

Things Overlooked: Exploring housing renewal with actor-network theory



(photograph by author, 2013)

A case study of the Sint-Mariastraat in the Oude Westen, Rotterdam (NL)

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Introduction

Rivierenwijk, een dijk van een wijk
In ontwikkeling:
Wijkvoorzieningscentrum
RENTREE

Rivierenwijk Deventer, 2008. Woningcorporatie Rentree heeft dan nog grootse plannen voor wijkverbetering

Woningcorporaties in crisis

Tucht van staat noch markt

De privatisering van de woningcorporaties in de jaren negentig heeft geleid tot grootschalige fraude, omvangrijke schulden en talloze onvoltooide bouw- en leefbaarheidsprojecten. Rijk en sector houden elkaar gevangen in een gemankeerd systeem. Het toezicht heeft gefaald.

door Guido van Eijck, Hanneke Grutterink, Hans Hindriks, Sara Murawski & Saskia Naafs

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OVERWOEKERD door onkruid leiden verlaten straten en steegjes door de Rivierenwijk in Deventer. Delen van deze buurt lijken nog het meest op een spookdorp. Ruiten zijn ingeslagen, deuren dichtgetimmerd en achtergelaten huiskraak ligt lukraak tussen het sloopafval. De gemeente Deventer en woningcorporatie Rentree, die de helft van de huizen bezit, hebben een grote opknappbeurt en nieuwbouw beloofd. Maar na tien jaar plannen maken is alleen de sloop van zeshonderd oude woningen flink gevorderd.

In de Rivierenwijk wonen ongeveer vijftienduizend mensen in rijtjeshuizen en portiekflats uit de jaren dertig, zestig en zeventig. De helft van de bewoners is allochtoon en een derde leeft onder de armoedegrens. In 2008 was de Rivierenwijk de eerste krachtwijk waar minister Ella Vogelaar haar handtekening zette onder

een ambitieus vernieuwingsplan. Woningcorporaties in heel Nederland zouden veertig probleemwijken opknappen. Rentree beloofde ruim tweehonderd miljoen euro te investeren, niet alleen in sociale huurhuizen, maar ook in luxe koopwoningen en projecten tegen schooluitval. Bovendien zou de corporatie dertig miljoen meebetalen aan de verbouwing van een drukke provinciale weg die de wijk in tweeën deelt. De Rivierenwijk zou een prachtwijk worden, maar ligt vijf jaar later grotendeels in puin. De leefbaarheid is verder achteruit gegaan. De dromen van de ambitieuze corporatiedirecteur bleken onuitvoerbaar, de plannen voor de Rivierenwijk onbetaalbaar. De directeur verloor zijn baan, de corporatie tientallen miljoenen euros.

Rentree is niet de enige corporatie waar het misging. In Rotterdam verbouwde Woonbron voor 250 miljoen euro de asbesthoudende

(De Groene Amsterdammer, 2013)

Agentschap NL
Ministerie van Economische Zaken

Inspiratiebijeenkomst ISV na 2014

'Het nieuwe denken', enkele initiatieven

>> Als het gaat om duurzaamheid, innovatie en internationaal

(Agentschap NL, 2013)

Het cultureel kapitaal van een afgeschreven straat

Sint-Mariastraat 106-146

Joke van der Zwaard en Karin ter Laak

(Van der Zwaard and Ter Laak, 2008)

Outline

<i>Theme</i>	Aim and questions Housing renewal	<i>Case study</i>	Network framing and ordering
<i>Theory</i>	Network governance Actor-network theory	<i>Discussion</i>	Consenting versus contesting
<i>Framework</i>	Housing renewal controversy Conceptual model	<i>Conclusion</i>	Materials framing relationships
<i>Methodology</i>	Methods Case criteria	<i>Recommendations</i>	ANT in research and practice

Aim and questions

Aim: To introduce and test concepts and methodologies of actor-network theory in the study of housing renewal in order to explore if and how 'things' make a difference

1. What material actors are in the housing renewal network of the Sint-Mariastraat?
2. How do these material actors negotiate the the housing renewal project?

