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Stepping Outside the Ivory Tower

The role of community-based research in transformation and social change

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“If a problem is fixable, if a situation is such that you can do something about it, then there is no need to worry. If it's not fixable, then there is no help in worrying. There is no benefit in worrying whatsoever.” — Dalai Lama

Abstract (English)

Cities and societies have undergone major changes over the last several centuries, leaving certain communities lagging behind and without hope of a better future. I argue that universities need to take a more active role in not only understanding the problems that are faced by disadvantaged communities, but by becoming agents of change instead of taking a passive role to research. We need to understand the processes of change, how to facilitate community development that is beneficial to the communities that have been left discouraged and forgotten. Universities can actively promote this style of action-research and learning, acting as powerful community and social infrastructure while also providing a unique experience to the students involved.

For my case studies I assumed the role of a participant observer with Tesseræ Urban Social Research, an independent research organisation focused on urban policy located in Berlin, and Mapping San Siro, an action-research group affiliated with the Politecnico of Milan, located within the city. I stayed with both groups for several months to understand their diverse approaches, roles in the respective context and relationships with different actors at the local and city level, carrying out interviews with the three different level of actors in the case of Mapping San Siro.

Using Margaret Archer's theory of social change and Morphogenetic Approach, I carry out an analysis from Mapping San Siro's inception to present day, examining how their role in the neighbourhood has adapted over three distinct periods, and how they brought together the local groups and associations to form the Sansheroes network.

I conclude that Mapping San Siro's unique position as an actor within the network and a public institution has allowed them to act as an intermediary between the city and the local associations, bringing the needs of the neighbourhood into the public eye. I also highlight my beneficial situating experience with the two groups, how carrying out research within a disadvantaged neighbourhood and the daily situations has contributed to my development and demonstrated that researchers do not need to take an objective, passive approach in their research.

Key words: community development, action-based approaches, pedagogy, critical realism, social infrastructure

Abstract (Italian)

Le città e le società hanno subito grandi cambiamenti durante gli ultimi secoli, lasciando indietro alcune comunità, senza speranza per un futuro migliore. Crediamo che le università debbano assumere un ruolo più attivo non solo capendo i problemi presenti nei quartieri svantaggiati, ma proponendosi anche come attori di cambiamento, invece che attenersi ad un ruolo passivo tramite la ricerca. È necessario comprendere le dinamiche di mutamento in corso, nonché come facilitare uno sviluppo della comunità che sia favorevole ai quartieri che sono stati lasciati a sé stessi, dissuasi da ogni possibilità di sviluppo e miglioramento. Le università hanno la capacità per promuovere questo stile di ricerca-azione e apprendimento-azione, agendo come infrastruttura sociale potente, fornendo in aggiunta un'esperienza unica agli studenti coinvolti.

Per i miei casi di studio ho svolto un'osservazione partecipante con Tesserae Urban Social Research, un società di ricerca indipendente situata a Berlino che si focalizza sulle politiche urbane, e Mapping San Siro, un gruppo di ricerca-azione associato al Politecnico di Milano che opera all'interno della città. Ho trascorso alcuni mesi con ciascun gruppo per comprendere i loro differenti approcci, i loro ruoli nel proprio contesto e le loro relazioni con differenti attori a livello pubblico e locale, conducendo interviste con tre livelli di attori diversi nel caso di Mapping San Siro.

Applicando la teoria del cambiamento sociale di Margaret Archer e il Morphogenetic Approach, ho analizzato le attività di Mapping San Siro dal loro inizio ad oggi, esaminando come il suo ruolo nel quartiere si sia adatto durante tre fasi distinte, e come il gruppo abbia contribuito ad unire le realtà locali ed associazioni per dare forma alla rete locale di Sansheroos.

La posizione unica di Mapping San Siro come attore all'interno della rete locale e al contempo come istituzione pubblica gli ha permesso agire da intermediario tra la città e le realtà locali, mettendo i suoi bisogni in risalto agli occhi della sfera pubblica. In più, ritengo che la mia esperienza con i due gruppi mi abbia portato beneficio, e che aver eseguito la ricerca all'interno di un quartiere svantaggiato osservandone la realtà quotidiana abbia contribuito al mio sviluppo, dimostrando inoltre che i ricercatori non sono tenuti ad assumere un approccio imparziale e passivo nella loro ricerca.

Parole chiave: sviluppo della comunità, ricerca-azione, pedagogia, realismo critico, infrastruttura sociale

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List of Abbreviations

AL	Action Learning
ALER	Azienda Lombardia Edilizia Residenziale
AMSA	Azienda Milanese Servizi Ambientali
AR	Action-research
CASS	Comitato Abitanti San Siro
CBPR	Community-based participatory research
CBRO	Community-based research organisation
CDO	Community development organisations
CR	Critical Realism
DAtSU	Dipartimento di Architettura e gli Studi Urbani
DM	Dialectical Materialism
LAL	Lifelong action-learning
MA	Morphogenetic Approach
MSS	Mapping San Siro
NSC	Neighbourhood Solidarity Curriculum
NUEA	National University Education Association
PAR	Participatory action-research
P-GIS	Participatory Geographical Information Systems
Polimi	Politecnico of Milan
UCL	University College London
UR	Urban Reconnaissance
VGI	Volunteered Geographical Information

Introduction

Cities and regions are being shaped as a result of three major historical processes: 1. A technological revolution¹ that is based around information technologies; 2. the formation of the global economy, which has seen economic processes structured on a planetary scale, notwithstanding national and international borders; 3. and lastly, the emergence of information as a form of economic production, basing productivity on the generation of new knowledge and access to it (Castells, et al., 1994). What can be seen as a result of the post-Fordist ideology is the specialisation of certain sectors of the economy to cities and regions (Kumar, 2005), as well as cultural and ideological changes that placed value on individualism over collectivism, leaving governments to promote this style of life in terms of zoning regulations favouring low-density development, providing new infrastructures and financial support for single-family homes (Graham, et al., 2001).

Cities are product of different systems and infrastructure: whether it was the basic agricultural infrastructure farmers need to sustain their families, clans or villages, or the complex physical (e.g. transport, green, water), social (various networks of cultures) and virtual (data) structures seen today, and marked by different phases of modernisation, urbanisation and de-urbanisation, with advances in technology dictating the level of modernisation in different areas of the world. Modernisation refers to the transition from a traditional, rural, agrarian society to a secular, urban, industrial society. The process includes urbanisation, applied science and technology, increased bureaucracy and educational levels, with additional economic, social and cultural changes with industrialisation seen as the central element of the modernisation process (Inglehart, 2001; Inglehart, et al., 2000). We live in a society where the human value of community has been corrupted by two key aspects of modernisation: one being hierarchical bureaucracies, where power is congregated at the top and people at the bottom lack the ability to exercise their own power to act autonomously; the other being competitive individualism, the driving ideology of capitalism, which places value on the achievement of the individual and essentially separates the community into groups of individuals, instead of viewing the importance of community as a whole (Winter, et al., 2001). Being at the global level, there is a large focus placed on the global intercity networks - the impact of globalisation – with the intra-city connections to strengthen cities at the local and neighbourhood levels being neglected (Graham, et al., 2001).

With the shift in the economies of cities around the world, this causes people to leave in search of work or a better quality of life, with the cities being the most severely affected by this phenomenon tending to also see a loss of tax revenues from the loss in population, resulting in a decrease of public services, especially in neighbourhoods in the peripheries that are already the most socially and physically disconnected ones. A loss in population tends to go hand in hand with both a job loss and abandonment of buildings and property (Weaver, et al., 2017). While there is no precise chain of events involved in the relationship, there is a common agreement between practitioners and researchers that there is a cumulative causation between population, the economy and the built environment. Urban decline can manifest in various neighbourhoods, regardless of whether they are shrinking, stable or growing. Disadvantage is defined as “a quality or circumstance that makes achievement unusually difficult” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2019). Therefore, places with more disadvantages are more likely to fall into a state of decline than places with fewer disadvantages (Weaver, et al., 2017).

¹ The Second Industrial Revolution, occurring from late 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century, is also referred to as the Technological Revolution. In this case, it refers to technology resulting from the Digital and Information Revolution.

While the general theories from modernist planning were to improve the quality of life, it focused on developing the peripheral areas of cities, giving people greater access to countryside living, while also being located close to the city. These modernists created peripheral neighbourhoods that were once meant to provide a better quality of living soon became the ones that would enter in a state of decline, with higher levels of poverty and a lack of social and physical infrastructure. With the majority of financial support from the government being invested in city centres, it has become the responsibility of non-governmental agencies to bring change and optimism to these forgotten populations and places, which comes to the main objectives of the research and thesis: What are the roles and methods of community-based research groups and how do they contribute to community development? What is the value of social infrastructure's role in improving disadvantaged neighbourhoods? Community development is defined as "a process of transforming marginalized communities so that the people in those communities may collectively act on their situations and on the external forces that undermine and perpetuate their oppressive conditions" (Luna, et. Al, 2004 from Quimbo, Perez, & Tan, 2018). There are different approaches taken when it comes to community development and community organisation, e.g. different roles assumed and tactics used by the agents of change, that will ultimately affect the level of involvement by the community.

Who intervenes and what their intentions are is a crucial aspect of community development, as the approaches taken can be either top-down or bottom-up, which "consists of heterogeneous initiatives based on the principles of progressive redistribution, ecological sustainability and social responsibility" and is usually led by self-organised groups and networks (Rabbiosi, 2016). In the past 20 years, community-based participatory research (CBPR) has garnered attention particularly in the field of public health and social sciences (Wallerstein, et al., 2008; Faridi, et al., 2007; Oetzel, et al., 2018)), but the role of community-based research groups in community development is something that has not been fully investigated. CBPR, which balances action and knowledge, shares similarities with action-research in the sense that it looks to put the knowledge obtained during research into some kind of action. The most important issue for community-based participatory research is the relationship between researchers and the community being researched (Wallerstein, et al., 2008), as the co-production of knowledge is central to these kinds of approaches, and experimenting with action-based approaches² for the empowerment of communities is what defines this research. These approaches with their origins coming from Kurt Lewin with action-research, Orlando Fals-Borda with participatory action-research and Reginald Revans with action-learning, are centred around the concept of critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy is a field of teaching that comes from one of the most influential educators of the 20th century, Paulo Frieré, a shift in the traditional thinking of education that aims to help students develop a new consciousness of freedom that allows them to be aware of authoritarian tendencies, foster creativity and empower the imagination and connect knowledge, truth and power (Giroux, 2013).

Action-research's (AR) origins date back to the late 1930s when Kurt Lewin, a German-American university professor in social psychology, started conducting quasi-experimental tests in factories and neighbourhoods to demonstrate that democratic participation was more effective than oppressive coercion in increasing productivity and abundance of law and order (Eikeland, 2012; Udas, 1998). The action-research approach proved effective in explaining how to develop social relationships with different groups in order to sustain communication and co-operation. With the different variations in action-research depending on the context, orthodox sociologists tend to be sceptical of any variation of what they consider untraditional research, including variations such as: Participatory Action Research (PAR), Emancipatory action-research,

² Action-based approaches is the umbrella term I use to refer to action-research (AR), participatory action-research (PAR) and action-learning (AL)

Critical Participatory Action Research, Applied research, Intervention research, collaborative research and praxis research (Eikeland, 2012; Kemmis, et al., 2014; Spjelkavik, 1999). AR and PAR, which is a combination of research, adult education and socio-political action, emphasise micro-level change and community-based change strategies situated in the context of macro-level social inequalities (Wicks, et al., 2008). PAR and AR are not methods³ in the traditional sense of the word, and can be described as the study of operating systems in action (Spjelkavik, 1999), where action and change are subjects of the research.

There are endless debates in research in regards to the nature of reality, the ontological assumptions of research, and how knowledge about that reality is created, the epistemological assumptions. AR and AL are alternative approaches to producing knowledge, which research is one of the main modes, and sharing knowledge, which teaching is the primary mode, as a response to the traditional positivist approach. They seek to empower different types of knowledge, and the objective of this section will be to validate this type of knowledge as valuable to local communities, but also in academia and the scientific community. With the subject of AR being change and transformations, it is crucial to fully understand what is to be changed – the physical or natural environment, the mindset or behaviours of local populations and actors, local and public – and in order to do that value must be placed on local knowledge.

Under the *extended epistemology* of Heron and Reason (2008), one which contains overlapping characteristics of several epistemologies and extends past the modes of obtaining knowledge of positivist orientated research, it suggests that by applying the different ways of knowing within co-operative inquiry, knowledge will become more valid if all of the ways correspond with each other. Pedler and Burgoyne (2008) state that critical realism (CR) sees the world neither as the determinate machine of positivism nor the ‘anything goes’ meaning-making of extreme social constructivism, but as an open system with emergent properties, containing some mechanisms or powers that can be relied on as stable”. CR posits that an objective reality exists of individual perception, as does the positivist view, but also recognises that role that subjective interpretation play in defining reality, as the social constructivist view does (Taylor, 2018). According to CR, the causal mechanisms that exist in the world have varying effects on outcomes as they interact with other mechanisms.

Approach to case selection and analysis

From before the beginning of my time as a PhD student I was interested in carrying out urban interventions that originated from the bottom-up, and would begin to give public space back to the inhabitants. During the time, my focus shifted from the actual interventions to the people and groups involved and the processes necessary in order to reach that point, and that meant researching the areas of intervention. As I realised that there was a wide gap between the intentions of urban planners and urban sociologists, the former being to provide solutions to substantive urban issues and the latter being to fully understand problematic situations, I wanted to find a middle-ground that was able to bridge the two professions and understand how to change and improve situations, and that is what lead me to choosing the 2 cases I will present in this thesis.

The two organisations I choose to work with were selected based off of their action-based approaches to research of disadvantaged areas, one being Tesseræ Urban Social Research in Berlin, and the other being Mapping San Siro in Milan. Tesseræ is an independent research organisation that connects education, art, communication and project development in the field of urban studies, applying various creative and media-based participatory techniques to understanding social and territorial contexts. Mapping San Siro on the

³ A method is a way of doing something in order to solve problems and to acquire new knowledge. Any means that assist in meeting this objective belong to the array of methods (Spjelkavik, 1999).

other hand is a university affiliated research group that has adopted an action-research approach, and has focused their energy and activities on the public housing neighbourhood of San Siro, while also opening up a research office in the neighbourhood. Seeing how I was interested in the methods they were employing, I choose to focus on the research groups and their roles instead of the actual communities.

Using Margaret Archer's Morphogenetic Approach (MA) for part of the methodological framework for understanding social change, I analyse Mapping San Siro's activities and interactions with various levels of actors in the neighbourhood. The relationship between structure and agency is examined sequentially in the MA, by first looking at how structural and cultural conditioning affect the social interactions. Actors' social interactions are influenced by the structures (rules, laws, institutions, resources, etc.) and culture (ideas, beliefs, visions, etc.), and are able to reflect on how the choices they make in connection with their personal projects. Lastly, is the elaboration (morphogenesis) or change in a system's given form, organisation or state, or the reproduction (morphostasis) of that system (Archer, 1995). CR and the MA are used as starting points in order to develop middle-range theories in order to determine the most significant forces that are in play in determining outcomes. As is the basis of CR, it does not attempt to make generalisations about the results, but to provide generative mechanisms that could be applied to other contexts, specifically looking the case of Tesseræ.

Lastly, Jack Rothman's core modes of community intervention (Stockdale, 1976; Rothman, 1996) are used to analyse the type of approach to community development that is adopted by Mapping San Siro, which attempts to answer one of the main questions this thesis has explored throughout – what is the role of community-based research groups and social infrastructure in intervening in disadvantaged neighbourhoods?

Research questions and objectives

The research questions of this study are:

- *What are the approaches to community development taken by research organisations and what role do they assume as an actor in the neighbourhood?*
- *How do the relationships with local NGOs, public bodies and private organisations play a role in advancing the goals of the community organisations?*

With further objectives being:

- Provide analysis into the action-based approaches to social-spatial analysis – the theory, tools and techniques used by Tesseræ and Mapping San Siro, and how it is advantageous for researchers to take part in the process
- Understand Mapping San Siro's roles (as a community centre/hub, research centre, urban living lab), as well as social infrastructure in the neighbourhood and how they contribute to neighbourhood change
- Understand the process of the realisation of Mapping San Siro and their projects of regeneration, as well as their relationships with various actors in order to produce change
- Analyse processes of change – the idea of action research is to study this – whether it's a change of view, change of physical aspects. Which generative mechanisms had the greatest effect in producing change in the case of San Siro.

Significance of Study

This research offers an original contribution not only in the analysis of the case studies, but also applying CR to urban studies - which has been done most notably by Andrew Sayer in his seminal works *Method in*

Social Science (1992) and *Realism and Social Science* (2002). CR and the Morphogenetic Approach (MA) have also been used recently to analyse organisations and their strategic courses of action (Herepath, 2014; Müller, et al., 2018; Edwards, et al., 2014), in educational settings (Kotta, et al., 2014; Pereira, 2012), as well as urban planning (Naess, 2015) and other social sciences (Fletcher, 2017). By combining the pragmatic approaches of action-research with the search for deeper understand of social structures of CR, this research offers a unique contribution in the field of urban studies and community development, with the intention of offering some generative mechanisms that were most influential in the case study of Mapping San Siro. Aside from the analysis, the thesis highlights the importance of situated learning and experiencing situations using action-based approaches to research to better understand not only the development of communities, but also for the development of the researcher.

Outline of Chapters

The thesis is organised as follows:

Chapter 1 discusses the transformations of cities and society, examining how societies have gone through several evolutions and how they have affected the form of cities. In addition, I explain how cities are structured based on the flow of goods, people and services, and how this has resulted in the formations that are seen today. Lastly, regeneration policies and the actors involved are examined and how they are able to address urban decline in a capitalist society.

In *Chapter 2* the debated concept of community and the infrastructure it is composed of is introduced, relating it to the term community development. The different approaches to community development and community organisation are detailed. In the second half of the chapter the various types of social infrastructure are discussed with the role they play and the services they offer to communities, while also examining the university's role in community development with community-based participatory research.

Chapter 3 examines some of the main concepts used in this thesis, the action-based approaches of AR, PAR and AL, along with critical pedagogy, and why they, and the knowledge produced by the participants and facilitators, should be given more value within academia and science. It goes on to discuss the different types of philosophical assumptions behind AR, and how CR can be used to justify the knowledge produced as scientific and valid. The chapter is concluded with looking into various action-based approaches used in practice.

In *Chapter 4* I detail the research design and the methodological approach I have used, going into detail about CR and the Morphogenetic Approach and how it was used to analyse the case study. I explain the reasoning behind the choice of questions for the interviews, how the interviewees were chosen and how the interview transcripts were analysed.

Chapter 5 is the first of two chapters dedicated to the presentation and analysis of the 2 case studies. I begin by using my first case study, Tesseræ, as an introduction to my experience by presenting their methodological approach used in relation to the Switch-On Mehringplatz project. In the second part of the chapter, I introduce the Mapping San Siro case by providing a detailed timeline of events that will be analysed in the following chapter. I conclude by recounting my situating experience with the group and how it has contributed to the debate on using action-learning.

In *Chapter 6* the case study of Mapping San Siro is analysed using the MA, examining the realisation of the group over a 6 year period and 3 distinct phases in their development, which I title *Discovery*, *Experimentation* and *Action in Motion*. In line with the MA and CR, I offer potential generative mechanisms

that contributed to the success of the group, concluding with my analysis of whether morphogenesis or morphostasis occurred.

Chapter 7 is the final chapter and begins with addressing one of the main research questions - what the role of community-based research groups - examining it in terms of the approach to community development. I detail the roles of the physical space in the neighbourhood, in addition to the roles of the group, that I was able to witness. I conclude the chapter, and the thesis, by returning to the research questions as well as offering a middle-range theory based off my experience with the research groups, as well as examining the role of action-research as an experimental approach that can be used for more than just research purposes.

Chapter 1 Understanding Drivers of Urban Change

“The structures of the past were typically the products of myth, superstition, and religious prejudice. It followed that scientifically designed schemes for production and social life would be superior to received tradition” (Scott, 1998).

1.1 Introduction

Cities are dynamic, always changing, adapting to movement in populations, advances in technology, shifts in ideological thinking, etc. From the days living in an agrarian society to modern society, the many transformations, whether they be social or physical, have had a significant impact on how people live within cities. The effects of capitalism on cities, with more focus on a handful of global cities, has resulted in the rise of inequalities felt more deeply by certain populations and areas of the city, i.e. peripheral neighbourhoods. The movement and fluxes of goods and people is something that defines how today’s cities are organised, and how this impacts the lives and social aspects will be explored, and it will be presented from the changing of society how the economy has played a role in its organisation. As cities have grown larger because of these varying fluxes, cycles of growth and decline impacted the way different cities, areas and neighbourhoods were formed, resulting in fluctuating levels of development.

To introduce the material of this chapter on the social and spatial aspects of cities, the all-encompassing term urban morphology is what comes to mind as a fundamental theme, as it takes into account the geography, architecture, planning and engineering, as well as the history, sociology and anthropology of urban environments. The general definition of urban morphology by the Urban Morphology Research Group (1990 from Oliveira, 2016) generally reflects the author’s interpretation: the study of the physical (or built) fabric of urban form, and the people and processes that shape it. Another definition by Moudon (1997 from Oliveira, 2016) focuses on the manner in which it is studied, urban morphology analyses “a city’s evolution from its formative years to its subsequent transformations, identifying and dissecting its various components”. Although they seem to neglect the human and social interactions that independently occur within space and cities, these two definitions cover the general objective of studying and analysing the changes to cities and society.

The term morphology, originally proposed in the field of biology and eventually applied to other fields as a general term, when applied to cities can be used to examine the different layers and complex elements that cities are composed of. At a general level, as Karl Kropf (1996) defines it, is the urban tissue of the city and as the resolution is increased the more detail can be seen. At a low level of resolution the urban tissue might only include streets and street blocks, while a very high resolution, as Kropf (ibid.) states, includes component plots, rooms, structures and materials. But cities are not just made of concrete structures, land plots, streets and open spaces. The buildings and form might give an area a distinct character, but it is the people that inhabit it who provide the social identity of the area, street or neighbourhood. As stated in the definition used previously, the main focus of urban morphology is on the form and how it is shaped by people and processes, while this chapter will look to expand the analysis of urban environments to also the populations and the social and economical aspects that contribute to its character.

In order to understand spaces and places, it is important to understand how the city has been shaped by advances in the capacity of human beings and changes to societies over thousands of years, to arrive where they are today – cities comprised of various arrays of dynamic spatial representations and social characteristics, as well as a complex set of systems and infrastructures. This chapter sets the pretext for the situations, spaces and cities that presently exist, providing a historical context of the changes in cities and

society. As CR states that society is an open social system, the social structures of which it is constituted are historically and spatially contingent (Banai, 1995). As this thesis uses CR to attempt to explain the causal mechanisms at the real level⁴, this chapter will explore some of the causal mechanisms linked to cities and uneven urban development, taking into account the shift to a market economy in the modern society, and how this shift has resulted in the social and economic organisation of cities that are seen today.

Societies along with cities have shifted in their ideals, and there is a need of this deeper understanding in order to address the problems faced, and this will go for the types of approaches taken and the organisation addressing them, which will be introduced in this chapter with urban regeneration and discussed more in depth in the second chapter. The issues of marginalised communities cannot be addressed by substantive solutions, there must be a deeper understanding of issues systemic inequalities. As part of this thesis will examine more specific techniques to uncover these issues, this chapter will introduce the author's perspective of the issues linked to uneven urban development and how they contribute to the problems of marginalisation, looking at the social and economical organisation of cities.

1.2 Social and Economical Organisation of Cities

Modernisation “entails revolutionary change in values, technology, and organisation that transform every aspect of a society and the individuals who inhabit it” (Nester, 2010), while ideally these changes are for the better, depending on who or what is benefiting, societies that have experienced it have done so at different rates. While modernity can be said to have begun with the intellectual revolution during the Renaissance, the chain of revolutions that it has sparked, political, economical, industrial, technological, etc., have had the greatest effects on the organisation of cities and society. Modernity is an endless cycle of creative destruction in which traditions, institutions, communities, property and people, are only retained if they can be justified (ibid.). Even with the constant changes that modernity brings, tradition is still engrained in all individuals, and thus causes us to make a choice between traditional? and modern urges.

The social organisation of urban systems, acting as an alternative to the different levels of urban tissue presented before, can be described according to three different levels. On the micro level, the city is comprised of persons, firms and institutions. The meso-level corresponds to the city as a geographical and functioning entity, while the macro level is the system of cities made up of many towns and cities under political unification (Bretagnolle, et al., 2009). The next sections will be mainly focused on the micro- and meso-level, looking at a historical view of the transformations of not only settlements, cities, neighbourhoods, etc., but how changes in ideologies have also influenced the organisation of society.

1.2.1 Characteristics of Traditional Societies

The Agricultural Revolution began around 9500-8500 BC when humans in the area of Eastern Turkey and Western Iran began domesticating several plant and animal species, believing it could provide them greater yields of fruit, grain and meat (Harari, 2014). Settlements were established based on the quality of farmable land, rivers, climate – natural resources. In agrarian societies, farming was the livelihood of a majority of the population, making natural resources a vital part when choosing where to live and to fulfil their basic needs⁵. According to Johnson and Earle (2000), the economy can be defined as the way people use and interact with their environment to meet their basic needs, and includes the production of material goods

⁴ The CR ontology states that reality is experienced at 3 different levels: the empirical level, the actual level and the real level, and at the real level causal mechanisms exist and are meant to explain the unseen forces that produce events at the actual and empirical levels.

⁵ The basic needs in life, which are still relevant no matter which period of life, using Maslow's commonly accepted hierarchy of needs (shown in Figure 2-1), that are the first to be fulfilled are: physiological needs of sleep, food and shelter, and the safety, health and security of the family.

necessary for the survival and reproduction of the human species and social institutions that they depend on. Therefore, the settlements were facilitated to support the economy in order to meet the basic needs of its inhabitants, as the economic system is a function of social organisation (Nester, 2010).

Traditional societies displayed characteristics, ties between families were very strong, and age was one of the primary factors involving dominance in political and social negotiations. The well-being of the clan or group was valued over the individual, and the production and distribution of goods and services were based on family and tribal structures. Trading of goods was based on reciprocity and trust, that formed the basic social relations and the family unit was the basic economic unit (Johnson, et al., 2000). This is one of the ways goods and services are exchanged, according to Karl Polanyi (2001), and characterises the pattern of exchange seen in households, villages and many other small social groups. As settlements grew, so did the social distance between individuals, requiring a greater sense of fair exchange. While at the furthest social distance, people with no social ties, there is likely to be negative reciprocity, where individuals attempt to exploit others while giving as little as possible in return, causing dwindling social relations between strangers (Johnson, et al., 2000).

Markets, being the meeting place for barter or buying and selling goods including long-distance trade, have been the cornerstone of urban development, usually developing naturally where carriers of goods had to stop at fords, ports, riverheads and the two routes of land expedition met. Polanyi (2001) characterised the economic systems of tribes to larger scale communities and the majority of modern governments, to larger extent something found in all human groups, as centrality and redistribution, with the hierarchal flow of goods into a centre where they are controlled and then redistributed by a central authority (Johnson, et al., 2000). Lastly, there is exchange, the flow of goods and services based on the principles of supply and demand in a market driven economy, which has been the prevailing form of economy seen and expanded over the last century (Johnson, et al., 2000). The expansion of trade was closely related to the expansion of cities, and as cities grew they demanded more goods and services to sustain them, which did not occur until after the Middle Ages (Nester, 2010).

In the phases of early modernisation in Europe around the mid-eighteenth century, rural areas with large population growth and a lack of work opportunities saw large migrations of the population to urban areas (Adams, 2013; Bade, 2003). In countries like England, by the mid-to-late eighteenth century, the interrelated processes of trade, urbanisation and monetisation were increased by ruling classes moving to restrict pastures that had been previously common land for all (Nester, 2010). For those that were left without suitable land to sustain their livelihood had no other choice but to migrate to cities, leaving fewer peasants under the control of lords and more in control of their own destiny, as all of the newcomers to the city refused to join guilds (ibid.). This resulted in the rationalisation of agriculture, increased competition, greater social mobility and an increasingly growing bourgeois class, setting the stage for the Industrial Revolution, which brought the complete social transformation

1.2.2 The Shift to the Modern Society

Trade, production, population and state-building are considered by many as the igniting factors of urban development and the contribution to city and economic modernity (Fields, 1999). Adam Smith in his famous work, *the Wealth of Nations* (1776), outlined the importance of cities as centres of production, not just their role as facilitators of trade, while Pirenne argued in his book *Medieval Cities* (1925) that European cities were brought out of the Dark Ages by opening up foreign trade. Thomas Malthus argued that there was a relationship between the agrarian and urban economy, and demographic behaviours, where urbanisation was linked to demographic trends that depended on the agrarian economy to sustain the non-

farming population (Fields, 1999). This meant if there were not enough food to support the population, starvation would ensue and would lead people to emigrate to other areas, or to succumb to famine. Ester Boserup's (1993) theory slightly contrasted this view, arguing that the agrarian economy depended on the size of the population, and in times of pressure from an increased population of farmers would have to adapt and find means to increase food production. In contrast to all of these theories, Max Weber insisted in his work, *The City* (1921), that cities are a product of political processes where the idea of an urban area says that economics cannot be the primary factor in determining what is urban and what is rural. He believes the city is made up of a society of institutions for "perfecting human domination over the social, economic and political environment" (Fields, 1999).

With origins in mid-18th century Great Britain and occurring spontaneously without government assistance (Deane, 1979), the Industrial Revolution marked the turning point from the pre-industrial cities characterised by traditions, customs and behaviours performed unconsciously by humans, to the emergence of capitalism in the emerging industrial urbanised areas across Europe (Fields, 1999). The Industrial Revolution signalled the shift from producing small-scale, hand-made goods to large-scale factory production fuelled by energy sources like coal. This, in turn, transformed an agricultural and commercial society into one where industrial manufacture became the primary way of organising economic life. The factories of England not only shaped the country's economic institutions, but also its politics, social problems and character of daily life (Nester, 2010). As Gregory Clark (2013) states, it "represents the single great event of world economic history, the change between two fundamentally different economic systems". Capital cities such as London and Paris became centres of political administrations, culture and more importantly, centres of consumption. The industrial city is organised and designed around the idea of the economy: one of production and consumption, organised around large industry and the flow of goods, services and people to urban centres.

The Industrial and Agricultural Revolutions no doubt produced positive effects, leading to the high living standards that exist today in Western society, but at the same time they also had negative effects. Life in pre-industrial societies did not offer the possibility to ascend the social ladder, economic growth in communities was stagnate, and few social classes existed⁶ (Hendrickson, 2015). The Industrial Revolution marked for the first time the consistent increase in the standard of living for the general population, allowing people to enjoy longer and more productive lives (Lucas, 2002; Nester, 2010). These not only had negative and positive effects on people and society, but also on the transformation of cities and urban living.

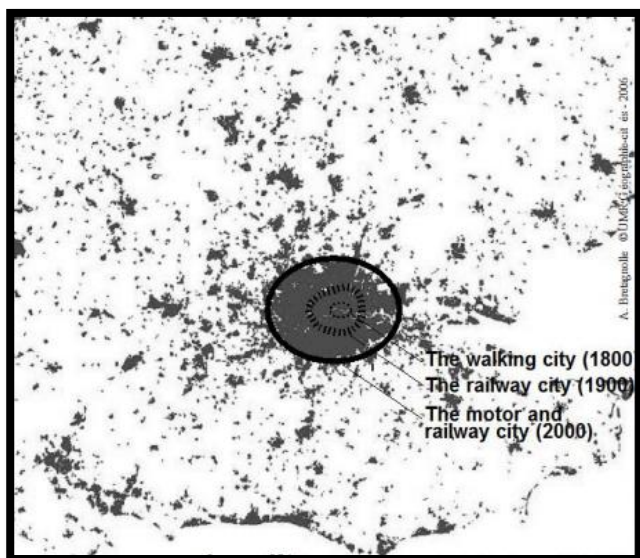
1.2.2.1 The changing of urban form and city life

From the beginning of civilisation until the mid-19th century, cities were formed based on all destinations in the city being reachable by walking, and were characterised by high density, mixed land-use and narrow streets. These types of cities can be seen mainly in the medieval core of European cities, and although the centres of American and Australian cities used to be characterised as walking cities, only a few remnants of these neighbourhoods can still be found (Newman, et al., 1999). It was not until the post-industrial revolution, or the Second Industrial Revolution as it's also known, period when cities started to change shape, and a growing pressure of population increase and new technology and innovations in

⁶ These were: the noble class, who owned the land and the means of producing goods; the peasant class, those who worked the land to produce agricultural wealth; artisans were highly skilled craftsmen who produced the tools used in daily activities and work; and finally there were the merchants, people that exchanged goods and services through the economic system.

transportation technology⁷ multiplied the size of the city ten-fold, forming ‘Transit Cities’ and eventually ‘Automobile and Railway Cities’. The spatial development of a city has historically been constrained to a one-hour time frame⁸, and as shown in the example of London Figure 1-1, it has spatially grown from a radius 3-4 km in the 17th century, to 6-8 km in 1830 and 20km in 1900. This is important, as discussed previously with the link with urbanisation of cities and their economic influences, since the expansion of cities were motivated by economic success and social pressures to spatially maximise its boundaries (Bretagnolle, et al., 2009). Yet, not all planners and urbanists were convinced by this line of thought, as Frank Pick, the chief executive officer of London Transport : “There comes a point when the size of [a city] becomes its undoing; if they expansion went on, [it] might go into decline” (Hall, 1984).

FIGURE 1-1 THE SPATIAL DIMENSION OF LONDON WITH A ONE-HOUR TIME CONSTRAINT



Source: (Bretagnolle, et al., 2009)

The rapid growth of urban areas during the industrial revolution left many cities lacking basic utilities, from roads to drainage of sewage and waste water (Hall, 1984). There may have been an increase to the average wages and better living standards, but the rapid urbanisation led to worsening the city life, decreasing health and housing quality with severe over-crowding, increases in pollution and congestion in the streets. The many challenges faced had to be dealt with, and city officials were left with the responsibility to come up with solutions to them, resulting in the creation of the field of urban planning.

The commercial cities of the 19th century were usually settled around rivers and harbours, acting as ports and routes for trade, with canals representing one of the first advancements in transport technology of the Second Industrial Revolution (Deane, 1979). As downtown areas emerged, the industrial development followed along the arteries of transportation; Sub-centres that supported medium-density and mixed-use areas were created at rail stations and transport nodes, and linear development along tram lines (Newman, et al., 1999). There was little in the way of planning regulations to keep in check the development of industrial areas in the country side with housing for workers who needed to live close by, often leading to

⁷ 1829, horse omnibus; 1836, steam railway; 1863, steam metropolitan; 1905, electric metropolitan (Bretagnolle, et al., 2009)

⁸ In order to identify a city by its geographical area, given that cities usually expand outside of their municipal boundaries, the common reference for the city as a conurbation is in time-space.

the construction of high density and poor quality housing (Hall, 1984). Frederick Engels was one of main critics of the time to condemn the living conditions and quality of urban life of the working-class, along with the economic inequalities they faced living in factory towns. He believed these types of industrial towns were the primary causes of social degeneration, while the exterior appearance of a town could also help to conceal the internal condition (Layton-Jones, 2016).

Not only were there movements of people from rural to urban areas during the industrialisation of cities, the middle to end of the 19th century marked periods of mass migrations from Europe to the Americas. During the century from 1750-1850, the population of Europe grew from 140 million to 260 million, while in Asia it grew from 400 million to 700 million (Nester, 2010), and partly due to this population boom, Europe experienced mass emigration of more than 40 million from 1850 until the first World War (Hatton, et al., 1994). In addition to the problems of keeping up the urbanisation of cities, the mass migrations of groups from Russia, Italy, Germany, Ireland, Austro-Hungary and Jews to the United States faced poverty and extreme cultural and linguistic barriers to assimilation. The immigrant groups were packed tightly into their own small districts of the city, with poorly built housing almost without access to natural light and ventilation (Hall, 1984).

1.2.3 The new agents of change and their solutions

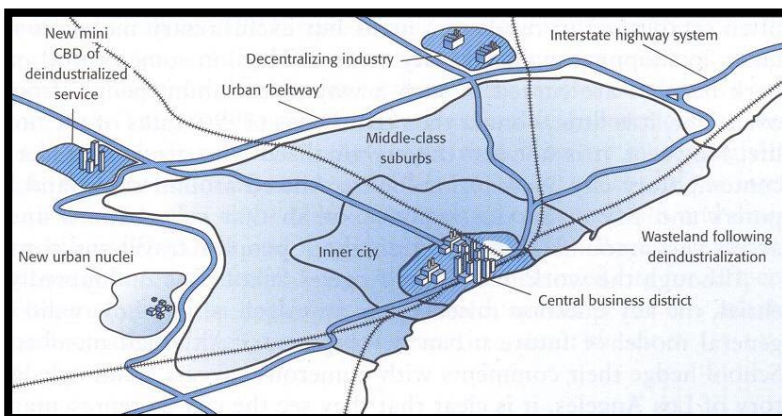
In response to the challenges faced by the rapid urbanisation of cities, the field of urban planning developed various responses: on one side were the urbanists, and the de-urbanists, led by the ideas of Scottish urbanist Patrick Geddes and American architect Frank Lloyd Wright, who believed that humans should reconnect with nature. People began looking to escape the congested, noisy and polluted city centres before the rise of the automobile (Banerjee, 2007; Schafer, et al., 2009), and throughout the first several decades of the 20th century, inner city districts around Europe started to see massive decreases in population, while the outer suburbs flourished with growth supported by suburban railways. In order to keep up with mass national migrations to cities, as well as the urbanisation of peripheral areas, cities and governments were forced to intervene in providing housing.

As fast as urbanisation was happening, the process of suburbanisation, or de-urbanisation, was already being envisioned as a solution, and the advancements in transport technology helped make it a reality. In addition to transportation, reliable access to modern infrastructure such as electricity, telecommunications, water and sewage networks allowed social, cultural and economic participation to occur over wide-spread geographical areas (Graham, et al., 2001). Prior to the 20th century, urbanists like Ebenezer Howard were envisioning 'Garden Cities' to help alleviate the problems with traditional city life, giving people the fresh air in the country side that they had desired, while also providing quick access to the city (Herzog, 2015). By definition produced in 1919, they were towns meant for industry and healthy living, with a size that made it possible for a full measure of social life, surrounded by a green belt with the land being in public ownership or held in trust for the city (Hall, 1984).

The modern city and urban spaces were shaped by the idea of mass consumerism, with the planning policies keeping in line with economic policies in order to maximise and match supply and demand, and sustain the consumeristic lifestyles of society. The ideas of separation of uses and mono-functional zones: housing, retail, central business districts, public housing, industry were meant to keep the city functioning as efficiently as possible and practically function as a machine (Scott, 1998), being influenced by the

principles of Fordism⁹ (Graham, et al., 2001), but also were meant to give a visual harmony to the planning and order of the buildings and areas that were being constructed (Scott, 1998). The French-Swiss architect Le Corbusier had one of the greatest impacts in establishing the Modern movement, saying the pressing problem in cities was how to reconstruct streets for automobiles, a plan that would allow vehicles to move more quickly and without stopping (Langdon, 2017), while relocating manufacturing outside the city. He wanted to, as Hall (1984) states, “free people by super-urbanisation, with traffic and trees on the ground and people in the air”. The utilisation of electricity to power vertical transportation, i.e. the elevator, made the construction of skyscrapers, and Le Corbusier’s utopian city, possible, leading to buildings that could now surpass the previous limit of four to five stories. The modernist movement of the 1920s and thirties envisioned cities of the future with skyscrapers, wide street and highways as the main means of travel as a way to open up cities and create green spaces (Barnett, 2011) and was strongly endorsed by the International Congress of Modern Architecture (Banerjee, 2007).

FIGURE 1-2 - THE FORDIST CITY



Source: (Anderson, 2016)

The Neighbourhood unit, as shown in Figure 1-3, proposed by American planner and sociologist Clarence Perry and championed by advocates of Ebenezer Howard’s Garden City Movement (Banerjee, et al., 1984), was another design influenced by the negative effects of city living in the 19th and 20th century and built upon the growing consensus of separation of land-use and the segregation of vehicles and pedestrian. It placed emphasis on the physical environment as the prime determinant of residential quality of life, neglecting the salience of the social environment; although, Perry did believe that small-scale community facilities, such as schools, community buildings and shops would create ideal neighbourhoods (ibid, pg. 4). The neighbourhood concept has become adopted as the model for town planners around the world, from the United States to the United Kingdom, to Sweden and Russia, with no rivals or challengers (ibid, pg 24). It veered away from the collectivist view of housing, reinforcing the idea of mass consumption with single family houses and automobiles. The desire for constant growth and unchecked pattern of building along with the pursuit of privacy that resulted in the physical isolation of communities, the decline of the city identity and erosion of civic life and communal responsibility (Adam, 1995). The social and spatial make-up of neighbourhoods will be discussed in further detail in the last section of this chapter.

⁹ Fordism was the new way of economic organisational management, that used mass-production of products to fuel a new mass-consumption economy. It included the standardisation of products, single-purpose assembly lines and workers who are paid higher living wages in order to afford the products they make.

FIGURE 1-3 - THE NEIGHBOURHOOD UNIT



Source: (Banerjee, et al., 1984)

Unfortunately, all of the utopian planning ideas and theories to alleviate congestion in city centres and improve the human condition did not come to fruition, and were ultimately a failure, as argued by Scott (1998):

If a planned social order is better than the accidental, irrational deposit of historical practice, two conclusions follow. Only those who have the scientific knowledge to discern and create this superior social order are fit to rule in the new age. Further, those who through retrograde ignorance refuse to yield to the scientific plan need to be educated to its benefits or else swept aside.

This view that the scientific knowledge from higher institutions is more valuable than that of local knowledge will be a reoccurring theme throughout this thesis. This assumption has led to society becoming “an object that the state might manage and transform with a view of perfecting it” and instead of halting social change, urban planners hoped to shape social life in a way that would minimise the friction of progress (Scott, 1998). This progress was the advances in technology, increasing the speed of transport and the quantity and flow of goods, people and knowledge, while also allowing people to move more freely and easily and giving them the economic means to do so. The idea that nature could be transformed to suit man’s needs, and that the human nature could be transformed and refashioned to fulfil the needs of the city as a machine. The problem with planned social order is that humans will not conform to the ideas or beliefs of designers and planners who try to shape their social lives, hence the creation of conflicts between different populations and the working poor who were often the first subjects of social planning schemes. How these cities imagined and designed by a few, created inequalities among many, will be discussed in the final section – Urban change and marginalised neighbourhoods, while the next section will look at the

transition from the industrial city to post-industrial, post-Fordist and global cities – different names to a phenomena that contain some of the same over-lapping characteristics and describe the world and cities that exist today.

1.2.4 The Contemporary City

With the rise of the networked city¹⁰, a society that is characterised by changes over the last decades in technological advances and a shift from an industrial-based economy to an information-based one is swiftly taking ground (Castells, 2000), most prominently in developed western countries, but also in developing countries in the Global South. Information is now being mass-produced the way that cars once were, and this knowledge has become the driving force of the economy (Kumar, 2005). In reference to the urbanisation of cities and capitalist development, the French historian Fernand Braudel characterised the world economy¹¹ of pre-industrial Europe in three ways: it occupied a given geographical space, it had a pole or centre that was represented by a dominant city, and lastly was divided into concentric zones (Fields, 1999). While the urbanisation and economies of industrialised cities still followed these characterisations presented by Braudel, this organisation can still be seen across larger geographical areas of today's cities, regions and countries. Cities are linked to one another by not only invisible infrastructure, such as social networks, but also physical infrastructures such as roads, railways and airlines, exchanges of goods and population migrations, and also invisible networks of capital investment and information flows (Bretagnolle, et al., 2009).

What also marks the cities of today is accumulation of economic activities, with the cities being the most well-connected being the centre of a network of cities that further apart geographically, but being virtually connected in a network of an expanding global economy (Sassen, 2005). This is in contrast to the city being well-connected to its smaller, regionally located cities, as Braudel states as one of the three characteristics. This is and has affected the city in several ways: the new spaces that are being created, and the spaces of old are becoming solely spaces of consumption (Miles, 2010; Christopherson, 1994), with technology often dictating the outcome; Within Western countries that have shifted to technology driven, service-sector economies, the populations that failed to keep up with the advances in technology, due to infrastructure networks favouring certain areas and users (Graham, et al., 2001), have fallen even more behind in their attempts to earn respectable wages, and be able to live in an area that is easily accessible to work, schools and social services; Lastly, with certain cities emerging as economic drivers and the focal points of innovation and investment by local and national governments, there are large national and transnational migrations to these promoted cities, leaving the declining cities, and also neighbourhoods, to become industrial ruins, inhabited by the unemployed and the discontent, and laden with social and environmental issues (Castells, et al., 1994).

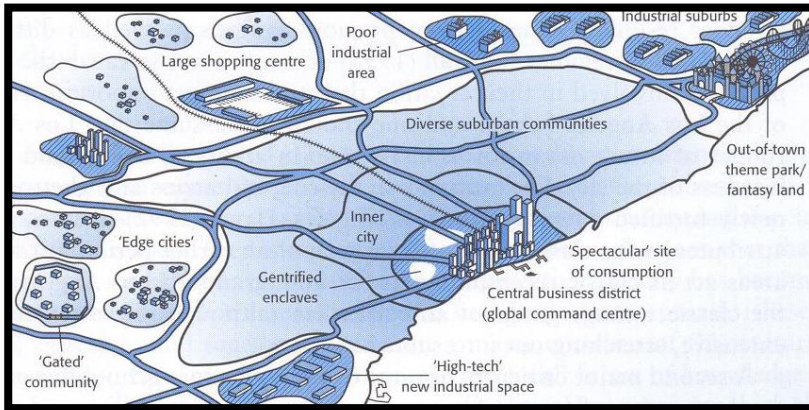
The idea of organisational management also gives rise to the idea that cities should function as an entity, so the ideologies of city making shift with that of organisations and business, depending on those of the planners and urbanists in the country. This can be seen with the shift from the Fordist idea of management and organisation, to the post-Fordist city, as shown in a possible example in Figure 1-4 - cities that are marked by the de-industrialisation of urban areas and, the shift to service economies and the geographical dispersal of industrial activities, usually to developing and under-developed countries. Replacing these

¹⁰ The expression was coined in 1991 and is related to the social, political, economic and cultural changes caused by the spread of networked, digital information and communications technologies.

¹¹ The world economy refers not to the economy of the world, but the economy of a region and the degree it forms an economic whole (Fields, 1999).

industrial areas are the corresponding faces of the new economy – the high-tech spaces of information and technology, which generate the basis of the informational economy (Castells, et al., 1994).

FIGURE 1-4 - THE POST-FORDIST CITY



Source: (Anderson, 2016)

Whether it is virtual space or physical space, the use of media is changing the way spaces are conceived, making everything an visual advert and “redefining citizenship as an audience” (Tripodi, 2018), allowing for social media to be an actor in dictating trends in the representation of places and spaces. As spaces in cities have become those of consumption, Miles (2010) suggests that consumption can also offer a new kind of citizenship. Consumption is considered to be the primary urban function in cities, focusing on the role of the space in producing profit and tax revenues, reducing the experience of cities as a home, a cultural centre and a place of meaning. While citizenship once originated from the urban experience, it is gradually being transformed and defined by consumerism (Christopherson, 1994). Not only are spaces designed as places for the exposure and optimisation of economic activity, cities in themselves are becoming symbols: “skyscrapers and their concentration in downtown and business districts epitomise the relevance of iconicity and spatial branding in the global economy” (Tripodi, 2018). Cities and their spaces were once built to foster social interaction and generate mutuality among different people, nowadays the private realm has taken precedence over the public one, and with it, the separation of populations has occurred over a city designed for interaction (Christopherson, 1994).

The relation between space and technology, which has been shaped by humans, has come back around and ultimately plays a major role in shaping space, and therefore our perceptions of these spaces. How these perceptions shape cities, with the city being seen as an economic investment, one that can be branded for purposes of attracting foreign investment, especially the major global cities of Europe (Miles, 2010). The citizens of these urban areas are becoming even more marginalised, as the cities become the centres of finance, investment and technology for their respective countries. These social and economic processes that characterise post-Fordist/global world have impacted the social-spatial patterns, intensifying the negative effects on the residents who are most susceptible (Baum, 2006).

1.3 Urban Change & Marginalised Neighbourhoods

Cities, along with their neighbourhoods, experience lifecycle processes of growth, stagnation and decline. Urban decline, which occurs due to rapid population loss, can be caused by several of the factors that have been discussed in the previous sections, i.e. de-industrialisation, suburbanisation, demographic shifts, etc. (Weaver, et al., 2017). Unless there is consistent renewal, a neighbourhood that was once marked by innovation and growth slowly converts into an area marked by aging housing and declining industry, as well

as demographic shifts, making the area not as desirable to live in. As the housing stock ages, and jobs move to different areas, the area becomes attractive to a population within lower socio-economic group, being what can be afforded. The behaviour of a city in terms of urban growth and stagnation is more dependent on its economic value and the fluxes in population, housing and industry (Forrester, 1969). The US Department of Housing and Urban Development developed the stages of neighbourhood change, which include: Stage 1 – Healthy, Stage 2 – Incipient decline, Stage 3 – Clearly Declining, Stage 4 – Accelerating decline and Stage 5 – Abandoned (Metzger, 2000). The next section will briefly discuss the causes of these cycles of urban development, while the last section will examine the approaches in explaining urban change.

1.3.1 Uneven Urban Development

Uneven development, as defined by geographer Neil Smith in *the International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, refers to the “the systematic processes by which social and economic change in capitalist societies enhances the wealth of some places at the expense of others” (Smith, 2001). This can be easily seen with the contrasts between the countries of the western world (Europe, North America, Australia and Japan) vs. to those in the east and global south (Africa, Asia and South America), city centres vs. peripheries and/or suburbs, and developed vs. underdeveloped regions of countries (e.g. the Northern vs. Southern Italy). As discussed previously in this chapter with the shift to the market economy, and eventually leading to a capitalist society, has affected many other facets of urban life, including the costs of land and the production of space.

Smith (2008) refers to the cycles of investment and disinvestment related to capital accumulation as the “seesaw” geography of uneven development. Space is seen to reflect society, but we must move beyond this conception in order to understand the processes of uneven development, as capital also plays a major role in the production of space (Smith, 2008). Certain areas of a city that were once neglected may once again become desirable for investors and therefore spawn the prospects of new development. These areas that were once attractive for investment will begin to decline, as the eventual high labour costs, urban congestion, technological obsolescence, etc. become the cause of their own undoing (Smith, 2001).

Capital is constantly invested in the built environment to produce surplus value in order to increase the initial capital. What is seen is a contradiction between the use-value of an area and the exchange-value: the potential value property has on the open market, resulting in the development of certain areas and the underdevelopment of others (Smith, 2001). Frank (1967, from Lane, 1976) states, “capitalist contradictions and the historical development of the capitalist system have generated underdevelopment in the peripheral satellites whose economic surplus was expropriated, while generating economic development in the metropolitan centers which appropriate that surplus—and, further, that this process still continues.” What can be done to remedy uneven urban development? Depending on the school of thought, neighbourhood change can be the result of either endogenous or exogenous forces; Three models that attempt to explain urban change are detailed in the next section.

1.3.2 Models of Urban Change

In the literature there are three theoretical approaches or models in explaining urban change, at the neighbourhood level, which are ecological, subcultural and political economy. The ecological approach comes from the Chicago School, applying the ideas of free-market economics and Darwin’s natural selection and symbiotic ecologies (Geyer Jr, 2018), and views neighbourhood and urban change as a result of individuals and mobile social groups competing for urban space in an evolutionary process (Weaver, et al., 2017; Geyer Jr, 2018). People experiencing higher social mobility will move to more desirable locations

with newer housing, while people with a lower social mobility will filter into the housing stock with the lowest demand (Geyer Jr, 2018). Linked to this approach is the idea mentioned in the introductory paragraph of this section, that cities and neighbourhoods experience cyclical processes based on socio-economic characteristics of the population and land-demand. Critics claim that this approach focuses too much on the exogenous forces that are brought about by urban decay over time.

The subcultural approach, which focuses on the human agency as a determining factor, argues that neighbourhood change can be attributed to both exogenous socio-economic and demographic factors and endogenous psychological factors (Geyer Jr, 2018). Although neighbourhood change and poverty is caused by these exogenous factors, they can be overcome by collective action from residents, and in response to signs of urban decay and disinvestment prompt residents to come together against ecological transformations (Weaver, et al., 2017); therefore, “the rate of neighbourhood decline (or improvement), is directly linked to local sentiment” (Geyer Jr, 2018). According to the subcultural theory (Geyer Jr, 2018; Lupton, et al., 2004) the neighbourhood is created of overlapping social networks of residents, and strong cohesion provides a common purpose, social control and a sense of place. While exogenous macro forces, such as unemployment due to economic restructuring, outmigration of the middle-class, spatial concentration of poverty in low-rent neighbourhoods, etc., are the primary forces, neighbourhood poverty is dependent on micro endogenous micro social behaviours. Without quality access to positive role models, quality education, a local employment network and healthy social values, which make up the social capital of an area (defined below), the social isolation and concentration of already disadvantaged and marginalised populations reinforces non-normative behaviours. Weak social cohesion results in social inequalities and low neighbourhood attachment, contributing to the decline of the neighbourhood (ibid., pgs 4-5). On the other hand, critics of the subcultural approach say the theory does not explain the mechanisms for creating these strong community ties, and the capacity for collective action usually depends on exogenous, higher-level factors, such as effective institutions, to help intervene; this leads to the political economy approach (Weaver, et al., 2017).

Similar to the ecological approach, the political economy approach attributes neighbourhood change to exogenous forces, although unlike the ecological approach, decline is not natural and inevitable. The political economy approach says that decline is brought about by failures in the free market, because market economies produce geographically uneven patterns of development (Weaver, et al., 2017). The exogenous processes include production and accumulation of space by special interest groups, resulting in unequal ownership of the means of production, i.e. land and capital, with neighbourhood changes and neighbourhood poverty as an adverse side effect. Furthermore, a decline in public and social services accentuates poverty and political disengagement of the urban poor (Geyer Jr, 2018). This leads to the social capital model proposed by Temkin and Rohe (1998), which attempts to bring together the three schools of thought.

The social capital approach presents a model of intra-urban change, which states that the success of a neighbourhood is dependent on the neighbourhood’s internal supply of social capital. Social capital, as defined by the prominent theorist in the field David Putnam (1993, from Weaver, et al., 2017 and Forrest & Kearns, 2001):

Social capital refers to features of social organisation such as networks, norms and trust that facilitate co-ordination and co-operation for mutual benefit. Social capital enhances the benefits of investment in physical and human capital.

More concisely, social capital, which is a function of a neighbourhood's social cultural milieu and institutional infrastructure, describes the capacity of a neighbourhood to collectively act together. Neighbourhoods with a higher social capital are able to cooperatively act against urban decline, while neighbourhoods with insufficient levels will continue to decline like they were predicted in the ecological models (Weaver, et al., 2017).

In addition, studying neighbourhoods presents another difficulty, which is measuring quantitatively the levels of change. The concept of neighbourhood is comprised of both physical characteristics that include environmental, location and infrastructural, and social characteristics that include demographic, social-interactive, sentiment and local politics, services and associations (Lupton, et al., 2004; *Transforming Neighbourhoods*, 2010). How can neighbourhoods be defined in order to track and measure changes? If neighbourhoods are thought of as overlapping social networks, physical boundaries are likely to be inadequate, yet they are important when trying to measure changes. Despite being imperfect units of measurements for representing neighbourhoods, census tracts are generally used to study and examine changes at the neighbourhood level (Weaver, et al., 2017). One might encounter difficulties when trying to measure and track changes in neighbourhoods over space and time, because like the cities they are part of, they are never static; The rate at which they change vary between neighbourhood, as well as the physical boundaries that may have once separated a neighbourhood (Lupton, et al., 2004). The thought that the neighbourhoods need to be defined comes from a top-down approach to understanding neighbourhoods, that they are geographical administrative boundaries, known as electoral wards. While the other model for understanding neighbourhoods comes from the social perspective, that they are self-defined by the people who live in them (*Transforming Neighbourhoods*, 2010). A third framework offers a better understanding of what makes a neighbourhood, albeit being more vague: the local public realm. This includes public spaces, public buildings and public services. The definition assumed in this thesis can be said to have characteristics of each: a population that makes up a geographical area, albeit not necessarily politically defined, which includes the aspects of the public realm. Therefore, there is a mix of cultural, social and physical qualities that compose the definition of a neighbourhood.

