

# abstract

*How would it be if collective appropriation was an essential part of a spatial strategy?*

*Playgrounds of commons* refer to a mix of top – down and bottom-up spatial strategies and design interventions taking as a starting point that Rotterdam South can be seen, and (re)designed as an heterotopia, where as Shane (2003) underlines some armatures should be designed top – down, whereas leaving freedom for others to occur in a more spontaneous way. The spatial strategy is based upon the empowerment of collective appropriation through leisure, food and crafts. More specifically, it discusses an alternative way of approaching urban renewal in deprived areas of Rotterdam South establishing an alternative accord. What is important to highlight is that this project does not only focus on upgrading housing stock in order to attract newcomers and empower the concept of “mixed neighbourhoods”. On the other hand, it does not emphasise the need of creating connecting infrastructures between the North and the South so as to connect unemployed people from the South to the North labour market and available vacancies. On the contrary, the project aims at reinforcing not only North – South connection, but most importantly East- West and creating opportunities for local employment in the South. In that sense, design intervention and strategies aim at making South a service area and a productive hub, by reinventing underused lands or areas under transformation, such as the riverfront. That signifies a transition to more integrative design and decision making processes.

A key element of this project is that starting from the theoretical framework, moving to the site analysis and the development of a neighbourhood game, it puts forward a dual strategy: hacking institutions – hacking space, acknowledging the power of space as a software and finally concludes with the design of four key projects and a matrix of recommendations regarding appropriation and urban renewal processes in terms of form, programme, tools and platforms.

## Playgrounds of commons

Spatial interventions for collective appropriation towards liveability and diversity in Rotterdam South. The case of Oud Charlois and Waalhaven area

### Part 8//

Conclusions, reflection and recommendations

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I would like to thank my first mentor **Victor**, who inspired me from the first time I met him in my Q2, both as a designer and researcher. I really appreciate the time that he dedicated to our meetings, his great – always critical - ideas, his visualisation remarks and the pressure for detail and creativity that made me challenge myself. I couldn't ask for a more professional and insightful mentor. Also, I would like to thank **Diego**, my second mentor, who had a valuable contribution to my project since the beginning. I am particularly grateful for all the discussions regarding my project and for the planning dimension that he stressed in every meeting. His great ideas from a different perspective, his positive attitude, enthusiasm and encouragement helped me proceed throughout the year. What is more I would like to thank Roberto Cavallo, my external examiner, for his constructive feedback and ideas at critical points of my project. I hope that the result meets their expectations and compensates their efforts, as well.

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I would also like to thank **all the people from Oud Charlois** that helped me with my research and **all the practitioners** that dedicated some of their time to discuss with me on appropriation and inclusive urban design.

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*Meraki*= greek from Turkish *merak*, meaning doing things with devotion and passion.



delft\_2018



**colophon**

**part eight // Conclusions, reflections and recommendations**

TU Delft

Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment

department of Urbanism

research group | design of the urban fabric

group coordinator | Birgit Hausleitner

student | Evangelia (Vaggy) Georgali

student number | 4627229

first mentor | Dr. Victor Muñoz Sanz (Chair of Urban Compositions)

second mentor | Dr. Diego Andres Sepulveda Carmona (Chair of Spatial Planning)

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\* the cover is a synthesis created by the author [figures based on SANAA PEOPLE CUTOUTS, NOUN PROJECT]

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**PREFACE . PART 8. THE END**

The present booklet forms the culmination of the Master in the track of Urbanism at Delft University of Technology. This is the eight part of the graduation project Playgrounds of commons: *Spatial interventions for collective appropriation towards liveability and diversity in Rotterdam South. The case of Oud Charlois and Waalhaven area*. This research and design project is conducted under the supervision of Dr. Ir. Victor Muñoz Sanz and Dr. Ir. Diego Andres Sepulveda-Carmona, starting from September 2017.

The whole research and design process is being presented in 8 different parts, included in separate booklets. Each part and booklet represent crucial moments of the research that present a certain degree of completeness and autonomy (higher or lower depending on the case). However, all the parts greatly depend on one another and manifest the approach and scope of the project. In a nutshell, the concept of presenting my work in different booklets came out of the need and intention of making graspable and useful to other researchers my findings, proposed organisation of information and proposals, both in planning and design level. Thus, some of the booklets have the aspiration of functioning as manuals for similar decision – making and design processes.

All the booklets have the same main format of 25 x 25 cm. and the same dust jacket to retain a connection to one another and support the concept of one project with diverse branches. However, they also have a distinctive colour visible in the internal cover. This colour functions as a colour code mainly representing 3 “colour palettes”: the yellowish the blueish and the pinkish. The yellowish refers mainly to the analysis and understanding (the foundation of the project), the blueish to the intermediate step of vision and participatory approach and the pink “family” is dedicated to the proposed planning and design interventions (Fig.1).

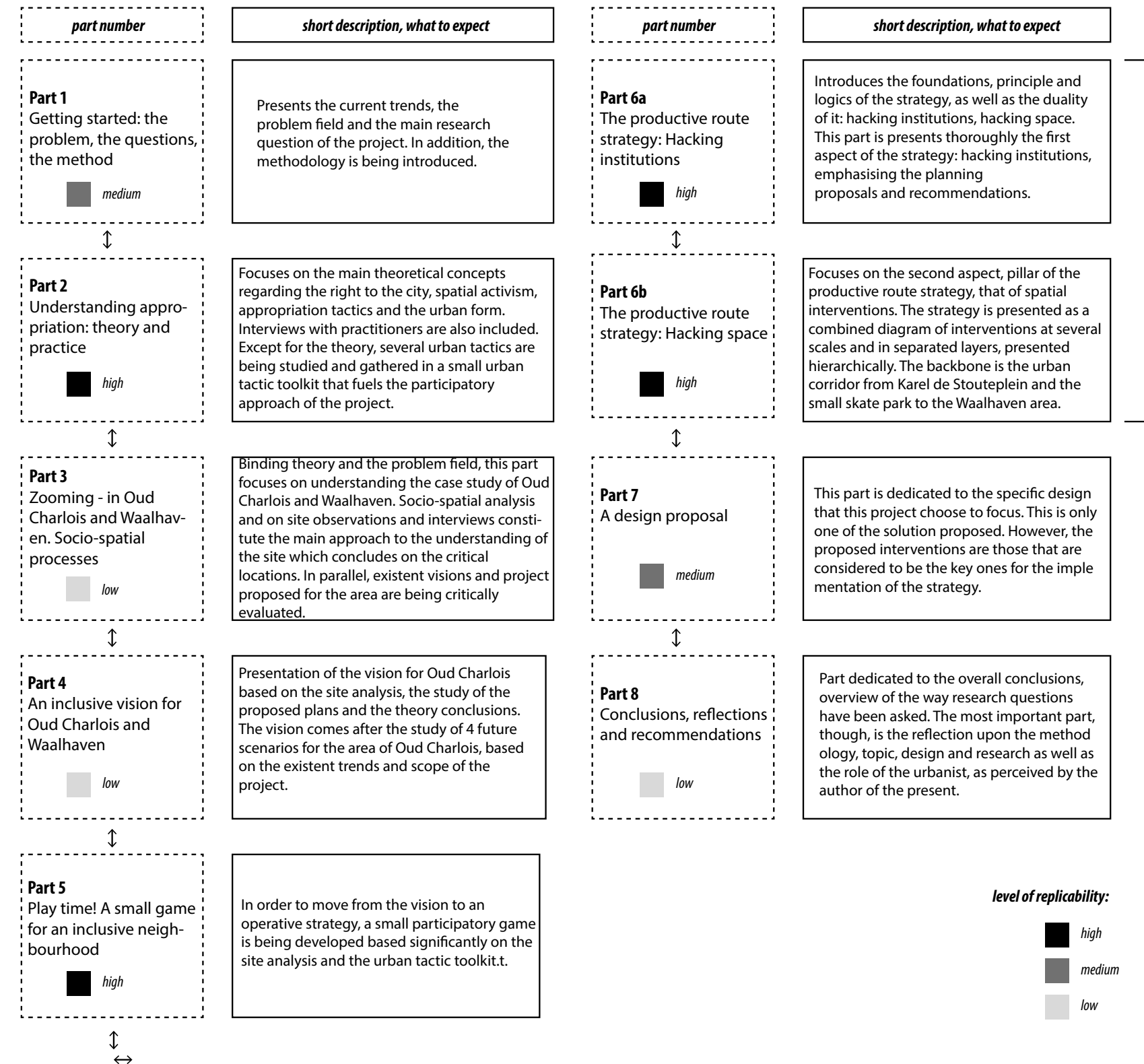
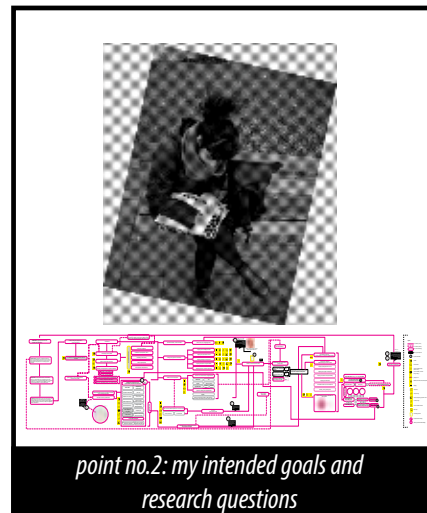


