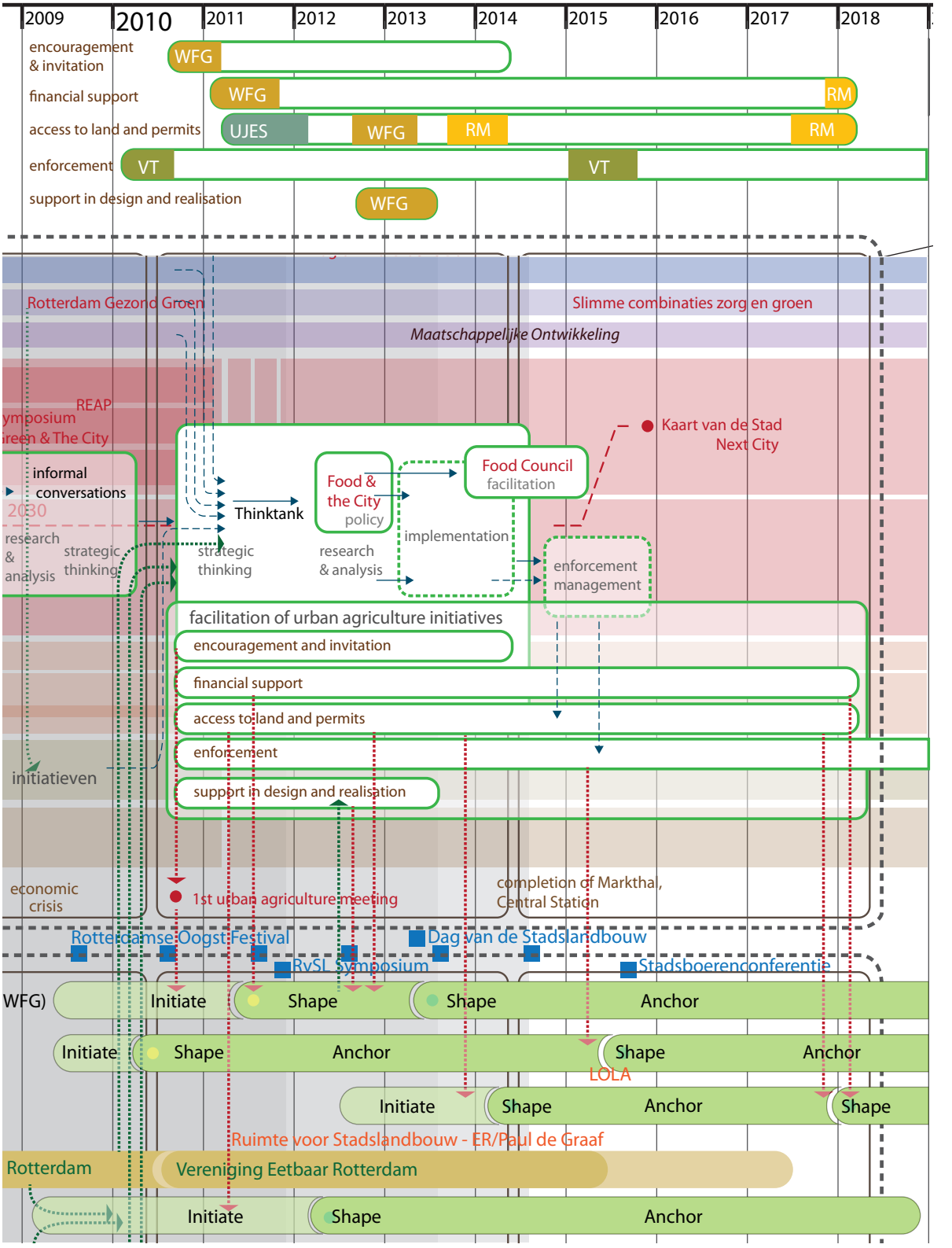
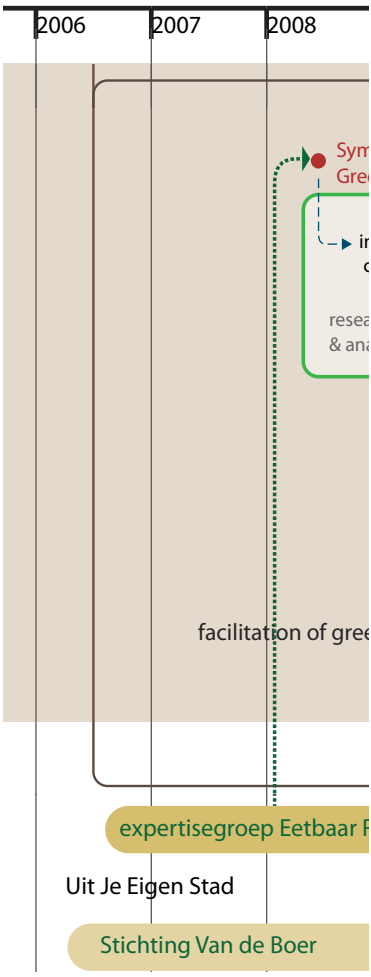


Fig. 6.1 Timeline of interaction between urban agriculture and planning policy and facilitation of four projects

Over the next two years, it remained an internal matter at Urban Development until 2010, when the new alderman adopted the theme at the first municipal urban agriculture meeting (during the second Rotterdam Harvest Festival). In the meantime, the urban agriculture movement developed rapidly with connecting initiatives such as the Rotterdam Harvest Festival, Transition Town Rotterdam and Eetbaar Rotterdam, and the seeds were sown for most of the initiatives studied. These initiatives were in preparation or started in 2009, before the Urban Agriculture Think Tank was set up. Initially, the approach to green initiatives in the neighbourhood and district did not change significantly, with little involvement from Urban Development. Regular support was provided by the borough councils or from social budgets from the Municipal Health Service (GGD) or Social Services (Social Affairs and Employment). However, from 2011 onwards, Urban Development did provide support for a number of pilot projects, and it is these four initiatives that have remained in the planners' memory. As described above, each of these followed its own path.

The municipality was involved in the planning of these initiatives in five different ways: 1) encouragement and invitation; 2) financial support; 3) access to land and permits; 4) enforcement; 5) support in design and realisation. With a little goodwill, this can be said to reflect the 'extra effort by the municipality for initiatives that contribute significantly to municipal objectives' mentioned in the 'Food & the City' document.

From support in gaining access to land and permits (Uit Je Eigen Stad and Rotterdamse Munt) to setting design requirements (Voedseltuin and Rotterdamse Munt), actively encouraging urban agriculture as a theme and involvement in design and implementation (Wollefoppengroen & Co) and financing (Wollefoppengroen & Co and Rotterdamse Munt). From a planning perspective, the process with Wollefoppengroen & Co was the most far-reaching experiment. This experiment stood out in two respects: 1) the municipality actively proposed the theme of urban agriculture; 2) the initiative was the client for the development and implementation of the design. In the other projects, the planning department tried to fit them into the current planning system through a combination of support, guidance and enforcement. What was special about Wollefoppengroen & Co and Rotterdamse Munt was that a piece of public space was more or less permanently transferred to the management of this initiative.



6.3 Encounters in the field: different perceptions and interpretations

6.3.1 Uit Je Eigen Stad

Uit Je Eigen Stad (From Your Own Town), an initiative by social entrepreneur Bas de Groot and his partners Huib van de Leede and Johan Bosman, received extensive support from the municipality. Project developer AM and housing corporation Havensteder were involved, and the municipality made a location available on the Marconistrip, a site in the port area where, under the name Marconi Freezone, space was offered for other ways of more organic

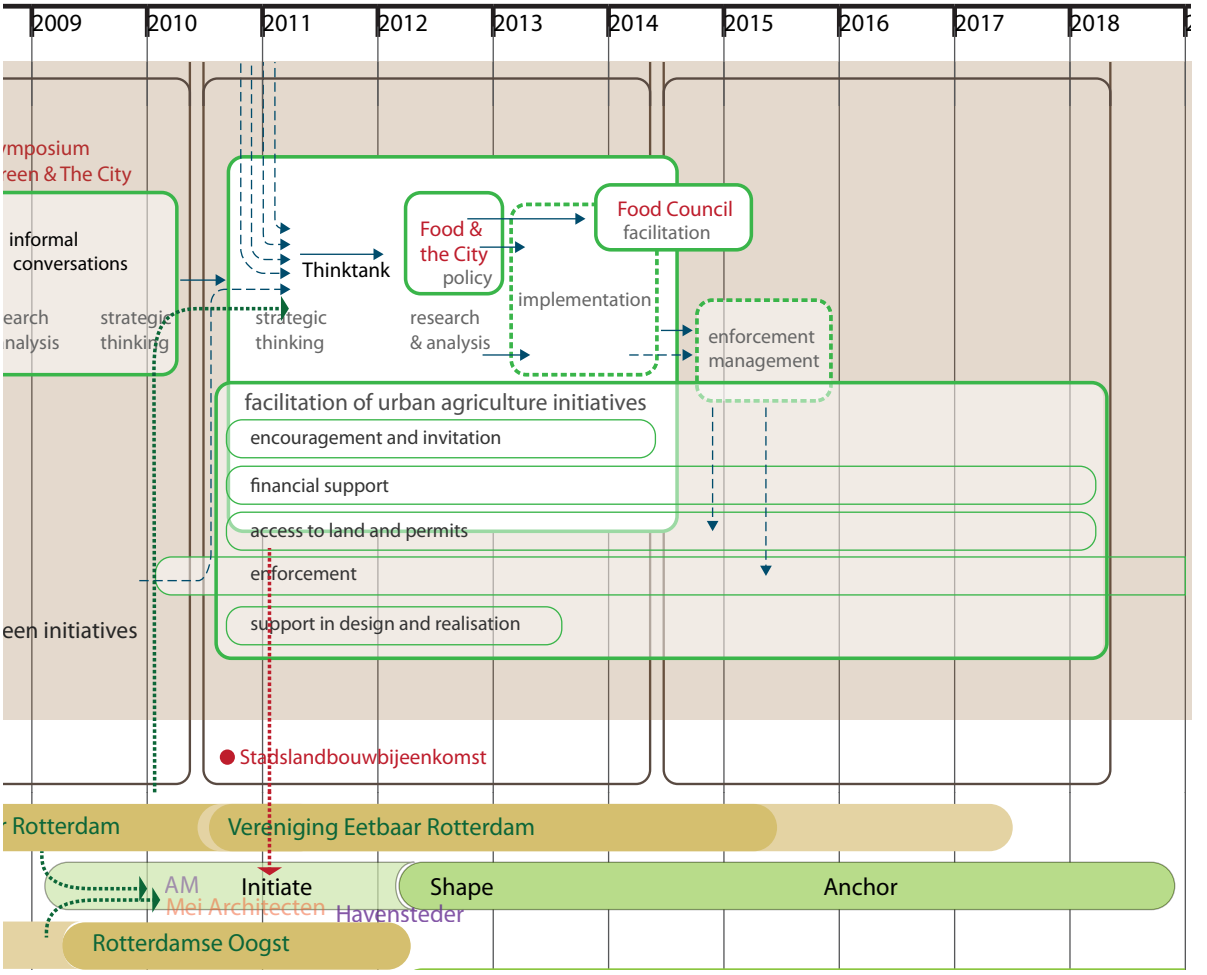


Fig. 6.2 Timeline Interaction Uit Je Eigen Stad

Initiate: start garden initiative 2009, permit process and financing 2010-2012

Shape: final design & implementation 2012

Anchor: programming, collaboration with Rechtstreex, Evides and other parties

development in the inbetween-time, and where – so the idea was – all kinds of regulations would be dealt with more flexibly.

Nevertheless, De Groot found interaction with the municipality difficult, particularly at the official level with Urban Development and the DCMR. What helped was their participation in the City Initiative and the support of Alexandra van Huffelen.

The councillor was enthusiastic about the project and, through Annemieke Fontein and Kees van Oorschot, the policy officers responsible for urban agriculture, the project was brought to the attention of the Merwe-Vierhavens project team. Arienne de Muynck, a project manager at Urban Development who worked within this project team, then helped the social entrepreneurs behind the initiative to overcome various administrative hurdles.

De Muynck herself looks back on this somewhat differently. She cannot remember civil servants being obstructive in terms of permits. What she believes did play a role was that civil servants struggled with the question of how to deal with this new phenomenon and with the new questions it raised (for example, about possible odour

nuisance associated with keeping chickens). The fact that the plans were not yet finalised at the outset and it was not yet clear what would and would not happen made it even more complicated for the municipality. Partly for this reason, she played a role in enthusing the necessary civil servants.

"(...) I had to get people excited about this initiative to make it happen. That was sometimes a bit difficult." "As project manager, I also saw it as my role to get things done on behalf of the council. So that meant (...) consulting with the permits authority and getting them on board." - Arienne de Muynck

According to De Muynck, she had relatively little contact with Fontein and Van Oorschot, or with the councillor. Marconistrip was part of Merwe-Vierhavens, which was a Stadshavens project. Stadshavens had its own organisation with its own councillor – not Alexandra van Huffelen but Jeanette Baljeu – and big plans for the transition of the Merwe-Vierhavens area. The transformation of the port areas into urban areas in the Stadshavens project was supported by the government under the Crisis and Recovery Act. The Act, which came into force on 31 March 2010, was aimed at accelerating spatial projects, such as large construction projects and projects in the field of sustainability, energy and innovation. This created space for the Marconi free zone, where Uit Je Eigen Stad found its place. However, Hans Beekman, the project director of Stadshavens, was not enthusiastic about the Uit Je Eigen Stad initiative *. De Muynck had to manoeuvre in this field of interests, expectations and preferences.

"So that was a real struggle. Because I was dependent on it." "It also had to do with deadlines. Stadshavens' idea was: can't it be for a maximum of five years? And Uit Je Eigen Stad would have preferred 20 years to the 10 years that were ultimately agreed upon. So it was quite a search, also in terms of: who is responsible for what?" - Arienne de Muynck

In addition to the municipality, there was also contact with the Havensteder housing corporation (then Com.Wonen), which also invested in the project by purchasing the buildings on the site and financing their renovation. According to De Muynck, Jan van der Schans of Havensteder was someone who was willing to think along, to allow something innovative, based on the idea that this was also good for the city.

"It also had to make financial sense. We owned the land, so we had to come to an agreement with each other." - Arienne de Muynck

The many consultations with the municipality were a challenge for the social entrepreneurs; they saw it as a game, but it could also be exhausting, especially when they felt that someone was stalling. De Muynck was a guide and support in dealing with all these people. The structure of a large organisation such as the municipality was not clear to the initiators. De Groot has dealt with both large and small municipalities and has noticed that in large municipalities, civil servants often do not know what each other is doing. This can sometimes be helpful because you are less dependent on one person who

** In 2008, Eetbaar Rotterdam was invited to give a presentation at the Stadshavens Project Office. We gave an enthusiastic presentation, but it did not appeal to director Hans Beekman. In the years that followed, urban agriculture in Merwe-Vierhavens was repeatedly mentioned as an opportunity, including in a study by Henk Oosterling and in the vision of Jan Rotmans of DRIFT. However, this did not automatically guarantee the presence of Uit Je Eigen Stad in the area. A rendering of Uit Je Eigen Stad from the study Ruimte voor Stadslandbouw (Space for Urban Agriculture), in which the aquaponics installation was prominently featured, was later used by the initiative to position it within the theme "Clean Tech Playground" from the vision for Stadshavens.*

decides whether you can proceed. In a small municipality, if someone says no, it's quickly over. The first person to respond is decisive, and the rest fall in line. Whether they agree or not, because, according to De Groot, they are not going to undermine each other. In that sense, it was fortunate that the project had Van Huffelen's approval.

With the help of Eetbaar Rotterdam and parties such as project developer AM and housing corporation Havensteder, Uit Je Eigen Stad positioned itself in a larger planning narrative: about urban agriculture as a (social) enterprise that contributes to the city and engages in placemaking in the redevelopment of the port area. De Muynck became so enthusiastic about the subject that she wrote her thesis for the Master City Developer * on the role of urban agriculture in area development.

** A postgraduate MSc programme at Erasmus University, Rotterdam*

"The research only convinced me even more that this kind of initiative is simply a very good thing, and that we as a city should embrace such initiatives."
- Arienne de Muynck

De Muynck focused on urban agriculture in the city. Her study did receive attention within the municipality, but she had the impression that the emphasis was still more on the farmers around the city.

Nevertheless, the failure of the project in 2017 had an impact on urban agriculture in general.

"That's a shame. Because the municipality made a huge effort to make it happen, and when it doesn't work out, it's not really good for those who come after you. Because the municipality put in quite an effort."
- Josine van den Bogaard (GGD)

Think tank member Van den Bogaard (GGD) had reservations about the commercial approach from the outset and believes that the project would have had a better chance of success with a more social approach.

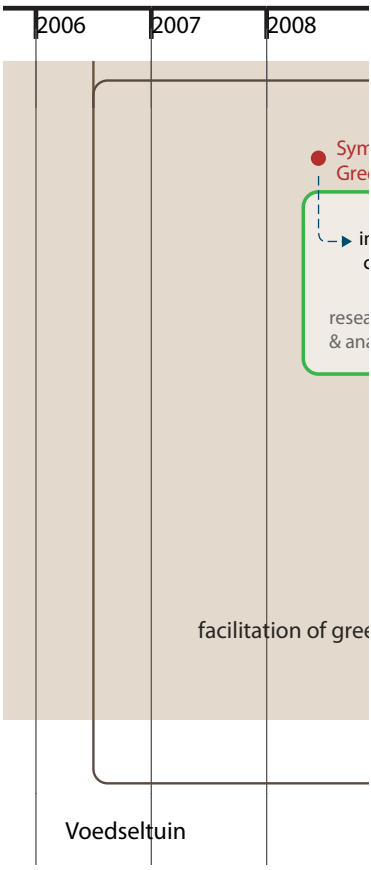
"I also found [Uit Je Eigen Stad] very interesting at the time. But I didn't really believe in it then, because they wanted to make it entirely commercial. You will never make it, competing with that. I also kept saying, try to work with people who benefit from it, combine it with care and wellbeing. They didn't want that, because they wanted to be a real business." - Josine van den Bogaard

Looking back, De Groot would build up the company in a more grassroots way. In his first plan for an urban farming business he did make the connection with care and wellbeing. But he also points to the ambiguity of the municipality, which on the one hand encouraged a more idealistic approach, focused on social importance, and on the other hand, in a Neoliberal manner, cherished market parties with an aura of capitalist success. With their professional plan and the background in real estate of De Groot's co-initiators, the initiative was received differently. Their more business-like image and the partners they brought with them impressed the civil servants involved. It is questionable whether an urban farm set up as a grassroots community would ever have been granted permission to operate on this scale at this location.

Between collective narrative and neoliberal game

Through Eetbaar Rotterdam member Jan Willem van der Schans, there was a direct link between the ideas of Eetbaar Rotterdam, which originated in 2007, Uit Je Eigen Stad, which wanted to put these ideas into practice, and the development of urban agriculture policy. Partly as a result, Uit Je Eigen Stad found an ambassador in the new councillor who took office in 2010. When Uit Je Eigen Stad was given the opportunity to start on the Marconistrip, it therefore received official support. They fitted into the framework of urban agriculture policy, which sees social entrepreneurs as placemakers contributing to the development of Merwe-Vierhavens and to awareness and production of healthier local food. A form of Collaborative Planning with room for civic initiative.

But in fact, the initiative fitted into various conceptualisations of planning, and perhaps its successful realisation was partly due to the fact that it deliberately appealed to this. Based on the ideas of Eetbaar Rotterdam, UJES introduced (or became part of?) a post-structuralist 'collective narrative' for the city, in which urban agriculture offers opportunities for (other forms of) agriculture and for (making the city more sustainable). This appealed to many planologists. It also fitted in with the area development in the area of which the Marconstrip is a part. At the same time, the commercial set-up fitted in with a Neoliberal Planning concept, in which market parties themselves take social responsibility within a neoliberal government system. The libertarian/anarchist attitude of the founder also fitted in well with this to a certain extent: 'the government should not interfere too much', 'I stand on my own two feet' and 'dealing with the government is a game'. In that game, the 'corporate business' image of the other founders was sometimes an advantage, because the neoliberal government – represented here by Stadshavens (an organisation in which the municipality and the Port Authority collaborated) – identified better with this than with the idealistic anarchist framework. In other words, the initiative was forced to relate to multiple conceptualisations of planning within the municipality. On the one hand, because the municipality was still developing its policy. On the other hand, because, as we saw in Chapter IV in Rotterdam, multiple conceptualisations of planning coexisted (and still coexist). A flexible attitude is therefore a necessity. The interviews show that understanding of each other's role in the process was sometimes limited by one's own approach and background. In other words, the version of what exactly was going on in the planning process differed, even between the initiators of Uit Je Eigen Stad and their ally within the municipality.



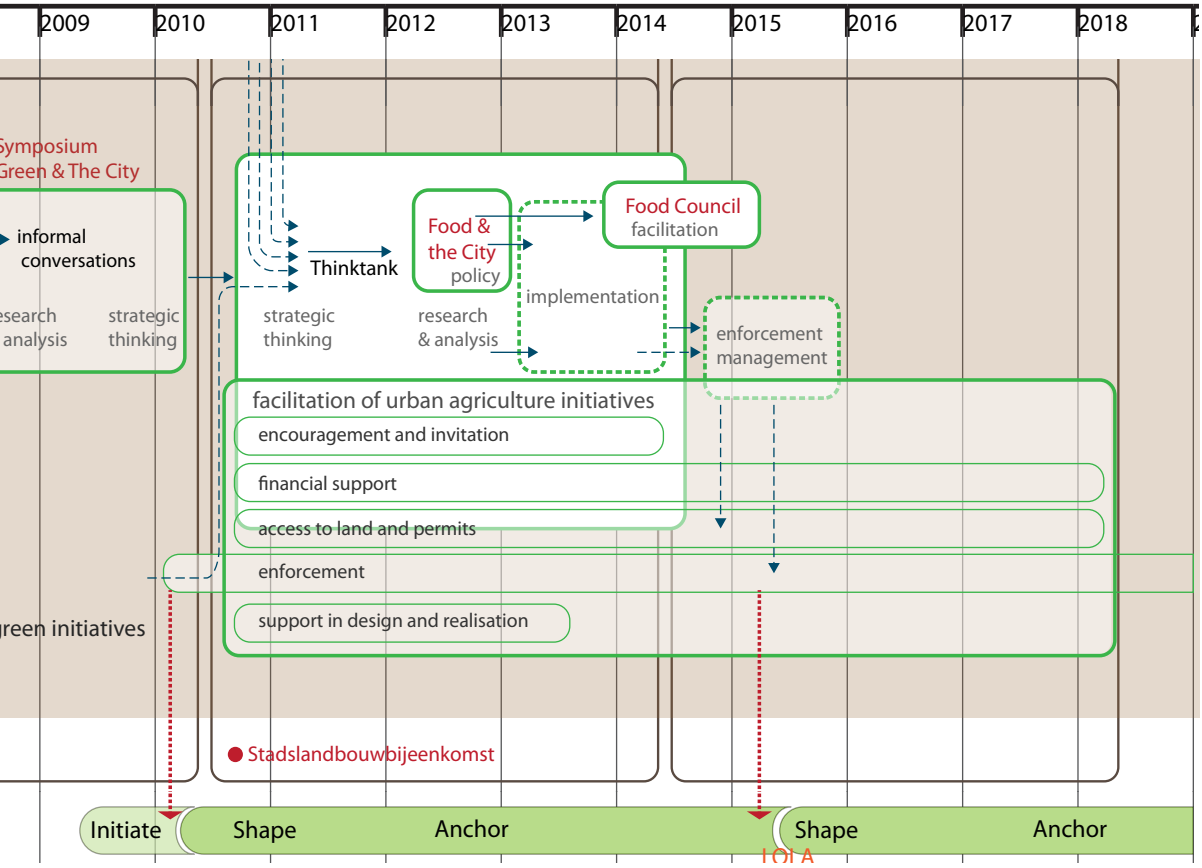


Fig. 6.3 Timeline Interaction Voedseltuin

Initiate: start of garden initiative 2009/2010

Shape I: design & initial construction 2010

Anchor / Shape II: re-design 2015; renewed construction 2015/2016

Anchor: project plans/ project participation, area development process

6.3.2 De Voedseltuin

Like Uit Je Eigen Stad, the Voedseltuin is located in the port area, which is to be developed into a residential area in the longer term. However, the route taken by the initiative in its interaction with the municipality was very different. The initiative, set up to supply the Food Bank with fresh food, asked the municipality for permission to use a plot of land next to the Food Bank. The municipality asked them to investigate whether the soil was clean enough to grow crops. So they found a sponsor who was willing to carry out the soil investigation for them. This revealed that there was some contamination, but not to such an extent that it was impossible to grow crops there. Subsequently, the municipality tacitly permitted the project to start.

> *"It was quite a hassle with the municipality, because they had to say yes or no. And they didn't really know what to do with such a report. In the end, I received an email saying: well, that's fine. Nothing official. I think they were afraid of getting their hands burned, or something." - Tineke van den Burg*

In the early years, the Social Affairs and Employment department placed clients with a labour market disadvantage at the Voedseltuin, and the Voedseltuin operated on the compensation they received for this.

This agreement was soon terminated due to budget cuts. After that, the Voedseltuin was mainly dependent on private funds. Thanks to her background at the municipality and in community work, Tineke van den Burg had a large network in the city and, together with her colleague, was skilled at writing applications and dealing with various official questions and requirements.