1.4 Combating Neighbourhood Decline – Urban Regeneration

When discussing urban regeneration, it is important to take into account the needs of the area and community in question, so the questions can be proposed: Are needs best met by place-based approaches or people-based approaches to regeneration? Is a community defined by the people that is composed by, or by the geographical location? These two questions can be debated simultaneously, but there does not have to be a definite answer – a community's needs can be resolved using a mix of approaches that focus on improving social and community infrastructure. Community and social infrastructure include both services and programmes, yet they are situated in physical urban structures. So, the regeneration of programmes targeted at a certain population would also need to take into consideration the improvement of the facilities that conduct these services. Although they do not need to necessarily be located within a community, having a place in close proximity would help make it more accessible and more known to the people whom it is looking to benefit. The thought of regeneration should only come after a long-term approach of working with the community and understanding their needs¹², this section will briefly define and discuss several types regeneration and

¹² The topic of co-production of knowledge and how it can be used to improve communities will be discussed in detail in the Chapter 3

Urban regeneration comes in a variety of forms, scopes and sizes, but in general it refers to the comprehensive vision and the subsequent actions which lead to the resolution of urban problems and the improvement of urban areas, and aim to bring about lasting improvement economic, physical, social and environmental characteristics of an area (De Magalhaes, 2015).

As Couch and Fraser (2003, from Tripodi, 2017) summarise,

“In biology, regeneration means the regrowth of lost or injured tissue, or the restoration of a system to its initial state. And so it is with urban areas. Regeneration is concerned with the regrowth of economic activity where it has been lost; the restoration of social function where there has been dysfunction, or social inclusion where there has been exclusion; and the restoration of environmental quality or ecological balance where it has been lost. Thus urban regeneration is an aspect of the management and planning of existing urban areas rather than the planning and development of new urbanisation”

Some of the main types of urban regeneration, but not limited to these characteristics, are (Tripodi, 2017):

- Reconversion of underutilised and unused properties and/or buildings and brownfield sites for new uses and functions
- Improvements to the public realm
- Development of mobility and infrastructures in order to increase accessibility or decrease congestion of degraded areas
- Interventions targeted at socially disadvantaged neighbourhoods

While community development, which will be discussed in the next chapter, and urban regeneration can overlap to a certain degree in their meanings, as they both deal with the improvement of urban areas, community development focuses more on the aspect of involving the community in the approach. Urban regeneration has usually been more focused on physical and economic change related to the urban environment, as it was disconnected from social inequality and community cohesion issues in the UK during the 90s and 2000s (De Magalhaes, 2015). As also shown from the definition and some of the main types of regeneration, it is clear that the majority of urban regeneration interventions are focused on the physical aspects of a community, and the social aspect is quite vague (Colantonio, et al., 2011). More recently, regeneration practice has realised the need for interventions to extend beyond physical redevelopment, mainly the stimulation of economic growth coupled with policies that aim to decrease social inequality and increase social cohesion (De Magalhaes, 2015).

1.4.1 Neighbourhood Regeneration Policies

Urban regeneration projects in the EU have varied in the past, depending on the country and the time period. In the 1980s, projects focused mainly on the physical and economic renewal of inner-cities, while the 90s saw a shift to a more environmental and economic focus. More recently, this approach has been replaced by a more integrated approach which links economic activity and improvements to the environment to social and cultural events. The idea of community has emerged as a key focal point in delivering sustainable urban development under European policy, and many targeted areas of regeneration have been some of Europe’s most disadvantaged neighbourhoods, which have become this way due to globalisation and structural change (Colantonio, et al., 2011). Critics of regeneration policy that are intended to improve neighbourhoods are concerned that these policies usually end up creating neighbourhood change through the movement of the population instead through change of the existing population (Tunstall, 2016).

When discussing neighbourhood change, it is not clear how much of it is done without the presence of some kind of policy aimed at narrowing the gap between deprived and other areas. Policies that are meant to stop or reverse neighbourhood decline are based on the theory that absolute or relative negative change in physical, economic and/or socio-economic attributes can be addressed through the application of policy (Tunstall, 2016). Given that this thesis deals with two case studies based in Germany (Berlin) and Italy (Milan), the neighbourhood, or area-based, regeneration policies of the two countries will be briefly introduced, as an in-depth review of them is out of the scope of this thesis.

1.4.1.1 Italian neighbourhood-based policies

Opposed to other countries in northern Europe, Italy has not had a tradition of nationwide urban development or neighbourhood regeneration policies. It was not until the mid 90s when the country began to promote ad hoc regeneration projects that had cities and neighbourhoods enter in public “competitions” based on project proposals in order to gain access to national funding. Many of the projects prior to this period were carried out under a centralised top-down approach that focused on the improvement of physical infrastructure as the main objective of urban regeneration. The Neighbourhood Contracts¹³ in 1996 and the Neighbourhood Contracts II in 2003 were some of the schemes that focused mainly on the improvements to social housing and environmental improvements, which were moved away from in favour of integrated neighbourhood regeneration programmes, known as PRUSSTs¹⁴ (Colantonio, et al., 2011). Unfortunately, many of the programmes and design solutions originally proposed under the Neighbourhood Contracts had to be scaled back to due to time and money constraints, and a scaled down version of the goals and strategies took place (Fianchini, 2012)

1.4.1.2 German neighbourhood-based policies

Legislation for neighbourhood regeneration policies in Germany were introduced in 1971 and started being integrated into planning laws in the 1980s. The spatial focus of these policies was on urban areas that suffered from structural deficiencies, such as poor infrastructure provisions, derelict and unfit housing, etc, where the technical term of *redevelopment area*¹⁵ was used to label the intended area of intervention. Although social issues were defined as part of the considerations that had to be addressed in the planning process, the interpretation of social considerations differed greatly to those included in today’s planning philosophy, which include preserving existing communities and promoting social inclusion, education and cultural activities (Colantonio, et al., 2011).

The German Soziale Stadt programme (Socially Integrative City) is a federally supported initiative that was launched in Berlin in 1999, and later at the national level as part of the 2004 planning reforms (ibid.), to support the stabilisation and upgrading of neighbourhoods and urban areas categorised as economically and/or socially disadvantaged. Investments were directed at improving the overall urban living environment, infrastructure and the quality of life to ensure more intergenerational equity. The primary objective of the programme was to promote lively neighbourhoods and strengthen social cohesion (Städtebauförderung, 2017).

The Socially Integrative City falls within the national framework, with cities having adapted aspects such as the ways in which areas in need are identified and the scheme for citizens’ participation, as is the case in Berlin (Verga, 2017). Since 2006, Berlin has been implementing and developing the Social Urban Development Monitoring system, which provides a unique set of social static and dynamic indicators for

¹³ *Contratto dei Quartieri* in Italian

¹⁴ *Programma di Riqualificazione Urbana e Sviluppo Sostenibile del Territorio* in Italian

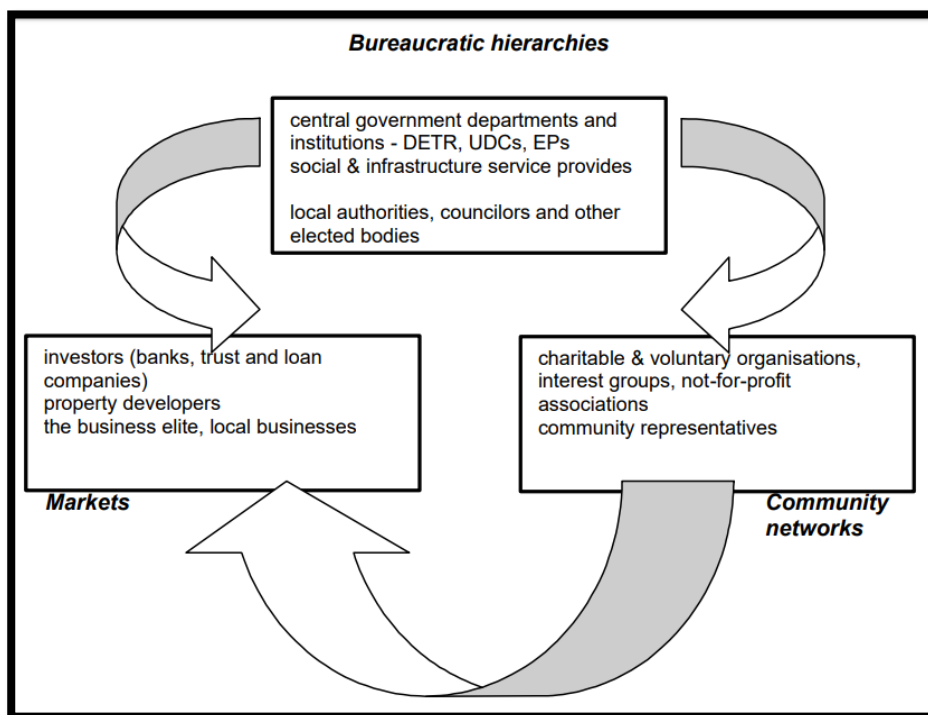
¹⁵ *Sanierungsgebiet* in German

the identification, assessment and classification of neighbourhoods (Verga, 2017). Another unique feature of the Socially Integrative City of Berlin, once the ‘areas with special development needs’ are identified, is the creation of neighbourhood councils in each of these selected neighbourhoods, known as Quartiersmanagement (QM Team). The QM Team is responsible for engaging and activating citizens and local actors in the process, promoting local networks and working alongside the district in producing a local Integrated Action Plan (IAP) (Verga, 2017; Senate Department for Urban Development and Housing, 2016).

1.4.2 The new actors and innovative approaches in regeneration

Whether they are area- or people-based initiatives, top-down or bottom-up, various actors from the local level to the city level, and potentially all the way up to regional and national level are involved in the process. While the projects of regeneration up until the 1980s saw little interaction between the local actors and communities, the beginning of the 1990s allowed for more control from real estate and infrastructure developers. While the second half of the 90s at least started to introduce the terminology of participation¹⁶, albeit being institutionalised “participation” processes (Rabbiosi, 2016). Figure 1-5 displays the types of actors typically involved in the regeneration process; while much control of the processes have been exerted by the public and private sector institutions (labelled markets and bureaucratic hierarchies), this thesis would like to focus on the role of community-based institutions in the process of regeneration. Also shown, or better not shown, from the figure below is the role that the university can contribute as an actor in the regeneration process, using innovative approaches to testing out solutions in the urban environment before they are implemented on a larger scale.

FIGURE 1-5 - ACTORS IN THE REGENERATION PROCESS



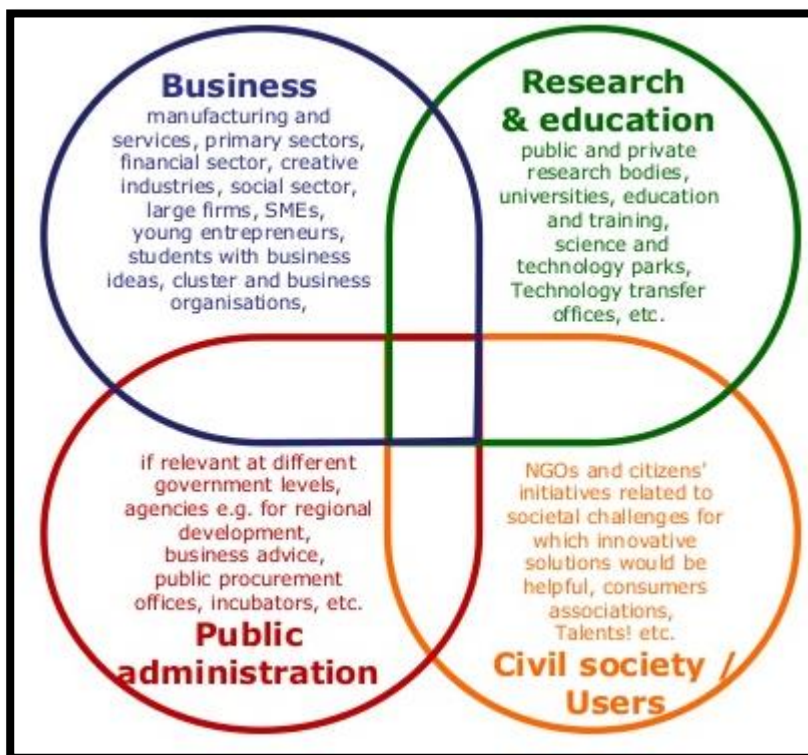
Source: (Tsenkova, 2002)

¹⁶ Participation and its varying levels will be discussed in Chapter 3

1.4.2.1 Urban Living Labs

As mentioned previously, taking into account the needs of the communities or neighbourhoods at the centre of regeneration or development should be the key priority, yet until recently this has not been the case. Even when the typical needs of a community are known, for example housing, jobs, education, public spaces, etc. to name several substantive ones, the solutions to these are not always simple. The concept of testing real life experiments using temporary materials to more easily react to the needs of communities by accepting their input and participation has been gaining ground in the urban planning field, with Urban Living Labs (European Network of Living Labs, 2016; Concilio, 2016; JPI Urban Europe, 2016), radical temporary urbanism (Kossak, 2012), bottom-up urbanism (Glick, 2014) and tactical urbanism (Lydon, et al., 2012). Urban Living Labs are seen as environments where resources are shared between people (experts and non-experts) who collaborate to find solutions to problems and help one another to achieve their goals, which results in a collective learning and shared understanding¹⁷ (Concilio, 2016). Figure 1-6 displays the actors involved in the Urban Living Lab approach, referred to as the Quadruple Helix Innovation Model, which includes the educational sector and extends beyond mid-range to higher level public and private actors to also include “civil society” as a broader and encompassing term.

FIGURE 1-6 - THE QUADRUPLE HELIX INNOVATION MODEL



Source: (Metropolitan City of Bologna, 2017)

In order to provide innovative solutions to the problems faced by marginalised neighbourhoods, there needs to be an actor that has the capacity and skills to research, observe and report on them, while working together with local communities throughout the process. Research institutions and community-based groups are able to provide a bottom-up approach to regeneration, something that is needed if the perspectives and opinions from the community or neighbourhood affected by a resulting

¹⁷ Knowledge exchange and these types of action-based approaches will be discussed in Chapter 3

project are to be taken into consideration. It is important that the debate on how to address the issues faced by communities, which can be linked to market failures in a capitalist society at the economic level, can be partially remedied by interventions at the political level by providing public housing, social services and public and green spaces (Banai, 1995). Although the level of intervention required by a disadvantaged neighbourhood or community is often not met by the state nor the market, which gives rise to new actors to provide services to assist people and reduce levels of poverty.

1.5 Conclusion

Usually the neighbourhoods described as the ones containing concentrations of urban poverty are in the peripheries of cities¹⁸, the ones that are considered the most problematic - spatially and socially disconnected with degradation from not only a visual aspect, but also a social and cultural one (Cellamare, 2017). In many sprawling cities, land-use per capita is high and marginally increasing from the city-centre to the periphery, with significant and variable discontinuity in the urban morphology (Guastella, et al., 2019). While a neighbourhood has certain social and geographical attributes, a community has a different definition¹⁹ yet the two can be overlapping concepts. Whether it is a neighbourhood or community that is the subject of debate, what is clear that the social relations of communities have been eroded in favour of market relations, as Polanyi (2001) stated, “instead of economy being embedded in social relations, social relations are embedded in the economic system”. The basis of the livelihood of societies comes from redistribution and reciprocity, which will be presented in the next chapter in the form of social infrastructure.

This chapter has attempted to comprehend a society in which the operation of an array of different forces, seen and unseen, and actors have acted as underlying mechanisms that influence the formation of cities. Polanyi (2001) refers to *the great transformation* as the shift from non-capitalist pre-industrial societies to the modern day, market-driven ones, which has effects on the organisation of society, cities, neighbourhoods and communities. Neighbourhoods are a make-up of various outcomes of social-spatial processes that have been re-shaped by local, national and international policies. The state plays an important role in supporting markets, providing infrastructure in the way of roads and ports, an institutional framework (e.g. money and property rights) and regional peace, all of which the exchange of goods depends on. By supplying these varying infrastructures for an area, cities are more likely to increase the economic capabilities, and therefore leading to be more prosperous. Hence, this is the reason the organisation of cities is closely linked to the economy, and the nature of exchange, according to Polanyi, is determined by the social organisation of the economy (Johnson, et al., 2000).

Providing the basic economic and social standards for communities should be standard procedure of state and local governments; yet, as seen with the uneven development of cities as well as the levels of poverty and social exclusion displayed in neighbourhoods characterised as disadvantaged, a different set of actors need to assume the role when the state and market fail to provide these. The next chapter will explore how focusing on networks of social infrastructure can start to rebuild the ruptured social bonds that once existed within small communities, as well as presenting the concept of community development and the different actors it helps bring together in order to confront challenges and advance community goals.

¹⁸ This mainly refers to the attributes of peripheries of European societies (Gammone, 2018).

¹⁹ The definition of community will be discussed in the next chapter on community development and social infrastructure

Chapter 2 Community Development and the Role of Social Infrastructure

“Social infrastructure is not built of bricks, mortar, and dirt, but rather from the social actions and practices that restore relationships between and among people and the places they hold dear.” (Kuhlmann, et al., 2014)

2.1 Introduction

Cities built around capitalistic ideas of limitless growth have led us to massive urban agglomerates, endless sprawl, segregated and impoverished peripheries, and mono-centric urban areas that have led to a lack of social relations in order for communities to thrive. What has become evident in the last several decades is neo-liberal policies and the social democratic welfare state have failed to meet human needs. There are widening gaps between the haves and the have-nots, leading to increasing levels of poverty, hunger and crime (Goel, 2014). The constant mobility of labour, capital and people under globalisation have made it more difficult to plan for the future, as it threatens the economic base of many communities. With these aspects combined, it has weakened the democracy and civic participation in cities. In the state’s bid to reduce spending, they are relegating their responsibilities onto local governments and community-based organisations to address the issues of social services, housing needs and welfare programmes (Green, 2010). Can communities and their infrastructure be relied on in their attempt to resolve today’s urban issues? Could what previously kept small communities strong, the feeling of belonging and reciprocity, be the key to moving forward? By calling attention to local-level concerns and focusing on the core economies that help invigorate local communities, the woes that have been created by unjust urban policies and external market forces can begin to be corrected.

This chapter will present communities, their infrastructure and the role of various types of social infrastructure in terms of community development and organisation. Communities and neighbourhoods, as mentioned in the previous chapter, are social and geographical constructs, composed of the natural environment, physical and social infrastructure, as well as the people and local politics that make up the neighbourhood (Lupton, et al., 2004; Transforming Neighbourhoods, 2010; Holland, et al., 2011). This chapter will argue for the need to focus on the building of relationships between various actors of a neighbourhood in order to promote community development, essentially employing a bottom-up approach to the regeneration of the area.

2.2 Communities and Community Development

Although the term community has been widely debated in urban and community studies (Pradeep, et al., 2017), it can simply be defined as diverse groups of people who live in a commonly understood location or place (Majee, et al., 2011), as the scope of this thesis is not to debate the definition of community, as it can have different meanings depending on the perspective, but to examine its resources to determine how they can be used to improve the quality of life and meet the needs of inhabitants of an area. The definitions of community usually deal with two categories, that of community as a place or neighbourhood, and that of community as a relationship of solidarity, or interaction, which can extend beyond the geographical location. A third aspect, which is not always included, is the aspect of attachment to a community, which plays an important role within community development, as communities can be viewed as a localised social system that unite social groups and institutions (Pradeep, et al., 2017). Communities consist of three basic components: people, places, and things. With people being the primary substance of a community, these people interact regularly around a common set of issues, interests or needs (Lesser, et al., 2000; Gilchrist, 2009). Locality is considered an important facet of people’s identity and their attachment to a place

appears to be associated with strong social networks. There tends to be increased feelings of distrust, personal security and cohesion where there is a high population turnover (e.g. large influx of migrants). However, as communities are usually formed around common interests, the social networks that form communities usually extend beyond the geographical boundaries (Gilchrist, 2009).

The second component of effective communities is places for communities to congregate, a physical place where community members meet and share ideas - "this place becomes a unique identifier that reinforces the group's sense of commonality" (Lesser, et al., 2000). With the increases in technology, meeting spaces are extending beyond the physical realm to the virtual, but face to face interactions can never be completely substituted. Therefore social and virtual networks become vital for sustainable communities and community development (ibid.).

Lastly, communities consist of things, or *boundary objects*, as Etienne Wenger (2002) refers to them. These objects can be immaterial, such as rules and norms, or material objects such as tools or other artefacts that communities use to accomplish their objectives. Individuals within a community can use these common objects to expand the collective knowledge of the group (Lesser, et al., 2000). In these communities, individuals participate through sharing experiences, pooling resources, representing the interests of larger groups, and building relationships with other likeminded individuals (Gilchrist, 2009). These three aspects contribute to the cohesiveness of communities, allowing for people and local organisations to form bonds and for ways to facilitate development within the community which starts from the bottom-up.

2.2.1 Community development and organisation

Being well connected is recognised by governments and society as a source of strength (Gilchrist, 2009), and it is crucial for carrying out community development and the fostering of a relationship with (between?) the community and various levels of city officials and local organisations. Community development is an umbrella term for a wide range of methods that include: community research, community education, community organising, community advocacy and mobilisation and community planning (Quimbo, et al., 2018). The agent of change, which can range anywhere from individuals to institutions and from organised to unorganised actors, who plays a crucial role in the process as they choose the type of model it would like to employ when carrying out community organisation adopted as part of a community development project.

Community organisation, according to one of the earliest definitions the 1950s provided by Murray G. Ross, is a process through which a community identifies its needs or objectives, and will work to meet these needs and fulfil these objectives, finding the internal and external resources necessary to deal with the needs, and taking action based on the respective needs, while subsequently expanding and developing cooperative and collaborative practices in the community (Dizon, 2012). While community organising has been defined differently over the years in Western societies, the ultimate goal is to bring about change to the social, political and environmental institutions so that people can affect change according to their needs and direct their own lives (ibid). Jack Rothman suggested that three models could be used to describe the activities of persons and groups involved in social change at the community level: locality development, social action and social planning (Stockdale, 1976).

Locality development, which is most closely related to the concept of community development under the framework of the United Nations, deals with the development of local leadership and initiatives, self-help and participation by a wide range of community members (Stockdale, 1976). Within the development, the change agents assume the responsibility of enablers of members, coordinators of actions and activities and teachers of problem-solving skills. Projects usually involve setting specific task goals and more general

process goals that are concerned with developing the problem-solving capacity of the community (ibid.). The locality development model, along with the social action model, emphasises grassroots strategies for change and seeks to enhance the relationship between the power structures and the citizens of the community. Social action on the other hand views the community as a hierarchy of privilege and power, with the overall goal being to redress the imbalance in power (Hyman, 1990).

The next is Rothman's community organisation is the social action model, which assumes that disadvantaged populations must be organised in order to make sufficient demands from the larger community for increased resources or treatment more in line with social justice. It seeks to alter institutional policies and/or the distribution of power, as well as making basic changes to community practices and policies of formal organisations (Stockdale, 1976). Examples of social action include civil rights groups and social movements, which use methods that are often abrasive and high levels of participation are the strength to those who employ this approach (Brager, et al., 1973).

Lastly in Rothman's model is social planning, which deals with the application of technical skills and expertise to solve pressing public issues, with a further focus on rational, deliberative decision making and planning. Social planners are tasked with gathering data and analysing situations, making use of their skills to devise and implement solutions. This makes the approach more of a task oriented one, with less of an emphasis on community participation. It assumes that change within a complex environment requires expert planners, who can negotiate with large bureaucratic organisations and guide complex change processes (Stockdale, 1976).

While Stockdale (1976) found Rothman's framework useful for some aspects, he argued that the social planning model was too broad, and that it should be split into two distinct categories of 'traditional' planning and 'advocacy' planning²⁰, which can be further associated with conflict and consensus roles in society (Hyman, 1990). Traditional planning aligns itself with the idealist rational-comprehensive model²¹, which is associated with the consensus theory of society, while advocacy planning tends to focus on subgroups and their problems, within a community (Stockdale, 1976; Hyman, 1990; Gilchrist, 2009). Given that it focuses on these usually underrepresented subgroups within society, advocacy planning is usually in a position of conflict and requires campaign or contest tactics, which fall in line with conflict theory, while the traditional planner relies on existing power structures for support and implementation of objectives (Hyman, 1990). The traditional planner is mainly concerned with fundamental social problems, such as housing and health, while the advocacy planner is concerned with these, in addition to more intangible issues like social injustices, inequalities and deprivations. The role of the traditional planner is fact-gathering, data analysis and programme implementation, while instead the advocacy planner also assumes characteristics of activists, which overlap with the social action model. A realistic plan of community action would have characteristics of both traditional planning and advocacy planning, using the advantages of each to carry out effective community organisation.

While these four approaches are not exhaustive, and can be critiqued to a certain degree, they provide some assumptions and conditions that influence the selection of the model(s) of community organising, while also helping to identify the types of skills and roles required by community workers. If community

²⁰ Advocacy planning was introduced by American professor, lawyer and planner Paul Davidoff in the 1960s and sought to question planners' role as solely technicians, claiming they should also concern themselves with the social and political equality of the constituents they represent (Davidoff, 1965).

²¹ Stockdale (1976) also categorises traditional planning as idealist-unitary and advocacy planning as realist-individualist.

change practitioners are to be effective, they need to select strategies based on a realistic assessment of the area, as well as the structures and dynamics of the situations in which they will act (Stockdale, 1976). The basic framework will be used to identify the roles played by the two organisations in the discussion and conclusion chapter of this thesis (Chapter 7).

Depending on the approach chosen, whether the problems identified are more substantive ones or more intangible, will determine the type of intervention needed to fulfil the objective(s). While it is important to make changes at a systemic level, for example with social inequalities, these are also issues that are not easily solved in society as they are complex and involve many facets of life. It does not mean agents of change should not strive to achieve them, but it is something that is done incrementally over a long period of time, and also something that can be broken down into more attainable goals. When identifying the needs of a community, especially working with disadvantaged populations, the most pressing needs should be addressed first. This may not mean carrying out large infrastructure projects to solve the problems and meet a community's needs, as cities often look to those over smaller social infrastructure projects.

2.2.1.1 Community networking approach

Higher levels of social capital appear to be linked to improvements in health, crime, education and economic regeneration (Gilchrist, 2009), so given this, governments should be supporting interventions that strengthen networks and build trust between communities. Community groups and NGOs provide crucial forms of assistance and informal support through self-organising and community action. Networks that connect communities act as an invaluable resource, as the development of a community depends on the strengthening and expanding of networks between people, groups and organisations, as well as between different government sectors and agencies, so networking can be viewed as an essential aspect of community development (Gilchrist, 2009).

While networking within community work and community development was seen as important during the accounts of projects throughout the 60s and 70s, it was not until later that the idea of intervening to change or develop networks was introduced. By viewing the networked community as an arena of co-production, relationships between inhabitants, local organisations and public agencies can begin to be more respectful and reciprocal. This supports the idea of building towards a *core economy*, as Edgar Kahn has named it, one that is “on based on relationships and mutuality, on trust and engagement, on speaking and listening and caring” (Stephens, et al., 2008). This gives value to the welfare of communities that is generated by the strengthening of networks and organisations that result in the co-production of services.

An approach to community development that focuses on the networking of the community infrastructure of a community, known as asset-based community development, focuses on the community strengths as a starting point rather than its perceived and actual disadvantages (Gilchrist, 2009). There is a necessity to provide spaces for these networks to gather and discuss important issues regarding their communities, and having the proper community infrastructure is vital to the success and sustainability of community groups and networks. There is also a necessity in some communities, especially in the developing world, to have access to basic infrastructure such as water and electricity, but for the sake of this thesis being carried out in a European context, it will be assumed that communities as a whole have access to these types of infrastructure, even if the access to services or infrastructure are not always satisfactory (Gilchrist, 2009). Carrying out a type of needs assessments, participatory techniques to research and analysis will be discussed in the next chapter, with the community is typically done in the discovery period, and is the basis of a regeneration/community development project. The next section will examine the different types of

community infrastructure that exist to provide welfare and services, and their role in tackling the various types of regeneration.

2.2.2 Community Infrastructure and Urban Regeneration

A community development approach deals with how and for whom an intervention is planned, implemented and managed, and can include participatory approaches, asset-based approaches, people and place-based approaches, community economic development, rights-based approaches, etc. (Quimbo, et al., 2018). First and foremost, the community must be involved in determining their own needs if a development project is to be successful and beneficial to the people that it is supposed to serve. On the other hand, ineffective participation strategies can lead to the disengagement of minority ethnic and disadvantaged communities, resulting in the damage of community well-being and these minority groups to adopt a strategy of non-participation as a way of coping with long-term disadvantage. A long-term strategy of community engagement is required, one that considers the differences within communities, that manages expectations and tensions, and allows for a variety of ways for inhabitants to contribute. Solely by acknowledging the feelings of disengagement by the communities is a necessary first step to rectifying years neglect by local officials (Gilchrist, 2009). Working with a variety of approaches can help provide an effective strategy for resolving issues highlighted by the local residents, and by taking advantage of existing community infrastructure can also contribute to the success of a community development programme.

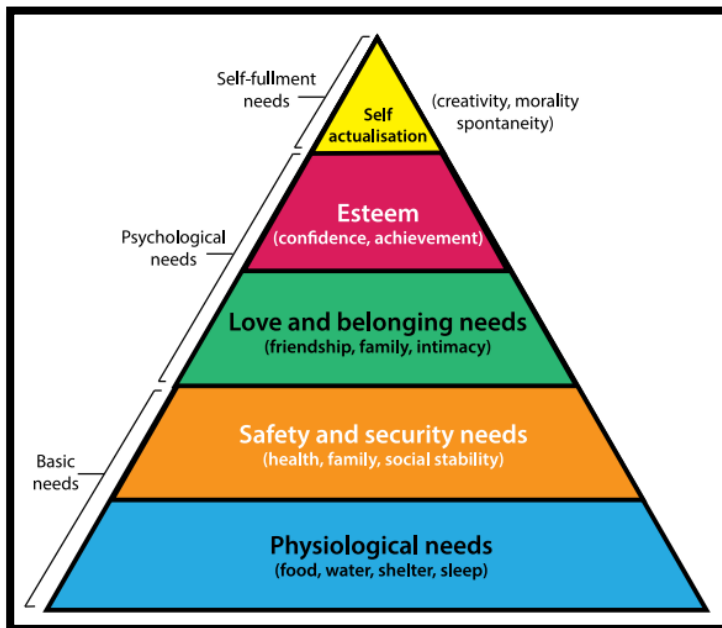
In focusing on the community asset-based approach to development, it is necessary to discuss what is community infrastructure, which includes physical, various types of social and virtual infrastructures. According to a report published by the city of Melbourne, Australia, community infrastructure “refers to public places and spaces that accommodate community facilities and services and support individuals, families and groups to meet their social needs, maximise their potential and enhance community wellbeing” (City of Melbourne, 2014). Communities with access to a high-quality of social infrastructure have a better opportunity to participate in community life, with these facilities being viewed as the heart of the community, providing spaces for formal and informal activities (Capire Consulting Group, 2014).

In the absence of the public sector providing welfare and services to communities, there are social associations and organisations that work on fulfilling the needs of the inhabitants, referred to as social infrastructure. Social infrastructure can include facilities relating to social connection and community identity (e.g. civic spaces, places of worship, community art, youth centres), recreation and leisure (e.g. parks, sports fields, pedestrian and bike paths), community well-being (e.g. health and emergency services, childcare, elderly care, integration services) and learning (e.g. primary, secondary and tertiary education facilities, adult education, libraries; *ibid.*). Seeing how many of these types of facilities and services are usually non-profit, they usually depend on volunteers and/or funding from the public in order to be sustainable.

While the regeneration of urban infrastructure contributes to the improvement of communities and quality of life, many forms of social and community infrastructure remain largely overlooked in cities, besides the issues of homeless and affordable housing being one of the essential needs of human-beings (Clutterbuck, et al., 2002). Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (Figure 2-1) can be referred to, as community and social infrastructure can contribute to fulfilling the most basic needs of sleep, food, shelter, safety and security, as well as the less essential, but still vital to a higher quality of life, psychological and self-fulfilment needs that humans possess. Many people get involved in community activities to meet people and gain a sense of

belonging, and social infrastructure has the potential to provide these activities, as well as spaces to carry them out (Gilchrist, 2009).

FIGURE 2-1 - MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS



(Corrigan-Doyle, et al., 2016)

In respect to physical urban infrastructure, such as housing and transportation, the impact is measurable, leading for a cost-to-benefit ratio to be formulated, an indicator that is commonly used in city planning and budgeting. On the other hand, the benefits that social and community infrastructure provide – a network of services and support - are difficult to measure, and therefore are not always given the recognition they deserve when the topic of regeneration and community development is discussed (Clutterbuck, et al., 2002). Focus is instead placed on the big-money projects that look to develop physical infrastructure as the solution to the problems faced by disadvantaged communities, instead of focusing on the social factors that contribute to improving the quality of life and the mental well-being of the community, a people-based approach. With a shift in focus to the delivery of services and programmes that have the potential to involve people in the processes of bringing change in their communities, promote social inclusion and work towards developing trust between individuals (Francis, et al., 2014; Gilchrist, 2009).

Stockdale (1976) argues that the locality development and traditional planning approach of community organising is more closely related to the place-based approach, as it focuses on a whole geographic community and deals with resolving substantive social issues. This is typically the style of approach urban regeneration adopts, as in its name and its origins from the profession of urban planning, which has traditionally had more of a substantive focus. In many cases, spatially targeted urban policies were unsuccessful in decreasing poverty and improving neighbourhoods in disadvantaged areas, as they were tackling symptoms and not the root causes, and actually contributed to some cases of social inequalities, as regenerated areas can become gentrified, therefore shifting the problems and people to a different area (Barbanente, et al., 2019; Hambleton, 2015).

Can there be a shift to focusing more on different types of infrastructure that are able to better connect communities, like virtual and social infrastructure that can work in unison with each other? With the objectives to increase social sustainability in marginalised neighbourhoods, assuring that the physical

infrastructure is in place will help transition the focus to improving the social infrastructure – but physical infrastructure is quite costly, and with shrinking public budgets, municipalities may choose to invest funds in more attractive parts of the city. On the other hand, developing the social infrastructure and community networks with the assistance of virtual infrastructure could be a way to increase neighbourhood cohesion, connect personal skills with local initiatives and initiate more inclusive decision making and dialogue between various levels of actors in order to empower marginalised groups. If regeneration can have a social and community infrastructure focus, can it prove to be more effective? Who plays a role in connecting the community and social infrastructure? The next section will look into several examples of the agents of change involved in community development and providing support to local communities, mainly looking at the role's community development organisations and community hubs play in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

2.3 Community Hubs and Community Development Organisations

2.3.1 Community Development Organisations

Community development organisations (CDOs) or Community development corporations (CDCs)²² are organisations that leverage local knowledge and resources, bring together concerned citizens, businesses, and other governmental institutions to manage the improvement of a disadvantaged neighbourhood for the benefit of the residents (McQuarrie, 2010; Nye, et al., 1999). The key phrase here is *for the benefit of the residents*, seeing that during many regeneration projects, the physical urban environment is usually improved but often at the expense of the residents and resulting in gentrification (Barbanente, et al., 2019). CDOs “seek to develop human, economic, organisational, physical and environmental capacity or assets of a neighbourhood” (Nye, et al., 1999). Activities include neighbourhood planning, physical development and revitalisation (affordable housing, public spaces and amenities) community economic development (creation and retention of jobs, job training), leadership development and community building, with housing development and job creation being the most typical of their activities (Nye, et al., 1999). The activities carried out by CDOs, usually starting on a smaller scale and being eventually adopted at larger one, can not only lead to an improvement in the standard of living for the community, but also create beneficial relationships with the state, markets and civil society (Mequanen, 1998).

Community development organisations are based on the ideology that community-controlled development is superior, which in response to the failures of the market and the state to meet the needs of marginalised populations, where communities are organised around local social relations (McQuarrie, 2010). Resulting from the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, the first CDOs were established in United States as part of the programme, and thus began the emphasis on third sector organisations that could better respond to the needs of the community rather than governmental agencies. In the United States, this disconnection from the state has led CDOs to rely more on market mechanisms to fund activities, which has led them to focus more on the physical redevelopment of neighbourhoods in order to attract investments. Not only has the US seen this surge of non-profit organisations assuming the role of local development (Mequanen, 1998), the amount of CDOs have vastly expanded worldwide due to the idea that civil society organisations are better suited to provide for the people they serve (McQuarrie, 2010).

On the other side, the realities of working in disadvantaged populations can come to the surface when carrying out community development activities, as is discussed in Chapter 3 with the issues with participation in projects, with residents having little time and energy to carry out activities. Often lacking

²² Both terms are used in the literature and describes non-profit organisations, but for the sake of confusion (as corporation is usually a term used to denote a for-profit organisation), I will use the term community development organisation or CDO.

material resources, most projects are financed by “outsiders”, leading to the outsiders having some influence and bringing their organisational values and way of doing things and possibly conflicting with the locals’ priorities. Given that communities are not homogenous, there is the issue with some people not reacting in the same way to defend or promote shared interests, and projects can mean different things to different people; “Conflict rather than consensus, may be the key, defining features of communities existence” (Mequanen, 1998). The idea that people should collectively act together towards a common good has been and still remains an attractive idea, but creating the proper organisational framework to guide communities in this direction is what renders this task difficult.

The use of local knowledge and resources, as mentioned previously, means not only leveraging the people of that area as valuable assets that contribute to their own development, but also the existing social infrastructure that can contribute to the building of “community” and meeting the needs of the people in which they serve. Community hubs are a type of community asset that have different connotations around the world, with different functions and services depending on the country, area and neighbourhood, but one of the main objectives is to bring the social infrastructure of a neighbourhood together. While it may not be considered ‘community development’ *per se*, it can be considered an asset-building approach that can play an important role in strengthening community relations.

2.3.2 Community hubs

Community hubs is a term used mainly in Anglo-Saxon speaking countries, but several variations, such as community centre, are being used in different countries around the world, albeit with varying meanings and functions of the space. The term is widely used to denote the convergence of spatial, social and educational planning, and is used quite freely in planning and policy documents, in governmental and non-governmental sectors, in a variety of countries (McShane, et al., 2012). In the term *community hub*, there is community, which has been defined as unified body of individuals, people with common characteristics or interests living in a particular area; and hub, which is a centre of activity. So looking at these two definitions taken from the dictionary, a community hub would appear to be a central place that seeks to unify people with common interests. McShane (2012) calls the concept of community hubs a normative, with all the positive connotations of community, and the central place and activity of a hub. Reports showing the various use of different facilities, the majority are schools (McShane, et al., 2012), but also libraries (The Association for Rural and Small Libraries, 2017), city halls (Nonko, 2019) and urban gardens (Karamarkos, 2019) are being imagined and converted to the community hubs of the future.

The term community hub developed from origins of community and social centres in the early 20th century in the United States and United Kingdom. Community centres, or social centres as they were called, were part of the efforts of the social centre movement and in 1911, Wisconsin became the first state to write into law a provision for the establishment of social centres. Community centres were to act as the foundation for community organisation, to allow people to gather for a variety of activities, including sport, clubs, social occasions, games and entertainment, while also being a place of lectures and civic education and debate (Stevens, 1972). Over the next couple decades, the idea took off around the United States, from 1919 when there were over 100 cities with community centres established to 1930 when New York City alone had almost 500 centres (Fisher, 1994).

“No democratic form of government can long endure without popular education or the means of acquiring it. The first and chief aim of the community centre movement is to deepen the content and broaden the scope of the term ‘education’ and to extend the activities of the public schools so that they may evolve into the people’s universities” (Jackson, 1918). Jackson said that our greatest need is the continuing education

of our grown men and women, as education is a life-long process. The community centre seeks to unify the bonds between people and to augment their points of contact by taking into consideration all interests that people have in common. The things that can only be achieved if we are united together, only if there is cooperation between the community, far outnumbers that which cannot. In order to unite the various populations, Jackson was a proponent of creating the spirit of community; teaching foreigners the local language is not enough to make them feel part of a society, “the right hand of fellowship must be extended to them”. Jackson believed that the community centre was the most available and effective way to carry out these activities (Jackson, 1918).

The United Kingdom followed suit with their concept of a community centre, and in 1919, the National Council of Social Services set out some of the purposes of community centres published in their report: centres will be responsible for management of the building; they will provide facilities for the development of recreational, cultural and personal welfare of members of the community; and will act as a meeting place for voluntary organisations, associations and other community groups (Yasmin, et al., 2008). In Italy, social centres grew from the radical left social movements of the 1970s and were more associated with the squatting of unoccupied buildings, thanks to the transition from the industrial to the post-industrial society (Montagna, 2006; Dunnage, 2002). This was mostly done by young people, but the idea to provide activities such as concerts, film, yoga, discussion groups and counselling for drug addicts (Dunnage, 2002), which is similar to the idea developed 50 years earlier in the US and the UK.

While community centres have been traditionally more of a meeting place for community members, community hubs look to additionally provide services for residents, as can be shown by the varying definitions found in Table 2-1. The term community hub seems to be more used in rhetoric in the United Kingdom and the commonwealth countries rather than in the United States²³, where community centre is still the primary term used. Deducing the main terms of the descriptions provided in Table 2-1, community hubs are a welcoming/inclusive place that bring a multitude of services and resources together under one roof that are accessible to all of the community. The 2 last definitions, although are for community centres, provide similar definitions to their purpose, of providing activities and services and places for socialising and community organising.

TABLE 2-1 - COMMUNITY HUB AND COMMUNITY CENTRE TERMINOLOGY FROM ANGLO-SAXON COUNTRIES²⁴

Country	Source	Definition/ Characteristics
Australia	https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/building-and-development/urban-planning/community-housing	The term ‘community hub’ refers to the integration of community facilities in one location to provide better access to a wide range of services as well as a more cost effective way of delivering and operating these services
	http://www.communityhubs.org.au	Community hubs are welcoming places where migrant and refugee families, particularly mothers with young children, come to connect, share, and learn. Hubs bridge the gap between migrants and the wider community, they connect women with schools, with each other, and with organisations that can provide health, education, and settlement support.
	https://www.accesscommunity.org.au/community_hubs	Community Hubs brings local education, health, community and settlement services together in a familiar and welcoming environment to make it easier for newly arrived families to access the services and assistance they need. The Hub provides families with a sense of belonging and facilitates the development of friendships and support networks.
United Kingdom	http://www.octopuscommunities.org.uk/our-projects/community-hubs/what-is-a-community-hub/	Community Hubs provide a focal point and facilities to foster greater local community activity and bring residents, the local business community, and smaller organisations together to improve the quality of life in their areas.

²³ While researching the use of the term community hub in the Anglo-Saxon countries, it was difficult to find examples of community hubs in the US as I had found with the commonwealth countries (UK, Canada, Australia). The main example I came across in the US was founded by the United Way, an international organisation, which also directs community hubs in Canada.

²⁴ This is by no means an extensive list, just to provide several examples from countries (the majority Anglo-Saxon, where its origins are from) that commonly use the terminology.

	https://mycommunity.org.uk/resources/community-hubs/	A community hub is defined as a multi-purpose centre or building that is made accessible to the residents of the area that it occupies. It provides a range of community services, delivered by community members, and is often managed by a dedicated community organisation
	https://www.leeds.gov.uk/residents/neighbourhoods-and-community/community-hubs	The hubs offer a mixture of library services, housing services, customer services and offer job searching help and advice
Canada	https://www.ontario.ca/page/community-hubs	A community hub makes it easier for local residents to access the health, social, cultural, recreational and other resources they need together in one spot. It can be located in a physical building or accessed through a digital service. Community hubs serve as a central access point, which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • offer services in collaboration with different community agencies and service providers • reduce administrative duplication • improve services for residents and are responsive to the needs of their communities
	https://www.rotaryclubofcalgary.org/sitepage/community-hubs/community-hubs	Key features of community hubs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents engage in planning, design and implementation • Welcoming and inclusive gathering spaces to connect neighbours with one another and their community • Platforms to spark community economic development • Access to supports, services and resources
	https://settlement.org/ontario/health/community-and-public-health/public-and-community-health/what-is-a-community-hub/	A community hub is a public space that brings several community agencies and neighbourhood groups together to offer a range of activities, programs and services. They were created to make better use of public spaces by offering multiple services under one roof that meet the needs of a specific community or neighbourhood. Community hubs also encourage social gatherings.
United States	https://www.tps.org/community/unit-ed-way-of-greater-toledo.html	Community hubs connect residents, students and their families to resources and supports with their neighbourhood. The strategy makes a school - a place that already acts as a natural anchor for children - the centre of an entire neighbourhood by bringing together multiple services and programs and making them accessible to everyone
	http://www.sixthstreetcenter.org	Sixth Street Community Center has been working to empower the Loisaida community by organizing around issues that affect the community since 1978. In 1996, we began focusing on issues concerning food, health, and the environment. In addition to community organizing, we also seek to create a fulfilling sense of community in the neighbourhood by bringing neighbourhood residents together around the same table.
	http://whatworksforhealth.wisc.edu/program.php?t1=20&t2=6&t3=82&id=337	Community centres are public venues where community members go for a variety of reasons, including socializing, participating in recreational or educational activities, gaining information, and seeking counselling or support services. Community centres house a variety of programs, and can be open to everyone in a community or only to a particular sub-population, such as seniors, youth, or immigrants.

Issues that community hubs deal with fall mainly under the three categories of: planning, integrated service delivery and community infrastructure. “No community hub is like another, as each brings together a variety of different services, programs and/or social and cultural activities to reflect local community needs. It is this diversity of activity that allows community hubs to play a critical role in building economic and social cohesion in the community” (Community Hubs Advisory Group, 2015). Community hubs acts as an asset-based approach to community development, providing services in response to the needs of the community in order to facilitate development, stronger relations and trust between members, as well as between the various services and the people who carry them out. Seeing that it looks to bridge gaps between social relations in an area, it can also be considered a community networking approach (Gilchrist, 2009).

In Australia, the co-location of community facilities has been the most ambitious policy trend, leading to many cities and communities adopting community infrastructure frameworks (City of Melbourne, 2014; McShane, 2006) What is sparking this interest in community hubs? The idea of providing an all-inclusive experience to meet the needs and provide services to community members, besides from the obvious economic benefits, offers a new approach to the holistic management of community services (McShane, 2006).

Having schools that provide services to a community and act as places for meeting and community organising is something that was in the original ideas for community centres (Jackson, 1918), but even more now governments are investing in schools as central places in order to revitalise local communities and invest in human capital (McShane, et al., 2012). As community hubs and community centres promote the development of human agency, and carrying out a process of life-long learning. As the university is an institution that provides learning and development beyond grade school for its students, can it also provide it for local communities by acting as a local resource, while also providing a unique learning experience for students? The final section of this chapter will examine the roles universities have in supporting disadvantaged communities.

2.4 The University's Role in Community Development

Universities' roles in community outreach and development can be seen dating back to the early 20th century in the United States and Canada, more or less around the same time as community centres began to establish themselves. At the first conference of the National University Education Association (NUEA) in 1915, the importance of informal community service was emphasised, and then in 1935 the association called for university-sponsored development workers (Phifer, 1990). In 1960, a report published the involvement of thirteen member universities of the NUEA in community development. In the 1920s, St. Francis University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia, under the leadership of Father M. M. Coady, whose programme known as the Antigonish Movement helped organise a local fishermen cooperative, became one of the pioneers in community development and education. The university would later found the Coady International Institute which focused on grassroots training in community development (Phifer, 1990). The United States has its roots in carrying out practical forms of learning, education and research, with pioneers such as John Dewey and Kurt Lewin (Feldman, 2017; Levin, 1999).

The Pratt Institute Center for Community and Environmental Development, is part of Pratt University of New York and is the oldest university-based community development organisation in the United States, founded in 1963. It served as a model for Robert F. Kennedy's project to create CDOs as part of the Economic Opportunity Act, and acts as a research centre dedicated to servicing marginalised communities in different neighbourhoods of New York City (Pratt Center for Community Development, 2019; Cagnetti, 2018). Some of their notable actions have been supporting local social movements against unwanted development, fighting to ensure federal assistance was invested in marginalised neighbourhoods and working with local housing groups to reclaim their buildings (Pratt Center for Community Development, 2019).

There are three assumptions of why a university should take a role in community development: community development involved learning experiences by the people who take action towards local system development; there is a need for formal and organised learning experiences which provide learners with the competences to engage in community development; and lastly the objective of a university has been to serve the educational needs of society by emphasising the changing of social order (Schuler, 1969). Not only should the university be developing civic-minded students, but institutions should lead by example and serve the common good by making use of their financial, human and knowledge resources to address social issues (Moore, 2014).

So, what are the roles of a university and what should be their role in community development/engagement? The two primary roles that universities perform are teaching and research, while being a servant of the internal and external communities of the institution (Moore, 2014). Universities' Third Mission is a framework that sets out a third goal of universities beyond the principle

goals of teaching and research, which is providing public service and community engagement, with a further focus on service learning and empowering local communities (Pappalardo, et al., 2018). While some universities may be more engaged in others in this last role, it is usually up to an individual faculty member who acts within their role as an engaged scholar, as the engaged scholar's role differs from that of a traditional one with their commitment to co-creating knowledge that is required to address social issues. This type of engaged research is known as community-based research, and is a collaborative research strategy involving stakeholders, which democratises knowledge and makes it widely accessible (Moore, 2014).

2.4.1 Community-based participatory research

CBPR is a term that encapsulates a variety of approaches such as AR and PAR (which will be discussed in the next chapter), and is more an orientation to research rather than a method of what?. While AR and PAR can have different focuses outside the scope of community, CBPR, as the name indicates, is centred around the strength of the community. Besides having originated from the public health field (Minkler, et al., 2008), the core principles of CBPR, which are detailed in Table 2-2, demonstrate many similarities to PAR. Within the field of urban studies, CBPR serves as the starting point in community development and regeneration, taking a democratic approach to understand relevant issues. Offered as an alternative approach to traditional research carried out by universities, CBPR is focused around important issues faced by communities that involves community members and stakeholders throughout the research process, and as part of that process, CBPR builds partnerships with community groups and agencies, public bodies and other academic units.

TABLE 2-2 - PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY-BASED PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

-
1. Recognises the community as a unity of identity
 2. Builds on strength and resources within community
 3. Facilitates a collaborative, equitable partnership in all phases of the research
 4. Fosters co-learning and capacity building among all partners
 5. Balances knowledge and action for the mutual benefit of all partners
 6. Addresses locally-relevant health problems and considers multiple determinants of health and disease
 7. Occurs in a cyclical and iterative process that includes on-going evaluation of success and obstacles
 8. Disseminates findings and knowledge gained to all partners
 9. Involves a long-term process and commitment to sustainability
-

Source: (Israel, 1998 from Wallerstein, et al., 2008)

In the building of local partnerships, CBPR seeks to develop research knowledge, trust, culturally centred research methods, sustainable interventions and the capacity of the community, while also changing the dynamic between university, policy makers, community members and other stakeholders (Oetzel, et al., 2018). By starting with CBPR as the first stage in community development, it engages community members into a variety of processes of asset identification by involving them in non-linear processes of self-assessment and discovery (Hancock, et al., 2008), and as Minkler and Wallerstein (2008) state, "enhancing the community members awareness of the assets' they bring as researchers and agents of change is a hallmark of CPBR". CPBR demonstrates how universities can contribute to community development by combining participatory research techniques to engage community members and begin a more effective process of identifying not only problems of an area, but also the strengths of the collective community.

Education must take place in both directions, with the researchers educating the public and the public educating the researchers. In this sense, the university acts as a type of social infrastructure, providing its research and education capabilities as a service to the community, while the community provides their local knowledge of the area.

2.5 Conclusion

Too often, cities place the emphasis on the development of hard or physical infrastructure (Clutterbuck, et al., 2002), over soft or social infrastructure, which is seen as the driver of growth in neoliberal cities by promoting investment and enhancing the city's image as an efficient business climate. However, focusing solely on development such as transportation as a driver of growth can limit existing infrastructure, local knowledge and social networks (Shields, 2018). Therefore, focus should be shifted to the social infrastructure, the mix of facilities, places, spaces, programs, projects, services and networks, in order to maintain and improve the standard of living and quality of life in a community (ibid). By fostering greater connectivity between social actors, it can create the conditions needed for the kind of forward-thinking innovation and experimentation that can contribute to solving complex issues seen in communities, especially disadvantaged ones.

As concluded by this chapter, the term community development constitutes an approach, usually by third sector organisations, community hubs, community centres and CDOs, that aims to improve the quality of life in a neighbourhood based on the needs of that community and through leveraging already existing assets. Their objectives are to use the local resources and knowledge to their advantage, as well as to the advantage of the community, and bring together local communities in order to facilitate the improvement of the neighbourhoods where they live. While there are a variety of different approaches to community development, many times one single approach is not sufficient, as this thesis has argued for a mix of approaches such as network building and asset-based community development, but most importantly to be an effective intervention, the community has to be involved to a certain degree. Firstly, their participation is vital to assuring that the needs of the community are being met, and one of the priorities of CDOs is the involvement and empowerment of the people they serve. Community and social infrastructure is vital to marginalised communities, and should be the main focus of regeneration and community development. CBPR provides an approach to research that can be used by universities throughout the stages of community development, but for several reasons this style of engaged research is not taken into consideration. As Schuler (1969) goes on to say in his questioning of the role of university in community development, "it analyses, but seldom integrates or prescribes. It teaches specialization but fails to build links of communication between these worlds of knowledge and action". As CBPR is focused on the aspects of research and action, I will argue in Chapter 3 that universities should play a role as agents of change in the community development process, as they are in the field of producing knowledge and research, and they have the resources. Considering this, the role of research organisations in carrying out analysis of and with communities and how they share knowledge of their work and findings will be examined, while attempting to provide the justification for accepting action-research as a viable and scientific methods.

Chapter 3 The Co-production of Knowledge for local communities

“To do a little good is better than to write difficult books. The perfect man is nothing if he does not diffuse benefits on other creatures, if he does not console the lonely” - Reginald Revans (1980, from Pedler & Burgoyne, 2008)

3.1 Introduction

The planning of interventions by public officials, community groups, planning agencies involves countless hours of research in order to understand well the situation an area faces, yet how this data is collected and the research is carried out can differ depending on who performs it and the level of involvement in the various actors involved. The goal of research is to produce some kind of knowledge to provide to policy makers, but is this knowledge produced cooperatively or independently of the people that it could be affected by it?

Given that last chapter presented the importance of doing community-based research and the role of university, this chapter will present action-based approaches to research and learning as an alternative to the traditional approach to research and policy, examining the theory behind action research and how it can lead to more meaningful actions based on a cycle of co-producing knowledge. From its roots in the 1940s with people like Kurt Lewin, and even before him with John Dewey, it has become an increasingly relevant topic in producing different approaches to carry out research in the field, and producing findings that are relevant for the community or the people. More importantly than the findings it produces is the process that the participants go through to get there, engaging in a continuous cycle of planning, acting, inquiring and reflecting on the situation, altering the approach where and when it is necessary and agreed upon.

It is important to define a basis for action-research, and how knowledge is produced and viewed from several schools of thought within the scientific research community, from traditional epistemological approaches such as positivism and constructivism, to more recent approaches like critical realism. Furthermore, it will look at the universities role, one of the greatest institutions in the production, sharing and exchange of knowledge, and what could be done with the results of research that is carried out cooperatively. And lastly, it will look at a few of the approaches currently being used in the field of urban studies, such as collaborative mapping, urban explorations, story-telling and network building.

Firstly, the concept of critical pedagogy will be discussed, which, even though it came out in the 1970s, is rooted in the idea of emancipation of the oppressed through reflection of one’s current situation and an awakening of one’s consciousness, and shares some of the same characteristics and concepts as action research and action learning. In its critique of the production and sharing of knowledge coming from the concept that knowledge has always been rooted in power, it questions the sources of knowledge and whether people have their own knowledge that can be contributed to situations, viewing all forms of knowledge as equally important.