Fig.1: Description of separate parts. Source: edited by the author

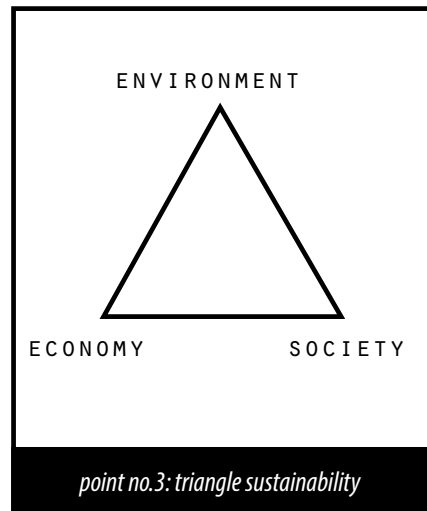


### 1// REFLECTION LINES AND FRAMEWORK

After presenting the main body of this academic research and design project, the intention of this booklet is to present an overview of the main conclusions derived along this journey. The intention is to reflect upon the adopted methodology and the extent up until which the research questions posed in the beginning have been answered. In order to do so, will use some references and framework(s), starting from my own methodology as initially described in Booklet 1. Moreover, I use the triangle of sustainability as a reference framework in order to reflect upon social, economical and environmental contribution of the presented work (the project as a whole). Given the participatory approach of the topic, I make considerable reference to Markus Miessen and his book *The nightmare of participation*,<sup>1</sup> regarding the role of the urbanist.



<sup>1</sup> The book of Miessen has been chosen as a point of reflection as it has been an essential addition to my theoretical framework regarding participation and the role of mediators, going beyond the idea of consensus and possibly outdated concepts of participatory design.



point no.3: triangle sustainability

### 2// RELATION WITH THE RESEARCH GROUP

One of the reasons that I selected the Design of the urban fabrics group is related to the main topics that the group focuses: spatial design interventions, urban composition and the emphasis on liveability and public spaces, through the study and design of the urban form. In addition, the group encourages alternative intakes and approaches to design through patterns, scenarios, simulation and gaming and fieldwork exercises<sup>1</sup>.

Moreover, the nature of my project and the topic are strongly related to the research group's activities. The project deals with the urban fabric at several scales: city, neighbourhood, local (plot, street, and building) towards the formation of a design proposal for a specific neighbourhood and its adjacent waterfront. By proposing a dual strategy of hacking institutions and hacking space, the project puts design at its very core either in institutional terms and governance, or in spatial terms and that of the actual built environment. Therefore, it suggests an alternative way of dealing with urban renewal or regeneration practices in the context of deprived, but culturally diverse environments, under the pressure of gentrification.

Overall, my topic is linked to the research group in terms of 1) scale and the use of urban fabric as a performative base to study various phenomena and practices, 2) methods or techniques that I used and in relation to 3) the growth context given this year in the studio, 4) relevance of topic (arisen from the practice) and the 5) importance of design in several forms and at several stages of the research

<sup>1</sup> See more in the webpage of the Research group: [https://urbanfabrics.weblog.tudelft.nl/graduation\\_project/intro/](https://urbanfabrics.weblog.tudelft.nl/graduation_project/intro/)

Fig.2: Lines of Reflecton. Source: edited by the author

### 3 // RELATION BETWEEN DESIGN AND RESEARCH

In this project, the research mostly focused on understanding the current trends in Rotterdam, the existing urban renewal processes, the proposed visions and plans as well as understanding the site through available literature (history of the place, challenges, statistical data, specific proposals on behalf of other stakeholders, such as municipality, or design offices etc), fieldwork, interview and gaming sessions. Moreover, the research has also been conducted at a more general level in order to understand appropriation and link it to the urban form. In that sense, conclusions fueled my site analysis, either on mapping or on simply understanding emerging synergies or potential, whereas at the same time I investigated how the topic of appropriation is being perceived in urban design theory and practice.

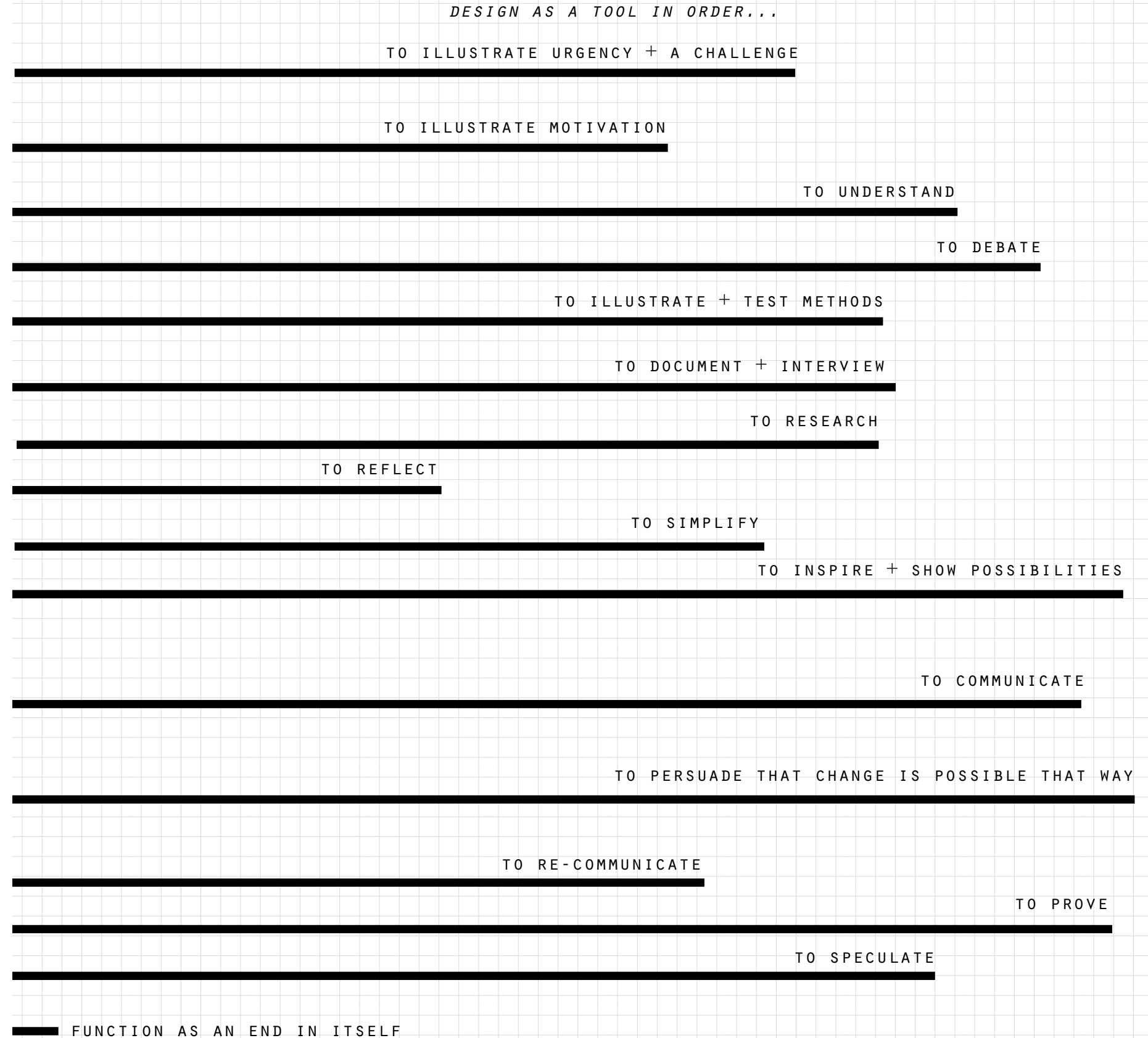
Some illustrative examples of such a relationship between research and design, include the mapping and the drawings I dedicated to present traces of appropriation or the mapping of existent visions in order to unveil their values and driven forces, and the desirable future that they propose. Additionally, research influenced my design in less direct ways, in terms of rethinking about the potential of my site in contrast to previous experiences from the transformation of the South. In particular, while studying Katendrecht as an example of recent urban renewal in the South I started to speculate about the future of Waalhaven and what this could mean for Oud Charlois. Even though the connection to the waterfront was at the back of my mind from the beginning of the project, this research binded with other spatial analysis and the fast overview of some historical facts, lead to some extent to the final design.

What is more, finding and studying relevant official documents, like the one dedicated to the transformation of Waalhaven, functioned as pivotal triggering moments, where research provoked design. In particular, after reading this document<sup>1</sup>, I came across an icon which triggered my attention: the spin - off effect of Waalhaven's transformation to Oud Charlois. That is when I thought that my project should focus on how we can go beyond either "alien" to the local identity projects or small scale projects, and actually use the Waalhaven as a test lab to come closer to Oud Charlois and pursue an alternative strategy positioning active public spaces and leisure on top of the agenda.