When the initiative was able to secure a five-year contract in 2015, the municipal planning department made it a condition that the garden be tidier. Van den Burg and her colleagues took this as an opportunity to redefine the project in dialogue with the municipality and surrounding businesses as a (future) food park for the neighbourhood that would one day be built there. LOLA Landscape Architects was asked to create a design that was implemented by the initiative with a few practical adjustments. By working with the municipal planners and becoming part of the local area development process, the initiative secured a place in the planning of the area.

"The Voedseltuin didn't make a big fuss and steadily continued with their mission, which was appreciated by everyone." – Josine van den Bogaard (GGD)

This was helped by the fact that the phasing out of port-related activities is not according to planning scheduled to be completed until 2034. As long as fruit juice importer HIWA remains in the neighbourhood, until 2034, no homes may be built. So there was a long interim period in the area, beyond the crisis period of 2008-2014. The hope of the Voedseltuin was and is that by the time the new residential development goes ahead, the garden will be allowed to remain on the basis of its proven value to the area, but the signals from the municipality are mixed. In 2020, the Voedseltuin wanted to extend its lease for another five years, but the municipality did not agree. Developments in the area were in full swing at the time, and they did not dare to give the initiative another five-year contract. So now it is tacitly renewed every two years.

But in the meantime, the location has been designated as green space in the zoning plan, so they have already achieved that, even though the details of that green space have not yet been determined.

"Nobody wants us to leave. We're not in the hot seat. Everyone is happy with us. Also, we have joined forces with all the parties involved in the Keile committee." - Tineke van den Burg

"We are always invited to participate in the area development here. We are also a fixture on the map of the area." - Tineke van den Burg

This gives her confidence in the future. Nevertheless, she remains vigilant.

"You keep your ears and eyes open. And if there are threats, we chain ourselves together (laughs). No, seriously, then we'll take action again." - Tineke van den Burg

From an initiative under the radar to a participant in area development

In 2010, the Voedseltuin was initially tolerated informally as an initiative of the Food Bank. Municipal support came from the social side of the municipality (GGD and MO). In 2011, the municipality drew up a Structural Vision for the area, which was adopted by the municipal council. The term 'urban agriculture' does not appear in this document. However, as a pilot area for the acceleration of spatial projects, within the framework of the Crisis and Recovery Act, other ways of more organic development were encouraged in the meantime. This created space for recognition of the Voedseltuin. In 2015, the Voedseltuin was also given a role as a placemaker, a role that the initiative embraced and further developed. The municipality demanded that the Voedseltuin be tidier. The Voedseltuin responded with a plan in which it redefined itself as a Food Park with a role for the environment and for green innovation. In this way, they made themselves part of the 'collective narrative' for the area, but the extent to which this was based on a Post-Structuralist or Collaborative Planning concept on the part of the municipality is unclear.

The fact that the Voedseltuin is still there today has to do with both the long development process and its active participation in that process. In the most recent plans (from 2019), both the Voedseltuin and part of the former UJES are marked as green spaces. How these green spaces will be used in due course remains to be seen. There is no mention of urban agriculture or food. However, Van den Burg and her colleagues remain vigilant in actively safeguarding their interests in the area's development, acting as a kind of advocacy planners.

Unfortunately, those directly involved from the municipality were not available for an interview.

6.3.3 Wollefoppengroen & Co

"What has always been a success for me – although we had little to do with it – is Wollefoppengroen. That was a bit more under the radar. The funny thing was that it was also taken up very enthusiastically by the then borough council. They also received subsidies from the City Region and the Province. And they had the advantage that there was already a task set to ameliorate the park that they wanted to redesign. There was also a housing development plan hanging over the market, which the neighbourhood was opposed to. That's when the switch was made: no housing, we're going to turn that boring lawn into a food garden. They also had very good contact with the Orion care organisation, which ran a day care centre there. They came up with this idea at that first meeting with the municipality and then continued very steadily. I see that they are still functioning very well. That's a real good example."
– Kees van Oorschot

As a citizens' initiative, Wollefoppengroen & Co managed to involve the municipal planning department in a Collaborative process. Because they were able to arrange funding from the Province and the City Region as an innovative residents' initiative, the initiative was given a central position in the planning process; they were given the role of commissioning the planners/designers. Jennie Greevink was appointed project leader by the then borough council (deelgemeente). Her story provides insight into how the borough council worked at the time and the challenges involved in facilitating civic initiatives by residents, particularly in the design and implementation of public space. Looking back, she recalls:

"It was one of the first residents' initiatives we had in the city."
"If you look at the current situation, there are lots of 'Wijk aan zet' [a municipal programme] initiatives, and I notice that as a municipality we are increasingly trying to get residents involved in all kinds of active roles. But back then, that was completely new, so it was a steep learning curve for everyone: how do we do that?" - Jennie Greevink

At that time, the social and physical domains were still very separate policy areas. Greevink initially worked in the social domain but then made the move to also work in the physical domain.

"I did both. So I had both physical and social in my portfolio." "Actually, a precursor to integrated working. Something we want more and more (as a municipality), but which is also quite complicated, because it requires a lot of expertise." - Jennie Greevink

At the borough where she worked, they eventually made the switch to so-called neighbourhood teams. In these teams, a small group of civil servants was responsible for the entire ins and outs of a neighbourhood. She was part of the neighbourhood team on behalf of the social domain, with a colleague from the physical domain ('safety and space' in policy terms) and a communications officer. Around that time, the Wollefoppengroen & Co initiative was launched. Based on her background in the social domain, she was asked to supervise the process surrounding this residents' initiative.



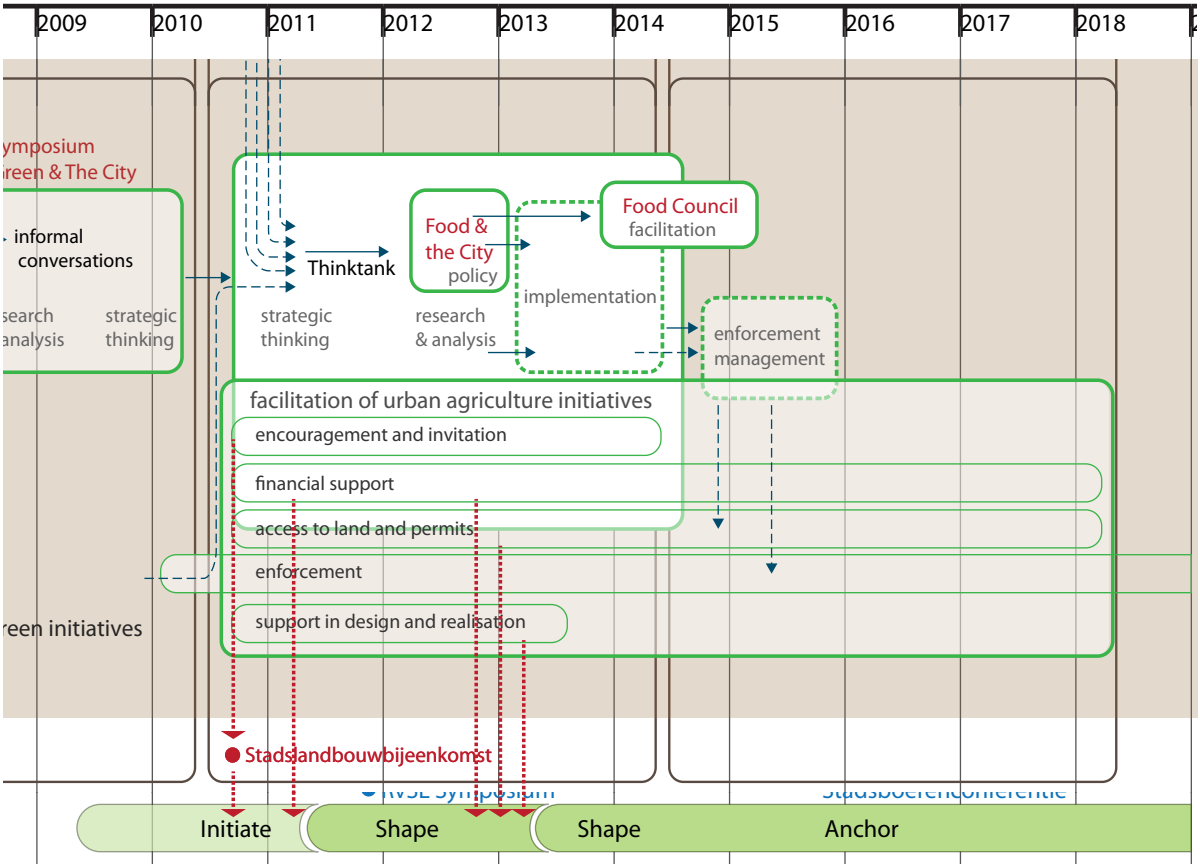


Fig. 6.4 Timeline Interaction Wollefoppengroen & Co

Initiate: start of garden initiative 2009

Shape I: preliminary garden design 2010 (initial construction 2011)

Shape II: design process 2011-2013 (final design & implementation 2013)

Anchor: activities / right to challenge

She received support from colleagues from the physical domain, as she was less familiar with the subject matter.

"My role was very process-oriented, ensuring that the necessary steps were taken, that the right parties were involved in the follow-up, and that agenda items were prepared for the daily management of the borough, that then can give the go-ahead for the next step to be taken." - Jennie Greevink

Starting with a protest against construction plans in 2005, the initiators focused their attention in the following years on improving their living environment. By doing their own research and setting things in motion in a smart way, they were taken seriously, but they also ventured into the domain of the government. Initially, they were encouraged to do so by the municipality. Looking for funding for their plan to create a garden on the former construction site, they were advised by the borough council to look into urban agriculture. They therefore attended the municipality's first urban agriculture meeting, where they met Christiane Willekens (a permaculture designer who was also involved in Transition Town). She saw opportunities in their plan for the park to create an edible park.

"It's a wonderful plan, but why not make those trees nut trees and why not create a vegetable garden? Because," she said, "that's what really connects people." - Frenk Walkenbach

They made an appointment with urban agriculture official Van Oorschot. He came by and they showed him the plan. In addition to the original plan for the park, they had made a sketch of the vegetable garden.

"Then I asked: what is the ideal urban agriculture plan? And he said about the sketch: well, this. So that gave us a lot of energy. And then, in a week, we completely changed the plan to what it is now, actually." - Frenk Walkenbach

"I learned during that time that it's often enough to drop by every now and then and say, 'Great! And if anything comes up, give me a call.' My colleagues were very busy with the design, of course. So the initiative didn't require me much. Just showing your face every now and then means something. Sometimes just that can help." - Kees van Oorschot

"So, by chance, we got in touch and entered the world of urban agriculture. And there we found financing for the plan." - Frenk Walkenbach

This set off a chain reaction, with more and more authorities joining in and ambitions growing. Wollefoppengroen & Co involved residents by posting a number of options on their website for residents to choose from. They chose the most ambitious plan, which cost €450,000. The borough had £125,000 available, on condition that they arrange two substantial co-financiers. This led them to the City Region, which was willing to contribute because, by realising an urban agriculture project in Wollefoppenpark, they were, as it were, bringing the countryside into the neighbourhood. They then approached the Province, which also became supportive at a certain point. At the end of 2010, they quickly adapted the plan into an edible park and submitted it. From September 2010 onwards, they spent two years lobbying various parties and further developing their plan. They collaborated with Henk Koedijk, chair of the borough council, who lobbied within the council.

"He wanted to make it a great project. He wanted to score points. So did we – for the residents – so it all came together nicely." - Frenk Walkenbach

Everyone was enthusiastic. Nevertheless, the realisation proved to be a difficult process. In addition to Greevink (from the district council) and Frenk Walkenbach and his colleague (from the residents' initiative), two civil servants from the municipality took part in the process: a 'Water & Groen' (Water and Greenery) Manager from City Management (Public Works) and a landscape architect from Urban Development. Greevink describes it as a process with two sides, with positive aspects but also with conflict. In her account, she explains the dilemmas faced by the municipality and how this influenced the process.

"The fact that the initiative came from them was something we as a municipality were not used to, because we always had our own civil servants, and they – the people in the clusters – decide what needs to be done. And suddenly there are residents who have ideas about this. And that sometimes caused friction." - Jennie Greevink

The first dilemma concerned the demarcation of disciplines, because the division of roles between municipal experts and residents was constantly being questioned.

"I found it very difficult to assess whether an idea put forward by a resident was rejected because it was really unrealistic, or because it was actually a kind of cocky, competitive behaviour. Because after all just any someone comes up to you and says, 'I'll do it this way', while we obviously had experts who also had ideas. You could have given it to a designer, who could have made something out of it." - Jennie Greevink

She therefore discussed this with colleagues within the borough from the physical domain: spatial advisors with a background in urban planning. With their substantive knowledge and expertise, they were able to help her assess what was going on.

A second municipal dilemma was the division of responsibility.

"If things go wrong – and you always have to think in terms of worst-case scenarios – then the municipality is liable. So I noticed that there was also tension in that: how much freedom can you give residents in their plans? And what do you want to keep under your own control and what can they really do?" - Jennie Greevink

Because the municipal officials struggled with their role, friction arose regularly. This could lead to heated exchanges, but there was also mutual understanding. Walkenbach saw the conflict that the project caused within the municipality

"There were supporters. Others found it very difficult." - Frenk Walkenbach

"And every time there was friction and we had to discuss it with each other and understand each other's worlds, yes, that was the game we were playing with each other all the time." - Jennie Greevink

The municipality also stepped out of its comfort zone. A landscape architect from Urban Development contributed constructively to the design and made suggestions for sightlines and suchlike.

"He was a good bloke. He was a fan of our plan. But he also ran into problems." - Frenk Walkenbach

Walkenbach and his fellow initiators thought it was taking far too long. They were less interested in the details of the plan, such as the litter bins, benches, etc. But according to Greevink, those details contained choices that would determine whether or not the plan was financially feasible.

"Then you get into a discussion: do you want a golden chair or is a regular chair okay?" - Jennie Greevink

This led to a lot of back-and-forth communication. The lack of understanding was partly due to the intransparent procedures that the municipality had to go through. Because the municipality wanted to keep control of many things, it took a lot of hours (and therefore costs).

"...(we were) surprised at how things work at the municipality. I come from the commercial world myself, so I know a little bit about how things work, but the municipality..." "The public works department came up with all kinds of clauses. All those people who had to approve it. That also cost quite a bit of money. Drawings, adjustments." - Frenk Walkenbach

"...because we let it run through the municipal channels again, that requires a certain structure and a certain order in which you take steps together. And that's quite long-term thinking. I can well imagine, from the residents' perspective, that they think: can't it be done a little faster?" – Jennie Greevink

It was also a matter of exploring what the municipality should take on and what the residents' initiative could do itself. The initial idea was that the residents would do it themselves, but at a certain point it was decided to do it through the Urban Development department with a Preliminary Design and Final Design; in short, all steps had to be taken in accordance with the usual process. The municipality was reluctant to hand over the entire implementation. A division was created in which the municipality's Public Works Department constructed the main structure, such as the paths. The residents were given the freedom to fill in the smaller details themselves.

"They can do the small things, then [Public Works] can use the excavator. But I think that's really different from saying: the residents are going to transform this space." – Jennie Greevink

"We designed the layout ourselves for the most part: this is how we want to shape our outdoor space." - Frenk Walkenbach

It is important to note that the residents' initiative was entirely voluntary. In that respect, the limits of what you can ask of citizens were also explored:

"...it even went so far that we were accused, like: 'I sent a drawing two days ago, and I haven't received a response yet.' You think, 'what the hell?'. About where the bins should be placed. There are rules for that..." – Frenk Walkenbach

In the end, everyone was happy with the result, but according to Greevink, the process revealed an inherent tension in the policy implemented at the time to give residents' initiatives more space.

"I don't think we're very good at giving trust as a municipality. And that has everything to do with the risks, which is understandable, but the question is how strict you should be about everything." - Jennie Greevink

Walkenbach also emphasises in this context that the project was a learning experience for both the municipality and the residents. He gives as an example his encounter with a civil servant in the garden. He saw two people sitting on a bench and, as he always did at the beginning, went over to them to have a chat. It turned out to be one of the civil servants involved from the Public Works Department (the one responsible for the dismantling clause and the rubbish bins). He had brought his colleague along to see how the project was progressing and was full of praise for how beautiful it had become.

"He said, 'We should do this more often. Even if we don't know how it will turn out, we should just do it! And look what happened!' He had done a complete U-turn." - Frenk Walkenbach

"One of our objectives with this project was also to influence things, to influence civil servants. You can go to Coolsingel with a placard, but now we were talking to those civil servants." - Frenk Walkenbach

"And you don't know in advance what that influence will be. We had no idea what we were getting ourselves into. Of course, we knew what we wanted, but what you actually experience? Who knows." - Frenk Walkenbach

From protest to catalyst for collaborative area development

Wollefoppengroen & Co came about around the same time as Voedseltuin and Uit Je Eigen Stad, but in a totally different context: in the post-war expansion neighbourhood of Zevenkamp in the borough of Prins Alexander. The initiative started with a protest against building plans in 2005 and then focused on improving the green spaces on the edge of the neighbourhood. From 2010 onwards, it was embraced as a residents' initiative, first by the borough, then by the municipality and subsequently by the City Region and the Province. By linking up with the municipality's burgeoning urban agriculture policy, they started a dynamic in which funding was made available for the upgrade of an underused piece of public green space. It became an example of a residents' initiative gaining control over its own environment. It was a form of Collaborative Planning, where a genuine attempt was made to work together on an equal footing. In practice, however, this led to questions about responsibility and trust. Because the municipality tried to combine a Collaborative approach with a classic, Rational construction process, the process was long and frustrating. Lessons for the future have not been recorded or incorporated into policy.

6.3.4 Rotterdamse Munt

Both at the first temporary location, which was taken into use in 2014, and at the second permanent location of Rotterdamse Munt (from 2018), the municipality was involved in finding the location, providing the permit and lease agreement, and partly also the financing. The initiative began in the middle of Alderman Van Huffelen's term of office. According to initiator Ingrid Ackermans, Van Huffelen was actually the biggest ambassador for the first location (along the city boulevard Laan op Zuid). She wanted to support it, and Annemieke Fontein was tasked with making that possible. The project was linked to a location, and that is where project manager Marcel van Blijswijk became involved.

Van Blijswijk was then project manager of the 'Parkstad' development on Laan op Zuid. He entered into discussions with Rotterdamse Munt because, as an area manager, he had a site for which there were no concrete development initiatives. There was a plan for a larger piece of land that was almost ready for construction. However, due to the crisis at the time, there were no developers lining up for it.

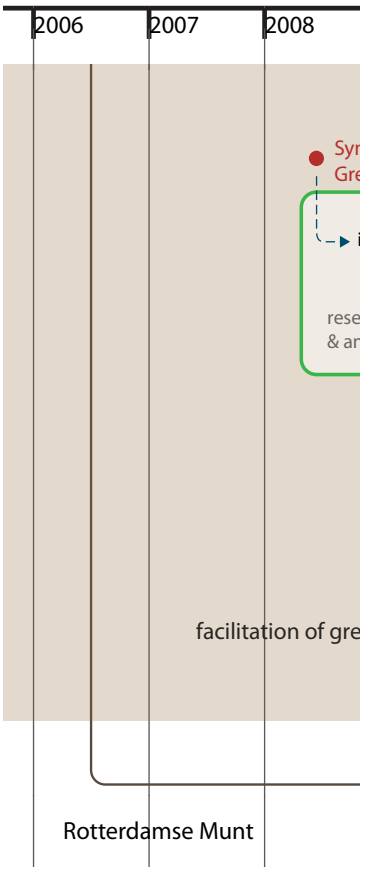
"As a municipality, we then decided: we are going to tidy it up completely; we will re-profile Laan op Zuid with rows of trees, and when the market picks up again, we as a municipality will be able to facilitate that."
- Marcel van Blijswijk

But during that period, there was nothing. So, Parkstad came up with the idea that Rotterdamse Munt could be given a temporary location there. From his time as a planologist, Van Blijswijk already knew colleagues such as Kees van Oorschot and Pieter de Greef, with whom he was in regular contact, so he suspects that a link was already being made there *. The project then became – also within the municipality – a textbook example of urban agriculture that is rooted in the neighbourhood as a social enterprise and contributes to it. According to Van Blijswijk, the initiative was well aligned with the needs of the surrounding area. The planning department wanted there to be a link between the social challenge in the Afrikaanderwijk neighbourhood and the temporary use of that site.

"We thought that was important, and Rotterdamse Munt does that very well, of course. It also takes the social component into account. The learning component from the neighbourhood is also part of their mission. And that made it very interesting for us for the area. It's better to have something that connects with the neighbourhood than a bare expanse." - Marcel van Blijswijk

As a former designer for the municipality, design professional Ingrid Ackermans had a different position than other initiators, both in terms of her network and her insight into and reputation within the municipality. This also influenced how representatives of the municipality view the initiative.

"(The people at Rotterdamse Munt) are very professional people who understand how the municipality works. They are also patient. The municipality is not always easy to deal with. So we did have some tough discussions. And they have the patience to really get this off the ground." - Marcel van Blijswijk



** Initiator Ingrid Ackermans recalls that initial contact had already been made when Van Blijswijk joined.*

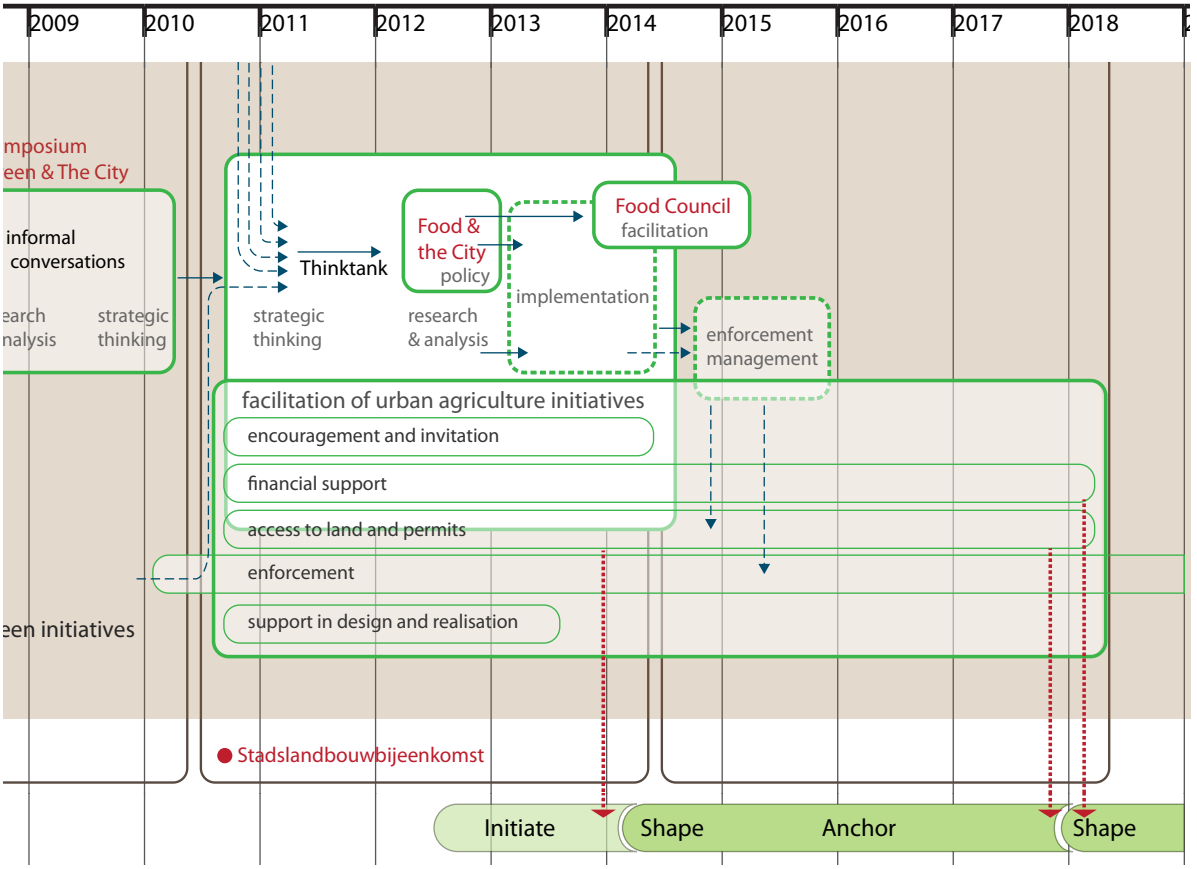


Fig. 6.5 Timeline: Interaction Rotterdamse Munt

Initiate: launch of the garden initiative in 2012 (design competition)

Shape I: design & implementation of the first site in 2014

Anchor / Shape II: design & implementation of the second site in 2017–2018

Ackermans' approach was primarily pragmatic: what do we need urban development for? For this location, it was a lease, a permit and financing. She was able to obtain financing through her network at the City Region (Stadsregio).

"During the crisis, they had a budget to temporarily develop building sites that were lying fallow. For the sake of liveability. But Stadsregio does not provide subsidies to foundations, only to municipalities, and they in turn have to pass them on. And that's where we needed Urban Development. And in the end, they also used it for two other locations." "I don't know if they were already working on that, or if I suggested it to them. But actually, I came across it myself because I knew someone from Stadsregio." - Ingrid Ackermans

A lease agreement also had to be drawn up. According to Ackermans, Van Huffelen did not want a 'free' contract; the initiative had to be able to bear its own costs. Jan Willem van der Schans, who as a board member was involved in Rotterdamse Munt, found that 'really unbelievable'. Ackermans resigned herself to it and thought: if that's how it has to be, then that's how we'll do it. Ackermans saw the first location as an experiment.

'Of course, we knew it would only be temporary. Fine, that's our trial location. We'll give it a try and see how it goes.' - Ingrid Ackermans

Van Blijswijk does see the irony in charging rent to a socially valuable initiative.