3.2 Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy is concerned with understanding the relationship between power and knowledge, and connecting learning to social change, which is where it relates to the concept of action-research. Knowledge provides a basis for comprehending the actual conditions of everyday life, it should be used to help people participate in important issues that affect their everyday experiences (McLaren, 2003). Paulo Frieré, in his critique of the education system, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2000), details the issues with the

traditional model of teaching with what he calls the “banking” concept of education: the teacher-student relationship is that of the teacher being the narrator of information, with the students acting as containers into which information is deposited. Instead of opening up a two-way exchange of communication, the teacher makes “deposits” to the passive students, and the more the students are able to store this in their “banks” by receiving, memorising and repeating this information, the more are praised for accepting this passive role, in turn inhibiting students’ creative ability and diminishing their critical consciousness²⁵, which Frieré (2000) says, “would result from their intervention into the world as transformers of that world”. Every educational system implies the following (McLaren, 2003):

1. The presence of individuals – educator and learner
2. Objects of knowledge to be taught – content
3. Mediate or immediate objects which direct or orient education
4. Methods and processes, teaching techniques and materials, that must be coherent with the object

Furthermore, what is seen constantly in education is several things: the downplaying of experienced-based knowledge brought by learners who come to school in favour of accumulated, “scientific” knowledge; the idea of school as an exclusive place for learning, when in reality the struggles and conflicts that take place happen far away from it; classifying the learner as the objects of education, when actually they are the active subjects; whoever thinks differently is seen as a populist; and hyper-inflating one’s position of authority leading to a diminishing effect on the learner’s freedom (Freiré, 1999).

Problem-posing education, as opposed to “banking” education, attempts to de-myth reality and explain the way human beings exist in the world, prioritises dialogue as an act that uncovers realities, and treats students not as passive recipients, but as critical thinkers and stimulates creativity and reflection about action in reality. It looks at human beings history as a starting point for inquiry and places value on past experiences as a way of solving problems (Frieré, 2000).

Dialogic teaching aims to create a process of learning and knowing that involves theorising about shared experiences. On one hand, this style of teaching invokes conversation for participants to share their problems, while on the other hand it presents the teacher as a facilitator. The dialogue between recipients acts as a means to foster better comprehension of the object of knowledge, and never as an end in itself. Theory is a crucial aspect in the exchange of knowledge, and neither lived experience or practical knowledge, nor theoretical knowledge, must be given priority in the process. As Frieré (2000) states, “in order to achieve this unity, one must have an epistemological curiosity—a curiosity that is often missing in dialogue as conversation”. Human beings are “programmed to learn” and therefore are curious beings. The activity specific to human beings is our ability to cooperatively work together using tools in the production of foods and goods, with language playing a necessary role in the development. The desire to know would follow human throughout their history, inciting us to more learning, more teaching and more knowing (Freiré, 1999).

In order to emancipate this internal knowledge that all humans have, we must start thinking of and, more importantly, enacting alternative approaches to the sharing and production of knowledge. This can be done by radical experimentation through new approaches to teaching and learning at the university level, which is something several figures in the field of architecture experimented with in the 1960s. Although in the end

²⁵ Critical Consciousness is defined as a moral awareness which propels individuals, not as recipients but as knowing subjects, to disassociate from their cultural, social, and political environment, and make active efforts to construct their own place in social reality and liberate them from socially conditioned mind-sets and values (Mustakova-Possardt, 1998; Cherry, 1999).

they were not successful, they demonstrated an important step in questioning the roles of universities and teachers, the knowledge exchange process and how venturing out from the traditional classroom context could be more beneficial to solving real world problems.

Shadrach Woods, an American architect and educator, was one of the prominent figures calling for the change of traditional education in the 1960s. He described the university as something that should be integrated into the city, and saw the city and its streets as a place for learning. His idea, along with a member of his artist group – Robert Filliou, of the Non-School in France, was to experiment with radical ideas in the field of education, placing art at the centre of the education process to show that certain problems with teaching and learning could be solved through participation techniques developed by artists. Furthermore, Woods believed that spaces of learning should be left open to interpretation, leaving it up to the users to dictate and define the uses so that it could be changeable over time. Like the idea of Critical Pedagogy, they wanted to challenge the traditional student-teacher relationship and cultivate a new model of the learning process, where teaching and learning were part of a two-way process (Doglio, 2018).

Woods argued that it was necessary for universities to draw on the vast knowledge and experiences of societies, which was done by engaging with the city. He saw education as an integral part of the physical environment, and considering the city as a space of education, he argued, “cities represent the future of Western Society, and schools represent the future of cities” (Doglio, 2018). He insisted on the core principles of his approach: open collaboration, non-specialisation, challenges to hierarchy and the utilisation of existing urban networks, in order to produce a long-lasting betterment to society.

Cedric Price was another architect, educator and radical thinker who, during the 1960s was very critical of the current education system, often insisting that classrooms are not the only or best places to learn. Proposing the idea of a flexible institution of higher education that made use of existing infrastructure, such as abandoned railway carriages and in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, using the term “thinkbelt” instead of university, he sought to provide a network of flexible and ever-transforming facilities. With his Thinkbelt, he wanted to blur the lines between classical and technical education, and pure and applied science. The objective was to emphasise change, and what he intended with the Thinkbelt was “the capacity for activities to change as a result of thoughts changing” (Doglio, 2018).

3.3 Action Based-Approaches

Action-research (AR) and action-learning offer different approaches to gather knowledge in order to solve real problems faced by society, by interacting with the city. As Kurt Lewin first introduced action-research to social sciences in the late 1930s and 1940s (Eikeland, 2012; Udas, 1998), nearly 25 years before the ideas of Frieré, Giroux, Price and Woods, one that would seek to acquire knowledge in order to solve real problems. Lewin believed that in order to understand something you have to change it (Eikeland, 2012). Along with the development of action learning, these two approaches would begin to shift the traditional approaches of carrying out research and didactic activities. Like critical pedagogy, action-research is critical of the positivist view of research in that it views valid research as objective and free of value or personal interest. Instead, critical pedagogy, action-research and action learning present similar objectives in that: they provide students with the capacity for critical judgment, social responsibility and sense of public commitment; they draw on indigenous or local knowledge rather than knowledge rooted in those who claim to have power and authority; and finally, as seen as the most crucial aspect of both, their transformative potential (Miskovic, et al., 2006).

Lewin, like Frieré, was interested in helping minority groups seek independence, equality and co-operation through action-research and various techniques (Adelman, 1993; Baum, et al., 2006). Conventional social-

science research views the relationship between the researcher and the subject(s) being researched as the researcher being in a position of authority, (Levin, 1999) while in AR the “radical practitioner” challenges the modern institutionalisation of social research and knowledge production by invalidating hierarchical structures in the production of social knowledge (Eikeland, 2012).

John Dewey, an American educator and philosopher, with his pragmatic approach to doing educational research, is also said to have had a role in the influence and development of AR (Feldman, 2017). Dewey also viewed research as a process of learning through cycles of acting and reflecting, providing progressive and temporal approaches to research, as the systems we live in are dynamic and never static. He, like many proponents of action-research, believed there were too many moving pieces – factors, players, possibilities for change – for outcomes to be predictable. The key approach of AR is that the realities and the way they are perceived are the subjects of inquiry and learning. (Martin, 2008)

One of the main objectives of Lewin, through AR, was in changing social systems through scientific research during a time in the US when research was primarily conducted using the positivistic model of science. As a result, along with other contributing factors, AR gradually shifted to a positivistic way of experimenting in which only several variables were manipulated and results were strictly quantitative, negating the focus on the relationship between the researcher and the researched (Levin, 1999)²⁶. In Europe AR took on several different forms depending on the cultural context: in the United Kingdom, the emphasis of AR focused on the importance of the relationship between technology and social activity, and how changing social systems depends on the technology can support that change; This led to industrial organisations becoming the dominant arena for conducting action research. Lacking institutional support in Britain, Norway, due to its historically left wing government, became the new arena for experimentation in the late 1960s, leading the countries labour market to new approaches and models for social change. Both in the US and Norway, however, the majority of the emphasis was placed on action, and not the research aspect, whereas in Sweden the research maintained a higher standing (ibid.).

3.3.1 Action Research and its Variations

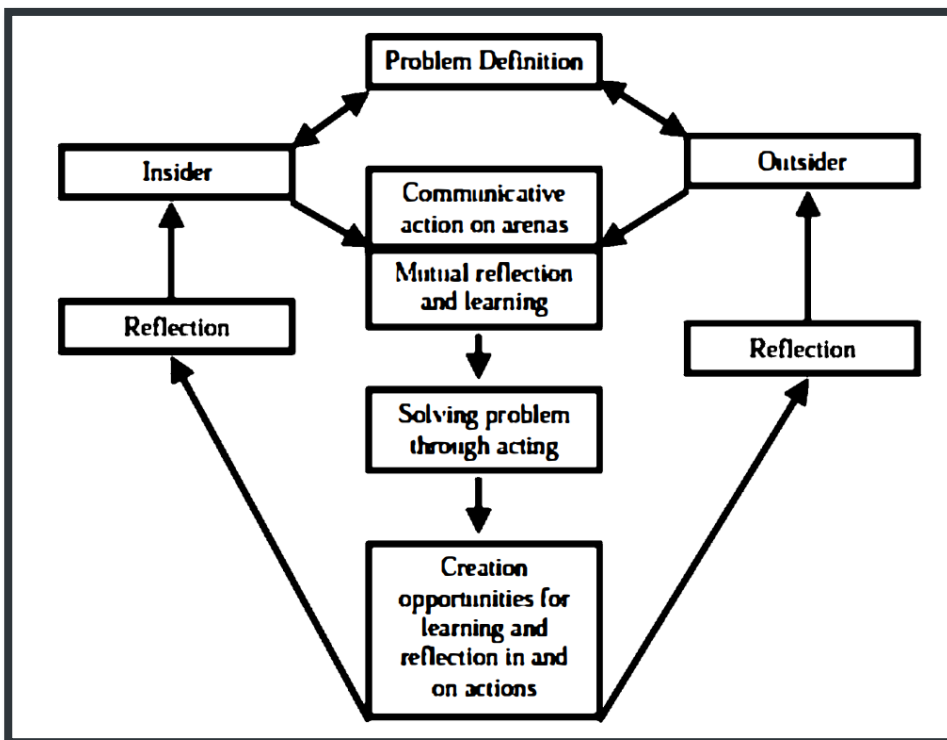
Differences in the variations of action-research may be more terminological than conceptual, as many intervention researchers do not call themselves action researchers but have many things in common (Eikeland, 2012). This section will focus primarily on PAR and AR, at times using the terms interchangeably as they both are strongly rooted in social change and transformation, but also acknowledging that they do in fact exhibit several differences. Many of the modern conceptualisations of PAR focus on communication processes as the central point in producing shared knowledge (Levin, 1999), while having been developed out of different contexts.

PAR, according to Glassman and Erdem (2014), evolved in the developing world through bottom-up processes, having strong ties with local communities and disputes of wealth and power. Another version of PAR developed in the United States by William Foote Whyte, completely separate from the traditions, as a way of examining organisational structure, with the objective of resolving conflicts between various structural hierarchies; but as Glassman and Erdem state, it still maintained the status quo. PAR on the other hand, like critical pedagogy, was more revolutionary instead of just reacting to the existing social order situated in the context of oppression and colonialism, hence its evolution in countries like Tanzania, India, Peru, Chile and Brazil in the Global South (ibid).

²⁶ Morten Levin (born 1946) is a Norwegian sociologist, not to be confused with Kurt Lewin (1890-1947) who is referred to as the creator of AR.

PAR has been defined as a collaborative process of research, education and action (Kindon, et al., 2007), and in itself is a social practice, with the purpose being to change social practices, including research practice, to make them “more rational and reasonable, more productive and sustainable, and more just and inclusive” (Kemmis, et al., 2014); it is a collective effort to acquire new knowledge and a process shaped by people’s interactions (Levin, 1999). PAR and AR are not a method²⁷ in the traditional sense of the word, and can be described as the study of operating systems in action (Spjelkavik, 1999), where action and change are subjects of the research. It is not a single research process, but “a way of learning from and through systematic inquiry into one’s own practice”, one that takes problems and transforms them into questions which can be acted and reflected on in order to create living theories (Riel, 2017). According to Udas (1998), PAR is a subset of AR, and with PAR the participants are thought of as researchers in the process instead of being objects of research, which Reason (1988 from Levin, 1999) calls the “human inquiry” paradigm; the researcher does not enter in a local context as an expert, but as a learner, and as a facilitator, they are active in the inquiry process, while also providing knowledge, resources and skills, but not decision-making (Udas, 1998).

FIGURE 3-1 - THE CO-GENERATIVE ACTION-RESEARCH MODEL



Source: (Levin, 1999)

In order to address social and economic needs, AR should be thought of in 2 distinct phases: The objective of first phase is to clarify the initial research question. It begins with a general idea and the planning of an objective and why it is desirable to reach that objective, which is then followed by fact-finding about the situation in order to devise a plan (Feldman, 2017). In this phase, one of the outcomes could be to modify the original idea. The goal of the second phase is the “initiation and maintenance of the change or meaning construction process” (Levin, 1999). In this stage, the cycle is begun again is thus the planning is carried-

²⁷ A method is a way of doing something in order to solve problems and to acquire new knowledge. Any means that assist in meeting this objective belong to the array of methods (Spjelkavik, 1999).

out, once again followed by fact-finding about the outcome of the plan. Reconnaissance, as Lewin referred to it, had 4 functions (Feldman, 2017; Udas, 1998):

1. To evaluate the impacts of the actions
2. To determine the effectiveness of the actions
3. To provide information for planning the next steps
4. To serve as the basis for modifying the plan

A positive sign of development in the research process is how much the original questions of inquiry have been shaped by the learning process to include initially unknown material. Once the problem and focus of the research has been agreed upon, the development of the communication process between the insiders and outsiders is crucial for establishment for a long term relationship between all of the parties involved (Levin, 1999).

Within AR, there is always the involvement of animators or agents of change: the insiders, who are the empirical subjects of study and the owners of the problem, and the outsider, the researchers - both of whom cooperatively work in order to solve pertinent problems and engage in a broad social analysis of the local context and their situation (McTaggart, et al., 2017; Fals-Borda, 1991), but at the same time, play two distinct and different roles. The outsider brings a particular set of skills and is responsible for supporting the continuation of the research process. The challenge is to take advantage of the differences between the outsiders and insiders, as they can contribute to new and important learning for everyone involved. The outsiders can learn from the situated, local knowledge of the insiders, and the insiders can learn from the specific institutional and professional knowledge of the researchers. Also, the outsiders can leave the situation at almost any point in the process, while the insiders have to live with the results of any change that takes place, meaning they are the owners of the problem, as well as the potential solution for that matter, and are the focus of the research process (Levin, 1999). The Co-generative AR model (Figure 3-1), as Levin (1999) describes is based off planned social interactions, whether it be in an organisation or a local community, and challenges participants to shape these interactions as a tool to foster co-generative learning.

It is true that human beings are shaped by their natural and social environments, but on the other hand being active, critically conscious and having the ability to foster creativity allows humans to shape their own natural and social environments (Oquist, 1978). Not only does AR allow for a methodological approach that fosters dialogue and empowers participants to be active in the role to transform their mental capacity, and acquire the knowledge to transform their social and physical environments by finding solutions to everyday problems faced in their communities, it also liberates researchers' critical and analytical skills from the traditional knowledge producing process and allows for the engagement with local populations. Action-learning is another method, developed by the "father of action-learning" Reginald Revans for organisational and business development, and shares the same philosophical assumptions with AR, that knowledge can also be created by anyone who learns to create knowledge through experimental learning and solving problems in real-life contexts (Zuber-Skerritt, et al., 2013). Like organisations, communities have their own problems to solve, and action-learning can valuably contribute to human life, learning and sustainability of our environments.

3.3.2 Action-learning

Action learning is focused around helping people learn how to solve problems (Pedler, et al., 2008). The concrete experiences enrich humans by forcing them to self-reflect and ask themselves the questions: why

am I doing what I am doing? Why do I think this will be effective? Revans (1981 from Cherry, 1999) called this the science of praxeology:

“The science of praxeology—or the theory of practice—remains among the underdeveloped regions of the academic world. And yet it is, or should be, the queen of all, settling the ancient argument about the relative natures of nominalism and realism, bringing Plato, St Dominic and Descartes into the same camp as Aristotle, St Francis and Locke. For successful theory is merely that which enables him who is suitably armed to carry through successful practice. This is the argument of the pragmatists, William James, John Dewey and even Karl Marx: to understand an idea one must be able to apply it in practice, and to understand a situation one must be able to change it. Verbal description is not command enough. It is from consistently replicated and successful practice that is distilled and concentrated the knowledge we describe as successful theory.”

Although Revans never specifically defined what action learning was, he did state that it was a means of intellectual, emotional or physical development that required someone be involved in a some type of complex and stressful situation in order to achieve sufficient change so as to improve their observable behaviour. It was clear that he placed great value on hands-on, experimental learning as opposed to traditional “book learning”. The way to learn, as Revans believed, was to deal with real problems and let the participants learn with and from each other. Learning should be a social process and by bringing people together and engaging them in open dialogue, by setting people free from the rules and norms that restrict creative thinking, action learning could contribute to solving the world’s problems (Botham, et al., 2010).

Lifelong learning (LL) and action learning (AL) are two approaches that, when combined (Lifelong action learning (LAL) a concept developed by Zuber-Skerritt & Teare (2013)), allow for people to engage in a process of lifelong learning without being involved in school, university and/or research. Whilst LL is usually recognised as an individual focused, AL is developed collaboratively and in a systematic way. They both share the epistemological assumption that people can create knowledge based on concrete experience through a process of reflection, formulation of abstract generalisations and experimenting with these newly formed concepts, and consequently gaining concrete experience that can be applied to the next cycle of experimental learning and knowledge creation (Zuber-Skerritt, et al., 2013). The LAL concept takes the time and space aspects of LL and combines them with a system of AL to have a more complete process. The figure below shows the differences between LAL and traditional education, with the one of the main characteristics being that LAL is always centred around the learner(s).

TABLE 3-1 - COMPARISON BETWEEN LAL AND TRADITIONAL EDUCATION

	<i>Lifelong Action Learning</i>	<i>Traditional Education</i>
	Learner centred	Teacher centred
	Process and project based	Content and curriculum based
	Interdisciplinary, problem oriented	Disciplinary, departmentalized
	Located in real-life/work	Located in classroom/laboratory
	Inclusive, accessible to all, aimed at social justice	Exclusive, elitist, social justice not a conscious priority
	Informal, self-directed learning	Formal education, policy based
	Based on contemporary cultural context	Based on dominant eastern values and worldviews
	Communities of learning, action learning sets	Individualised learning
	Collaboration, cooperation	Competition (e.g., in assessment system)

(Zuber-Skerritt, et al., 2013)

The principles of action learning, which include empowerment of the learners; minimum interference from facilitators; use of problems that are real, intricate and urgent; pushing people outside their comfort zones and to work in unfamiliar settings; and reflecting on these experiences and the assumptions behind the actions, which include solutions to the addressed problems, demonstrate many similarities to the ideas of critical pedagogy and action research. Revans often referred to children when it came to their spontaneity in expressing themselves, free thinking and how they harmoniously worked together when showing how controlled, highly regimented environments stifled creativity and did not allow for thinkers to reach their full potential (Botham, et al., 2010).

Revans prescribed his own formula to accelerate the learning process: $L = P + Q$, where L stands for “Learning”, the P for “Programmed instruction”, meaning traditional classroom learning and textbook exercises, and the Q, which stands for “Questioning insight”. The Q is what makes the difference in action learning, and that is where you begin, rather than with P which is what has been programmed into humans in both school and work settings, which Revans believed was a “fundamentally flawed concept” (Dilworth, 2010). In order to avoid other interpretations of the equation arising i.e. thinking the learning process starts with programmed knowledge due to its order in the equation, Alan Mumford has proposed a revised version: $Q + P + Q = L$, to stress the importance that in action learning the process must start with question and inquiry. P always starts with the past, and therefore, in order to adapt solutions needed in a fast-changing world, starting with P may lead the pathway to solving a problem in the wrong direction. To progressively begin to understand the many dimensions to a problem, Revans suggests 3 basic leads questions:

1. What is happening?
2. What should be happening?
3. How do we make it happen?

These will naturally lead to the second phase of the process of fact-finding and assumption testing to verify what is being learned; field research, data collection and interpretation; survey, observations, trial hypothesis and then a process of experimentation, evaluation and review; and finally, approval or rejection of results. With its general application, this approach to learning has been, and continues to be applied successfully to a number of fields²⁸ as a flexible, robust tool for surfacing local knowledge in order to resolve challenges and issues faced by communities and local populations (Willis, 2010).

Communities, from tribal societies to Colonial America, have always engaged in capacity-building in one way or another, and it has stood as a symbol for community organisation and accomplishment. Community organising, which includes the ideas of working together, listening to the various voices of the community, and connecting sources of funding and decision makers, is a concept that in theory exhibits the attributes of an action learning approach. It posits that groups can learn how to take action from reflecting on their actions and experimenting with new approaches to community organisation (Willis, 2010). Action learning can act as an energising process, a short-cut, to get people engaged and start data collection, and is a way to begin building relationships and trust between the outsiders and insiders. Willis (2010) states that “trust relationships are a proven natural outcome of genuine action learning”. If the insiders, or local communities, want to begin to understand and take action on issues that are most important to them, then the outsiders sent to facilitate these situations will need to stay in the locality and learn from and with

²⁸ This includes education, health care, the business world, governmental agencies, and community and civil societies (Dilworth, et al., 2010)

people. There are various methods and techniques used to facilitate this process, which will be discussed in the last section of this chapter.

Being part of the wider family of action-based approaches, action research and action learning share many similarities, which include a commitment to action and pragmatism, and their critique of the positivist approach to social sciences that contests the generation of abstract knowledge and dissemination by assumed “experts”. Both are characterised by cyclical processes that centre around the pragmatists’ approach of experimenting, reflecting and learning that intend to produce meaningful solutions to social problems. With that said, they also exhibit several differences, which can be seen in their starting points and paths of development. Action learning has become an alternative to traditional models of teaching, whilst action research presents a response to passive research traditions that seek to separate theory and practice (Pedler, et al., 2008). Action learning is more focused on learning through action and less focused on producing knowledge or a useful contribution to the field of research, which is what action research can be argued to do, in order to show how a conclusion is derived methodologically. The next section will discuss more in-depth the epistemological position of action research and action learning, and why the actions and knowledge produced as a result of them can be scientifically validated.

3.4 The Production of Knowledge

The first section will discuss various types of knowledge, and why under certain types of epistemological assumptions the types of knowledge produced can be validated. Action-research is a controversial form of research within social sciences for several reasons, which will be discussed in this section, but mainly because it does not follow the traditional positivist approach to conducting research which is rooted in power-knowledge hierarchies (Fals-Borda, 1991) and the tradition of objectively studying a subject in order to understand it. The various ideologies to research differ, as can be shown through several epistemological questions: How does one produce and justify knowledge, what is the relation between theory and practice and what is the relation between values and science (Oquist, 1978)? Given that action-research’s intent is the modification of reality throughout the knowledge production process causes controversy in answering these epistemological questions.

There are two perspectives of how humans view the nature of the world: normative and interpretive. The normative view posits that social systems are relatively stable and people share the same basic beliefs and values. People can be seen as passively reacting to social forces where the meanings of human action and behaviour is assumed to reflect a predisposed framework. The interpretive view is that human beings can only know something indirectly, and that the meanings of situations and actions are a result of interpretations formed on certain occasions and circumstances²⁹ (Novack, 1986). Whether one chooses one view or the other will affect how knowledge and social behaviour are uncovered, and will dictate the ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions.

3.4.1 Types of Knowledge

There are several interpretations to the different types of knowledge, which this section will attempt to cover, in regards to which setting the knowledge is produced and how knowledge can be generated in AR and AL. Can verifiable knowledge only be produced in a classroom setting, or can it be produced through praxis? Furthermore, can this knowledge produced under an academic setting be given equal importance to knowledge produced through praxis? These debates will be further evaluated and expanded upon, examining in further detail the different types of knowledge and how it is produced.

²⁹ That are subject to be reformed on subsequent occasions

Knowledge, being culturally, historically and socially situated, is formed by various stances according to particular values and influences, and is transformed by human activity, meaning it is context dependent (McLaren, 2003). There are 2 primary types of knowledge: tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge. Tacit knowledge is the know-how and learning that exists within people's minds which can sometimes be unconscious and is deeply rooted in action, while explicit knowledge is formal or codified knowledge that communicated through documents, data, books, etc. We know more than we can tell, and while tacit knowledge is important, it is vital to be able to articulate and express that knowledge in some way (Cherry, 1999). Tacit knowledge can be accessed through guided reflection (Rimanoczy, et al., 2010), which relates to the theory behind PAR, AL and critical pedagogy in that they state that through self-reflection one can awake their inner consciousness and take part in the process of solving problems.

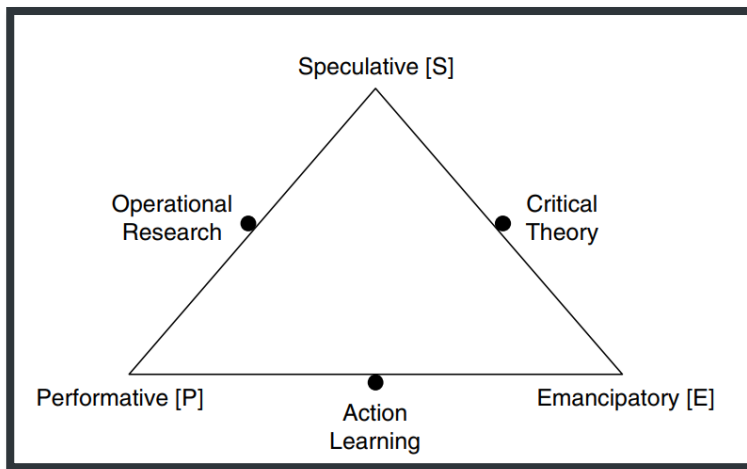
Mode 1 Knowledge production, as stated by Levin and Greenwood (2008), is knowledge produced in an academic setting under the context of academic professional structures and is knowledge that has long been privileged, this can be called a type of explicit, or propositional knowledge (Heron, et al., 2008). Mode 2 knowledge production, on the other hand, is knowledge produced in the context of application and is not regarded particularly as having much value, this can be considered a type of tacit or experiential knowledge (ibid). It is knowledge that is tested in action under a co-generative process, and what Levin and Greenwood (2008) call "socially robust knowledge".

Knowledge in the traditional sense is meant as a theory that is supposed to represent the world, so in academia the notion of practical knowledge is viewed with scepticism. If we reject the idea that knowledge is an attempt to represent reality and focus on the importance of practical knowledge, and the relationship between truth and the rest of the world becomes causal instead of representational (Heron, et al., 2008). In producing this type of pure knowledge, that is objectively collected without any influence from the researcher and based on propositional knowledge or speculative knowledge, which will be referenced here on out as theoretical knowledge. This preference for seeking a pure type of knowledge in academia aims to influence the world through ideas rather than actions. One can learn (in school) and talk about taking action without actually ever having taken action. In order to truly learn about taking action and seeing the effect of the action itself, one must take action (Pedler, et al., 2008).

Lyotard's argument about the three types of knowledge provides a framework for action learning: emancipatory knowledge – knowledge that helps people overcome oppression and reach their full human potential; performative knowledge – knowledge that leads to action in the world to help resolve problems and produce better goods and services; speculative knowledge – knowledge for "its own sake", i.e. theoretical knowledge (Pedler, et al., 2008), similar concepts to the forms of knowledge that McLaren (2003) presents:

1. Technical/Productive knowledge – knowledge which can be measured and quantified
2. Practical knowledge – enlighten individuals so they can shape their daily actions
3. Emancipatory knowledge – attempts to reconcile and transcend the opposition between technical and practical knowledge

FIGURE 3-2 - LYOTARD'S TRIANGLE OF KNOWLEDGE



Source: (Pedler, et al., 2008)

While these three types of knowledge may not fit directly within the categories of tacit or explicit knowledge, they provide a basis of where AL and PAR fall under. The type of emancipatory knowledge produced through a co-generative process, which Frieré (2000), Fals-Borda (1991), and others saw as a way to liberate or emancipate oppressed populations, could be considered a type of tacit knowledge. While performative knowledge could be considered as a transfer of knowledge from tacit to explicit, as it can be local knowledge that can be documented and eventually lead to some sort of action. While speculative knowledge sits the furthest away from AL, it is also important as it can complement the knowledge brought by insiders as part of the reflection process. Now that the various types of knowledge have been differentiated, the next section will discuss the different epistemological positions in regards to AR.

3.4.2 Philosophical Assumptions in Research

Before delving into the various epistemological positions and ways of knowing, it is necessary to differentiate between the ontological positions, which will dictate the epistemology and debate whether there is one reality in this world which is objective and does not change, i.e. the realist perspective, or if there are multiple realities that are shaped by different contexts that can in turn change and evolve the truth about these realities, i.e. the idealist (or relativist) perspective. Epistemology is the justification of knowledge and is concerned with how knowledge is produced and the relation between the subject and the knowledge, which will be discussed subsequently in more detail relating to the questions previously posed in the introduction of this section and their stance on accepting AR as a viable methodology.

Following the realist perspective to research, the positivist epistemology believes that human beings are governed by the laws of nature, and that they do not have control over the things that happen to them, so the phenomena are a product of nature, hence the need to study and objectively observe it. People's ideas and actions are caused by external forces that make up social structures, and since social facts exist independently of people's minds, they should be researched independently as well. On the other end of the spectrum is the idealist perspective, the social constructivist epistemology, that social reality the world is made up of many realities, and the goal of the researcher is to discover the mechanisms that guide the behaviour of the various social actors in order to make sense of their actions. In order to do that, the

researcher must immerse themselves into the actors' world to understand the reality of each actor (Cherry, 1999).

3.4.2.1 Epistemologies and Action-research

Descriptive and nomothetic research, which fall under the more traditional epistemological positions of Empiricism, Positivism and Structuralism, which reject AR, attempt to explain or predict phenomena within typologies of facts and events, or to establish relationships between a given phenomenon and one or more variables and constants. The end results of the production of knowledge, which is done through direct and neutral observation, are considered a set of universal and indisputable laws, and does not connect theory and practice through this process of knowledge production, which is based on propositional or theoretical knowledge (Heron, et al., 2008).

This separation of theory and practice fall within the views of centuries of traditional European philosophy, ones that search for a change in ones-self in the face of uncertainty. Instead of seeking to control nature and cope with problems, Greek science and science through the middle ages was more interested in producing stable certainties and sought to accept things as they were, whether it be through enjoyment or suffering. Knowledge is based on prior existence, and things that human beings produce after a resulting action must be defined so as to exclude explicit action that could affect prior knowledge. Therefore, It does not allow for creative, reflective thought, which involves inference or judgement (Oquist, 1978).

In the positivist approach, knowledge may be designed for the purpose of guiding practice, as is the goal of policy-based research, but scientific theory and practice should not be confused with political, social or educational theory and their practices, as they are unscientific, making the justification of knowledge produced impossible (Oquist, 1978). Structuralism views the production of knowledge as something that occurs only within thought, and the object of knowledge is produced through theoretical practice. Although the real objects can be defined by knowledge, these objects produced by reality exist independently of the object of knowledge obtained theoretically. Action-research is rejected because of the fact that it "confuses" theoretical practice and real practice, and the scientific notions of researcher objectivity, reliability and validity do not fall in line with the goals of AR or PAR (Udas, 1998; Oquist, 1978), but as Cherry states (1999), human minds are research instruments through which data is generated, filtered and interpreted. Therefore, the research product is a product of the individual creativity of the researcher, and cannot claim to be truly objective. Karl Marx was adamant in rejecting the passive role of researchers in the process of knowledge production, and instead he believed that human intellect was active and selective. (Oquist, 1978).

According to these critiques, the generation of scientific knowledge does not require a method of detached observation, as any observation, being detached or involved, is value based and not where the scientific character of knowledge is determined. The objectivity of knowledge is based on its social verifiability, which is determined by a consensus depending on the method of verification. "PAR belongs to a different paradigm of social inquiry than positivist research, so that it is not answerable to the positivists' question of validity or objectivity of the findings; instead, PAR has its own criterion of validity which is a matter of 'dialogical argumentation', with the 'truth' being a matter of consensus rather than of verification by any externally determined standards" (Rahman, 2008). Scientific knowledge is relative to the epistemological paradigms which it belongs to (Rahman, 1991). Thus, the purpose of knowledge with PAR is to use it to guide actions, and to restore and promote this type of popular or local knowledge.

Action based approaches have different claims to which philosophical positions they fall under, usually combining characteristics of critical realism (CR) and pragmatism (Pedler, et al., 2008). With Pragmatism,

the justification of knowledge comes from the consequences of an action or operation; if the problematic situation that was being researched is resolved, then it can be justified as knowledge. The pragmatist view does not argue whether many realities exist in the world or just one, or whether humans are shaped by social forces, because these types of debates tend to be circular and never ending. It questions, what difference does it make if either were true (Heron, et al., 2008)? With that said, pragmatic research, like AR, is primarily goal oriented, where the production of knowledge is viewed as an eventual outcome, with the object of knowledge being created rather than pre-existent (Wicks, et al., 2008; Oquist, 1978). Under the pragmatist epistemology, there is no debate which one, theory and practice, is primary in the process of knowledge production. John Dewey proposed a view of reality that assumed no fixed views and no fixed realities, and rather than viewing knowledge as antecedent, he viewed it as the eventual result of human action.

On the other end of the spectrum are action and policy research, which according to Oquist (1978) fall under the positions of Pragmatism and Dialectical Materialism (DM), both of which intend to modify reality. With the intent to guide practice and policy, the modification occurs as part of the research process, with the production of knowledge and the modification of reality occurring simultaneously, and also because of each other. This is where action-research differs from policy research, which the attempt to modify reality occurs independently of the research process. Policy consists of the needs and interests, values and norms, ends and objectives, plans and programs, operations and evaluations, and resources related to a given action or potential action. Practice is policy and action in the context of determinate structures and processes, both those being acted upon and those that condition the outcomes of actions (Oquist, 1978).

Various PAR works have been inspired by the concept of class struggle, as is embodied by dialectic materialism and the works of Karl Marx (Fals-Borda, 1991; Rahman, 2008). DM posits that outcomes are a result of individual actions, natural causes and accidental circumstances, etc. (Bhaskar, 1986). It is able to demonstrate power of human activity and human knowledge as both a product of and a force in shaping social reality. In breaking down the term action-research, research is the production of knowledge, while action is the modification of a reality. According to DM, human needs are the point of departure in the production of knowledge with the synthesis of theory and practice (Oquist, 1978). The issue with dialectic materialism as Fals-Borda (1991) states, is that it views social transformation mainly as the responsibility of the ruling class, which is assumed to have a more advanced consciousness compared to that of inhabitants, so in that sense PAR is opposed to this interpretation (Eikeland, 2012). Roy Bhaskar, who is known as the initiator of CR, saw the limitations of DM and wanted to move beyond them, developing a philosophy that built on the principles of DM. As Oquist's paper *The Epistemology of Action Research* was published in 1978, which was around the years that Bhaskar initially started publishing work on the theory of CR states, he may not have been aware of it and hence did not include it in his text.

Being that CR recognises the existence of a wide range of causal mechanisms, it allows for a broader range of social action to be taken. As AR places a great importance on the relationship between the researcher and the object of research, CR also acknowledges this relationship, as well as the distinction between our understanding of the world and the objects of study (Peters, et al., 2013), but we will only be able to understand, and therefore change the world, if we are able to understand the underlying structures that result in our current reality (Bhaskar, 1986). PAR emphasises that there is a socially constructed reality within which multiple interpretations of a single phenomenon are possible by both researchers and participants (Kindon, et al., 2007).

3.4.3 The value of (participatory) action research

This chapter has argued the role AR and PAR can have in the production and coproduction of knowledge in the social sciences, as well as being a resource to the public. Whether positivists debate the knowledge produced is valid or of value to the scientific community is irrelevant, and as mentioned previously it always leads to a circular debate. PAR is not research on people or about people, hence they are not the object of study, but it is a research with people, where the object of research is social change and transformation (Heron, et al., 2008). The process of social change is what should be of value, as the findings and results of PAR gives value in several ways, with one being to the scientific community, but more beneficially outside the higher education institutions, to the researchers and participants who are part of the process, as well as contributing to the betterment of local communities.

Acceptance of the positivist tradition has led to the failure to inform ourselves about transformative practices and processes. Educational institutions reproduced disadvantage, with their traditional approaches to research doing little to suggest how things could be changed, with Wicks, et al. (2008) claiming that “the notions of an objective, value-free, expert science were responsible for perpetuating and reinforcing social injustices and inequalities”. In a scientific model of reporting, the findings are often published in a journal or presented at a conference that is not read or attended by the subjects of the research (Udas, 1998). As Greenwood & Levin (2005) add to this view:

“A great number of university social scientists write about each other and for each other, purposely engaging as little as possible in public debates and in issues that are socially salient. Often, their research is written up in a language and with concepts that are incomprehensible to the people who are the ‘subjects’ of research and to those outside the university who might want to use the findings. That philosophers, mathematicians, or musicologists do this fits their image as humanists conserving and enhancing ideas and productions of human value, regardless of their direct applicability. That social scientists do this as well, despite their aims to study and comprehend the workings of society, is more problematic”

Sociologists are also members of society, not just observers, so it is futile that describing society should be given more value than changing or preserving it (Spjelkavik, 1999). Leven and Greenwood (2008), in the critique of higher education institutions of social science, question, “why is it that the knowledge created by social science research seldom leads to solutions to major societal problems?” Research can be used not only to reflect on the past, but also to create new futures. The utilisation of localised spatial and social knowledge that is coproduced can have tremendous value to the relevant communities, and also has the possibility to be experimented with in other communities, dispelling the myth that local knowledge cannot be generalizable. There is always a lesson to be learned or a piece of information that can be applied to different contexts, as long as the causal mechanisms

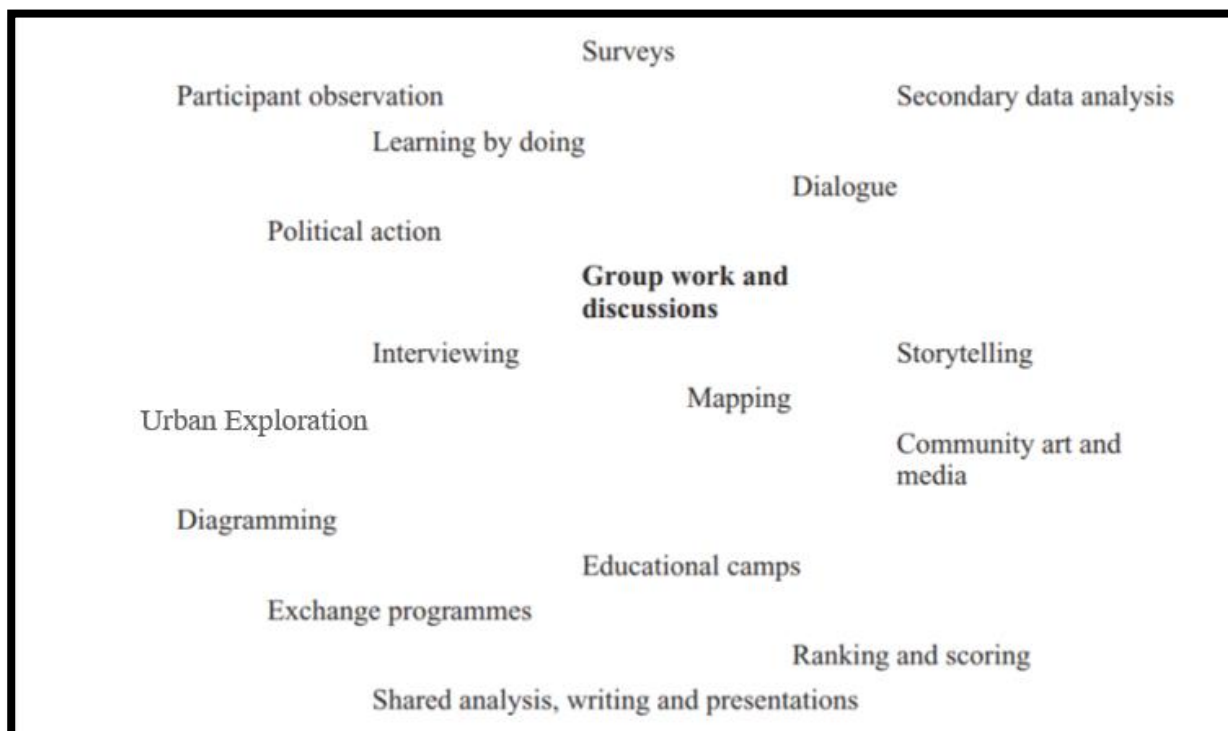
Besides being able to contribute to universities and the public, it is important to focus on the other benefits that action based approaches can provide to the people who are part of the process. Within AR and PAR, the researcher is part of the transformative process, while going through the cycles, the researcher also takes part in the reflection phases, as many authors argue that engaging in reflective thought is one of the most crucial parts as it allows for creativity, emancipation of the human mind and a critique of one’s current situation (Fals-Borda, 1991; Frieré, 2000; Oquist, 1978; Rimanoczy, et al., 2010; Willis, 2010; Dilworth, 2010; Zuber-Skerritt, et al., 2013; Cherry, 1999), and while assuming the role of facilitator and an equal partner, they are expected to acquire knowledge that influences their behaviour. Even though the researcher is a learner in the process, this does not compromise the scientific value of the research. In fact, with the processes of change as a central focus of the research, also the researcher becomes part of the experiment

in understanding how human beings are shaped by the environments. The next section will examine several participatory action-based methodological approaches being used in the field of urban studies to provide a deeper understanding of social and spatial contexts.

3.5 Participatory Action Research Methods

Within PAR, choices about modes and levels of participation are made by the researcher but at the same time are part of a negotiation process with co-researchers and participants. Varying degrees of participation may be valid at different times during the research process, depending on the situations and contexts. As discussed through this chapter, creating dialogue between participants is one of the most common methods in PAR, while others include storytelling and collective action (Figure 3-3). The diffusion of technology around various parts of the world has also led to digital and visualisation techniques, such as participatory mapping and arts and media-based methods, to gain traction. In working with marginalised populations, the most crucial aspects that PAR methods exhibit is their ability to engage people and enable them to express themselves, generate information and share knowledge by using a language that is comprehensible to them (Kindon, et al., 2007). This section will provide an in-depth look into several participatory techniques used to explore urban contexts which also function as a type of AL: urban exploration, participatory mapping and (digital³⁰) story-telling.

FIGURE 3-3 - COMMON METHODS USED IN PAR



Source: adapted from Kindon, et al., 2007

Participatory approaches have been employed by critical researchers in the fields of sociology, education, community development and environmental management (Pain, et al., 2007). As participation, space and place are all engrained within each other, space and place are important concepts in PAR for several reasons: participatory approaches usually address local community concerns and are able to provide ways

³⁰ One of the case studies in this research used digital story-telling as one of their participative techniques, but this section will mainly focus on the theory of story-telling.

of relating those concerns at the personal, state, national and global level (Kindon, et al., 2007; Pain, et al., 2007) and they are able to influence spatial practices and provide a means to connect displaced events and causations. Chambers (2008) details five ways in which visual and tangible approaches play a role in reversing power relations, contributing to innovative types of communication between groups : the process of collective analysis and learning, if the facilitator performs their role properly, creates a group-visual synergy; it allows for democracy on the ground as most activities are done in an informal setting (e.g. on the actual ground) where participants, whether it is an older man or a younger woman, feel more free to speak; visual methods allow for the representation of complex realities and relationships; visuals diagrams, such as maps of the rainforest and diaries, act as instruments of empowerment by securing rights and boundaries; and lastly, the numbers and figures produced by locals in participatory settings have been found to combine accuracy, authority and utility.

3.5.1 Story-telling

While maps and urban explorations are able to tell stories about community resources and document characteristics about a place, they can lack the historical dimension. Story-telling can act as a device that allows people to express concerns, needs, wishes and desire, they seek to convey an experience, something that has actually happened, something that could have happened and something that might happen. Cultures around the world have used stories to preserve and share historical knowledge (Coghlan, et al., 2014). Knowledge can be represented in diverse forms, ones that have already been discussed that are more academic forms, while the others can be more artistic, such as music, story-telling, murals, theatre, etc. It is a type of presentational knowledge, and also a way of sharing tacit knowledge, and becomes a new way for participants to see their experience (Pedler, et al., 2008; Coghlan, et al., 2014).

Everyone has a different experience of reality based on past experiences, story-telling can be used a reflective technique to give meaning to personal experiences, it is a way to explore how other people see the world (Cherry, 1999). Story-telling can act both as art and something therapeutic, and is potentially a very powerful tool to engage participants in conversation, and even confrontation, on complex agendas, with humans' familiarity to recount and listen to stories, it allows for a highly articulated representation and discussion of important issues (Ferilli, et al., 2016). Fals-Borda (1991) refers to story-telling as a critical recovery of history, an effort to collectively, and selectively, discover elements of the past which have proven useful in defending oppressed people, and which may be applied to present struggles.

3.5.1.1 Digital story-telling

Arts-based methods can be used to engage communities in a fun way in documenting and representing their version of the world. Digital story-telling is a participatory approach that uses new multi-media technologies to tell and share stories. It usually includes first person visual narratives that combine recorded voice, images, videos, music, sound and text to narrate experiences or discuss social issues. Story-telling can act as an integral part in sharing the values, lives and traditions of different cultures (Coghlan, et al., 2014). Sharing stories has been shown to strengthen and facilitate community development, with digital storytelling acting as a tool to concretise the stories as artefacts that have the potential to be mediate relationships. Firstly, it helps to build character to the area, it lets others, who have not been in the area as long, learn about the neighbourhood's history from a personal perspective while also learning about their neighbours, with whom they may have never had the chance to interact. It also helps creates stronger bonds between the inhabitants, gives voice to the area, it can let policy makers know that there is a strong importance in the attempt to sustain the social character of the neighbourhood (Copeland, et al., 2017).

3.5.1.2 *Benefits of PAR*

While story-telling may seem like an individual activity, it is very much connected to PAR when it is carried out as part of a group session. Having people write down the stories is an important part of the process, then having the story read out loud first by the author of the story, and then read back by the listener, the original tellers hear their story in a different way, allowing for self-reflection about their story. At the same time, story-telling can elicit different reactions and perspectives from the audience. The story-telling done in this way quickly goes from belonging to the individual to belonging to the group. The group moves from beyond the description of the story and are able to start giving meaning to the shared experiences (Pedler, et al., 2008; Ramos, 2017).

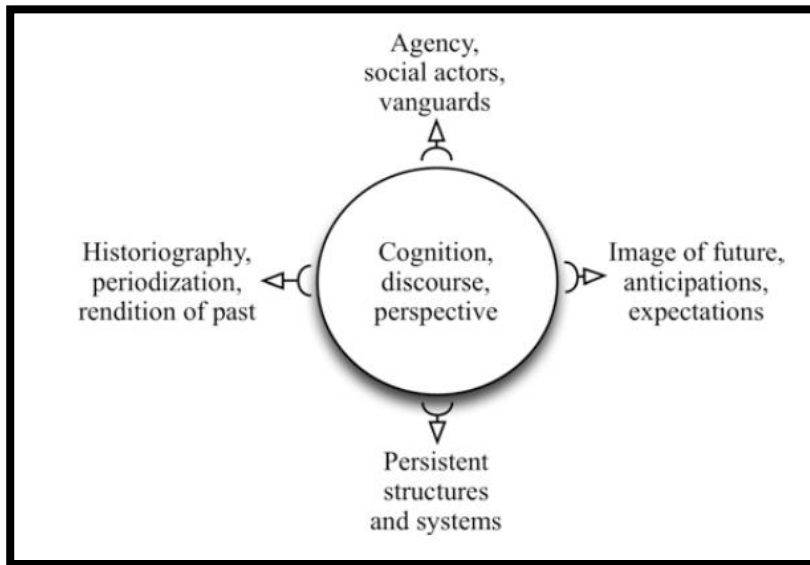
Story-telling is also a tool technique widely-used in classrooms, as Coskie et al. (2010) state, “We have witnessed again and again how, through storytelling, students directly experience the power of narrative, creating meaningful connections with each other and with members of the community—those who are close to them as well as those who represent different cultures and generations”. Moving beyond the benefit of creating a shared meaning, story-telling can act as a tool to for expressing potential solutions to problems faced in people’s daily lives.

“People’s experience of reality is mediated through myth, metaphor, story, and narrative” (Ramos, 2017). In this regard, communities can generate new narratives in order to facilitate the change process. The act of talking about oneself can be very helpful in talking about a problem, added insight can be gathered into what the problem is and how it can be dealt with, while adding pictures and words to an experience can enhance their meaning (Cherry, 1999). By performing these techniques within a group setting, participants can begin to create shared solutions and give hope that there is potential for future change even though they are living in a less than ideal situation.

Inayatullah (2008) argues there are six concepts of future thinking: the used future, disowned future, alternative future, alignment, model of social change and uses of the future. The default future, or used future, is a future that is not our own and is unconsciously borrowed from someone else. The disowned future occurs when certain aspects about the future are forgotten, the future we do not see because we are too focused on something else. The alternative future, one that is not often thought about as people are only able to imagine one future, is one that allows people to look for alternatives. The fourth concept, alignment, deals with aligning a strategy with day-to-day problems, but at the same time keeping in mind the bigger picture. Next is creating a model for social change, ideally one that paints the future as positive and one that can be created by our daily actions. The last concept, uses of the future, is about creating strategies to build capacity and potentially help individuals with new competencies and skills. All of these concepts for future thinking can be intertwined into the techniques of collective story-telling in order to effectively create new narratives.

By challenging the default future, as Ramos (2017) suggests, we will then be able to envision and articulate alternative, and therefore desired futures. Within discourse exists notions of temporality, both of the past and present, and also key notions of structure and agency. These discourses can reveal strategic actions for change, as humans collectively hold visions of change. They do not necessarily explain reality, rather they explain what ideas are held by people and what guide them in their actions. Therefore, discourse and critically subjective story-telling are ways to generate a series of actions that can help shape the future. By incorporating web-based networks of media, it allows for the facilitation of larger-scale inquiries into the creation of future visions. These techniques are promising in the fact that they are able to reach large-scale audiences (Ramos, 2017)

FIGURE 3-4 - ELEMENTS OF FUTURE NARRATIVES



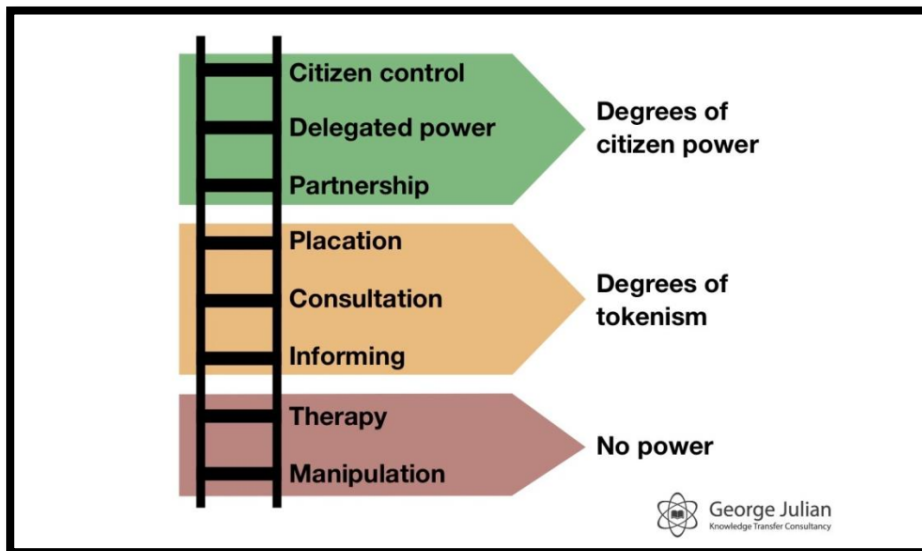
Source: (Ramos, 2017)

3.5.2 Theory of participation

Being the key word in action-based approaches to research and learning, participation and to which degree people are involved in the process, has been a term that is used freely at times and is highly subjective. After years of being subjected to policies that do not take their interests into account, marginalised communities and populations have been forced to “engage in passive resistance survival strategies” in order to cope, feeling that is their only option (Ferilli, et al., 2016). Without a voice in the decisions that affect their daily lives, communities need to be viewed as entities in decision making processes, as experts in local knowledge. If they were given the key to unlock their inner potential and awake their critical consciousness, as Frieré and the values of PAR and AL posit and stand for, they could have the possibility to improve their situations.

The word participation needs to be re-examined to what it actually means, and not just another failed promise by local policy makers. Sherry Arnstein observed that not all participation was equal, arguing that reaching the goal of “citizen power” was essential for ‘true’ participation, even though it rarely, if at all, ever happened (Juarez, et al., 2008). She outlined the various levels of participation in planning with her “Ladder of Participation” (Figure 3-5), where there are 8 different levels of participation which she places within 3 subgroups: manipulation and therapy, which are non-participative, where citizens are “educated” or “cured” by people in power as a substitute for real participation; consultation, informing and placation, which are forms of tokenism, where citizens may be included in discussions, but lack the power to insure their views will be taken into consideration; and lastly, partnerships, delegated power and citizen control, ranging from citizens negotiating and engaging in trade-offs, to giving them full managerial power (Arnstein, 1969). The varying degrees of participation are an important concept to keep in consideration while examining PAR processes in more detail.

FIGURE 3-5 - ARNSTEIN'S LADDER OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION



Source: (Julian, 2013)

3.5.3 Urban Exploration³¹

Urban exploration involves journeying through cities as a way of discovering and constructing geographical knowledge and giving a deeper meaning to the spaces that are traversed on a daily basis (Garrett, 2013; Gregory, et al., 2009). The *Flanerie* method, a term originating in early nineteenth-century Paris and being very similar to the concept of urban exploration, is based on the aimless urban wandering and observing, and a way of reading urban spaces with the intent to better understand what is happening in complex environments (Jenks, et al., 2000; Gregory, et al., 2009). Urban exploration is often associated with the travels of nineteenth-century explorers who delved into the social conditions of urban spaces in far-away colonial lands to report on their conditions and make them more known to the public. Being intrinsically linked the explorations done by colonial or imperial powers, the term has sought to reverse its exploitative roots by democratically working with disadvantaged and disenfranchised communities and planning with them instead of for them (Gregory, et al., 2009),

Transect walks, which is a type of urban exploration, are tools used by a group undertaking observation-based community improvement and provides participants the ability to describe and show the location and distribution of natural and artificial resources, features of the natural and physical landscape and current land-uses, public resources and mobility among various populations (World Bank, 2005). They cut across urban landscapes in order to capture diversity and they can be used as an approach for socio-cultural education (Hammersam, et al., 2016). Urban exploration, the *Flanerie* and transect walks are all methods of qualitative urban ethnography that can be used to observe, represent and document the city, and while they may online provide a snapshot in time, they can also provide witness to events that reveal certain aspects of the character of that place. Transect walks usually involve linear movements along a defined path (Hammersam, et al., 2016), while urban exploration can use more of a *Flaneur* technique of walking freely with no aim. These methods do not just allow for unexpected discovery of places, but for the

³¹ Urban exploration has also been given this definition: is the exploration of man-made structures, usually abandoned ruins or not usually seen components of the man-made environment. This thesis will not refer to this type of "urban exploration", but urban exploration more in terms of transect walks. (Gregory, et al., 2009; Garrett, 2013)

activation of tacit and explicit knowledge of the individuals involved, hence its importance in participatory approaches.

While this thesis focuses primarily on urban spaces, these types of techniques can be applied to urban and rural communities, often referred to as Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA; Juarez & Brown, 2008; Chambers, 2008) especially with the roots of PAR and community mapping giving rights to communities in undeveloped regions of the world. These explorations are participatory exercises, where members of the community, planners and other local representatives can all be included, that focus on interviewing passers-by, mapping observations while taking notes, pictures, audio and video recordings of the pertinent characteristics, with the end goal being to identify issues and come up with possibilities for future solutions (parCitypatory, 2017). It can be used as a complementary tool to community resource mapping, social mapping and seasonal calendars. Besides being a tool to identify relationships between geographical attributes of the natural environment, activities of production (e.g. cultivation, farming, etc.) and human settlement patterns (World Bank, 2005), it also allows for the different groups of participants to build rapport and interact with each other as a type of knowledge exchange, teaching experts about the local knowledge of inhabitants and experts are able to suggest their knowledge on technical solutions (Dooley, et al., 2018). There are various ways to explore streets, neighbourhoods and cities and explorations in order to understand the local contexts, the techniques used in one of the case studies will be discussed in the empirical chapter of this thesis.