Housing renewal

Definition: The assignment of citizens, societal actors and the government [to] maintain and improve the quality of the living environment. (Donner, 2011).

1. Housing renewal takes place in networks
2. Housing renewal can be managed in networks

Network governance

Assumption: The theoretical and normative assumption ... is that handling these types of uncertainty ... is essentially a matter of mutual adjustment and cooperation (Koppenjan and Klijn, 2004: 114)

1. Pluriformity
2. Closedness
3. Interdependence
4. Dynamics

(De Bruijn et al., 2010)

Actor-network theory

Perspective: The world is assembled by associations between human *and* non-human actors as they form, negotiate and stabilize networks

1. Science wars taken to the laboratories
2. Modernist divide between nature and society
3. Sociology of circulations and heterogeneous work-nets
4. ANT: a theory or a methodology?

Three ANT principles

Objective: To not separate the human from the natural but to make visible the associations between humans and non-humans that assemble the world

1. Relationality: Action is interaction and transformation
2. Symmetry: One repertoire for all entities
3. Association: Social is made up of entities not social by themselves

The non-human actor

Definition: Non-human and material objects that humans engage with and mobilize for specific (human) ends

1. As a stabilizer

2. As a mediator

3. As a gathering

Housing renewal controversy

Definition: “Every bit of [housing that] is not yet stabilized or “black boxed” ... we use it as a general term to describe shared uncertainty.” (Macospol, 2007: 6; in Venturini, 2010: 3)

1. The renegotiation of existing heterogeneous housing networks till actors have redefined their identity and new (i.e., renewed) housing networks emerge
2. The management (or, stabilization) of uncertainty in the network is done by heterogeneous means

Networks in perspective

Hierarchy	Network	Actor-network
Dependence on superior	Interdependence	Relational
Uniformity	Pluriformity	Symmetry
Openness	Closedness	Association
Stability, predictability	Dynamic, unpredictability	Contingency, instability
	uncertainty	controversy
	exhortation	description
	players	actants
	rules	intermediaries

Elaborated on the basis of De Bruijn et al. (2010, 20)