Concluding, design and research have been constantly and inevitably interwoven threads, combined in different proportions and adopting different forms depending on the stage of the project. Especially, in the design phase of the project research on the memory, sense of place and historic events became very helpful in binding different streams together.

<sup>1</sup> STADSHAVEN ROTTERDAM. 2009. Gebiedsplan concept januari 2009. Waalhaven-Eemhaven [Online]. Available: <http://stadshavensrotterdam.nl/wpcontent/uploads/2009>

> Fig.3: The role of design in the project. Source: by the author



**Within the current urban renewal plans and trends, what are the spatial interventions and strategies needed and feasible so as to encourage collective appropriation towards liveability and diversity in deprived neighbourhoods in Rotterdam?**

The main research question has been answered through a proposed dual strategy hacking institutions – hacking space that considers changes in planning and governance of high importance in order to create meaningful spatial interventions. Having said that, the strategy is being proposed after the relevant socio-spatial analysis, the study of the current urban renewal plans and trends (through the study and mapping of existing proposals and visions) and the study of the theoretical framework departing from the right to the city and heterotopia and concluding to the study of appropriation tactics. Following that, the productive route strategy emphasising the entrances of Oud Charlois and Waalhaven, focuses on the redesign of the end and start points. In that panorama and having as a starting point that Oud Charlois does not present a well defined centre (especially absent in the West Entrance, Karel de Stouteplein), public spaces, even though sufficient in quantity, were found not connected and often unattractive, anti-social phenomena and unhealthy habits have been observed, as well as a disconnection from a highly potential area, that of Waalhaven, I proposed four projects, as already mentioned. Namely, the first one that deals with the fragmentation in the West entrance and concerns the reactivation of Karel de Stouteplein based on a system of ribbons (existent and new), activators and pavilions aiming to increase gathering points, productivity of the landscape, sports and leisure, with an emphasis on the differentiation of the landscape. The second one, is the Cranesquare that offers a new public square in Waalhaven and a control tower crane over the developments. The third one that offers the opportunity to swim and clear the water coming from river Maas through a swimming pool in Waalhaven. The fourth one is the first housing project in Waalhaven, aiming at reconnecting living and working to the riverscape, embodying modularity and keeping the port industrial identity.

**What is the concept of appropriation in the urban fabric?** The concept of collective appropriation is related to that ability of the urban landscape to provoke the user to experiment and leave his/her own mark, by taking also responsibility about space.

**Which are the spatial conditions that contribute to appropriation of space?**

Temporariness, mobility, permeability, modularity, visual appropriateness and personalisation.

**What are the current approaches, policies and visions to deal with multi-cultural, social diverse and low in liveability neighborhoods in the Netherlands and in Rotterdam, more precisely?**

There have been several policies to deal with deprived neighbourhoods in Rotterdam South. Most recently, the approach is related to state driven gentrification. The answer to this question was given in Booklet 1, with short overview and a timeline of several approaches and the study of Katendrecht's case, which brought to surface that there was a mismatch between the proposed programme and the existent lifestyles.

**What are the definitions of the concept of liveability? What is the current debate on liveability and diversity and on what conditions is taking place?**

There are several definitions of liveability presented in Booklet 2. In the context of this thesis liveability is considered as related to appropriation and that design form that could allow the user to shape his/her own environment based on some design principles, guidelines and form proposed by the designer.

**Which are the spatial conditions that contribute to liveability?**

In order to answer this question I studied several scholars on liveability from J. Jacobs to M. Crawford and several urban tactics related to appropriation.

**Why collective appropriation can encourage diversity and liveability and how?**

The answer to this question can be found in the first and second booklet of my study, but also forms a conclusion of my project. Collective appropriation can increase liveability through experimentation of people with their urban landscape. Such a relation, give them the opportunity to meet in public spaces and raises conflict which with the appropriate design and strategy could lead to increased engagement. Spaces that present permeability, unresolved narrative and encourage modularity and porosity can increase liveability. Such an approach is directly related to giving people responsibility over shared space, but also create spaces that present spatial qualities and stimulate activity. The answer was mainly given through my appropriation toolkit.

**How can everyday practices lead to urban design principles?**

The answer to this question came through the study of best practices, scholars like M. Crawford and the site analysis, as well as evaluation of design proposals towards diversity, like Superkilen Park in Copenhagen. Observation of everyday practices can inform design in the sense of critical – challenging areas, lifestyle of the local population, everyday networks and axis of movement as well as absence of social infrastructure, meeting spots etc.

**What are the planning instruments to secure the long term nature of bottom-up design solutions and empowerment of marginalised groups?**

The answer to this question came through my strategy: hacking institutions and after studying about the system of governance in Rotterdam, and engage myself with the site. As a result, in my thesis, I propose 7 planning recommendations (the bugs) and an alternative phasing in the urban renewal processes. These recommendations are based in the study and evaluation of existent frameworks and mechanisms and the existing conflicts between agents or levels of governance. Experience from other cities and countries, played an important role, whereas the most important change refers to the figure of urban designer and the tools that he/she uses.

**What are the areas of Oud Charlois that are challenging?**

The answer to this question can be found in the Booklet related to the analysis of the area (Booklet 3) and partially in the game booklet (Booklet 5). After my analysis, I came to the conclusion that the entrances of Oud Charlois bounded by natural and artificial barriers form the most challenging areas. There I also identified unattractive, often empty green spaces. Moreover, the areas east of the neighbourhood and close to the dike also present high challenge due to absence of permeable routes and disconnection to the riverfront. What is more, small inner streets present low quality housing, unattractive environment, absence of legibility and concentration of anti-social phenomena, whereas in general the car is dominant, and slow mobility axis are absent. However, I choose to focus on the disconnection between Oud Charlois and the north part of Waalhaven in relation to the dike element and the unpleasant entrances at the west part of the neighbourhood, putting forward the argument of Oud Charlois being bounded between barriers and future developments.

**What are the areas of Oud Charlois that are being appropriated promoting liveability and should be strengthened?**

The answer to this question can be found in the Booklet related to the analysis of the area (Booklet 3) and partially in the game booklet (Booklet 5). Even though open spaces seem to lack in spatial quality and activity, there is a movement of pedestrian and cyclist that should be strengthened and the image of Wolphaestraat (artists' street) should also be encouraged as an example of other street approaches. Following the same line Gouwplein, as a co-created, successful public space can inform future interventions and should be strengthened. Moreover, the industrial identity, sense of place and the relation to fishing in the harbour are aspects that should be also encouraged.

5 // EVALUATION OF THE METHODOLOGY AND THE OVERALL OUTCOME, LEVEL OF REPLICABILITY

My whole methodology can be characterised as a juxtaposition (or knitting) of several layers and the critical decision – making process towards design (See Fig.6 and Fig.7 for the total process followed and the connections between different variables, respectively). As far as the literature overview is concerned, the wideness of scholars, with respect to their study cases and discipline, is one of the main elements of this thesis. My approach borrowed several elements from several scholars at different stages of the project: e.g. Rahul Mehrotra on *kinetic urbanism*, Saskia Sassen on *radicalisation of the local* or Markus Miessen in the role of the architect in the proliferation (and bankruptcy) of participation or Keller Easterling on *space as a software*. The intention has been to cope up with a flexible strategy which brings together urban form, inclusion, appropriation and accessible governance.

Fig.4 summarises the social, environmental and economic contribution of my project, whereas Fig.5 stresses the level of replicability in each section.

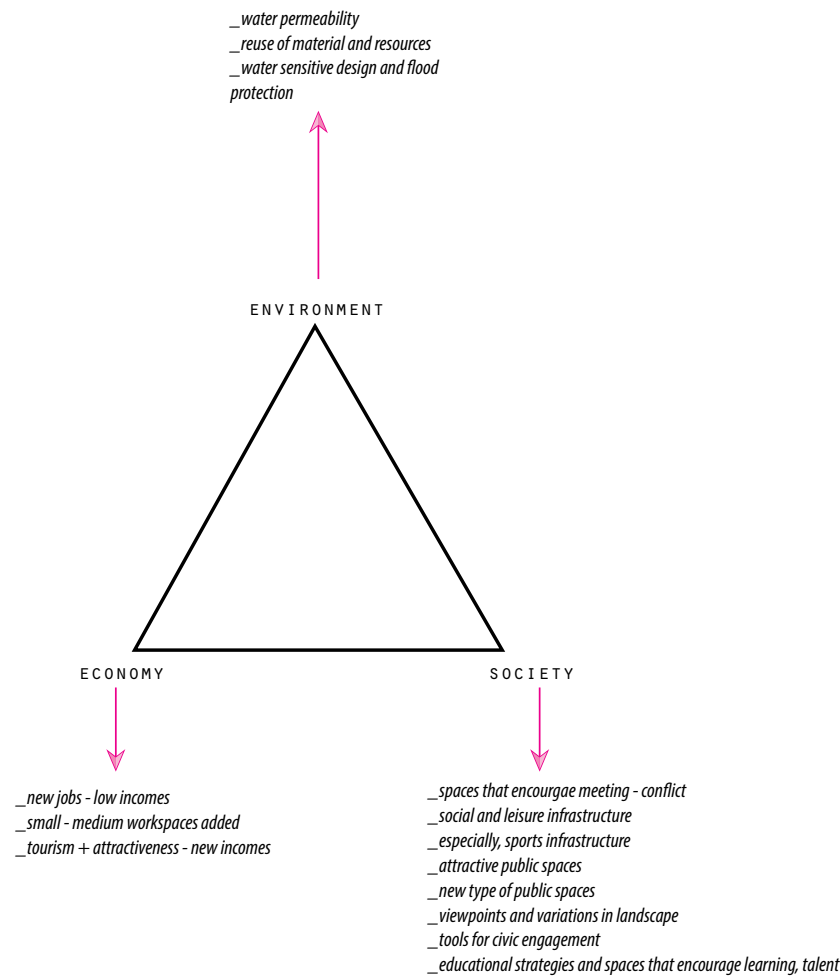


Fig.4: Overall evaluation of the project, based on the sustainability triangle. Source: by the author