"You might say, you're doing something great for Rotterdam, why should we charge rent?" "I understand that it's a bummer for Rotterdamse Munt. [However] I couldn't ignore that." - Marcel van Blijswijk

The Contract Management department had rules for facilitating initiatives. Their fear was that if they allowed this now, soon everyone throughout the city would ask or demand not to have to pay rent. That's why he had to ask the initiative to pay rent. The decision was made to charge the lowest possible cost-covering rent, which covered all the costs incurred by the municipality (excluding Van Blijswijk's hours and suchlike, he adds).

According to Van Blijswijk, there was a limit to what the municipality could and was willing to promise, even though he himself did not always feel comfortable with it.

"As municipality, we said A, but we wanted to say B as little as possible. That's pretty much what happened. And B was mainly the responsibility of Rotterdamse Munt" - Marcel van Blijswijk

For example, it was up to Rotterdamse Munt to ensure that cables and pipes were laid. So they had to arrange that financially themselves. But at the same time, there were all kinds of rules from the municipality that had to be complied with. For example, a temporary pavement had to be installed. Various parties from the municipality were responsible for this, so Rotterdamse Munt looked to the municipality to coordinate this properly. Van Blijswijk understood this, but the municipality threw the ball back: 'But you are the initiators. Sort it out!' In the discussions he had with the initiative, these kinds of issues could 'clash quite a bit'. But in his experience, patience and trust on both sides ensured that these issues were ultimately resolved.

'(Because) you also have civil servants who are really very precise, and then you can't get things done. I encounter this myself within my organisation. You have very precise people, but it's not always easy to cut with tiny scissors.' - Marcel van Blijswijk

Even though Ackermans also found the process 'extremely difficult', her professional background and the appeal of the project also contributed to its acceptance by the municipality, according to Van Blijswijk. He too noticed that the municipality was concerned that such an initiative would cause problems, 'with weeds and such'. But he was confident that this would not happen, because the initiative was simply well thought out, carefully planned and professionally conceived.

"...what you often see with plots where people grow their own things is that it doesn't look good visually. And I think Rotterdamse Munt has been able to make it look neat. You think: well, that looks good. With sloping lines, a nice little building. It just looks spick and span, even though you can see that it's temporary." - Marcel van Blijswijk

According to Van Blijswijk, projects such as Rotterdamse Munt also contributed to project developers regaining interest in the area around 2013-2014. Developers always drove past Laan op Zuid and focused on the city. Developers had a fairly short-term perspective, so they saw that perspective in the city centre. When the municipality had designed the public space in the area and Rotterdamse Munt moved in, they realised that Parkstad was an interesting development location, and then things took off. This success also meant that Rotterdamse Munt had to leave when a property developer came up with building plans for the location.

When the initiative was informed that they had to leave the first location, Ackermans consulted with her board to consider whether she wanted to continue the initiative. At this stage, she contacted Urban Development again. She had an exploratory meeting with Annemieke Fontein, who responded enthusiastically and was willing to facilitate our move. Ackermans then discussed with the board the conditions that the new location would have to meet: it had to be within a certain radius of the current location because they had built up so many relationships there. They wanted to take all of them with them. This was not only about relationships with people in the neighbourhood, but also with all kinds of organisations. And especially primary schools, because education was Rotterdamse Munt's main source of income, so they wanted to be able to continue teaching their classes. A second important condition was that it had to be a permanent location. Fontein understood this. They then looked at the entire area with a designer: these are possible locations. And Urban Development then scanned these locations: what were the building plans? Was the location permanently available? The municipality came up with a number of locations and ultimately chose the Rosepark.

The fact that the municipality facilitated the initiative and that it also ended up at the new location is quite exceptional. Van Blijswijk emphasises how important it was for Rotterdamse Munt to have a well-functioning temporary location. At Parkstad on Krugerstraat, they had shown what it could be, and that enabled them to secure that permanent location.

"All kinds of other people were involved in that. And they said: but what is that? Yes, go and see for yourself. And you could just see that it works. I think that was a big advantage for Rotterdamse Munt in being able to secure a permanent location on the railway tunnel, which is also an incredibly complicated place to gain a foothold." - Marcel van Blijswijk

Nevertheless, Ackermans also experienced the support from the municipality as ambivalent. On the one hand, a new location was found. On the other hand, the transfer of this piece of public land to Rotterdamse Munt as a private organisation and the communication about it to residents was left entirely to the initiative.

"We were actually completely on our own." "When I think back on it, I think: if you, as a municipality, say: we support this, we facilitate this. That's what they said, but they didn't communicate that to the outside world. We had to do that ourselves." - Ingrid Ackermans

When asked whether the sometimes minimal support from the municipality may have been influenced by the fact that she was a former colleague who knew her way around, Ackermans says she doesn't know. However, she does indicate that it may also have had to do with chemistry between people. She herself is quite independent, and at the same time she had to deal with people from Urban Development who had no experience, who had only been working there for two years or so.

"So that can be difficult at times." "... not working on the basis of trust. It could feel like you were being stifled." - Ingrid Ackermans

"I think Urban Development did their best. Without their cooperation, none of this would have been possible. And in the second phase, they actually provided quite a lot of funding. But we also did them a favour. Because there was still a piece of public space that needed to be renovated. And we included that in our project. And they got it done for much less than it would normally cost. So we did make our contribution to society." - Ingrid Ackermans

From tolerated example to permanent presence

Rotterdamse Munt started later than the other initiatives, in the middle of the councillor's term of office, when urban agriculture policy had already been formulated and laid down in Food & the City (2012). The support it received from the municipality is also in line with this policy, but at the same time remained very informal, partly because the policy has never been formalised. In Van Blijswijk's words, it was more tolerated. There was support for it, as long as his formal assignment did not suffer as a result. Therefore, no guarantees were given to the initiative. On the one hand, it was approached collaboratively as an equal initiative, but all (decision-making) power remained with the municipal planning department. 'Solve it yourself', but without any commitments in return. As soon as market forces kicked in again, Rotterdamse Munt had to move. Exceptionally, Urban Development helped to find a second, permanent location and contributed to the financing of the location. It should be noted that Urban Development also solved a problem of overdue maintenance in doing so; it was estimated that Rotterdamse Munt could do this more cheaply than the municipality itself. Rotterdamse Munt was thus a partner in solving a problem in a Pragmatic way, but although it was held up as an example of a good urban agriculture project, the way in which the planning department made room for it did not become common practice within the municipality.

6.3.5 Additional perspectives from other initiatives

Another project often mentioned by planners is Dakakker. The project was part of De Luchtsingel. This project competed for the City Initiative, a competition for civic initiatives that could win funding from the municipality based on a public vote. As the first winner of the City Initiative, De Luchtsingel was viewed with some scepticism by the planning department, because a large sum of money was spent on it at the same time that drastic cuts were being made in this department due to the crisis *. However, the Dakakker fitted in as an example project in the municipality's Green Roofs Subsidy Programme and was fast-tracked through the permit process by Urban Development with a so-called 7x7 consultation (a meeting in which all relevant departments for the permit process met at the same time).

** Because Uit Je Eigen Stad also participated in this first edition of the City Initiative and competed with Luchtsingel for first place, Eetbaar Rotterdam also took a critical (and competitive) look at this initiative.*

"I still hear from people who attend presentations at the municipality that we are mentioned as an example. The municipality still uses it as promotional material for themselves." – Wouter Bauman (Dakakker)

But it is not a given that an initiative will fit in well with municipal policy. Creatief Beheer was active at several locations in the city. One of their first projects arose from a municipal contract, in which they were subcontractors. Because of the innovative way in which the initiative designed temporary sites with residents, they were asked to work in several places. As the manager of temporarily available land, the initiative was easy to fit into the planning. But the initiative's ambition went further, and because they were critical of the municipality's current approach to the design and management of outdoor spaces, there was regular friction.

Whereas Rini Biemans of Creatief Beheer considers criticism and confrontation a necessary way of communicating and discussing the future of the city and the role of green space management in it, this provoked a lot of resistance from civil servants.

"He was way ahead of the troops. And he became frustrated because he wasn't being heard. That's a risk when you're way ahead of the troops; sometimes it does more harm than good. That's a shame." – Josine van den Bogaard (GGD)

"I've been hearing the accusation that I'm too much my whole life. But I'm a professional. When I present a fact, I want a substantive response to it. Not for them to start talking about my behaviour. Sorry, I think by myself, you're boring and depressed. That's not acceptable." – Rini Biemans (Creatief Beheer)

For planners in particular, Biemans was not only provocative, but also threatening because he challenged the separation between planning and management. Within the Think Tank, the members of City Management and Social Development were sympathetic to a greater role for citizens in management. But according to Van den Bogaard, this actually stood in the way of acceptance by Urban Development.

"(But) that also meant that it came to belong to them less. It took on a different appearance that was less suited to them. That's still an issue..." – Josine van de Bogaard

Biemans does not mince his words when he talks about the designers at the municipality. He accuses them of paying little attention to ecological processes and sticking to plant lists.

"The essence of the matter – what bothers me the most – is that designers don't understand that nature does it itself and that they should design accordingly." "All those designers in the outdoor space. I have yet to meet anyone who works without plant lists. I have yet to meet anyone who understands nature."
– Rini Biemans

But urban management also comes in for criticism. He sees the way in which the design and management of outdoor spaces are organised as outdated and even harmful to people and urban nature. But while this criticism is a starting point for him to discuss how things could be done differently, he is often ignored by civil servants.

"That gossip behind your back. You wonder why. Cowardice? Fear? Am I that unsympathetic? I don't know. It bothers me. It has costs us some. But at the same time, there are also many people who have helped me a lot."
- Rini Biemans

Many of the civil servants he has encountered have indeed helped him. But according to Biemans, the problem is that civil servants are no longer able to do anything. In the past, people in the borough council could still make some budgetary decisions. Now that this is no longer possible, their room for manoeuvre is much more limited. Planner Fontein points to the lack of accountability for expenditure by initiatives in this context.

*"Tom Bakker's research * showed that most initiatives had very sloppy accounting practices or none at all. It took too much time." "They should hire an accountant together and set up a foundation to distribute the money. But the various initiators are too individualistic for that." - Annemiek Fontein*

** Economisch Onderzoek Stadslandbouw Gemeente Rotterdam (Economic Research on Urban Agriculture in the Municipality of Rotterdam) (Bakker, 2016). See also section 4.3.4.1.*

NuHier and Stadslandbouw Schiebroek-Zuid did receive more positive attention from Urban Development. This may have been partly due to the fact that these initiatives were located on land owned by housing corporations, which meant that the municipality had relatively little to do with them. As clients, housing corporations were also examples of large social organisations that took responsibility for the city. These were partners with whom the municipality had been keen to collaborate since the City Vision 2030. Both initiators were designers who, like Ackermans (Rotterdamse Munt), shared a sense of design quality with the municipality's planners.

Nevertheless, Van de Wieldat also saw that this attention did not last.

"At some point, it became apparent that the 'project world' was starting up again." "At a certain point, there was money again and projects were started again. Thinking in terms of 'open-ended' processes is simply difficult for the municipality." - Ester van de Wiel (NuHIer)

In another project, she found that thinking in terms of processes and temporary space resonated with City Management, which also has a practical need for this. But Urban Development, with its dominant

real estate mindset, did not want to go along with this. There she noticed the power of planners to refuse to engage in dialogue.

"Later, I discovered that the narrative that vacant lots are necessary for breathing space in the city is not widely supported by the municipality. They see any (temporary) use of vacant land as a threat to the financial development perspective." - Ester Van de Wiel

Piet de Jonge (Tuin op de Pier) also experienced the power of disinterest.

"I actually found every conversation extremely frustrating. No recognition, no understanding of what we were doing. We addressed the municipality about points in its own programme: that citizens' initiatives would be embraced, that there should be more green space in the city. And when we said we were doing that, it wasn't in the way the municipality wanted."
- Piet de Jonge (Tuin op de Pier)

This was in sharp contrast to the attention that was also given to the initiative. Van Huffelen came by to plant a tree. And people from Urban Development also came by, but they were different people than those with whom they had ever sat down at the table.

"They were also very enthusiastic. They came by with cycling groups and so on. And then we were presented as a kind of example. But in the end, they didn't do a damn thing with it." - Piet de Jonge

6.4 Tension between planning policy and unruly practice

Planners with limited time and mandate set ambitions and narratives in motion, and the people on the ground had to realise those narratives within the existing government system. Occasionally, an initiator had contact with a planner, but more often the contact was through a project manager, area manager or neighbourhood team. The development of urban agriculture policy, laid down in a policy document, created high expectations for initiatives. While these expectations were met to a certain extent for some initiatives, such as the four initiatives examined in more detail, this was certainly not the case for everyone.

When we listen to the civil servants involved in the implementation, we hear a Pragmatic Planning approach, in which support for certain projects from politicians and/or policymakers was sometimes translated into an assignment (as in the case of Uit Je Eigen Stad and Wollefoppengroen & Co) and sometimes included in the margins of an existing assignment (in the case of Voedseltuin and Rotterdamse Munt). Project managers then often entered into a difficult implementation process in which policy intentions to support, involve and – literally and figuratively – give space to civic initiatives were hampered by legal requirements, practical implementation problems and financial constraints. There was a constant tension between planning ideals and unruly practice. In this tension, initiators were sometimes the messenger, the jester who pointed out what was going on. This was often not appreciated. Conversely, project managers were many

times bound by rules, which often originated from other departments. Within this framework, they tried to navigate pragmatically.

"In the implementation of my projects, I sometimes have to take 150 frameworks into account, according to research. I know 10, maybe 20. And the rest? It's all relevant policy." - Marcel van Blijswijk

6.4.1 Facilitating and hindering

In the tension between policy and practice, there existed a jumble of rules and procedures. The municipality had the ambition to facilitate initiatives, but as a bureaucratic body, it was also a potential obstacle to bottom-up initiatives. Depending in part on the point of contact at the municipality – via the councillor, a policy officer or a local project manager – various barriers were erected by the municipality.

It started with the question of who to contact. There was a plan for a citizens' desk, but it never got off the ground. When there were still boroughs (deelgemeentes), it was easier to reach the municipality.

A second hurdle was that a space claim by a bottom-up initiative was viewed with extreme scepticism. It was not self-evident that citizens had the right to do this, or that their claim would be granted. Even on temporary land, initiatives were not immediately welcomed at first: what if they never leave? This was overcome by working with temporary contracts. But these were often issued for a short period and renewed annually. What if a project developer came along who wanted to invest?

This short term provided little certainty for plans that had a longer duration, such as a garden. This was a third barrier: a year is very short in agricultural terms. Because the municipality often did not want to commit to the longer term, it was difficult for initiatives to plan ahead, which caused a great deal of uncertainty about the future. This was despite the fact that it was sometimes clear that a piece of land would remain vacant for a longer period of time, as in the case of the Voedseltuin.

A fourth hurdle was financial: it was policy that rent had to be charged, based on the principle of equality/to prevent unfair competition; urban agriculture initiatives had to be facilitated but were ultimately, in the eyes of the government, private initiatives that had to arrange their own financing. "In the municipality's vision, urban agriculture in Rotterdam will be a unique combination of citizen initiative and entrepreneurship," according to the Food and the City policy document. However, the value they added to a neglected area of the city was often recognised but not financially rewarded.

Then there were the regulatory barriers, such as various permits and soil quality requirements. These were often not tailored to new functions in the city, such as food production. Thanks to the Crisis and Recovery Act, an exception to environmental legislation relating to chicken farming could be negotiated for Uit Je Eigen Stad. But this required the cooperation of civil servants. One curious example was

the enforcement of rules for public space, such as the advertising tax that Van de Wiel was once confronted with (although the civil servant in question did not take any further action after that first inquiry).

Finally, there was also a professional barrier: the aesthetic and professional preferences of planners. For example, municipal planners and civil servants were more positive about initiatives that resulted in what they considered to be an attractive 'end result'. According to them, this radiated quality and professionalism, but these qualifications were, of course, linked to a prevailing, subjective norm among designers about beauty and quality.

6.4.2 The civil servant as guide or gatekeeper

Civil servants played a crucial role in the aforementioned barriers. There was a lot of room for interpretation in facilitating urban agriculture initiatives. There was a growing acceptance within the municipality that good initiatives should be supported. However, as we saw in practice, this often happened informally, outside existing frameworks. At the institutional level, this cultural shift had not yet permeated. In fact, according to many interviewees, the emphasis on control and budget management has only made this more difficult since then, not because of policy unwillingness but because of structural developments towards efficiency and equal rules for everyone.

"This schizophrenia lies, on the one hand, in the ambition to do good things for the city and, on the other hand, in the tendency to control in order to treat everyone equally, and (parallel to this) in the gap between policy and implementation." - Marcel van Blijswijk

This was also reflected in the substantive hesitation to relinquish government tasks. Wollefoppengroen & Co shows how this hesitation was overcome. Jennie Greevink's account shows how understandable questions about responsibility could lead to the creation of professional barriers. As a result, the civil servant sometimes changed from a guide to a gatekeeper.

Resident initiatives that contributed to existing policy objectives were sometimes given a chance. However, where this contribution conflicted with more immediate property interests, as in the case of Tuin op de Pier, it was more a matter of tolerance than facilitation. Whereas in the beginning, as in the case of the Voedseltuin, this could still be attributed to unfamiliarity, a year later at Tuin op de Pier it seemed more a case of bureaucratic rigidity. Although this could also be due to the difference in temperament and expectations between the NGO representative of the Voedseltuin Foundation and the Active citizens of Tuin op de Pier.

6.4.3 Growing distance

Between 2010 and 2014, the borough (deelgemeente) played an important role in facilitating contact between initiators and the municipality. Without the encouragement and guidance of the Prinsenland borough and the responsible portfolio holder, the aforementioned Wollefoppengroen & Co would probably not have come this far. The plan for Rotterdamse Munt also received support from the local council (Feijenoord borough) and the responsible portfolio holder in its initial phase. In the Noord borough, portfolio holder for Sport & Recreation Nils Berndsen supported various initiatives. He was from D66 (the same party as the councillor), so he didn't want to give too much money, but he did want to give space. He thought TTR/Groengoed was a good example of taking personal responsibility for the neighbourhood. He was very enthusiastic about green space and permaculture. And he had the authority to provide funding. NuHier also received support from the borough of Noord.

"There were helpful people working there. We received 10,000 euros in support and they lent us all kinds of useful gardening tools. When a cannabis farm was raided in the neighbourhood, we were asked to come and see if there was anything we could use for the plot. That's how we got the rain barrels for the greenhouse." - Ester van de Wiel (NuHier)

"I think it depends on the person. I've also heard stories from colleagues in Kralingen where there was conflict with the local borough council there. Here we came up with a plan and they were very interested in it." - Rutger Henneman (TTR/Groengoed)

The abolition of the boroughs in 2014 meant that many initiatives lost their contact at the council. And with that, the trust they had built up disappeared, and often the funding that went with it. This affected initiatives such as Creatief Beheer and Groengoed, which had multiple locations in the neighbourhood and were partly dependent for their funding on their contacts at the borough council, on people who knew the local circumstances. Both initiatives later found their way again, but the impact at the time was significant, and not only for them.

"When the borough council was abolished, we ended up in a black hole." - Rutger Henneman

Civil servant Jennie Greevink also looks back with some nostalgia on the period she worked at the borough council. The borough council consisted of about 100 employees, who knew each other well. It was really like a family, according to Greevink. With the abolition of the borough council, that small-scale atmosphere disappeared. Things became more businesslike and distant. This growing distance also reduced the neighbourhood's ability to take decisive action. She therefore decided to remain in the area in a networking role (rather than moving to a cluster). But she noticed that she was doing a lot of connecting, but that she had very little influence or say over anything. She missed the substance, because as soon as it became substantive, she had to go to a cluster where policy is made.

6.4.4 Personal involvement

The various stories from the planners and initiators show that personal involvement was very important, even if this was not always visible to the initiators. It was often unclear to the initiatives which department they were dealing with and what the decision-making power of the civil servant involved was. As a result, it was not always clear to what extent the civil servant was doing his best to make the most of the available circumstances. Sometimes the image of the civil servants involved differed from that of the initiators about who was responsible for what and who did what exactly.

The implementation of the formulated urban agriculture policy within the municipality often took place through informal channels. These types of innovative initiatives were supported on the margins of regular tasks.

"(My colleagues in planning) of course have some kind of policy and look for good places in the city where this could be possible. Then they come to me and in conversation we think: we can do something for each other and then it takes off." - Marcel van Blijswijk

He indicates that there is a formal division of roles: he is the project manager for the area and they are responsible for policy, and that there must be a connection between the location and the policy. But even if that connection is there, it still has to work on a personal level, especially for his client. The client is someone from the management team who is his supervisor for this project (the assignment). From the outside, it is not always clear how the municipality works internally and what the relationship is between different departments. In the case of Tuin op de Pier, there was (apparently) no contact between the officials handling the case and the enthusiastic officials from Urban Development who later came by on a bicycle excursion. In that respect, the municipality is a 'many-headed monster' and it seems to matter a lot who you meet and at what level you enter.

In this context, it is interesting to note that the civil servants involved in urban agriculture policy also took on multiple roles in a somewhat similar way to the initiators. Annemieke Fontein met Jan Willem van der Schans as a citizen in the schoolyard. This led to their professional conversation as civil servant and researcher. According to Jan Willem van der Schans, this 'multiple inclusion' was the starting point for a transitional intervention *.

"Addressing each other about overlapping roles was the strength of Edible Rotterdam." - Jan Willem van der Schans

However, the civil servants in question struggled with this dual role and their personal involvement. This is because civil servants who acted as guides or ambassadors for initiators within the municipality could also contribute to the external image of arbitrariness. This arbitrariness was reflected, among other things, in the financial support for projects: different conditions in contracts; the restriction to short-term project-based funding; the work involved in applying to

** Van der Schans refers here to an interpretation of the concept of "partial inclusion" coined by Karl E. Weick. Whereas this term means that people partially fulfil expectations as they have to fulfil expectations in more than one group, he believes that in Rotterdam we developed a 'radical version' in which (engaged) people want to fulfil different expectations simultaneously in different groups or settings.*

one department for money to pay rent to another department. The lack of clarity and uncertainty that this inconsistent support created for the initiatives also led to discomfort among civil servants directly involved in urban agriculture policy.

"(...) I think it's a shame for the city that it hasn't been possible to give these kinds of initiatives (including UJES) a kind of basic income so that they could continue to exist. Instead, they have to put in a lot of time every year to get a little money. As a city, as a municipality, I think that's a downside."
- Annemieke Fontein

"[The intermediate layer of citizens who are social entrepreneurs] are extremely important. They form the link between citizens and the municipality. They fulfil a very important bridging function. As a municipality, you have to cherish them. I sometimes find it very difficult when that is not possible or does not happen. Entrepreneurs – such as Ingrid at Rotterdamse Munt – always have to lobby for money, and we as a municipality are unable to offer that continuity. I actually find that shameful. When something is new, there is always money available for innovation, but when it comes to sustaining it, there is no money left. I think that is exploiting entrepreneurs. I find that so painful sometimes that I think we shouldn't even start. If you can't offer anything afterwards, you are giving people false hope." - Josine van den Bogaard

6.4.5 Tailor-made solutions and policy implementation

In the urban agriculture policy as implemented, the actions from the Food & the City policy document actually played a subordinate role. While these actions at least attempted to establish a policy framework for all initiatives, in the practice of urban agriculture policy, ad hoc tailor-made solutions aimed at supporting a limited number of initiatives has been of decisive importance. This may be understandable in the short term, given the novelty and unfamiliarity of the theme, but no attempt seems to have been made to institutionalise this customised solutions on the basis of lessons learned and to establish such a policy framework after all. This is in line with the findings in Chapter IV.

Implementation in policy begins with an evaluation of the experiences gained. According to Greevink, the planning process of a successful example such as Wollefoppengroen & Co was never properly documented, evaluated or monitored *.

"When the boroughs were abolished, people returned to the clusters, which meant that their knowledge became part of those clusters again. But we never evaluated in that way that we looked back to learn how to approach it."
- Jennie Greevink

The same applies to the other projects studied. If any form of monitoring took place, it was by the initiatives themselves, in their annual reports. According to Greevink, a better transfer of experience would be valuable for the municipal organisation. She believes this should be done through good documentation. Because people come and go. In the past, people stayed in the same place for a long time. Experience cannot be retained and passed on by the people who

** However, the project was included in the study into the social effects of urban agriculture Onze Oogst (Bronsveld, 2014), which was commissioned by the Urban Agriculture Think Tank, but this was a one-off assessment.*

work within the municipality, because staff turnover is too high. Initiators also experience this lack of memory within the government. *

"Nowadays (...) it's almost a hype; you stay somewhere for three or four years and then the main intention is that you move on to something else." "So I think the strength lies in recording everything somewhere and making it easy to find centrally." - Jennie Greevink

"The municipality has no long-term memory." - Ester Van de Wiel

At the same time, customisation is under pressure. According to Van Blijswijk, tailor-made solutions are simply too expensive. And that at a time when major cuts are being made to the municipal budget **. He believes that urban farming initiatives such as Rotterdamse Munt are relatively small projects that require just as much attention and energy as larger projects, but with added value for the city. It must be a political choice to opt for this; he himself has no way of influencing that. But his department is being given a different directive by politicians: they must work more efficiently; do more with fewer people.

"I don't think it has become any easier. In my opinion, we are making fewer and fewer exceptions. If an initiator such as Rotterdamse Munt were to come along now, they might find it more difficult to get things done." - Marcel van Blijswijk

The scope for initiatives is also diminishing because in recent years the municipality has focused primarily on risk prevention. There have been scandals in the recent past involving municipal investments in (social) real estate. So in recent years, the municipality has focused much more on control. This has led to a more uniform way of working, with less room for customisation.