3.5.4 Participatory Mapping

Over the last 20 years, the power of map making has been changing hands from the state, map makers of western societies and to a lesser degree academics, into the hands of anyone with a computer and internet, providing the ability to create online, interactive 3D maps that are widely accessible. This technological transition of cartography has been taking place due to a mixture of elements: new user-friendly mapping applications, open source software, mobile technology and geo-tagging (Crampton, et al., 2006). It allows for people to make for equally and competing power-knowledge claims – mapping is something that has always been contested throughout its history. Mapping plays a role in the production of space, geography, place, territory and political identities of the people who inhabit that place. Maps can be powerful tool for promoting social change by facilitating a spatial understanding of concepts, conditions, processes and events and are something that actively construct knowledge. Janis Alcorn highlights the power of maps, which communicate information immediately and convey a sense of authority. “As a consequence, community-based maps empower grassroots efforts to hold governments accountable. This mapping is not action research; it’s political action” (Alcorn, 2000 from Rambaldi & Callosa-Tar, 2011).

The process of creating and designing maps with local communities can be as valuable as the maps themselves (Rainforest Foundation UK, 2018), the reason for this being the increase in knowledge it provides, the realisation that communities can be empowered by working towards and achieving their goals together and the ability to foster greater independence. Therefore, the primary objective of participatory mapping, which is one of its key strengths, should not be to create a map, but to analyse a community, a neighbourhood or a district and provide knowledge of local resources and opportunities at the disposal of citizens, which in turn brings community members together to share their ideas and visions, which can help contribute to strengthening community cohesion (Corbett, 2009). The maps made draw on local knowledge and attentive observations of local conditions and this new knowledge can strengthen negotiations with government officials, residents and other community organisations (Elwood, et al., 2007). The same theories of rainforest mapping and PRA can be applied to the mapping of local actors, resources and transformations in order to help facilitate improvements in disadvantage neighbourhoods.

Participatory mapping is defined by several factors: the process of production, where the maps are planned around common objectives and the higher level of participation by community members the more beneficial the outcome will be; the product that represents the agenda of the community, where the production displays information that is relevant to the needs of the people; the contents of the map, that contains place names, symbols, scales and key features that represent local knowledge systems. Participatory mapping comes in various forms: geographical community mapping, concept mapping, dialogue mapping, social network mapping (de Moor, 2017) and participatory asset mapping (Advanced Project- Healthy City Community Research Lab, 2012) are just several of them.

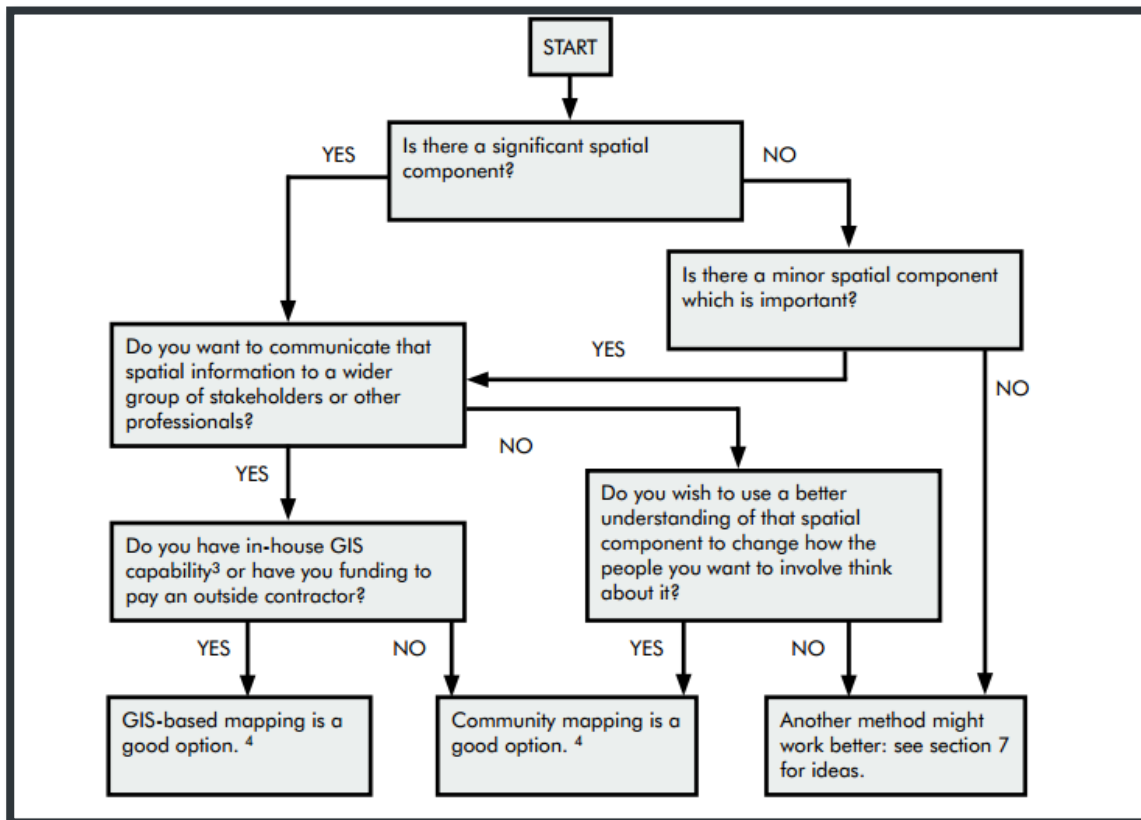
TABLE 3-2 - PARTICIPATORY MAPPING METHODOLOGIES

	Function
Geographical Community Mapping	Highlights land rights and resources and allows communities to spatially represent themselves
Concept Mapping	Organises and represents knowledge
Dialogue Mapping	Captures the issues, positions and arguments during discussions
Social Network Mapping	Displays the relationship and flows of networks of actors, located within and outside of the community
Participatory Asset Mapping	Highlights the availability, or lack thereof, of community assets (i.e. services, associations, organisations)

3.5.4.1 Community Mapping vs Participatory GIS

Participatory mapping is a tool that has emerged over the last 30 years and has been extensively used in rural communities, especially in developing countries of the Global South, to help empower citizens and provide knowledge of their rights to and how to manage various local resources (Rainforest Foundation UK, 2015; McCall, 2004), whereas Participatory-GIS (hereon referred to as P-GIS) has been used extensively in Northern societies to identify neighbourhoods in urban communities, problem identification and participatory planning. Choosing which type of mapping is the most suitable for a project depends the type of data you would like to collect and how you would like to analyse it (shown in Figure 3-6). Participatory mapping is used to explore the views of a community, where interested parties take part in workshops, using maps to help provoke ideas, clarify views and focus on issues within that given community (Forrester, et al., 2012).

FIGURE 3-6 - DECISION TREE: USING COMMUNITY MAPPING



(Forrester, et al., 2012)

The decision to use community mapping in neighbourhoods, seeing that the spatial component in analysing territories is always a primary concern, whether it be over public/private space, housing rights and issues, accessible transport, location of associations and local services, should be guided by the question, what is to be done with the data once it is collected? When advancing the participatory analysis of the neighbourhood, is it something that is to be shared with local inhabitants so they can make informed decisions about issues in their neighbourhoods, then using more elementary types of mapping should be used given their strengths lie in their low-cost, easily adaptable and non-technological methods to engage participants.

Techniques such as ground mapping would be more suited in rural contexts, and with the easily accessible maps on the internet, access to accurate maps using programmes such as Open Street Maps can allow community members to accurately pinpoint issues and spaces of concern, as well as beneficial services and commercial activities. Transect mapping, which involves exploring areas by walking along either pre-defined routes or start and end-points, questioning community members and mapping social and spatial aspects, is a way to depict geographical features such as infrastructure, schools, local markets, public and green spaces, land-uses, etc. (International Institute for Environment and Development, 2009), but also social features like where various groups of people congregate, intended use of spaces compared to actual uses (which could result in social conflicts), feelings of insecurity, etc. The weaknesses of transect mapping, shown in Table 3-3, are reduced with the aid of technology, providing geo-referenced points and accurate representations of neighbourhoods that can also be used as credible sources to present to government officials. Multimedia mapping adds another layer to traditional mapping techniques, using interactive computer-based maps to link videos, photos and written text. It allows community members to

communicate complex, qualitative knowledge related to the territory, and with a user-friendly platform, it can allow government officials, outside populations, associations, etc. to access and learn about local knowledge through a different medium. These benefits come at a high cost, as the start-up and continual maintenance of the platform being very expensive for many communities.

TABLE 3-3 - MODES OF GEOGRAPHICAL COMMUNITY MAPPING

	Description	Uses	Strengths	Weaknesses	Resources
Ground Mapping	A basic method that involves people drawing maps on the ground	Start framing land-based issues. Helps acquaint communities with maps	Engages non-experts, low cost, tactile, tangible short-term outcomes	Not replicable, fragile, not to scale, lacks credibility as formal decision-making tool	Raw materials – soil, sticks, rocks; open space; large sheets of paper, cameras
Sketch Mapping	Drawn free-hand on large pieces of paper and from memory	Stimulate community discussion on: land-use, resource distribution, conflict areas	Same as ground mapping, but more detailed and permanent; can be adapted at community level	Not geo-referenced; lack of accuracy undermines credibility	Large-size sheets of paper, coloured pens and/or pencils
Transect Mapping	A spatial cross-section of a community that depicts geographical features; Involves questioning comm. members and walking and mapping transects	Stimulate and inform community discussions; helps analyse links, patterns and interrelationships of land-use	Engage with non-experts with little training; low cost, not technology dependent; easily replicated; related to participants everyday activities	Can only be transposed onto a scale map with help of GPS data; lack of accuracy undermines credibility	Paper and coloured pencils; Depending on scope of area, can be done on foot, animal or motor vehicle
Scale Mapping	Present accurate geo-referenced data; distance on map always represents distance on ground	Communicating community information to decision-makers; info can be incorporated into other mapping tools and vice-versa	Provides accurate representation of the area; low cost and not technology dependent; can be used to determine quantitative info	Access to accurate scale (especially in developing countries); more complex to grasp for non-expert users	Scale maps; large sheets of transparent paper, coloured pens and/or pencils
Participatory 3-D Modelling	Stand-alone to scale models based on topographic map, made with pieces of cardboard	Stimulate and inform community discussions; can become installation depicting community spatial knowledge	Reusable for multiple planning exercises; low cost and not technology dependent, 3-D aspect is intuitive and understandable	Access to accurate scale; labour intensive and relatively time consuming; storage and transport can be difficult	Topographic map; pushpins, coloured string, wire, paint, plaster, cardboard
GPS Mapping	A GPS receiver is carried in the field and used to capture exact location of places	Increasingly used by communities to quickly survey large areas; helps add accurate locational information onto scale maps	Provides accurate geographical data; after initial training, receivers are easy to operate; increasingly affordable; Lower technology requirements	Still relatively expensive for many communities; Training required to understand cartographic protocols	GPS receiver; Scale maps to plot points; Logbook: set of spare batteries for receiver
Multimedia Mapping	Interactive, computer-based maps that link digital video, photos and written text with maps	Support local communities in expressing, documenting and storing land-related knowledge; integrates local spatial and non-spatial data	Very engaging format, excellent for communicating local knowledge; Easy for end-users to access and learn about local knowledge; tangible computer based skills for community members	Expensive for many communities; training required to understand equipment; long-term commitment; video-production, photo editing and file management skills required	Video and camera equipment, or a smart phone; digital image of map; computers and software
Participatory GIS	Participatory GIS are Computer-based systems that capture, manage, analyse, store and present geo-referenced spatial info.	Used to explore community-driven questions; can integrate local spatial and non-spatial data to support	Displays precise geo-referenced information; can provide sophisticated analysis and create quantitative data;	Steep learning curve (even for experts); continuous updating of software and long term commitment to training; expensive;	Computers, GIS software and data sets

		discussions and decision making	can easily communicate information and are highly convincing	persuasiveness of GIS can cause false sense of legitimacy	
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(International Institute for Environment and Development, 2009)

Brown and Kyttä (2014) expand on the definition of participatory mapping even further, using three different categories: public participation GIS (PPGIS), participatory GIS (PGIS) and volunteered geographical information (VGI). As defined by Tulloch (2008, from Brown & Kyttä, 2014), PPGIS is a field within geographical information sciences whereby the public contributes to public processes, such as decision making and mapping, using various forms of geospatial technologies. PGIS and VGI are related terms for describing processes that collect non-expert³² spatial data. Brown and Kyttä (ibid) claim that, based on a review of the literature carried out on the three participatory mapping methods shown in Figure 3-7, that the focus of PGIS has been on social learning and community engagement within a rural context, and that PPGIS is better suited in urban and regional contexts; but there is just as much as a need to for fostering community engagement and social inclusion using digital and non-digital mapping techniques in urban contexts. As discussed previously with the strengths and weaknesses of the various modes of geographical mapping, a multi-methodological approach that builds on their many strengths is needed.

FIGURE 3-7 - CHARACTERISTICS OF PPGIS, PGIS AND VGI

	PPGIS	PGIS	VGI
Process emphasis	Enhance public involvement to inform land use planning and management	Community empowerment Foster social identity Build social capital	Expand spatial information using citizens as sensors
Sponsors	Government planning agencies	NGOs	NGOs, ad hoc groups, individuals
Global context	Developed countries	Developing countries	Variable
Place context	Urban and regional	Rural	Variable
Importance of mapped data quality	Primary	Secondary	Primary
Sampling approach	Active: probability	Active: purposive	Passive: voluntary
Data collection	Individual (e.g., household sampling)	Collective (e.g., community workshops)	Individual
Data ownership	Sponsors of the process	People and communities that created data	Shared (e.g., data commons license)
Dominant mapping technology	Digital	Non-digital	Digital

(Brown, et al., 2014)

Whether community mapping or participatory GIS is being carried out in a neighbourhood, there are several things that need to be considered: first, the activities should be aimed as much as possible at involving ordinary stakeholders, with the participants seeing themselves on equal level with the ‘experts’. If the mapping workshop is being held in the global south, using participatory GIS or other mapping techniques using advanced technology may not be the best choice; second, it is important when choosing someone to organise and lead the workshops that they are seen as a neutral party. In regards to the first point, the person “leading” the workshop should act more as a facilitator and encourage the community to take responsibility for leading themselves; third, it is critical that all participants – including organisers – fully understand what will be discussed, as well as what level of participation and influence the participants will be able to contribute; Lastly, in regards to the output of the mapping session, it needs to be clear who owns the data. The local community has the right to be identified as the owners of the knowledge produced and how it will be used. This should be discussed at the end of the session, or as part of a follow-up session, as this is one of the main purposes in carrying out community mapping, and should be considered as an important part in the process (Forrester, et al., 2012).

³² The author of this thesis does not consider the users in the process as “non-experts”, as the community members are experts of local spatial knowledge in their own right.

3.5.5 Limits to PAR Approaches

Although there is a clear need for participation of marginalised or underrepresented groups in the planning of policies and development activities, the practice does not always follow the ambitions of the project. Arnstein argued that communities should strive for full citizen control, which as the top rung in her *ladder of participation* (see figure Figure 3-5), this is rarely the case, and possibly for legitimate reasons. While the techniques used with PAR, such as the ones discussed previously, are intended to engage participants using non-traditional means of teaching and learning, they have their limitations. It is critical part of the process to understand who the marginalised groups are and how they can effectively be included in participation activities.

Carrying out community led participation is often a complex and challenging process, with the benefits being difficult to quantify and present to policy makers. The qualities that qualify an area as socially disadvantaged, in addition to the problems that make involvement in participation successful (i.e. weak social capital, lack of trust between residents and public bodies, high resident turnover and a weak attachment to place), all add to the complexity of these types of processes, in turn making them more time consuming and cost intensive (Berkeley, et al., 2012). As being part of a research project, the results of the project, such as the written documents, end up benefiting the research institution rather than the participants themselves, as well as being when the time frame for the project has finished, the researchers are no longer in contact with the local participants (Mayo, et al., 2008).

The other issue seen with marginalised or oppressed groups is that they are too busy trying to secure basic necessities, which are physiological needs: sleep, food, housing and safety (according to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Figure 2-1), to be able or even think about being to participate in research activities (Bennet, 2004). For those who do participate in activities may experience task exhaustion or long-term fatigue, leading to the size and make-up of the groups fluctuate over time. Also the concept of the research may not be clear and the outcome may not be fully known by the researcher, and community members will not take it seriously or get involved without understanding what they are getting themselves into (ibid).

Involving marginalised groups in general is no easy task, even if the exercises are designed to be engaging and allow for participants to express their creativity. If the participants who take part in the activities are not representative of the marginalised community, then the techniques used to engage these types of people may end up empowering the groups who are already empowered (Juarez, et al., 2008). Some group activities, which involve multiple levels of stakeholders, reinforce already existing power relations. Certain groups may feel uncomfortable expressing their views in the presence of traditional power holders, such as police groups, as the participatory techniques carried out in the research of Juarez and Brown suggests (2008). While PAR intends to produce equality is necessary to examine the negative power effects that occur. In situations where the same techniques are deployed but under different circumstances of leadership, with institutions such as the World Bank, instead of community activists or radical academics, this can lead to quite different effects. Even though approaches are carried out in a participatory manner, the power exerted by a group may lead to manipulation or indirect coercion of a 'lesser' group. Or, groups may attempt to legitimise elite local knowledge, or even romanticise local knowledge, because it is produced through a participatory process (Kesby, et al., 2007).

3.6 Conclusion

While action-based approaches discussed in this chapter have highlighted the need, benefits and justifications for the use of participation in (action) research, it has also demonstrated why it is necessary to include marginalised groups in the research process, although attempts to do so may be met with

difficulties. By using techniques that differ from traditional approaches to participation and engage citizens using active and creative approaches to co-produce social and spatial knowledge, such as urban exploration, mapping and story-telling, researchers can begin to build a better understanding in the improvement of deprived communities. While the end result of the approaches can be considered more important for the research, what is more important in the process is the relationships built between the researcher and the participants, as well as the new relationships forged between participants. It is also important to stress the role that the facilitator assumes in the process of community development, and whether they have truly kept in mind the needs of the community in which they are working with. In the process of PAR and AL, the researcher becomes one of the objects of the study, as they are also part of the social transformation and change that they wish to seek. As this chapter transitioned from theory, to epistemological positions to methodological approaches used in PAR and AL, the next chapter will detail the methodological approach used in conducting my research, although it cannot be considered an AR, on the action-based approaches used in the 2 case studies.

Chapter 4 Methodology: The Morphogenetic Approach

“The work of inquiry, it is argued, should attempt to identify the objective structures which generate the form of the events we subjectively experience, in order to change the social world we inhabit” (Bhaskar, 1989 from Winter & Munn-Giddings, 2001)

4.1 Introduction

As part of my research, I wanted to understand the approaches various community development groups were employing to deal with the issues faced by disadvantaged communities from the bottom-up, starting with the discovery of not only the needs of the communities in which they worked, but also the assets and resources that were already existing. I was interested in groups that were using action-based approaches, and I wanted to experience these first hand and be engaged with the people and communities that were being researched, and most of all, I wanted to be part of something that was committed to change - that is why I chose groups that I did. Firstly, in order to study not just change, but how to change something, it is important to study the drivers of change – the who, what, where how and why of change. Which parts of the process are critical in driving change? In that sense, it was important for me to be involved in the process – the meetings, activities and informal discussions – to understand the underlying mechanisms that foster change. Action-research is an approach that at its base, is designed to acquire the knowledge on how to change reality. It is the cyclical, multiple stage learning process where if one thing does not succeed, it allows for it to be discussed, revised, and retested. In relation to the methodology behind action learning, I wanted to engage myself as an action learner in order to learn these participatory techniques.

In my research I have used a Living Educational Theory approach, which is “a form of self-study research in which practitioners research questions that are important to them to generate their values-based explanations of their educational influence in their own learning, the learning of others, and the learning of social formations” (Whitehead, 1989). Research does not have to be objective and measurable in order to be beneficial, as many aspects of life cannot be quantified and put into formulas. With that said, the research I have carried out has been influenced by my past experiences, and I feel a personal connection to what I have researched and who I have researched with, as that has also turned around to influence my personal development, which I feel necessary to include as part of my methodological approach.

Coming most recently from the field of teaching English as a foreign language, we were always engaged in sharing and producing knowledge using creative approaches to teaching that mixed experiential learning with theoretical learning. Breaking down the common belief that the teacher was the possessor of the knowledge and the students were passive recipients of that knowledge (Freiré, 1999), the role of the teacher was to be a facilitator. Action-research is commonly used in the field of education, and for valid reasons, as it allows them to engage in a cycle of reflection if something does not go as planned, and allows them to improvise and adapt plans. Also coming from business, we are taught to examine and increase the efficiency of processes, usually in order for companies to increase their profits. But what if we are dealing with a social context that does not deal with profits, can we still examine social processes that can be constructed and improved with our interaction? And lastly, coming from a background in transport planning where I began to learn about issues that faced cities, expanding my view of problems faced by society, and how transport can be used to increase the quality of life in terms of reducing pollution and increasing accessibility to job opportunities, friends and family, health services, etc. Therefore, I dedicated my master’s thesis to examining theories of behavioural change within transport, the factors that cause people to change from a psychological and cultural point of view. I was interested in learning how to

change people's behaviours, but my view was mainly limited to transport, a small part in the wide field of urban studies. And once again, I have focused this thesis on change at the societal level, leading me to imagine different ways of sharing knowledge of the problems faced in cities and urban contexts for the purpose of inspiring transformation and social change.

As social scientists and researchers, we spend years obtaining knowledge for ourselves, sitting back and observing situations and populations in order to gain a better understanding of various phenomena, sharing this knowledge within academic settings and communities, performing our research and then leaving the situation in the same way we found it. The passion to share this obtained knowledge within communities is the inspiration for my approach to research, taking from people like Paolo Friere (1999), to share this knowledge can be a way to empower people, and give them the tools to bring change, to reflect on their current situation and be able to imagine a different narrative for the future. Critical realism aims to have the same objective of offering an emancipatory approach to research (Edwards, et al., 2014), and for this reason it is why I have chosen it for this thesis.

While I would have liked to conduct my own workshops within communities with mapping at the base of my techniques to share and represent knowledge produced by the community, I realised that during my research I was attempting to carry out something that I did not have the knowledge to do. That I had to engage first with groups of people who shared my values for this type of approach and were attempting to do the same, then I could take part and acquire the knowledge how to do these. As Jean McNiff (2016), an expert in AR, states, even if you are not able to come to a conclusion, you can tell two parallel stories: you tell the story of what happened in the social world and the story of the learning process. As I have attempted to also provide a relevant contribution to social science, this thesis offers an alternative way to the traditional way of carrying out research, something I hope can stand out as my contribution to relevant social theory. With that said, presented below are my research questions and objectives:

Questions

- *What are the approaches to community development taken by research organisations and what role do they assume as an actor in the neighbourhood?*
- *How do the relationships with local NGOs, public bodies and private organisations play a role in advancing the goals of the community organisations?*

Objectives

- Provide analysis into the action-based approaches to social-spatial analysis – the theory, tools and techniques used by Tesseræ and Mapping San Siro, and how it is advantageous for researchers to take part in the process
- Understand Mapping San Siro's roles (as a community centre/hub, research centre, urban living lab), as well as social infrastructure in the neighbourhood and how they contribute to neighbourhood change
- Understand the process of the realisation of Mapping San Siro and their projects of regeneration, as well as their relationships with various actors in order to produce neighbourhood change
- Analyse processes of change – the idea of action research is to study this – whether it's a change of view, change of physical aspects. Which generative mechanisms had the greatest effect in producing change in the case of San Siro.

Based on the questions of my research, in the first half I will introduce the research design, presenting some of the primary arguments of critical realism and providing reasoning for using the 2 cases that I have

chosen and the type of realist research approach. In addition, I will discuss my data collection techniques and how I prepared the data for the analysis. In the second half, with two of the objectives within the research being to understand the process of realisation of Mapping San Siro, as well as understanding the strongest mechanisms for change, which is the basis of critical realism, I detail my methodological framework of the Morphogenetic Approach that I have used to analyse the data.

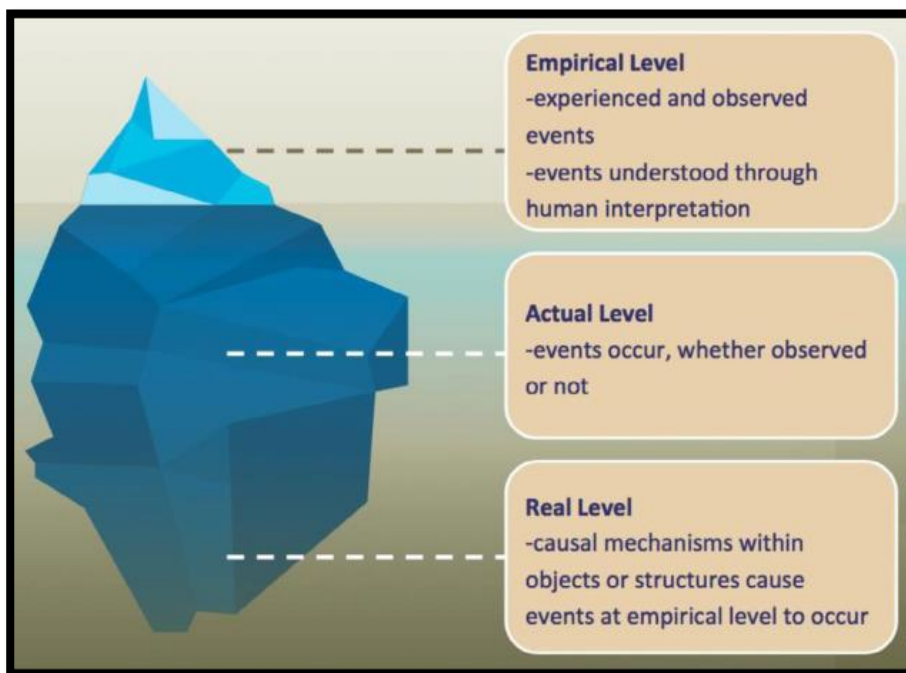
4.2 Research Design and Methods

From the beginning, I had an interest not only to know about the methods and practices of social research organisations, but also how they sustained themselves, how they functioned and what they had done to arrive where they are today – what had caused them to choose the paths they did? While my focus may have changed, from focusing solely on the mapping aspect of their activities to, in the end, examining the bigger picture of the groups, I have wanted to gain something from this experience that could be applicable to the real world. It is also what led me to choose Margaret Archer's (1995) Morphogenetic Approach to analyse the data. Seeing how there has been this underlying desire to not only observe and deeply understand a situation, but the desire to contribute to the better of it, I felt it was necessary to understand the mechanisms that contributed to change. As part of my research, I have let my experiences guide my theoretical approach, and have avoided committing myself to prior theories, as one must do in critical realism (Fletcher, 2017).

At the basis of CR is the critique of positivist approaches to how knowledge is acquired (Meyer, et al., 2013). Constructivism and Constructionism do not give the researcher the possibility to gather evidence about a single real world as there are many realities, while critical realism acknowledges that a real world exists and the related knowledge can be researched (Taylor, 2018). As suggested by Bhaskar (1986, in Edwards, O'Mahoney & Vincent 2014), social science should seek to contribute to the emancipation of human beings, something that action-based approaches to research share. "In realist social theory, the social world is produced and reconstructed by the action of participants" (Edwards, et al., 2014), hence why the research carried out should also value human being's contribution to it. As a controversial form of research, action-research is rejected by the traditional epistemological positions (Oquist, 1978), and in Chapter 3 the justification for knowledge acquired using action-research is presented. Even though I did not directly apply AR in my research, both of the groups that have been analysed use action-based approaches and collaborative techniques that place emphasis on the collection of "non-expert", situated knowledge. Given that my objectives were to analyse the approaches of the two groups and understand the causal mechanisms in processes of change, I have decided to use CR as my methodological framework.

The interests of critical realists in empirical research is to identify, explore and seek to understand (and in participatory research to test the limits of) the structures and mechanisms that cause events to happen (Taylor, 2018; Edwards, et al., 2014). During the investigation process the researcher can contextualize aspects of the objective world as well as constructs from the social world that influence or determine the link of causation. As an ontology CR looks for tendencies, not laws as in positivist research (Fletcher, 2017), and so it offers a stratified ontology to present the different ways in which we know things. Reality is divided into three levels, as shown in Figure 4-1: empirical, actual and real. The empirical level deals with events as we experience them, and events and objects can be measured empirically, yet at the same time mediated through interpretation or human experience. At the actual level, events occur no matter if they are experienced or not, and they are not subject to interpretation. At the third level, the real, causal structures or mechanisms exist, and they are the properties of a structure that act as generative forces that produce events (ibid).

FIGURE 4-1 - THE ICEBERG METAPHOR FOR CR ONTOLOGY



Source: (Fletcher, 2017)

4.2.1 Case selection and approach

Case studies are an important style of research because they allow for the study of a situation in which generative mechanisms can be isolated to some degree and then studied. According to Ackroyd & Karlsson (2014), “the aim of research is to bring to light formative processes which cause particular outcomes, when they operate, and which are best conceived in their totality or as near to it as possible”, resulting in the abduction of theories. As critical realists focus on the ontology of a case instead of the epistemology, they ask themselves the question, what must have the world have been like for the existence of the discovered mechanisms? Sayer (1992) posits that the nature of theory and observation must be examined more in depth, and not only to consider the epistemology. It is a well-chosen case study that can contribute to new scientific knowledge. In realist case study design, the study can either be extensively or intensively focused, and can have either the involvement (engaged study) or the detachment of the researcher, as highlighted in Table 4-1.

TABLE 4-1 - EIGHT TYPES OF REALIST RESEARCH AND SOME CHARACTERISTICS

Distinctive Research Strategies				
Intensive ↔ Extensive				
	<i>What is the mechanism? (context as given)</i>	<i>How do context and mechanism:</i>		<i>What is the context? (mechanisms inferred)</i>
		<i>Typically interact?</i>	<i>Historically intersect?</i>	
Detached Study	Case studies	Comparative case analysis	Generative institutional analysis	Research surveys and census data
Engaged Study	Action research	<i>Intensive realist evaluation</i>	Barefoot historical research	Extensive realist evaluation
Dominant Logic of Discovery:	Abduction	Abduction	Abduction/ Retroduction	Abduction/ Retroduction

Source: Adapted from Ackroyd & Karlsson 2014

For choosing the two case studies, I sought to explore the various techniques being used in order to understand the social-spatial conditions that exist in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in order to focus projects of regeneration that could actually be beneficial to the inhabitants, as well as taking part in a group that was working with participatory and action-based approaches. In addition, I wanted to understand the value that these organisations bring to the contexts which they research and attempt to influence, leading me to carry out an engaged style of research. And then my goal was to understand how the mechanisms and context typically interact, as there may have been some dependence on the context (as realists believe that mechanisms cannot be generalizable, and they are to a degree always context specific), and therefore try to discover what works for who and under what circumstances (Ackroyd, et al., 2014). With that said, I have carried out an intensive realist evaluation (Table 4-1) with regards to analysing the case studies.

For the first case study I chose to do a 4-month visiting period with Tesseræ Social Urban Research in Berlin, as they were experimenting with participatory techniques to understand generative structures typically in disadvantaged contexts; I was curious to know more about the group and how their methodology worked, so I spent the time with them learning about how their methodology was applied to neighbourhood of Mehringplatz, a public housing neighbourhood in the heart of Berlin, as part of an EU-funded project. As for my second case I chose to carry out my research with the group Mapping San Siro in Milan, as they had organised workshops with and on a disadvantaged neighbourhood of San Siro, as well as having established a base in the neighbourhood to carry out action-research.

Due to the different stages the groups were at, I chose not to carry out a comparative case study research (and the fact I carried out more of an engaged style of research). With Tesseræ, I was more focused on their methodology and I use the case as a starting point into my second, more in-depth analysis. While with Mapping San Siro, I focused on their realisation as a group and the effect they have had on different aspects of the neighbourhood. Therefore, the Mapping San Siro case consumes a majority of the analysis, while Tesseræ's approach is discussed mainly in Chapter 5. I took an abductive, exploratory approach to the research, wanting to investigate different practices that are currently being used. I did not want to just study a neighbourhood, I was interested in change and how something could be changed. Action-research is the study of change and transformation, therefore I examined action-based approaches of Tesseræ in

Mehringplatz, Berlin, and Mapping San Siro, in the public housing neighbourhood of San Siro, Milan. Both groups had neighbourhoods that were considered disadvantaged by certain standards; the Socially Integrative City (Soziale Stadt) programme for Berlin (Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Umwelt Berlin, 2015) and Neighbourhood Contracts³³ for San Siro (Lo Re, 2018), although they are very different contexts.

When I began my research period with Mapping San Siro in September of 2018, I intended to design an interactive map of the resources of the community as I had originally proposed it to the head professor of Mapping San Siro, Francesca Cognetti, as the group was missing this technological part in their approach. So, for the first few months, I was put in contact with several members of the local network that Mapping San Siro had created and was also part of, in order to learn about the activities they provided for the neighbourhood, and to understand if it would be useful to create a map for the community. During my experience with Tesseræ, I had met a partner of their projects who specialised in creating maps for local communities called Mapping for Change located in the UK. After getting in touch with them about the idea to create a map as part of my thesis, all we needed was approval from the university³⁴ to get the initial funding for the software. After a couple of months had passed with no response from the university, I decided I needed to change my approach. After speaking with Francesca³⁵ we decided it would be best to adopt a different approach to my research, one that would carry out an analysis of the activities of the Mapping San Siro research group, their action-research approach and relations with various levels of actors involved in their activities. Around the middle of January 2019, I began designing the new plan to how I would carry out the methodology.

4.2.2 Data Collection

Data collection begins with material gathered from the empirical level. In this case, I wanted to collect data on urban research organisations using extensive (widespread data, such as published documents) and intensive (in-depth interviews, participant observations, field-notes, observations) data. I choose to carry out semi-structured interviews, ensuring the flexibility to explore and update the existing literature. The questions allowed me to better understand the motivation for carrying out the specific type of research by the group, how it started and reasons for their approaches. Partly I am providing an objective approach of the chain of events that have taken place leading up to and the continuation of Mapping San Siro, on the other hand I am giving a subjective approach from the participants the research group, as well as the perceptions of their approach from members of the local network, which Mapping San Siro is a member of, and several public actors in the city of Milan. As Spjelkvaik (1999) states, “It is not enough merely to describe local actors' views. We must also explain their views, their actions, and how these views and actions generate a system”. The human experiences should be analysed in order to understand their behaviour and experiences, concentrating on cultural norms and values, as well as social processes viewed from a subjective perspective. The search for mechanisms that enable us to analyse change as the result of a actions and motivations of individuals situated within a larger context represents one of the research components of this thesis. In CR, in order to understand the associations between what people do, and the individual or structural factors that have played a role in shaping the environment and behavioural responses , it is necessary to use interpretive tools and techniques that allow for this (Meyer, et al., 2013).

³³ Contratto dei Quartieri is the name in Italian

³⁴ As I am a PhD Candidate at the University of Milan-Bicocca, I asked for the funding from them, and not the Politecnico di Milano, the university that Mapping San Siro is affiliated with.

³⁵ From this point going forward, if I reference the name Francesca, I am referring to the professor Francesca Cognetti and leader of the Mapping San Siro group. That goes for most of the names that I will use throughout the analysis of my case studies, unless there is a chance on confusion, which in that case I will also specify the surname.

In order to do that, I have chosen to carry out the data collection of this research with participant observation, semi-structured interviews and field notes.

4.2.2.1 *The Fieldwork*

Fieldwork is defined as a form of inquiry that requires the researcher to be immersed in an environment of on-going social activities of an individual or group (Whitehead, 2005). In the case of San Siro, I was immersed in the context of a public housing neighbourhood, observing the everyday life of people in that neighbourhood, while at the same time being set within a research office (in the case of Mapping San Siro, the majority of the time was spent in an abandoned ex-shop that was converted into an office) and observing the events, experiences and interactions that occurred there. In the case of Tesseræ, while I spent time with the group, it was not consistent, as they did not always work from the office (as it was a shared working space in Berlin, and located outside the context of the neighbourhood where the project was done) and were often travelling and working from different places³⁶. In both cases, they were examples of participant observation, as action-research is carried out with the knowledge and consent of the people and community of study (Whitehead, 2005).

Along with interviews, I would take field notes and pictures to accompany my observations at 30metriquadri, the research space of the group located in the San Siro neighbourhood. Field notes are intended to present a descriptive account of people, scenes and dialogue, while also including personal experiences and reactions to events, without trying to theorise or interpret the situations too much (Emerson, et al., 2001). I frequented the space two days a week during the normal office hours from 9.30 until 17.30 from September 2018 to June 2019, but only contemporaneously taking field notes on what I experienced and encountered from the middle of January 2019. I also attended, observed and took notes on ad-hoc meetings between the Sansheroes network, research activities of the group³⁷, seminars of external universities that came to the space as part of their course, tours of the neighbourhood given to university students, public seminars held in the city of Milan³⁸, as well meetings as the public actors who were involved in several of the group's projects, taking notes of what I was able to comprehend³⁹. As one of my research objectives was to understand the role of the group in the neighbourhood, I felt it was necessary to attend all of the meetings and events that I could. I also was a participant in the painting of the sidewalk for the Green Living Labs project, which was a small public space improvement project and will be discussed more in the next chapter. I also took notes on my general observations of events occurring in the neighbourhood while I was there, which range from speaking with locals and just observing everyday life in a public housing neighbourhood. In the end, the field notes included recordings of the events and

³⁶ I discuss this aspect in the empirical chapters as the benefits of being part of a university and continuously involved in the research of a neighbourhood, instead of having gaps between the end of a project and the beginning of another – which was the case of Tesseræ in Mehringplatz.

³⁷ While this was done more informally, I was interested in the types of research they were currently working on. I went out with Paolo and Francesco (an intern for some of my time there) while they went to the house of an elderly lady and interviewed her about the main public space that is located on the edge of the neighbourhood (Piazza Segesta).

³⁸ There were 2 important ones in particular: one was an event at the Triennale of Milan (is an important institution in the centre of Milan that organises exhibitions and conferences about arts, design, architecture, fashion, cinema) that presented the shared document of the Sansheroes network called, "Istantanee di San Siro. Discutiamo presente e future del quartiere" on 5th February, 2019, while the other was a book discussion at the Fondazione Fetrinelli for the first book published about the work of Mapping San Siro on 22 March, 2019.

³⁹ Some of the meetings between public officials from the city I was not able to understand everything that was being said as they were in Italian, which is not my first language. I did not consider it necessary for my research that everything should be understood, as I was able to comprehend the overall agenda and topics that were being discussed.

activities of others that were observed, as well as my own actions, questions and reflections that also represented a type of diary (Emerson, et al., 2001) which I include in the first part of the empirical chapter to demonstrate my experience as a researcher situated in the research context.

4.2.2.2 *Semi-structured interviews*

I carried out semi-structured interviews, based around general ideas and direction I wanted the interviewees to go in and related to my two research questions: What are the underlying approaches to community development taken by research organisations and what role do they assume as an actor in the neighbourhood?; How does the relationships with local NGOs, public bodies and private organisations play a role in advancing the goals of the community organisations? The information gathered by the active process of listening and asking questions was able to provide both access to information, or knowledge about the events and processes, and perspectives – concerns, discursive strategies and cultural contexts. They allow for the researcher to obtain insider information and insights on alternative lines of action and accounts of decision-making processes (Smith, et al., 2014).

4.2.2.2.1 Tesseræ

Being an exploratory research, when I arrived at Tesseræ I was unsure what the focus of my study was. I wanted to learn about and experience their methodology in person. As I had come to realise that I would probably not be able to accomplish that due to their period of inactivity when I arrived, I decided to focus more on the participatory techniques they used to carry out social-spatial analysis during the Mehringplatz project: what were the inspirations for the research and their methodology and some history that contributed to the development of the group.

With that said, I decided during my research with Mapping San Siro that it would be useful to have some information formally documented, as everything I had collected before were based on notes, informal interviews/conversations and observations. When I had the opportunity to return to Berlin for a conference organised by Tesseræ, I arranged an interview with Lorenzo Tripodi⁴⁰, one of the co-founders of Tesseræ.

TABLE 4-2- CATEGORIES AND SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR TESSERÆ INTERVIEW

General information	Could you explain a little about your motivations for Tesseræ/Methodology From ogino:knauss to Tesseræ – has it made it more of a professional group?
Methodology	It can be difficult because maps can be difficult to comprehend for many people? Did participants give you many of these ideas for the 64 definitions that are part of the Urban Reconnaissance methodology? Why don't you try taking regular inhabitants for this type of methodology? You said you had to change the language working with the device. Do you have to break it down in a simpler way sometimes?
Regeneration Projects	Why do you think that many regeneration projects take time do understand the neighbourhood they are working in?
Sharing of Knowledge and Communication	It seems similar to the MSS approach where they used this as the initial introduction, then the question is how do you keep the momentum going?

The interview was set in a private setting, and lasted a little over an hour. I started with a basic question of: Could you explain a little about your motivations for the group and the methodology? And from there the

⁴⁰ Also with Lorenzo Tripodi I will also refer to him by his first name of Lorenzo. There is another Lorenzo (Lipparini) involved in the Mapping San Siro case study, so when I refer to him it will be also with his surname.

interview was very free-structured, with me mostly just providing follow-up questions to some of his responses. Seeing how there was only one interview for this part, I did not need to do an in-depth coding like I did for the interviews from Mapping San Siro. With that said, I transcribed, analysed and coded the text with several categories: Urban Reconnaissance methodology, Mapping, Team diversity, Issues with Participatory Approach, Neighbourhood Solidarity Curriculum, Exchange of Knowledge, Role of the group, Future Aspirations, Tesseræ Beginnings and History as Activists/Contested Spaces. Based on the coding of these categories, I was able to carry out the descriptive analysis of Tesseræ and their methodologies employed during the Mehringplatz project.

4.2.2.2.2 Mapping San Siro

Working with Francesca, I planned to carry out interviews with three levels of actors: the Mapping San Siro research group (1st level), the Sansheroes Network⁴¹ (2nd level) and the public actors and institutions involved (3rd level). From the Mapping San Siro group, I selected to interview: Francesca Cognetti, coordinator of Mapping San Siro; Liliana Padovani, scientific supervisor of Mapping San Siro; Ida Castelnuovo, project manager for Polisocial; Elena Maranghi, post-doc and original member of Mapping San Siro; Alice Ranzini, PhD Candidate at IUAV and original member; and Paolo Grassi, post-doc with Mapping San Siro and the anthropologist of the group⁴². From the Sansheroes Network, I would interview: Paola Casaletti of Cooperativa Sociale Tuttinsieme; Amelia Priano of the project Velo'ce mente and a representative of the Comitato Quartiere San Siro; A member of the activist group Comitato Abitanti San Siro⁴³; Bianca Bottero, a retired professor from the Politecnico of Milan and Italian teacher at the Associazione Alfabeti Onlus; and Sabrina Uberti-Bona, a member of the Intercultural Commission of the Cardorna School⁴⁴. From the public actors involved in Mapping San Siro's activities: Lorenzo Lipparini, Head of Participation, Active Citizenship and Open Data for the city of Milan; Cristina Cocciolo, Vice-General Director of ALER Milan; Andrea Ghirlanda, General Supervisor for housing, Regione Lombardia; Patrizia Digirolamo, part of the neighbourhood contracts unit and urban regeneration for the city of Milan; and Gabriele Rabbaioti, head of housing and social policies for the city of Milan. In the end, I was able to obtain 13 interviews⁴⁵ out of the 16 I had originally wanted. Although it may seem like a low number of interviews, I was able to gain rich qualitative data from the interviewees.

In the interviews, I always started out with asking about the history of their relationship with the group, starting from the beginning and attempting to go in a chronological order. As I was trying to see the effect Mapping San Siro had had on the neighbourhood, as well as the relations between actors, I wanted to build a picture where there was a before and after of the situation. The categories of the questions for the 1st level interviews were related to: the general information of the group and connection to Mapping San Siro; the role of university; methodology and role of the group; regeneration and neighbourhood projects; relations with and between the local network; and the communication and sharing of knowledge. The questions varied to a degree when speaking with Francesca, Liliana Padovani and Ida Castelnuovo, as they were involved at a higher level than Elena, Alice and Paolo.

TABLE 4-3 - CATEGORIES AND SAMPLE QUESTIONS FROM 1ST LEVEL ACTOR INTERVIEWS

⁴¹ The Sansheroes network was formed in November 2016 by Mapping San Siro and consists of the social actors who operate in the San Siro Neighbourhood, which will be discussed in chapter 6.

⁴² The rest of the group are all urban planners and architects, so Paolo's position is quite unique

⁴³ I will refer to him as activist CASS (Comitato Abitante San Siro) in the following chapters, as he wished to remain anonymous

⁴⁴ The Commissione Interculturale dell'Istituto Comprensivo Luigi Cadorna is an a branch of the Parents Assembly

⁴⁵ Cristina Cocciolo, Patrizia Digirolamo and Gabriele Rabbaioti did not respond to my request for an interview.

General information	Tell me a little about your background and how you got involved with MSS. What is your role within the group and how has it changed over the years?
Role of university	What is the benefits of being connected to the university? Do you feel like the university is a neutral actor?
Methodology	What would you say is the role of MSS? Which is the most important part of the 4 stage methodology? Why have you chose to involve the associations over of local inhabitants?
Regeneration	How was your research contributed to the regeneration projects that are being carried out?
The network	Can you explain how the network was created? What were the relations between actors before MSS arrived?
Sharing of Knowledge and Communication	How do you think the Triennale event went? How does technology play a role in the communication of your activities?

The interviews with the second level actors were based generally around the same themes, but more trying to understand their perception of MSS's activities and how they have impacted the neighbourhood, as well as the local associations.

TABLE 4-4 - CATEGORIES AND SAMPLE QUESTIONS FROM 2ND LEVEL ACTOR INTERVIEWS

General information	What is your role of your association in the neighbourhood? How did you become involved with MSS?
Perceptions of Mapping, their role/activities	How would you describe MSS's role in the neighbourhood? Do you think their approach works well? Is there anything you would change if you could? What is the benefit of being associated with a university?
Methodology	How would you change their approach? Do you feel like you're representing the interests of the people with the projects? How do you know?
The network	How has the network changed over time? What was your relation with the other associations of San Siro before their intervention into the neighbourhood?
Sharing of Knowledge and Communication	How do you think the Triennale event went? Do you think the citizens of the neighbourhood know about Mapping's work?

The interviews from the third level actors were related to that person's responsibilities with their work, as well as how they got involved with MSS and how they played a role in the projects/realisation of MSS. As mentioned before, due to time constraints and non-responses from other potential interviewees, I only succeeded in carrying out interviews with Andrea Ghirlanda from the Regione Lombardia and Lorenzo Lipparini from the city of Milan.

TABLE 4-5 - CATEGORIES AND SAMPLE QUESTIONS FROM 3RD LEVEL ACTOR INTERVIEWS

General information	Can explain a little about your position and how you got involved with MSS?
Mapping San Siro Approach	How would you describe MSS's role in the neighbourhood? Were there difficulties coming to an agreement between the actors?
Working with disadvantaged neighbourhoods	What are the problems that these types of neighbourhoods face? What are the greatest needs of the neighbourhood?

Regeneration and relations with actors	What is your relationship with the other public institutions (ALER, City of Milan, Regione Lombardia)? How can you understand if a project has been successful? What are you means of evaluation over the life of a project?
Role of university	In addition to city institutions, do you think university plays an important role in studying and helping disadvantaged neighbourhoods? Is it different working with a university?

With the Mapping San Siro group and the public actors of Milan, all of the interviews were conducted in English, while with the Sansheroes network, the interviews with Amelia Priano⁴⁶, Paola Casaletti, and Bianca Botteri were conducted in Italian⁴⁷. All interviews were recorded with the consent of the interviewee⁴⁸, while I simultaneously took notes, highlighting reactions from the respondents. There were then transcribed accurately to what the interviewee had intended, given that English was not their native language. Being an English teacher in Italy, and also living in Italy for several years, I have learned pretty well what Italian speakers mean when something is said. For the Italian interviews, they were transcribed in Italian then translated to English using my knowledge of the Italian language

All of the interviews were conducted in a 1 on 1 office setting, aside from the interview with Amelia Priano, which was conducted at a bar during lunch. About 15 minutes into the interview, her colleagues from the Comitato Quartiere San Siro (Neighbourhood Committee of San Siro) came and sat down beside us⁴⁹. There are several questions she has to hold back what she says, or she responds in English⁵⁰:

Jim – “What are the most pressing needs for the neighbourhood”

Amelia – “I am scared because there is (Lucia Guerra from) the Comitato” Definitely legality, degradation, abusiveness, inclusion. Inclusion should include these three areas if there were to be an intervention. Legality is a huge problem. And then the perception of security”⁵¹

Jim – “What happened to your office here?”⁵²

Amelia – “I have to tell you in English because they’ll get angry with me.”

It is apparent that she is worried, although she said it half-jokingly, about her stance on the illegal occupation (squatting) of flats, among several other things, with Lucia Guerra from the Comitato sitting they feel, aside from having their trust (which being part of Mapping San Siro, I have gained that trust), I

⁴⁶ The interview with Amelia was done mostly in Italian, but she switched back and forth from Italian to English where she felt comfortable (and wanted to hide what she was saying).

⁴⁷ For the interviews in English I was more easily able to provide follow up questions to certain responses, whereas the interviews in Italian I more just followed the script of questions, being able to follow up every once in a while. A native speaker helped me with the translation of the questions from English to Italian.

⁴⁸ The only interview that did not record was the first one with Alice Ranzini due to technical problems. I had tested the recorder for a short duration beforehand, and I assume that the size of the file may have caused some difficulties. After that I switched to a different application, and tested it for an hour before carrying out the next interview, and there were no further technical difficulties.

⁴⁹ As I discuss in the empirical chapter, there is a longstanding conflict between Comitato Quartiere and Comitato Abitanti due to their views on the illegal occupation of flats. While this may have affected the interview, it also helped me understand the situation between the 2 conflicting groups better. Realising this, Amelia told me after if I had any additional questions I would have liked to ask in private, she would be happy to do so.

⁵⁰ At one point we are interrupted by Lucia, asking why we are speaking in English.

⁵¹ Original Italian text: “Quali sono gli esigenze più importanti per il quartiere?”

“Ho paura perché c’è il comitato”. Sicuramente legalità, degrado, abusivismo, inclusione. l’inclusione dovrebbero avere queste tre aree vanno verso un intervento. Legalità è un problema enorme. E poi la percezione della sicurezza.”

⁵² This question I ask her in Italian, and she responds to me in English.

should conduct interviews in a private setting. Seeing how all of the other interviews were conducted in private, I did not encounter any similar issues.

4.2.2.3 *Secondary-data analysis*

Another source of information I used was all of the secondary data that was available in the form of documents, reports, academic papers and books. Given that both of the groups are research orientated, there was an abundance of information available online and on the organisations' websites⁵³. There was an archive of printed reports and documents located within 30metriquadri, that included thesis' of bachelor's and master's students, publications, academic journals, reports on the group's activities, etc. and there was also an abundance of information available online about the group and the neighbourhood.

4.2.3 Preparation for the analysis

4.2.3.1 *Interview coding-1st cycle*

For analysing my data using CR, I was hesitant to use grounded theory to analyse the data, as grounded theory is solely data driven and is primarily inductive, while CR is more theory and researcher driven process and is therefore abductive (Fletcher, 2017). In order to analyse my data, I used the qualitative data analysis technique of coding. A code is a word a short phrase that is used to assign a "summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (Saldaña, 2013), which is used in the interviews as well as the participant observations. Saldaña (2013) warns about not being too precise with the initial coding, as it can prevent you from being open to new interpretations, ideas and alternative ways of thinking about a phenomenon.

I wanted to understand each person's experience with the research group and their activities, therefore during the first cycle of coding I used aspects of the affective method of coding that Saldaña (2013) refers to as evaluation coding. The affective method examines the emotions, values and other subjective qualities of participant experience. Wanting to see the effectiveness of MSS's approach, as well as the history and motivations for beginning the group, I applied a type of evaluation coding, that according to Saldaña is particularly useful for process evaluation and the facilitation and implementation of change in action-research projects.

As I was transcribing the interviews, I had already started to take notes on phrases that I found interesting, as well as reactions and facial expressions to certain questions. After, I reread each one individually, and started to highlight sentences in different colours with various words and expressions describing each one using the notes in Microsoft Word. It did this for each interview, and eventually I began to make a list of categories to follow the coding for each of the three levels of actors that can be seen in Table 4-6

After the going through the interviews at least 2 times and coding and categorising the interviews, I moved all of the highlighted and pertinent information to their own documents. I made sure to still separate the phrases by name, but having all of the information (e.g. the role of university, the impact of MSS) in one place made the analysis more efficient. I still switched back and forth between the documents separated by category and name while carrying out my analysis.

Aside from the interviews, I had pages of field notes and observations to analyse. I use the notes to recount my situated learning experience while at Mapping San Siro, with the objective to show the benefits of this type of experience as compared to traditional ways of carrying out ethnographical research. Also as a way

⁵³ Tesserae: <http://www.tesserae.eu> , <http://exercices.oginoknauss.org>;
Mapping San Siro: <http://www.mappingsansiro.polimi.it/il-progetto-2>

to understand the role that Mapping San Siro plays in the neighbourhood, I used the observations/field notes along with the interviews to assist in this process.

TABLE 4-6 - LIST OF CATEGORIES USED TO ANALYSE INTERVIEWS

	MSS	The Network	Public Actors
Green	Dual Role of University	Role of University	Role of university
Light blue	Inspiration/Motivation	Perception of Mapping	Changes to the normal way of working
Red	Impact/Value of MSS ⁵⁴	Impact/Value of MSS	Impact/Value of MSS
Yellow	Exchange of Knowledge	Exchange of Knowledge	Exchange of Knowledge
Magenta	Methodology	Methodology	
Dark Green	Role of MSS/ 30metriquadri	Role of MSS	Role of MSS
Teal	Future Changes	Future Hopes and Desires	
Gold	Connection to MSS	Connection to MSS	Connection to MSS
Purple	Relation with other actors	Relation with other actors	Relation with other actors
Grey	Role of Group/Person	Role of Group/Person	Role of Group/Person
Blue	San Siro Context/Problems	San Siro Context/ Neighbourhood Issues	San Siro Context/ Neighbourhood Issues
Dark Blue	Regeneration Projects	Regeneration Projects	Regeneration Projects
Black	Triennale Event	Triennale Event	

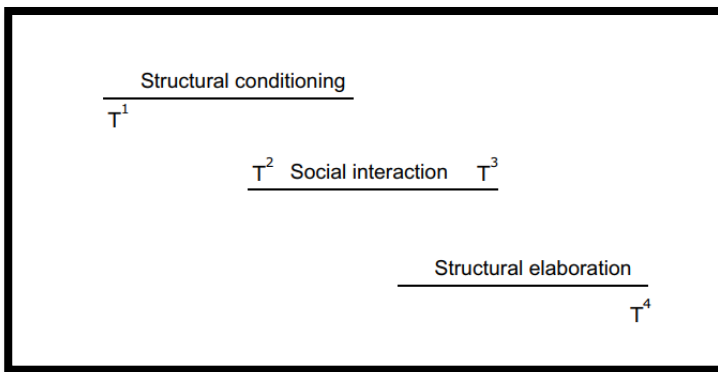
4.2.3.2 Interview coding-2nd cycle

In order to carry out the 2nd cycle of coding, it is necessary to introduce Archer's (1995) Morphogenetic Approach (MA), which shaped how the data was analysed. The MA examines the interactions between structure and agency over a cyclical process and leads to the continuation of certain social structures which shape our social lives (morphostasis) or a transformation of structures due to the actions taken by agents (morphogenesis). One of the main aspects of CR that differentiates it from other realist philosophies is the non-conflated view between structure and agency, as this provides a way to comprehend the underlying causal mechanisms (which exist in the 3rd level of Roy Bhaskar's⁵⁵ stratified ontology of reality; Figure 4-1) that determine the outcomes in context-dependent situations. In order to understand change, the dynamics of deep structures must be understood (Wong, 2005). Archer (1995) argues that interactions between structure and agency occur over 3 phases (Figure 4-2): structural conditioning, social interaction and structural elaboration. As humans are exposed to and influenced by pre-existing social structures (structural conditioning), they also have the opportunity to execute their agency to act outside these structures (social interaction), presenting the possibility of change as a result of their agency. This can provide a new structure for the next iteration in the morphogenetic cycle (Müller, et al., 2018). Archer's approach to analysing change helps demonstrate that structural and cultural conditioning influence socio-cultural interactions, and what forms of social interaction foster structural and cultural change (Herepath 2014), which is what this the thesis would like to understand in the case of social research organisations.

FIGURE 4-2 - THE MORPHOGENETIC CYCLE

⁵⁴ MSS is an acronym for Mapping San Siro

⁵⁵ Roy Bhaskar is given credit as the father of Critical Realism (Bygstad, et al., 2011).