>Fig.5: Level of replicability. Source: by the author

LEVEL OF REPLICABILITY OF THE PROJECT

1// Analysis of Rotterdam - problem field

critical reading and understanding of Rotterdam's visions, current condition and applied renewal programs could be used to boost similar projects

2// Interviews with practitioners on appropriation and design

interviews with practitioners on the issues of appropriation and design can form a performative base and also be enriched and lead to autonomous studies (publications) regarding the turn on architecture and urban design and the role of the urban designer, architect

3// Urban tactic toolkit - study of best practices

the toolkit can function itself as a manual to cope with similar challenges and a tool for decision making processes. It can be enriched and modified to answer to more specific cases. It can also become available online and open to user modification through the creation of relevant interfaces.

4// The game

the game can function as an inspiration or a tool for similar projects. Modification of the rules and of the cards would be needed as well as more feedback from the users (players). Altered versions depending on the scale (strategy or design) would be needed. Its main role as a way of debating, discussing, expanding knowledge and imagining possible future remains central.

5// Site analysis

analysis of Oud Charlois could be used as an input to similar projects. Each map's approach could also be used in other cases (e.g. mapping traces of appropriation), that share similar narratives. In any case, additional observation and interviews based mapping or collective mapping could expand the understanding of the urban entity and offer more justification to the central argument.

6// The productive route strategy

the approach to space as a software and the proposed dual strategy of intervening both in institutions and in space could be applied in other cases, always differentiated depending on the context. It is my belief that the strategy, both as a method and as an end product, is one of the parts of my graduation, that embody a high level of replicability. More participation and interaction with stakeholders could expand its applicability. Moreover, justification from scholars like Easterling could add to it (e.g. rumors and gossip as forms of spatiopolitical activism; as tools of spatial strategies).

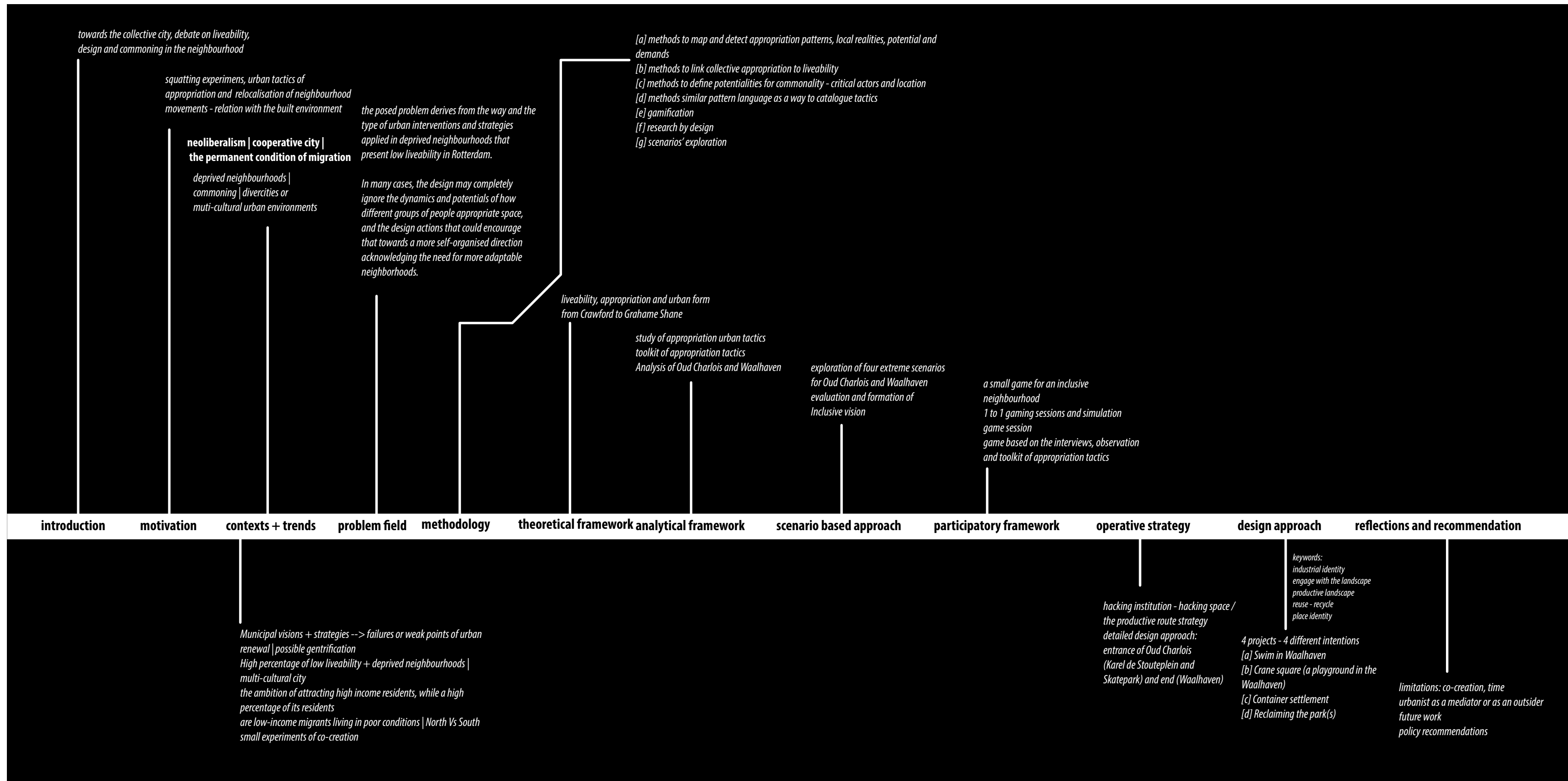
5// Design projects

design proposals could easily be applied in other locations and inform practice. Given to the fact that they are not fixed solutions they carry a high level of replicability, proposing new type of public spaces (E.g. crane as the center of public space), or justification from elements, such as sense of place and memory (e.g. the past of Karel as a more "romantic" public space and its "loss"). Moreover, the design decisions could be also applied in other contexts in order for collective appropriation to empowered.

6// General values

general values that the design promotes can be applied in other cases. Namely, such values - concepts include: water permeability, flexibility, openness, inclusion in design, new types of active public space and living – working spaces in former industrial ports, as well as interventions that offer to people the opportunity to interact and follow the transformation processes (the crane as a kick – off project and its main function as a watchtower). Finally, the importance of hacking institutions with/and in order to hack space is one of the core values of this project that could fuel a whole new trajectory of solutions, projects etc.