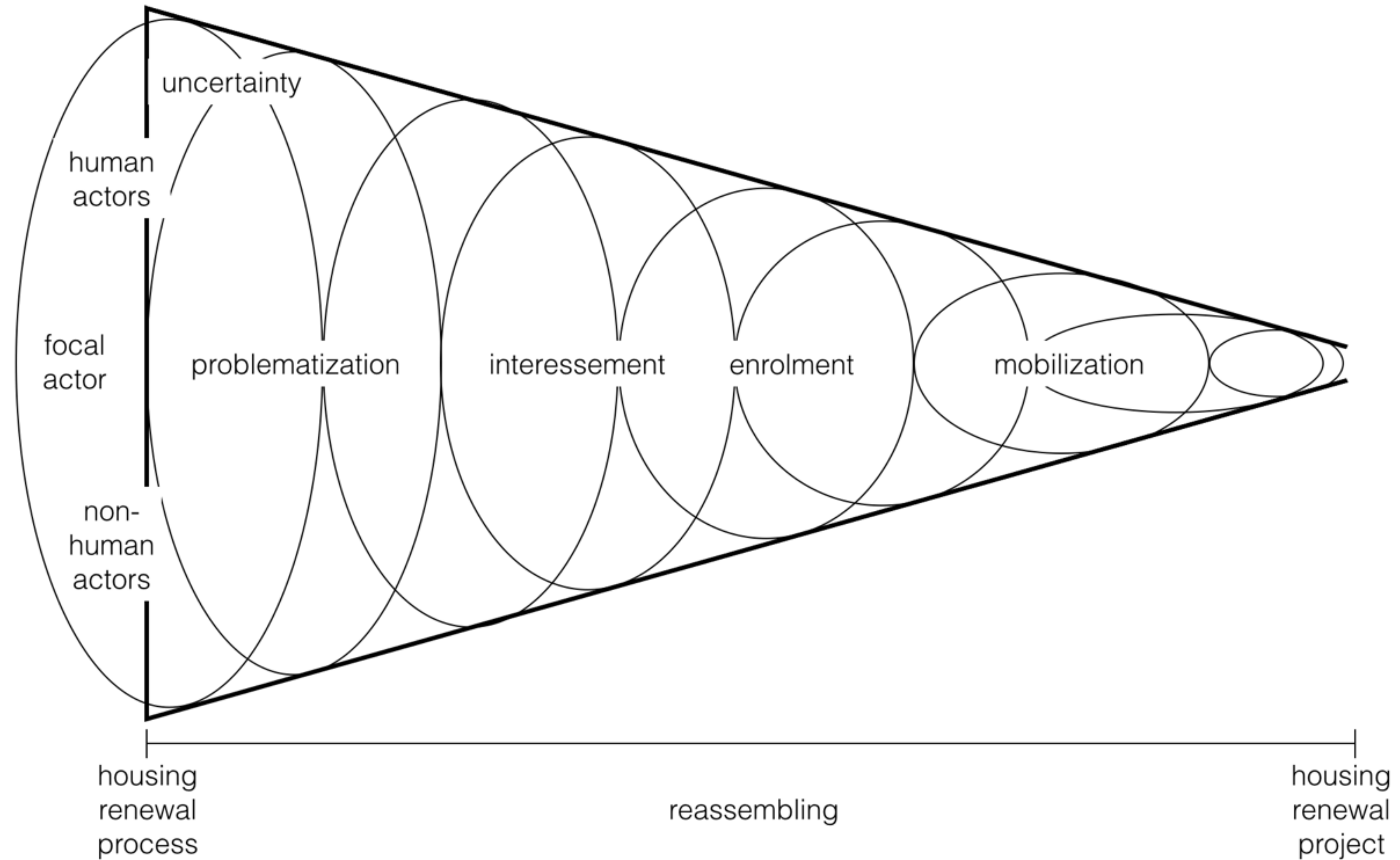
Six study propositions

1. To approach housing renewal widely and follow all actors in the reshaping of the housing renewal network
2. To understand renewal as the reassembling of both humans and non-humans into new heterogeneous associations
3. To see housing renewal not as a project but a dynamic process of dealing with shared uncertainty (controversy)
4. To focus on the efforts and powers of actors to stabilize and destabilize the housing renewal network
5. To consider actors and their intermediaries even when they act on a distance, in time and place
6. To recognize that to order the housing renewal network is power albeit by various means

Conceptual model

housing renewal controversy

(diagram by author, 2014)



Theme

Theory

Framework

Methodology

Case study

Discussion

Conclusion

Recommendations

Methods

Goal: To follow the actors and be flexible with the research methods to multiply the points of observation

Techniques: Controversy mapping
Situational mapping
Grounded theory

1. Site visits

2. Interviews

3. Document analysis (legal, policy, proceedings, marketing)

Case criteria

Housing studies:

The study housing renewal it concerns (1) physical renewal of (2) social housing (3) in a central city location (4) initiated by a housing association and (5) requires tenants to move out for at least the duration of the project

Science and technology studies:

To study the housing renewal controversy the housing renewal project is (1) debated and (2) takes place in the moment in (3) localized arenas that are (4) accessible

Case study



(maps.google.com, 2014)



(maps.google.com, 2014)



(photograph by author, 2014)



(photograph by author, 2014)

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Controversy elements and entities