Source: (Mutch 2017, adapted from Archer 1995)

Given this short introduction to the MA which will be expanded subsequently, the second cycle of coding can be described. Using a mix of the newly formed documents under the heading of the categories of Table 4-6, I started to analyse those and think of them in more abstract terms. It was during this phase that I performed a second round of coding and categorising the interviews according to terminology used in the MA. As I went through the transcripts with categories such as *motivations* and *role of university*, I began to realise its connection with CR and the concepts of structure, culture and agency⁵⁶. The role of university is a structure that shapes people's actions, while motivations and inspirations were part of an individual's personal reasoning for taking the actions they did – their agency. As I went through each iteration of the morphogenetic cycle, I began to code the data with categories such as structural conditioning, social interactions and structural elaboration, as well as more specific terms of the MA such as vested interests, opportunity costs, bargaining position, etc. (Figure 4-4) that contributed to the understanding of the interactions between structure and agency – which will all be introduced in the next section.

4.3 Methodological Framework - The Morphogenetic Approach

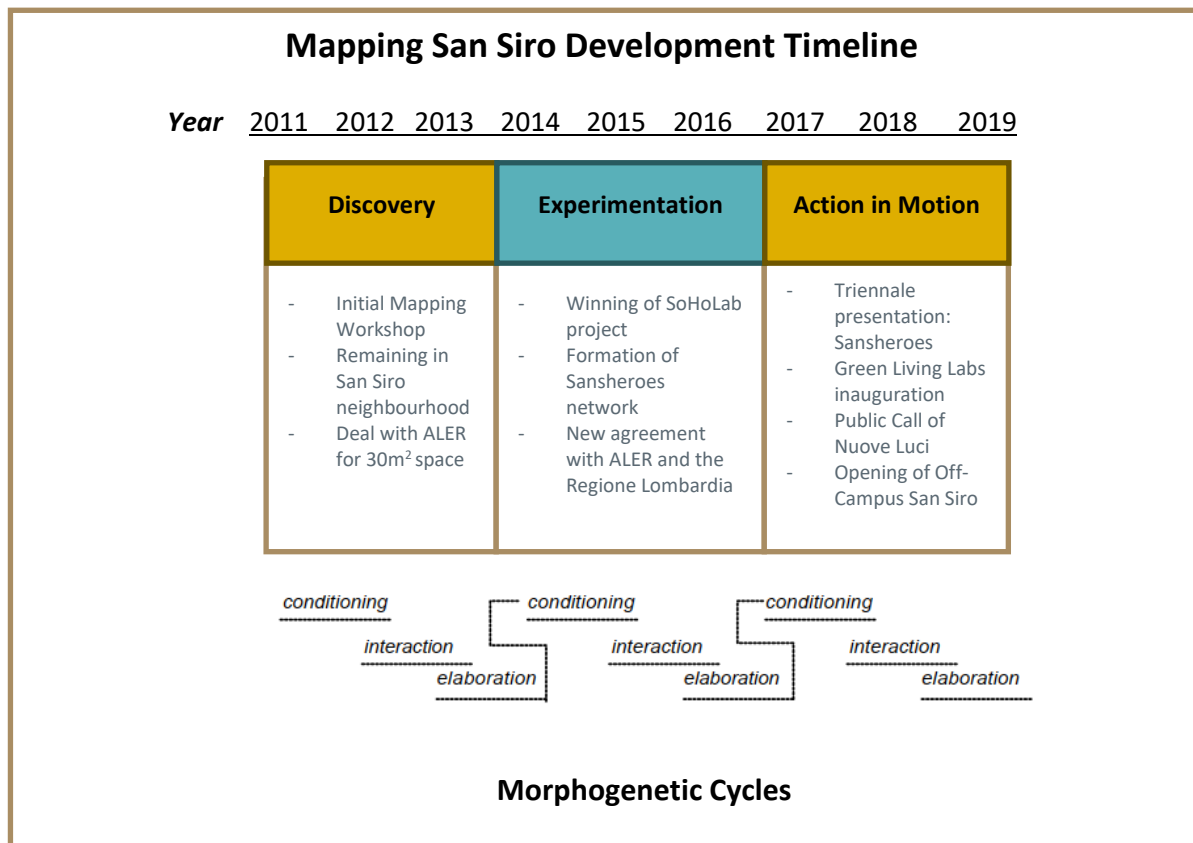
I choose to use Archer's Morphogenetic Approach to analyse for several reasons. Although at times Archer's discussions on society can be quite complex and abstract, while also analysing change over long periods of time (she began by examining the changes in education over a several hundred year span), she suggests that the MA can be used to analyse both micro and macro topics related to practical social problems by using the terms presented as a framework for investigation (Mutch, 2017). For this case, viewing the group as an organisation, but also part of the academic setting, I felt that the Morphogenetic Approach would be a useful tool to assist my investigation. Also, with the theme of action research being a focus of the thesis, the MA deals with processes being cycles, going through stages of development and changes to environments, which make things more or less favourable for the agents involved.

The first thing I did after analysing the timeline of events was to separate the events into 3 distinct timeframes based on two of the research objectives: 1. Understand the process of the realisation of Mapping San Siro and their projects of regeneration, as well as their relationships with various actors in order to produce change; 2. Analyse processes of change – the idea of action research is to study this – whether it's a change of view, change of physical aspects. Which mechanisms had the greatest effect in

⁵⁶ As the study of CR and the Morphogenetic Approach as a methodological framework was quite new to me, it took a little bit to fully grasp the concepts and terminology. So, I did not code them instantly, but more as part of a gradual process. So the coding of various structures, culture and agency came as I gained a more profound knowledge of the Morphogenetic Approach.

producing change in the case of Mapping San Siro? The three times frames⁵⁷ dealt with significant changes in the structure of the group, having diverse characteristics that defined each stage, which I name: Discovery, Experimentation, and Action in Motion (Figure 4-1). These would establish the analysis of the data coming from the interviews and observations, as each stage could be viewed and analysed under the framework of the MA.

FIGURE 4-3 - MAPPING SAN SIRO DEVELOPMENT TIMELINE



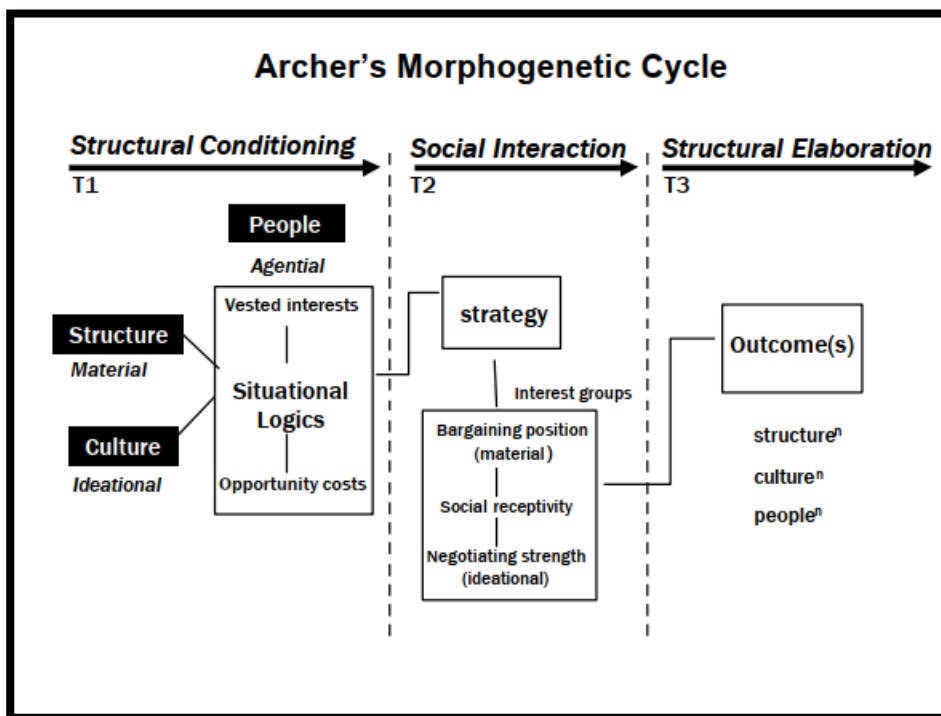
Source: Adapted from Wong, 2005

4.3.1.1 Structural and Cultural Conditioning (T^1 - T^2)

In the stage of structural and cultural conditioning, Archer's MA starts by exploring the relationship between the three aspects of social reality: structure, culture and agency (shown in Figure 4-4). Structure, which is made up of the material aspects of society, includes things such as people who occupy different positions, institutions, resources, roles, etc. Culture consists of the ideational aspects in life, which include values, beliefs, theories, etc., and lastly there is agency, the human aspect of life, the people who act (Kotta, et al., 2014; Archer, 1995; Pereira, 2012). Archer argues that while in life the three aspects are inseparable, for analytical purposes, they should be separated to understand who each possesses unique properties and powers (Pereira, 2012).

⁵⁷ I adapt this figure in Chapter 6, and the three periods, which are Origination, Implementation and Permeation, from a similar one taken from Wong, 2005, which analyses the innovation process of a company using a Archer's (1995) take on critical realism with the Morphogenetic Approach.

FIGURE 4-4 – DETAILED CYCLE OF THE MORPHOGENETIC APPROACH



Source: (Archer, 1995)

Society, which is formed of structures, culture and agents, is shaped from and formed by agents, which originates from the intended and unintended consequences of their activities (Mutch, 2017). Culture systems are man-made and are the products of past events, but at the same time are continuously transformed through people's actions. It is important to understand what beliefs people hold and how that in turn affects behaviour (Pereira, 2012). One of the main cultural systems that is discussed in Chapter 6 is the beliefs of the role the university should play as a producer of knowledge, and who that knowledge should be accessible to.

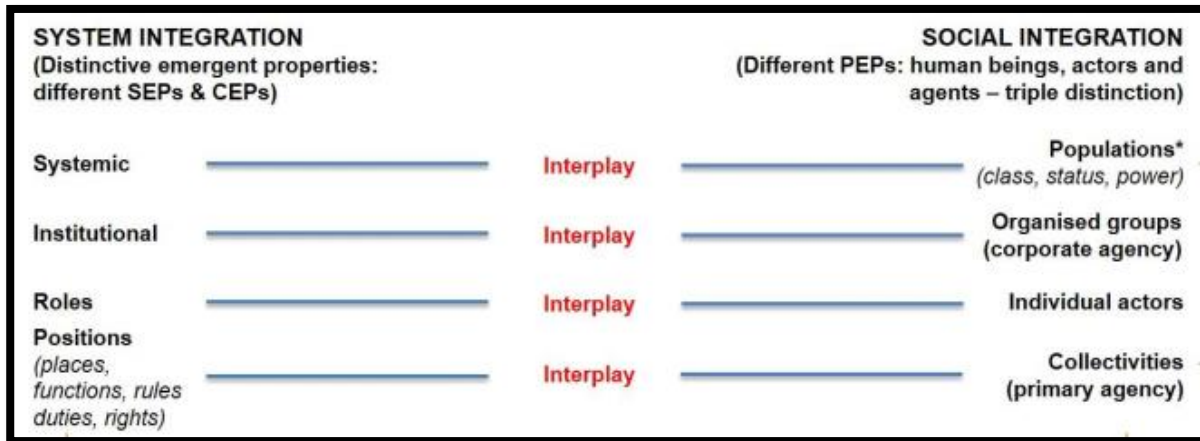
Structures, on the other hand, while they exert similar influences as culture, have varying attributes that set the two aspects apart. Structures contain material resources, both physical and human, the relationships between them, and the power they have over people's actions (ibid). Like cultural systems, structural systems exist independently of what people think, know or feel about them. They are antonymous systems that are different from people and culture, but like culture, people are born into them. Structures in this case are the public institutions of Milan: the city government, the regional government (Regione Lombardia), the public housing agency (ALER Milan), as well as the university – the Politecnico of Milan.

Lastly, within structural and cultural conditioning are the agents who have the ability to exist and act independently of the systems they born in to. Agency refers to the daily choices people make which can reinforce existing systems (morphostasis) or transform them (morphogenesis). It must be remembered though that agency may be shaped by structures and culture, but in the end it does not determine their actions, and therefore in return agents possess the power to shape or reshape social structures (Fletcher, 2017; Pereira, 2012). In the case of Mapping San Siro, Francesca Cognetti is one of the primary people in the process, hence her role as an agent of change will be highlighted throughout the analysis.

In order to carry the analysis of these, the elements of both culture and structure need to be identified, which has been done at the beginning of each stage of Mapping San Siro's cycle in analysis. Also, when

analysing structural systems, there are three different aspects that can be focused on: positional levels, roles or institutional structures (Figure 4-5). For the scope of my research, I chose to explore the relations of various institutions that make up the social system, while also exploring the role of university within society.

FIGURE 4-5 - ANALYTICAL DUALISM: A STRATIFIED MODEL OF SOCIAL STRUCTURE



Source: (Nuryatno, et al., 2015)

Within the social position exists actors or a primary agents and corporate agents (Figure 4-5). With agents, there exists pre-group collectives of agents which fall under 2 categories: privileged and underprivileged, which can change over time. Archer identifies corporate agents as “those who are aware of what they want, can articulate it to themselves and others, and have organised in order to get it” (Archer, 1995). These actors act strategically in order to promote their interests in order to be involved in negotiated societal transformations. Primary agents, on the other hand, are not able to articulate their demands and are unorganised, and therefore they remain excluded from these negotiations (Herepath, 2014). With the potential bargaining power of the various agents involved, this represents the second stage of mediation, and examines agents who are contextually conditioned use their subjective and reflexive thought processes to advance their goals (ibid). The situational logic as Archer (1995) calls it, is depended on the relations between the intersecting cultural and structural emergent properties.

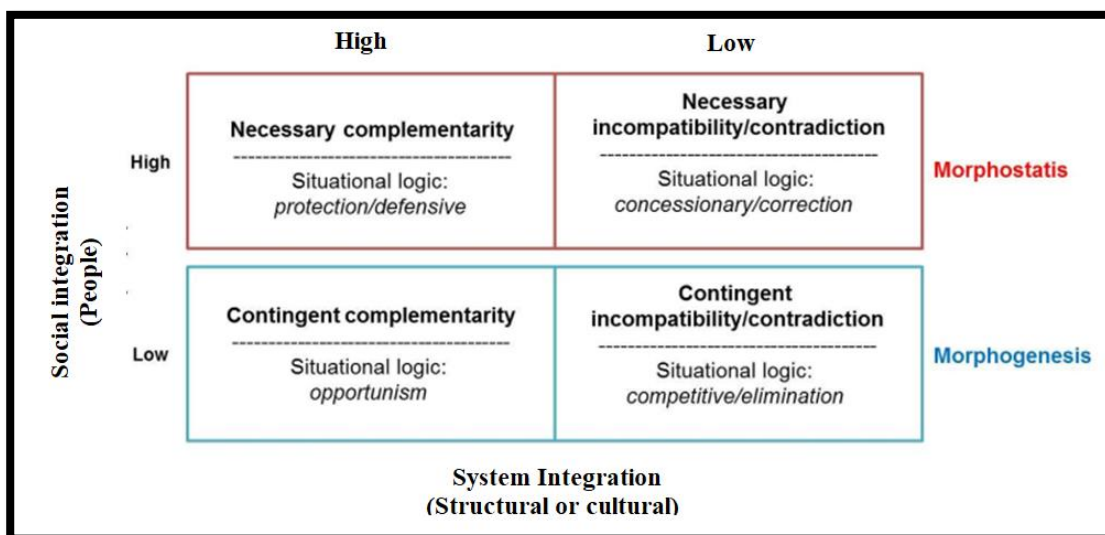
4.3.1.1.1 Situational Logics

As shown in Figure 4-4, the interactions between structure, culture and the agents involved lead to various situational logics (as Archer posits that this happens at the institutional level, and since this thesis deals with institutional actors, I will include it in the analysis; Herepath 2014; Kotta, Case & Luckett 2014), which influence agents to promote their own personal interests and projects. Both structure and culture can constrain or enable a situation given the context, and the situational logics taken by agents during the social interaction phase (at T^2 - T^3) that lead to different forms of strategic action where groups see their interests served by defensive, concessionary, opportunistic or competitive modes of interaction (Nuryatno, et al., 2015; Herepath, 2014). As shown in Figure 4-6, there are four possibilities (Nuryatno, et al., 2015) :

1. Necessary complementarities – The compatibilities of the ideas and beliefs between the cultural and structural systems, creating a situational logic of protection at the system level. The institutions are mutually reinforcing and persuade each other to work in terms of each other (Archer, 1995). Change is ultimately blocked because it threatens to disrupt the status quo.

2. Necessary contradictions – As the opposite of the necessary complementarities, these are marked by incompatibility between institutions due to particular beliefs which are inconsistent at the cultural level. This results in a situational logic of correction, or a compromise between the parties involved as they struggle to remain in power, where the promotion of vested interests usually lead to “cautious balancing act, a weighting of gains against losses, where to accrue bonuses is also to invite or incur penalties” (Archer, 1995).
3. Contingent contradictions – This creates a situational logic of competition, or elimination, as the arena becomes a “battleground of ideas” where the party who seeks to gain the most will attempt to inflict “maximum injuries on the other side” (Archer, 1995). This leads to groups and individuals struggling to keep up with the competitive nature of institutions, as the use of material and human resources provides leverage to those who obtain them.
4. Contingent complementarities – In these relationships the interests (social and cultural properties) of particular groups are in line and compatible, and the groups see the material opportunity that will arise from this, resulting in a situational logic of opportunism. It allows for originality and innovation and leads to great cultural variety.

FIGURE 4-6 - SITUATIONAL LOGICS - MORPHOSTASIS VS MORPHOGENESIS



Source: Adapted from Nuryatno & Dobson 2015

4.3.1.2 Social Interaction(T^2 - T^3)

As Archer (1995) states, it is only in rare cases where an entire social system will have all of its components (institutions, roles and distributions) align and bring together all of the agents in the same situational logics, and therefore means that all material resources are poured into one direction. The concept in CR is that societies are open systems and are therefore subject to external contingencies, so variety in relations between institutions in society becomes the norm. As will be shown in the case of MSS, the involvement of different institutions and the agency of certain individuals were able to experiment with a different approach to community development, going outside the traditional role of university situated within the Italian context. The situational logic taken by the actors at each stage will be examined based off the interviews carried out with them, using the actions taken over the years to either support or contest their claims. By detailing the results of the interactions between actors, it will paint a clearer picture, as has been done in each phase of the development of the group.

During social interactions, bargaining power, negotiating strength and social receptivity are some of the key elements that effect the strategy of the agents, which is conditioned by the power of the groups involved

(Archer, 1995). When negotiating strength is analysed, the material resources available play a key role, but the relation between those and relations between actors cannot be conflated – as resources are a great importance to have in order to change something, as we will be shown during the development MSS. As different actors can have access to resources, the question is how much do the corporate agents get on with each other in order to pool resources and have joint goals (ibid)? The negotiating strength of the agents involved therefore depends on their relative bargaining power (Herepath, 2014), as Archer (1995) says, “to have real negotiating strength [a group] must stand in a particular relationship to the other corporate agent involved”. The micro-interactions of the actors are examined in detail during the analysis of MSS in order to understand the macro ideologies of the institutions involved. As will be stated, the affiliation the group has with the university gives it more bargaining power, which puts it in higher standing when negotiating their strategic plans with the other institutional actors involved.

4.3.1.3 Cultural/Structural/Agential Elaboration (T^3 - T^4)

As a result of the structural conditioning and social interactions between various levels of agents, there will either be an morphogenesis, the elaboration of a system’s form, structure or state, and even the morphogenesis of agency, or morphostasis, the processes which tend to maintain a system’s form (Herepath, 2014). In order to have effect on structural or cultural modelling, primary agents must be organised into groups, which therefore requires that primary agents go through a morphogenesis of agency in order to make significant change (Njihia, 2008) – something that I demonstrate in my analysis of lower level actors involved in the MSS case study. This transformation from person to agent and then from agent to actor is something Archer (1995) calls double and triple morphogenesis, respectively. In the case of morphogenesis of the either structure or culture, change ultimately derives from agent interaction and reconfiguring in the pursuit of interests (Njihia, 2008).

As a result, there are 4 different possible outcomes: structural and cultural morphostasis, where status quo remains due to the failure of marginalised groups to organise and accumulate a viable amount of resources; structural morphogenesis and cultural morphostasis, where the structural context may change due to new technologies, political alliances or resources, and the unchanged cultural context will eventually restrict the pursuit of complete structural change; structural morphostasis and cultural morphogenesis, where these new beliefs and ideas challenge the dominant structural agent(s) in power and give the ultimatum to either support these new beliefs or continue to defend tradition; and lastly, there is the morphogenesis of structure and culture that happens when there is a wide diversity of material resources and ideas/beliefs and social-cultural and social interactions reinforce each other (ibid). As part of the analysis of whether morphogenesis or morphostasis occurs, the actual events are examined to establish the interplay between structure, culture and agency, as well as the anterior and posterior cycles, and, if they do in fact go through elaboration or not, how the new properties affect the second (Experimentation) and third (Action in Motion) phases.

As the real-world constitutes an open system, as this is what society exists as according to CR, the objective reality of knowledge is limited due it being an open set of variables (Winter, et al., 2001). As the purpose of CR and the MA are not to uncover general laws, but to analyse social systems to determine the causes of change, or non-change, one of the other objectives of the analysis was to conclude which generative mechanisms had the greatest effect, to identify a key mechanism, as we try to validate an explanatory power (Bygstad, et al., 2011). These generative mechanisms can be found in the attitudes of group members, which influenced the subsequent actions taken and the interactions that followed (Edwards, et al., 2014). As I discuss several generative mechanisms at each stage of the process, I conclude with what I

feel is the most significant one, which then leads to the development of middle-range theories that analyse and explain the mechanisms in more detail (Bygstad, et al., 2011).

4.4 Conclusion

As part of this chapter, I have described the processes I have used to select the cases of study, collect data and then the methodological framework to analyse the data. As mentioned in the introduction, this style of research I have engaged myself in has been experimental, as the case studies were chosen based on my personal interests, but as stated throughout this thesis with the justification of action-research, research does not have to be objective to provide value to the scientific community, a belief that is also shared by critical realists (Winter, et al., 2001). I have also chosen something I feel is important to the field of community development and action-research. At the same time, I have only come across one researcher within the urban studies field (Naess, 2015) who has attempted to apply CR to a case study, so also for that it has been experimental. The next chapter will detail my findings and analysis during my time studying the research organisations of Tesseræ and Mapping San Siro, and how they have contributed to processes of change.

Chapter 5 The Action-Based Approaches of Tesseracte and Mapping San Siro

“The value of the individual story should be assessed in terms of the thinking that it stimulates in others, rather than whether it is representative of the experiences of others” (Cherry, 1999)

5.1 Introduction

This section will detail my first experience in Berlin and learning the approaches to social spatial analysis of Tesseracte Urban Social Research, who had just finished a 2-year project with a series of workshops using techniques of urban explorations, mapping and story-telling. From them, I learned about Mapping San Siro: a group of action-researchers with an office in a public housing neighbourhood who had attended a conference organised by Tesseracte. As I learned more about both of these groups, I realised while they had a lot in common with their objectives, but at the same time their approach to reach these objectives was very different. On one hand, Tesseracte is an independent research organisation and consultancy that focus on education, communication and project development under an urban, territorial and social discipline, and was performing these workshops using and experimenting with a methodology of social-spatial analysis in the Mehringplatz neighbourhood of Berlin during a 2 year EU funded project, using action-based approaches that they had developed over the years with their artist collective, ogino:knauss. While on the other hand, Mapping San Siro, a university affiliated research group, had carried out their social-spatial analysis of the public housing neighbourhood of San Siro of Milan in 2013 as a unique university course, and they were well under way in acting on the issues that had become their main themes of research over the years. I will explain some of the inspirations and motivations for Tesseracte’s methodology and their group, and the direction they are looking to head in the future.

5.2 Tesseracte Urban Social Research

As discussed in Chapter 1, cities are an agglomeration of transformations and contested spaces, with various public, private and non-profit entities vying for these spaces that are deemed most valuable. With the shift to the networked and post-fordist cities, we are experiencing changes to the organisation of the spaces within certain areas: on one hand there is the race for development of abandoned and neglected spaces closest to the city centre, while on the other, peripheral neighbourhoods and their inhabitants continue to lag in development. In carrying out my research, I wanted to understand the spatial-social situation better in order to focus projects of regeneration that could actually be beneficial to the inhabitants. With that in mind, I came across Tesseracte Urban Social Research who had developed a set of techniques and creative methodologies for exploring and understanding the complexities of an area under investigation. I was curious to know more about the group and how their methodology worked, as I was also interested in the idea of action-based approaches and participative methodologies, so I spent four months in Berlin learning about how their methodology was applied to neighbourhood of Mehringplatz, a public housing neighbourhood in the heart of Berlin.

5.2.1 The Origins of Tesseracte and their Methodology

Tesseracte started as a group of artist/activists/researchers focusing on audio-visual media and digital technologies under the collective of ogino:knauss in 1995. In their quest to produce documentaries, photography, books, graphics, etc. with a focus on urbanisation and spatial justice, the idea to explore urban peripheries was born (ogino:knauss, 2016). While developing these activities within an occupied social centre, the idea to use these tools of audio-visual media to defend social and contested spaces with the attempt to develop professional tools in research became more and more apparent, Lorenzo (Tripodi,

2019), the co-owner of Tesserae and one of the founders of the ogino:knauss collective, explained to me in our interview. He was able to develop these tools more during his PhD on how new media and information technologies play a role in transforming the way people inhabit and perceive public space. The idea of contested spaces was central to their activities, and as a collective they were very involved in several campaigns that looked to reclaim abandoned and unused spaces in Florence, so after the PhD in 2004, they decided to start a workshop in one of those self-managed (not occupied) spaces. The workshop of urban exploration, *Cartografia Resistente*⁵⁸ (Tripodi, 2008), focused on using cartography and mapping as a tool for activists, using the concept of *dérive*, which is a technique that uses the quick passing through varied environments and involves the “playful-constructive behaviour and awareness of psycho-geographical effects” (Debord, 1958), as the main practice of their activities. At the same time, while exploring the peripheries of Florence, the group started to build an online archive of their results in order to develop a platform of communication “accessible to the widest public” (Tripodi, 2008).

While the exploration of the urban periphery remained an important aspect in collecting very qualitative data on a territory, the second step of the project was how can the material aspects (images and videos) be combined with the practice of capturing emotions and impressions of an area in order for them to later be analysed –from there came the prototype of the Neighbourhood Atlas, which would become one of the outcomes of the Switch-On Mehringplatz project. The initial idea of the *Cartografia Resistente* website was to be used as a tool for mapping, a picture gallery and most importantly as Lorenzo told me, a wiki, as discussed through Chapter 3 the idea of presenting local knowledge to be used for the benefit of disadvantaged and/or oppressed populations. As they quickly realised, the management and upkeep on this type of infrastructure on a voluntary basis with no funding was very ambitious if you did not have the resource and still, something that does exactly what they wanted does not exist today. As Lorenzo (Tripodi, 2019) clarified the functionality of it:

What we wanted to do was create a platform with a user interface that was specifically dedicated to creating a community atlas, creating social spatial representations that were complex and based on different formats of information, different visualisations that were flexible enough to allow the local community to create a representation of a territory, and to co-manage with different roles and different competences and build such a set of dynamic archives that were able to follow the evolution of the territory, of the struggles, the issues and those kind of things.

Without funding or backing for the project, it remained too ambitious to proceed, and many years passed with platforms such as Google maps becoming the dominant platform, but according to Lorenzo, it did not do what they group wanted. They knew the map could not be the only way to represent different perspectives of a territory, as often it is regarded as an expert representation, something that has changed over the last 10 years, but it must be integrated and be part of a set of various representations that include texts, audio-visual files, sounds and pictures. With this project in limbo, they focused on the primary aspect of their activities: understanding local territories and being able to analyse the situation in them (Tripodi, 2019).

The idea for *Exercises in Urban Reconnaissance* (UR) came from the many walks through the marginal territories of cities, discussions of the meanings of the things they came across and the many determinants that the city is composed of. They would hand out pieces of paper with a different definition of the word ‘city’, and at the end each participant would report on the ‘different’ cities they experienced while walking through the same city. They decided to look for a way to organise their explorations in order to make an

⁵⁸ In English, Resistant Cartography

ontology of all of the different ideas they were conceiving, starting with the roughly 20 definitions they had already made. As Lorenzo explained to me, this project was less ambitious than the Neighbourhood Atlas, as all they wanted was to have a website with hypertext made up of the definitions so you could navigate from one definition to another (example of *Public City* definition given in Figure 5-2), along with different exercises for exploring each one (Figure 5-3). Over time, the list of 20 definitions became more robust, ending up with the 64 definitions that the device has today (Figure 5-1). This device would provide 64 different definitions, or perspectives, from an engineer talking about infrastructure, or a biologist looking at the city as an ecosystem, to a writer describing the city as a field of literature (Tripodi, 2019). The 64 definitions are never static, and while interviewing Lorenzo, he expressed the idea to add another definition after realising the need of an exercise for what he called the Gendered City – the city as a sexual environment, with gendered spaces, activities and conflicts being the theme of exploration.

FIGURE 5-1 - TESSERAE'S 64 DEFINITIONS OF THE WORD CITY

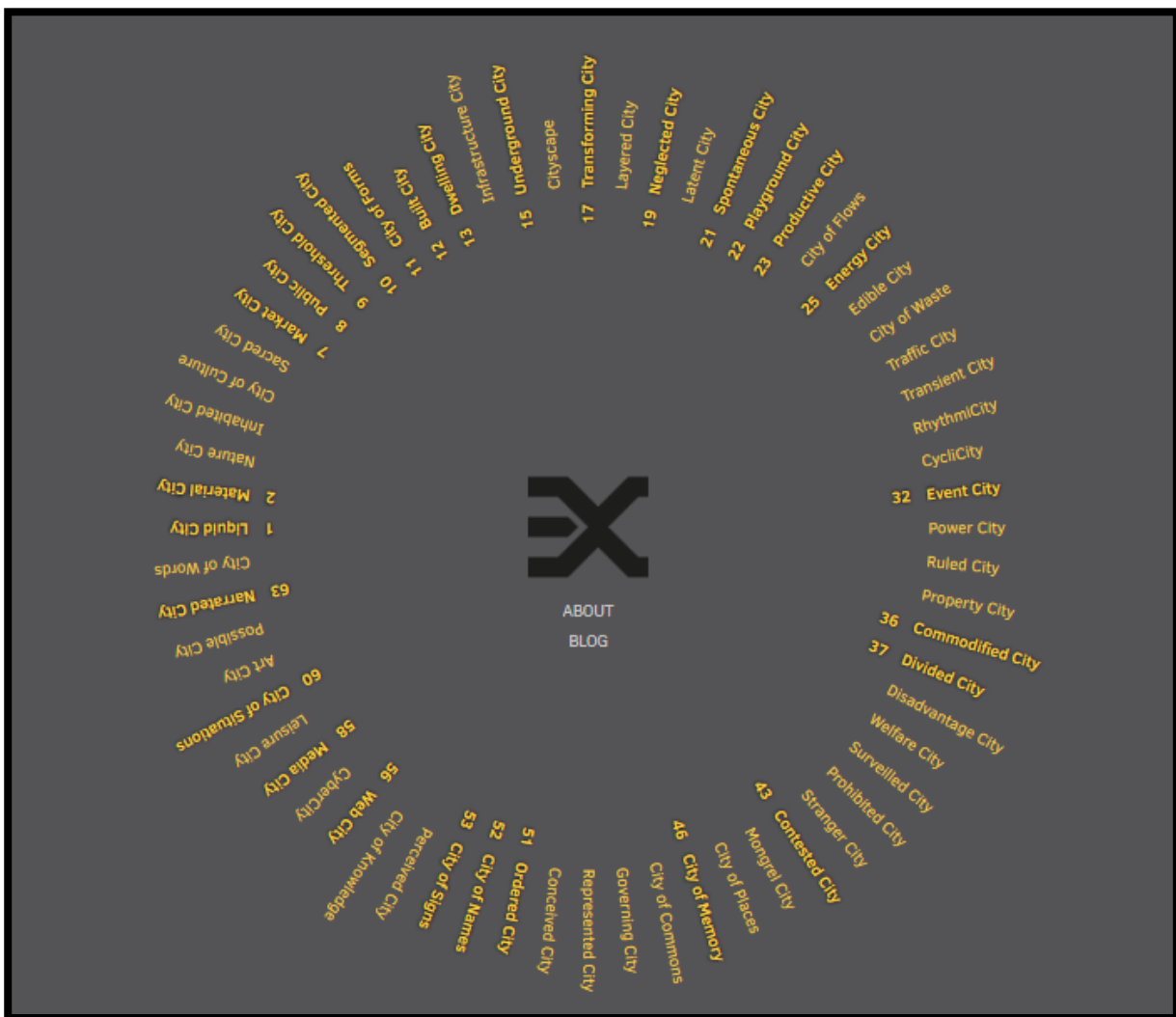
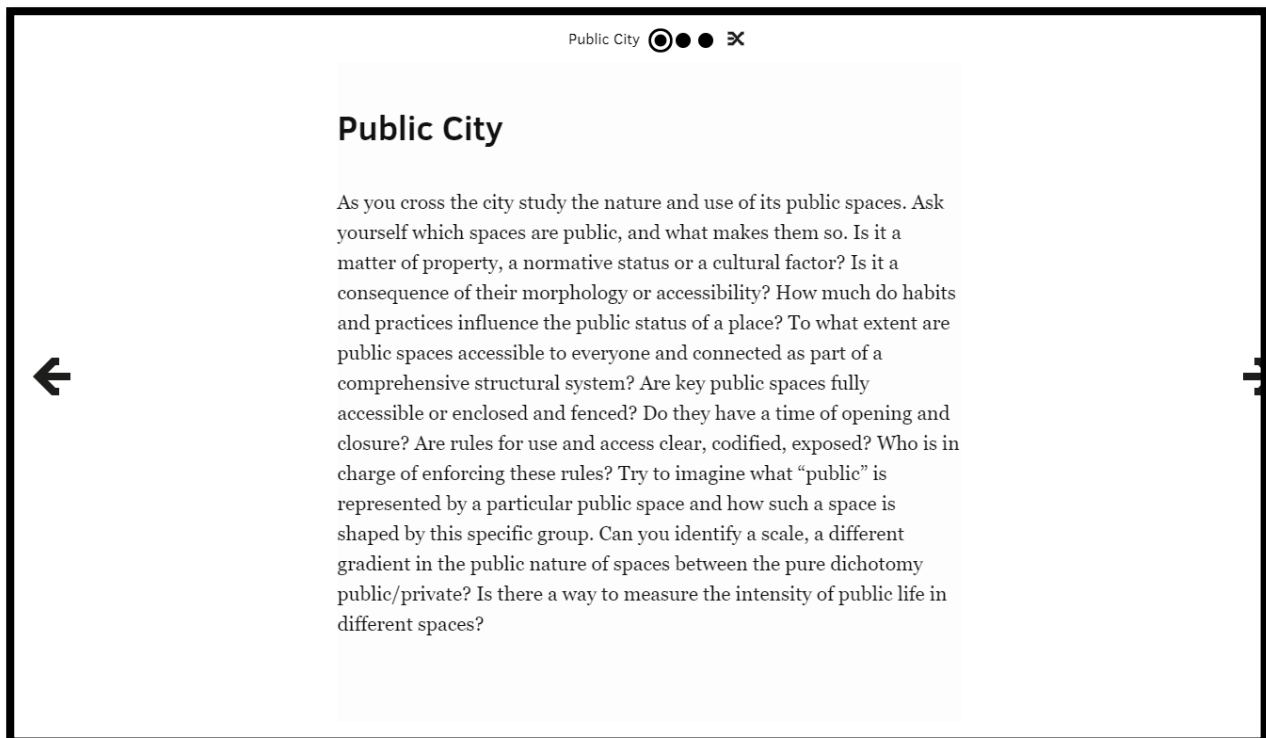


FIGURE 5-2 - EXAMPLE OF DEFINITION FOR *PUBLIC CITY*FIGURE 5-3 - EXAMPLE OF EXERCISE FOR *PUBLIC CITY*

From one end they started from a collection of different explorations for understanding and breaking down the complexities of the city, and ended up creating a methodological toolkit which has become the basis for

their activities, as Tesseractae was created from the original group of activists whose origins as artists producing audio-visual media began in social centres and occupied spaces. The scope of their activities would change, focusing on educational, pedagogical and critical aspects of their methodology of an organisation that works with urban policy, planning and participative processes (Tripodi, 2019). This idea of understanding the local context would form the basis that Tesseractae would employ during the Switch On Mehringplatz project, using the *Exercises in Urban Reconnaissance* as a part of the methodological toolkit.

5.2.1.1 Urban Reconnaissance - Uncovering Generative Mechanisms?

The objective of CR is to examine events that occur, whether they are observed or not, at the empirical and actual level, and determine which generative mechanisms and structures caused the events to happen. While CR is an ontology that believes a real world exists (realism), the epistemological position is that our knowledge of socially constructed (constructivist/interpretive), there must be a way to obtain knowledge that can be used to address real-world issues (pragmatism). One of the critiques of CR is that it lacks a concrete methodology for data analysis and searching for generative mechanisms (Bygstad, et al., 2011); within the field of urban studies, Tesseractae's UR methodology could be used as comprehensive methodology for aiding researchers, practitioners and citizens in order to do so.

Tesseractae's UR methodology combines multiple schools of thought in its approach with its objective to profoundly analyse a given area or community, is essentially performing a critical realist analysis by examining the various aspects of the city, e.g. power structures, morphologies, representations, current transformations, etc., in order to frame the complexity of factors that make up a local identity, while also understanding the socio-economic status. In order for subsequent regeneration projects to have significant meaning to a community, the underlying forces that have led an area, or people, to become disadvantaged must be determined. In addition to the 64 definitions that provide users with different perspectives, the UR methodology is a participative tool that allows for multiple interpretations of a context - which follows the constructivist epistemology that there exist multiple views of reality. By facilitating a process that provides participants with knowledge of generative mechanisms and structures that cannot be seen, the UR methodology can be used to empower citizens and make them aware of the structures that are contributing to their marginalisation.

5.2.2 Switch On Mehringplatz Project

The framework for Switch on Mehringplatz originated from the EULER Project, which was funded by the Erasmus plus programme of the European Union and aimed to investigate ways to unlock and deepen the skills of people disconnected from the labour market through learning outside of formal settings (EULER Project, 2016). The focus was on neighbourhoods that could be described as deprived or marginalised, and whether the skills of the inhabitants of these neighbourhoods could be activated in order to increase participants' agency in the job market. The project ran from the end of 2015 to November 2017, while the community projects ran over a period of 9 months, from September 2016 till June 2017, and included the project partners of City Mine(d) of London, Trànist Projetes of Barcelona, Ndvr of Brussels and Tesseractae of Berlin (ibid).

With each partner applying a different approach to obtain the objectives of the EULER Project, the aim of Tesseractae's programme was to promote participatory methodologies for social and entrepreneurial initiatives at the neighbourhood scale. Being a tool for social-spatial analysis, the methodology can be adapted to fit several different objectives depending on the needs of the community. The programme was structured into a series of discussions and workshops over the 9-month period that included an

introductory module on the topic (Public Conversations), followed by three key concepts, to be used in successive steps, of social-spatial analysis:

1. Urban Laboratory (URLAB) or Urban Reconnaissance: Understanding the multiplicity of aspects of the urban context;
2. Collaborative Mapping (MAPLAB): Representing the key elements;
3. Digital Storytelling (STORYLAB): Expressing personal views and/or narratives.

The methods used aimed to develop a process of situated learning (EULER Project, 2016); a series of pedagogical techniques that connect the learners with the social context that they are in, originating from the principle that communities are key resources for instructional innovation (Pease-Alvarez, et al., 2005), as well as from various techniques used in PAR that aim to allow participants to express themselves, and in doing so, generate new knowledge and share it amongst them (Kindon, et al., 2007). As discussed in Chapter 3, the situated learning approach also shares aspects with AL, as both approaches deal with using the real environment as an experimental learning context and that knowledge is obtained and exchanged more efficiently when learning is viewed and conducted as a social process (Botham, et al., 2010; Leave, et al., 1991; Zuber-Skerritt, et al., 2013). Figure 5-4 provides a full outline of the workshops that were carried out during the 9-month period, which will be subsequently discussed in more detail. An additional outcome proposed by Tesserae was to experiment with the *Neighbourhood Solidarity Curriculum*, a local atlas that is dedicated to mapping resources, memories and current transformations (Tesserae Urban Social Research, 2017).

FIGURE 5-4 - SWITCH ON MEHRINGPLATZ WORKSHOPS

	PUBLIC CONVERSATIONS	URLAB	MAPLAB	STORYLAB
COMMONING	26th Oct 2016 7PM Commons in Practice Conversation with Silke Helfrich	27th Oct 2016 10AM City of Commons	19th Nov 2016 2PM - 7PM Map as a Commons	26th Nov 2016 2PM - 7PM Collective Narrations
COLLABORATIVE ECONOMIES	9th Dec 2016 7PM Platform Coops Conference on digital cooperative economies SUPERMARKT / AGORA	10th Dec 2016 2PM - 7PM Platform City	26th Jan 2017 2PM - 7PM Mapping Actors and Economies	21st Jan 2017 2PM - 7PM Place Narrative

NEIGHBOURHOOD INITIATIVES	15th Feb 2017 7PM Activating local Knowledge Conversation on bottom up initiatives with Prinzessingärten.	18 th Feb 2017 10AM - 5PM Spontaneous City	24 th Mar 2017 2PM - 7PM Connecting Layers	22 nd Apr 2017 2PM - 7PM Collecting Stories
ARTISTIC/ ACTIVIST STRATEGIES	23rd Mar 2017 7PM Strategies for change Conversation with MetroZones	15 th Jul 2017 10AM - 5PM Representing the Neighbourhood	2 nd Jul 2017 Neighbourhood Atlas	1 st Jul 2017 2PM - 7PM Urban Sketches

(Tesseract Urban Social Research, 2017)

5.2.2.1 Laboratory Themes

Instead of taking an objective based approach to organising the workshops, a thematic-based approach was used that took into consideration the primary objectives of the EULER project, and the themes were: commoning, collaborative economies, neighbourhood initiatives and artist/activist strategies (Figure 5-4; Tesseract Urban Social Research, 2017). Learning that is integrated around themes is said to better suit the way people naturally learn (Cameron, 2001). When learning is too focused on very specific aspects of knowledge, it can make it difficult to make personal connections to it. If we understand the ways in which things are connected to us and our daily lives, it is easier for us to organise and understand what is being taught (Ward, 2003). Aldo de Moor, an expert in community mapping and understanding community dynamics, places importance on the idea of using themes over goals and in interview with Christine Capra of Greater than the Sum: “themes are much more open, much more generative and they’re making people think in the direction of movement that is much more productive...so they help to think outside the box” (de Moor, 2017). These themes and conversations that followed explored the topics in depth, with speakers discussing how each could be applied in practice to real-world examples. These were then directly linked to a set of UR laboratories that set out a series of spatial explorations designed to investigate the geographical aspects related to the discussions (Tesseract Urban Social Research, 2017).

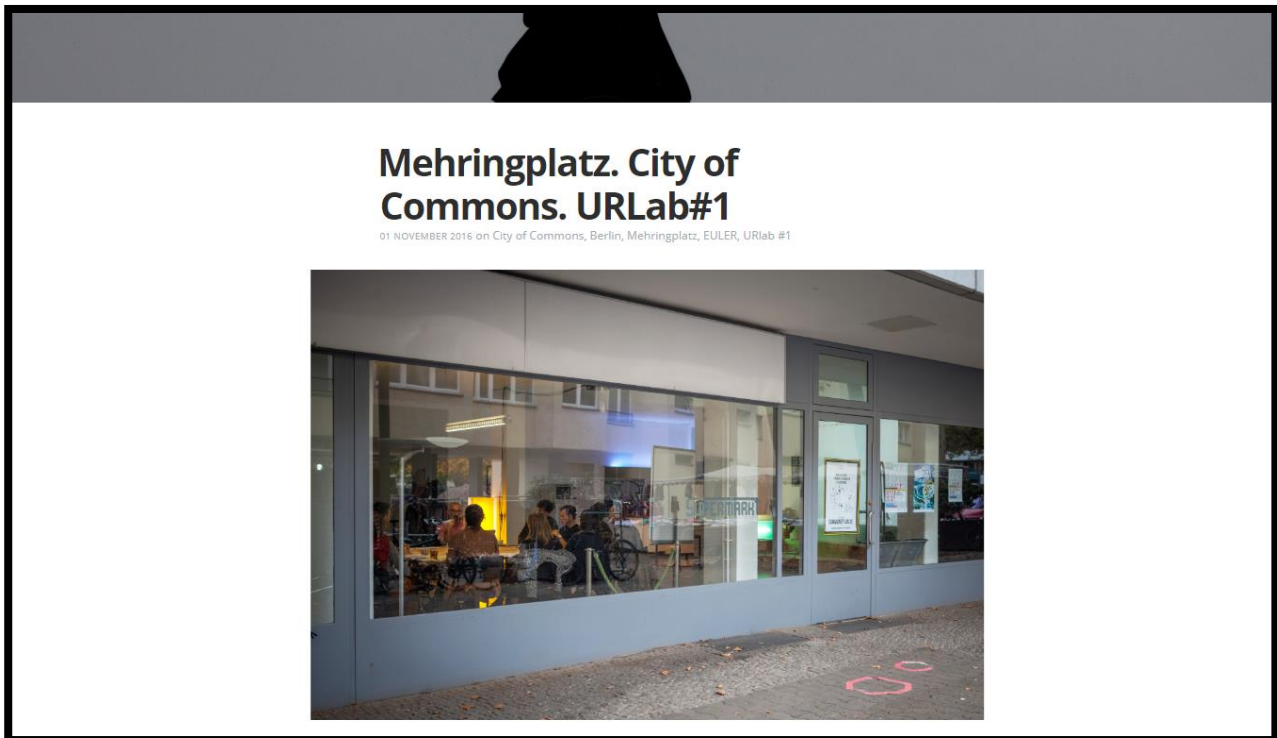
5.2.2.2 Exercises in Urban Reconnaissance

The first module of the training programme was the UR laboratory, with the objective to let the participants better understand the array of elements that determine the local identity of a city, area or neighbourhood, which leads to a collective representation of the neighbourhood that is being explored. The themes were used as entry points to develop exercises of urban exploration, or transect walks as referred to in Chapter 3 and in the literature of geography (Hammersam, et al., 2016), which used the online interactive UR device (<http://exercises.oginoknauss.org>) to guide the explorations. Tesseract uses this to elicit ideas and create conversation and an exchange of knowledge between the participants, with each person sharing their own perspective of their city or neighbourhood (Dooley, et al., 2018). Following the ideas of creating a blog of information based off of the results of the exploration, each of the UR Lab workshops were summarised, as well as being filmed in full, and placed on the on the EULER project website⁵⁹, as well as on the UR blog⁶⁰ (example shown in Figure 5-5). As the workshops were designed to be

⁵⁹ <https://asceps.org/makingprojects/eulerproject/application/berlin-process/>

carried out in succession of each other, each contributing and building on the previous workshop, they represent successive steps in the process of social-spatial analysis. The mapping laboratory (MapLab) was used to connect the discussions that arose from the urban explorations to the spatial attributes of the neighbourhood (Tesserae Urban Social Research, 2017).

FIGURE 5-5 - EXERCISES IN URBAN RECONNAISSANCE BLOG



Source: (ogino:knauss, 2016)

5.2.2.3 Collaborative Mapping

The MapLab investigated how much of the complexity of the diverse elements discussed in the URLab could be represented and organised using collaborative mapping techniques. Mapping is a commonly used tool to represent and expose relations between places, actors and power, and plays an important role in the production of space, as well as the being used as a political tool to represent competing claims of power (Rambaldi, et al., 2011). Connected to the 4 main themes of the workshops, the primary goal of the laboratories was to investigate the methodological and social aspects associated with collaborative mapping, as well as ways of using it as a tool for public participation and connecting and supporting social initiatives. As Lorenzo (Tripodi, 2019) mentioned in our interview, the map has always been a type of expert representation⁶¹, so it was important to explore ways that could be more useful to the relevant communities as a way of sharing and representing local knowledge using technology and various formats and platforms. The MapLabs specifically examined how mapping could be used as a resource for the community by mapping local actors and economies, and how the various layers could be connected and presented is a user-friendly and inclusive interface (Tesserae Urban Social Research, 2017). The MapLabs were especially useful in setting up the next set of StoryLab workshops, as they attempted to connect maps to place narratives and memories, using the maps as an interlacing framework.

⁶⁰ <http://urban-reconnaissance.oginoknauss.org>

⁶¹ This is also discussed in Table 3-3 - Modes of Geographical Community Mapping

5.2.2.4 Digital Storytelling

Coming from their background in audio-visual media, Tesseræ used the third series of workshops as ways to represent narratives and collect stories from people of the community, as story-telling has the potential to empower communities and foster participation (Tesseræ Urban Social Research, 2017). Sharing stories has been shown to strengthen and facilitate community development, with digital storytelling acting as a tool to concretise the stories as artefacts that have the potential to be mediate relationships (Copeland, et al., 2017). Storytelling is also a tool technique widely-used in classrooms, as Coskie et al. (2010) state, “We have witnessed again and again how, through storytelling, students directly experience the power of narrative, creating meaningful connections with each other and with members of the community—those who are close to them as well as those who represent different cultures and generations”. The workshops investigated various approaches for collecting narratives for various actors in the neighbourhood, the use of new media as a way to present place narratives, the use of games⁶² to elicit discussion and the story-telling process and finally the production of several place narratives using *Urban Memo* (Tesseræ Urban Social Research, 2017). In connection with the other labs, the StoryLab was seen as the final contribution to the Neighbourhood Solidarity Curriculum to represent the archive of personal stories of Mehringplatz.

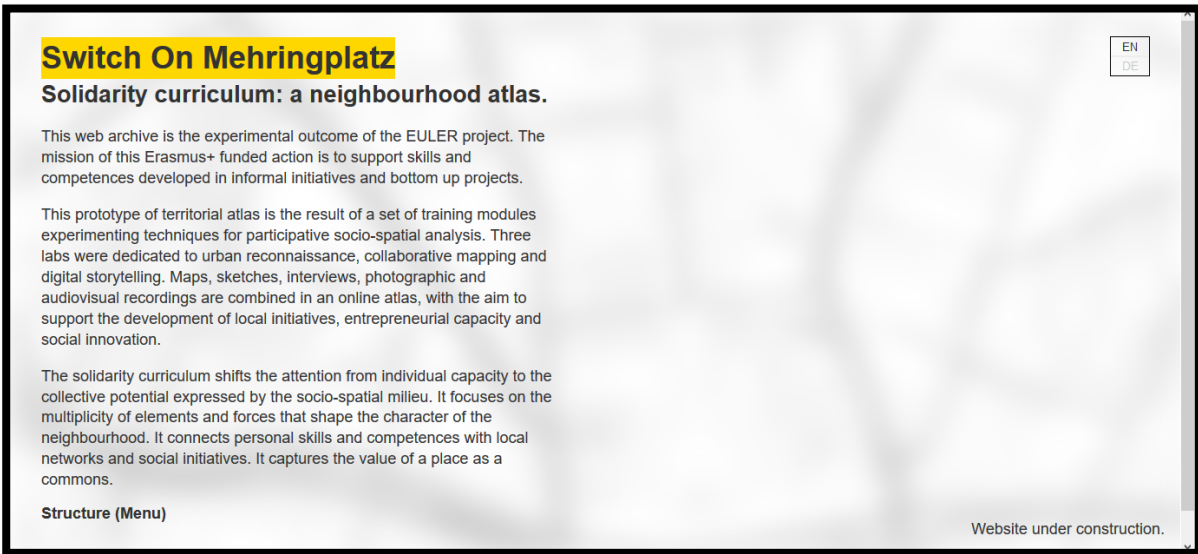
5.2.3 The “Solidarity Curriculum”

An additional outcome⁶³ of the *Switch On Mehringplatz* project, as well as the future objective of Tesseræ (Tripodi, 2019), was the experimental development of a *Neighbourhood Solidarity Curriculum* (NSC; conceptual design show in Figure 5-6 and Figure 5-7): a local atlas containing neighbourhood resources, memories and on-going transformations, with the ultimate goal to produce a platform that can help sustain social capital and strengthen social networks (Tesseræ Urban Social Research, 2017). Being involved in the use of audio-visual media and new technologies, combined with urban planning, architecture and mapping practices since the inception of the ogino:knauss collective, the members of Tesseræ have wanted to produce a platform that would help contribute to sustaining communities and the reclaiming and defending of contested spaces, especially in the face of the unwanted transformations and relocation of local populations.

⁶² Specifically the activity/game Memory was used that was by Tesseræ tailored for the Mehringplatz neighbourhood

⁶³ Although the creation of the neighbourhood atlas as a user-friendly platform was not one of the objectives of the EULER project, nor was it funded by the programme (Tesseræ Urban Social Research, 2017), Tesseræ has developed a prototype of the platform

FIGURE 5-6 - TESSERAЕ'S NEIGHBOURHOOD ATLAS (HOME PAGE)



Source: (Tesserae Urban Social Research, 2017)

FIGURE 5-7 - TESSERAЕ'S NEIGHBOURHOOD ATLAS (MENU SCREEN)



Source: (Tesserae Urban Social Research, 2017)

As noted in the comparison between traditional educational systems and the concept of lifelong action learning (LAL) in Table 3-1, the traditional system focuses on individualised learning and competition in the job market. The concept of LAL, along with the NSC, is that learning and the development of competences and skills, should be conceived as a cooperative activity that is dependent on context and social relations. As in line with the concept of situated learning, most learning takes place outside the traditional classroom setting, leading to the NSC being meant as a tool that enables the empowerment of communities and not put them in competition with each other, but focus on their collective potential as a community, giving value to it as a commons (Tesserae Urban Social Research, 2017).

What is usually done with these complex sets of data collected on a neighbourhood, and what value does it contribute to the neighbourhood or community of study? The problem with many activities that are intended to analyse urban environments and unite communities is that the information is forgotten about within several months, with the use of the website that was used to publish and disseminate information about the event dwindling day after day. The purpose of the information obtained is to share knowledge within and outside the community, to foster greater social cohesion and initiate urban change. As discussed with the concepts of AR, research where the object of study is social change and transformation, the data and shared knowledge gathered must be able to be used for the benefit of not only the researchers and university, which is traditionally the case (Greenwood, et al., 2005; Udas, 1998), but also for the benefit of the community. Given that the NSC was not an outcome of the project, but a natural outcome of 9 months of carrying out participative research, the data collected during various workshops and laboratories function as possible components. When combined, the photos, videos, maps, drawings, interviews, etc. provide a snapshot into the context of the neighbourhood. With a user-friendly platform, technology can play a crucial role in facilitating civic engagement in communities by storing the complicated layers of information and letting them be easily accessible to the public.

5.2.4 The role of Tesserae in the neighbourhood

While the goals of Switch On Mehringplatz and the NSC were not intended to directly produce change, as we will eventually see with the case of Mapping San Siro, the intention to provide a tool that can facilitate learning and change can be said to be the role of Tesserae. The methodology carried out in the workshops was intended, as was the objective of the EULER project, to provide alternative modes of learning, how this learning could contribute to neighbourhood-scale action and how people's individual skills could be recognised and applied in different ways. The methodology specifically looked at analysing the urban context using the participative techniques of urban exploration, mapping and story-telling, which can empower communities in terms of understanding their local situation and the context in which they live, work and play. This is the idea of knowledge exchange, where "experts" in the field of research, urban planning and policies go into a back and forth exchange with participants, who have specific knowledge of the local context, and in the end both experts and locals benefit in the process.

5.2.4.1 Outcomes and Lessons Learned

While the intent of Tesserae was to provide the tools and means to help improve a socially-disadvantaged neighbourhood, the project did not have the intended impacts due to factors out of their control, mainly continued funding and time. In speaking with Lorenzo, he outlined the importance of choosing a local project coordinator that is dedicated to the cause from the beginning, which was another factor that contributed to the outcome of the project. As discussed in Chapter 3, participative methodologies are extremely time consuming if the community is to be truly represented in the development of the neighbourhood.