This raises the question of whether control can be combined with customisation; a little more control here, a little less control in an urban agriculture project. Van Blijswijk refers to the principle of equality that the municipality adheres to.

*"The tendency of the government is to treat everyone equally ***. And that makes sense. Because that's what we have to do. So why should a smaller initiative have a different control mechanism than a larger initiative? We are mainly in favour of an equal approach. That means you control everyone in the same way." - Marcel van Blijswijk*

So unless you set up a whole system of rules to differentiate and substantiate differences, it is up to the civil servants involved to do this on their own responsibility where they deem it appropriate for the city. There are relevant differences can be formulated, also from a market perspective, but here too, it requires extra work to do so and the question is who is going to do it. Nevertheless, Van Bleiswijk does believe that the policy has been influenced by urban agriculture.

"Without these kinds of experiences, the policy would have been even less open in that sense. So I think it does influence policy, but you would want it to have much more influence. Or so I think." - Marcel van Blijswijk

** Based on my own experience, I can only confirm this. Civil servants come and go. And the council's website is inadequate as an archive due to regular revisions of the website structure.*

*** Within municipalities, it is known as 'ravijnjaar 2026': the 'ravine year' in which the planned cuts in central government funding for municipal authorities (funds from the so-called Gemeentefonds (Municipal Fund)) will be implemented, while they remain responsible for the same tasks. Initiatives and institutions that depend on local authority subsidies and contracts also view these cuts with great apprehension.*

**** This principle of equality is on the one hand, a fundamental democratic principle, but must also be seen here in the context of the municipality's Neoliberal orientation towards the free market. It concerns the role of the government in guaranteeing equal access to available resources and opportunities in that market.*

6.5 Action perspective for conceptualisations of planning

The action perspective taken by initiators was partly determined by the developments outlined here. In addition to the formal role that was strongly linked to the worldview and approach to urban agriculture, initiators chose different situated roles in relation to the circumstances in which they initiated, shaped and anchored their initiative. How did the initiators relate to the conceptualisations of planning of the Rotterdam planners? Did they recognise these and participate in them? Did they step into the same film (to paraphrase the planologist from Chapter IV, section 4.1.4)? You can see that the initiators tried in various ways to get a grip on the planning process and on the multi-headed municipal organisation that they encountered time and again. In doing so, they helped shape their own action perspective.

6.5.1 Interaction as role play

NGO representatives such as Van den Burg (Voedseltuin) and Bauman (Dakakker), but also a design professional such as Ackermans (Rotterdamse Munt) attempted to negotiate and position themselves based on their knowledge and understanding of the government. They presented themselves as professional partners of the government. With this attitude, they fitted into both a more Pragmatic and a Collaborative conceptualisation of planning. They were and are consistent in this role, and this was generally appreciated by civil servants.

Other initiators saw dealing with the municipality as a game in which you have to take on different roles at strategic moments to get things done. Some initiators enjoyed this more than others. De Groot (Uit Je Eigen Stad) found the negotiations with the municipality exhausting, but also describes how enjoyable it could be to tactically discuss with his colleagues who should be the 'good cop' and who should be the 'bad cop' in the next meeting with the municipality. Walkenbach (Wollefoppengroen & Co) visibly enjoys recounting how they persuaded the municipality to renovate the cycle paths in Wollefoppenpark, or how their initiative led to them becoming a client of the municipality. Breaking through traditional role divisions could contribute to a different balance of power. This could be uncomfortable for civil servants, but it could also sometimes free them from their own straitjacket. This playful action perspective particularly challenges the Rational conceptualisation of planning, but could also connect with planners who worked from a Pragmatic or even Neoliberal conceptualisation of planning.

For initiators, it could be liberating to realise that they could take on a different, more active role. This is also reflected in how Henneman refers to 'a nice trick' to describe how they managed to launch their first initiative together with residents. You could say that in such cases, the initiator took on the role of Advocacy planner.

Some initiators also saw confrontation as a constructive force that can bring about change. Biemans sees himself as the driving force behind what he considers to be a necessary dynamic when he says that he has to confront people, because otherwise he will 'simply be forgotten' and that he therefore 'has to hurt someone once in a while'. This more strategic interpretation of the role play could cause more friction, but it also offered the opportunity to gain new insights and redistribute roles. In principle, a Post-structuralist conceptualisation of planning should provide space for this, as should a Collaborative Planning as envisaged by Healey (see section 2.2.8).

6.5.2 Niches in the lee of planning

Another action perspective was to avoid interaction with municipal planning as much as possible. This could be motivated by both practical and ideological considerations. The former mainly wanted to avoid too much hassle and get on with the job. The latter saw government interference as an infringement on citizens' autonomy and was therefore critical of the Rational conceptualisation of planning. In doing so, these initiators (often unintentionally) aligned themselves with the Neoliberal conceptualisation of planning, as for example Uit Je Eigen Stad (From Your Own City) did. Many initiatives were started based on the idea that they would do something in places that were (temporarily) unused or underused. The crisis provided this space. Many gardens came and went on temporarily vacant land. However, in practice, all kinds of restrictions and rules emerged, especially when initiatives wanted to plan beyond the following year. In this way, Uit Je Eigen Stad ended up in a lengthy permit process and the Voedseltuin was asked to redesign itself. Both projects were incorporated into the story of Stadshavens in a Post-structuralist manner, but in their realisation they had to deal with the Pragmatic conceptualisations of planning, in which they were guided through the existing system by well-meaning civil servants.

Places that were not owned by the municipality but by housing corporations offered more freedom, as demonstrated by the NuHier and Stadslandbouw Schiebroek projects. However, when, as a result of the crisis, housing corporations such as Vestia ran into problems due to unsecured investments, the broad interpretation that housing corporations – usually with good intentions – gave to their social objectives was cast in a bad light. The housing corporations were forced by the state to focus on renting out homes, and support for urban agriculture declined.

6.5.3 Management as a Trojan horse

A special way to avoid interaction with planners is to focus on the management (rather than the design) of public space. The management of public space falls under the remit of the Cluster Stadsbeheheer (City Management). There is an inherent tension between design

and management in the sense that a design – in interaction with ideas and expectations about what public space should look like – creates the conditions for the extent and form of management and maintenance. Conversely, the choice of a particular form of management and maintenance determines whether and how a design 'manifests' itself. Van de Wiel quotes a manager who said: 'You have designers: they create a design, and we manage towards it.' By acquiring a position in this domain, initiators were able to realise and promote their ideas about the design of the city. By managing a piece of public space together with residents, an initiative could – in theory – achieve more at lower cost, increase support for the design and strengthen social cohesion in the neighbourhood. This idea was well received by civil servants and administrators in certain boroughs. As a result, it was possible to obtain resources and permission on the basis of support in the neighbourhood. The fact that a different, more inclusive form of management also represented a different vision of the city was – initially – less noticeable. In this way, management acted as a kind of Trojan horse for a different view of spatial planning. Here, too, traditional power relations were questioned, in this case the relationship between design on the one hand and management and implementation on the other. The ideal that city management ensures a healthy neighbourhood and that urban development supports this, as Biemans phrased it, puts the practice of living and working with urban nature centre stage.

Since 2014, the municipality of Rotterdam has been experimenting with inviting citizens to take on government tasks themselves through the so-called right-to-challenge and later (since 2020) also in the right-to-cooperate. This planning through management in collaboration with residents fits into a Post-structuralist conceptualisation of planning, in which new relationships are established between residents themselves and the urban ecosystem of which they are a part. Seen as the takeover of a government service by the private sector, it also fits into a Neoliberal conceptualisation of planning.

6.5.4 Initiative as a mirror and as an example

In practice, the way an initiative positioned itself was always a response to the government and how it approached the initiative. In this way, the initiative, whether intentionally or unintentionally, reflected the government's position. Initiatives that were invited to do so could play a constructive and inspiring role. If they encountered a lot of opposition, they became more activist or sought a place in the lee of planning. In this role play, an initiative could also present itself as an example and source of inspiration. Uit Je Eigen Stad presented itself as a European leader in the field of (commercial) urban agriculture. Dakakker set up a European network for urban agriculture on rooftops. The initiatives were often presented as examples of social entrepreneurship, as businesses, and/or as innovative forms of agriculture, but rarely as a different form of or perspective on planning.

Creatief Beheer is known nationally for its concept of Urban Medicine, but mainly in healthcare and social development circles. On a more modest level, Wollefoppengroen & Co was once invited by the Province to play itself in a role-playing game for provincial planners. In doing so, it contributed to self-reflection within the planning discipline. This role as a mirror fits well with Collaborative and Post-structuralist conceptualisations of planning.

In the context of the Stadshavens area development, Uit Je Eigen Stad and Voedseltuin were also framed as forms of placemaking that contributed to the identity formation of the area in the inbetween-time between the planning phase and implementation, by making a desired future visible *. As an example, they fit well into Collaborative and Post-Structuralist conceptualisations of planning and, insofar as the joint narrative contributes to the developer's image, it also fits into a Neoliberal conceptualisation of planning.

** One may wonder when 'place making' turns into 'place branding' and whether the future that is being enacted is desirable commercially or socially. In the case of Uit Je Eigen Stad in particular, the project seems to have gradually shifted from social to commercial.*

Chapter VII
Discussion en conclusions



7. 1 Key findings

7.1.1 Background of the thesis, objective and research questions

At a time when bottom-up civic initiatives are gaining more and more space and influence in urban design, it is relevant to look at what we can learn from practical experiences with the planning of and with these types of initiatives. How did policymakers, and more specifically spatial planners, and initiators interact with each other in the realisation of spatial interventions, such as the city gardens, allotments and farms that have been realised by urban agriculture initiatives? As part of the Rotterdam urban agriculture movement, I have seen at close quarters how this interaction was not always easy and often frustrating. And to this day, in my current work as part of an association uniting green initiatives and as member of a green workers'cooperative, I see that there are divergent expectations and perceptions on both sides of the joint process of making the city greener, more social and more sustainable. On the one hand, the disagreement is due to substantive differences of opinion about the scale, ambition and approach. But on the other hand, different ideas about the role of planning also play a role. About power relations and representation: who you are doing it for, who gets to have a say and with what resources. About how to deal with the widely felt need for change: do you take the legal route or that of public debate? Do you make a design or do you get straight to work? Civic initiatives introduce different ways of looking at these questions, which can enrich the discipline of spatial planning and challenge its principles from different angles. Is it possible, through a better understanding of these dynamics, to come up with proposals for improving the interaction between spatial planners and bottom-up initiatives with ideas for the design of public space? To investigate this, I have formulated three objectives:

1) To gain insight into the interaction between bottom-up initiatives and government planners in the planning and realisation of urban agriculture, and

2) the underlying views on planning that form the basis of this interaction and its results.

3) To draw lessons from this interaction and make proposals to improve it, thereby increasing the contribution of bottom-up initiatives to sustainable spatial planning in the city.

This has led to the following central research question:

How can bottom-up initiatives, with their diversity of worldviews and action perspectives for the city and the food system, contribute to sustainable spatial planning in the city?

An important background question is: What role do different ideas about planning play among planners and initiators in this regard?

This central research question was investigated on the basis of a case study at a specific location during a specific period: Rotterdam in the period 2006-2018, when an urban agriculture policy was developed by Stadsontwikkeling (Urban Development - the cluster that includes the planning department).

In this geographically and chronologically defined context, I studied how bottom-up civic initiatives in the field of food production in the city, or urban agriculture initiatives for short, influence the design of the city.

The dynamics between planners and related policymakers on the one hand and urban agriculture initiatives and their initiators on the other have been studied more frequently (Pellerey & Giezen, 2024; Jansma & Wertheim, 2024), but often the initiator is the object of planning and the emphasis is on what planners do and can do. This research investigates whether a more equal approach to both parties as actors in planning is possible and whether this offers starting points for better cooperation. To this end, I looked at how planners think about planning and the role of bottom-up initiatives, how initiators think about planning and the role of planners, how they subsequently act and interact, and how their respective claims to public space meet or clash.

The theoretical framework is based on the idea of a planning theory landscape with different approaches to planning (Allmendinger, 2017). These approaches are linked to different theoretical currents within planning and represent different ways of understanding planning: what planning is, what its role is and, important for this research, how it relates to different civic actors. Where these directions seem to compete with each other in planning theory, they exist as complementary schools of thought alongside each other in planning practice (Allmendinger, 2017). These schools of thought are referred to in this research as conceptualisations of planning. In the context of this research, I first examined how these conceptualisations of planning relate to bottom-up civic initiatives. Secondly, I looked at the role of urban agriculture in the theoretical discussion about urban food planning and planning with bottom-up civic initiatives. From the literature on planning for and with bottom-up initiatives I derived guiding concepts for analysing the interaction between planners and initiators.

7.1.2 Development of conceptualisations of planning in relation to the emergence of bottom-up urban agriculture initiatives

On this basis, in Chapter IV I investigated the sub-question: How do municipal planners understand and conceptualise spatial planning and how does this influence the planning of urban agriculture in practice? And the background questions: Which conceptualisations of planning are used in spatial planning in Rotterdam and what is the role of bottom-up urban agriculture initiatives and other civic actors in these conceptualisations? (Chapter IV)

In response to the second part of this question, I have shown that the different conceptualisations of planning can be found in the way planners talk and think about planning in general and in their thinking about the planning of civic initiatives in particular. From the Rational conceptualisation that formed the basis of the discipline in the last century, in which civic actors are the object of analysis and solution by the planner-expert, via Neoliberal Planning, which focuses on the market and companies as civic actors, and Pragmatic Planning, in which citizens are allowed to participate as local experts, to recent conceptualisations of planning in which civic actors are seen as equal partners in arriving at a shared truth (Collaborative Planning) or as co-creators of one or more shared narratives (Post-Structuralist Planning).

During the period under review (2006-2018), there was a development in conceptualisation in relation to societal developments, in which the latter conceptualisations seemed to gain influence, partly under the influence of the economic crisis. Urban agriculture also played a role in the development of this thinking.

The municipal structure is still based on the Rational conceptualisation of planning in its way of organising and accounting for the planning process. That is why it is not simply disappearing and its influence can still be found in spatial planning practice in Rotterdam. In addition, the influence of the market thinking of the 1980s is visible in this structure, for example in the way in which the planning department is financed on the basis of property income. In this Neoliberal conceptualisation of planning, civic actors are seen as customers or companies. When new conceptualisations of planning (with a more inclusive approach to civic actors) emerged from 2005 onwards, they tended to coexist alongside existing conceptualisations rather than replace them. This led to internal friction within the municipality between the organisational structure and existing policy on the one hand and the practice of planners who wanted to work more closely with civic actors on the other. These planners therefore often fell back on a Pragmatic conceptualisation of planning in which they tried to create space within the existing system with tailor-made solutions that were not yet or only informally in place in terms of policy.

As a result, the application of these conceptualisations in practice was not consistent but pragmatic and opportunistic (not necessarily meant here with a negative connotation). This led to uncertainty among civic actors about the role and intentions of the municipality, and about what it can and cannot and will and will not do.

The analysis of the rise and fall of municipal urban agriculture policy and the handling of urban agriculture initiatives in the period 2006-2018 confirms this picture. The analysis shows that this policy came about under the influence of grassroots movements combined with the economic crisis of 2008. It also shows that, despite the efforts of the councillor and officials from the spatial planning department and other departments within the municipality, the urban agriculture

policy never really took off. This had structural causes related to the organisational structure of the municipality, but also to the relatively limited importance attached to urban agriculture within the council and within the organisation in relation to other policy objectives, especially after the crisis came to an end in 2014.

The financial crisis of 2008 largely halted the construction of new projects. The removal of market pressure on planning created space for initiatives from society that – temporarily – took the place of market parties, including many urban agriculture initiatives. The municipality saw an opportunity to experiment with the idea of an enabling state and new/different conceptualisations of planning that embraced and supported these initiatives. Civic initiatives were facilitated both in rural areas and in the city. This facilitation included a range of measures that were primarily intended to create the right conditions for the initiatives to develop on their own. This different approach combined elements of Collaborative and Post-structuralist planning in its aim to take grassroots initiatives seriously and to use them to create new narratives for the city. At the same time, the approach to support was Neoliberal in its emphasis on facilitating initiatives (amongst others by creating the right preconditions) to stand on their own two feet and develop business models within the existing economy.

In practice, old and new conceptualisations were intertwined in the implementation of urban agriculture policy. Particularly in the city, with its complex accumulation of space claims, some of the planners involved shied away from the consequences of new conceptualisations of planning for their own position and for the functioning of the current system. Real questions about responsibility and liability, support and representation played a role in this. But the involvement of other civic actors also undermined the authority and thus the self-image of the planner as an expert. Initiators were therefore only accepted as equal partners to a certain extent.

Looking back, the planners interviewed did see a lasting influence on municipal policy, particularly in programmes focusing on green spaces and climate adaptation. These programmes have been running from 2018/2020 to the present day and are working towards the realisation of their policy goals (20 hectares of green space, a more climate-adaptive Rotterdam) in collaboration with civic green initiatives (including edible green initiatives, as they are now called).

7.1.3 The bottom-up perspective on planning urban agriculture initiatives

The perspective of the initiators was further investigated in Chapter V on the basis of sub-question 2: How do bottom-up citizen initiatives for urban agriculture understand and conceptualise the spatial planning of their initiative and their role in it?

For an equal approach to initiators in the planning process, it is relevant and perhaps even necessary to take these civic actors seriously as planners. That is why I mapped out the ideas of initiators about the planning and design of the city and analysed how these ideas were reflected in the action perspective that initiators chose and the strategies they applied in the realisation of their initiative.

The initiator's worldview was often strongly linked to the development and design of the initiative's practice. These urban agriculture initiatives put ideals into practice.

The precise definition of urban agriculture, and especially the expectation of what urban agriculture can contribute to the city, varied greatly among initiators. These expectations translated into different ambitions for what the initiative wanted to achieve in the field of spatial planning: from establishing the initiative's right to be there, through recognition of urban agriculture as a category of spatial design, to changes in the system of spatial planning and urban design.

These differences in definition and ambition could often friendly coexist and were sometimes complementary, like a range of possibilities, but sometimes ideas could also conflict *. This pluralism and diversity of voices was an essential part of the urban agriculture movement in Rotterdam from 2006 to 2018. The underlying differences posed a challenge to the consensus-seeking practice of spatial planners (whether they determined this consensus as experts from a top-down Rational perspective or tried to achieve it in consultation with civic actors through Collaborative means).

** And these ideas could sometimes compete for the attention of policymakers and claim a share of the scarce budget.*

These differences manifested themselves in the practice of urban agriculture, as well. Each initiative translated its worldview into 'the practice of planning' an urban agriculture project, in which goals were made concrete and converted into action perspectives and planning strategies. In this study, an action perspective is defined on the basis of the role or roles that initiators assume. The initiatives studied assumed both formal roles and informal, more situational, place- and time-specific roles. In practice, initiators also switched flexibly between these roles **. Formal roles were based on the chosen organisational form that positioned the initiative in relation to the municipality: as (representative of) an NGO, as a (social) entrepreneur, as an active citizen or as a design professional. This classification is not set in stone, but defines four positions that say something about how the initiators saw themselves and how they were seen and treated by the municipality. The importance of the worldview for the initiators differed between roles. Roughly speaking, citizens were more focused on their own local interests, NGO representatives saw themselves as executors of the NGO's mission, while design professionals and social entrepreneurs more often expressed a personal, professional vision of the city and the role of urban agriculture in it.

*** On rare occasions, civil servants also switched between roles as citizens, volunteers and policymakers, as was the case with Wollefoppengroen & Co.*

In addition to these formal roles, initiators made use of more situational, place- and time-specific roles that they assumed as part of certain strategies. It was part of the experimental and creative nature

of these bottom-up initiatives that they also acted self-consciously and sometimes playfully in their interactions with the government. Initiators could charm, disrupt or provoke, and sometimes did so deliberately.

The planning strategies used by initiators can be divided into three phases of the planning process of an initiative: 1) gaining access to land (Initiate); 2) setting up the project from design to regular maintenance (Shape), and 3) ensuring the project's survival (Anchor). In each phase, an initiative employed one or more strategies. I mapped these strategies and analysed them for patterns. The strategies for Initiating and Shaping showed a range that can be roughly classified from formal to informal. Although diversity prevails, the differences can largely be traced back to a combination of the action perspective and the location- and time-related circumstances. There are also clear differences between initiatives that take a more formal, legal route in interaction with municipal planners and initiatives that operate more in the background of the planning process and apply more informal strategies.

Urban agriculture planning practice, and in particular the action perspective and strategies chosen by initiators of urban agriculture initiatives, determined how these initiatives fitted into different conceptualisations of planning. The choices made by initiators in this regard therefore had a (major) influence on how the interaction between the initiative and the municipality proceeded.

In a number of cases, initiators withdrew from the municipal conceptualisations of planning, or at least attempted to do so, and presented their own ideas about the role of planning. These could be labelled as alternative conceptualisations of planning, but they withdraw from the dialogue of ideas that characterise the conceptualisations formulated in Chapter II on the basis of planning theory trends. Nevertheless, they did express a relevant critique of existing conceptualisations of planning (and, for those who understand, they do engage in dialogue with them). The examples from section 5.5.1 illustrate this nicely. Creatief Beheer put forward the idea that planning of public space should serve the practice of socio-ecological management and focus more on enabling ecological processes than on shaping or steering these processes. This seemingly simple idea undermined the municipal management practice at the time * and the division of roles in which the planning department within Urban Design & Planning acts as the designer of public outdoor space, the Ingenieursbureau (Projectmanagement & Engineering) implements it and Stadsbeheer (City Management) manages and maintains it. And Groengoed explicitly gives that management a productive character, in which food is produced collectively **.

The ambition to change the system itself varied from initiative to initiative. Most initiatives tried to carve out a place for themselves or for urban agriculture as an urban function within the existing order (although that did not necessarily rule out greater ambitions).

** A management practice that continues to this day*

*** Broadly speaking, you could say that the idea that public space is not only a space for consumption but also a productive space forms the basis for urban agriculture as an act of planning*

The ideas of urban agriculture initiators offered interesting insights into urban planning, which were critical of the plans and ideas of municipal planning and – sometimes – also of the conceptualisations of planning within the municipality. This argues in favour of taking initiators seriously as bottom-up planners, even or especially if they adopt a critical or activist stance. It is precisely the diversity of approaches in urban agriculture practice that offers creative potential; an experimental laboratory from which lessons can be learned. Their unique contribution consists of testing different ideas in practice. These ideas are developed and adapted and, if successful, embedded in that practice.*** The experience and knowledge this yields complements that of the municipality and its planning department.

*** *On the one hand, in the practices of the initiatives themselves. On the other hand, the influence of alternative management and the ways in which this can be organised on municipal planning and urban management is subtle but undeniable.*

7.1.4 The interaction between municipal planners and initiators

In Chapter IV and V, the perspectives of planners and initiators respectively were examined and analysed. However, the practical significance of their conceptualisations of planning and ways of thinking only becomes clear when we examine Sub-question 3 in more detail: How do the views on planning of municipal planners and bottom-up initiators and the strategies they use relate to each other, and do they converge or clash when it comes to the realisation of urban agriculture initiatives?

If we take a closer look at individual projects/initiatives, we see how the factors described in the answers to sub-questions 1 and 2 came together in varying combinations and influenced the interaction between municipal spatial planning and civic initiatives.

The planners and other civil servants involved in the creation of urban agriculture initiatives operated in a field of tension between planning policy and unruly practice. A small group of planners, with the support of the councillor, initiated new policy, or rather the ambition and narratives that were to lead to new policy, and the people on the ground, often project managers, area managers or members of a neighbourhood team, had to realise those ambitions.

The municipality was involved in urban agriculture in various capacities, as a catalyst, a permits authority and an enforcer, and in those various capacities it created various barriers, sometimes contradicting the policy intention to facilitate urban agriculture. In doing so, civil servants sometimes acted as guides and sometimes as gatekeepers. The guide often adopted a pragmatic, solution-oriented attitude. Gatekeepers often manifested themselves as executors of a Rational or Neoliberal Planning agenda. This made the personal involvement of planners and other civil servants involved crucially important. However, this meant that the municipality's position towards civic initiatives was not very transparent or predictable. Sometimes an initiative was approached as a business or consumer from a Neoliberal market-driven perspective. Other times, an initiative was embraced as a co-creator of a shared narrative. Sometimes an initiative

experienced both approaches in its dealings with different municipal authorities.

A tailor-made approach was needed to manage this effectively, but in practice this remained stuck in an ad hoc approach, without any policy implementation.

The initiators sought and found ways to deal with this sometimes enthusiastic but always inconsistent government. They actively engaged with different conceptualisations of planning and adapted their action perspective – as far as possible – by applying different strategies and associated situational, place- and time-specific roles.

They approached their interaction with planners as a role play; they played 'good cop, bad cop'; they sought out sheltered areas where they could withdraw from planning interference as much as possible; they secured themselves a position in the management of public space as neighbourhood connectors and influenced planning from there, or they offered a mirror to the municipal authorities as a kind of coach or court jester. With situated roles, they reinforced these strategies to create space for their action perspective. These roles were used to break through, question or supplement formal connections – 'the system'.

An interesting observation is that the initiatives that were facilitated more by planners conformed more strongly to more traditional planning strategies than other initiatives. And it was also these initiatives that the interviewed planners remembered when looking back on the period, even if they themselves were not involved in their creation.

7.2 Discussion

How can bottom-up initiatives, with their diversity of worldviews and action perspectives for the city and/or food system, contribute to sustainable spatial planning for the city? What role do different ideas about planning among planners and initiators have in this regard? Or to put it differently, which conceptualisations of planning are relevant for planners and initiators to achieve this?