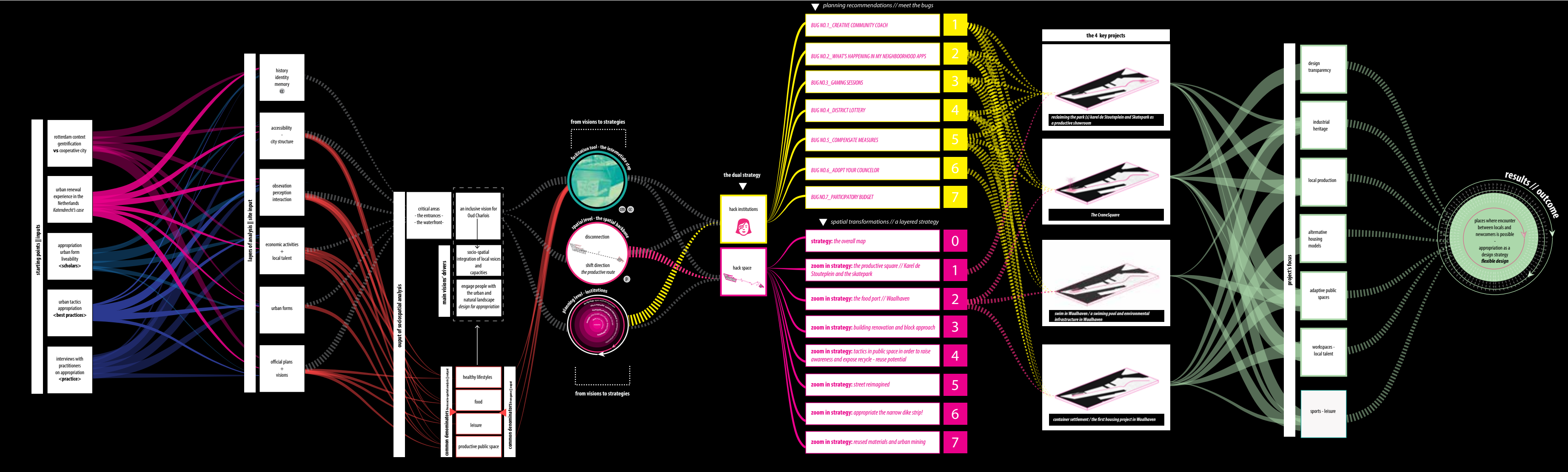


Fig.7: Overall scheme of the project - connections between variables. Source: by the author

“WHEN PARTICIPATION BECOMES CONFLICT, CONFLICT BECOMES SPACE” (MIESSEN, 2010: 93)

Within my project, designer is not only the curator, but is an active actor, a creative community coach, that is not only bounded by office tasks and desk design research – practice, but goes to the field as an outsider and observes, interacts and many times gets ignored or even rejected. And in the end, he/she comes back with a design. A design that may be more top down in some parts, but tries to identify those small cracks that could “hack space”.

Following the hacking line, an urbanist or a designer could also develop the design of institutions and processes, given his/her creative nature, his/her ability to communicate with other disciplines and the tool of visualisation that he/she can use to support and illustrate less spatial concepts.

Finally, through my research I considered my role, mainly, as an interplay between three roles: the student, the researcher – creative community coach and the designer (Fig.8). The first period of the graduation project was mainly dedicated to find a research question and drive my motivation from just a motivation to being an actual project, worth investigating for a year. The second period was mainly dedicated to the analysis of the case study, visiting, observing and researching relevant theoretical concepts and best practices. The third period, I went deeper to the site engagement and contacted several people, while also developed a game for participation. Research did not stop, but focused more on the site, the existent agents involved in governance, and the adopted strategy to hack institutions and space. After evaluating the current conditions and prioritising the actions in the strategy, I developed the four projects, already presented and discussed above. In this phase, I acted mainly as the designer. No matter how many criteria had been initially established and my initial intention of binding different interests, I acted more individually and, of course, discriminations, have been made. As Interboro (2016), design collective mention in their book *The Arsenal of Exclusion & Inclusion*<sup>1</sup> whichever spatial structure object or policy includes agents, it also excludes others, inevitably and no matter the initial intention.

<sup>1</sup> A book that selects and “examines some of the policies, practices, and physical artifacts that have been used by planners, policymakers, developers, real estate brokers, community activists, and other urban actors in the United States to draw, erase, or redraw the lines that divide” (excerpt retrieved from the back cover of the book)

Reflecting upon my design proposals and especially those that may seem more top down and with higher cost, I conclude that spatial quality does not come only for those that can afford it, spatial quality, infrastructures of leisure, education and other social infrastructures are more than relevant when designing for the South. In that sense, I believe that small scale minimal interventions focusing on green spaces and other more top down focusing on housing, workspaces should go hand in hand and interact within a flexible strategy that could lead to local action plans.

THE CONFLICT AND THE OUTSIDER

Miessen describes the architect, urban designer as something more and different than just a facilitator or as a mediator, but as an “uncalled participator” and “uninterested outsider” who “enters the arena with nothing but creative intellect and the will to provoke change”, prone to cause friction and destabilise existing power relations.

Therefore, in order to get ahead the *mondus operati* in spatial practices, this crossbench practitioner puts forward a model of “bohemian participation” in the sense of an outsider’s point of view, seeking for more than consensus. This reading of participation as something more than consensus gave to my project an added value and made me reflect upon theoretical concepts and practices and their real innovation in the field of design. In particular, I consider “my” creative community coach to be such a figure that with all his/her tools in the backpack invades space and provokes change. Examples of such “invasion” of space can be found in the field immersion of several urban design collectives that through repurposing idle spaces, test their ideas.

FIRST PERIOD | P1 - HALF P2



SECOND PERIOD | HALF P2 - HALF P3



SECOND PERIOD | HALF P3 - P4



THE STUDENT



THE RESEARCHER



THE DESIGNER



Fig.8: 3 different roles. Source: by the author

# 7// FROM SMALL EXPERIMENTS TO BIG AGENDAS

## THE MULTIPLIER EFFECT OF THE PROPOSED STRATEGY AND DESIGN

*Playgrounds of commons* refer to a mix of top-down and bottom-up spatial strategies and design interventions taking as a starting point that Rotterdam South can be seen, and (re)designed as an heterotopia, where as Shane (2003) underlines some armatures should be designed top-down, whereas leaving freedom for others to occur in a more spontaneous way. The spatial strategy is based upon the empowerment of collective appropriation through leisure, food and crafts. More specifically, it discusses an alternative way of approaching urban renewal in deprived areas of Rotterdam South establishing an alternative accord. What is important to highlight is that this project does not only focus on upgrading housing stock in order to attract newcomers and empower the concept of "mixed neighbourhoods". On the other hand, it does not emphasise the need of creating connecting infrastructures between the North and the South so as to connect unemployed people from the South to the North labour market and available vacancies. On the contrary, the project aims at reinforcing not only North-South connection, but most importantly East-West and creating opportunities for local employment in the South. In that sense, design intervention and strategies aim at making South a service area and a productive hub, by reinventing underused lands or areas under transformation, such as the riverfront. That signifies a transition to more integrative design and decision making processes (Fig.9).

A// PROPOSING A NEW MODEL OF URBAN RENEWAL

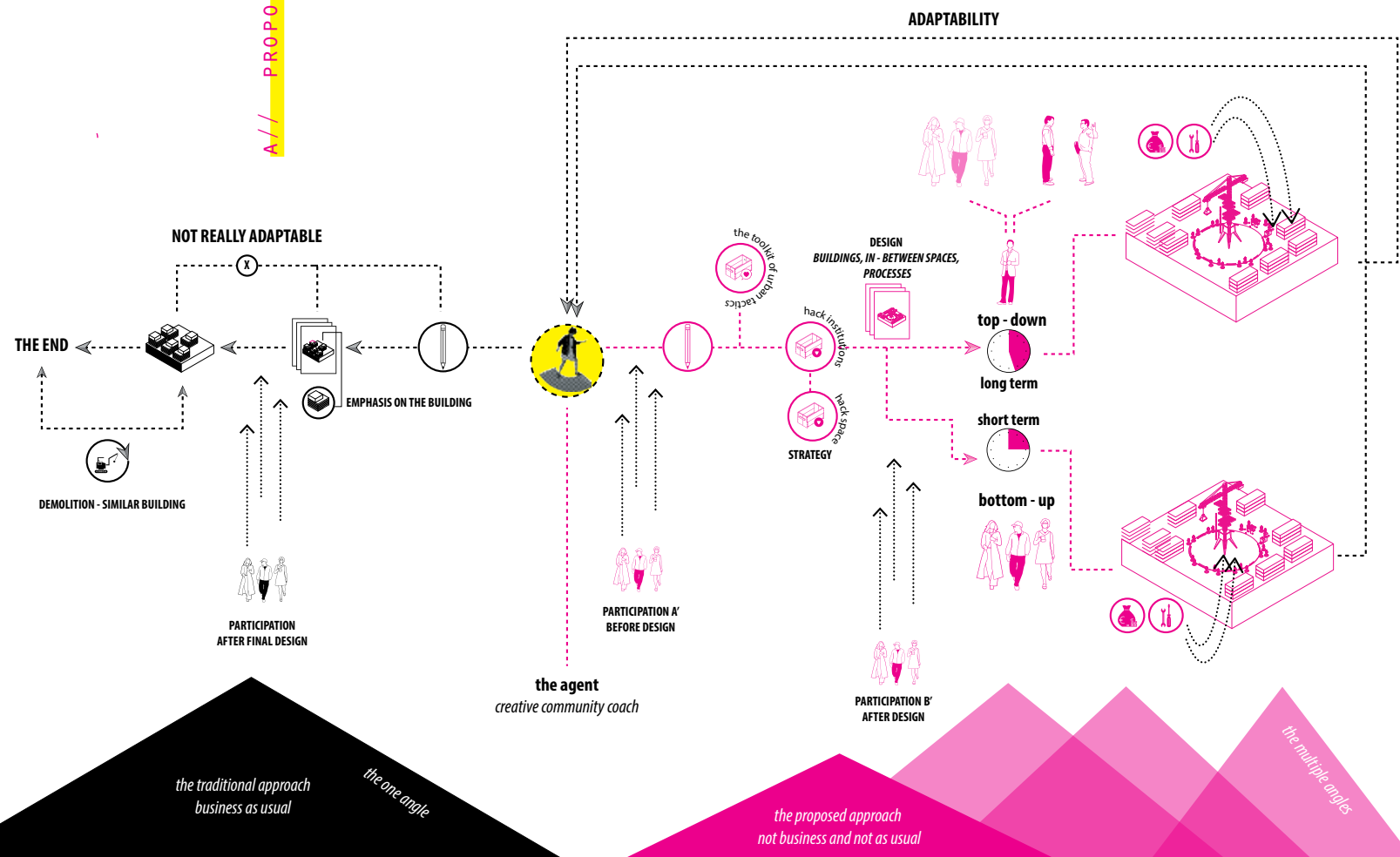
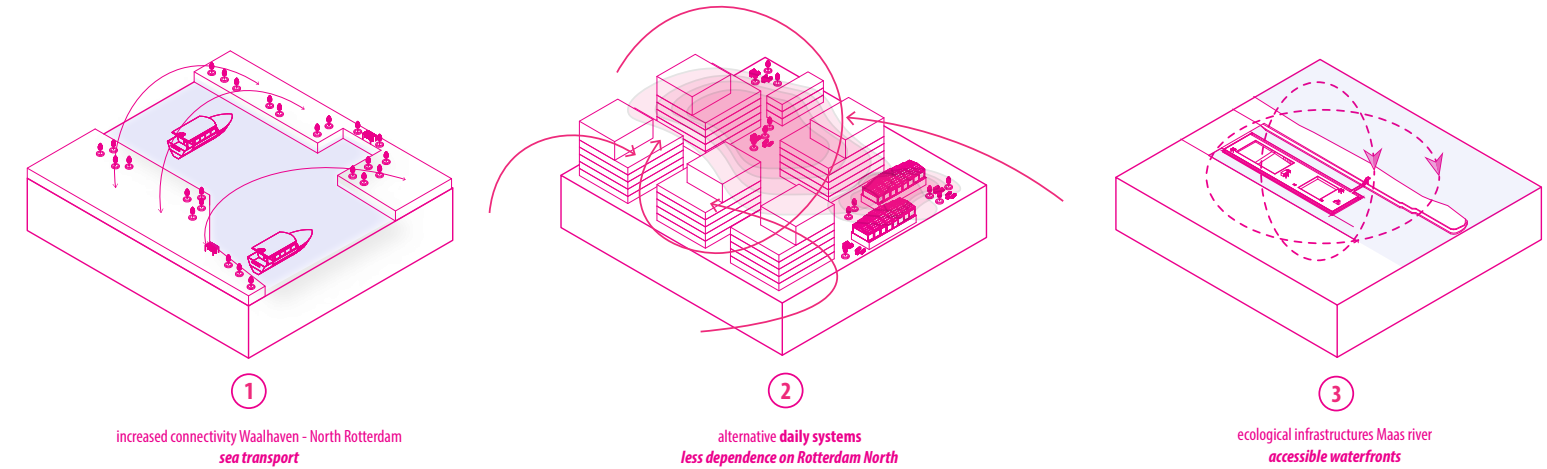