Even though the project was organised in a neighbourhood characterised by Soziale Stadt as a neighbourhood with special development needs (Städtebauförderung, 2017), the participants of the laboratories and workshops of Switch On Mehringplatz were not representative of the neighbourhood, as was stated in the project's booklet "due to limited timeframe...and our organisation's position...as a relative outsider, we refrained from delivering a programme directly aimed at local residents", leaving "only a minority of the participants attending the laboratories" that "had a long-time connection with the neighbourhood or were a resident of the area" (Tesserae Urban Social Research, 2017). Most of them were representative of the changing demographic of the surrounding Kreuzberg neighbourhood, populated with creative and highly-educated expats due to the concentration of co-working spaces and cultural venues

(ibid.). Another local partner that was contacted named Kreuzberg Musical Action (KMA), a local youth cultural centre with a focus on music and arts (KMA ev, 2013), but did not participate in the project⁶⁴; being connected to the children of the neighbourhood, they could have had a stronger influence in encouraging people of the community to take part in the project.

The project was more beneficial externally, meaning for the organisers, i.e. Tesserae testing out their refined and organised collaborative methodologies (Tesserae Urban Social Research, 2017), then it was for the actual inhabitants of the neighbourhood where it took place, which was also due to the limited time and funding for the project. They started working with Mehringplatz towards the end of 2015, nearly 4 years ago and “we are just at the very beginning” (Tripodi, 2019). While they are in the midst of 3 new European funded projects to advance and refine their methodologies and the eventual NSC, the objective of bringing change, in the sense of perception and understanding the local community, is just getting underway with the Community Engagement for Social Inclusion (COMENSI) project⁶⁵.

5.2.5 A Learning Experience

With this research experience, I sought to explore the various techniques being used in order to understand the social and spatial conditions that exist in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Even though I had come to Berlin with the desire to experience Tesserae’s methodology in action, I had arrived at an inopportune time – the 2-year Mehringplatz project had just finished several months before, and they were in the middle of organising other work and new projects, as well as the continuation of the Mehringplatz one in order to further the development of their methodologies and platform.

More than anything, this experience served as an important part in the development of myself as a researcher, and of my thesis. During my time in Berlin, I came to discover that at the end of the EULER project partners had organised a seminar of similar experiences called *Learning from Context: Building social competence for local knowledge*, with one of the presentations being done by Francesca Cognetti, Elena Maranghi and Gabriele Solazzi of Mapping San Siro. The case and the work they were doing seemed interesting, so I decided to reach out to them. When I originally proposed my project to Francesca Cognetti, the scientific coordinator of Mapping San Siro, it was to try and create a digitalised database of the local actors using online mapping software, which was inspired from my experience with Tesserae, with their end goal to create a local atlas for communities. I noticed that even though the group was called Mapping San Siro, mapping was not included anymore in their four-stage methodology, but just as part of the research and inquiry, nor had they adopted any kind of technological approach. My idea was to connect the 2 experiences, using the strengths of Tesserae’s background in audio-visual tools and digital knowledge and skills with MSS’s on the ground presence in the neighbourhood and the trust established with local associations over the years. Although I was not particularly successful in achieving this goal due to time and money constraints, I was able to understand the long process of a group of researchers who were able to permanently locate themselves in a neighbourhood and start to initiate change in a place that was not accustomed to seeing any.

⁶⁴ Tesserae later collaborated with KMA with another Erasmus+ project, URBEX (2018-2019) and used some of the techniques to develop a guided tour of the area designed by youths at risk of exclusion. The outcomes of the lab are going to be published soon in the prototype of the Neighbourhood Atlas that will be published online in the final quarter of 2019.

⁶⁵ COMENSI is a 24-month project that started in October 2018, with the purpose of understanding why adults who are living in disadvantaged urban areas are underrepresented in participatory processes, as well as developing appropriate strategies and tools to counteract such issues (Bond of Union, 2019).

5.3 Mapping San Siro

Mapping San Siro is a group of researchers from the Politecnico of Milan that engage in action research in the public housing neighbourhood of San Siro. The group is composed of Francesca Cognetti, Liliana Padovani, Ida Castelnuovo, Elena Maranghi, Alice Ranzini, Giada Mascherin, Paolo Grassi, Margherita Bernardi, Gianfranco Orsenigo and interns that stay there for several months at a time. It started in 2013 as a 10-day workshop with the goal of exploring the neighbourhood, and over time it has established itself as a central social actor in the neighbourhood. The case study was followed over a 9-month period, from September 2018 until June 2019, with many changes occurring during that time. This section will not focus so much on the specific details of the original workshops of Mapping San Siro as was done in the previous section with Tesserae, but what the group has been able to accomplish from then until present, the role they have assumed in the neighbourhood as a local actor and my experience of staying with the group who decided to exit the confines of university and establish an office inside a disadvantaged neighbourhood.

5.3.1 Introduction to the Neighbourhood

WHEN SAN SIRO IS DISCUSSED AS A NEIGHBOURHOOD IN THIS THESIS, IT DOES NOT ENTAIL THE ENTIRE GEOGRAPHICAL REGION AS SHOWN IN

Figure 5-8, but the public housing neighbourhood of San Siro (Figure 5-9), one that is made up of nearly 11,000 inhabitants and 6,000 dwellings, with approx. 40% being immigrant populations, almost double the average neighbourhood in Milan (Cognetti, et al., 2016; Castelnuovo, et al., 2019). It is a community that has been for decades host to numerous fragile populations: immigrant families, a large population of elderly, people with mental disabilities, etc. Besides these fragile populations, it is also the largest public housing neighbourhood in Milan, with approx. 6,100 residences, it was constructed between 1935 and 1948, the period where modernist planning and architecture was just starting to take off, in an area that was once the periphery of the city (Cognetti, et al., 2016). It is also characterised by social-spatial inequalities, conflicts between the aging population and the new arrival immigrants, unemployment, a lack of maintenance of the housing stock by the public housing agency ALER Milan, abandoned commercial and residential spaces and the occupation of many abandoned flats.

GEOGRAPHICALLY, THE NEIGHBOURHOOD IS VERY DISTINGUISHABLE, AS IT IS DIAMOND-SHAPED WHEN LOOKING AT A MAP OF MILAN (

Figure 5-8), and being this way made the area of research very clear for the group. The concept of neighbourhood is comprised of both physical characteristics that include environmental, location and infrastructural, and social characteristics that include demographic, social-interactive, sentiment and local politics, services and associations (Lupton, et al., 2004; Transforming Neighbourhoods, 2010), which can often make it difficult to define as the borders are not always physically present.

FIGURE 5-8 - THE SAN SIRO NEIGHBOURHOOD

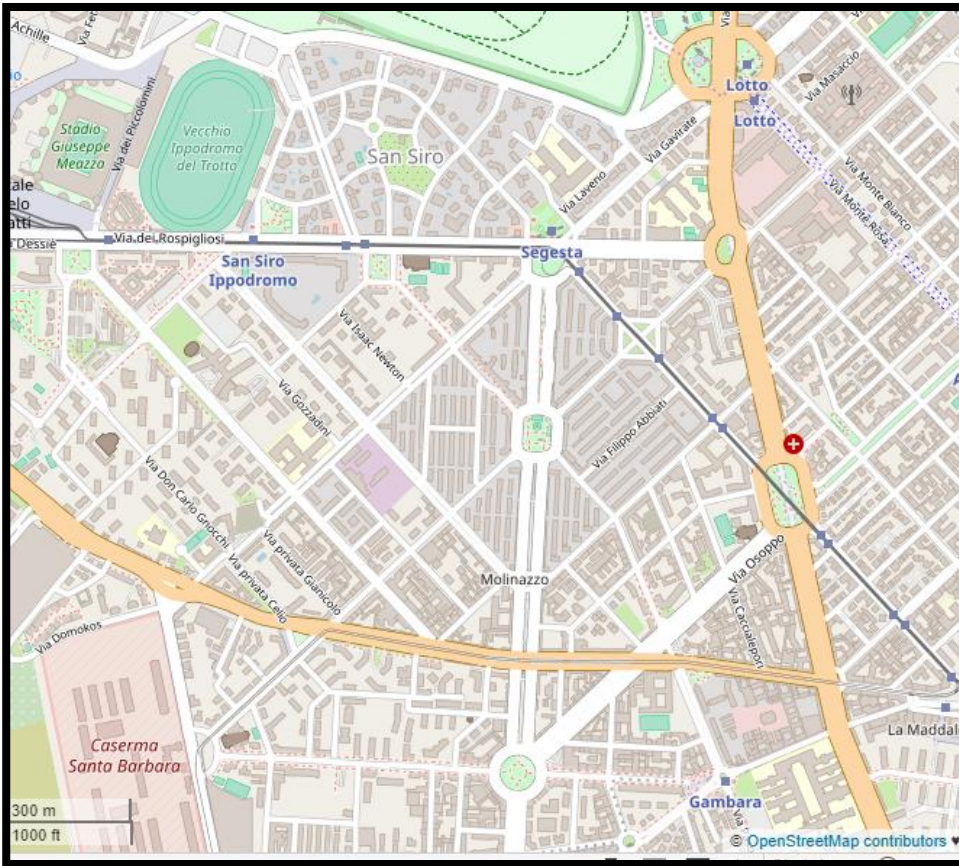


FIGURE 5-9 - THE "QUADRILATERO" OF THE PUBLIC HOUSING NEIGHBOURHOOD OF SAN SIRO



The focus of this thesis is not the public housing neighbourhood of San Siro, as this has already been in process since 2013 by Mapping San Siro; It is about a group of researchers who wanted to inspire change in a marginalised neighbourhood with little aspiration. It was initially chosen for analysis during the original workshops by Professor Francesca Cognetti due to personal reasons: living close to the public housing

neighbourhood of San Siro and choosing to have her children attend the Cadorna School (shown in Figure 5-9), one of the multi-cultural schools in the neighbourhood where many Italian families were choosing to leave because of the increased ratio of foreign to Italian students, fearing their children would fall behind due to the disadvantage of foreigners having to learn Italian (Uberti-Bona, 2019; Cognetti, 2019). Being an assistant professor at the Politecnico who specialised in urban policy and planning, she wanted to understand the situation better – starting with the Mapping San Siro workshops. The next section will give an account of the activities and accomplishments of the group over the last 6 years.

5.3.2 Timeline of important events

Outlined below are just some of the activities and events that have occurred over the years in relation to Mapping San Siro⁶⁶ that I feel have been most crucial, having contributed to the success of the group. These events will be discussed and analysed in Chapter 6 and can be found referenced in Mapping San Siro's development timeline in Figure 4-3 that is based around the Morphogenetic Approach to social change.

2013: 10-day workshop to explore San Siro Neighbourhood

Professors Francesca Cognetti and Beatrice de Carli, among other professors of the Politecnico of Milan, work together, in collaboration with the post-graduate course *Local Participated Action and Sustainable urban Development* coordinated by professor Liliana Padovani and the PhD programme in Architecture, Engineering and Urbanism at the University degli Studi di Roma 'La Sapienza', to prepare an AL and AR workshop for students, a group that is composed of 35 students and 10 teachers, with diverse backgrounds in urban planning, architecture, urban policy and design, economics, sociology and visual art. The primary objective is to construct a shared representation of the neighbourhood and express and deepen the situated knowledge (Cognetti, et al., 2016), exploring the neighbourhood using mapping as a device to represent the various interactions, dialogues and co-design with the inhabitants (Cognetti, et al., 2013). The workshop takes place over several months, from January to April, and is done in collaboration with various associations working in and with the San Siro neighbourhood. It consists of three phases: phase 1, titled *Heads on: seminario introduttivo* (introduction seminar) is held on the 28th and 29th of January, and intends to introduce the group to the neighbourhood and presents the various types of methodology and good practices they plan to use in the second phase; phase 2, titled *Hands on: workshop intensivo*, is held from 27th February to 5th March and proposes an intense experience of research and action in San Siro, working in small groups of teachers, students and meetings with local actors and residents; phase 3, called *Heads on: seminario conclusivo* (concluding seminar), finishes at the Politecnico of Milan and takes place on the 5th of April and is a workshop of reflection based on the experiences of the students and the results of the action-research (Cognetti, et al., 2013).

After the workshop, a smaller group decides to remain in the neighbourhood, being hosted by several associations⁶⁷ that have taken part in the original workshops and are interested in the activities of the group, believing that their local knowledge can be useful to help better understand the situation and the needs of the inhabitants and assist in improving the neighbourhood. In this second phase of the research, the group have organised themselves around three central themes: housing, courtyards and common spaces and non-residential empty spaces (Cognetti, et al., 2016).

2014: Deal with ALER and inauguration of 30metriquadri

⁶⁶ For a more complete timeline (up until 2016), please reference the document, *Mapping San Siro: strumenti di ricerca-azione nel/con il quartiere San Siro a Milano* (Cognetti, et al., 2016)

⁶⁷ In particular, the association Cooperativa Tuttinsieme

In May of 2014, ALER Milan, the regional public housing agency that owns and manages the housing stock, and the Politecnico of Milan approve a yearly contract for free use of a 30m² space⁶⁸ located at Via Abbiati, 4, given that the university finances the utilities of the space (Cognetti, 2018). In very little time, with the help of students, friends and residents to restore the space, it becomes a meeting place and a place of exchange between the university and the neighbourhood.

2015: Winning of call for Don't Call Me Stranger project

Starting in January of 2016 and lasting until December 2016, this project was a 3 partner project, with Mapping San Siro, Comunità Nuova ONLUS (New Community NGO) and Associazione Culturale (Cultural Association) Villa Pallavicini, taking place in 3 different contexts in Milan. For Mapping San Siro, the objectives of the project are to create a positive image of the multi-ethnic cohesion and to promote the integration and the social cohesion, demonstrating the value that different cultures can offer to the neighbourhood of San Siro and to the city of Milan, and at the same time, utilising the foreign woman as protagonists in creating new cultural spaces within the neighbourhood, taking advantage of the unused and abandoned spaces to promote their activities and competences. Another object is to allow the women to represent themselves and use their knowledge as tools to enhance their daily life by providing opportunities to work and earn some money, while changing the stereotypical role of foreign females of just staying home (Mapping San Siro, 2017).

2016: Winning of call for 3-year SoHoLab Project, First Sansheroes Meeting

A new contract is agreed upon between the Politecnico, ALER Milan and the Regione Lombardia, that stipulates, other than the research and teaching activities that Mapping San Siro and the Politecnico already conduct in and with the neighbourhood, that they will continue to carry out and bring forth pilot projects related to the issues in the neighbourhood: vacant residential and non-residential spaces, and public and condominium spaces (courtyards). The contract also states that ALER and the Regione will fully collaborate with the experimental activities and projects that aim to give value to the neighbourhood and provide an alternative to their approach of privatising and selling of the public housing stock. These new approaches include: combining economic and social activities, deepening the knowledge of local issues and defining innovative models of intervention into the neighbourhood (Cognetti, 2018).

The SoHoLab project is a three year project from 2017-2020 funded by the JPI- Urban Europe call 2016, with the 2 other partners from the Cosmopolis Centre for Urban Research in Brussels and Architecture Urbanisme Société in Paris, that establishes and evaluates Living Lab approaches in deprived social housing contexts. Mapping San Siro, along with its local partners: temporiuso.net, Polis Lombardia, ALER Milano, Osservatorio Regionale sulla Condizione Abitativa - Regione Lombardia (JPI Urban Europe, 2019)

The call contained three projects that aimed to carry out not only urban regeneration of the neighbourhood, but also social and economic regeneration, which are:

1. *Nuove Luci a San Siro*: This experimental project deals with the theme of non-residential empty spaces in the neighbourhood (one of the themes from the original workshops), and is a collaboration between Mapping San Siro, ALER Milan and Regione Lombardia, and is an open call for 10 abandoned spaces, to be reactivated by associations that offer economic, social and cultural activities. The contract offers reduced rent and ALER will cover up to 80% of the restoration of the space, provided that the winner of the call expenses the costs up front.

⁶⁸ The space was formally a café

2. *Green Living Lab*: This project deals with the theme of public spaces (another one of the main themes of the original workshops) and their transformation and regeneration, specifically Via Abbiati for this project, with a participative co-design process and the first Patto di Collaborazione (Collaboration Pact) in the city of Milan, signed by: Dip. DASTU – Politecnico di Milano, Temporiuso.net, the city of Milan – Head of Participation Lorenzo Lipparini, Municipal 7 of Milan, Associazione Culturale Imby, Alfabeti Onlus, Genera Onlus. (Comune di Milano, 2018; Mapping San Siro, 2019).
3. *Ghe pensi me*: This project is an extension to the *Don't call me stranger* project, which looked at using the competences and skills of foreign woman, mostly of Arab heritage, to provide services to people in the neighbourhood, which has the potential to propel them out of the difficult situations they face, such as job insecurity, and allow them access to the job market (Mapping San Siro, 2019).

In November of this year, the first official meeting of the Sansheroes network takes place at the office of 30metriquadri in San Siro. It discusses how the associations, with their shared knowledge of the neighbourhood, can collaborate and contribute to tackling some of the glaring problems that exist in this neighbourhood (Rete locale Sansheroes, 2017). This will also become one of the themes of the SoHoLab project.

2017: Production of first shared vision of Sansheroes; new agreement between public actors

As a result of the meetings between the Sansheroes network, Mapping San Siro believes that it is important to get the ideas and knowledge of the various associations into writing. This document discusses the issues of the San Siro neighbourhood, offering solutions and their future visions of a better neighbourhood for the residents (Rete locale Sansheroes, 2017).

Also, during 2017 there is a new formal agreement of collaboration between the Regione Lombardia, ALER Milan and the Politecnico of Milan that guarantees the support of the public institutions for the research activities of Mapping San Siro (Ghirlanda, 2019).

2019 Triennale Event, Green Living Labs project, Opening of Nuove Luci call, Spazio Gigante

On the 5th of February an event at the Triennale of Milan is organised by the Politecnico of Milan to present the shared vision of the Sansheroes network. This is a big step, as it is the first time it is presented to the public and to the city. There are too many people for the original room made to accommodate around 50 people, so the presentation is moved to accommodate the audience of well over 100. Presenting from the network are Bianca Bottero, Amelia Priano, Paola Casaletti, Sabrina, and an activist from Comitato Abitanti San Siro⁶⁹, along with members of Mapping San Siro, Francesca Cognetti, Elena Maranghi, Paolo Grassi and Alice Ranzini, and several public institutions.

The 24th March marks the inauguration of the Green Living Labs public space project, which includes a renovation of the sidewalk/public space that runs the length of Via Abbiati. During the weeks leading up to the event, Tempo Riuso, several members of Mapping San Siro (including myself), Retake Milano spend several days designing and painting the length of sidewalk along Via Abbiati, in addition to 2 bike racks being added by the city. The day is organised with events for the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, organised by Alfabeti ONLUS, Mapping San Siro and the Custodia sociale del Comune di Milano, all located along Via Abbiati. Many inhabitants appreciate the new look of the street, commenting positively on the changes to the street.

⁶⁹ This activist preferred to remain anonymous. They will be referred to as Activist CASS (Comitato Abitante San Siro)

The 17th of April is the inauguration of Spazio Gigante, which will be the new off-campus space and the seat for the Mapping San Siro group. The renovations of the space, which was one of the abandoned non-residential spaces in the neighbourhood, is co-financed by ALER and the Politecnico and is 4-5 times the size of the original space of 30metriquadri, with 3 large rooms for research, presentations, meetings. After 5 years of being situated in the neighbourhood on a self-mandated mission, Mapping San Siro is officially recognised for their work and their contributions to a new approach to action research outside the university, being granted a new space funded and promoted by the Polisocial programme. As a result of this new space, 30metriquadri is entered in the public call for Nuovi Luce a San Siro.

5.3.3 The situating experience

More than establishing a different kind of relationship with the neighbourhood, the local associations and public actors (which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6) and providing a different role for the university, the experience that Mapping San Siro provides for the students, who take part either as full-time researchers or bachelor or master students working as interns, this new approach to learning, whether it be called situated or action learning, is more beneficial for understanding what occurs in real-life contexts. Situated learning is the study of how knowledge is developed over the course of activity, and especially how people create representations of what they are doing (Clancy, 1995). It comes from the theory that students are more apt to learn by actively participating in the learning experience. Having access to the resources of MSS from their years of building and maintaining personal relationships with local actors, I was able to gain knowledge of the neighbourhood not just by observing it and speaking with locals, but by going to work there 2 days a week, which allowed me to experience the situation in a more natural way, while also learning about the effort it takes to set up an off-campus laboratory for urban research.

Wenger, et al., (2002) defines Communities of Practice as “groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly”. The experience for the group at MSS has been just that, the concern for a neighbourhood firstly by Francesca and her colleagues who together designed the original workshops, the many students who volunteered there in order to try this new way of interacting with the city and from the beginning the local associations who provide social services to the neighbourhood. They have shared this experience together, building relations and carrying out a learning by doing approach – seeing how they did not have a similar model to follow in the Italian context, as well as the Polisocial programme being an experimental one at first – they have been able to experiment with new methods of reactivating the neighbourhood using AR. For me, being there in this type of environment has been very beneficial for my understanding of carrying out AR, but more importantly my understanding of the inner workings of the types of activities that a social urban research group perform on a daily basis, but also how they achieve their long-term goals and objectives.

Outside of the standard university classroom or lecture, the environment is also a pedagogical environment. And with this knowledge gained from studying the context of a situation or neighbourhood, we can then use that to try to improve the situation, either to try to create a more positive representation of a place, or by improving the physical and social aspects. In the case of Mapping San Siro, 30metriquadri acted as the base to study and learn. It became a classroom with a view into the real-life context of a public housing neighbourhood, one filled with many issues.

FIGURE 5-10 - VIEW FROM INSIDE 30METRIQUADRI



5.3.3.1 *The reality of the neighbourhood*

Seeing how my research was more focused on the role of Mapping San Siro rather than the neighbourhood itself, I was still able to learn an immense amount about the neighbourhood without actually researching it, and just taking part in the daily work and activities of the group. This comes from the idea that the workplace is also one of the explicit educational sites, besides schools being the primary ones (Lave, 1991). We are learning skills that are valuable as a researcher inside university, but also ones that can be applicable in the real-world - so working at an office in a context such as San Siro, and with a university affiliated group, you are able to experience the benefits of both. In this section I will recount some of my experiences that support what I have just stated and present some first-hand accounts from some of the moments that have stuck with me.

By becoming a member of the community as a researcher, I was able to assume a dual-role, one that is unique to university and the community, allowing me to meet and interact with local inhabitants, the associations and also public institutions. This was of naturally speaking with inhabitants, also from the years of the researchers of MSS developing relationships with the neighbours, allowed me, even being new, to immediately be considered a person of trust – with the local associations as well as some of the local inhabitants.

Almost every day, Anton, the gate-keeper of the flats behind 30metriquadri and an employee of ALER, would stop by and just to say hello, other days he would ask for advice on how to handle a situation, with his family, or other Sri Lankans who were new to Milan and he was trying to help. From hearing stories from Anton about things that happen just in his block of flats, to seeing the same couple fight constantly in front of their children outside the office at various times in the day, to dealing with William, a 40 something year old with mental issues, and one of the most noteworthy moments for me, the fire of an apartment (which I will present my account below) that they said the remains of the charred flat would probably stay that way for a couple years seeing how ALER cannot even manage to refurbish the hundreds of other

empty flats in the neighbourhood. Seeing the whole scene start from the beginning and finally when the fire brigade put out the fire, the event really stays with you and on your mind even after a few days have passed. These events would shape my perception of the neighbourhood and provide me with a learning experience of life inside a public housing neighbourhood in Milan.

30 April 2019

Some lady stopped in before, happy to see a new space here and asking what we were doing. She said that the piazza here isn't nice (because Margherita says she likes it here. And she replies, "that's because you don't live here") and it's good to see something new here.

William just came by with this man with a hole in his neck – maybe from being a smoker, who knows. William tells this guy to tell us something, but the guy just shows his throat saying he can't speak. Bohhh – I never understand what William is talking about, but at least I know it's not just me. I feel like William has something against me. He shook Francesco's hand but not mine. He's a little crazy obviously, so I won't take it personally.

Wow! Fire in the flat right outside in back of the office. Elena called the fire brigade right away. There might have been someone inside, but I think they're OK. It could have been worse. I was talking to this guy that was outside (it looked like he lived in one of the privatised flats) saying that he's lived there for 3 years and the people on this side are always causing ruckus – recently they set a couch on fire. This is something you wouldn't see just being a researcher that comes here. You really start to understand the life here by becoming a resident of the university.

FIGURE 5-11 - FIRE AT VIA ABBIATI, 6



At times it felt rewarding to help people like Anton, even if it was just a small thing such as helping him move some boxes, or helping two ladies that came by looking for an office to help them with public housing. It provided me something I was able to learn and grasp without having to open a book and learn what constitutes a disadvantaged neighbourhood. It is not always something that can be defined, but something that has to be lived and experienced in order to be truly understood.

Experiencing the situation myself, hearing these stories and speaking with members of MSS, the Sansheroes local network and the public institutions of Milan provided me a different perspective. In speaking with Liliana (Padovani, 2019) about her experience with MSS and her view about the contentious issue on the occupations of flats, I learned that she changed her opinion on the topic after having spent time in the neighbourhood and experiencing the situation first hand:

Now, firstly, look at who are the occupiers, where there are enormous levels of poverty which nobody takes care of. And occupation shows you these people. These are real problems. When you touch it you understand it better...You have to look at the situation and try to find a solution. Being there I understood this...seeing the occupancies, they are violent: either the way they get in, it is forceful, or it is also violent how ALER closes the apartments, where they go in and destroy the bathrooms. It is a real shock. It makes you think about 2 forms of violence in a poor neighbourhood.

Also hearing the different opinion on squatters from Lorenzo Lipparini from the municipality of Milan, and the other end of the spectrum from the Activist of Comitato Abitanti San Siro, who fight for squatters rights and mainly the Right to the City, as David Harvey (2008) famously describes as the most basic rights everyone should have. When speaking to Lipparini (2019), he made it clear that the squatters were the main problem of the neighbourhood, and that this theme of illegality is linked to the problem with the rubbish, when they occupy a flat they clear everything out and do not use the public cleaning service (AMSA⁷⁰) because they would then need to state who they are. Drug dealing is also linked to the legal occupation, because it is done inside the houses as an illegal business. In this is one of the things I learned in my time there, about this concept of 'good' and 'bad' squatters: on one hand there are the 'good' squatters, the ones who are homeless and are desperately in need of shelter. These are the one that the Comitato Abitanti try to assist. Then on the other hand, there are the 'bad' ones who occupy the flats and illegally rent them to desperate families or they sell drugs in them, both as profit making activities as the Activist CASS (2019) confirmed. So, they do agree on some issues, but then they also clash on the issue of illegal occupation or squatters' rights (depending on the narrative):

In 2015, [ALER] tried to evict 30 families of a whole building. We stopped it. Then we started to say the municipality and ALER, we can make a check of the needs, and after 2 years, they accepted it. There is a law that if you squat for 5 years, you can have a house. But they made these contracts outside of this law, but we want to fight after these 5 years, they will have housing. It was the first time in Milan that we reached all the people in a building. Our pressure was strong, it was a big win for us.

So you speak with the municipality and ALER?

Yeah. As a union we made roundtables with them and present different proposals. They listen to us, but they don't do a lot of things, but with this eviction, we win. They accepted it. They know if they tried to evict them it would be difficult. They say "how hard is it to evict them and fight with these fucking communists".

⁷⁰ AMSA stands for Azienda Milanese Servizi Ambientali, which in English would be Milanese Environmental Services, and offers a free service for collecting bulky rubbish.

You begin to understand the precariousness of the situation that the squatters face, as Paola Casaletti (2019) explained to me that people keep themselves invisible because they do not have documents and they are afraid they will be discovered and get in trouble. There is also the issues with all the different ethnic groups in the neighbourhood, as well as between the older Italian population who view the immigrants negatively – “there is true division between the whole neighbourhood that is determined by mutual fear” (Casaletti, 2019).

Albeit the many problems you hear about and experience, there were the days and stories that were more positive where we were able to contribute to the neighbourhood. This type of work goes beyond the experience that you get in university, and for me it is what I was looking for in doing my research experience – the desire to change and transform something. As I mentioned in my notes from that day, even though it is a pretty insignificant thing for the reality the people face in the neighbourhood, it shows that someone is there that cares and is willing to take care of the neighbourhood. Even if it only positively effects a couple people, it is the many small changes that will eventually result in something greater. As I learned about the type of work that Mapping San Siro did in the neighbourhood, and while some may be critical of their urban planning projects, they are attempting to do something that is not common for a group of researchers inside the Italian context. I feel this diary entry was really able to sum up my situating experience with the Mapping San Siro group:

5 March 2019

There is a lot going on today here, there is Tempo Riuso (the group that is a partner of the Green Living Labs project) starting the work on the public space outside – there is a group of about 5-6 people. They are working with the flower pots outside. I'm lucky to be here during some interesting times, when all these changes are taking place. Within a month they'll have finished the public space, if everything goes according to plan. They should be here the next 2 weeks doing work according to Paolo. Also by the end of this month it should be open the new space of Via Gigante. So it will be interesting to see the changes.

There is also a meeting with an association that Ida was telling me about before, I have to ask her the name of them again. They are explaining their work and about some of the projects. Francesca is explaining about action learning, the responsibility of Polisocial, how it is helpful to show students the reality of this neighbourhood, with a perspective from researchers who spend their time here. We have a true perspective on the reality here, and not just a snapshot of it, and what research or the media might say. In speaking with the members of the network who deal with the people of the neighbourhood on a daily basis, we can build a picture of the reality here. This is the approach of the community engagement, which is not direct but we can say it is effective. The reality of including marginalised populations is very difficult, as I've learned in my experiences with both groups, and from my interviews with Liliana (Padovani) and Lorenzo (Tripodi).

And like always, William just passed by to talk with Paolo. He is one of the realities of living in this neighbourhood. He needs assistance from the state, but the most helpful one with him is Amelia. It would be interesting to ask her about dealing with the realities of the people who live here.

I just went out and talked to William for 5 minutes. I have no idea the bullshit he was telling me. I try to talk to him, ask him about what he thinks of the work, and he goes off on this story about my father getting with another girl, having me and my sister....I really have no idea! I just yes him. I ask him about his tattoos to change the topic and he shows me the one on his wrist, a sun in the place of a watch – I tell him that I like that one. When I came in Paolo thanked me for it, giving him a break from always having to deal with him. He can be a little difficult sometimes to deal with. Today he wasn't in too bad of a mood, but you never know which William you'll get, and what thing you say that could set him off.

There is this nice older guy who always passes and gives us a smile. It's a nice mix of people you encounter in this neighbourhood. You never know what you're going to encounter coming to work here. It could be a group of students, large or small, who want to do some kind of project on the neighbourhood, or you could talk to one of the passing neighbours who have a question or want to know what's going on in this space. There could be a meeting here like what is going on right now, with someone from the city of Milan, or this lady who is the head of an local association.

With the door open, William has come in with his flute and tells us to keep working, he's not leaving until the boss returns, aka Paolo. He's playing the flute very badly, saying random things. We just kinda ignore him, hoping he'll leave soon. In all honestly I'm trying to hold myself back from laughing, listening to how badly and loudly he's playing the flute. We probably should have stopped him from coming, but sometimes he is very difficult to deal with. It really helps to have some experience in working with people who have psychological issues, and someone like Paolo, who was once a social worker, has this. It is clear to see how he interacts with William, as well as others in the neighbourhood.

With Giada, Paolo and Francesca all out, I am watching over the space myself. Not that it is anything too difficult, but I like the responsibility of doing something like this.

For some reason Tempo Riuso left the job half done outside. Some lady was complaining that people think of it as a dump, "un scarico", with the old looking flower and tree boxes sitting out front. I'm not sure when they were planning on returning to finish, but for the last hour we went out, Paolo, Francesco, Gianfranco and myself. Anton helped us as well. We moved all of the extra soil and dirt to the back courtyard, with Anton directing us where the green spaces and plants could use some more. We moved all of the old boxes into a pile where AMSA could come and get them. We swept up all of the rubbish and left the new flower pots there⁷¹. I said to myself, this is more fulfilling than doing research every day. I'd say this is the results of doing years of research and work with the neighbourhood. Even though you're just doing something small, you're doing something that has a real impact on the surroundings and neighbourhood. This is not going to change lives, but a lot of small things add up. Anton was and always is very grateful for the work we do here. I'll be eager to see if the public space here will change the way the area is used, and whether the cars will stay off the sidewalk with the bollards up (even though it looks like they can fit through them.)

FIGURE 5-12 - POST CLEAN-UP OF SPACE OUTSIDE 30METRIQUADRI



MSS has been able to analyse the situation over many years and are finally being able to implement the projects that they feel will begin to improve the situation for the inhabitants of San Siro. This is just part of their work though, as they have bridged relations between the local actors themselves, as well as the public institutions, which is something that is not easily measured, but as I will discuss in the next section, it is something that I was able to witness during the many meetings with them, as well as interviews carried out with the various levels of actors.

⁷¹ Results of our work shown in Figure 5-12.

5.3.3.2 *Learning from the various activities*

Aside from learning about the context of San Siro, while I was there, I tried to better understand Mapping San Siro's role in the neighbourhood by observing their activities, interactions with inhabitants and local and public actors. It was also a beneficial experience to understand the work MSS does and the various roles they assume in the neighbourhood; This not only includes their formal work such as building and sustaining of the network, carrying out research on and with the neighbourhood, their projects of regeneration and the teaching activities associated with the Polisocial programme, but also the more informal roles they assumed of helping people, like Anton but also many others, who would just stop by the office with a question, in acting as a voice for the neighbourhood, they were very open to listening what people had to say, whether it was to complain about certain things or to praise the work Mapping had done. As Sabina Uberti-Bona (2019), a long-time resident of the area and a member of the Sansheroes network representing the Intercultural Commission of the Cadorna School⁷² (Cognetti, et al., 2016) explained:

People in this neighbourhood do suffer a sense of isolation, a sense of being left alone – very very strong. They have an incredible need to be listened to.... you realise that people need to express themselves, they need get thing off their chest, it's a strong need. Having [Mapping] there with an open door was the first strong impact.

In order to truly represent the needs of the neighbourhood, having a space in the neighbourhood has been extremely useful. I would say that is one of Mapping San Siro's roles in the neighbourhood, by taking an approach to participation that has them working mainly with the second level with the local institutions, they have become a place that is ready to listen to the inhabitants and their needs, something that is often done on a more informal basis. 30metriquadri also acted as the meeting place for the Sansheroes network, with MSS taking the lead role as a facilitator of the meetings. In sitting in on several meetings between the local actors, I quickly realised that even though MSS acts as the facilitator, everyone in the network felt free to express their opinions and ideas, which I could understand what MSS had intended to do with these types of meetings, to direct them when needed but let the ideas come from the local actors of the neighbourhood. They have developed a friendly working dynamic between them, seeing how they are all working towards the same objective with the creation of the shared document. The meetings were usually quite productive, but in the end it was always MSS's responsibility to take what was said during them and produce a summary or think of ways to get the ideas in to action, as well as to act as the intermediary between the local actors and the city, as they are able to assume this dual role on one side being the Politecnico, a public institution, and on the other side a member of the Sansheroes network.

Not only did the members of the network develop good rapport with each other, the members of Mapping San Siro did as well, with Paolo, Giada, Elena, Margherita and Francesco (he was an intern for most of my time there) all working together to accomplish their goals. I noted specifically in my field notes that there was a nice team atmosphere between them, where they all have their different perspectives but they shared a solid team dynamic between them. As traditional researchers it seems like much of the work is usually done individually, where MSS has adopted this approach of a team environment. And this can be seen on all levels, from the researchers who are part of the group, to the dynamic between the network, and also learning about MSS's role with the public institutions where they have developed a relationship that sees all of the actors as equals. I feel that this is one of the most important aspects of their work, in breaking down certain hierarchies that are typically seen in certain relationships, and something that Paulo

⁷² Commissione Intercultura Scuola Primaria Cadorna

Frieré (1999) was adamant about his criticisms of the traditional roles assumed in education and the production of knowledge. So, the idea of attempting to break these knowledge hierarchies established within university and the political realm of the city, realising that knowledge from various sources and levels was vital for producing change that was worthwhile to the inhabitants of San Siro.

In being part of the team, I was also able to take part in certain activities, like the painting of the sidewalk, the cleaning up of the flower pots (as I described previously in my field notes from 5th March), or even my role in dealing with William when Paolo was not around. It made me feel part of something that was not abstract, but a reality, and when you experience those interactions and develop the relationships, you begin to become emotionally attached to the cause. While this is something that is rejected in traditional research, in my experience it has made the research more meaningful, that it could contribute to the betterment of a place or situation. As part of the Polisocial programme and the idea of connecting the university with the city, there were often classes that came to the neighbourhood, whether they be of the Politecnico or abroad such as the University of Sheffield⁷³, were introduced to our work and some of the roles of the group, while also being presented to the context of San Siro, as their objectives as classes of architecture, urban design and planning. During one of the visits of a master's programme of Politecnico, I had the opportunity introduce the neighbourhood to the class seeing how they were international students, and this for me was a valuable experience to think about the role of AR and AL. In these types of activities, I was able to understand MSS's role as a model example of how they use this real-life context as a pedagogical environment.

To conclude, I would like to discuss the benefits of my experience with MSS as ones that have made me reconsider the role of university as more than just institutions of learning and producers of knowledge. Without actually studying the neighbourhood, and focusing mainly on the role of the group as actors of urban change, I was able to think more about the solutions that could be proposed rather than just focusing on the issues the neighbourhood faced. I learned that there is more than just one way to carry out research, and that this way of carrying out research was more beneficial for the subjects of study, and that having a personal connection/involvement in the research did not compromise the results, rather, I feel it makes the researchers more connected to trying to improve the situation. And lastly, the dynamic of the research group was another important part of the success of the group, especially having someone like Paolo Grassi, an anthropologist but also a social worker, who is able to contribute a different perspective when thinking about solutions and working with his more urban planning focused colleagues. The next chapter will examine Mapping San Siro as a process of change, from the beginning as just a wandering group of researchers looking to understand the neighbourhood better, to setting up an off-campus research space with few resources and finally seeing some of their projects realised based on the initial findings of their exploration.

⁷³ Beatrice de Carli, one of the original members of the Mapping San Siro workshops, is a lecturer in urban design at the University of Sheffield.

Chapter 6 Process of Change – Mapping San Siro

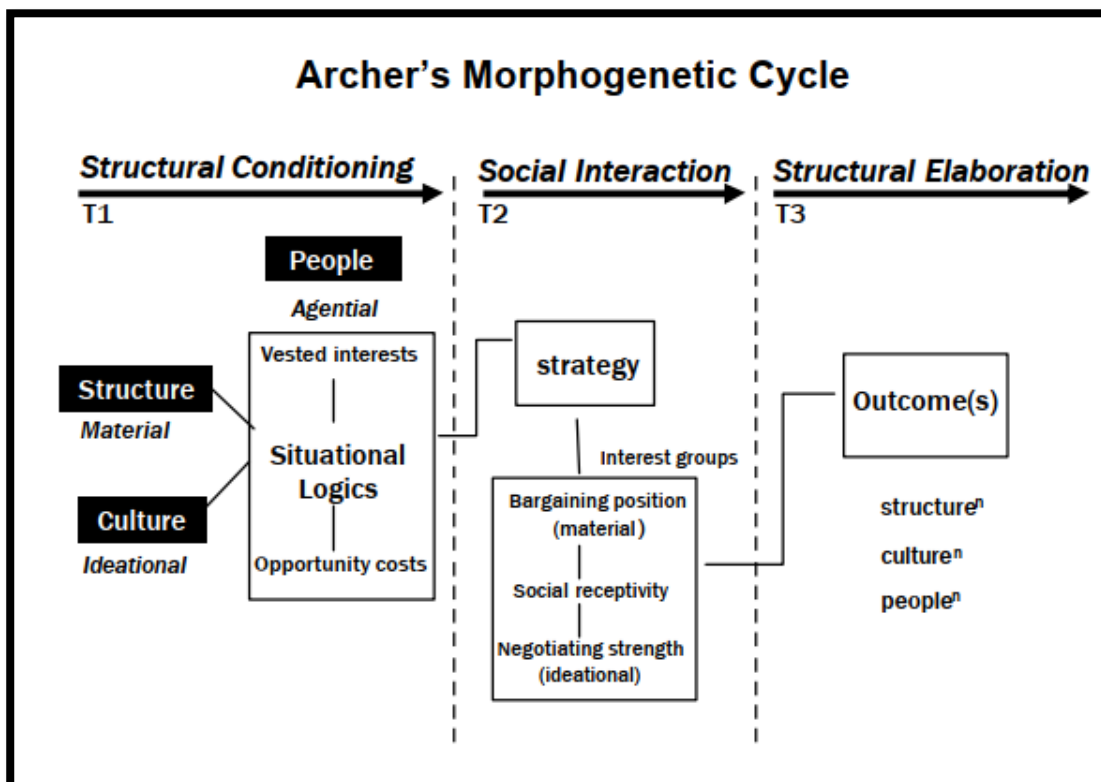
“What is most important as we contribute to large system change is that we foster learning, so that, in the face of their many differences, citizen participants can see their way to create positive change long after we are no longer involved” (Martin, 2008)

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I use Margaret Archer’s Morphogenetic cycle (Figure 6-1) as a conceptual and methodological framework to analyse the events that have taken place over the last several years related to the activities of Mapping San Siro, which have led to the realisation of the research group who chose to situate themselves in the neighbourhood of study. Archer’s Morphogenetic Approach analyses the principal actors involved (agency) and the forces, cultural and structural, that influence them to take the course of action that they have. It examines the interactions between the actors and the events that took place to determine whether there was an elaboration (morphogenesis) or reproduction (morphostasis) of culture, structure and/or agency and what were the primary generative mechanisms that produced these results.

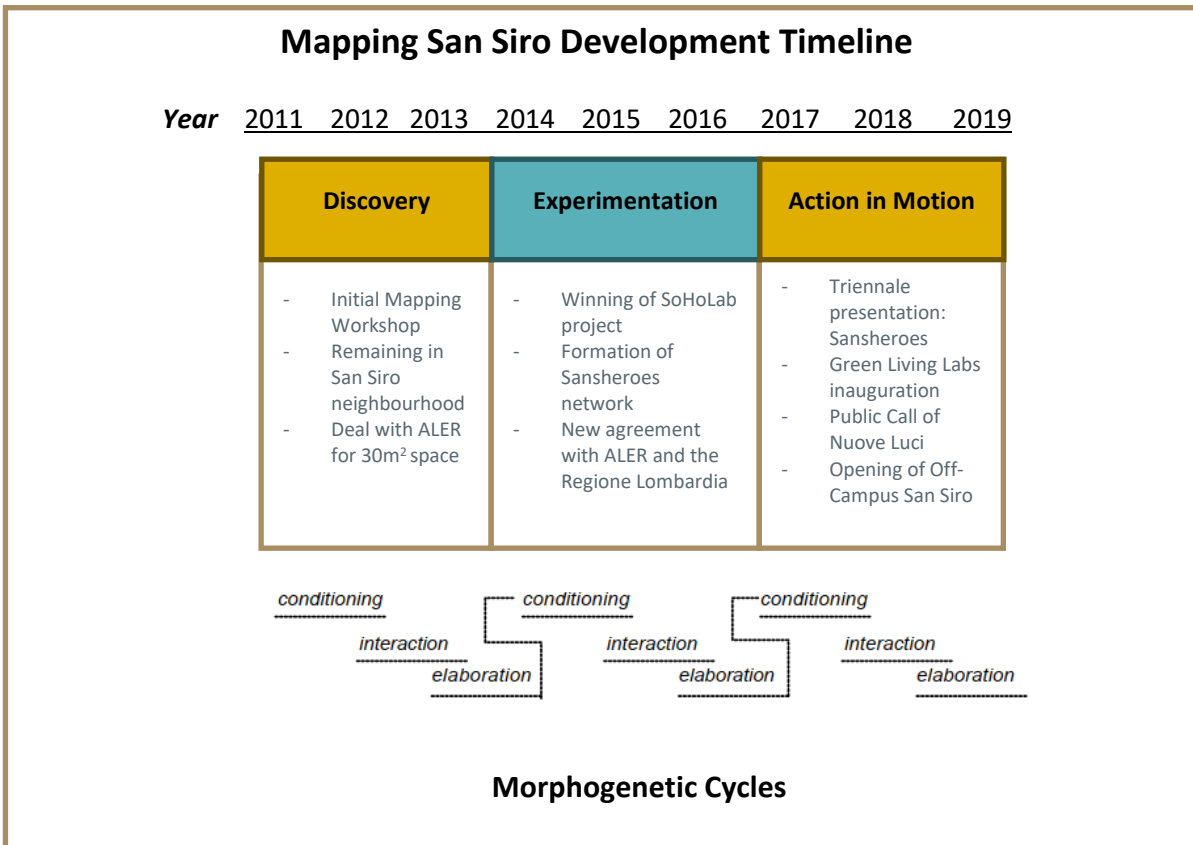
I have already presented the events that I considered the most important in the realisation of the group in Figure 4-3, so I will subsequently analyse the events (social interaction) that occurred during three phases that I have called *Discovery*, *Experimentation* and *Action in Motion* (also shown in Figure 6-2 below), and what structures and cultural conditioning were in place to lead to the series of events in each phase. At the end of each phase, I discuss whether there was morphogenesis or morphostasis, and what were the contributing causal mechanisms that causes the events that have occurred (Bygstad, et al., 2011).

FIGURE 6-1 - THE MORPHOGENETIC CYCLE



Source: (Archer, 1995)

FIGURE 6-2 - MAPPING SAN SIRO DEVELOPMENT TIMELINE



Source: Adapted from Wong, 2005

6.2 Phase 1 – Discovery

Phase 1 is marked by the initial introduction of the group into the public housing neighbourhood of San Siro, as well as the inspirations and motivations for the group, along with their leader, Francesca Cognetti, that influenced them to step outside the boundaries of university and involve themselves in an innovative style of research. The primary change in this period is the agreement for the new space that will eventually allow the group to set up a small research centre in the neighbourhood.

6.2.1 Structural and cultural conditioning (T¹-T²)

6.2.1.1.1 Urban Political Actors

ALER is an autonomous branch of the regional government (Regione Lombardia) and is responsible for the management of a majority of the public housing in the city of Milan. It has been experiencing financial problems due to the mismanagement of funds, leading them to try and resolve the problem by selling off public housing meaning nearly a quarter of the San Siro public housing neighbourhood was privatised. Adding to this decrease in the insufficient quantity of public housing in the city of Milan, nearly 10,000 public housing dwellings were unoccupied in 2015 with around 80% of them owned by ALER. The plan to resolve issues by privatising their housing stock, given that profits in these types of transactions are very low, seems destined to fail (Cognetti, et al., 2017). In addition, having limited resources to properly take care of the neighbourhood and provide renovations to the decrepit housing stock, ALER has become the scapegoat of all the neighbourhood’s woes (Ghirlanda, 2019)

ALER falls under the supervision of the Regione Lombardia, who carries out the regional governance in all of Lombardy. According to Andrea Ghirlanda of the Regione Lombardia, when he began working there 10 years ago, the bi-annual budget for the office was €1 billion, but in the last couple years it has been decreased to €100 million, bi-annually (Ghirlanda, 2019). Seeing that the region is responsible for funding ALER's activities, this can explain some of the issues with the public housing problem in the city and region. In times of austerity for the country due to the financial crisis of 2008, public funding is cut, and privatisation is encouraged to reduce public spending, thus potentially leading to ALER's strategy to privatise portions of their private housing stock instead of refurbishing it.

6.2.1.1.2 The state of the San Siro Neighbourhood

The public housing neighbourhood of San Siro, with its many issues and lack of response from ALER and the municipality, has created the need for another actor to get involved, one who can focus their time and resources on a neighbourhood that has been neglected by public policies for peripheries and marked by failed regeneration policies⁷⁴ which has resulted in the housing stock being in a decrepit state, not having been refurbished previously since its inception in the 1930s and 40s. As mentioned previously the problem with selling off part of the public housing stock, which in San Siro is about a quarter of the houses that are dispersed throughout the neighbourhood, brings into question who is responsible for maintenance on the buildings that have both private and public dwellings (Padovani, 2018). There is a relationship between the urban structures of the neighbourhood and actions of the inhabitants who are exposed to these structures on a daily basis. Then there is a process-related relationship between non-material social structures and the agents involved in planning and decision making about physical urban structures (Naess, 2015).

Whether I was speaking with people from the municipality or the local network who helped fight against evictions in the neighbourhood, squatting (or the problem with empty flats) remained one of the main issues of conflict in the neighbourhood, along with criminality (drug-dealing, theft, etc.), unemployment and a high percentage of psychological issues. From spending my time there to hearing it from the people I interviewed, the neighbourhood had this sensation of being closed off from the surrounding neighbourhoods and the rest of the city.

The neighbourhood is firstly divided by 2 populations: the elderly and immigrants. But within the immigrant population in the San Siro neighbourhood exists 84 different nationalities, which by far makes them a non-homogenous group, the majority consisting of Egyptians (37.2%), followed by Moroccans (10.4%), Filipinos (9.5%) and Peruvians (6.1%) (Padovani, 2018). Due to the poverty and the lack of response from the Regione and ALER to provide housing, the issue of squatting has created conflicts between the aging Italian population and younger immigrant groups who have moved to the neighbourhood. Not only is there a lack of young Italians in the neighbourhood, but also in the several schools in the area.

The school was the starting point into the neighbourhood as Francesca called it, and a personal one as well. As I learned from my interview Sabina, a 51-year resident of the area and a member of the Sansheroes network, in the late 1990s the catchment area of the schools was not mandatory, meaning parents were free to choose the schools they desired for their children. This left the schools in the public housing neighbourhoods to begin filling up with foreign immigrants⁷⁵, and middle-class families wanted to find

⁷⁴ Contratto di Quartiere, which put approx. 45 million euro into the regeneration of the neighbourhood (97% for the housing and infrastructure and 3% for social interventions). In the end only about 1/5th of the flats were refurbished (Padovani, 2018).

⁷⁵ Cultural note: This was a strange thing for me to hear, as she referred them as foreign immigrants. The Italians coming from the southern regions of Puglia, Campagna, Sicily and Calabria were previously known as immigrants in this region.

schools with a more “homogenous mix”. For Francesca and her husband it was a challenging decision to leave her children in the multi-cultural Cadorna School, located in on the border of the San Siro public housing neighbourhood on Via Dolci. “On one hand, for me as an expert in urban policies and these kinds of neighbourhoods, it was obvious to go there, but on the other hand, I was worried about the internal situation and maybe there was some risk about the educational process for my kids” (Cognetti, 2019) she explained in our interview. This was the worry for many parents who chose to send their kids to school with more Italians children, as the school was already reducing in size when Francesca decided to put her child there (Uberti-Bona, 2019).

6.2.1.1.3 Local Actors and Associations

The public housing neighbourhood of San Siro is populated by social actors and associations with various roles, from teaching Italian to foreigners and organising social activities, to providing health services to inhabitants without residence permits⁷⁶, protecting squatters against evictions and providing support in the form of food and clothes. Together they form the social infrastructure of the neighbourhood that exists to support inhabitants in need, which in San Siro there are many (Cognetti, et al., 2016; Padovani, 2019). As I learned speaking with the associations, they have a sort of antagonistic relationship due to opposing views on issues such as squatting and the fact that there is a competitive attitude towards receiving funds for activities (Casaletti, 2019). With the few resources they have, they are only able to focus on their individual missions (Uberti-Bona, 2019).

6.2.1.1.4 Traditional role of university

Being a student in an Italian university since 2016, one of the first things that struck me was this culture of staying in the university and not interacting with the urban environment, even within the field of social sciences. Then, researching the traditional role of researchers, to observe environments and people as the objects of study, that this was quite common practice within universities throughout Europe. For me it was essential to go out from the university, to create and learn from and with the people and the city. This is one of the things that I have learnt, also through interviews and personal experience, that this comes from traditional approach taken by Italian universities, “that they find it hard to identify themselves as actors in the city and to define their role in urban development and regeneration” (Castlenuovo, et al., 2013).

Francesca expressed this view on the role of university to me: “in our culture, university is not involved in these kinds of activities. For Italian culture, you can write a good book if you are in academia...When the university arrives in the neighbourhood, at the end of this research, you can have a good book, and that’s enough” (Cognetti, 2019). Bianca Bottero (2019), a retired professor from the Politecnico of Milan, said the same thing about the Italian university, “the problem is always the university is disconnected from reality. [The students] do not manage to conceptualise it”. She went on to say that the way they teach is very detached and the students would do projects and not even go to see where these projects were. I began to understand that I was not alone in seeing this disconnect between university and the city.

6.2.1.1.5 The Politecnico of Milan

The university, which is a public institution, could also be considered an urban political institution albeit with a different role than the urban actors mentioned above. At this stage with its experimental Polisocial initiative its objective is to provide the city with a different kind of actor and to involve themselves in the improvement of the neighbourhood. In the end, the university, specifically the Department of Architecture and Urban Studies (DAtSU), is responsible for planning and their objective to try and transform something is central to their discipline, as Francesca made clear in my interview with her (Cognetti, 2019).

⁷⁶ Without residence permits to legally stay in Italy, foreigners cannot access the public health system.

6.2.1.1.6 Socio-cultural conditioning of agents

One of Francesca's inspirations for her work came from her experience working with Paolo Fareri, and also with Prof. Alessandro Balducci who worked with Fareri when he was younger, whose experience in the US with urban centres and their role in educating and spreading knowledge in marginal contexts would form the original concept of the ideas for Mapping San Siro as a way to interact and empower local communities in Milan (Cognetti, 2016). Francesca said "About our approach, what I learned from Paolo Fareri, he wrote about this Pratt [Institute Center for Community and Environmental Development] that worked on education and advocacy – Education, to give power and skills to the inhabitants, to speak with institutions or to work in a different way for the betterment of the neighbourhood" (Cognetti, 2019). The Pratt Centre, which is an affiliate of the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York, was founded in 1963 and partnered with local community organisations to address urban poverty by encouraging residents to take part in planning processes that directly affected their communities (Pratt Center for Community Development, 2019).

Working with the University College of London (UCL), Francesca realised they had a very different approach, having many links to political dynamics and local contexts. At UCL, they developed this approach not very much with London, but with cities in the global south, which may offer a different context but had some similarities that made the comparison between the 2 contexts interesting. Not only was Francesca looking to experiment with approaches from contexts outside of Italy, Ida Castlenuovo, now a project manager within the Polisocial programme, was experiencing something similar. With Ida at the time being a PhD student looking into the universities' role and commitment to local communities and the city, specifically in the South American context of Buenos Aires, she began discussing the idea with some professors, one being Francesca Cognetti, to start something similar to her experience with the University of Buenos Aires (Castlenuovo, 2019).

6.2.1.1.7 Polisocial Programme

The Polisocial initiative was launched at the beginning of 2012 by the Politecnico of Milan and was the first public engagement programme instituted at the university level in Italy. With this programme, the university assumes a second responsibility, outside the traditional roles of teaching and research, that is aimed at society and attempts to establish new relationships with social and public actors, and experiment with new approaches to the use and sharing of local knowledge (Castelnuovo, et al., 2013).

The teaching in the field programme was founded under 5 principles (Castelnuovo, et al., 2013):

1. *It assumes a double responsibility* – Functioning inside and outside university, it firstly has a responsibility to the students, producing and applying knowledge that use situations in the real world. The second responsibility is to society, where its role is to imagine new possibilities of applying knowledge to different contexts, and promoting a new relationship between university and civil society.
2. *Transmits ethic values of social responsibility* – It proposes the social activities to involve students in teachers together in order to construct new ways to look at, sense and treat contemporary phenomenon.
3. *Promotes interdisciplinary approach* – The university has adopted a multidisciplinary approach, to activate the various competences acquired in university, experimenting with the capacity in the stages before a planning project.
4. *Regards the city as a platform* – This means that the city is an environment of meetings and exchanges between different visions, actors and projects. Within this, the university views itself as an actor among actors, but it also takes on the role as a catalyser and an activator of new planning, forming alliances in order to bring forward co-creation projects.

5. *Modernises forms of learning* – For experimenting with new forms of knowledge production and working in real world contexts to allow teaching to use these new forms and instruments with students.

6.2.1.2 *First order Emergent Properties*

Some of Francesca's vested interests could be her career as a professor, that by realising this type of innovative project could help advance your career. But as I will subsequently explain, it was more driven by her relationship with the neighbourhood and the schools, that she wanted to see improvements to the quality of educational facilities. As mentioned previously, instead of choosing a different school for her children – like many parents were doing, she chose to stay in that school and do something to improve the situation, which she was not just doing for her benefit or career as a professor, but as an altruistic choice. Although she lives in the area, she does not live in the public housing neighbourhood, and could have probably chosen to avoid the neighbourhood altogether – this is her responsibility as a parent, but as she said, she also has this responsibility as a researcher with the university (Cognetti, 2019). This could have played a role in making the previous choice, knowing she had the university backing her decisions, to a certain degree.