The answer to this central research question lies partly in the answer to the fourth and final sub-question: What lessons for planning can we learn from this interaction between government planning and bottom-up initiatives, and how can these lessons contribute to the effective involvement of bottom-up initiatives in the sustainable spatial planning of the city?

The Rotterdam 2006-2018 case study shows that interaction between municipal planning and bottom-up initiatives is determined both by the diversity of worldviews and action perspectives of the initiatives, as well as by the ways of thinking about planning with and for bottom-up initiatives within the municipality. A better understanding of this diversity and pluralism and a more complete picture of the whole is an important prerequisite for realising the potential of these initiatives, and for developing conceptualisations of planning that can support this through other ways of planning. Subsection 7.2.1 discusses the importance of the diversity of worldviews and action perspectives in the contribution of urban agriculture to municipal planning. Subsection 7.2.2 reflects on how the municipality deals with this pluralism in planning for and with bottom-up initiatives. In 7.2.3, I discuss what conceptualisations of planning may be relevant in this light, and in 7.2.4, I look at these conceptualisations from the bottom up and highlight the role and responsibility of bottom-up initiatives. Section 7.3 reflects on this discussion in relation to planning theory.

7.2.1 The pluralistic contribution of urban agriculture initiatives

The Rotterdam 2006-2018 case study not only shows that there is a great diversity in the ways in which initiatives interact with planning, but also that there is a system to this diversity. If you compare the initiatives side by side, you can see differences in the way each initiative makes connections that give each initiative a unique character. Worldview is an important motivator for initiatives. Locally produced food plays a role in all initiatives, but there is great variation in ambition, thinking and implementation. This pluralism is a strength. Even though not every way of thinking is equally promising or successful, every worldview contains the ambition to make the world a better place than it is; an ambition that the initiatives share with the planning discipline.

In order to deal with this diversity, planners need to understand how initiatives translate their worldview(s) into an action perspective:

what roles the initiators assume and what strategies they use. What these initiatives need (in terms of support, funding, preconditions (rules and requirements) from the government, etc.) depends on their role (from citizen to social entrepreneur) and the associated form of organisation and funding. To appreciate and include the diversity of initiatives in a constructive way in planning, planners need to conceptualise planning anew.

There are four distinct action perspectives, each representing a different attitude towards the government:

- the active citizen: who claims the right as a citizen to help shape their living environment;

- the social entrepreneur who likes to pursue social and green goals independently;

- the design professional who engages in professional dialogue about planning; and

- the NGO representative, who moves flexibly and diplomatically in the circles of policymakers.

This distinction is important to the initiator, but is not always clearly understood by the municipality. The same applies to other authorities, charitable institutions, housing corporations and similar organisations that are involved in these initiatives. It should also be noted that these are not exclusive categories and that initiators sometimes take on multiple roles (simultaneously or over time).

The strategies they apply and the informal, time- and location-specific roles they assume in this context are often a response to municipal policy and the attitude of the planning department, and thus hold up a mirror to the government. They identify and raise social and political dilemmas and challenges. They invite the government to reflect on these dilemmas and to engage in dialogue with its citizens about them, rather than sweeping them under the carpet or depoliticising them. And they propose unconventional solutions and 'live them' in their projects.

The plurality of worldviews and action perspectives in bottom-up urban agriculture initiatives translates into a diversity of ways in which they intervene in and contribute to urban planning. These contributions take place on three levels:

1) Physical-spatial: initiatives make physical interventions. They initiate and realise new public and semi-public green designs for outdoor spaces, often temporary but sometimes also (semi)permanent. With these designs, they introduce food production as a function in the city's public outdoor space, and in its wake also a place for social interaction and knowledge exchange.

2) Professional: initiatives influence the image, idea and expectations of what an urban green public space is and what it should be capable of. In doing so, they develop other ways of planning that space bottom-up, from idea to realisation.

3) Political and societal: initiatives question the principles on which we as a society base the design of space. Developing different ways of planning public outdoor space creates different possibilities for use, different definitions of the common good, and different ideas about the economy. The initiatives studied introduce their own social codes within the boundaries of their project, different manners, different rules of conduct and conditions of use of the space, and distribution of the garden's yield. In doing so, they often implicitly criticise prevailing social rules and norms. This also gives the initiatives a political dimension.

In the design of parts of the public outdoor space by bottom-up initiatives, spatial, professional and political choices about the design of the city are made visible and open to discussion. In this context, food supply is sometimes, but by no means always, the political theme. It is a broadening of the societal debate with spatial means. From this perspective, it is important to give this diversity, this pluralism, a place in the city, quite apart from the social and cultural contributions that these initiatives also make.

It is striking that municipal planning often resulted in more conventional and conformist strategies for initiating and shaping an initiative. In other words, interaction with planning had a conformist effect, because existing planning rules had to be complied with, even in experimental, low-regulation zones.

7.2.2 Dealing with pluralism from the bottom up: a parallel municipal planning reality

The Rotterdam 2006-2018 case study shows how a municipality sought ways to incorporate the emergence of urban agriculture initiatives into the city's planning. The way in which the municipal planning department dealt with bottom-up urban agriculture initiatives was not straightforward, as shown by the study, thus confirming and enriching the picture painted by Bronsveld in 2016 of the bottom-up perspective of initiators in the outdoor space (Bronsveld, 2016). The reasons for this lie in the tension between the organisational structure of the municipality and existing policy frameworks and planning practice on the one hand, and innovative policy intentions in the field of urban agriculture on the other. The diversity of the urban agriculture initiatives themselves also played a role. The ways in which planners dealt with this reveal different conceptualisations of planning that coexist within the municipality.

A unique coalition of planners and policy officials formed around urban agriculture, both within the Think Tank and beyond. Representatives of the planologists and designers (the two main groups within the planning department) worked together and also involved representatives from other departments in the social, executive and administrative domains. A closer examination of the development of a number of projects in Chapter VI also highlighted the role of area

managers and process managers: professionals with varying backgrounds (from planology to social sciences) who supervised the processes in which urban agriculture initiatives were facilitated. Much of the ability to facilitate initiatives lay in the degree of involvement and autonomy of these civil servants and the freedom they dared to take within the municipal system, as well as the leeway they were given (or managed to fight for) by their management. That leeway seemed to exist on the margins of business as usual in the 'Cluster Stadsontwikkeling' (Urban Development Cluster) which consisted of implementing existing policy and developing top-down views on new developments.

Around the crisis of 2008-2014, a number of developments converged that paved the way for a different approach to planning, partly out of conviction and partly forced by circumstances. The crisis was a disruption that destabilised the system, creating space for niches to develop. The space that emerged for experimentation in urban planning was filled by planners and initiators in different ways and with different expectations. Many initiators hoped that this would be the beginning of a transition, but the case study shows a more mixed picture. The economy recovered and 'the project world started up again', as one of the initiators interviewed said. Municipal planners were part of that project world and moved with this dynamic. In the eyes of the initiators, 'business as usual' took over again and the space and interest for urban agriculture initiatives declined once more.

At the same time, however, looking back from today's perspective, it is clear that bottom-up urban agriculture initiatives are no longer 'strangers to Rotterdam's municipal planning' (to paraphrase Pothukuchi & Kaufman (2000)). This is reflected in different ways of thinking about planning among the planners involved. Theoretical conceptualisations of planning that make more room for the involvement and agency of bottom-up civic initiatives can be recognised in the way they look back on the period 2006-2018.

Seen from the present, both planners' thinking about planning, their conceptualisations of planning, and the interaction between planners and initiators have undergone a development, but in the period under review it was still very much pioneering work. The experiment that was urban agriculture planning in Rotterdam took place – in the case of inner-city urban agriculture – largely outside or alongside the existing structures of the municipality, sometimes even in the civil servants' own time. The practice of planning urban agriculture initiatives largely preceded the development of policy, and the policy that was laid down was only partially implemented, without taking into account the lessons learned from practice.

One could say that an 'alternative planning future' was played out, a form of prefiguration of a different way of planning, which existed alongside current policy. In this parallel planning reality, Collaborative and Post-structuralist conceptualisations of planning were experimented with in order to get to grips with the diversity and plurality of initiatives. However, it was not possible to break away from

the Rational and Neoliberal perspective that attempts to capture the contribution of initiatives in financial terms of yield, revenue model and aesthetic terms of final image and tidiness. The tension between the two had to be constantly mediated by the planners involved, who often adopted a Pragmatic attitude in the implementation of policy, focusing on the here and now and less on a bigger picture or long-term vision. The way in which the municipality facilitated initiatives both encouraged and inhibited their innovative character.

This parallel reality continues to exist to this day. On the one hand, a different approach to bottom-up initiatives in the city has resulted in programmes for public green space, sustainability and climate adaptation, but on the other hand, the planning instruments and the system in which they operate have not yet been adapted or brought into line with this.

7.2.3 Discussion of relevant conceptualisations of planning for urban agriculture: navigating the alternative planning reality

The lessons learned from Rotterdam 2006-2018 can be translated in a number of ways into more consistent and targeted planning of and with urban agriculture initiatives. If we test the insights from the case study against the theory from Chapter 2 and the conceptualisations of planning discussed there, we see a number of possible lines of thought, each with their own challenges and dilemmas.

The municipal organisation of Rotterdam is a tanker that cannot simply change course, as this case study shows. But under the right circumstances, meaningful changes can be implemented, as demonstrated by the regional urban agriculture policy. This change in policy led to the current focus on urban-oriented agriculture in the outskirts of the municipality, which is being developed in collaboration with nature conservancy and land manangement organisation Natuurmonumenten. This Collaborative effort succeeded largely through the influence of the interregional governance entity City Region, which could be considered Post-Political as it displaced decision-making outside democratic municipal control.

In the city, conditions were somewhat less favourable, despite the opportunities offered by the crisis, or perhaps because of other interests being greater and more conflicting with urban agriculture. Nevertheless, there have been a number of interesting developments there too, thanks to and sometimes despite the municipality. Taking a sober view, we can conclude that changes are slow, that there will be friction in the municipality between those who are moving forward and those who are stuck, or even working against it, and that urban agriculture initiatives, like any bottom-up initiative, will have to settle for a smaller role within larger considerations about the future of the city. But even a small initiative can have a big impact, and this case study offers a number of starting points for better supporting this impact through planning.

7.2.3.1 Rotterdam conceptualisations of planning as a given?

The analysis of Rotterdam conceptualisations of planning shows that there is a series of conceptualisations that coexist and that each of these conceptualisations is relevant in certain circumstances and can be found in the thinking of planners and in the structure of the municipality, the institutional context. The research has also shown that some ways of thinking offer more freedom for engaging bottom-up initiatives in planning, but also that each conceptualisation has a raison d'être in practice and is therefore practically unavoidable. Planners must relate to all these conceptualisations in their daily practice and navigate between them. While doing so, they should also make explicit the friction that arises from this, both internally within the municipal organisation and externally towards initiatives. Urban agriculture initiatives represent a new type of actor on the urban planning stage that intervenes in the planning of the city and takes a critical stance towards a number of the prevailing conceptualisations of planning and the societal values and systems they represent. This requires planners to be more conscious of these different conceptualisations and their own role in them; a critical awareness of their position as planners and clarity towards initiators about the possibilities and limitations of that position. This opens the door to a (more) equal collaboration in which the planner can work with initiators to see how both positions can support each other.

The innovative and future-oriented nature of bottom-up initiatives from a transition perspective labels them as niches. From this perspective it would seem logical to approach the planning of bottom-up urban agriculture initiatives as a form of niche management. If we look at the municipality of Rotterdam's involvement in urban agriculture from that perspective, we see that the goals and means of this niche management were not very clear. Its objective should be linked to a vision of the role of food and green space in the city. A spatial vision on food (production) in the city was largely left to civic actors, based on a combination of Neoliberal laissez-faire and Collaborative openness. At the same time, the municipal planning department maintained existing barriers to initiatives that wanted something that did not fit in with the planning department's vision of green space, or that questioned its own role in the design and realisation thereof. On the other hand, experiments with other forms of management and design were encouraged, either out of a Collaborative ambition to work with citizens and develop a shared vision, or out of a Post-structuralist interest in civic initiatives as an essential link in a relational approach to complex tasks. Through the lens of Savini and Bertollini, we can observe a 'politics of niches' in this; By choosing to support initiatives that fit into the planners' existing agenda, such as Wollefoppengroen & Co, Uit Je Eigen Stad and Rotterdamse Munt, while initiatives that questioned that agenda (such as Creatief Beheer and Groengoed) or were not quite in the right place at the right time were ignored, part of the potential of urban agriculture remained untapped.

It is unlikely that this was intentional. Rather, it is an indication of the persistence of Rational and Neoliberal frameworks in which certain projects were better suited than others. In any case, the municipal planning department fell back on its role as an objective, professional expert. It could be argued that the existing agenda, which arose from policies developed on behalf of democratically elected administrators and developed by planning experts, is the most objective guideline for deciding who to support and who not to support – and institutionally speaking, this is still the status quo – but that objectivity is called into question in this study, following the planning theory discourse as described in Chapter II. The contribution of bottom-up initiatives have a democratic value, albeit a different one than representative democracy (Visscher et al, 2023. Therefore, when initiatives put something on the agenda, this requires a serious response and, in the first instance, a sympathetic ear and openness to other perspectives on planning, even if they do not come from professional planners. In this sense, Wollefoppengroen & Co is also a good example of planning urban agriculture, however difficult it may have been in practice. If you want to do more justice to the pluralistic reality in which every truth is subjective, without falling into a postmodern, relativistic indifference, then involving urban initiatives in all their pluralistic and recalcitrant diversity and with all their creative, unorthodox and sometimes naive ideas is a democratic task.

If we look at the involvement of municipal planners in urban agriculture (in the city) from this perspective, we see that a number of projects have been actively supported in the expectation that these projects could develop a business model based on food production and thus grow from niche to mainstream/regime, forming a profitable alternative to current forms of green management. The contribution of these initiatives to social, cultural and ecological policy objectives was recognised and praised, but a financing mechanism within the municipality that converts this contribution into financial compensation to get that business model up and running has so far proved to be a bridge too far. Initiatives that were unable to survive financially, such as Uit Je Eigen Stad, have ceased to exist and have almost been forgotten, even though there is much to be learned from their failure.

The observation that most urban agriculture initiatives do not have a viable business model fails to recognise that this is not feasible due to their idealistic and sometimes prefigurative nature. At best, society will develop towards the future envisaged by the initiative, and then a viable business model may emerge. However, the value of the prefigurative niche lies not so much in its potential return on investment but in its criticism of the existing situation, in demonstrating that a different future is possible (Davoudi, 2023), and in the promise that this enactment might gain knowledge and insights that are valuable in unforeseen future circumstances (Savini et al, 2022). And, of course, in the social, cultural and ecological value in the here and now, including hope, even or especially if this cannot be valued financially. Support for urban agriculture initiatives should therefore

not be measured by their chances of success as a business, but – in addition to their social, cultural and ecological value – by their ability to make possibilities plausible within relevant future scenarios and to develop experience and skills that are relevant and necessary in such a possible future (and which are not being developed in the current context). To which Bertolini (2025) would add that prefigurations also explore what we can not know to be relevant, yet. The Neoliberal perspective of the business model, with the urban agriculture initiative as a business, stands in the way of public funding that covers the costs of the initiatives and values and pays for services that society considers important.

7.2.3.2 Prefigurative planning or adaptive planning of conditions for prefiguration

The prefigurative value of urban agriculture initiatives has been underexposed until now, at least as a factor that – in addition to the social, cultural and ecological value that initiatives have in the here and now – must be taken into account and can even be guided by municipal planning (Davoudi, 2023, Bertolini, 2025). From the perspective of the field of planning, it is an important challenge to address this because it touches on the question of how the field remains relevant in a pluralistic, complex society threatened by crises in the areas of climate, inequality and sustainability and the underlying question of how this will change our lives (Savini et al, 2022). Prefigurative planning can be conceptualised as planning aimed at strengthening the resilience of a city by realising and testing possible futures (Tornaghi & Dehaene, 2020; Davoudi, 2023). Urban agriculture initiatives can play an important role in this, and indeed already do, as Tornaghi and Dehaene argue, but they are not always seen in this light, let alone approached in this way in planning. By consciously making room and planning for initiatives that explore possible futures for the city, municipal planning can gain valuable knowledge. Initiatives that are critical of the current system should also – and indeed must – be given the opportunity to develop. This does not necessarily have to be through government funding, although there is something to be said for this if they provide clearly definable public services in the here and now. However, removing contradictory rules and obligations and providing a certain degree of certainty in the form of a clear policy framework would already constitute a good basis.

From this point of view, it is more important to manage the space for experimentation, i.e. to set the framework within which it takes place and leave its implementation to the initiators. The boundaries of the niche – between the prefiguration and today's reality – must be safeguarded. Where do the current rules apply and where is an exception desirable? And the role of the government in this must be transparent. When is the municipality the facilitator of the experiment that explores other worlds with other values, and when is it the reliable government that enforces the rules? This requires a vision at a more abstract level than that of the individual project. In this approach,

the frameworks in which initiatives are created are determined and not everything is controlled in detail. Adaptive planning (Rauws & de Roo, 2016) offers starting points for this. This conceptualisation of planning is based on the idea that if you create the right conditions, by supplying a general framework(Rauws, 2017; Moroni et al, 2020), you create room in which forms of self-organisation can develop that contribute to the resilience of the city. For example, by applying the same rules to all urban agriculture initiatives (access to land, land use and land conservation and management) in combination with making land available. A basic reimbursement of expenses such as rent and organisational costs without heavy accountability afterwards, as mentioned by several interviewees, would also fit in here. However, waiving this accountability is at odds with the controls imposed by the standards of the system world, which are laid down in regulations on good governance and financial management. Urban agriculture initiatives are difficult to capture in models used by the Rekenkamer (Audit Office)*, as one of the planners interviewed pointed out. This approach therefore requires trust and a certain tolerance for deviations from the quality standards that the municipality itself has formulated for public spaces. The involvement of municipal planners in Wollefoppengroen&Co shows how difficult this is. Here, the process of realisation of this residents' initiative including their role as clients was controlled, micro-managed and monitored down to the level of choosing the litter bin.

** The Rotterdam Audit Office investigates the efficiency, effectiveness and legitimacy of municipal policy in Rotterdam.*

7.2.3.3 Tailor-made mosaic: possibilities and limitations

In addition to the dilemma between control and trust, there is also a tension between the aforementioned principle of equality (equal treatment and equal access to (government) resources) and a need for differentiation, for tailor-made solutions for initiatives that make a special contribution (as mentioned in the Food & the City policy document). A tailor-made approach to initiatives does justice to the specific character of each initiative, because you create a customised process for that one initiative in that particular place and at that specific moment. This fits in with a Post-structuralist conceptualisation of planning in which different narratives are developed with initiatives and their initiators. Mosaic governance (Buijs et al., 2019); a mosaic of tailor-made administrative arrangements, proposes a more dynamic, incremental and adaptive planning approach alongside the Rational logic of strategic planning – to accommodate the Collaborative, place-based logic of bottom-up initiatives. In a sense, mosaic governance describes the current practice of urban agriculture planning in Rotterdam, with the essential difference that it was not guided by a vision; there is no central control from municipal planning that deliberately applies the various approaches in a location-specific manner. Experiments have been conducted with differences in the way actors are dealt with (Buijs et al., 2019), from citizens to subcontractors to clients; (the way in which) resources are made available, such as access to land and means (forms of financial or material support);

the rules of the game (e.g. with a low-regulation zone) and the way in which the dialogue between the government and initiatives is conducted (discourse). However, no conclusions have been drawn about the appropriate form(s) of governance. The research shows that the time- and location-specific combination of the place, the initiative, its ambitions and the municipal policy objectives can lead to various successful solutions. However, the lessons learned from various – sometimes successful – approaches that have been tried out in Rotterdam have not been recorded and incorporated into policy.

There also seems to be little room for this in the existing Rational municipal structure. Considering the tension between this structure and the parallel reality of new inclusive conceptualisations of planning, the direction and vision should come from a planning actor who knows how to navigate this tension. One could think of a curator who can act as a representative and guardian of a shared vision, developed in consultation with bottom-up initiatives. A civil servant with personal commitment and a clear mandate to colour outside the lines if necessary. Within the framework of such a jointly developed vision, the municipality can work together with urban agriculture initiatives on shared goals over the longer term. This does require a shift in emphasis from means to ends. Prescribing the use of certain means is an expression of the accountability and control culture that has gained importance under the influence of New Public Management, and which manifests itself in regulations for litter bins, such as those encountered by the Wollefoppengroen & Co initiative. These kinds of requirements are easy to monitor, unlike a broader objective such as a clean outdoor space. But you could leave the responsibility for that objective to an initiative. However, that is a lot more complicated for the government. It requires more trust. *

In addition to this programmatic space, physical space is also needed, which could be provided in the form of a 'permanent temporary space' that can move with the needs of the city and thus contribute to urban resilience. More and more planners are advocating such unplanned space for future needs, particularly in the context of climate adaptation (Roggema, 2017).

A curator could also play a role in developing (and maintaining) a municipal memory and a more nuanced image of (urban agriculture) initiators; an image that takes into account the differences in intentions and ambitions, and the formal and informal roles they assume. Sometimes a citizen is simply a committed citizen, but sometimes they are also a professional with relevant knowledge and experience. Describing these initiators as citizens does not do justice to their knowledge and experience. Approaching them as a business ignores their idealism and the inherently unpaid value for the future that they are trying to create. The irony is that in Rotterdam, the memory lies with the initiators, who have often been working for 15 to 20 years, while civil servants move to another position within or outside the municipality every few years. This mobility within the municipal apparatus is problematic. In positions where contact with and

** The municipality is experimenting with this through arrangements such as the 'right to challenge' and, more recently, the 'right to cooperate'. Also, initiatives such as Creatief Beheer and Groengoed receive funding from the municipal budget for maintenance of public space 'Clean, intact and safe' as part of their management budget.*

knowledge of various civic actors (citizens, initiatives, local businesses, civic organisations, etc.) is essential, knowledge, a network and trust are built up that are difficult to transfer *.

** In any case, not without careful, personal transfer and a transition period, and often not enough time is taken for this transfer.*

A tailor-made mosaic approach might do justice to the diversity of urban agriculture initiatives and the different ways in which they can contribute to the city and municipal policy objectives for that city. However, it does require a change in the working culture within the municipality because it demands a long-term commitment from those involved. A disadvantage of a tailor-made mosaic approach is that customisation takes more time and can be difficult to justify legally. Moreover, it requires good communication and coordination with initiatives in order to justify the differences in approach per initiative. Finally, it is important to remain vigilant about the conforming influence of excessive government interference from planning on the innovative, exploratory nature of bottom-up initiatives.

7.2.4 Conceptualisations viewed from below: initiator as planner or partner in planning

The above approaches also have consequences for initiators, which is why they ideally should be partners in the development of a common vision and its implementation. This is not self-evident, because the research shows that each initiative chooses its own strategies and that, despite the presence of umbrella organisations such as Eetbaar Rotterdam and Transition Town, there was not much contact between initiators, let alone cooperation in the field of spatial planning of the city. The question is therefore who can represent the initiatives and on what premises.

In addition, there is still a contradiction between the need for recognition of the diversity of initiatives (which would suggest a tailor-made approach) and the need for equal treatment (which requires clear frameworks). A curator could play a role here. The research shows that, on the one hand, a guiding role on the part of the planner is viewed with suspicion, especially if it is based on Rational top-down logic, but that on the other hand there is a need for the government as a reliable partner in the tradition of Collaborative or Pragmatic Planning.

However, it should not be forgotten that initiatives have also worked independently of municipal planning to achieve their various missions and objectives. By each following their own path, they have also developed a range of strategies and forms of action perspective that this study has identified. The wealth of bottom-up planning approaches shows that there are many ways to start an initiative and engage in planning, to deal with planners and, where necessary, to provide a counterbalance. It is a dynamic interplay in which conflict is not shunned.

Most initiators claim a role as representatives of the public interest and thus as partners (or competitors) of the government. This claim also entails a certain responsibility (see also Bronsveld, 2016).

Food and green space are important themes, but they exist alongside and in connection with themes such as care, welfare, poverty, education, etc. This sometimes requires a degree of modesty and the ability to see your own role in this larger context.

And every initiative is part of a range of initiatives. Each initiative has its own hobbyhorses, but it is the whole that creates a movement. Any municipal strategy for planning urban agriculture should relate constructively to this sample, both the more pragmatic and the critical approaches, in order to ensure the diversity of niches and allow a thousand dandelions to bloom. But this requires, especially from the more professional initiators, that they are able to think and act not only on behalf of their own initiative but also on behalf of the whole.

This offers the advantage that initiatives as a group carry more weight in negotiations with and as a partner of the local authority. In this way, initiatives can jointly address problems that they encounter individually. Such as the power imbalance between planners and initiators, and in relation to this, the transfer of responsibility for services that initiators take over from the municipality, the degree of control, the lack of trust and the need to build that trust together.

As a group, initiatives could also develop a vision for tailor-made support for initiatives. In this, it is not only important to recognise and acknowledge the differences between initiatives, but also to understand at what level(s) an initiative is active and contributes (or aspires to contribute). How can planners deal with this and how do initiators think this should be done? Is there solidarity or competition?