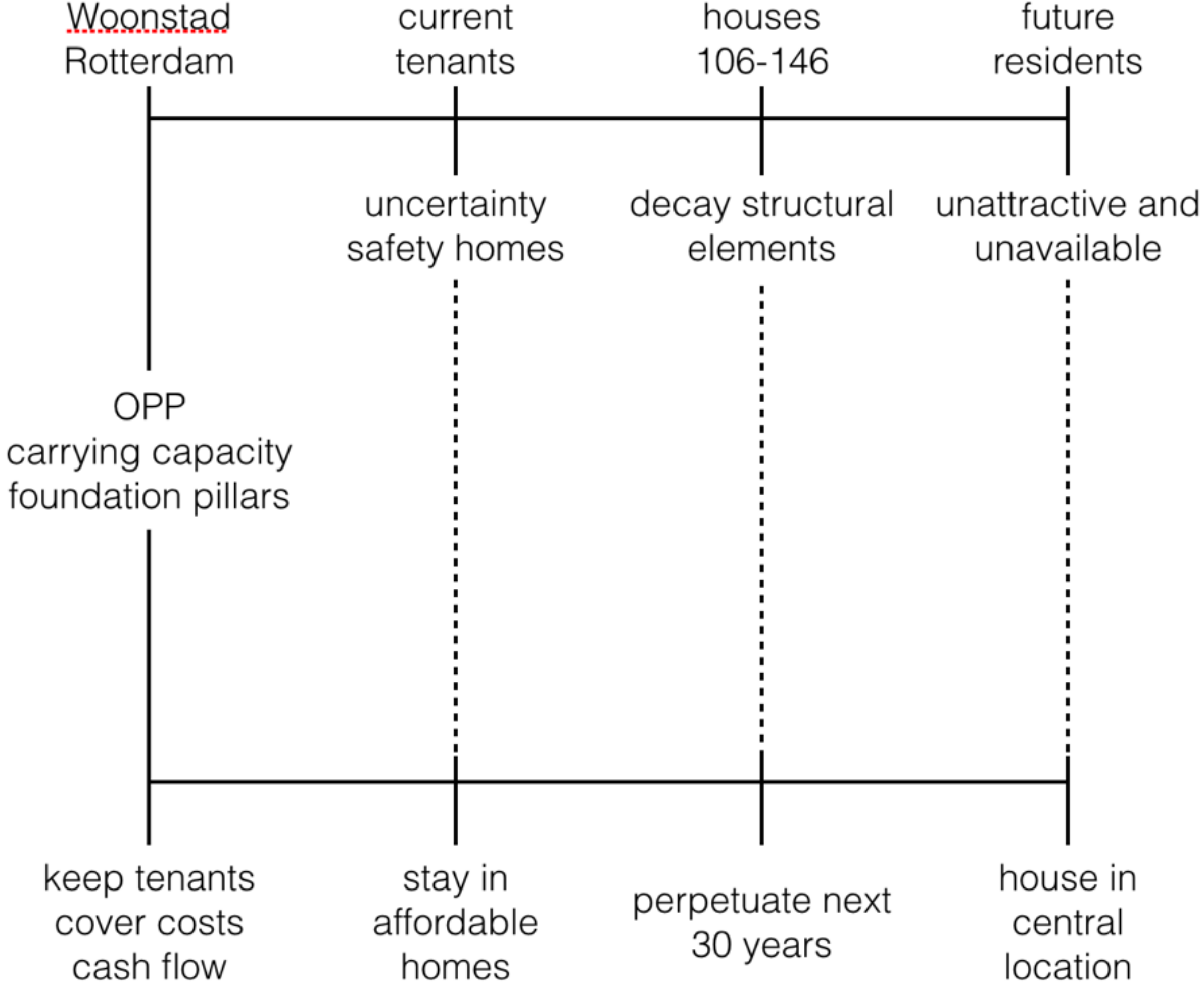
Elements

1. Future development of the neighbourhood
2. Future of current tenants after the renewal
3. Condition of housing and risk of foundations
4. Financial position of Woonstad Rotterdam