Fig.9: Limitations and suggestions. Source: by the author

# B// A CONCLUDING MATRIX - RECOMMENDATIONS

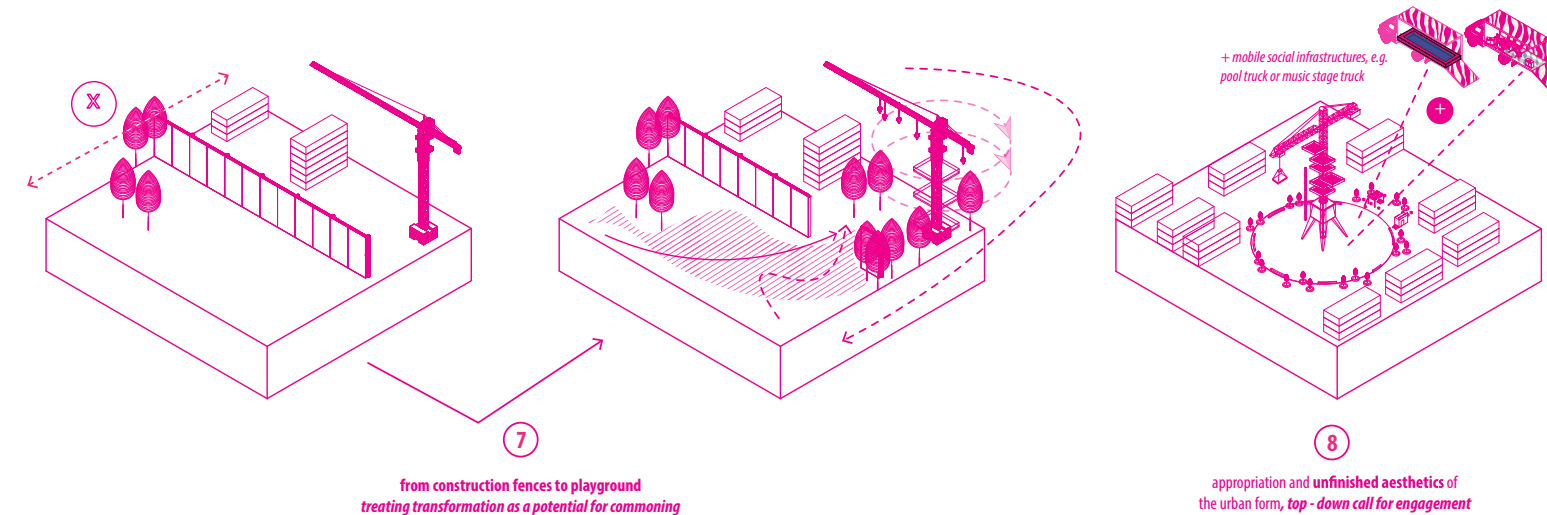
accessibility  
city scale



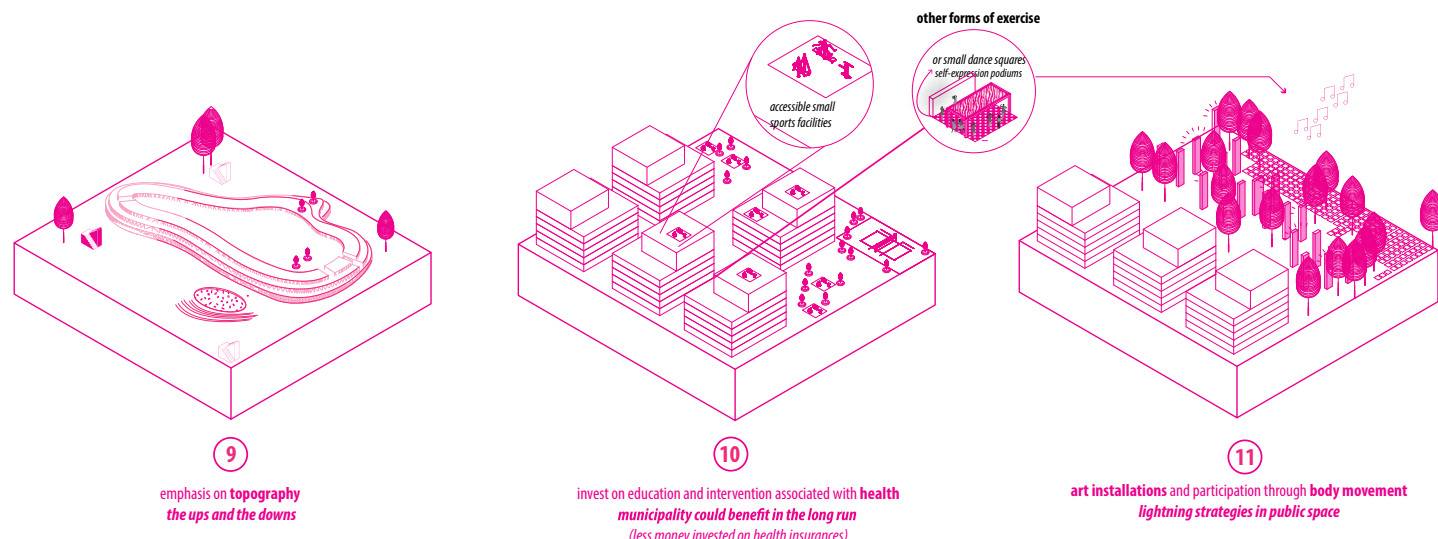
living and working  
city scale  
neighbourhood scale