An interesting recent development in this regard is the relaunch of Vereniging Groen010, an association for (edible) green initiators. Within the European Horizon 2020 project EdiCitNet, an initiative-led Living Lab has been set up to work on structural cooperation between (edible) green initiatives. The aim of the Living Lab Rotterdam was to offer mutual support and knowledge exchange, but also to form a clear point of contact for the municipality and to be able to lobby effectively for the joint initiatives. The challenge lay in seeking connection and cooperation on shared goals and interests, while respecting the diversity of approaches and worldviews. The result is that there is now an association with around 60 members that consults with the municipality on a structural basis and tries to develop a common language to give the knowledge and contribution of green initiatives a place in municipal green policy. These Green Tables, organised in collaboration with the municipality, are collaborative in nature. It is still too early to assess the results.

The Groen010 Association acts as a (constructively critical) partner, complementing and strengthening the municipality. In a sense, the association partly fulfils the role of curator. In light of the upcoming cuts to the welfare state (which will be borne largely by the municipalities), there are major challenges but also new opportunities for the initiators to take a position. New crisis, new opportunities?

7.3 Theoretical reflection

In this study, various planning theory approaches have been instrumentalised into a series of so-called conceptualisations of planning: emblematic ways of thinking in planning, to interpret developments in planning practice. The overview provided by Allmendinger in his book 'Planning theory' (Allmendinger, 2017) provides a useful introduction to the world of planning and the ideas that have been developed in this field.

The planning theories that Allmendinger describes originate in specific contexts, they are indigenous to certain planning practices. This study confirms that these theories that originated in the U.S., U.K. and Europe have relevance for understanding practice in the Netherlands to. There is a clear resonance between schools of planning theory and theorising in practice. It also shows the limits of the influence of developments in theory in the sense that more traditional positivist conceptualisations of planning are not easily supplanted by more recent, relativist conceptualisations of planning, because these traditional conceptualisations are engrained in governmental structures and policy frameworks and the wider political landscape. It sheds a light on the nature of the gap between theory and practice. The gap is real and might be imagined like a canyon with views of the other side in the distance, and with communication across it, albeit sometimes with delays, recurring echoes and background noises. You can fly to the other side but you would have to leave some things behind. Fly back and forth we must nonetheless.

7.3.1 Planning theory through the lens of civic engagement

The landscape of planning theory as presented by Allmendinger has, in this study, been interpreted through the lens of civic engagement (Allmendinger, 2017, Horlings et al, 2021) and expanded to include more recent conceptualisations in development that conceptualise how to engage civic initiatives in more inclusive ways (at the top of Arnstein's Ladder of Participation), e.g. as co-creators, innovators, visionaries or beneficial urban self-coordination in planning practice (Rauws, 2016; Boonstra, 2015; Savini et al, 2022; Davoudi, 2023).

In the context of the case study of urban agriculture in Rotterdam in the period 2006-2018, these conceptualisations of planning have proved valuable in interpreting developments 1) in the way of thinking about planning and about planning with bottom-up initiatives in municipal planning practice, and 2) in how those ways of thinking are translated into action in that practice in a situation-specific manner (i.e. bound to time, place and context). These conceptualisations also form a frame of reference against which the thinking and actions of bottom-up initiators in that planning practice could be set and related.

The study of the planning and realisation of urban agriculture initiatives shows that civic initiatives are indeed actors in planning with their own agency (Boonstra, 2015), but their engagement in planning

is also characterised by a complex interaction between municipal planners and civic initiatives with (sometimes hidden) hierarchies and a variety of roles and strategies. The interaction mediates as it were between different conceptualisations of planning: it forms a dialectics of conceptualisations.

The case study highlights differences within municipal planning (the Rotterdam Conceptualisations of planning), within the civic initiatives (different action perspectives and strategies based on different worldviews), and consequently in the interaction between municipal planners and civic initiatives that are at the centre of the research goals of this thesis.

The tailor-made nature of the interactions that this study brought to light, might suggest a Pragmatic tailor-made approach like mosaic governance (Buijs, 2019), but this could obscure some of the underlying challenges of engaging these civic initiatives in planning practice, regarding representation and governance.

The lens of prefiguration helps to understand their value as embodied practices of alternative futures in the here and now (Maeckelbergh,2011), but does not yet answer how a prefigurative planning would plan for this value to improve the city in a more structural way. As Bertolini (2025) observes "experimentation yet struggles to achieve systemic impact". Before I go into this question, I would like to explore the idea of interaction between municipal planners and civic initiatives as a dialectics of conceptualisations. This exchange and discussion of ideas is played out in the planning process.

7.3.2 Interaction as a prefigurative dialectics of planning

The case study suggests that the municipal planning of urban agriculture initiatives consists of a dialectic of conceptualisations. Firstly between different conceptualisations of planning embedded in the municipal organisational structure of which the planning department is a part, and secondly between these conceptualisations and bottom-up conceptualisations of planning. The interaction between municipal planners and initiators is full of frustration and misunderstandings (Visscher et al, 2023) but the exchange of ideas on planning, mutual expectations and counter-ideas, sometimes agonistic, sometimes collaborative (Legacy, 2019), and often implicit, is also a potentially fruitful discussion of ideas of what planning should be.

This dialectic between municipal planners and initiators is played out in the planning process: in the (strategies of) initiating, shaping and anchoring of urban agriculture as outlined in Chapters V and VI. This dialectic can be seen as the process of creating space for prefigurations in planning.

Each realised initiative is a prefiguration of another kind of green space, but the creative ways in which they are realised also form prefigurations of other ways of planning that are created in interaction with the municipal planning department as well as other municipal departments.

When initiatives initiate an urban agriculture garden they challenge the Rational idea that planning experts or market forces decide which function goes. They offer alternatives, and try to find other forms of (democratic) support for these initiatives. They only begrudgingly conform to the Rational procedures of municipal planning, and respond with counterstrategies. Uit Je Eigen Stad tried to make the permit procedures into a negotiation; combining a libertarian entrepreneurial spirit with insight in the Neoliberal power relations within the municipality to negotiate a maximum of space for agricultural experimentation. Wollefoppengroen & Co aimed to self-organise the design and realisation of their community garden, and though in the end the municipality did not want to relinquish the control, the initiative did become a client to the planning department, reversing traditional roles, and creating a Collaborative shared space for decision-making.

Other initiatives seek marginal spaces (cf. Horlings et al, 2021) that are more in the lee of planning, and in this way try to negate Rational and Neoliberal conceptualisations planning. Both Voedseltuin and Tuin op de Pier found temporarily available space, where they defined other ways of shaping public urban green spaces, socially and, specifically in the case of Tuin op de Pier, also in the organisation of space over time. Still other urban agriculture initiatives find marginal spaces by delivering services in other policy domains such as care (Groengoed), or public green maintenance (Creatief Beheer) and through performing these services practice prefigurations of another kind of public green space, defined as a commons or an ecosystem. These initiatives are overtly critical of Rational and Neoliberal planning conceptualisations (see Fig 5.11) and have found ways around the constraints these impose through planning by maintenance.

A similar prefiguration of participative public green space was performed by Stadslandbouw Schiebroek-Zuid. This initiative reimagined the public green space as a playing field for developing tiny patches of green that could come and go as a reflection of the needs of the residents. Taking this one step further was NuHier saw their whole terrain as a canvas for different ideas and wishes of residents, employees and students in the neighbourhood. Less overtly political than Groengoed or Creatief Beheer these two initiatives do offer alternative ways of looking at planning. As they both were situated on a terrain owned by a housing corporation they did not need to engage with municipal planning. All these initiatives created alternative imaginaries that current planning seems to lack (Davoudi, 2023).

The prefigurative quality of urban agriculture initiatives lies to a large extent in their action perspective and the strategies they use. Whether these strategies extend beyond the locally oriented goals of the initiative might differ between projects, but the empirical results suggest that these prefigurations can not be seen separate from strategic action on a larger scale (Maeckelbergh, 2011).

The ideas behind these projects were not only prefigured in situ (i.e. situated prefiguration), but also affected networks around it, and ways of financing. In this way urban agriculture as prefiguration spreads beyond the physical performances into alternative procedures and arrangements; distributed prefiguration (Chertkovskaya et al, 2024).

The action perspectives are central to this prefigurative performance. Every time the municipality (or another societal actor) accepts the initiator in his/her action perspective this becomes part of the performance. This could be the signing of a lease contract or a financial agreement paying the initiative for its services. Of course this only is the case when the contract or agreement is formulated in a way that acknowledges the nature of the initiative and prefigure e.g. others forms of ownership or alternative economies.

Initiatives like Wollefoppengroen & Co and Uit Je Eigen Stad combined the prefigurative power of their realised project with influence via other channels such as institutional politics. Wollefoppengroen & Co gathered support amongst citizens, and lobbied with local and regional government. Because their initiative also fitted the municipal goals for the park after the initiative rallied the neighbourhood to oppose the plans for building on the same location.

Uit Je Eigen Stad was part of the Stadsinitiatief (as was Dakakker) competing for the favour of the Rotterdam general public, and was backed by Edible Rotterdam. Edible Rotterdam tried to promote urban agriculture as a different way of looking at the city through different channels, both political (producing a manifest before the 2010 elections), within the discipline of planning and agriculture (via research and lectures) and via contacts with universities, art institutes, NGOs and farming organisations as well as similar organisations in other cities. In fact most initiators had other channels for their message, which are described in the analysis of anchoring strategies. Professional, societal and - up to a point - economic anchoring strategies positioned initiatives in the professional debate on the city, in the socio-political debate and in the economic logic of planning and strengthened their prefigurative presence, if only temporarily.

This diversification of strategic channels can be seen as a bottom-up counterpart to the multipolitical approach of prefiguration, that Bertolini, following Schiller-Merckens (2022), proposes to achieve systemic impact (Bertolini, 2025).

7.3.3 Constructing a parallel planning reality

The municipal planning department entered this dialectic with an open mind and genuine interest on the part of the directly involved, but got stuck in prevalent ways of thinking, conceptualisations of planning and the structures that have grown from these ways of thinking, as described in Chapter IV. Still, using the lens of prefiguration the planning of urban agriculture in Rotterdam could be

considered as form of prefigurative planning . Seen through this lens the municipal approach had, at least in its intentions, three distinct features:

- the planner as facilitator of initiatives, taking a more modest role (Savini et al, 2022; Boonstra, 2015; Verhoeven & Tonkens, 2023) combining a Pragmatic approach with a, Collaborative ambition
- a focus on creating beneficial conditions (Bertolini, 2025), in this case by taking away barriers, rather than direct support, albeit inspired more by Neoliberal than Adaptive conceptualisations of planning
- a pluralist multi-disciplinary approach involving different policy domains that reflected the cross-disciplinary character of urban agriculture suggesting a Collaborative approach influenced by Poststructuralist thinking.

As we have seen this approach had to operate in the margins of institutional structures informed by Rational and Neoliberal conceptualisations. Negotiating these conceptualisations with the postpositivist conceptualisations of planning that were more open to engaging civic initiatives asked a lot of individual planners and civil servants involved (cf. Verhoeven & Tonkens, 2023).

In the cases of Wollenfoppengroen & Co and Uit Je Eigen Stad a project manager was assigned to serve as a guide, between initiative and different departments (legislative, real estate, public space management and maintenance). In other cases, most notably Rotterdamse Munt, the involved planners and project managers performed their part in the planning of urban agriculture in the slipstream of their regular activities, if they were involved at all. And this was up to a point the case as well for the civil servants involved in the development of the urban agriculture policy and the thinktank. There they experimented with different facilitating roles and strategies, not unlike the planner as navigator that Boonstra and others propose (Boonstra, 2015; Rauws, 2017; Savini et al, 2022), but outside of their regular activities. In this way facilitating initiatives was placed outside of official planning policy and practice by municipal planning management.

Similarly, the aim to create beneficial conditions did not result in lasting framework to support urban agriculture initiatives (although it did most likely influence and support the experiments with right-to-challenge and right-to-cooperate).

Finally a multi-disciplinary approach to municipal planning remains a challenge due to the silo-structure of the municipal departments. The management of the department as a firm (refered to as ‘concern’ with internal client-customer and invoicing structure) suggests a Neoliberal conceptualisation of planning and governance, and stimulates competition over resources.

7.3.4 From parallel planning reality to mainstream planning

Together mostly well-meaning planners and activist, entrepreneurial and/or innovative civic initiatives created a parallel experimental, alternative planning reality. The planning of urban agriculture in Rotterdam was an attempt to prefigure an alternative to the planning status quo focusing on a different role for the planner, creating conditions rather than using traditional planning instruments and working multidisciplinary within the municipal government and with societal actors. The question is how the beneficial aspects of this experimental, alternative planning reality could be embedded in municipal institutional planning, in the sense that prefigurations such as urban agriculture initiatives can be stimulated and sustained. The case study showed that the lessons learnt were hardly translated from this parallel reality to the municipal organisational structure and its longterm policies.

A prefigurative planning aims to translate prefigurations to changes with a wider, systemic impact (Davoudi, 2023; Bertolini, 2025). Bertolini suggests a multpolitical approach in which planners engage which prefigurative, contentious and institutional politics, that is to say with initiatives, activists and state actors, and take on a role as catalyst, both within these different spheres, and between them. The Rotterdam experiences show that this in some cases can be effective but also that the risk of co-optation is real, even if not purpose. A

As Savini et al argue "the planner must learn from the multiplicity of contemporary urban practices that prefigure and enact alternative urban futures" (Savini et al, 2022) and this requires that planners also open up to the idea that there own role should change, something which the involved planners were not ready to do, and more importantly were not stimulated to from within the department.

Interestingly, the Pragmatist attitude of more independent municipal planners within Rational and Neoliberal frameworks might offer ways forward, here. Pragmatist thinkers like Hoch have tried to reconcile the concept of utopian thinking with Pragmatism (Hoch, 2016), as part of the experimentation that always was an integral part of Pragmatic thinking (Bertolini, 2025). And the accounts of quite a few the involved planners show evidence of a development from Pragmatic to Poststructuralist and even Prefigurative thinking, e.g. by including narrative that prefigure different conceptions of the city.

If the planner should become a catalyst (Bertolini, 2025) navigating between bottom-up initiatives (Boonstra, 2015), state actors and social movements (Bertolini, 2025) some form of institutionalisation of this role is necessary, with a clear mandate and hours to perform this role in.

According to Bertolini planning practice "should create room in planning organizations for learning from experiments to reshape institutions". Beside mandate and hours this requires a reflexive attitude in municipal government and long-term planning. It also brings up the question whether planners are willing to choose and act on conceptu-

alisations that run counter to their own interest (Allmendinger, 2017), i.e. conceptualisations in which they have to give up part of their authority. The case study indicates that there is a certain willingness among individual planners, and even some enthusiasm towards a this new role, but also a fear of loosing there expert position. Rather than a conflict of interest this seems to be a question of accountability and the responsibility that comes with it, which might be similar to the dilemma of frontline workers dealing with civic initiatives as studied by Verhoeven and Tonkens (2023). This only emphasizes that the planning department and municipality as an environment have to be open to change. And there is a considerable institutional inertia to overcome, there. Not to speak of the reluctance of municipal planners to engage with, let alone mobilize, political protests and social movements to create demand for experiments and change (Bertolini, 2025).

Whether a fragmented political landscape and a limited budget (which is undermined by budget cuts and more fundamentally by the longterm unviability of rising real estate value as a source of income as Savini et al (2022) point out) are potential hurdles to institutional change, or might offer an urgency to beneficial change is hard to say. Prefigurative experiments might 'profit' from these developments, offering alternative democratic perspectives and (echoing the rhetoric from 20 years ago) ways of handing over government tasks to civic initiatives.

In this respect the development of planning rules and procedures for prefigurative experiments (Bertolini, 2025) is important, as it might help to prevent the inconsistencies that characterised the Rotterdam urban agriculture policy and its attempts to create beneficial conditions. It might also make tailor-made micro-management unnecessary, and reduce the pressure on the planner as catalyst, navigator or curator.

Finally it promises a way to let (more) prefigurations emerge by creating conditions that are beneficial to initiating and performing alternatives to the status quo. Within Adaptive conceptualisation of planning these (potential) alternatives make the urban environment more adaptive to change as they might be relevant in the future on a larger scale. They are at the vanguard of urban transformation and might offer solutions that can be applied on a larger scale (Rauws, 2017; Moroni et al, 2020) and that go beyond what is considered viable or reasonable today (Bertolini, 2025).

Planning practice should create room in planning rules and procedures for prefigurative experiments (Bertolini, 2025). To do this with a minimum of direct government involvement, creating conditions for self-organisation seems an appropriate form. Moroni et al differentiate between 'piecemeal experiments' and other emergent self-coordination. Self-organization as self-coordination is about spontaneous alignment, that is, the process whereby synchronization occurs in society without being deliberately created by anybody (Moroni et al, 2020).

As self-coordination poses a "major challenge to urban planners and their established repertoire of tools" Moroni et al (2020) propose three ways in which planners can productively relate to self-coordination: (1) particular framework rules, (2) specific carrying structures, and (3) certain piecemeal experiments. While prefigurations could be seen as the 'piecemeal experiments', from a prefigurative perspective it is interesting to consider what framework rules might create conditions for these experiment, and think of carrying structures that might support this. One could imagine a more strategic management of temporary available space and securing a blue-green network of green outdoor space (including all parks) as carrying structures and allow a percentage of this to be used for any non-profit use that would not degrade it environmentally or socially. This could be combined with more situated constraining, enabling, or triggering conditions in respond to local context. Successful prefigurations should under some transparent conditions be allowed to apply for a room in wider public space, or should be adopted by municipal public green space management.

The timelines in this research are cut off to reflect the period of study. However as a planning research tool they try to understand a relational approach of becoming that has no clear beginning or end. As Rauws (2017) points out, the Adaptive Planning reflects not only a change from plan to process but also from process to creating conditions for emerging developments. Timelines analysing relations between diverse developments help understanding and illustrating complex interactions and patterns in it.

Planners (catalysts, navigators) would use such understandings to define and adjust these rules, as well as to explain, to facilitate and sometimes to enforce them. However, they should engage the more experienced civic initiatives and their knowledge, as well as sympathetic actors within different municipal departments (Bertolini, 2025) and devise a process in which these rules are determined and adjusted together, considering and explicating power relations (Moroni et al, 2020). If this sounds like a parallel democracy, this might be true, but in potential it could be an augmentation to democracy, not unlike the way Visscher et al (2023) envision the do-democracy and representative democracy might supplement each other.

In any case, under the conditions described above, initiators can be equal partners in planning. It is not necessary to label them as planners in order to recognise them as creative co-designers of new conceptualisations of planning and of a new planning practice in which the impossible is made possible, even if only for a certain time in a certain place.

7.4 Methodological reflection

7.4.1 Chronology and transparency of the research method

The theoretical framework was used to guide the research and a bottom-up grounded theory approach was applied to the collected data. The results of which were again interpreted with additional theory, that was then added to the theoretical framework. An effort has been made to keep the sequence of the research as transparent as possible, but to fit the approach into the thesis format, I deviated from this insofar as part of the theory in Chapter II was only found and applied after the data had been collected and the interviews had been analysed for the first time. The literature on civic engagement in planning was expanded greatly and the key concepts of Horlings et al. (2021)were used afterwards to substantiate and organise the initial guiding concepts, that were derived in part from planning theory as defined by Allmendinger (Allmendinger, 2017) and in part developed on the basis of my prior knowledge of urban agriculture practice.

7.4.2 The case study method

Looking at the case study as a whole , the longitudinal study of a movement in a city provided rich empirical insights. The combination of methods worked well, with timelines giving a relational overview, interviews providing thick description and spatial analysis and facts on the timeline anchoring the subjective observations in a more objective or at least communicative reality. Having incrementally developed these methods throughout the period of study some minor inconsistencies entered the methodology, that subsequent research might avoid. The graphics were developed to systemically link different observations and analyses. The recurring timelines are a good example of how this can be a useful addition to other forms of analysis. The graphical analysis of strategies is another, but the link between them could be more consistently designed. A more rigorous definition of methodological tools and aims might have avoided this. However this might also have directed the results in preconceived directions. Now the graphics are like the accounts of different people, all approaching reality but from different perspectives.

Ironically, the period of (part-time) working on the thesis (10 years) almost reflects the period of study in length. The fixed period of study allowed some distance, as well as avoiding the potentially never-ending updating of research results through my participant observation. However to record recent history, ten to twenty years is a long time to recall back for interviewees (and for myself). Triangulating my memory with timeline data sometimes even surprised me. A collaborative research effort might offer a more complete and faster result.

The replicability of this method in other contexts lies first and foremost in combining interviews, timelines based on other sources and spatial analyses, to develop a relational understanding of spatial developments, and the role of planners and other societal actors in these developments. Specifically spatial phenomena with a (large) societal impact that is not directly related to their direct spatial impact (such as prefigurations and similar experiments). Involving local participants in these developments, preferably as co-researchers, might provide proper substitution of the exceptional inside position of the author of this thesis.

7.4.3 The interviews and their limitations

Interviews have been one of the important methods of data collection and means to retrospectively reflect on the case study in general, and on the role of the municipality and development of the initiatives specifically. The sample is not exhaustive, but tailored to the capacity of an external researcher. The number of interviews with planners within the municipality of Rotterdam could have been more extensive, which might have added nuances to the overview of Rotterdam's conceptualisations of planning. A feedback session with municipal planners could have provided additional insights, but this is beyond the scope of this study.

The interviews with initiators do provide a rich and representative picture of the urban agriculture movement. Given that these initiatives are the figureheads of a broader movement (with up to 100 citizens' initiatives according to inventories by the municipality), further quantitative research is possible, but I doubt whether this would have yielded much new information in qualitative terms. In one case an interview with co-initiators might have provided a more nuanced view, but they did not respond to my request for an interview.

In the in-depth interviews about four projects that were most closely related to municipal planning, it proved difficult to speak to everyone. During these interviews in the final phase of my research, I encountered the limitations of an oral, retrospective study. Due to the time that had elapsed, some of those involved had since retired or were no longer working for the municipality. This made it too difficult (also in terms of time investment) to reach them. Each project could have been explored in greater depth with more interviews with those involved. There was not enough time for this. Also analytical approaches using actor network or assemblage theory might provide a more complect picture of the roles of everyone involved, including non-human agents.

The perspectives of 'deelgemeente' (borough) politicians may be underrepresented. One interview was done that added little to the data from other sources. This might have been different in other cases. Also no housing corporations were interviewed, but previous research by the author on the role of non-governmental actors in the

city food region provided background on the role of housing corporations in the cases included in this study where this was relevant: NuHier, Stadslandbouw Schiebroek-Zuid, Uit Je Eigen Stad (Schans & Graaf, 2016). That research includes interviews with the key figures mentioned in Section 4. 3.1. Finally, the municipality's voice is less prominent in the description of the Voedseltuin project. Unfortunately, a key person at the municipality was unavailable for comment. This has been partially compensated for by the impressions of other civil servants.

Submitting the text to the interviewees for approval of the quotes yielded additional information in a number of cases and a few minor corrections to the picture outlined, which have been incorporated into the text.

7.4.4 Positionality

To return to my position as a researcher in the field of planning, reading and reflecting on planning literature has helped me develop a more profound understanding of planning in theory and practice. I understand how different theorists try to understand the world and how this is rooted in an engagement with planning. I can agree to a large extent with the critical realist viewpoint that the worldviews expressed by both engaged planners and civic initiators are false but necessary and potentially beneficial ideas (Xue, 2022), but also believe in the power of imaginaries, ideas of what the city could be like, to challenge our conceptions of the knowable truth (Davoudi, 2023), and create facts on the ground, that then can be scrutinised critically, again.

With regard to the description and analysis of the Rotterdam urban agriculture movement, although I have done my best to be as transparent as possible in the design and implementation of this study, it should be clear that my perspective as a stakeholder has had a major influence on the result. The retrospective nature of the study made every reconstruction subjective, and there are undoubtedly missing perspectives, opinions and insights from involved initiators and planners that I did not interview. However this is inherent to this kind of qualitative research. As mentioned in Section 3.4.1 my position as an insider gave me unique access to people and information during the research, which is reflected in the empirical data uncovered.

The study is not a complete oral history of urban agriculture in Rotterdam, as that fell outside of the research objectives. But it will hopefully contribute to the historiography of a movement that is changing rapidly and where projects come and go and seem to be forgotten as quickly as they emerged.