Entities

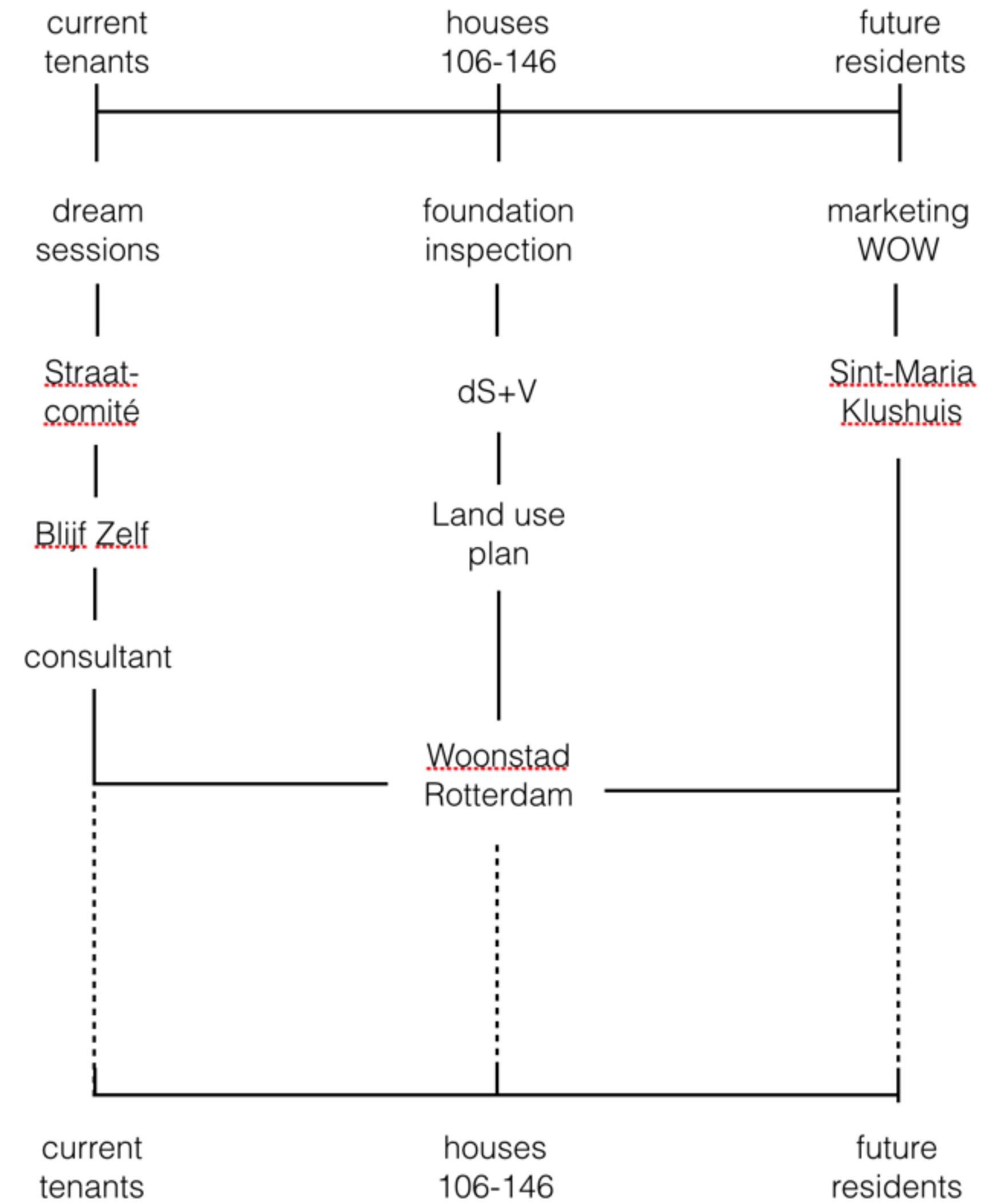
- Focal actor Woonstad Rotterdam
- Residents of the Sint-Mariastraat
- Houses Sint-Mariastraat 106-146
- Future residents of the Sint-Mariastraat

Defining uncertainty and identities



(diagram by author, 2014)

Controlling actors and spokespersons



(diagram by author, 2014)

Consenting versus contesting

Consenting

1. Consensus on the plan
2. Cooperation between stakeholders
3. Defined framework and network players
4. Technical is beyond the political

Contesting

- Contesting for alternative plans
- Competition for spokespersons
- Emerging political subjects and issues
- Technical is part of the political

Conclusion

1. Managing technical uncertainty builds relationships that can endure emerging non-technical issues
2. Materials are network resources for all actors so there is competition to make associations
3. Spokespersons give shape to the network but can always be negotiated and break down
4. Non-humans make a difference as they mediate the powers to order networks