urban renewal  
city scale  
neighbourhood scale  
wastelands



public spaces, collective spaces  
neighbourhood scale

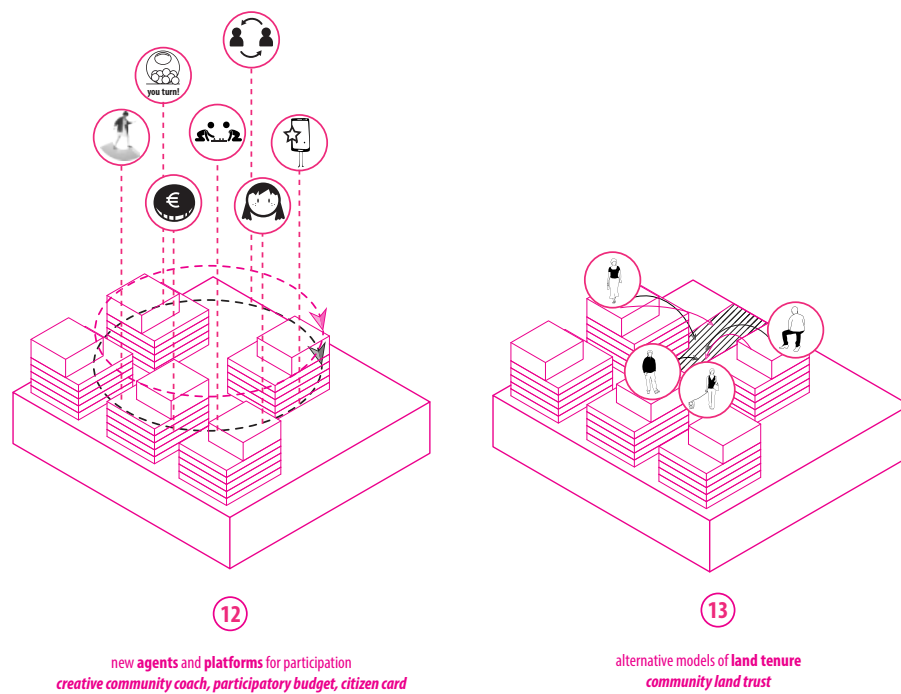


9  
emphasis on **topography**  
the ups and the downs

10  
invest on education and intervention associated with **health**  
municipality could benefit in the long run  
(less money invested on health insurances)

11  
art installations and participation through **body movement**  
lightning strategies in public space

agents + platforms  
city scale  
neighbourhood scale  
digital space



12  
new agents and platforms for participation  
creative community coach, participatory budget, citizen card

13  
alternative models of **land tenure**  
community land trust

\* definition collective spaces  
collective spaces are according to de Solà-Morales (1992 in OASE #71, 2006) are spaces not strictly public or private, but both simultaneously. These spaces may be public, but embody private activities or private that allow collective use.

Fig.10: Concluding recommendations that can be applied on other contexts

#1

**Increased connectivity and potential of sea transport.** Waalhaven connects to the North part of the city, whereas bus and ferry stops become vital public spaces, embodying either physical activity, e.g. a set of swings that gives light to the stop, or becoming exhibitional spaces for local artists.

#2

As a result of the small productive hubs, the new public spaces and the proposed working, living spaces and leisure facilities, **daily systems in the neighbourhood** and in the greater area change. **Local residents have more proximity to amenities and infrastructures, local economy is boosted and the area even establishes itself on the greater city map.** Small scale units in unattractive green spaces, e.g. waste transformer and material reuse hubs are a way to **tackle unemployment** and stir local employment.

#3

**Ecological infrastructures** clean the greater ecosystem and create new hubs for leisure at Rotterdam South, making the waterfront accessible at city scale level and offering new zones of leisure.

#4

**Densification vs suburbanisation: solutions for densification via plug – ins and house extensions.** Dense urban fabric is also proposed through the new housing project in Waalhaven and first Waalhaven settlement (containers) – dense fabric combining working – living – producing

#5

**Workspaces on the ground floors and visibility of the workspace** is one conclusion and recommendation of this research. The proposed active plinths and lightbox encourage this step which provides the neighbourhood with local economies, diversity and legibility against residential dullness.

#6

Combining working and living with **active rooftops and local greenhouse production** is a path that could strengthen densification and self-sufficiency at local level, anticipating city scale mutations.

#7

Instead of urban renewal processes that displace people or are being conducted behind closed fences, this project addresses construction and transformations processes as grounds for involvement of the existing population. The proposed design and strategy focus on creating transparency through design, boosting local employment and think of **areas under transformation as playgrounds or amusement parks.** **New typologies of urban space emerge (Crane) and people become more aware of the site.**

#8

**Appropriation and unfinished aesthetics of the urban form, top –down call for engagement** One of the recommendations of this project and result of the design and research stemming from the study case but related significantly with cities like Rotterdam is the importance of open and flexible urban form. In that sense, appropriation does not only comes as a result of bottom up initiatives and DIY practices, but could be addressed through spatial strategies.

#9

The emphasis on **topography** is an element useful for the redesign of public space within urban renewal projects. Slopes or sunken amphitheatres not only create new rhythms of movement, but they tackle issues of flooding management, they offer view points and visual connection within the city's areas and could embody leisure facilities or other infrastructures. Such elements emphasise centralities and unify space.

#10

**Fitness spots and sports installations.** At city scale, the investment of designing public space with an educational intention and towards healthy lifestyles, e.g. small exercise spots combines revitalisation of public spaces with the goals of municipality to tackle the issue of healthy cities and cut down on the budget spent on health insurances.

#11

**Art installations** enforce the cultural identity of the place and relate with the intention of Rotterdam to be the makers city, as they follow city-based initiatives such as the power generated dance floor, combining art with public space safety and energy production. The conclusion also refers to the importance of activating participation through body movement and interaction with the built environment through urban design equipment.

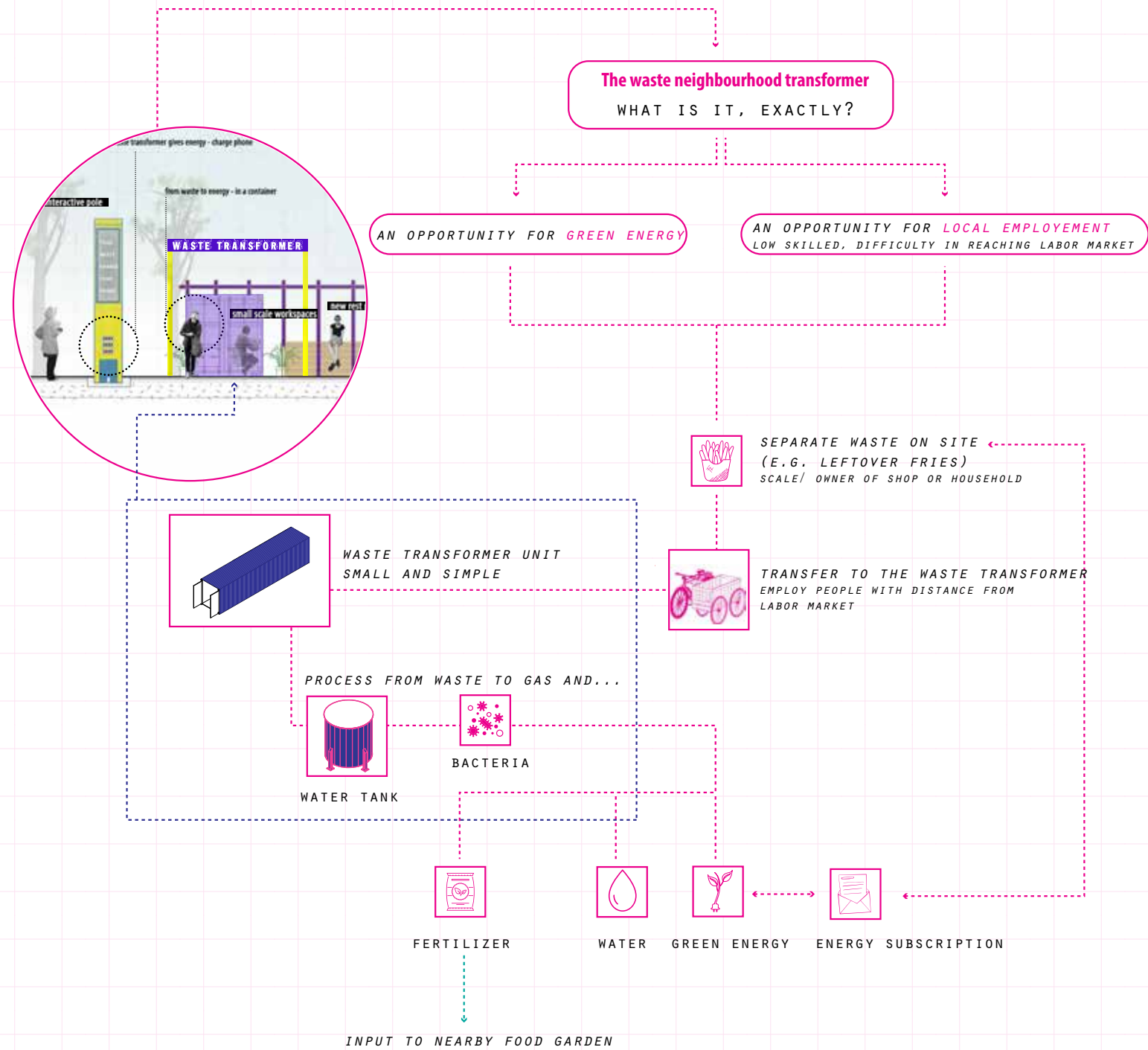
#12

The creative community coach, the participatory budget and gaming as a tool of participation are some of the **new agents, platforms and tools** that this project introduces in order to respond to greater challenges than the ones emerging within a neighbourhood. They are means to describe a new approach to urban renewal, going beyond "open calls for participation".