7.5 Next steps and directions for further research

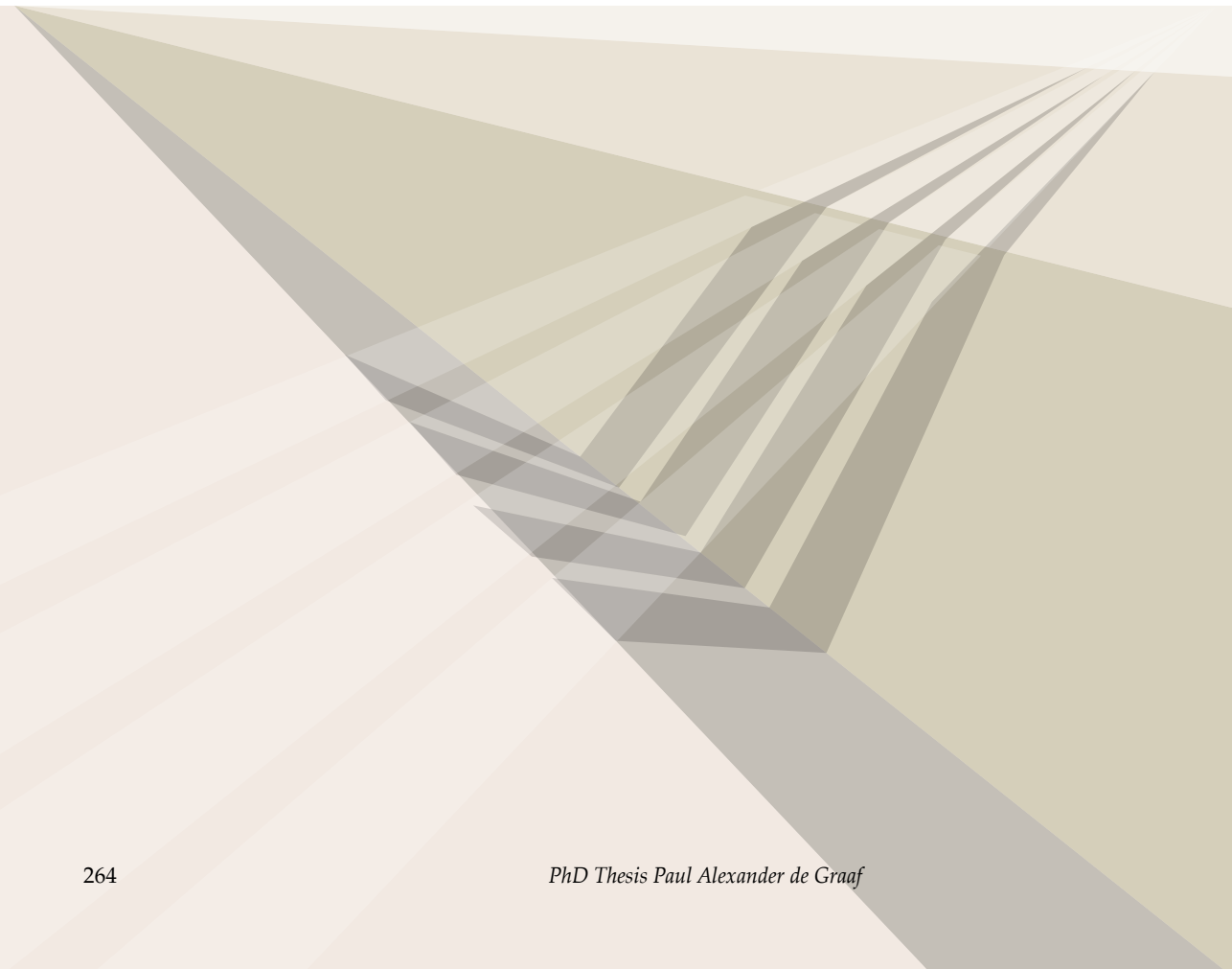
Recent literature highlights the need for a changing role of the planner, but also a changing planning and governance environment (Savini et al, 2022, Bertolini, 2025). The research and experiments in Prefigurative and Post-Growth municipal planning and governance provides an important direction for further study. Civic initiatives as prefigurations might need planning, but planning needs more prefiguration as well, to bring back hope and imagination to the field (Davoudi, 2023). Changes in the planning and governance environment are not possible without looking at and confronting power relations within city governance (Rauws, 2017; Savini et al, 2022; Bertolini, 2025).. These are deeply embedded in governmental and societal structures, and present inherent dilemma's between control and self-organisation and different conceptions of democracy (Visscher et al, 2023). A Living Lab or another form of more ambitious and elaborate experimentation (Moroni et al, 2020) might offer the room to formulate and try out transparant solutions for formulating the mandate of the prefigurative (post-growth, adaptive) planner and the extent to which agonism is allowed in the governance of planning. This could only be a succesful experiment if the involved planning department, or at least some key figures in positions of power, would initiate it and commit to its outcomes.

Another direction for further research is the development and application of Adaptive planning approaches to urban green space, e.g. following Moroni et al's differentiation into framework rules, carrying structures and experiments (Moroni et al, 2020). This could possibly also provide an underlying structure and mandate under forms of mosaic governance (Buijs et al, 2019).

With regard to this research, it would be interesting to conduct similar case studies of all urban agriculture initiatives in a city over a longer period of time for other cities, particularly in places where the city has explicitly developed and pursued an urban agriculture policy. The case study method that has been developed in this thesis could provide a reference or starting point for more advances relational mappings of interactions between planners and civic initators, as well as other human and non-human actors.

The value of the study for the Rotterdam context will be valorised in practice by the extent to which both planners and initiators identify with it. Given practical limitations in terms of time and logistics, the dissemination of results among these groups will largely take place after the completion of the dissertation in the form of presentations at professional forums and within the framework of Groen010 and the new Food Council, which is currently being established as I write this conclusion.

For initiators the practicalities of performing the new within the existing and finding models to balance the two (Swain, 2019) would be an interesting area of study. Workable interfaces between prefigurations and the reality for which they want to form an alternative, such as interim revenue models, tolerance constructions ('gedoogconstructies') and planning-free zones, have not yet been sufficiently researched from the perspective of prefiguration. Such research should include the question how planning could more structurally support these interfaces, e.g. via Adaptive approaches, to substantiate the idea of a Prefigurative planning and to make the existence of many civic initiators less precarious. Such research could build on the lessons from this case study, avoid the mistakes of planning for and with initiatives and stimulate the implementation of valuable outcomes of this experiment in mainstream planning.



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Case study projects

Creatief Beheer

https://creatiefbeheer.nl/
https://www.proefparkdepunt.nl/
https://www.dokterbiemans.nl/proefpark-de-punt
https://www.dokterbiemans.nl/single-post/2020/01/29/Het-Proefpark-is-waardevol-en-blijft-waardevol
http://www.bottom-up-city.com/creatief-beheer (bezocht op; 18-02-2022)
https://www.dakparkrotterdam.nl/
diverse plattegronden (archief Creatief Beheer)

Nu Hier

http://nuhier.org/
https://estervandewiel.wordpress.com/
http://eetbaarlandschap.mmmmx.net/home/

Transition Town Rotterdam / Groengoed

https://www.transitiontownrotterdam.nl/
https://groengoedrotterdam.com/
diverse plattegronden (archief Groengoed/ Daniel Opbroek)

Voedseltuin

https://voedseltuin.com/
http://www.omgevingseconomie.nl/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/TeebStad-Casus-Rotterdam-Voedseltuin.pdf
https://www.gebiedsontwikkeling.nu/artikelen/stadshavens-rotterdam/
https://www.gebiedsontwikkeling.nu/artikelen/merwe-vierhavens-van-havenindustrie-naar-maakstad/
diverse plattegronden, projectplannen en jaarplannen (archief Voedseltuin)

Tuin op de Pier

https://www.tuinopdepier.nl/
Timelapse video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lAZCX7z5z6g
Item RTV Rijmond https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d2xECPU5_1k
Foto's (archief Piet de Jonge)

Wollefoppengroen & Co

https://www.wollefoppengroen.nl/geschiedenis/
diverse plattegronden (archief Wollefoppengroen & Co / Frenk Walkenbach)

Stadslandbouw Schiebroek-Zuid

https://stadslandbouwschiebroek.blogspot.com/
https://except.eco/nl/projects/sustainable-schiebroek-zuid/
foto's, plattegronden, projectplannen (archief Caroline Zeevat)

Uit Je Eigen Stad

https://www.eetbaarrotterdam.nl/2019/04/in-memoriam-uit-je-eigen-stad-2012-2018/

https://www.ad.nl/rotterdam/huibert-heeft-lessen-geleerd-van-zijn-stadsboerderij-nu-zou-ik-het-anders-doen~a3ddf694/

Dakakker

https://dakakker.nl/site/

Rotterdamse Munt

https://www.rotterdamsemunt.nl/achtergrond-en-organisatie/

plattegronden, projectplannen (archief Rotterdamse Munt / Ingrid Ackermans)

Other projects and events timeline

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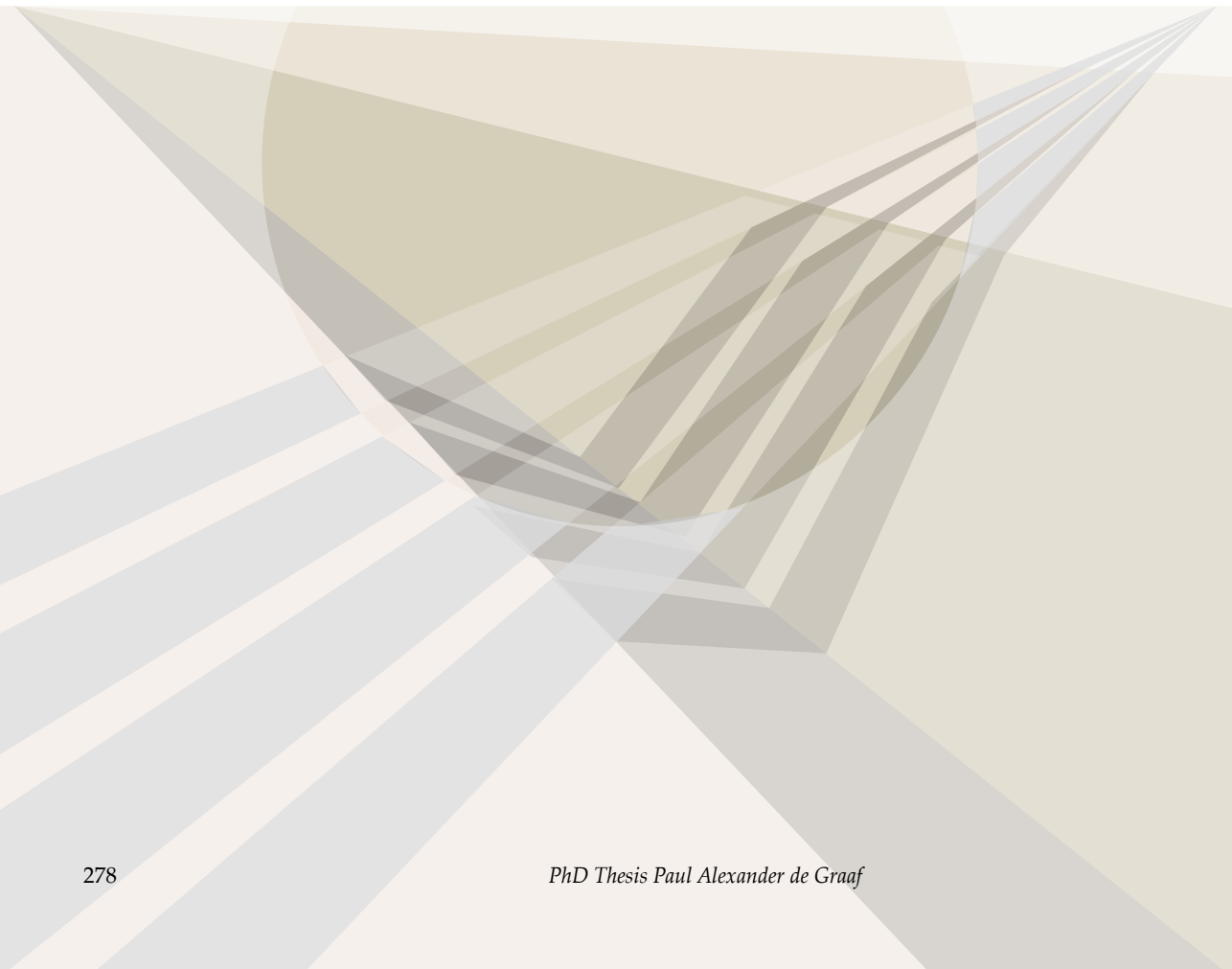
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Summary

Problem statement

The emergence of bottom-up civic initiatives in the first decades of this century poses a challenge for city administration in general and spatial planning in particular. The traditional division of roles between planners who determine the spatial layout of the city on behalf of the government and citizens and other social actors who comply with this arrangement has long been under pressure due to changing insights into how society functions. But bottom-up civic initiatives go a step further. They take matters into their own hands and enter the planner's territory. The tensions that this creates for urban spatial planning are particularly evident in the development of urban agriculture projects. It is therefore useful and necessary to investigate, analyse and understand practical experiences with this interaction. Until now, this has mostly been done from the perspective of the planning government or from the bottom-up initiators. There are still few studies that have examined this interaction over a longer period of time in a specific spatial context, taking into account both top-down and bottom-up perspectives. This research distinguishes itself by studying the interaction between planners and bottom-up initiators in the field of urban agriculture in Rotterdam in the period 2006-2018.

Aim and design of the study

The aim of this study is to gain insight into the interaction between bottom-up initiatives and government spatial planners in the realisation of urban agriculture projects. It looks at the worldviews and ideas about planning (so-called conceptualisations of planning) that underlie their actions, and how this interaction influences spatial planning, in particular the urban agriculture policy developed by the municipality. The research is designed as a retrospective case study of the practice of spatial planning for urban agriculture in the city of Rotterdam between 2006 and 2018. The case study includes the study of ten prominent urban agriculture projects developed by bottom-up initiatives during this period, and the actions, plans and policy measures of spatial planners with regard to urban agriculture.
It is a qualitative study that uses interviews with stakeholders in combination with a review of grey literature such as project websites, project plans and local (online) news, and analysis of plans and completed projects.
The interviews with planners are mainly interpreted on the basis of theoretical concepts from planning theory, while the interviews with initiators have been analysed in a more "grounded" manner, with recurring themes in the interviews being used to theorise about the possible role of initiators as spatial planners. The information from the interviews and other sources has also been incorporated into a

timeline of events and developments that maps the policy-making process around urban agriculture and links it to the development and planning of individual projects.

Key findings

The interaction between planners and initiators was studied at three levels: 1) the development of strategy and policy on urban agriculture within the Rotterdam planning context; 2) the worldviews and actions of bottom-up initiatives in planning and implementing urban agriculture projects; 3) the interaction between planners and bottom-up initiatives in a number of important projects. A sub-question from the research is answered at each level.

1) How do municipal planners understand and conceptualise spatial planning and how does this influence the planning of urban agriculture in practice? (Chapter IV)

I have demonstrated that different theoretical conceptualisations of planning can be recognised in the way planners talk and think about planning in general and in their thinking about the planning of social initiatives in particular. From the Rational conceptualisation that formed the basis of the discipline in the last century, in which social actors are the object of analysis and solution by the planner-expert, to Neoliberal planning, which focuses on the market and businesses as social actors, and Pragmatic planning, in which citizens are allowed to participate as local experts, to recent conceptualisations of planning such as Collaborative planning, in which social actors are seen as equal partners in arriving at a shared truth, or Post-structuralist planning, in which they are involved as co-creators of one or more shared narratives.

The crisis of 2008-2014 opened up opportunities for these new conceptualisations of planning. Urban agriculture initiatives that wanted to make use of temporarily available building land were facilitated and a policy vision was developed for this purpose. In practice, old and new conceptualisations were intertwined in the implementation of urban agriculture policy. Particularly in the city, with its complex stacking of space claims, some of the planners involved were alarmed by the consequences of new conceptualisations of planning for their own position and for the functioning of the current system. Real questions about responsibility and liability, support and representation played a role in this. However, the involvement of other societal actors also undermined the authority and thus the self-image of the planner as an expert. Initiators were therefore only accepted as equal partners to a certain extent.

2) How do bottom-up civic initiatives for urban agriculture understand and conceptualise the spatial design of their initiative and their role in it? (Chapter V)

The research shows that initiators often had strong ideas about the planning and design of the city. These ideas were reflected in the action perspective chosen by the initiators and the strategies they applied in realising their initiative. The initiator's worldview was often strongly linked to the development and design of the initiative's practice. These urban agriculture initiatives put ideals into practice. However, the precise definition of urban agriculture, and especially the expectations of what urban agriculture can contribute to the city, varied greatly among the initiators. These expectations translated into different ambitions for what the initiative wanted to achieve in terms of spatial planning.

Initiatives took on different roles and applied a variety of planning strategies in response to both location- and time-specific circumstances and the planning actions, ideas and policies of the municipality. Four different action perspectives could be distinguished, each representing a different attitude towards the government: the active citizen, the social entrepreneur, the independent planning professional and the NGO representative. However, these roles do not constitute a blueprint but rather reference points within a range of different action perspectives.

This pluralism and diversity of voices were an essential part of the urban agriculture movement in Rotterdam from 2006 to 2018. It is precisely the diversity of approaches in the practice of urban agriculture that offers creative potential; an experimental laboratory for urban spatial planning from which lessons can be learned. Their unique contribution consists of trying out different ideas in practice. The experience and knowledge this yields complements that of the municipality and its planning department.

3) How do the views on planning of municipal planners and bottom-up initiators and the strategies they use relate to each other and do they converge or clash around the realisation of urban agriculture initiatives? (Chapter VI)

The planners and other civil servants involved in the creation of urban agriculture initiatives operated in a field of tension between planning policy and unruly practice. A small group of planners, with the support of the councillor, initiated new policy, or rather the ambition and narratives that were to lead to new policy, and the people on the ground, often project managers, area managers or members of a neighbourhood team, had to realise those ambitions.

A tailor-made approach was needed to steer this in the right direction, but in practice the planning department remained stuck in an ad hoc approach, without real policy implementation.

The initiators sought and found ways to deal with this sometimes enthusiastic but always inconsistent government. They actively engaged with different conceptualisations of planning and adapted their action perspective – as far as possible – by applying different strategies and associated situated, place- and time-bound roles. They approached their interaction with planners as a role-playing game. With situated roles, they reinforced their strategies to create space for their projects. These roles were used to break through, question or supplement the municipal planning system. The fact that this also has a price is suggested by the fact that the initiatives that were more facilitated by planners conformed more strongly to more classical planning strategies than other initiatives.

Discussion

The Rotterdam 2006-2018 case study shows that the interaction between municipal planning and bottom-up initiatives is determined both by the diversity of worldviews and action perspectives of the initiatives and by the way in which the municipality thinks about planning with and for bottom-up initiatives. A better understanding of this diversity and pluralism (multiformity) and a more complete picture of it is an important prerequisite for realising the potential of these initiatives.

A dialectic of conceptualisations: the pluralistic contribution of urban agriculture initiatives

The plurality of worldviews and action perspectives in bottom-up initiatives in the field of urban agriculture translates into a diversity of ways in which they contribute to urban planning. These contributions take place at three levels:
1) Physical-spatial: initiatives provide physical interventions that introduce food production as a function in the city's public outdoor space, and in its wake also a place for social interaction and knowledge exchange.
2) Professional: initiatives influence the image, idea and expectations of urban green public space and develop other ways of planning that space bottom-up, from idea to realisation.
3) Political and social: initiatives challenge the principles on which we as a society base the design of space and often implicitly criticise the prevailing social rules and norms. This gives the initiatives a political dimension.
When parts of the public outdoor space are designed through bottom-up civic initiatives, spatial, professional and political choices about the design of the city become visible and open to discussion. In this context, food supply is sometimes, but certainly not always, the political theme. It is a broadening of the social debate with spatial means. From this perspective, it is important to give this diversity, this pluralism, a place in the city, regardless of the social and cultural contributions that these initiatives also make.

The municipal planning of urban agriculture initiatives can be interpreted as a dialectic of conceptualisations. Firstly between different conceptualisations of planning embedded in the municipal organisational structure of which the planning department is a part, and secondly between these conceptualisations and bottom-up conceptualisations of planning. This dialectic between municipal planners and initiators can be seen as the process of creating space for prefigurations in planning, that is is played out in the planning process: in the (strategies of) initiating, shaping and anchoring of urban agriculture.

A parallel municipal planning reality

The Rotterdam 2006-2018 case study shows how municipal planning sought ways to integrate the emergence of urban agriculture initiatives into the planning of the city. This proved to be no easy task. The reasons for this lie in the tension between, on the one hand, the organisational structure of the municipality and existing policy frameworks and planning practices and, on the other hand, innovative policy intentions in the field of urban agriculture. The diversity of the urban agriculture initiatives themselves also played a role. The ways in which planners dealt with this reflect the different conceptualisations of planning that coexist within the municipality.
One could say that an "alternative planning future" was being tried out, a form of prefiguration of a different way of planning that existed alongside current policy. In this parallel planning reality, Collaborative and Post-structuralist conceptualisations of planning were experimented with in order to get a grip on the diversity and plurality of initiatives. Interpreted as a form of Prefigurative planning its approach can be characterised through three features: 1) the planner as facilitator; 2) a focus on creating conditions; 3) a pluralist multidisciplinary approach. However, it was not possible to break with the Rational and Neoliberal perspective that attempts to capture the contribution of initiatives in financial terms of yield, revenue model and aesthetic terms of final image and tidiness. The tension between the two had to be constantly mediated by the planners involved, who often adopted a Pragmatic attitude in the implementation of the policy, focusing on the here and now and less on the bigger picture or the long-term vision. The way in which the municipality facilitated initiatives both stimulated and inhibited their innovative character. This parallel reality continues to exist to this day.

Relevant conceptualisations for planning bottom-up initiatives

The lessons from the Rotterdam 2006-2018 case study can be translated in a number of ways into more consistent and targeted planning of and with urban agriculture initiatives. The study suggests a number of possible lines of thought, each with its own challenges and dilemmas.

The range of Rotterdam conceptualisations of planning that now coexist are not so much competing ideas as complementary strategies for navigating the current complex reality of Rotterdam planning. Greater awareness of these coexisting ideas about planning, and the implications they have for the way bottom-up initiatives are approached, treated and involved, opens the way for conscious choices to be made about how and when to involve these initatives.
In relation to this, the prefigurative value of urban agriculture initiatives has been overlooked until now. Prefigurative planning can be conceptualised as planning that aims to strengthen a city's resilience by realising and testing possible, and seemingly impossible, futures. Urban agriculture initiatives can play an important role in this, and already do, but they are not always seen in this light, let alone approached in this way in planning. By consciously making room and planning for initiatives that explore possible futures for the city, even or especially if they are critical of current planning, municipal planning can gain valuable knowledge. Planning could focus on creating the right conditions for the emergence of such initiatives (through self-organisation), with less emphasis on use of certain means and more on the goals to which these initiatives contribute. This does require trust on the part of the government and relinquishing a certain degree of control over the end result.

In addition to the dilemma between control and trust, there is also a tension between equal treatment and equal access to (government) resources on the one hand, and a need for differentiation and tailor-made solutions for initiatives that make a special contribution on the other. A tailor-made approach to initiatives might do justice to the specific character of each initiative, but raises questions to its viability and its legitimacy. It would results in a mosaic of tailor-made administrative arrangements parallel to the traditional municipal planning apparatus. The urban agriculture planning practice studied in Rotterdam already resembles such a mosaic, with the essential difference that it was not guided by a vision; there is no central control from municipal planning. Nor have the lessons learned from various – sometimes successful – approaches tried out in Rotterdam been recorded and incorporated into policy.

Given the tension between this structure and the parallel reality of new inclusive conceptualisations of planning, direction and vision should come from a planning actor who knows how to navigate this tension. This 'planner as facilitator'; a civil servant or independent professional, should have personal commitment and a clear mandate to colour outside the lines if necessary.
This director, curator or broker can act as a representative and guardian of a shared vision, developed together with bottom-up initiatives. Within the framework of such a jointly developed vision, the municipality can collaborate with urban agriculture initiatives on common goals in the longer term.

However, a fair, tailor-made approach does require a change in the working culture within the municipality, with long-term commitment from the civil servants involved, a good municipal memory, and scope for civil servants to act in the spirit of legislation and regulations and with a focus on goals. Also, the question of representation and its underlying ideas of democracy needs to be addressed by explicating different ideas about and expectations of democracy and the role of planners and civic initiators in it.

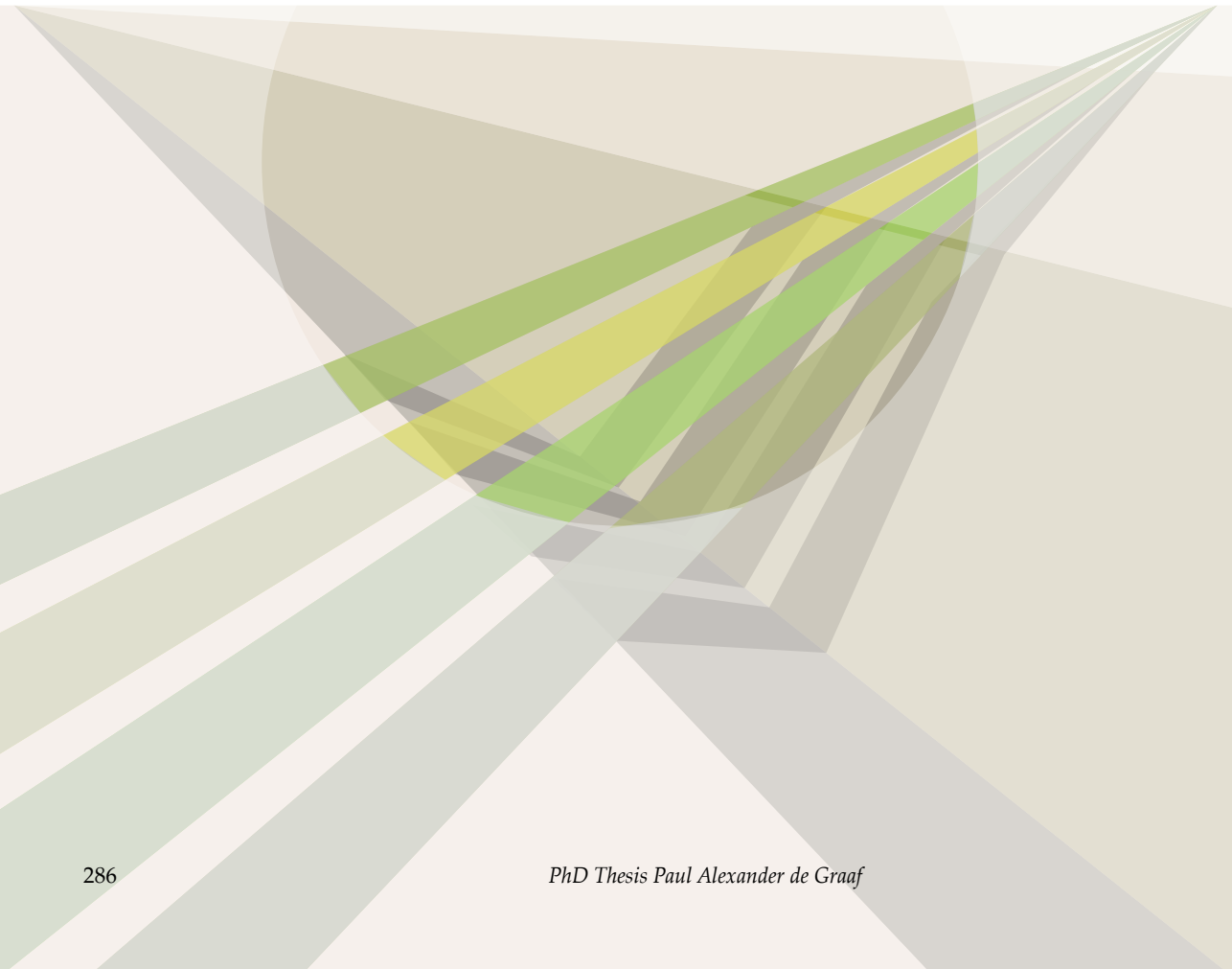
Finally, it is important to remain vigilant about the conforming influence of excessive government interference from planning on the innovative, exploratory nature of bottom-up initiatives.