Recommendations

Research

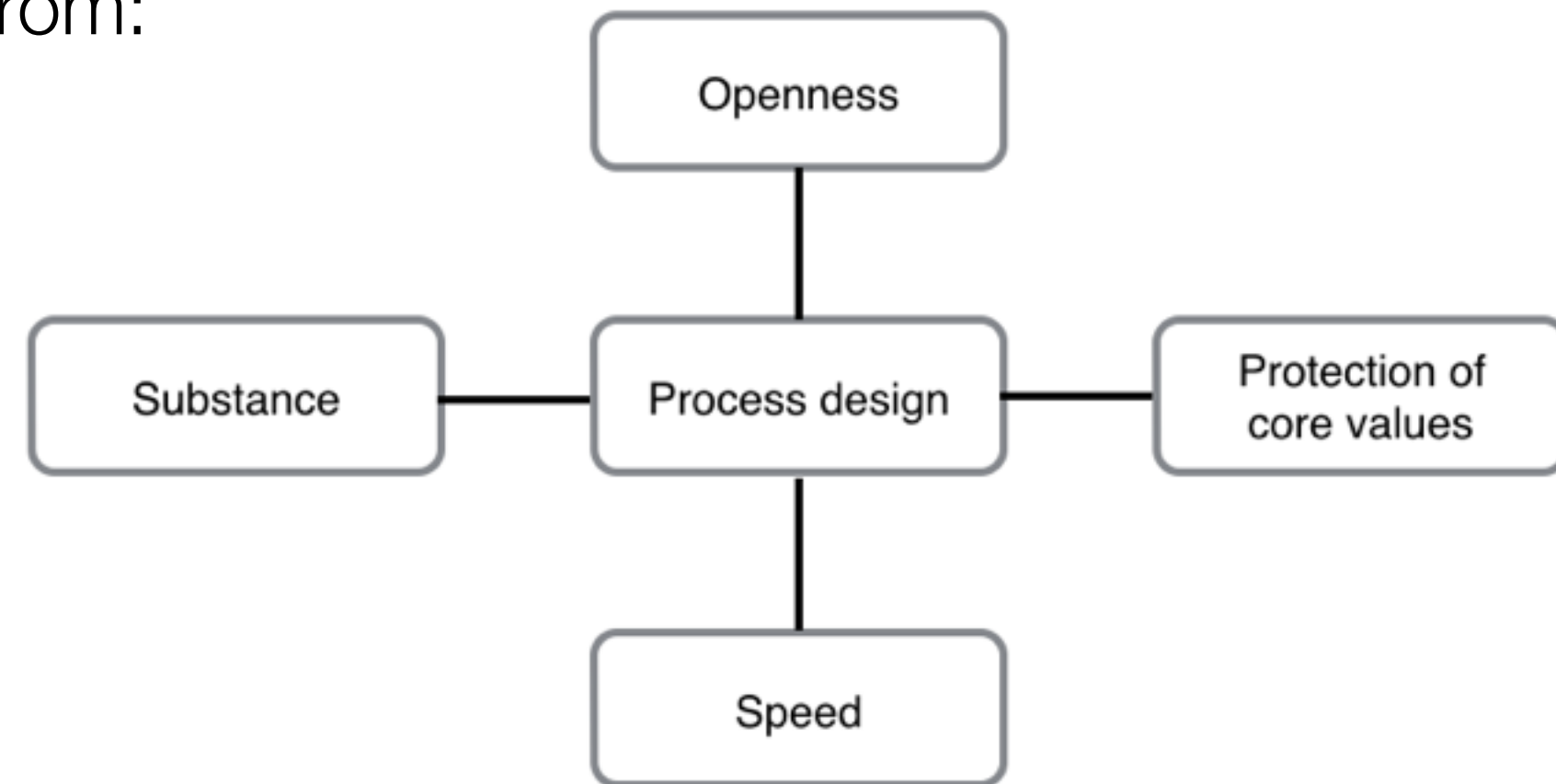
1. democratic anchorage network governance
2. mechanisms of defining uncertainty
3. ways of being political in a participatory process
4. visualize housing renewal controversies

Practice

- manage uncertainty for material and social relationships
- uncertainty managed and defined in networks
- issues and stakeholders not pre-defined by managers
- communicate process as a common project

Model for process building

From:



To:

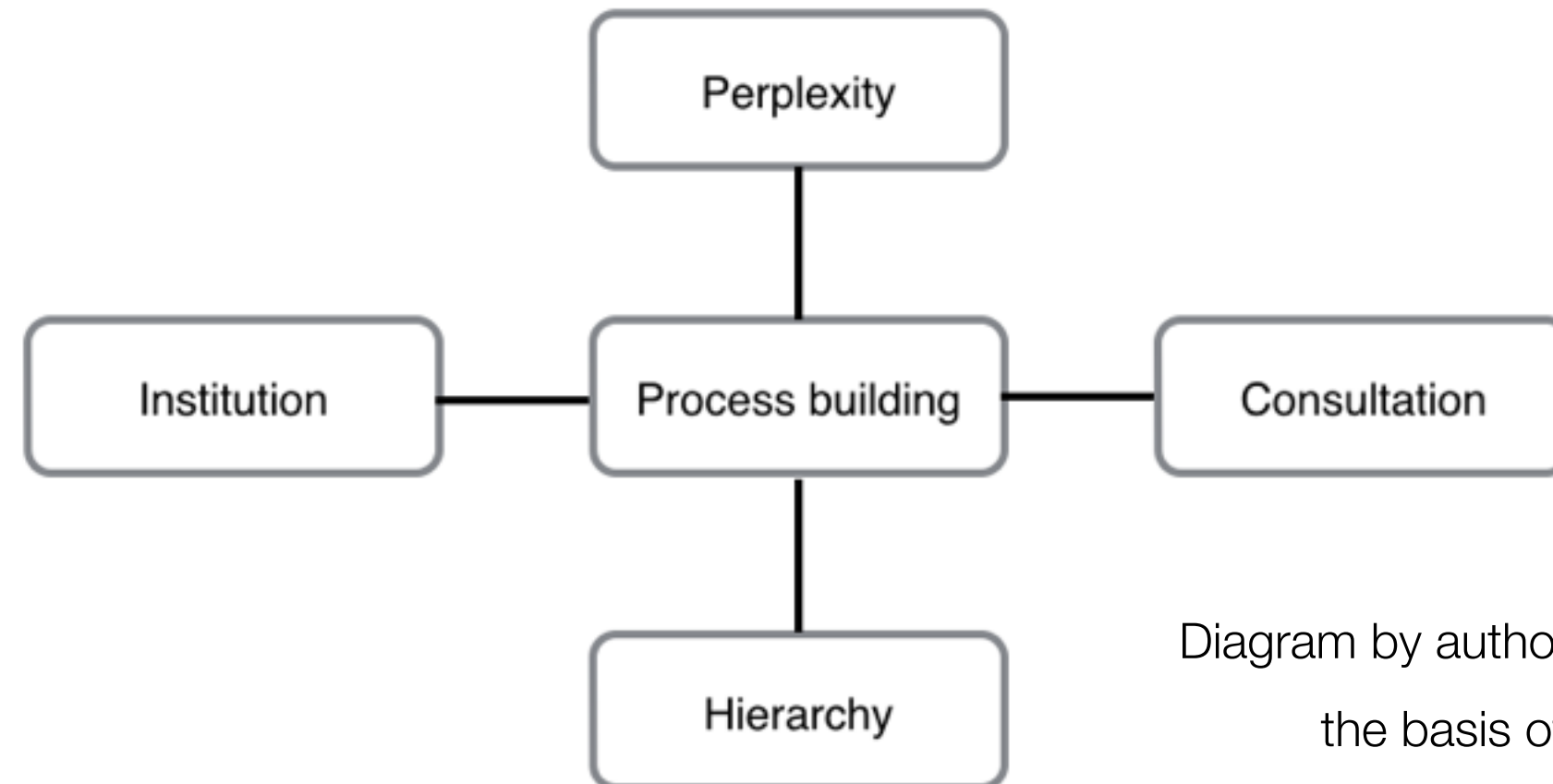


Diagram by author, elaborated on the basis of De Bruijn et al. (2002) and Latour (2004)



Image from Van der Gaag (1993: 8)

Thank you.

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