#13

**New forms of ownership:** The implementation, ownership and accountability is one of the issues that this project raises within the context of urban renewal processes. Tools such as community land trust could support shifts in terms of ownership and management and generate local flows, cooperation, while boosting the feeling of shared management of space and facilitate appropriation, as a result of a spatial strategy.

an example of how the waste transformer at Karel de stouteplein relates to local employment



\*inspired by Amsterdam - The waste transformer (<http://www.thewastetransformers.com/projects-development/amsterdam/>)



## 8// LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE WORKS

One of the most challenging parts of this project is the **topic** itself. Since the very first moment, the bridging between theory and design has been one of the most pressing challenges. Unfolding the “codes”, “rituals” and “tools” of heterotopic practices entails the risk of them losing part of their success and positive effects. Each tactic is unique and significantly attached to the site and the community that it grew and thrived. Those practices do not consist steps that if replicated in every location would *de facto* bring liveability and positive change in the urban fabric or/and the social relationships. Therefore, local “rooting” of such practices is important and should always remain a point of ethical consideration, reflection and potential limitation of similar research and design projects. As Shane (2005:10) describes “if an experiment (heterotopic spatial patches or pockets, as he defines them) is successful, actors can export the new model, copying (and altering) it so that it becomes, over time, a new norm. What were once surprising and surreal juxtaposition can - and have - become integrated slowly into the social practices of a host city”.

One of the main limitations was that of **time and scheduled deliveries** or deadlines, given the academic nature of the project that did not give me the opportunity to actually cope with it as a real assignment and engage more actors in real - time conditions. Moreover, the fact that I had no strong alliances at the neighbourhood made more difficult my communication with people. However, one brilliant opportunity that (yet) did not end up as fruitful as expected was my discussion with Wolfartproject space, where Joshua Thies proposed a small workshop. I hope in the future that would be a nice option for me and my project to actually combine activism and design.

Another limitation of the project, is that I **do not speak Dutch**, in a neighbourhood, where most of the people do speak Dutch. This leads us to the gaming limitations, where even though I had the opportunity to discuss with some artists in the area and visit some spaces, I could not reach the lower incomes and have a full workshop session.

In addition, **my personal ethical considerations** (that this project is just an exercise and I should not make people believe that is an actual project), the **frustration of people over the issue of actual change through participation**, **the absence of strong local alliances and the limited time** made my game less successful than initially expected.

However, the fact that I communicated **mainly with artists** made my understand myself that the narrative built around the creative class that is being used to facilitate gentrification does not often apply. Affordability due to low income is also an important asset for artists. a really important feedback for my project.

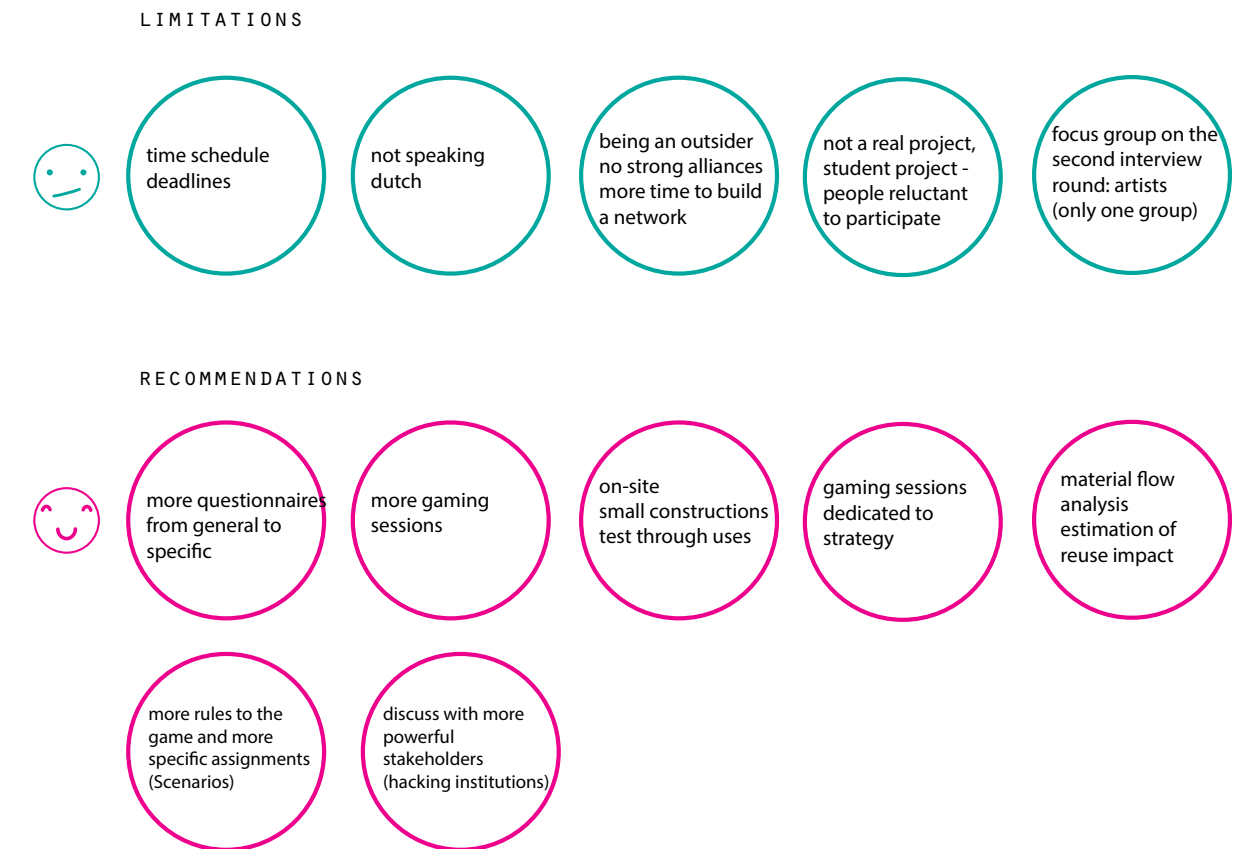


Fig.11: Limitations and suggestions. Source: by the author

Some **specification in other fields** and coupling with knowledge not always direct related to urbanism<sup>1</sup>, but essential for the implementation of such a strategy is one of the most important recommendations. Such expertise may include research in material flows (before and after), civil engineer, construction specifications and policy guidelines that could prepare the ground for spatial transformation and initiate the process of regeneration. In addition, sociology and arts as disciplines could contribute to the public engagement supporting a local regeneration plan and/or small experiments of co-creation.

As part of the future works of the project, one should bear in mind that some proposals (e.g. container settlement) would bring new residents to the area that would **also have more needs, asking thus, for additional educational, cultural or other facilities**. Such impact should be taken into account when reflecting upon the proposed interventions and would require further investigation as a new design and planning assignment. Already, from the simulation gaming sessions, most of the players highlighted the need of additional educational schools in the greater area of Waalhaven.

When it comes to the field of urbanism and the topic of appropriation and design strategies, **additional studies are required**. In that direction, contributions such as that by Mameli et al. (2018) in *Urban Appropriation Strategies: Exploring Space-making Practices in Contemporary European Cityscapes (Urban Studies)* could function as handbooks for designers and researchers encouraging engagement with similar issues.

What is more, I am aware of the fact that *The productive route* strategy will be more appealing to wealthier people that have already the power and

tools to appropriate their environment, **possibly encouraging gentrification phenomena**. That is why the recommendations at policy – planning level should be promoted equally and small actions of co-creation or compensate measures could secure the strategy against such a possible outcome, before getting the form of displacement of existent population. Through this process, I realised that a design with its core the issue of collective appropriation produces different spaces, but also asks for different processes of space production.

Concluding, this project provided us with a desirable future in the context of a deprived neighbourhood, while embracing design as a method of opening up possibilities, seeing new ways and discovering more potentialities, especially in relation to a more inclusive urban fabric and accessible governance. It focused on increasing spatial quality through open and modifiable spaces from the housing unit to the collective space. Moreover, it puts forward a new role for the urban designer that goes beyond the mere design of strategies or places, and expands critically so as to embrace the design of institutions and the design of more dynamic transformation processes. In addition to that, the project proposes a designer that is always a researcher and considers the systematic organisation and visualisation of literature review and fieldwork as an equally important task within the design process. **However, as every research and design project it also presents limitations that give way to future works** (Fig.11). I hope that this project could act as a starting point for similar research and design experiments and hopefully could be taken one step forward through deeper and longer interaction with local residents. Such interaction could vary from more detailed questionnaires, workshops, information campaign and the actual test through design.

<sup>1</sup> The ones related to urbanism and design include mainly the detailed design of the whole productive route strategy.

# 9.

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