Next steps

Urban agriculture initiatives challenge municipal spatial planning to think and act differently, but they also contribute ideas about how this could be done and try them out in practice. In doing so, they engage in a form of prefigurative planning that is already being considered in theory but is not yet widely used in municipal planning. Although there are practical and structural limitations, the experiences examined in this study show that it is possible to make room to try out innovative ideas for urban planning in practice, taking into account the complex, multifaceted reality.

In order for these experiments to find their way into mainstream planning municipal organisations have to open up to changes in the roles and responsibilities of planning and other departments, and commit to the outcomes of these experiments. The implementation of Adaptive framework rules might help to strike a balance between accountability and freedom for civic initiatives to prefigure alternatives. This framework could contribute to the development of a workable interface that in practical terms mediates between surviving in the now and living the 'not yet', and might make the existence of many civic initiators less precarious.

In any case, under the conditions described above, initiators can be equal partners in planning. It may help if initiators work together more closely. It is not necessary to label them as planners in order to recognise them as creative co-designers of new conceptualisations of planning and of a new planning practice in which the impossible is made possible, even if only for a certain time in a certain place.



Acknowledgements

Conducting a PhD research in your spare time is also a form of trying the impossible; it only took me 10 years. Along the way I met many people that supported, inspired or simply put up with me in different ways. I would like to thank a few of them.

To start with, my thanks go out to all the planners, civil servants and initiators who opened up for an interview and highlighted the pleasant and less pleasant aspects of the processes they were involved in. It was my pleasure. I hope I have done justice to your contributions. All interpretations are my own responsibility. I am aware of their limitations.

My deep thanks to my supervisors Han Wiskerke, Arnold van der Valk and Jan Willem van der Schans for inviting me into the academic world and encouraging me as a practitioner to do this PhD. This would have been impossible, if not for your support and guidance: Han as my promotor, who always had the main thrust of the research in mind even when I myself did not see it and who gave the right advice at the right moments and had my back when I needed it; Arnold as an indispensable guide in the field of urban (food) planning, planology and planning theory who gradually raised the bar for me academically, always with a smile; and Jan Willem as fellow traveler and expert on urban agriculture in Rotterdam, who challenged me to take a fresh look at the movement I thought I knew so well. Thanks to the chemistry between you, I always enjoyed your supervision and the discussions we had, even at times when the critique was considerable.

Thanks to my reviewers for agreeing to read my thesis, taking me seriously and demanding a bit more than I thought I had in me.

I would also like to thank my colleagues at Rural Sociology (RSO) for providing an academic home with all the conversations and exchanges during Research Days and, of course, the summer outings and Christmas dinners I was able to attend over the past 10 years. I regret having been absent most of the other times. That is a disadvantage of being an external PhD student, especially from faraway Rotterdam.

An exception was the CSPS FoodCluster meeting, which I attended more frequently for a few years. Thanks to all Food Cluster members I met during this time. I enjoyed participating in the open, respectful and supportive dialogue with you discussing each other's work. I never shared my own work (until my mock defence) but it really helped to develop my academic awareness at a crucial time in the PhD process. The various courses I took at RSO, most recently the RSO Summer School with Engin Isin, were also formative, not in the least because of the course guidance provided by the department. Thanks also to Marleen Buizer for introducing me to Prefigurative theory.

I was lucky to receive external feedback on my work at various times. Specifically, I would like to thank Wendy Tan for her extensive written

review of my first draft chapter disguised as a paper, and confirming the value of the empirical approach. And a special thanks to Birgitte Louise Hansen for many informal consultations at our home and the inspiration from her work on the architect as practitioner.

Thanks also to all the people involved in the urban agriculture movement, both during and after the period of study, that I for various reasons did not interview for this study, especially (most of) my co-founders of Eetbaar Rotterdam, the Rotterdam Forest Garden Network and Vereniging Groen010 (including the Harde Pit). Working together with you has helped shape me as a person and I hope some of the knowledge we collectively developed is reflected in this PhD.

The local and international network around Vereniging Groen010 and the EdiCitNet project, in which I participated in the years 2021-2024, offered me the opportunity to present, test and exchange ideas. Thanks for the support, feedback and interest I received over the years.

In general, thanks to everyone who unsuspectingly asked about my research and ended up hearing the whole story (including friends and family).

Thanks to my paranymphs for ceremonial support.

My colleagues from Cooperative Ondergrond deserve a special mention. Firstly, for being such wonderful, supportive colleagues and secondly for the joy of working together in the cooperative: our own prefiguration of a society organised like a food forest.

Speaking of which, this thesis focuses on humans and their doings in their urban habitats. However, none of these doings would be possible without many non-human beings, that we tend to forget about. Although implicitly, an awareness of the ecosystems we are all part of and that connect us all is fundamental to the challenges this thesis means to address.

Thanks to all the artists whose music I had in heavy rotation while writing (Sun Ra, for one) and a specific thanks to Ray Fuego for kind permission to quote his lyrics.

Finally, I would like to thank my family, Birgitte and Bjørn. Thank you for your love and patience with me and for giving me the space to retreat behind my laptop on holiday to bring this crazy project to a successful conclusion. Bjørn, thank you for your good-natured and witty presence, and for proofreading my thesis (you outshine AI). Our conversations on tabletop roleplaying games were an inspiration. Birgitte, you are my partner in life and love. Your emotional support and creative and intellectual inspiration were really indispensable. On to new endeavours.

With the both of you, nothing seems impossible.

Appendix 1
Interview protocols

(in Dutch)

Interview Protocol 1 Governmental planners Rotterdam

Korte toelichting op het onderzoek:

Dit onderzoek heeft als doel inzicht te krijgen in hoe voedselproductie in de stad (of stadslandbouw) de planning van de stad beïnvloedt (of niet) en wat we daar van kunnen leren.

Rol van dit interview:

Dit interview is onderdeel van een aantal interviews met planners binnen de gemeente Rotterdam waarin ik een beeld wil krijgen van het Rotterdamse stedelijke, ruimtelijke planningsklimaat, van de planningscontext waarin de afgelopen 10 jaar verschillende stadslandbouwinitiatieven zijn gerealiseerd.

Gidsvragen:

Rol van de planner en planningsklimaat

Wat is uw functie (geweest) bij de gemeente Rotterdam? Achtergrond?

Hoe ziet u de rol van stedenbouw en planning in Rotterdam? (evt ingaan op het verschil tussen stedenbouw en planologie in relatie tot het meer algemene planning)

Is er een Rotterdamse benadering van stedenbouw en planning in Rotterdam? Kunt u die karakteriseren? En wat is uw houding t.o.v. deze benadering?

Planning en burgerinitiatief

De laatste jaren wordt er veel gesproken over de opkomst van burgerinitiatieven, de participatiesamenleving e.d. Ziet u dit terug in uw/jouw praktijk en zo ja, hoe?

Wat is volgens u de invloed van de opkomst van burgerinitiatieven in de planning in Rotterdam?

Heeft u te maken gehad met burgerinitiatieven op het gebied van voedselproductie in de stad en zo ja, welke? Wat voor rol nemen deze projecten in in bovenstaande discussie? Onderscheiden stadslandbouwinitiatieven zich van andere burgerinitiatieven? Of zijn ze typisch voor de manier waarop burgerinitiatieven een invloed hebben (of niet) op planning?

In hoeverre verandert hierdoor de rol van de planner in het plannen van de stad?

Context: voorbeelden van elders

Hoe ziet u de ontwikkeling van het vak, met name de positie van de planner?

Zijn er voorbeelden van planning (benaderingen, beleid, afdelingen, mensen) in andere steden die u aansprekend, intrigerend of inspirerend vindt? *Verifiëren of dit stedelijke planning in het algemeen betreft of om omgaan met burgerinitiatieven of voedselproductie in het bijzonder*.

Interview Protocol 2 Municipal planners involved in urban food planning

Korte toelichting op het onderzoek:

Dit onderzoek heeft als doel inzicht te krijgen in hoe voedselproductie in de stad (of stadslandbouw) de planning van de stad beïnvloedt (of niet) en wat we daar van kunnen leren.

Rol van dit interview:

Dit interview is onderdeel van een aantal interviews met planners binnen de gemeente Rotterdam die betrokken zijn (geweest) bij de realisatie van stadslandbouw / voedselproductie in de stad. Hierin wil ik een beeld krijgen hoe ruimtelijk beleid is ontwikkeld en gerealiseerd voor voedselproductie in de stad Rotterdam en hoe de opkomst van dit soort burgerinitiatieven op het gebied van voedselproductie in de stad het denken over de ruimtelijke planning van de stad hebben beïnvloed (of niet).

Gidsvragen:

Rol van de planner en planningsklimaat

Wat is uw functie (geweest) bij de gemeente Rotterdam? Achtergrond?

Hoe ziet u de rol van stedenbouw en planning in Rotterdam? (evt ingaan op het verschil tussen stedenbouw en planologie in relatie tot het meer algemene planning)

Betrokkenheid bij stadslandbouw

Wanneer bent u als planner in aanraking gekomen met het fenomeen stadslandbouw? Wat was de aanleiding?

Welke projecten bent u bij betrokken geweest? *(doorvragen aan de hand van kaart of lijst initiatieven)*

Wat was uw rol als planner (*handhavend; faciliterend; richtinggevend*)?
Waren er ook andere planners en/of andere diensten bij betrokken (*namen? mogelijk te interviewen?)*

Kunt u iets vertellen over uw ervaringen met verschillende initiatiefnemers *(achterliggende vraag: ziet u deze actoren als partners voor de overheid, als burgers, als marktpartijen, als activisten*)?

Waar heeft u als planner invloed op gehad? Wat ziet u als een succes? Wat ziet u als een mislukking? (*doorvragen naar redenen waarom*)

Planningsbeleid (voor zover dit niet al aan bod is gekomen):

Wat is volgens u de invloed van de opkomst van burgerinitiatieven in de planning in Rotterdam?

Wat voor rol nemen burgerinitiatieven op het gebied van voedselproductie in de stad in in bovenstaande discussie? Onderscheiden stadslandbouwinitiatieven zich van andere burgerinitiatieven? Of zijn ze typisch voor de manier waarop burgerinitiatieven een invloed hebben (of niet) op planning?

Wat was de invloed van de politiek? Wat was de invloed van andere diensten?

Waren er andere stakeholders die invloed hadden op de ruimtelijke planning van stadslandbouw? *(bijv. corporaties)*

In hoeverre verandert hierdoor de rol van de planner in het plannen van de stad? In hoeverre is uw rol veranderd? *(doorvragen: in de loop van 1 project of in de loop van de tijd?)*

Context: voorbeelden van elders

Hoe ziet u de ontwikkeling van het vak, met name de positie van de planner? Ziet u dit ook terug in de relatie tot burgerinitiatieven. En zo ja, hoe?

Zijn er voorbeelden van planning (benaderingen, beleid, afdelingen, mensen) in andere steden die u aansprekend, intrigerend of inspirerend vindt? *Verifiëren of dit stedelijke planning in het algemeen betreft of om omgaan met burgerinitiatieven of voedselproductie in het bijzonder*.

Interview Protocol 3 Initiators Urban Agriculture

Korte toelichting op het onderzoek:

Dit onderzoek heeft als doel inzicht te krijgen in hoe voedselproductie in de stad (of stadslandbouw) de planning van de stad beïnvloedt (of niet) en wat we daar van kunnen leren.

Rol van dit interview:

In dit interview wil ik een beeld krijgen van uw initiatief, uw ideeën over de rol van uw initiatief in de stad, hoe de totstandkoming van het initiatief op locatie is verlopen en de rol van planning, met name de rol van gemeentelijke en zelfstandige planners/ontwerpers hierin.

Gidsvragen:

Organisatie en rol van geïnterviewde hierin

Wat is uw beroep? Wat is uw achtergrond?

Wat is uw rol binnen het initiatief?
Wanneer is het initiatief ontstaan? Hoe is het tot stand gekomen?

Wat was het doel bij aanvang? Wat is het doel nu?

Ziet u zich als burger(initiatief), als ondernemer(sinitiatief) of als professionele non-profit?

Hoe ziet en ervaart u de gemeente *(bijv. als partner, als neutrale handhaver, als instituut dat veranderd moet worden)*? (doorvragen naar verschillende ervaringen, met verschillende diensten, en door de tijd heen)

Locatie & planvorming

Hoe heeft u de huidige locatie gevonden?

Waar moest de locatie aan voldoen?

Wie heeft het plan gemaakt voor de locatie? Hoe is dit planvorming verlopen? Wie zijn betrokken bij het proces? *Specifiek doorvragen naar rol planners al dan niet van de gemeente*

Wat was nodig om de locatie in gebruik te nemen en wat was de rol van de gemeente hierbij (financieel; wetgevend/handhavend)? *Specifiek doorvragen naar afdeling stedenbouw en planning.*

Heeft u eerder op een andere locatie gezeten? *Zo ja, bovenstaande vragen herhalen*

Visie op voedselproductie in de stad

Hoe ziet u uw initiatief in relatie tot andere initiatieven op het gebied van voedselproductie in de stad? Is er uitwisseling en/of samenwerking en zo ja, met wie? Hoe was dit bij oprichting?

Hoe ziet u uw initiatief over 10 jaar? Hoe ziet u voedselproductie in Rotterdam over 10 jaar?

Interview Protocol 4 Municipal civil servants involved in urban agriculture project

Korte toelichting op het onderzoek:

Dit onderzoek heeft als doel inzicht te krijgen in hoe voedselproductie in de stad (of stadslandbouw) de planning van de stad beïnvloedt (of niet) en wat we daar van kunnen leren, specifiek de gang van zaken in project ..... .

Rol van dit interview:

Dit interview is onderdeel van een aantal interviews met ambtenaren die als project managers binnen de gemeente Rotterdam die betrokken zijn (geweest) bij de realisatie van een specifiek stadslandbouwproject / betrokken waren bij de Denktank Stadslandbouw. Hierin wil ik een beeld krijgen hoe ruimtelijk beleid is ontwikkeld en gerealiseerd voor voedselproductie in de stad Rotterdam en hoe de opkomst van dit soort burgerinitiatieven op het gebied van voedselproductie in de stad het denken over de ruimtelijke planning van de stad hebben beïnvloed (of niet).

Gidsvragen:

Rol van de ambtenaar

Wat is uw functie (geweest) bij de gemeente Rotterdam? Achtergrond?

Hoe ziet u de rol van stedenbouw en planning in Rotterdam? (evt ingaan op het verschil tussen stedenbouw en planologie in relatie tot het meer algemene planning)

Betrokkenheid bij stadslandbouw

Wanneer bent u als ambtenaar in aanraking gekomen met het fenomeen stadslandbouw? Wat was de aanleiding?

Welke projecten bent u bij betrokken geweest? *(doorvragen aan de hand van kaart of lijst initiatieven)*

Wat was uw rol (*handhavend; faciliterend; richtinggevend*)?

Waren er ook andere planners en/of andere diensten bij betrokken (*namen? mogelijk te interviewen?)*

Kunt u iets vertellen over uw ervaringen met verschillende initiatiefnemers *(achterliggende vraag: ziet u deze actoren als partners voor de overheid, als burgers, als marktpartijen, als activisten*)?

Waar heeft u als ambtenaar invloed op gehad? Wat ziet u als een succes? Wat ziet u als een mislukking? (*doorvragen naar redenen waarom*)

Planningsbeleid (voor zover dit niet al aan bod is gekomen):

Wat is volgens u de invloed van de opkomst van burgerinitiatieven in de planning in Rotterdam?

Wat voor rol nemen burgerinitiatieven op het gebied van voedselproductie in de stad in in bovenstaande discussie? Onderscheiden stadslandbouwinitiatieven zich van andere burgerinitiatieven? Of zijn ze typisch voor de manier waarop burgerinitiatieven een invloed hebben (of niet) op planning?

Wat was de invloed van de politiek? Wat was de invloed van andere diensten?

Waren er andere stakeholders die invloed hadden op de ruimtelijke planning van stadslandbouw? *(bijv. corporaties)*

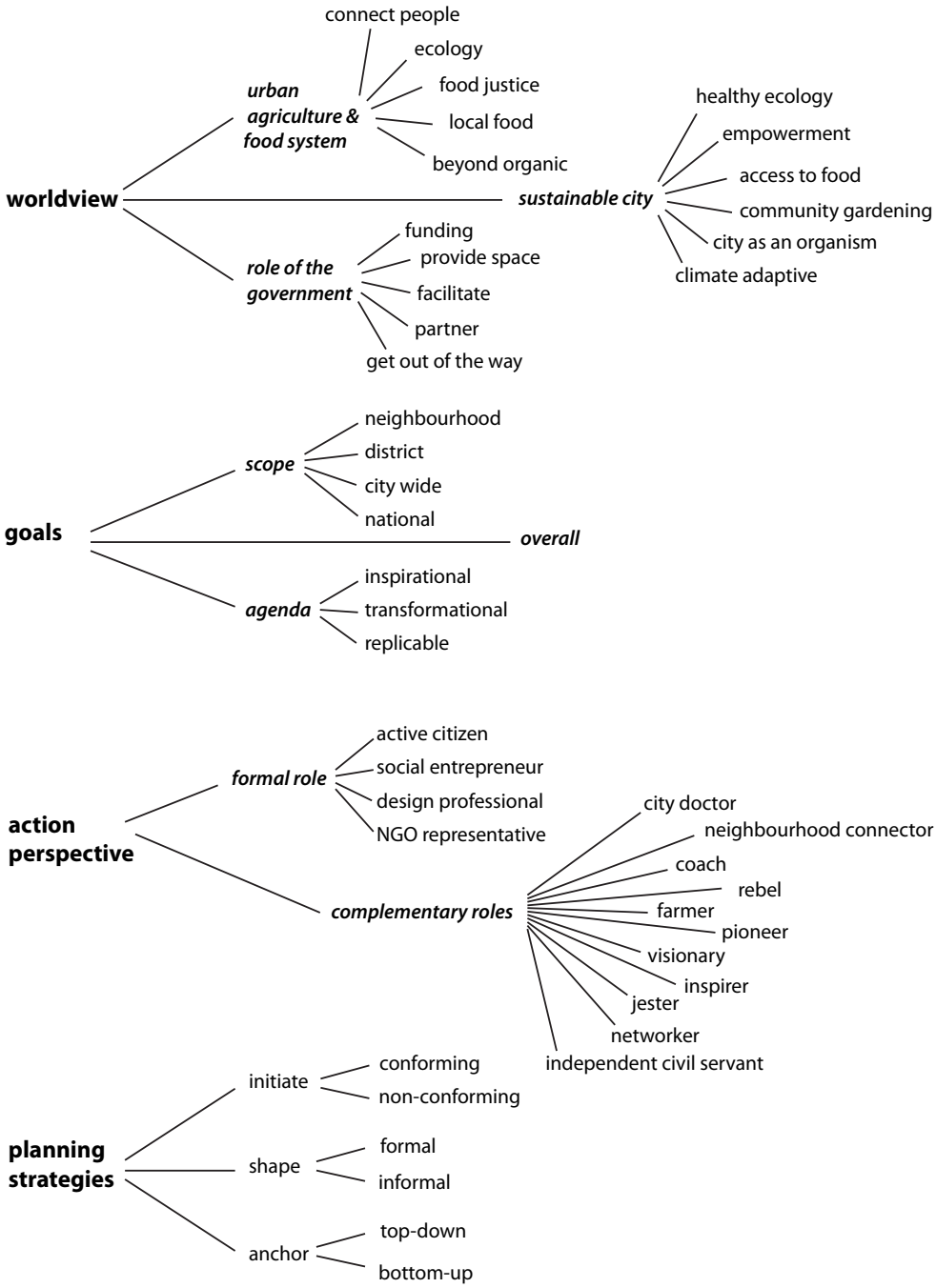
In hoeverre is uw rol veranderd? *(doorvragen: in de loop van 1 project of in de loop van de tijd?)*

Context: voorbeelden van elders

Hoe ziet u de ontwikkeling van het vak, met name de positie van de ambtenaar in ruimteiljke processen? Ziet u dit ook terug in de relatie tot burgerinitiatieven. En zo ja, hoe?

Appendix 2
Coding scheme

Coding tree for the interviews with urban agriculture initiators



Paul Alexander de Graaf
Wageningen School of Social Sciences (WASS)
Completed Training and Supervision Plan

Name of the learning activity	Department/Institute	Year	ECTS*
A) Project related competences			
A1 Managing a research project			
WASS PhD Introduction	WASS	2016	1
Research Methodology. From topic to proposal	WASS	2016	4
Writing research proposal	RSO, WASS	2017	6
Qualitative Data Analysis	WASS	2017	2.5
'Planning urban food together. Theoretical approaches to urban food planning practice in a complex, pluralistic society'	Association of European Schools of Planning (AESOP) Sustainable Food Planning Conference, Coventry	2017	1
'Engaging urban food initiatives in planning: Urban food planning in a complex, pluralistic society'	AESOP Sustainable Food Planning PhD Workshop, Almere	2019	1
A2 Integrating research in the corresponding discipline			
Critical Perspectives on Social Theory	WASS	2020	4
B) General research related competences			
B1 Placing research in a broader scientific context			
CSPS Writing Retreat	CSPS	2022	1
'Dealing with difference'	WASS PhD Day	2023	0.5
Democracy in Agriculture and Food Provisioning: A Citizenship Lens	WASS	2025	3
Scientific Writing	Wageningen in'to Languages	2025	2
B2 Placing research in a societal context			
'Stadslandbouw als planning'	Stadsmakerscongres 2025, Rotterdam	2025	0.5
C) Career related competences/personal development			
C1 Employing transferable skills in different domains/careers			
Teaching students in sustainable urban design (ON3 course)	TU Delft	2016-2017	2
EdiCitNet Living Lab Rotterdam	Vereniging Groen010 / EdiCitNet Horizon 2020	2022-2024	4
Total			**32.5**

*One credit according to ECTS is on average equivalent to 28 hours of study load

Authorship statement

PhD candidate's name : Paul Alexander de Graaf
First promotor : Prof.dr.ir. J.S.C. Wiskerke
Title of PhD thesis : Trying the impossible. Urban agriculture as an alternative planning reality
Date of public defence : June 2026

Chapter I *Introduction to the research*
The general research question and its general scientific and social perspective were developed in conversation with my promotor and co-promotors. I delineated the research question, positioned it in the current scientific literature and described its potential social impact. I revised the text one time, after a round of comments from my promotor and co-promotors.

Chapter II *Theoretical framework*
The main literature concerning general planning theory and the notion of conceptualisations of planning was suggested by one of my co-promotors. I developed the theoretical framework that applied this planning theory to the research question and found additional theoretical sources. I revised and refined this theoretical framework one time after comments of my promotor and co-promotors and added some references on their suggestion.

Chapter III *Methodology*
I developed a first draft methodology myself, and discussed and refined this in different stages of the research with my promotor and co-promotors.

Chapter IV *Municipal planning of urban agriculture*
The first analytical chapter was developed in three stages. First an early much abbreviated version of Chapter IV was part of a paper for a conference. This paper was reviewed by external reviewers, as well as by my promotor and co-promotors. Subsequently a first version of Chapter IV was written. This chapter was revised and refined once after comments of my promotor and co-promotors.

Chapter V *The planning practice of urban agriculture initiatives*
The second analytical chapter was developed in three stages. A first version of Chapter V was part of the same paper mentioned in relation to Chapter IV. This paper was reviewed by external reviewers, as well as by my promotor and co-promotors. Subsequently Chapter V was thoroughly rewritten on the basis of these reviews, including additional interview data. This second version was revised and refined once after comments of my promotor and co-promotors.

Chapter VI *The interaction between municipal spatial planners and urban agriculture initiatives*
The third and last analytical chapter was developed in two stages. Chapter VI was written in its entirety and was revised and refined once after comments of my promotor and co-promotors.

Chapter VII *Discussion and Conclusions*
This final concluding chapter was developed in two stages. A first version was written on the basis of discussions of my findings with my promotor and co-promotors. This draft was refined and expanded once after comments of my promotor and co-promotors.

For the translation of the original Dutch manuscript to English I made use of Deepl Translate to provide a draft version, which I edited. No other AI language tools were used.

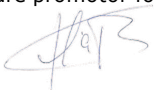
Date: 01-07-2026

Signature PhD candidate



Paul Alexander de Graaf, 01-07-2026

Signature promotor for agreement



Prof. Dr. Ir. J.S.C. Wiskerke, 01-07-2026

Colophon

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