In making the decision to remain in the neighbourhood, Francesca Cognetti and the group were prepared to make the sacrifices in order to do so, choosing an alternative course from traditional university and exiting from the confines of university. She chose to take this route, even going against the traditional role played by the university – “I think at the beginning no one at my university understood this kind of approach, my attitude, maybe they thought she's crazy, she's a very sensitive researcher” (Cognetti, 2019). This idea of an action-research approach was criticised as not being a scientific approach, having too much of a personal connection without being able to be replicated in different contexts (Udas, 1998; Oquist, 1978). Having said that, she was a bit isolated on one hand, but on the other hand she was not alone in this idea; with the beginning of the Polisocial, the concept of the university playing more of a role in interacting with the city would become more relevant. In the end, if they are prepared to pay the opportunity costs then they can choose an alternative route, opening the possibilities for change.

One of the most important aspects is the dual role played by the university as a local actor looking to perform research activities in the neighbourhood and more crucially in their interactions with other actors, especially corporate ones, their role as an institution (we'll see how this role becomes ever more important in later interactions), which increases their bargaining power with an established credibility in the city of Milan. As I learned from Tesserae and some of their difficulties involving various actors in their project, I believe not being a relatively unknown private research group has a lot of influence over their negotiations with public institutions like ALER. And at the same time, Francesca's relationship with Andrea Ghirlanda as an ex-student provides her a connection inside the Regione Lombardia, which could have played a beneficial role in advancing the negotiation process.

6.2.2 *Social interaction (T²-T³)*

During the 2011-2012 year, Francesca, under the Department of Architecture and Urban Studies (DA_tSU) at the Politecnico, had started writing a call for a project that dealt with intercultural issues for Fondazione Cariplo, working with other parents in the school as part of the Commissione Intercultura⁷⁷ (cross-cultural Commission), which was founded in 2011 (Cognetti, 2018). The objective of the project, called *Da Casa a Scuola in mezzo al Mondo* was to give the school a better image by providing extra-curricular activities so that Italian families might be persuaded to choose the more multi-cultural schools (Uberti-Bona, 2019;

⁷⁷ A non-formal body which is part of the formal Parent Teacher Organisation.

Cognetti, 2018). From there, Francesca asked herself, how could she play a role not only as a mother, but also as a university researcher. With the school as her entry point into the neighbourhood, it took the role of hosting the group during parts of the Mapping San Siro workshop, as well during the first year in the neighbourhood.

With the Polisocial programme being launched in 2012 as an experimental initiative to bring students outside the classroom and connect them to the city, the didactic workshop of Mapping San Siro, prepared by Francesca, Ida and Beatrice De Carli in collaboration with several local associations in the neighbourhood, consisted of a series of teaching and exploration activities from January to March, 2013. One of the main interactions that came from this was with the San Siro neighbourhood, not only the social organisations, but also with the inhabitants. Having these past experiences, with Paolo Fareri for Francesca and the PhD research in Buenos Aires for Ida, is what inspired them to carry out this approach with the workshop; using local actors and associations as experts of the local context. This comes from some of the concepts of Friere's critical pedagogy, that schools usually downplay experienced-based knowledge in favour of scientific knowledge, and that the school, or university in this case, is the sole place for learning (Freire, 1999).

During the preparation of the teaching activities for the workshop came the idea to connect and discuss the realities with the local actors in the neighbourhood, given that they had a profound knowledge of the neighbourhood and had close relations with inhabitants, with some working with them on a daily basis. With this started this process of knowledge exchange between participants and local actors, each one learning from each other. There was also the desire to not only find representatives in the neighbourhood, but also to find "new clients" as they referred to them, for the research (Cognetti, et al., 2016).

What emerged from this relationship with associations during the workshop was this interest in continuing this exchange in order to carry out a deeper investigation that could help refocus their activities so they could better meet the needs of the inhabitants they wanted to serve. As several members of the Mapping San Siro group told me, they felt like their work was unfinished (Padovani, 2019), wanting more than just to carry out the traditional style of university research of observing a neighbourhood then leaving, they decided to set up several further workshops over the next year, being hosted in the local schools and associations (Cognetti, et al., 2016). In the year following the workshop, the local associations shared their spaces, in particular Paola Casaletti and her association Cooperativa Tuttinsieme (Cooperative Altogether), with smaller group of researchers and teachers who had decided to continue and build on their work in the neighbourhood (ibid), carrying out a three-day internal workshop with the local actors (Maranghi, 2019; Cognetti, et al., 2016).

Francesca decided they should take advantage of the unused spaces in order to have a real laboratory in the neighbourhood, and having one of her ex-students working at the Regione Lombardia, she called Andrea Ghirlanda and asked if he could speak with ALER Milan, which is the public housing agency that manages and owns a majority of the public housing stock in Milan, to arrange an agreement with ALER for one of these spaces in the neighbourhood. Andrea said his role in this process was one of connection, trying to make the relationship between ALER and the Politecnico simpler (Ghirlanda, 2019). In the end, ALER responded saying they had a space located at Via Abbiati, 4, and that they would offer it as a *contratto uso gratuito* (rent-free contract), to which the Politecnico agreed that they would cover the utilities of the space.

6.2.2.1 Situational Logics and Second order emergent properties

With situational logics, the relative agent placement in terms of bargaining power and negotiating strength play a role in the actual success or failure of a strategic course (Archer, 1995). In this case, the strategic actors are the Politecnico, ALER and the Regione Lombardia, all corporate actors in the negotiations that represent roles of power and are aware of what they want (Herepath, 2014), although MSS is not a corporate agent at this point. What results is a case of contingent compatibilities (Figure 6-3) between the actors, as ALER and the Politecnico do not depend on each other to exist, and the university provides a different role that does not conflict with that of ALER's, whose responsibility is to manage the public housing, and whose lack of financial resources in order to find pertinent solutions to the housing issues presents an opportunity for a third party to assume these responsibilities, while the role of the university is to carry out research on the neighbourhood. I am not sure if ALER considered this in full at this point in the relationship⁷⁸ that the university could be an asset to them in providing a complementary role in finding solutions to the many issues faced in the neighbourhood, but according to Andrea Ghirlanda, ALER was quite enthusiastic about the presence of Politecnico in the neighbourhood. Seeing how ALER has had difficulties in filling the unoccupied non-residential spaces (Ghirlanda, 2019), and there is a university professor with the backing of university who would like to use that space for non-commercial activities, this presents that ALER is willing to agree to allowing the university to use the space rent-free.

FIGURE 6-3 - SITUATIONAL LOGICS AT SYSTEM AND SOCIAL LEVELS

	Contradictions		Complementarities	
	Necessary	Contingent	Necessary	Contingent
Situational logic	Correction	Elimination	Protection	Opportunism
CEPS: Cultural system	Syncretism	Pluralism	Systematisation	Specialisation
Socio-cultural interaction	Unification	Cleavage	Reproduction	Sectionalism
SEPs: Structural system	Compromise	Competition	Integration	Differentiation
Social interaction	Containment	Polarisation	Solidarity	Diversification

Source: (Lockett, 2012)

ALER has a neighbourhood that is in a state of decay, it already has a number of empty non-residential spaces so they do not risk anything giving the space to the Politecnico. Being completely unrelated in their traditional roles, ALER being responsible for the management of public housing, and the university obviously being responsible for research, there is no competition between them. Furthermore, apart from the Politecnico, Mapping San Siro is quite a small and unknown actor, so they are still considered a primary agent, so in terms of competing relations, ALER does not have to consider them as a threat to their role. Between the structures we see a situational logic of opportunism, but with the cultural ideas of this style of research, we see a different scenario.

In regards to the cultural system, we find a case of necessary complementarities, where the traditional role of the university still presides over this new approach. Being still untested and unproven, there is no threat for this new style of action-research to overtake the traditional, objective style of research, so we find a situational logic of protection, leading to a reproduction of ideas in the higher level of social integration.

⁷⁸ I would have liked to interview ALER to understand their perspective, but I was unable to obtain one with them. With that said, I reached out to Andrea Ghirlanda from the Regione Lombardia to ask him his interpretation of their actions involving the Politecnico in the neighbourhood.

Being an innovative approach within the Italian context, Francesca, Ida and Alessandro Balducci believed the responsibility of the university should be one that is oriented to the co-design with communities and not just transferring the knowledge and scientific culture of university, and more this idea of constructing this knowledge together. It is more than the traditional (yet also new in the sense that the third-mission of universities began in the 1980s with more entrepreneurial activities; Piccarozzi, et al., 2018) approach focused on the internal benefits of these relationships (Castlenuovo, et al., 2013). As Ida (2019) said, “it is more of a double direction, from the university to community but also from the community to university. This exchange of knowledge with a different kind of knowledge”. This is where the ideology of the traditional university⁷⁹, or society for that matter, differs, that it places more value on knowledge from those who are in power (Fals-Borda, 1991).

6.2.3 Cultural/Structural Elaboration (T³-T⁴)

6.2.3.1 *Morphogenesis of Structure and Agency*

The agreement for the space in May of 2014, and the eventual opening several months after, marked an elaboration of the structure and the emergence of the second phase of the group, who could finally stay in their own space and carry out their research activities in the neighbourhood. This new phase of situating themselves in the neighbourhood and becoming a permanent resident will help influence the relationship with the other local and public actors.

While the Politecnico of Milan can be considered a corporate actor (Figure 4-5), Mapping San Siro as a group, even though they are affiliated with the university, could be said to have been a primary actor being new and relatively unknown to the context. As a display of “double morphogenesis” as Archer refers to it, that within the morphogenesis of structure, there is also a morphogenesis of agency. The group goes through this transformation, going from a group that was not quite sure what they wanted, other than to improve the situation of the neighbourhood, but they are beginning to organise with the help of strong leadership coming from Francesca, Liliana and others. So initially they are a primary agent, and primary agents must organise into groups of corporate agents in order to be included in decision making at a high level (Njihia, 2008). With a physical space in the neighbourhood, the group goes from a temporary actor in the neighbourhood to a more permanent one, automatically going from being a collective to an individual actor in the neighbourhood. Having the space as a resource will be essential to the activities of MSS, which we will see in the sequential phases.

As Archer states, actors are able to make choices separate from the cultural and structural systems that shape society, leading to individual actors being the catalyst for change. Actors have the power as the voice of a corporate agent to shape structure and culture, which we begin to see in the case of Mapping San Siro. The agency within society is the changing of the role of university researchers and their relationship with the city. While this process can be said to be influenced by the Polisocial initiative, Francesca Cognetti felt that it was her responsibility as a citizen of the city of Milan, more specifically an inhabitant nearby the San Siro public housing neighbourhood, and a professor in urban planning, as well as that of the university, to intervene in situations where people believe they have no control over the forces that shape their lives.

Where Francesca chose to open a space in the neighbourhood went against the traditional role of the university, defying the belief that learning takes place in a classroom within the confines of university. What is needed in society are agents who are active and also reflective – someone who has the critical consciousness, as Frieré (1999) refers to it, to be able to self-evaluate their own life and to mediate

⁷⁹ When I speak about traditional university I refer to the positivist approach to research.

between the structural and cultural properties of society, and therefore, contribute to societal transformation.

The temporal aspect also plays an important role in this, as Francesca says when I asked her about the start of her involvement in the schools, the start of Polisocial and the beginning of Mapping San Siro, all of these events coincided together. So time would have played an important factor in bringing all of these events together, with her background and early life influences pushing her in the direction, yet at the same time, making choices that went against social norms and traditions of university.

6.2.3.2 Cultural Morphostasis

What we have in the end is structural morphogenesis, but cultural morphostasis at the macro (systemic) level in regards to the university. We see changes to structure at the micro level, but in reality these changes incubated or were allowed to be carried out from a cultural change at the institutional level, and not at a systemic level. I would be cautious to say that even at this point in the process, this experience had convinced the university that this would have worked, but it allowed the university to take a chance on this experimental approach to research, not knowing what would come of it. It is quite a unique case within the Italian context, being the only one with a department level initiative of the third mission of university (Castlenuovo, et al., 2013). I would not say yet at this stage that there was a morphogenesis to the cultural system of university, as this was still very new and not yet proven, but it set the groundwork as an experiment within the framework of the Polisocial initiative. The Italian university is not ready to leave their traditional way of carrying out research and adopt this new approach on a macro/ societal level, however I do feel that the individual university level, with the right people in place, can transcend this new environment of action-research in order to inspire transformation on a micro level.

6.2.3.3 Generative Mechanisms

One of the main causal mechanisms in this cycle, I believe, is the personal connection to the neighbourhood, as well as the role played by Polisocial that promotes at the institutional level interaction with the city. Having this programme at the university level plays to the benefit of MSS's desires to open up an off-campus research centre being that Polisocial is quite new and experimental. They are not quite sure the direction they want to go, leaving the objectives of Mapping San Siro free to interpretation. Francesca and the rest of MSS were not asked to go there, and the university was supporting them indirectly with Polisocial. As we will see in the third phase, MSS's approach and ideas will lay the foundation for the Polisocial programme.

Typically, research is carried out objectively, without the influence of the researcher who is studying from an outsider perspective. Having this personal involvement, although it may not be considered a scientific approach under traditional epistemological assumptions (Oquist, 1978), can motivate someone to persevere through challenges and go against societal norms and traditions, which is the case with Francesca and her connection to the neighbourhood due to her proximity and her children being placed in the schools. At the same time, there is a university initiative that supports this style of research that contradicts tradition and positivist beliefs and encourages a new relationship with the subjects that are being studied. I believe these 2 factors were the strongest causal mechanisms that led to the group of researchers to decide to obtain a space outside of university in order to make it the entry into the neighbourhood and apply an experimental approach to carrying out action-research within a disadvantaged neighbourhood.

6.3 Phase 2 - Experimentation

In this cycle, we see the early years of the group, marked by an uncertain future, and as new inhabitants to the neighbourhood, the beginning of a period of establishing relationships and trust with the neighbours and local actors. Although the group that would occupy the space would vary from day to month, the core of the group stayed intact, facing challenges as they tried to persevere through the difficulties of managing a new type of research centre without any mandate from the university.

6.3.1 Structural and cultural conditioning (T¹-T²)

6.3.1.1.1 University resources/Polisocial

The group do not have funding from the university, only the backing of Polisocial to try this experimental approach. With no monetary resources, the students and professors who come to the space do so voluntarily. This will remain like this until the group is able to obtain funding from outside sources, or until they prove that this experience is worth the investment from the university.

During this time, the Polisocial initiative is becoming more active, also using San Siro and 30metriquadri as a hub for teaching activities outside the classroom (Cognetti, et al., 2016). Without this initiative of community engagement, the university would have found it difficult to agree to rent a place and pay for the utilities.

6.3.1.1.2 30metriquadri

Now being in a permanent location at via Abbiati, 4, this space becomes the centre of the research with the group being committed to opening the space 2 days a week. This space changes the culture of how research is performed at the institutional level, from having the university as the base of research and the neighbourhood as just a temporary place of observation, to using the neighbourhood as the base and centre of research. This change allows the group to start “living” in the neighbourhood and carrying out their action-research, networking more easily with local actors and developing relationships with neighbours and locals, and learning about the neighbourhood without technically performing ethnographical research activities.

6.3.1.1.3 Mapping San Siro Approach

From when Mapping San Siro first entered into the neighbourhood, they had no clients – private, public or local, giving them a set of objectives on what they wanted them to find, and they were free to speak to who they wanted, and carry out research according to what they believed was the best approach (Cognetti, 2019). Their objective was to explore the neighbourhood without any preconceptions of what they would discover and get a better understanding of the current situation by speaking with actors who were part of the local context, reflecting with them and exchanging their diverse types of knowledge. As a result of the morphogenesis of structure, the obtaining of the space, there is a change in the methodology of the group that affects how they conduct their activities. Now that they are able to stay in the neighbourhood, they can build relationships, carry out research more efficiently and plan for future actions.

Resulting from the findings of their workshops and activities carried out in the first phase, the research in this second phase is organised around three themes developed from those findings: the housing situation, the common spaces and courtyards and empty non-residential spaces, with the dual-objective to produce knowledge and develop tools to sustain the activation of the local actors as their “clients”⁸⁰ (Cognetti, et al.,

⁸⁰ Although Francesca made clear in her interview that they did not have any specific clients, referring to the traditional relationship that usually occurs between universities and the city/region, they reference the local actors and associations as their clients they serve, who in turn serve the inhabitants with their services and activities.

2016). With this idea of producing new knowledge, the goals of the group were (and still are) to change the perception and build a new image of the neighbourhood, understand the complexities of decision-making and social practices that influence the living conditions, establish new relationships with the public institutions and give technical support to realise new projects and initiatives (ibid., pg 16).

From the beginning the goal of the group was to become an “inhabitant” of the neighbourhood, which comes from their 4-stage methodological approach of situating (which they accomplish with the opening of the space, even though the future at that point is unclear), networking, acting and inquiry. With the networking, acting and inquiry being interrelated in the sense that the research is carried out both with the network of local actors as well as individually, with it being action-research – research that has to be useful in order to transform the situation and has a clear scope in terms of how it will impact the neighbourhood (Castlenuovo, 2019). Aside from their approach, one of the other goals of the group, which they discovered in the discovery phase was that the neighbourhood was very closed and segregated from the rest of the city and the surrounding neighbourhood (Cognetti, 2019), was to open the neighbourhood to new actors and activities.

6.3.1.1.4 Relationships between actors and their roles

This type of relationship between public institutions, and also local actors for that matter, constitutes a client relationship, or no relationship at all in case of the local actors who inhabitant the public housing neighbourhood. Groups like the Comitato Abitanti, who stand up for the rights of squatters and stop evictions from happening in the neighbourhood, said that they had made round tables with the municipality and ALER in the past to try to present different solutions. “They listen to us, but they don’t do a lot of things” activist CASS told me in our interview. Their solution is to deal with public institutions with demonstrations, and it has worked at stopping evictions (Activist CASS, 2019), but it can be a very hostile relationship taking this route, as Liliana recounted about a time when they tried to invite the head of housing (l’assessore delle case) – Gabriele Rabaiotti⁸¹ and Comitato Abitanti to a meeting and there was a problem because local authorities thought there might be some kind of issue with harassment (Padovani, 2019).

Being under the management of the Regione Lombardia, but also being autonomous, ALER and the Regione work closely together, but sometimes ALER do what they want, as Andrea explained. As mentioned previously, ALER has had many confrontations with local actors such as Comitato Abitanti, but they are also a type of scapegoat, receiving blame for when things go wrong with the municipality, the Regione, and other social organisations, as Andrea tells me that it is difficult to create a good relationship with local actors because of this. Although they are partly to blame for the mismanagement of their properties and funds, the lack of financial resources can also be to blame (Ghirlanda, 2019). Many times the different public institutions do not talk to each other, or are in competition with each other. As Francesca explained, “In the [city] of Milano they have a very sectorial approach: mobility, public space, public housing, health. Different offices don’t have the attitude to work together” (Cognetti, 2019).

The typical relationship between university and the city/region is also quite a simple one, because the relationship is established at the beginning. The university is asked to provide some data or to carry out research on a neighbourhood, and in return they provide a “nice little book” (Ghirlanda, 2019). At this point, ALER has provided the space for Mapping San Siro, but they do not play a role in assisting in their research activities. Andrea Ghirlanda plays the role of connection in the first phase, being a former student

⁸¹ I also would have like to have an interview with him to understand his role and relation with other actors, but unfortunately he did not respond to my request.

of Francesca. That is the extent of the relationship and the roles. Also, the role of the Regione and ALER is to deal with the renovation of residential units, and not with the commercial units.

At the local level, there are the relationships between the local associations and actors which is characterised by a culture of competition between them in order to receive funds for their own cause (Casaletti, 2019), as well as tension between certain groups⁸² that hold conflicting viewpoints, specifically in regards to the illegal occupation of flats. The local associations are not dialoguing with each other, and they exist more as a fragmented geographies of relations between them (Castlenuovo, 2019). The role of university is important in the neighbourhood as they are usually needed to participate in the larger calls, because the financiers often ask for a university as a partner to carry out the rigorous parts of the planning, evaluation, etc. (Casaletti, 2019).

The Laboratorio di Quartiere, which was part of the social initiative of the Contratto dei Quartieri, plays an important role in the neighbourhood in being a centre for planning social activities, also including other social actors in the neighbourhood, and a centre for counselling for inhabitants. The problem is it is not able to constantly remain open due to the ending of the funding, and having to reapply to a new call in order to remain open, there is a downtime (Andreis, 2012; Uberti-Bona, 2019), which shows the inadequate response and the lack of commitment to this types of social infrastructure by the city of Milan.

6.3.1.2 First order emergent properties

Like I have mentioned previously, Mapping San Siro has no mandate from the university to be there, so it gives them the freedom to explore their own path of solutions to what they determine to be the most relevant problems of the neighbourhood. At this point, the vested interests of the actors converge in that all of them would like to improve the state of the neighbourhood, albeit having different strategies, but lack the resources to do so. The difference is the ones higher up the stratification of social integration, have the power to do so, while agents such as the local actors and Mapping San Siro do not possess much power at this point, so they have to enter in a stage of negotiations with ALER and the Regione, using their strength as researchers and university to try and convince ALER that they have a better strategy to deal with the issues that the neighbourhood faces.

Then we think about the local actors and associations, who do not usually take part in determining the broader context of the neighbourhood, who are presented with this opportunity to adopt a different approach to their everyday activities. The local actors know if they do not join the group, which some may choose to do, things will carry on like normal. So it also depends if they have the time and resources to be able to step out of their normal activities and commit to being part of something new.

This opportunity cost for the social actors of the neighbourhood, even though they may not always agree with everything that Mapping San Siro does, is quite low, because they are still able to carry out their normal activities and services they have always been doing, with the added backing of a powerful university if they are able to cooperatively work together to advance their ideas for solutions. For Mapping San Siro, their objective is to represent the needs of the inhabitants through this second level of participation, and by having the input from the local actors, they are able to work towards achieving this goal, which will also increase the social receptivity of what they are trying to accomplish.

⁸² This is referring to the groups Comitato del Quartiere San Siro, which was started by Lucia Guerri and a group of women in the mid-90s and is staunchly against the illegal occupation of flats (Galbiati, et al., 2014) and Comitato Abitanti San Siro, who as I have mentioned previously engages in demonstrations and fights for squatters rights.

The coalition of actors that MSS has brought together, can all be viewed as beneficiaries, as each of the actors have something to gain through each other's expertise and sharing of knowledge. From the highest levels there is an expert knowledge of the laws, regulations and processes that are necessary in order to bring about change, while local actors bring their situated knowledge of a neighbourhood and its population. The university on the other hand is an expert in research and producing and representing knowledge, while in this case Mapping San Siro has also taken on the role of a local actor, acquiring local knowledge from having become "inhabitants" of the neighbourhood and working closely with the local actors and associations.

6.3.2 Social Interaction (T²-T³)

After the agreement for the space is finalised, one of the first activities is the renovation of the space, which being an unused ex-commercial space needed some work before it was ready to be used. This is done by the volunteered time and effort of students, professors, friends and inhabitants, which took place during June and September 2014. The opening of the space is marked by curiosity by the residents, who frequently look in and inquire what are these students and professors doing in their neighbourhood, and in very little time, the space becomes a place of encounters and conversations between the university and the residents of San Siro.

From the beginning, the approach was to open up the neighbourhood to outsiders and give people a reason to come there and show them a different way to try and share knowledge (Cognetti, 2019). With the first Caffè San Siro in June of 2014, it allowed for the opportunity to internally and externally reflect on and discuss issues that are affecting the city, and more closely, the issues that are affecting the San Siro neighbourhood. They were not designed specifically for the all of the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, but open for anyone who would like to listen. As Liliana explained, Caffè San Siro was a way to try to inform people on what they were doing there and mix researchers, institutions, local actors and inhabitants – to build bridges between different ways of looking at problems. "We wanted to get out of the arrogance of knowledge in university. We know, but we have a limited knowledge and we don't want to discuss it with you. We don't want to defend what we know" (Padovani, 2019).

The first activities in the space, as well as around the neighbourhood, connected with the concept of action-learning and action-research, where students learn from the environments in which they would like to study, and using that information obtained to change or transform something. Ida explained that her role as project manager within Polisocial was (and still is) to try to develop teaching projects with social orientated goals, as well as social orientated research (Castlenuovo, 2019). The idea of the group was to take this experimental approach to learning engaging in an exchange with local actors and inhabitants in order to produce a shared knowledge. In line with the Polisocial programme, 30metriquadri (30m²) became an experimental space in the neighbourhood to hold seminars and workshops (Cognetti, 2018), attempting to build new representations and imaginaries of change, opening spaces of dialogue and public debate and sparking new ideas for dealing with complex issues (Cognetti, et al., 2016).

With no mandate from the university to stay there, this was totally experimental, and proved challenging for the group of researchers, who came to open the space of Trentemetriquadri every Tuesday and Thursday as volunteers. During the time it was difficult to stay there full time and dedicate themselves to the neighbourhood, as they did not have the resources to do so. Elena was involved in some small research projects with Francesca, not only in San Siro but also Giambellino-Lorenteggio – another problematic

neighbourhood in the periphery of Milan. People like her, along with others⁸³, were staying in the space informally as volunteers, along with Francesca and Liliana (Maranghi, 2019). Many people were coming and going because they did not have the time or energy to stay there (Padovani, 2019). As Elena told me, it became easier to stay in the office at Trentemetriquadri and dedicate part of her time working on San Siro with the winning of their first project (Maranghi, 2019).

Having a mix of researchers, masters and PhD students, professors that were all in different stages of their lives, helped create a dynamic between them. This mix of young researchers played an important role in sustaining the group, helping each other past moments of discouragement. There were the professors who stayed committed to it, Francesca and Liliana (at that point she had already retired). According to Liliana her position was to play the role of the elder who with more life experiences, who had experienced defeat in situations and knew that an initiative like this would take an extended amount of time in order to develop – she was the optimistic of the group (Padovani, 2019). Francesca felt that, being a strange and innovative research activity for the university, the young researchers, Ida, Elena, Alice and Jacopo, were very supportive of this (Cognetti, 2019).

In 2015 Mapping San Siro won a small public call lasting from January to September 2016 and financed by the Department for Equal Opportunities – the National Office for Anti Racial Discrimination⁸⁴, which was called Don't Call Me Stranger, a project related to migrant woman and how they could be represented as valuable resources in the neighbourhood. Working with around 25 women, the majority of whom live in San Siro, one of the goals of the project was to deconstruct the image of “foreign women” of the neighbourhood by collecting stories of their lives and how they arrived there. One thing that was particularly relevant with this project, in connection with 30metriquadri, is the space it provided within the neighbourhood as a meeting place for participants (Castelnuovo, et al., 2018). In collaboration with several Italian language schools in the area⁸⁵ in order to facilitate conversation and assist with the language barrier of some of the participants, the group also engaged in focus groups to understand how common spaces are used to integrate new arrivals to the neighbourhood, as well as to understand the competences of the foreign women in order to use them to advance their social capacity (Castelnuovo, et al., 2018). Within the timeframe and resources at their disposal, they were able to gain a better understanding the situation of the problems faced by foreign women who would like work but are unable to for various reasons, and what are some of the possible future actions they could implement in order to advance this type of project at the local scale (ibid., pg 109).

Towards the end of 2015, the Politecnico went to the table again with ALER to discuss their relationship with the neighbourhood, this time involving the Regione. What resulted was a technical, yet informal, agreement between the general director of ALER, the general director of the Regione Lombardia and the Politecnico to support their research activities on the most relevant themes inside the San Siro neighbourhood (Ghirlanda, 2019). But in speaking with Andrea Ghirlanda, he explained that after about a year and a half, they realised that this informal agreement was not enough to produce results (Ghirlanda, 2019). Before this is realised, towards the end of 2016, the group had discovered they had won the public call by JPI Urban Europe focused on the regeneration of social housing estates through Living Labs, worth a little over €1 million for the 3 partners and intended to fund them for 3 years, from 2017-2020 (JPI Urban Europe, 2017). Winning this allows them to advance their pilot projects and make them a reality, for the

⁸³ Gabrielle Solazia, Ida Castelnuovo, Alice Ranzini (depending on the period), Jacopo Lareno Faccini and Cassandra Fontana from the original workshops, and also students doing short internships

⁸⁴ Dipartimento per le Pari Opportunità, Ufficio Nazionale Antidiscriminazione Razziali (UNAR)

⁸⁵ Associazione Mamme a scuola, Associazione Alfabeti Onlus

first time being able to focus their attention solely on the neighbourhood and allowing them to improve the themes connected to the original workshops.

With the SoHo Lab project, the Politecnico created a working group with ALER Milan and The Regione Lombardia as project partners that focused on public and common spaces and the reuse of empty commercial spaces in the neighbourhood (Cognetti, et al., 2018). With this, in 2017 the three institutions reached a formal agreement to carry out action-research in the neighbourhood, which brought the agreement to the political level. This agreement of collaboration was approved as a legal instrument, making it a formal legally recognised agreement. This last step was something the Andrea thought not was only good for his office, but also the fact that it was recognised, as it became part of his daily responsibilities and yearly targets he had to reach at the Regione – “For me it gave the real difference between the two periods” (Ghirlanda, 2019).

Mapping San Siro ended up establishing a different relationship with the public actors in the neighbourhood. Originally, Francesca had thought to try and work only with the local associations to create a bottom-up style approach to resolving the issues of the San Siro neighbourhood (Cognetti, 2019), only to realise it was necessary to include actors from all different levels in order to accomplish their objectives. But this relationship was not the same as the typical university client relationship, as Francesca explained to me, “When I spoke with local institutions, they weren’t my clients. They didn’t ask me something, but we tried all together to develop a project for the neighbourhood where Politecnico gave them our experience, and they gave us their experience”. In many cases the university act as consultants to the public institutions, something also iterated by Andrea Ghirlanda. He made it clear that this type of relationship between the university and the public institutions was atypical, and he felt the traditional way of collaborating was quite useless because it does not bring results (Ghirlanda, 2019).

From the very first Mapping San Siro workshop, the idea was to work with local actors: single citizens, groups of self-organised inhabitants, third sector organisations and local institutions, in the neighbourhood in order to engage in an exchange of local knowledge. These intermediate actors would express various viewpoints and competences, sometimes conflicting, but together the initial objective was how they could make knowledge on the neighbourhood emerge from all the different perspectives that were there and involved on a daily basis (Maranghi, 2019). With this, Mapping San Siro was able to create dialogue between local actors who had previously never spoken at a round table, in addition to creating dialogue and acting as mediators not only between the local subjects, but between public institutions as well (Cognetti, et al., 2016). On November 9, 2016, members of what would be called the Sansheroes local network⁸⁶ were called to 30metriquadri to begin work on a document that would allow them to represent their local knowledge in a structured way, and also propose some lines of strategy that could be used by the public institutions. Over the next 4 encounters that would take place in the following months, the group focused on several themes they deemed were most relevant in the neighbourhood: diverse populations and influx of new residents; state of the local networks and projects and politics in the neighbourhood; perceptions and valuations of the current political situation (Rete locale Sansheroes, 2017). The writing of

⁸⁶ Associazione Alfabeti Onlus; Centro d’Asolto Caritas della Parrocchia Beata Vergine Addolorata; Commissione Intercultura dell’Istituto Comprensivo Luigi Cadorna; Comune di Milano – Ufficio Coordinamento Custodi Sociali; Cooperativa Sociale Tuttinsieme; Comitato Abitanti San Siro; Comitato Quartiere San Siro; Associazione “La Banda dei Pirati” Onlus; Emergency Onlus – Politruck; Associazione Itama Onlus; Mapping San Siro – DASTU Polimi; Progetto “Velo’ce mente”

the document, *San Siro 2017 - Fotografia del Quartiere*⁸⁷, would eventually become part of the activities of the SoHo Lab project.

6.3.2.1 *Situational Logics and Second-order emergent properties*

In analysing the interactions between structure, culture and agency in this second phase, we see a situational logic of contingent complementarities which results in a strategy of opportunism for the agents involved, which in turn guide their actions. The involvement of Mapping San Siro is dependent on the political structure and the state of the neighbourhood, and their goals on finding solutions and resolving problems can be seen as complimentary. At a structural level exists different institutions that do not have strong relations and do not speak to or listen efficiently with the local associations and actors. This leads to the need for an actor who can play an intermediary role between them, who does not take part in the day to day activities of the neighbourhood, and plays a different complimentary role. The vision of Mapping San Siro is to change the way the different levels of actors interact with each other, as this phase is marked by changes to relations between the various level of actors, we will see what were the precursors to the decisions made and actions taken.

Socio-cultural interaction with the beliefs and methodology of Mapping San Siro has an influence on the strategy of ALER and the Regione, that results in new cultural values and norms for different actors involved. In the typical high integration of social systems, these very top-down approaches to change, the public institutions are content with keeping the status-quo – which can be seen by the years of inaction and ineffective responses to regeneration of the neighbourhood on their part (e.g. the *Contratto di Quartiere* project). When they start negotiating with public institutions, I believe being associated with the university helps move them up the stratification more quickly, as they are a public actor themselves. They still have some bargaining power, as compared to being a private research group with little recognition or historical context for backing. With Mapping San Siro as a new actor in the neighbourhood, intent on making change differently from what had been done in the past, they introduce new ideas and strategies into the mix. As I have mentioned before, they are not quite at this point a corporate actor, being relatively new to the neighbourhood, but they are affiliated with the university, who is clearly one. It takes time to develop the trust of ALER, and also have them be receptive to the idea of finding alternative ways to reoccupy the empty non-residential buildings.

These courses of action proposed by Mapping San Siro, specifically the discussions about the empty non-residential spaces, are in the interests of the neighbourhood, and therefore ALER and the Regione Lombardia, seeing how they lack the resources to dedicate to investigating and improving the neighbourhood. Therefore, in their negotiations for the solution to this problem, ALER takes a position of a contingent complementary, agreeing to and supporting the action-research they are doing in the neighbourhood. So they have bargaining power in their negotiations with ALER, and negotiating strength with the connection between Francesca and Andrea. So there this quasi-personal mission initiated by Francesca that has become a mission within the Polisocial programme, even though it is unclear what they future will be.

On the other hand, as is the case of the Sansheroes network, MSS wants to create a partnership supported by the public institutions and also at the lower level, with the local actors of the neighbourhood. This can be seen as favourable to join powers with an institution like a university, seeing that the university is a respected institution within the city, in this will instantly propel the members who join up the ladder of social integration, from individual actors and collectives, to an organised group that knows what they want

⁸⁷ Snapshot of the Neighbourhood

and is capable of making decisions. By joining, the group as a collective will have more bargaining power, and having different role allows the group not to be in conflict with the institutions.

The university, as well as the Regione, still lacks the resources, and for this they must apply for external funds, and they do this by applying to a public European call that investigates the regeneration of social housing neighbourhoods through living labs. When they win this call, for the first time they are able to focus their time and energy solely on finding solutions to their three themes they stated during the discovery period. They obtain even more bargaining power, having the funds to advance their pilot projects, so ALER and the Regione have even more reason to support these activities. By choosing to work with commercial-units, as the idea is established by the university that this is one of the pressing issues in the neighbourhood, the Regione and ALER chose a path of diversification, as these corporate agents choose different paths to obtain their objectives, as working with them was something that has not been done in the last 20 years.

6.3.3 Structural/Cultural Elaboration (T³-T⁴)

After years of inaction by the public institutions and allowing areas of the city to fall into a state of decay, the willingness and determination by a university affiliated group of urban planners decided it was up to them to attempt a new way of working. Not only do they attempt to exit outside the traditional confines of university, their goal, as planners, is to try and transform something, and they begin to do that in this phase of the cycle. To begin to develop relationships with various levels of actors within the city, playing a neutral role in going back and forth between public institutions and local actors in the San Siro neighbourhood, and in the end, there was a morphogenesis of culture, structure and agency due to their efforts.

Organised groups can make changes at different levels, as this interaction between agents and the cultural and structural systems in place. As organised groups, they can provide the ability to change structure and culture at the institutional level, and not just at the level of roles or positions within an organisation (Archer, 1995; Nuryatno, et al., 2015). While these changes begin to take effect within the second phase, the most impactful changes will start to take shape in the third and final phase of the morphogenetic cycle.

6.3.3.1 Morphogenesis of Culture and Structure

Throughout this phase, we see the morphogenesis of the relationship between the institutional actors reach different levels. From the event that marked the beginning of this phase, which was the informal agreement between ALER and the Politecnico for the space at via Abbiati, 4, to the agreement between ALER, the Regione and the Politecnico which was a formal agreement, but only a technical one. From there it developed into a formal one, reaching the political level – the *Delibere di Giunta Regionale*⁸⁸, becoming a formally recognised agreement made by the regional government, which supported the research activities based on the three themes of Mapping San Siro: the public spaces, the empty dwellings and commercial units (Ghirlanda, 2019). This change not only in the structure, realising a formal agreement, but also in the relationship between the actors, represents a change in the culture of how these public institutions collaborate together.

One of the most significant changes of culture which has been a result of Mapping San Siro's intervention in the neighbourhood, is the capacity to work together, and the philosophy that accomplishing this will help advance the goals of the parties involved, be it the goals of the local networks or those of the public institutions. First and foremost, with the agreement making it official, there is this change in the normal way of working between the institutions, where this new collaboration between the Politecnico, ALER and

⁸⁸ Resolution of the Regional Council – which is a political act made by the regional government (Ghirlanda, 2019)

the Regione changes their relationship from the typical consultant role that usually occurs between the university and public institutions to a supportive relationship. They have to work together, make concessions in order to advance their goals, and even though it can be more difficult, it is a new way to work in order to create something together (Ghirlanda, 2019). For the example of the reactivation of the unused spaces in the neighbourhood, ALER was not very receptive of the idea at first, but over time they were able to arrive to a position where ALER found this new approach interesting (Padovani, 2019), and are also trying to adopt it in another neighbourhood (Cognetti, 2019). Also, with the different roles within the city of Milan being divided within each sector as stated previously, different offices did not have the attitude to work together. This was another change within Mapping San Siro, that at first their objectives were to network with institutions and associations at the neighbourhood level and link them together, but they realised that in order to accomplish substantial changes it was necessary to work with public institutions and attempt to also link them together (ibid.)

The formation of the Sansheroes network as a new social organisation is one of the most impactful changes to the structural system, as well as a cultural change. Now that they are an organised group, which also represents a morphogenesis of agency, they can work together to find solutions to the many problems facing the neighbourhood. From carrying out my interviews with the Sansheroes network, I quickly understood the impact that MSS has had on them. As mentioned previously, there was this attitude that everyone had to act for their own personal gains, to win funds for their own personal projects, so they were not working cooperatively. When first meeting was called to take place in 30metriquadri, the members of the network were required to work together, some for the first time, and create this shared vision – one they all agreed on. Even though Comitato Abitanti and Comitato di Quartiere will never see eye to eye on political issues such as that of the occupation of unused flats, they start talking to each other on other issues and realise that personally they want similar things. So this bringing together of these various actors was a way to talk about things in a different way, and reinforce a common vision between them (Maranghi, 2019). Even Liliana told me that before working with Mapping San Siro, she had a very different perspective on what she conceived as formal and informal in regards to the illegal occupation of houses. Before it was that it is illegal and not possible to tolerate, but now she is able to look at who are the people occupying these houses, and that some people are in need and there is nobody who takes care of them. “Occupation shows you these people. These are real problems”. (Padovani, 2019). This exchange with actors such as Comitato Abitanti are able to provide a different perspective, and change the way situations are conceived.

6.3.3.2 Morphogenesis of Agency

This transformation of the role, and also the personality, allows us as human beings to actively re-make the society in which we live, in this relies on our capacity to learn, self-reflect and weigh the consequences of our actions, which takes place in the process of action-research: “real actors bring their own ideals and objectives, skill and incompetence, dedication or distancing, inflexibility or creativeness to the roles they occupy” (Archer, 1995). Francesca, initially starting out as a collective (primary agency), being relatively unknown in the neighbourhood, but also having the credibility of the university, becomes an individual actor while assuming the role of Mapping San Siro, which is building credibility in the neighbourhood through various activities over the timeframe. When the funding from the public call is obtained, and eventually the new agreement that gives MSS the official support of the Regione, and therefore ALER. I would say it is at this point Francesca, along with MSS as her group, becomes a corporate agent.

With the formation of the network, the members go from being a primary agent – a mix of collectives and individual actors, in the sense that they know what they want within their own personal context, and also

possibly for the neighbourhood, but before becoming an official group of actors, they are not able to work together and think beyond the scope of their daily responsibilities. With Mapping San Siro as part of the group, who have themselves obtained the status of an organised group, I would say also that the network gains the status of a corporate agency, knowing what they want, how to articulate themselves (with the help of MSS) and they are officially organised into a group (Archer, 1995), establishing that with the publication of the shared document and being part of their objectives within the SoHo Lab project (Rete locale Sansheroes, 2017). This collaboration between Mapping San Siro and the local actors increases their power in the sense that they also have the support at the local level, which I believe is a strength in MSS's ability to assume this dual role. As MSS acts as an intermediary between the network and the public institutions, this gives the network this implicit power, the fact that Mapping San Siro is able to act as a public institution in its talks with the other public bodies, e.g. ALER and the Regione, and as a third party actor when dealing with the members of the Sansheroes Network, which most importantly does not put them in conflict with the other local associations.

6.3.3.3 *Generative mechanisms*

6.3.3.3.1 Group Dynamics

When they space was opened it was not a requirement for anyone to be there, nor was there a mandate from the university, as Liliana made a point to reiterate during my interview with her (Padovani, 2019), to be in the neighbourhood. One on hand, as she said, it was also a positive thing to have the freedom without any specific questions or imposed rules by the university, but on the other, it was difficult because they were not funded to be there, so they were coming as volunteers, which depended a lot on the period and how much time they had. The group had their methodology and visions, but being an experimental project, no one was sure how it would result. For these reasons it was difficult because they had a space they had committed to opening, but at the same time it was not their job. Liliana stated that they were aware of the weaknesses and the risks of the group to fail, as people were coming and going and did not always have the time or energy to spend there. She had a background in participation, and was very unsatisfied with the typical top-down approach to it. She was interested how to set up true bottom-up participation, which she knew was quite complex (Padovani, 2019).

6.3.3.3.2 Methodological Approach

In speaking with the members of Mapping San Siro, and also spending 7-8 months there myself, I quickly realised the importance of having a physical space in the neighbourhood and how it allows the group to carry out the other activities (networking, acting and inquiry) more effectively (Maranghi, 2019). By becoming a familiar face in the neighbourhood, especially in a neighbourhood such as San Siro where people are accustomed to having shops closed down instead of opened, not only does it begin to build trust with the local people, it shows that they are there to stay, something that proves the commitment also to the local actors (Activist CASS, 2019). By being there you can begin to interact with people in an informal way, something that happens naturally in the everyday run-ins with locals, instead of going there and searching for people to interview or speak to (Maranghi, 2019; Padovani, 2019). It allows us to better understand the context and the real situation that the inhabitants are facing, where every day you are there is the chance to experience things that you cannot working within the campus of the university. They were also careful to not try to replicate any kind of participatory process within the neighbourhood, as it is a word that has been used all too often in public policy, but as Elena (2019) described, let "relationship(s) emerge with everyday practice in the neighbourhood".

AR, as described fully in Chapter 3, is a type of research that deals with the micro-level change and community-based change strategies, and one that seeks to challenge social practices (Wicks, et al., 2008). Throughout the process of AR or PAR, there is a collective effort to acquire new knowledge while looking at all the partners in the process as equal. I believe this was very crucial in MSS's approach in producing the outcomes that it has: on one hand it has led to the development of the Sansheroes network, where even though MSS acts as the facilitator and leader within the group (Cognetti, 2019; Casaletti, 2019), all of the members are considered as equal, and all are part of the research process. When they first entered the neighbourhood, they did not come as experts, but as learners and facilitators that can provide knowledge, resources and skills, but not decision-making, something that is the central focus of PAR (Udas, 1998). On the other hand, MSS has also succeeded in bringing this style of research also to the higher level, a new approach for the relationship between university and public actors. As Francesca made apparent, ALER and the Regione were not her clients, they were partners, each partner bringing a different set of competences to the process (Cognetti, 2019). And even though these processes can be resource consuming, they allow for a different kind of result in producing change, something we will see in Phase 3.

6.3.3.3 Resources

The lack of resources can inhibit the aspirations and good intentions of people, and for this reason, the winning of the two public calls, SoHo Lab and Don't Call Me Stranger, were important for the vitality of the group, sustaining and extending their activities while allowing them to focus solely on the research objectives. In this phase, it is still quite an experimental project, not meriting just yet the trust of university to invest additional resources. One of the strengths though, being part of the university, the students and interns act as valuable resources for the space. As previously mentioned, the dynamics of the group played an important role in their ability to keep the space operating while people such as Francesca and Ida, among others, worked on the higher-level management of trying to develop the framework for this new approach. This concept of starting something and developing a personal connection to the place, along with the personal connection developed with the actors and inhabitants, can increase the determination and commitment that the students have, and therefore dedicating themselves to the cause.

6.4 Phase 3 - Action in Motion

In the beginning of this phase, we see the development of the Sansheroes network, as well as the initial planning and negotiations for the 3 pilot projects. This is a stage marked by action and change, something I was able to experience during my time staying with the group. Not only is there physical change to the urban environment, there is also institutional change, as we see the university move towards this style of researching and staying in the field. Although this phase is still on-going, I believe that the changes experienced throughout it mark substantial progress in the morphogenesis of structure and culture at the macro level.

The results of doing this kind of research, can bring transformative effects on the cultural system that is ...university, as a way of bringing change to disadvantaged neighbourhoods by working with institutions and local associations, acting as a mediator between the 2 groups. In that sense, a change is experienced now at the role level, and reaching the institutional level of the university, following the initiative that was put in place to encourage these different roles and responsibilities that the university can contribute to the city as an actor of change.

6.4.1 Cultural and Structural Conditioning (T¹-T²)

6.4.1.1.1 Sansheroes Network

At this stage, the Sansheroes Network, with Mapping San Siro being their representative, are an established collective, with objectives and a strategy for achieving these objectives. Having published the first shared document, they are gaining recognition and credibility outside the neighbourhood. Mapping San Siro's dual role as network member and public institution is playing a key role as the mediator between the higher and lower level actors.

6.4.1.1.2 State of Relations and Projects

Besides playing the role of mediator and forming the group of local actors, MSS has brought together actors at the public level in order to advance their pilot projects included in the call for SoHo Lab: the Green Living Lab project in which they are organising the first Collaboration Pact between the university, local associations and the city of Milan; and Nuove Luci a San Siro, which they are currently discussing the legal framework for the public call that collaborates with ALER and the Regione Lombardia. When they started the Mapping San Siro workshops, they did not have any public institutions involved (Cognetti, 2019), so to go from that state to where they are at this point has taken substantial time and effort, and these 2 projects have opened up the roundtables to different public actors. In addition, both of these projects are experimenting with a different relationship between the public institutions, local actors and the university, as well as being experimental projects being tested out in a real-life context.

6.4.1.1.3 Resources

The winning of the public call has given the group substantial funds for advancing their projects (JPI Urban Europe, 2017), as well as the political level agreement reached with the Regione which allowed them to be able to invest money into the activities related to their research – the Nuove Luci a San Siro project. The Regione agreed to contribute €200,000 to fund the eventual winners of the public call for the re-use of the vacant commercial spaces (Ghirlanda, 2019; ALER Milano, 2019).

6.4.1.1.4 30metriquadri as the Polisocial Archetype

As the only permanent location, 30metriquadri represents the model off-campus working space for the Polisocial programme (Castlenuovo, 2019). With the need to discuss and plan for the 3 pilot projects, as well as meetings for the Sansheroes network, 30metriquadri has become the established meeting space for these activities. In addition to those, the space is continually used as an off-campus classroom, with direct access to the surrounding neighbourhood as the focal point of research and an archive of resources on the neighbourhood and their research activities.

6.4.1.1.5 Methodological Approach

From the initial explorations during the first phase, to the relationship building throughout the second phase, the methodological approach, even though it has not changed its framework, just its focus. As Francesca (2019) explained in our interview, "it was very important to demonstrate some real changes in the neighbourhood, small changes but changes...for me it was important to promote some kind of change about the space and the quality of the space." At this point, they have been in the neighbourhood since 2013, permanently since 2014, and would more to make their presence known.

6.4.1.2 *First order emergent properties*

The methodology and visions of MSS have been since the beginning to explore ways to reactivate the empty commercial spaces and open up the neighbourhood to new actors and opportunities. With the support of the resources from the call which aims at trying experimental techniques to improve public

housing neighbourhoods, along with the space of 30metriquadri which acts as an important resource for the group as it allows them to become a local actor in the neighbourhood, and the support of the relevant public institutions, all the parties involved have much to gain for this experience. As the group has shown their resilience in the neighbourhood, they have finally reached a point where they have garnered credibility with what they have been striving to do – which is establish a research centre in a disadvantaged neighbourhood and try to resolve reoccurring problems by working with various levels of public, private and third-sector institutions. Both the Regione and ALER, being owners and managers of the housing in the San Siro neighbourhood, have an interest in seeing the improvement of the neighbourhood, but at the same time reducing losses to rent and trying to increase their overall revenues on commercial and residential properties⁸⁹. Seeing how ALER's focus is on the larger problem with residential flats, they are not risking much in the process.

As Andrea explained to me the stances that each of the actors took into the decision-making process, show that obviously they all have different points of view, or vested interests as Archer (1995) refers to them: Mapping San Siro is interested in activating unused spaces, implementing activities that can create relationships with social actors that are already in the neighbourhood, and also creating services relevant to the inhabitants; the Regione's choice is to select entrepreneurs (seeing how they have agreed to invest €200,000 into the project), and ALER is just interested in using the spaces, seeing how they had tried to rent the spaces but were never successful. They obviously do not want to give them away for free (like they had done with space for 30metriquadri), but they are open to suggestions (Ghirlanda, 2019).

It is also in ALER's best interest to see this as an opportunity, firstly to experiment with new techniques to reactivate their spaces and improve not just the physical aspects of the neighbourhood, but also to add a social dimension, and secondly as a way to partly relieve them of the responsibility of trying to resolve these issues with out-dated strategies. With the university involved, they have assumed a role that could interfere with ALER, but the fact the Regione's budget has been reduced 10-fold produces opportunities for external actors to play a complimentary role to ALER's. At this level, since we are dealing with public institutions, there is not the same competition that is seen in a market economy because there is no fighting for market share. ALER will still have control over the public housing in the end of this process. It is a matter of a public institution not having the resources required – money, time, skilled individuals, in order to perform the in-depth research and relation building that the university has committed itself to. On one hand the university is also a public institution, and they are able to stay inside the neighbourhood, unlike ALER, and provide a different point of view on the issues. On the other, they are acting as a third party, assuming responsibilities of ALER and acting as an expert consultant, but at the same time sharing equal roles of power in the process, without one fearing losing out to the other since the actors are all playing complementary roles to each other – especially now that ALER and the Regione have gone into an official agreement with the Politecnico to support their research activities.

What can be seen, like in the last 2 phases, is a situational logic of opportunism, where all of parties involved can benefit from the activities of each other. As Archer (1995) describes this socio-cultural interaction as *cultural free play*, which involves in the case the conceptual integration of ideas between the actors. The agents in power, i.e. ALER and the Regione, could choose to ignore these ideas or adopt them, based on their willingness to explore new possibilities, and seeing how they have had trouble in the past trying to activate the spaces using their strategy, they should display that willingness. What we see is the

⁸⁹ Without the option to be able to increase rent prices given the fact it is public housing. Their only solution so far, which has not been so effective, has been the privatisation strategy.

opportunity for the diffusion of ideas between the various institutions. This methodological approach employed by Mapping San Siro of experimenting with ways of re-using vacant commercial spaces, also seeing that this is also something new for the Regione, as Andrea told me in our interview (Ghirlanda, 2019), is seen as an opportunity to adopt a new approach also for ALER, as this is something they could apply if it is successful in this case.

Similar to the case of the relationship between ALER, the Regione and the Politecnico, before the negotiations to decide the terms of the Green Living Lab public space project, the role of the university as an actor in the negotiations phase is very limited. The city owns and manages the streets and sidewalks, so in order to make changes it has to be approved by them. At the same time, they would like to experiment with this shared responsibility of taking care of the public goods of the city, under the guidelines for the shared administration of common goods⁹⁰, which was approved by the city of Milan in March 2018 (Mi-Lorenteggio.com, 2018). This is a way to include various groups of citizens in order to take care of their neighbourhoods⁹¹, and it gives different actors the chance to get involved in different phases of the process. Viewing it from a different angle, the city does not have the resources to do the type of work that MSS is doing, as Lipparini explained “as a municipality, we can do many things, make decisions, in terms of operability, we are not so operational. We don’t have staff to set up complex projects like that. As a municipality we are divided into many different bodies. We need to collect different competences inside our reality as the university has done on the ground”. With the resources to be able to carry out projects without much support from the city, the university provides a reliable partner that the city is happy to deal with. They have much to gain from the university as it specialises in research and planning, and the university is using the technical know-how of the public institutions, while also getting them to think about strategies in new and innovative (as opposed to the traditional way of doing things). “It is very important. They give us methodology, they give us project management, and the funding”, Lipparini (2019) said.

6.4.2 Social Interaction (T²-T³)

With the initial writing of the shared document in the beginning of 2017, the next step was to expand on the previous work of the Sansheroes network. In this phase of the writing of the new shared document, they looked to share their work in the document with people outside of the Sansheroes network in order to receive feedback. So during the months of February and March 2018, there were 5 meetings organised by multiple members of the network, with each one taking place at a different location: the first discussion took place at the Comitato di Quartiere San Siro, the second meeting took place with a focus group of young residents at 30metriquadri, the third discussion took place at the Cadorna School and involved a group of foreign women, the fourth, also held at the Cadorna School, was a presentation to a group of foreign women following a course by Mamma a Scuola Onlus, and the last discussion of the document took place at Comitato Abitanti San Siro. In the months following the meetings, the document was rewritten taking into account the observations and data collected. In the meantime, the local network met periodically working on the last part of the document which speaks about future visions and potential projects for the neighbourhood (Sansheroes rete locale, 2019). This document is what will be presented by the network to the public at the Milan Triennale in February of 2019.

On 5 February 2019 there is the first public presentation of the shared document of the Sansheroes network at the Milan Triennale. Aside from Francesca, Alice and Elena speaking, there are also several members of

⁹⁰ Regolamento per l’amministrazione condivisa dei beni comuni – Introduced by Labsus in collaboration with the city of Bologna in 2014. During the following years it was adopted by cities from Torino and Milan to Genova, including many smaller ones as well. The list of cities in Italy has reached over 200 (LABSUS, 2018).

⁹¹ At the same time, it could be viewed as a way to take responsibility from the local governments.

the local network⁹² who are each presenting some of the issues important to them. In the days leading up to the event, I witnessed a scene where Bianca was upset over the printing of the flyer for the event, how the names of all the public officials were included, but for the 5 members of the network, it only referred to them as the Sansheroes local network. She even threatened to not speak, saying that it was unfair that they include the names of the city officials but not them, giving more importance to them when in reality the event was organised around the presentation of the network. Sabina tries to reason with them saying they have to accept these opportunities to present themselves to the public when they can and not focus on the small details. Activist CASS even says that it is normal that they bring this academic approach with them, and someone else reminds her that they are here because of Francesca, Polimi etc. Even though Bianca left still upset and the group not knowing whether she would speak, in the end she presented to the public.

This scene was in a way emblematic of the response of the public officials at the presentation, but as Sabrina told me, it is impossible to do an event like this that pleases everyone. Even though the event was important to “foster the identity of the network” , as well as being a good experiment for the local networks to use a different language, a common one, to think and speak about the neighbourhood and present the work they had done (Cognetti, 2019; Padovani, 2019), it did not help create better institutional relationships (Maranghi, 2019). The public figures did not give the credit to the network for all the effort they had put into the document, something that had never been done before. There was this lack of empathy and a disconnect from them (Uberti-Bona, 2019; Casaletti, 2019), and according to Paola they did not even try to speak in a way that gave them hope that they could work together. The network all had the same feelings towards the response of the public institutions, but in the end the buses of people who came from the neighbourhood to the event got to see their neighbourhood spoken about at a public event at the Triennale Milan – this can be said to be the importance of this event.

Several weeks later the official presentation of the public call *Nuove Luci a San Siro* was held at 30metriquadri, but much time and effort had gone into the making of this call and finalising all of the details in the agreement between the actors: the amount of renovations for the space, the types of activities - economic, cultural and social (one of the main aspects proposed by MSS is that the spaces could not only be for commercial activities, which is what ALER wanted), and it must provide a social or cultural service connected to the neighbourhood. Something that was a clear outcome that all three actors wanted, was that this process would serve as a starting point for a process of transformation in the neighbourhood (Regione Lombardia; ALER Milano; Mapping San Siro, 2019). In order to assist the winners of the space, as Andrea (Ghirlanda, 2019), who took part in writing the call, explained to me: the €200,000 that was set aside for the call go towards funding up to 80% of the refurbishments, while the remaining 20% is covered by ALER in lieu of rent payments until the amount is recovered. It is a challenging competition, but in the end there were 24 applicants, and the winners of the call were announced 19 July, 2019 (ALER Milano, 2019).

In addition to the Nuove Luci project, there is the third pilot project that is part of the Soho Lab that deals with the quality of the urban environment and public spaces in the neighbourhood. This is another project where they spent the majority of the time in the negotiation phase, almost 2 years Francesca (2019) told me, as it was a particularly long process in dealing with the public institutions and trying to understand a lot of the specifics and rules that go into adding bicycle parking, or making changes to the sidewalk, e.g. that usually you must pay for the plans. The group did not want to pay for these plans, and made sure that it

⁹² Bianca Bottero, Sabrina Uberti-bona, Paola Casaletti, Amelia Priano, An activist from the Comitato Abitanti San Siro

was in the collaborative contract⁹³ that they did not have to, which the city agreed to. Also involved in this project was a participation aspect carried out by Temporiuso.net⁹⁴, to get the neighbourhood involved in the planning of the space, which happened in April of 2018 and involved the voting on the types of games and designs which were most desired for the pavement and the types of vegetation for the plant holders. In the end, the painting of the sidewalk is carried out during the week of the 19th March, with the inauguration of the space taking place on the 24th March, which includes a small block party hosted by the three social actors on the street: Custodi Sociali, Mapping San Siro and Alfabeti Onlus. Being completed with the first Collaboration Pact for the city of Milan, Mayor Giuseppe Sala is in attendance and he is very receptive to the work done by Mapping San Siro in the neighbourhood, saying that he wanted to keep these types of partnerships going for the future and that more roundtables should be arranged going forward.

The following month on the 17th of April there is one of the greatest results, in terms of institutional trust and credibility, that comes from Mapping San Siro's effort in the neighbourhood, the inauguration of the new Off-campus space promoted by Polisocial. A lot of work is needed to get the building ready for this day, and Politecnico and ALER agree to each invest money into the space, which is almost 4 times the size of the original office. From then this becomes the new seat of Mapping San Siro's research activities, while additional rooms will be dedicated to the meetings of the local network and other actors, a room dedicated to cultural activities and exhibitions and finally there will be room dedicated to a legal clinic organised by the University of Bocconi used for learning about legal issues in a real life context. Off-Campus San Siro is one the first of 4 spaces that will be opened in the city of Milan under the Polisocial programme, with this idea being generated from the experience with Mapping San Siro (Castlenuovo, 2019).

6.4.2.1 Situational Logics and Second order emergent properties

As mentioned several times with the type of relationship between the corporate agents, i.e. the university and the public institutions, they are partners and supporters of each other knowing that each of them have specific competences and expert knowledge pertaining to their roles. As Archer (1995) says "For such a group to have real negotiating strength it must stand in a particular relationship to the other corporate agents involved ". There is this need to have the public served by the institutions, because on one side they are funded by taxes, and on the other because it is their responsibility to serve the inhabitants of the city. With that said, the university is able to assume this hybrid role when it comes to their negotiating strength: being able to represent a context at the local level⁹⁵ with the bargaining power of a public institution, having the competences in research and project management/planning, and also being able to experiment with untraditional techniques.

The city is aware of its weaknesses in terms of being able to put and manage the resources inside a neighbourhood in order to sufficiently understand the problems in a local context. Like ALER and the

⁹³ 21 December, 2018, the first Collaboration Pact is signed in the city of Milan, guaranteeing cooperation of the other technical actors of the city by the Head of Participation, Lorenzo Lipparini. Included in this pact are: Mapping San Siro , Association Tempo Riuso.net, 7th municipality of Milano, Alfabeti Onlus, Genera and Association Imby (Tempo Riuso, 2019)

⁹⁴Tempo Riuso is a small planning consultancy whose "purpose is to target empty, abandoned or under-utilized existing building stock and land, owned by public or private entities, and re-activate them through designs such as cultural and associative projects, small business and handicraft start-ups, temporary dwelling for students and low cost tourism" (Tempo Riuso, 2019)

⁹⁵ I also believe having the space in the neighbourhood has played an important role in allowing them to become a local actor and represent the network

Regione, who face the similar problems with a lack of resources, they are smart to accept this type of partnership with the university and allow them to accept this hybrid role, part as a public institution and part as a local actor. These three attributes give MSS substantial negotiating strength when dealing with public institutions, and is one of the key emergent properties when examining their social interactions.

This is also the case working with the city of Milan and the various offices, having the university as a partner for projects, like the Collaboration Pact for the public space project along via Abbiati, is a way. In this sense the university plays a different role, and because of that has substantial negotiating strength given the fact they are able to come ready to the municipality with a proposal, with funds. They have this credibility as a public institution, that as a planning university they have a strong knowledge of project management and the ability to apply for European funds. As Lipparini (2019) said, “when they were ready, they came to the municipality as an ally, so we received all of the work already done by them”. This is important when negotiating between the public institutions, the fact they are able to take on this additional responsibility and provide this resource to the city, while simultaneously representing a network of local actors, gives them substantial implicit power in the neighbourhood.

On the other side, there is the relationship between the Sansheroes network and the public institutions, with the network assuming this new role as a new corporate agent in the city. MSS plays this very unique role with them, as Francesca (2019) mentioned to me that they (acting as the university) do not have a particularly neutral role, but one that “allows [us] to go to speak with local institutions, with politicians on the left and right, in this moment [we] can really speak all together because [we are] not an activist[s]”. This new role that allows them to go back and forth between public and local actors, also has the potential to create conflict between the already existing public institutions, in a sense, because it establishes the network as an actor with a certain level of power, as was shown at the event at the Triennale Milan.

As a result of the event of the Triennale, it showed that the public institutions were still not as receptive to the idea of the network as a powerful actor, at least in a public setting. As Paola (Casaletti, 2019) said, that they could have taken this defensive strategy because “they were thinking everyone was against them, and they had to respond in this way”. While this could be viewed negatively, the event showed unity with the local actors of the neighbourhood, and they had a large audience that did appreciate what they were doing. Alice, who is writing her PhD thesis on role of local networks and public policy, thought it would have been more fruitful to present their work in a more informal setting and at the neighbourhood level instead of having all of the institutions there (Ranzini, 2019). In a different setting they might respond differently, but it will be the Politecnico’s role as the leader of the network to create this setting in the future.

“It’d be easier for ALER, the municipality, the Regione, to say, ok we’ll make a deal with the Politecnico, then we’ll go and evict a bunch of people. But if they know that there are sub-themes that we all agree on, it is more difficult for them to deal with it, knowing that there is a social network that wants rights for everyone” (Activist CASS, 2019). The activist from Comitato Abitanti explains this idea of the power of the group that they have created and the common goals they share, especially because they are one of the groups that are very critical and often have standoffish relationship with the public institutions. This is possibly why at least in a public setting, with over 100 people watching, they were not given the credit they deserved for what they had accomplished by the public institutions. But as the activist from CASS (2019) stated, it was very important for them because it showed unity inside the neighbourhood, as well as a common vision between the local associations and actors, something that had been lacking previously (Casaletti, 2019; Uberti-Bona, 2019)

6.4.3 Structural/Cultural Elaboration

I should state once again, that the temporal aspect of the structural and cultural conditioning plays a crucial role in determining the outcome and success. Like Francesca stated during our interview that the concurrence of all the events of her children at the school, the start of the Polisocial initiative backing her ideas of being more connected to the city, and the start of the MSS workshops contributed to the morphogenesis of the first phase, the temporal aspects of this phase – the lack of sufficient resources by the public institutions to provide welfare to the populations and neighbourhoods in need, the immigrant crisis reaching its height in the previous years, the changing attitude of non-public institutions taking part in the care of the public goods. If this sort of project was attempted 10 years before, the results may have turned out differently, without the current structures, cultural attitudes and people in place. While I do not believe that morphogenesis can be attributed to the systemic level, we do see it more on at the institutional and role levels in this case study, with specific generative mechanisms that have contributed most significantly to the events that have happened during the third phase.

6.4.3.1 *Morphogenesis of Structure and Culture*

One of the major aspects of the cultural conditioning that has shifted is this new attitude of working together and the relationship between the various actors that Mapping San Siro has influenced greatly. At the higher level, we see this new relationship between the university and the public institutions of the city. With the university's introduction as a new actor in the urban environment as a result of the Polisocial initiative, and its ability to provide complimentary services to the public sector (as well as the private). The important aspect of this is their relationship with the actors and institutions that they work with, that the actors are all on the same level with each other. They must leave this idea that just because they are public figures that their knowledge and expertise is more valuable than that of local inhabitants, and realise that knowledge of all levels goes into the improvement and eventual change of a neighbourhood in this case. While I do not believe that this has changed at a systemic level, this could be said to be its starting point.

It is the university's role to elaborate this type of knowledge and be able to transfer it to the institutions that can act on it. This is how a true bottom-up process of collecting data and knowledge on an area should work, and the university has a key role in mediating and facilitating what is done with the knowledge and how it is used. If it is done the traditional way, with the university receiving funding for a research project by the Regione, which is usually how it is done (Ghirlanda, 2019), then the results will be the same as before. This research needs to be part of a larger process of cooperating together through the various phases, as is the AR approach, and not have the university be solely utilised as partner that provides data and research but is not involved in the decision making. As Andrea (2019) stated that the three actors are trying to cooperate with open minds in order to imagine interesting solutions that work for all the parties involved – and most importantly the neighbourhood of San Siro.

One of the things that Andrea (2019) said about this new relationship that really stuck with me - "It's like a virus that modifies the normal ways of work": The virus being the work they are doing with MSS and ALER on the commercial spaces and that it will set an example and succeed in permanently changing the way in which everyone at the Regione conducts their activities. Andrea, being an ex-student of Francesca, played an important role throughout the whole process: from the beginning he really had to insist for the Regione to get involved in the supporting of MSS's activities, first trying with these informal and technical agreements, and finally reaching the formal agreement. He believes that the managers at the Regione see this as a good experience, being much more useful than the usual way (ibid.). We need agents like these who can transform the culture of an institution, who are willing to experiment and try a new approach that is against societal norms. And this can be seen with Francesca and Andrea, both of whom stepped outside

what was considered normal in the Italian context and pushed to try something experimental, resulting in a permanent change, at least in the university's relationship with the city and public institutions.

The opening of the Off-campus spaces shows a morphogenesis to the attitude of MSS's approach of situating in a place at the institutional level. Not only does the investment of money into the space show the commitment to this style of action-research, but also the fact that the Politecnico has opened another 3 offices around the city of Milan (Castlenuovo, 2019). The new permanent base of Mapping San Siro is just one of those physical changes to improve the neighbourhood, the opening up of once abandoned spaces. They are already planning improvements to the public spaces at the front and rear of the new office, with the Sansheroes network building off their presentation at the Triennale and working towards more concrete objectives and projects. More than the physical change, it becomes a culture of change, and that is what MSS is contributing to the neighbourhood, in the hopes that these initial changes are able set off a chain of events that continue into the future. The hope is also that other universities will see what MSS and the Politecnico have achieved with the initiative of social responsibility⁹⁶, and eventually more and more universities will look to exit from their boundaries and try to establish themselves as actors of social change with the urban context, using their resources to experiment with modern solutions for the modern problems that cities face, instead of just studying them.

One of the other changes was the relations between the local associations as a result of MSS's activities. Now that the group is more publicly recognised after the Triennale event, I believe it will increase their credibility, but this is something that remains to be seen. While I would not say they are more than an organised group, which is what they became during the second phase when they officially formed the Sansheroes network and made the shared document, during the Triennale they may have been more repressed by the existing state of systemic integration (Archer, 1995), but their corporate agency as an organised group was reinforced by the backing of the Politecnico and now the public. I believe that the Network has solidified their role as a corporate agent, especially with the event acting as a display of unity to the institutions and to the public, something that was lacking before between all of them, as Paola Casaletti (2019) explained, "There was a little antagonism, it was always a competition, everyone wanted the funds for their own cause. Now it isn't like that. In this sense there was a huge improvement". Many of the individual actors know they are stronger together, especially teaming with the Politecnico, and for that, even though they may not always agree 100%, for people like the activist CASS, they know that a compromise is better than working alone (Activist CASS, 2019).

As discussed throughout this section, one of the greatest outcomes has been the relationships that MSS has established with ALER and the Regione, the city di Milan, the Sansheroes network, the local schools and finally with the University of Bocconi occupying an office in the new space. They have been able to, for the most part⁹⁷, create this culture of collaboration instead of competition between the universities, the local actors and other public institutions. Now that these relationships have been fostered over the last several years, and have produced positive results, I feel going forward change will be able to come more easily and efficiently than the first time around, and this will be beneficial for the inhabitants of San Siro – the ones who need it most.

⁹⁶ Being the only university in Italy to have a programme of social responsibility (Castlenuovo, 2019)

⁹⁷ According to Paola Casaletti (2019), Mapping has never been able to establish a reciprocal relationship with the Laboratorio di Quarteire, which she states is the neither the fault of Mapping nor the Laboratorio. The office that manages the Laboratorio never understood which type of political relationship they wanted to have with the other actors in the neighbourhood.

6.4.3.2 *Generative Mechanisms*

MSS's philosophy and approach, which has led them to building relationships with the various levels of actors in the neighbourhood, I believe has also been one of the most crucial determining factors in explaining their success. The fact they have taken an approach that varies from the traditional way of doing research, which goes in line with their exiting from the confines of university and opening a local research space – another break from the traditional way of doing research. Action-research is a cyclical process that is done by carrying out systematic inquiry in a reflective way and most importantly is centred around the improvement of a social practice, in this case the social practice goes beyond the improvement of the neighbourhood (Kember, 2000). One of the aspects that I have stressed throughout the phases, especially the second and third, is the importance of establishing relationships with the actors of the neighbourhood as a way of reflecting on your activities and research, and this can only be done if the participants taking part in this approach are all seen as equal. That is what truly allows someone to not assume that just because they are an 'expert' of a certain type of knowledge, this does not mean that it is more valuable than another type of knowledge. As Francesca (2019) explained to me, "social cooperatives, they have a lot of knowledge, but they are not able to explain that knowledge. They know a lot of needs of the neighbourhood, singular inhabitants, singular dynamics, but they [aren't] able to explain them" and on the other hand "the public institutions are not able to listen to local needs and different positions, and also to accept some conflicts". To me, this has been one of the greatest achievements of Mapping San Siro's work in the neighbourhood, and why this has led to the group being successful in advancing their goals of bottom-up regeneration of the neighbourhood.

One of the generative mechanisms examining the impact of the Sansheroes network is firstly their group dynamic, and secondly, which is part of the group dynamic, the dual role MSS plays within the network and with the public institutions. MSS's position as an affiliated university group gives them the power and reputation of an established public institution with the Politecnico of Milan, while in the neighbourhood they assume a neutral position, being able to listen to the other actors without favouring one or the other. They are able to act as the representative of the Sansheroes network, an important role when they go and speak with the public institutions. As mentioned previously with the various types of knowledge both the public institutions and the local actors have, MSS is able to act as a mediator between the two, presenting the needs of the local context to the public institutions, and helping the network express themselves by using different language when communicating to the city. Also, this role they play within the network as the facilitator of the group, the responsibility of organising meetings, writing of the shared document, and most importantly presenting a vision that goes outside the norm of the actors' daily responsibilities – they are essentially the manager of the network, and the glue that holds the network together.

As the manager of the network they are responsible for deciding who is allowed in the group but at the same time playing a neutral role and not taking sides, as I have discovered this group dynamic and the roles of the various actors is important for the longevity of this experimental project. Also, the fact that Mapping San Siro does not assume the role as a public institution allows them to accept groups like Comitato Abitanti into the network, without needing to take a stance if they are for or against the illegal occupation of housing. Groups like them, as Activist CASS believed that they play a role of pulling the group more left with their views as a squatted place. They acknowledge that their views are very different from others in the group, but they also do not want to close themselves off from people who do not share their views (Activist CASS, 2019). As I learned from my interviews with the other network in the neighbourhood, the group dynamic is crucial in keeping the group together, as is the example with the QB network which is more fragmented due to ideological motives, with one of the members disassociating themselves from the

group because they allowed in 2 very right leaning groups⁹⁸. MSS did not include these members and those that were so fundamentally diverse, so more or less all of the Sansheroes network have the same ideology (Casaletti, 2019).

6.5 Conclusion

Originating from a personal path of a professor living close by and being connected to the local schools of a public housing neighbourhood, Mapping San Siro has laid the groundwork on how to organise a research group outside the university and become an important actor and a catalyst for change in a disadvantaged neighbourhood. With a university initiative in Polisocial to support their initial activities throughout the first phase, it helped that there was already an experimental structure in place before MSS went into the neighbourhood. As Francesca was also one of the people involved in starting the Polisocial initiative, it leads to debate of which influenced what or whom, structure or agency. Seeing how the agent was involved in both processes, I would say that this would be a case of agency influencing structure, in 2 senses: on the one hand agency influences the structure of Polisocial by providing an experimental approach that the university is searching for in order to begin defining not what their objectives are (because those had already been defined), but by laying out a path in order to reach those objectives. On the other hand, it changes the role of the university within the city, as it looks to take a more reciprocal role with the neighbourhood in the exchange of knowledge between the university and the city, as well as playing the role of an actor that is able to negotiate with public institutions and local associations. As mentioned previously, although there is a morphogenesis of structure with the obtaining of the new space, I feel at this stage there is a morphostasis of culture in terms of the attitude towards the action-research approach of Mapping San Siro, as I do not believe this style of research is still widely accepted in many universities. Lastly, the generative mechanisms in the phase, which is what critical realism attempts to answer without making generalisations for all cases (Archer, 1995), are the introduction of the Polisocial initiative and the character of Francesca Cognetti and her mission to improve the living conditions of a local neighbourhood, being a local resident and involved in urban planning.

FIGURE 6-4 - MORPHOGENESIS OR MORPHOSTASIS?

Phase	I	II	III
Situation logic	Opportunism	Opportunism	Opportunism
Structural	Morphogenesis	Morphogenesis	Morphogenesis
Cultural	Morphostasis (systemic)	Morphogenesis	Morphogenesis
Outcomes	Need for change role of university	Need for change in the relationship between actors	Need for change – urban environment
Agency	Morphogenesis – Mapping San Siro	Morphogenesis – Mapping San Siro	Morphostasis – Sansheroes network

This is quite an experimental phase for the group, as there is no real direction of guidance coming from the university, so they are free to speak with whom they want and think about the three main themes they laid out during the discovery period. As a result, through the second phase there is the development of

⁹⁸ Paola explained to me that Fondazione Cariplo wanted that maximum number of participants possible in order to win the call (Casaletti, 2019)

Mapping San Siro's role in the neighbourhood, as they begin to build relationships in the neighbourhood with all 3 levels of 'inhabitants': the inhabitants of San Siro, the local associations and actors, and the public institutions connected to the neighbourhood, and therefore trust begins to develop over time. The defining aspects of this period are the official creation of the Sansheroes network and the new formal agreement between the public institutions to support the research activities of MSS. As an elaboration in structure occurs with this new relationship, once again there is a morphogenesis of agency, allowing MSS to become a corporate agent. I believe at this phase, with the success of the group, there begins to be a morphogenesis of culture in the traditional style of research at the institution level, and with these elaborations of culture, agency and structure, it sets the groundwork for the third phase of the changes seen within the Polisocial initiative, the neighbourhood and the Sansheroes network. In this phase, I believe the generative mechanisms responsible for the outcomes are: the dynamics of the group, the mix of young students and veteran professors; the 4-stage methodological approach of MSS; and lastly the resources secured by the JPI public call helped increase the bargaining power of the group and make them a legitimate actor.

In the third phase, the one that I was able to partly experience, there are significant changes to structure, culture and agency as a result of the negotiations and activities in phase 2. By winning the public call, the group looked to advance their 3 pilot projects, working with both public institutions and local actors. Some of the most significant outcomes are the opening of the new Off-campus San Siro space, along with 3 other new spaces throughout the city, which shows the commitment to this new style of action-research and relationship with different elements of the city which was the main objective of the Polisocial initiative. In addition to the opening of the space, which signals a reactivation of an empty commercial space, there are the publishing of the call *Nuove Luci a San Siro* and the execution of the public space project *Green Living Labs*, both within the objectives of the SoHo Lab project and the original goals established by the group in their exploration of the neighbourhood in phase 1. And lastly, with the public presentation of the Sansheroes network and the updating of the shared document, they are able to gain public recognition and become a corporate agent acting within the neighbourhood. Although, with the Triennale event I believe that they have advanced the status of an organised group, it still showed the limitations with this event being considered a consensus-style approach, which will discuss in more depth in the conclusion, resulting in the eventual morphostasis.

I believe the causal mechanism for these events is MSS's ability to assume this dual role as a public institution and a local actor, which allows them to have influence when negotiating, but also to gain the trust of local actors through their years of relationship building. With their knowledge of urban planning and research from being a university, the knowledge of the local context by being situated in the neighbourhood and discover local needs through dialogue with local actors, and lastly their newly acquired knowledge on the workings of negotiations at the public institution level, which thanks to these 3 different inputs of knowledge, they have an all-encompassing approach to be able to begin to solve issues with the physical urban and social environment of San Siro – their objective from the start.

Chapter 7 Discussion & Conclusion – The Role of Community-Based Research Groups

“The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways. The point, however, is to change it.” - Karl Marx

7.1 Introduction

Throughout this thesis, the concept of marginalised neighbourhoods and communities, agents of change and the exchange of knowledge between the two have been discussed. As the title of the thesis proposed to investigate the role of community-based research in producing change, focusing mainly on disadvantaged communities, this final chapter will examine the roles played by the two actors, Tesseræ and Mapping San Siro, connecting them with the theoretical concepts presented in the first 3 chapters: the changing of cities and society, community and social infrastructure and the role of action-research in community development. As one of the goals was using critical realism (CR), this final chapter will look to present the most significant generative mechanisms from the analysis in the previous chapter, while also introducing some possible middle range theories. Finally, it will be concluded taking into account my experience and the approach I have taken to carrying out this research, and offering some insights for future researchers.

7.2 Discussion - The Role of Mapping San Siro

Cities and neighbourhoods are a product of different physical, social and virtual infrastructures, various systems and networks, and are subject to processes of change. A neighbourhood like the one of San Siro in Milan which was once marked by innovation during its inception, is now marked by decay and conflict, one that is halfway between accelerated decline and abandonment by the Italian state. The groups that were once viewed as the foreign immigrants, the Italians who emigrated from the south, have been replaced by new immigrants, mainly from Africa, Asia and South America. Presented in the first chapter, were three models of urban change, one that believed that the exogenous forces of urban decline could be overcome by collective action and human agency, called the subcultural approach (Geyer Jr, 2018). It states that the strengthening of social cohesion in a community can lead to a stronger local sentiment, a common purpose and a sense of place. And for that, an urban actor that facilitates that is essential, as disenchanted individuals on their own are usually too occupied with their own needs to think about that of the community. With that said, it is the role of these urban actors that provide support and the ever important role of community cohesiveness, acting as agents of change in the process.

It is the role of the urban actors as facilitators of community-based research and the social infrastructure they provide that has been one of the aspects investigated during my research periods with the two groups, as well as the approaches they have chosen in attempting to carry out community development. For that, I will refer back to the definition of community development and community organisation provided in Chapter 2:

Community development – the process of transforming marginalised communities so that the people in those communities may collectively act on their situations and on the external forces that undermine and perpetuate their oppressive conditions (Luna, et. Al, 2004 from Quimbo, Perez, & Tan, 2018)

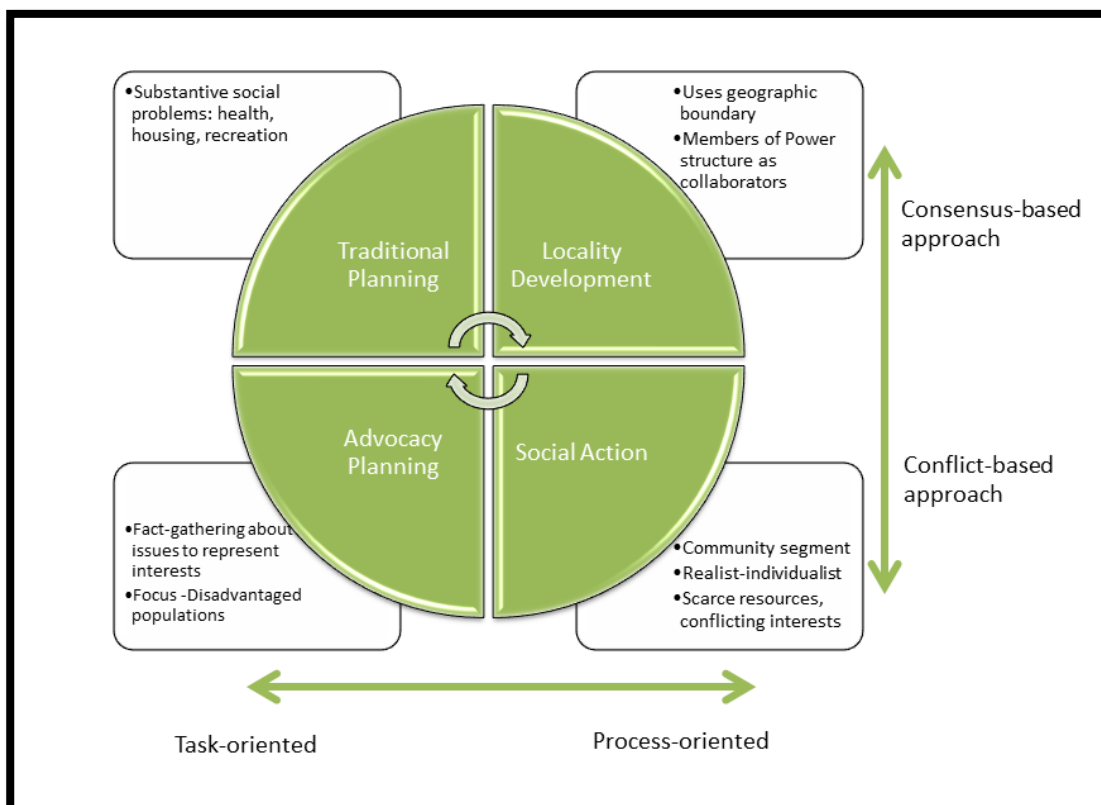
Community organising - a process which a community identifies its needs or objectives, and will work to meet the needs and fulfil the objectives, finding the internal and external resources

necessary to deal with the needs, and take action based on the respective needs, while subsequently expanding and developing cooperative and collaborative practices in the community (Dizon, 2012)

7.2.1 Role of the group

As part of Rothman's three models of community organising, which I will use to assess mainly the role⁹⁹ of Mapping San Siro in the neighbourhood of San Siro, Rothman presented three models of social change at the community level. I would argue that MSS's role falls more under the social planning approach, which Stockdale (1976) then breakdowns into two separate types, traditional planning and advocacy planning. Although these approaches are broken down according to their varying characteristics, in reality, the groups that carry them out usually do so with a combination of the four approaches. Although Stockdale says in theory social planning should be broken down into the two different disciplines, my experience has seen MSS take a mixed approach, as shown in Figure 7-1. In the boxes are several characteristics of each approach that pertain to the activities Mapping San Siro has carried out in the neighbourhood. On the horizontal dimension, the more rational and task-oriented strategies stand on the left, meaning they are the more technical approaches that rely on analysis of data, etc. While moving across the spectrum to the right is the process-oriented approach, which include the approaches taken by locality development and social action, which place emphasis on community processes and interactions (Hyman, 1990).

FIGURE 7-1 - MODELS OF COMMUNITY ORGANISING – MAPPING SAN SIRO APPROACH



7.2.1.1 Facilitator of Community Development

In the creation of the local network, part of MSS's approach has been organising people (and associations) for power, which is an aspect of social action (Dizon, 2012; Hyman, 1990). As this was not necessarily their intention, as the creation of the network happened naturally as a way to share ideas and co-produce

⁹⁹ Seeing how the most extensive part of the research was carried out with MSS, I will mainly examine their role in the neighbourhood.

knowledge, but the result has been the empowerment of the group, as Poblete (1995 from Dizon, 2012) defines empowerment as “the process by which local organizations obtain power and authority in managing and controlling local resources and in increasing their capability for decision-making and problem solving through increased membership, linkages, and level of participation.” I thought this definition defined quite precisely what the creation of the local network has become, although it was not that in the beginning. As the initial role of this relationship with local actors was to create a new perception of the neighbourhood, one that was more favourable towards the diverse cultures of immigrants and the benefits they can bring to communities, it has turned into a way to not only co-produce, but to also co-design projects with this local knowledge that the associations possess. For that reason, Mapping San Siro has played the role of facilitators of community development, and has used part of the social action approach in order to do so.

Falling under the category of social action would also assume that MSS has adopted a conflict approach to community organising, but that would not be true, as they have also taken on the role as a mediator, hence a consensus-based approach, which falls on the vertical axis of Figure 7-1. On one hand they are looking to redress the power balance, and gain allocation of resources for the associations and the neighbourhood, but on the other, with the ability to alternate from being the Sansheroes network to representing the Politecnico (a public institution), and vice-versa, they act as a mediator between the community and the power structures, i.e. the public institutions. They are also able to acknowledge that ALER has not acted in the interest of the people they are supposed to be serving, but also their role has been to also not align themselves with groups that view ALER solely as the enemy in the situation, as the members of Comitato Abitanti have referred to them numerous times as a “mafia” because of their corruption and mishandling of public funds in recent history (Activist CASS, 2019). Mapping San Siro, as well as groups like Comitato Abitanti, realise that a confrontational approach is not always the most efficient way to accomplish their goals. While they support groups such as Cantiere, or the Comitato Abitanti San Siro who would be considered social activists that use conflict tactics such as demonstrations, occupations, etc. (Stockdale, 1976), they know as a public institution they have a reputation to uphold and cannot take this approach.

While Mapping San Siro has focused on a geographical area, which is seen in locality development (Figure 7-1), this is also due to the context of the San Siro neighbourhood, a public housing neighbourhood that has clearly defined borders. Yet, the population within San Siro is a disadvantaged population with the highest concentration of immigrant populations in the city of Milan. The problem-solving involved as part of MSS’s approach is more aligned with advocacy planning, which uses technical skills and leadership, like traditional planning, but focuses on segments of the population. Obviously with the high concentration of immigrants¹⁰⁰, they are primary focus of MSS for several of their interventions, but they are also aware and considering plans for the elderly population who suffer from isolation and loneliness, although this is more part of the network. The traditional planning is shown in their regeneration projects, in which they have focused on more substantial issues such as the public spaces with the Green Living Labs project and the abandoned shops¹⁰¹ with the Nuove Luci a San Siro. But they have also focused on training and jobs for immigrant women in the neighbourhood, which would fall more under advocacy planning as it focuses on a specific population (Hyman, 1990; Stockdale, 1976).

¹⁰⁰ Also the fact that there are around 85 different immigrant groups, they know that they cannot group them together and have a general plan for all of them.

¹⁰¹ While the regeneration of the abandoned shops can said to be more substantive, the requirement to repopulate the shops with a mix of cultural, social and economic activities that benefited the neighbourhood is something that focused on the need to provide these types of services that are lacking.

7.2.1.2 Co-producers of knowledge

One of the things that has been discussed in this thesis is the co-production of knowledge, to which both Tesseræ and MSS have given a strong importance in their approaches. As mediators between the local associations and the public institutions, Mapping San Siro has played a crucial role in producing local knowledge of the neighbourhood with the assistance of the local network, as well communicating knowledge between the levels of actors. Working in the area every day, the local associations know a lot of needs of the neighbourhood and singular inhabitants, but they are not always able to express them. On the other hand, public institutions are not always able to listen to local needs and accept some conflicts, as Francesca Cognetti (2019) explained. Many of the inhabitants, along with several members of the Sansheroes network, have trust issues with the public institutions of the city for various reasons, and for that reason they may adopt a conflict approach between each other. So not only do they co-produce the knowledge as shown with their efforts with the shared document written by the Sansheroes network they act as a knowledge intermediary and try to bridge the divide in trust between the different levels of actors and inhabitants.

7.2.1.3 Network Manager

Another thing that would categorise their approach as locality development, is their role as the facilitator and mediator in the process of interaction and communication in regards to their role in the Sansheroes network. As Rothman argued, the role of the facilitator in community development is to adopt and change strategy that gets a broad range of people involved in studying and taking action based on their own problems (Stockdale, 1976). While the majority of a group of people in the local network are not inhabitants of the neighbourhood, their associations deal with people who are. So while the approach has been modified to have participation at the second level, the objective to include people with knowledge of the problems of the neighbourhood in order to propose solutions is similar to that of Rothman's locality development, and as Ghilchrist (2009) states, this role of helping people and organisation to cooperate and communicate across different boundaries and themes is an essential and unique part of community development.

As I have learned, before Mapping San Siro came to the neighbourhood, the associations were in conflict and competition for resources. So as a mediator not only between the local network and public institutions, they have also acted as the mediator between the individual actors in bringing them together. As Francesca (Cognetti, 2019) stated, "we can try to speak with both (Comitato di Quartiere and Comitato Abitanti) and try to reinforce a common vision. They don't agree on some points, but with our support they are trying to listen to each other". In the end, they know the overall vision is not for their benefit, but for the benefit of the neighbourhood, as the Activist CASS (2019) said, "For us, we are a squatted place. We know we are different but I know we have to work together. I know we are useful for the other associations and the Politecnico to stay linked with, we know each of us together give things. It is very useful to work together". Even though groups like Comitato di Quartiere and Comitato Abitanti disagree on their view of squatting, they come together when it comes to improving the neighbourhood, because that is something they both want. So in the end, all sides have to make concessions in order to work together and advance their goals.

As one of their roles as the network manager, they have mediated between many roles and personalities within the group. As the manager, some of their responsibilities is assembling documents such as the shared vision, as well as when they have the network meetings, they record the results and present them as minutes to the meeting when necessary. Being planners, they assume the role as project managers, taking the ideas agreed upon by the network and turning them into something concrete. This is something I realised is a very important role for the network, as I discovered in my interviews with some of the

members, that a lot of their time they are busy with their own endeavours. Therefore, with MSS being able to see the bigger picture and think outside the normal everyday activities, they assume the role also as a type of project manager within the group.

Many times, people would ask what exactly MSS does, and the answer varied to an extent, but always first and foremost they were a group of researchers. So they could be viewed as a community-based research organisation, and as they consider themselves action-researchers originating from an urban studies department, their end goal, which is also the goal CBPR, is to produce some type of change or action. One of the changes MSS has been able to produce is establishing a centre in the neighbourhood of study, which has been beneficial not only for their research activities, but also for the Politecnico of Milan, as it has inspired other types of activities that connects the university to the city, which will be discussed more in-depth in the next section.

7.2.2 Role of the Space – 30metriquadri

The research centre situated in San Siro has contributed a role in MSS's success in the neighbourhood for several reasons, as they have also become an important social infrastructure for the community. Not only have they given benefit for the local associations and the community, they have also significantly benefited the university, offering a didactic experience in a real-life context – something in addition to the theoretical learning that is done within the university. The question has been posed many times about what is the role of the space in the neighbourhood, and based off the different types of community infrastructure presented in Chapter 2, as well as my observations and interviews with the group, I will attempt to answer it.

Firstly, I should state that during my time there the space experienced some significant changes due to the change in support of the Politecnico. From May of 2014 the group occupied the building given to them by ALER at via Abbiate, 4 (30metriquadri), and then in April of 2019 they moved into the new space that was renovated by ALER and the Politecnico, located at via Abbiate 6 (Figure 7-2; Spazio Gigante). For me, there was instantly a different feeling between the two spaces, one being more formal and the other informal: The new space clearly became a university space, just from the feel of the interior design and also the markings on the doors, letting it be known that it was Off-Campus San Siro of the Politecnico of Milan (Figure 7-3). There are obviously immense benefits for the group having not only the personal support of the university, but also the financial support to sustain the activities of the group¹⁰². The one downside that I noticed instantly was that not as many people just wandered in the place asking what it was and if we could help them¹⁰³. From the outside there were many people curiously looking in, being a new space in a neighbourhood that was used to only seeing them close down instead of open; The more informal space being the original one, 30metriquadri, shown in Figure 5-10, being more of a self-managed space that felt like it was part of the community, that it was more unclear what the space was to outsiders¹⁰⁴ and it led to more people entering and asking who we were, what were we doing and if we could help them, which leads to some of the informal services that the space and group offered to the neighbourhood.

¹⁰² This is crucial because for the first couple years without a mandate to be there by the university, the space was supported by volunteers and their purpose there was not very clear.

¹⁰³ Although from the time we started using the space until my research period was finished, only about 2 months had passed. I would have had to spend more time if I wanted to conduct a full comparison of the spaces, which is outside the scope of this thesis. The purpose is just to state the initial differences I encountered from 2 April until 13 June 2019

¹⁰⁴ Many people entered confusing us for the Italian language school Alfabeti Onlus, which was located at via Abbiate, 2.

FIGURE 7-2 - LOCATION OF THE NEW SPACE COMPARED WITH THE ORIGINAL



FIGURE 7-3 - THE NEW SPACE OF OFF CAMPUS SAN SIRO: SPAZIO GIGANTE



Source: Edited from the Instagram account of Mapping San Siro, 2019

7.2.2.1 Relation building and Informal Activities

During my time there, one of the first things that struck me about the space was that they were not just there to do research, but to be part of the neighbourhood, and with that said, they were there to help when people needed it. Often, Anton, the Sri Lankan gate keeper of the apartments behind 30metriquadri and is employed by ALER, being a foreigner would come in and ask for assistance with things in his daily life. During one of my first days there, he came in with a 7-year-old boy who had just arrived a week earlier from Sri Lanka and was having trouble with his Italian homework assignment. Elena helped the boy with it, and also gave Anton the names of several afterschool programmes he could attend in order to help him learn Italian and catch up with his peers. Many times, Anton came to ask for assistance with things such as moving boxes that were part of a squatted basement, asking advice for his son who was sick, signing up for school, etc. But it was not just Anton that we gladly helped, people new to the neighbourhood would enter and ask for help finding services, or just people who wanted to talk. Just the expressions of some people who were passing by and smiled and waved at us, the people you would see while arriving to the office in the morning and spark up a conversation, knowing that research can be more than just interviews, observations and analysing data, but creating real connections with people.

One of the other people that I noticed was contributing more than just research was Paolo Grassi, the anthropologist who was previously a social-worker and is currently a post-doc researcher with the group. This was evident in his interactions with people in the neighbourhood, especially William, the forty-something year old with psychological problems who lived in the apartments behind the office and often stopped to talk to us. When Paolo was there, he was always the one to try and bring him outside to talk to him (which was not always easy because sometimes he was quite difficult to handle, especially if he had been drinking or in a bad mood). Many times when Paolo was not there, being one of the only other males, I would be the one to assume his role and try and talk to William. On several occasions Paolo also assisted people with CVs and an undergraduate thesis, he was just always there to help. He has this dynamic with other people in the neighbourhood that was a much-valued contribution to in addition what the other researchers were doing, almost as a type of social relations manager. As Amelia Priano (2019) said about him, “he does research, goes in people’s houses, he’s kind and has a good relational approach. A lot of researchers come, they are discreet, instead he is really kind, I have a grand admiration for him¹⁰⁵”. It just seemed that Paolo had assumed this role, as whenever he was there and people entered to ask questions, he was usually the one to take the lead and give them advice. These types of interactions help connect them to the neighbourhood and become a point of reference. Whether this is intended part of their activities, or just something that comes natural in the desire to help people, it is a crucial role of the group and the space in San Siro. This was something I noticed not just seeing Paolo in his everyday interactions, but also hearing the positive thing said about him from people in the neighbourhood.

Other than the social interactions we would have with the neighbours and passer-by’s, we also had the responsibility of keeping the office and the surrounding area tidy. Often, we would arrive in the morning to find the sidewalk outside the office a place to littered with large amounts of rubbish (dressers, tables, beds, couches, bicycles, etc.). Several times we called AMSA in order for them to come and pick it up. I discover that this is quite a common problem in the neighbourhood, that according to Lorenzo Lipparini (2019) of the city of Milano, he believes that people in San Siro do not call because they would have to leave their name, and being clandestine could cause problems. Being part-time residents of the neighbourhood, there is this responsibility to also keep it clean, which was also the idea of the Green Living Labs project (shown in Figure 7-4 and Figure 7-5) to renovate the sidewalk and make it a place of interaction for children, instead of a place for rubbish.

¹⁰⁵ In Italian: “Lui fare la ricerca, entra nelle case delle persone, gentile anche un bell’approccio relazionale. Molto arrivano, sono indiscreti, invece lui è proprio gentile, ho un grande ammirazione”.

FIGURE 7-4 - BEFORE AND AFTER: GREEN LIVING LAB PROJECT



FIGURE 7-5 – END RESULT OF THE GREEN LIVING LAB PROJECT



7.2.2.2 Centre of research, project management and university resource

The main role that the space acted as was a window or view into the everyday life of the neighbourhood of San Siro, and try to find a way to informally interact with the people there (Padovani, 2019). With that it has experimented with a new approach to carrying out research, one that allows CBROs to interact on a more familiar basis and to build relations with the inhabitants, while trying to understand the conditions and the situation that they were facing. Having the space allowed the group to build trust with the neighbourhood, letting them know that they were there to stay, and not just study them for several months and leave, which is typical of traditional university research, something that was viewed as positive by the Activist CASS (2019) This was essential to the success of MSS's work, as several of them expressed to me in their interviews (Padovani, 2019; Maranghi, 2019; Cognetti, 2019). By building relations you could more easily have access to inhabitants to interview and collect data. Aside from these aspects, the space was used as a centre to conduct interviews, and as an office for the group to meet and discuss their

research as a group. It also allowed the group to easily view the changes from projects like the Green Living Labs, and also acted as a central place for meetings and activities.

The office also played the role as a place for meetings with the actors involved in the projects of MSS, as well as for the Sansheroes network. There were many meetings to discuss and negotiate the details of projects such as the Nuove Luci a San Siro with ALER and the Regione Lombardia, and the Green Living Labs with the project partners and the city of Milan. The meetings that took place were vital for their development of the Sansheroes network, and it allowed them to collaborate to create the shared vision document, plan for the Triennale event, and discuss things freely that concerned the future of the network, where there is a feeling of freedom, openness and non-judgement (Uberti-Bona, 2019), which is essential in the process of PAR (Fals-Borda, 1991; Rahman, 2008). Aside from meetings, it was also used as the central base for the painting of the sidewalks during the Green Living Labs project, and the initial presentation of Nuove Luci a San Siro, where people interested in the spaces came and expressed the ideas for potential projects for the spaces and learned about what exactly would be offered if they had won the call.

Aside from the substantive activities it provided, it became of resource for the university and a real-life learning environment for students and teachers. Several times during my period there, the master's programme in Urban Design at University of Sheffield and the PhD course at IUAV University of Venice would come and learn about MSS's activities and be accompanied on a tour of the neighbourhood by Elena Maranghi and Giada Mascherin, while also using the neighbourhood in their studies to plan and design various projects based on their observations. The space also served as a classroom for students from the Politecnico to come and present their projects and work done on the neighbourhood. There was also a rotation of master's students from the Politecnico who were coming there for several months at a time to carry out their internships. Lastly, the space was also for external seminars organised by MSS called Caffè San Siro, which was a way to try to mix researchers, institutions, local inhabitants and associations and explain the work that they were doing, which helped them communicate it more efficiently. As Liliana (Padovani, 2019) told me in our interview "We wanted to get out of the arrogance of knowledge in university". I found interesting that even someone who had been in university her whole life also shared that view, which I believe inspired people like Francesca and Liliana to want to get outside the university and explore ways to exchange knowledge on a different level, and create a different type of learning experience, one that could help encourage new ideas and social change. Part of learning can be done from books, but there is a practical side that must accompany it, and this is what inspired Reginald Revans in his concept of action learning (Pedler, et al., 2008; Botham, et al., 2010).

7.2.3 Mapping San Siro: A Community hub or Community-based research centre?

When discussing what Mapping San Siro would be considered, it helps to also understand what they are not. For that reason, the last part of the discussion will examine the different types of community and social infrastructure introduced in Chapter 2, such as community hubs, community-based research centres and community development organisations, in order to aid the discussion.

When speaking about community hubs, Mapping San Siro does not fit the traditional definition of community hub or centre in the Anglo-Saxon context, which look to bring together all of the essential services (cultural, health, social, work, recreational etc.) under one roof and provide a space for neighbours to connect to one another and their community. I can confidently say Mapping San Siro, and the space of 30metriquadri, is not a service provider in that sense, but examining what they do with their space it can be said they exhibit some aspects, whether it be formally or informally. It is a welcoming space for people to come in and talk with the members of the group and ask for advice, as I have previously discussed. In

regards to a central place for services, there is a need within communities to bring service providers together in order to work together towards a common goal in a way that improves services and at the same time strengthen community cohesion (McShane, 2006). This is considered the asset-based approach to community development, which sees improving community facilities and services as a way of meeting social needs and enhancing well-being, and community hubs in certain contexts have been extending their services to include those of planning and co-design (Community Hubs Advisory Group, 2015).

San Siro has the need of spaces that provide more social and cultural services, and what MSS has done is facilitated the process that deals with the public call for Nuove Luci a San Siro, which viewed the abandoned commercial spaces with the potential to become resources for the neighbourhood. Aside from attempting to facilitate the development of other services in the neighbourhood, another interesting aspect that MSS has incorporated in its new space is a legal clinic¹⁰⁶, in collaboration with the University of Milan, it is a service that provides free legal advice to socially and economically vulnerable people. On one hand this offers a valuable service to the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, while on the other it falls in line with the concept of situated learning, which has been central to Mapping San Siro's approach. While I have stated that Mapping San Siro does not fit the traditional definition of a community hub, the work they do with providing formal and informal services while strengthening community infrastructure through the Sansheroes network and the Nuove Luci a San Siro project, which could be considered a type of manager and provider of community infrastructure.

What I have more associated Mapping San Siro's role, than that of a community hub, is that of a community development organisation (CDO), which I defined in the second chapter as:

An organisation that leverages local knowledge and resources, bringing together concerned citizens, businesses, and other governmental institutions to manage the improvement of a disadvantaged neighbourhood for the benefit of the residents (McQuarrie, 2010; Nye, et al., 1999).

CDOs have mainly existed as NGOs that have been assuming the role of community development, but in the case of Mapping San Siro they are technically a public institution being associated with a public university. On one hand they carry out community development, but on the other they are a group of researchers, which is necessary to effectively address the problems faced by disadvantaged communities. Community Based Participatory Research is a discipline that combines community development and action-research and therefore is what I would define Mapping San Siro as, a community-based research centre. Originating from the Department of Architecture and Urban Studies of the Politecnico of Milan, they have applied this approach with the lens of urban planners, so referencing Table 2-2 (Principles of CBPR), the work that MSS does meets all of the principles stated, except for specifically addressing locally-relevant health problems¹⁰⁷. Within CBPR, the model that MSS has applied started out as area-based collaboration with a small group of community organisations, but over time they have formed a broad-based coalition of grassroots organisations (Weiner, et al., 2013) known as the Sansheroes local network. Community organisations connected with universities such as the Pratt Center for Community Development (discussed in chapter 2) and Trent Community Research Centre, part of Trent University in Ontario, Canada (Trent University, 2019), appear to have differences compared to Mapping San Siro. While there is not much academic research available on these types of organisations, the difference I have come across while

¹⁰⁶ While I had left before the start of the legal clinic, there was already an office set aside for the University of Milan to carry out their activities, which were set to begin in September 2019.

¹⁰⁷ Although, within the Sansheroes network, there are groups that address the health needs of the neighbourhood, such as Emergency Onlus and Saluta Veloc'emente, so they support them indirectly.

researching them is that Mapping San Siro is one of the few that is actually located in the area of research, as well as being physically separated from the affiliated university.

7.3 Conclusion – The Role of CBROs in Addressing Urban Decline

With attempting to categorise Mapping San Siro and their activities, I have wanted to highlight the diverse roles that the group assumed, formally and informally, in the neighbourhood, which has set up the conclusion of this thesis. In the end, it is not so important that the group is defined as a community hub or a community research centre. The fact that they have gone from a wandering research group to having an established role in the neighbourhood, gaining the trust of and engaging the local actors in a crucial exchange of knowledge that has led to the group adopting the approach of participatory action research (PAR) is enough to say that they have accomplished a significant amount over the last 6 years.

“Can small-scale projects ‘build up to’ structural change, or are they always destined to be ‘defeated’ by the surrounding political structure (massive bureaucratic organisations seeking profits for shareholders) and the dominant culture (self-oriented individualism)?” (Winter, et al., 2001). This question, as well as the ones proposed in this thesis, has attempted to understand the ways in which agents have used untraditional approaches in the context of community development and the (co-)production of knowledge, how they can be achieved and what role do these community-based research groups play in the process? Community-based research has a long tradition with AR, as some of the earliest examples of AR are set within a community development context to empower people to overcome the hardships they faced, and thus amend structural problems at the centre of modern society (ibid.).

In order to conclude, I will connect the theoretical concepts of community-based approaches to the approaches taken by the two research organisations and how they address neighbourhood decline and uneven urban development. I will also examine MSS’s role within the neighbourhood and how their relationships with the various actors helped advanced their objectives, while also connecting this to the methodological approach I have used to examine and analyse the case studies, as well as validating the use of PAR as a sufficient approach to research. Lastly, in terms of the role of university in providing a different style of learning, which I have presented as action learning and situated learning, and how this experience has not only been able to contribute my development as a researcher, but also my personal development and what I view as my role of the future.

7.3.1 Addressing Urban Change

So far, the role of CBROs has not been documented as contributing to the reduction of urban decline, besides the fact that it is something that would be extremely difficult to measure, as they have mainly taken the role of researchers in the discovery of detailed information, or even activists (Pratt Center for Community Development, 2019). Since they may only be involved in this process, they are not able to make sure the pertinent information is carried on to the successive phases of regeneration or that marginalised groups are taken into consideration. As this thesis has presented the case of a CBRO that has acted on the information and data collected on a disadvantaged neighbourhood, the discussion will focus on whether their activities have the ability to reverse the root causes of urban decline.

In determining whether community-based research organisations can reverse neighbourhood decline, or even prevent a community from being displaced due to increased house prices, I will refer back to the first chapter and the theoretical approaches of urban change: ecological, subcultural, political economy and social capital. While the ecological and political economy approaches attribute change to exogenous forces, natural decline and market failures, respectively, the sub-cultural and social capital approaches believe that these exogenous forces of neighbourhood change can be overcome by human agency and strong social

capital. Seeing how this thesis has analysed the situation using CR and the MA, a philosophical stance that attributes change to human agency and not just structural and cultural conditioning, I would claim that CBROs have the ability to reverse neighbourhood decline, depending on the approach to community organising taken.

If neighbourhood decline and uneven development can be attributed to capitalism, can CBROs facilitate neighbourhood and structural change with consensus-based approach? As questioned by Dahrendorf (1973 from Lane, 1976) “How can a model which emphasizes maintenance of the social system, integration, the functional importance of each element of society, and consensus account for social change?” Based on the CR assumption that we live in a conflict-based society, in order to facilitate change a conflict-based approach must be taken by the CBRO; This is because society according to consensus-based theory stresses balance, order, authority and stability, and hence change is not desired. Those in power would like to remain in a consensus model of society, where every member contributes to the integrated configuration of that society and there is no conflict. The issue with this is that when the differences between those at the top and those at the bottom of the social structure become so great, conflict arises and change is desired (Lane, 1976). Previously in this chapter the actions of MSS were examined to determine which approach to community organising they fell under. The next section will discuss how the approaches adopted have contributed to reversing neighbourhood decline.

7.3.1.1 Roles, approach and actions that contribute to neighbourhood change

This thesis has delved into the role of CBROs and their ability to address and reverse neighbourhood decline, looking particularly at the two case studies of Mapping San Siro and Tesserae. While the case study of MSS has focused on change at the institutional (university) level, it shows the potential that this change has in addressing marginalised neighbourhoods. On the one hand, the root causes of neighbourhood decline need to be understood in full, and this should be the role of the university being a research institution. On the other hand, innovative solutions need to be proposed to policy makers to influence change not just at the neighbourhood level, but also the city level and beyond. With pragmatic approach and a critical realist view, this combination can help CBROs offer pertinent solutions, while also helping to empower communities through the discovery of generative mechanisms.

While 3 of the projects organised by Mapping San Siro under the SoHo Lab public call have dealt with more substantive solutions, i.e. the renovation of the public space and the public call for abandoned spaces, may help reverse neighbourhood decline, they will not directly address structural change. Reversing neighbourhood decline through substantive measures can be done fairly quickly compared to achieving real social change, but are these types of quick solitons truly beneficial to the community? If according to the conflict theory that every element in society can contribute to change, then these small changes could be more representative of a larger change, which was the belief of MSS (Cognetti, 2019). In the short term, improving the quality of the urban environment and providing the inhabitants with a stronger network of social services will help remedy the negative effects of capitalism, but there also needs to be groups that fight for the rights of marginalised communities. By supporting the local associations and taking part in a process of PAR as the Sansheroes network, they assuming more the role of advocate planners.

The impact MSS has had on changing the process of the various roles of actors, assuming the responsibility of not only collectively gathering information, but making sure it is taken into consideration during the successive phases of the decision-making process. While AR intends to carry out research with all members equal, something in practice is more difficult said than done. While taking place I often witnessed the members of Mapping San Siro take the lead during the meetings and discussions, while the associations

were happy to cede that responsibility to them, and therefore some power. In the end, the objective is to try and empower a group of individuals to become more than just a group of associations who provide social services to a marginalised neighbourhood. As a Community-Based Research Organisation, where MSS has the ability to address the root causes of neighbourhood change is by inserting themselves as actors in the process and working up to institutional change. The example with Andrea Ghirlanda and the Regione shifting their attitudes and beliefs in regards to the role and value of the university as an actor shows that with the intervention of human agency, it can be enough to overcome morphostasis.

7.3.1.2 Approach to building relationship with local and city actors

With CR, its purpose is to increase the autonomy of citizens by enabling them to re-describe their experiences and re-create these experiences as part of a collectively desired situation or state. Although it is never actually successful, AR attempts to carry out inquiry into these types of situations by “suspending hierarchal role relationships in favour of a free and collaborative interchange of critical analysis among all interested parties” (Winter, et al., 2001). PAR views society as conflicting, and for people to rise up they have to collectivise, as Archer (1995) posits, and become corporate agents who know what they want and can articulate their demands. This is what must occur for change to take place in a conflict driven society, where organisations are vying for resources, namesake, etc. With Sansheroes being a group of collectives and individual actors, one of the more powerful ones being the Politecnico, they have become an organised group, that know what they want and are able to articulate it. One of the main objectives of the Sansheroes network was to create a new representation of the neighbourhood, while at the same time creating a shared vision of what they wanted for the future.

Part of the basic principles of dialectics states that social change is created by the practical struggle between the opposing forces, with the increase in knowledge as an outcome in a process of self-emancipation (Winter, et al., 2001). In order to engage in this style of mediation between actors, you must see your role not only as an agent of change, but an agent of knowledge exchange. One of the generative mechanisms as I have stated in the last chapter that has been one of the most influential in MSS’s success, is their ability to assume a dual-role that is able to move between a public institution and a neutral local actor. They are able to act as a quasi-neutral actor with the members of the network when assuming the role of an advocacy planner, and to communicate freely with public institutions such as the Regione Lombardia and the city of Milan when assuming the role of the traditional planner. Therefore, while they strive to create real social change in the neighbourhood with the strength of the Sansheroes network, they are also trying to use their power and recognition as a university to negotiate with the political actors of the city to carry out more substantive solutions; As a result, they are demonstrating to be a viable and important actor in the neighbourhood, and city, and boost the social standing and reputability of their local network. Although, in order to play this role one of the other key mechanisms that have led to this is the taking up residency in the neighbourhood, which has allowed them to gain the trust of the community and the local actors.

On the one hand, the priority of MSS has been representing the interests of the local network, realising that having the support of local actors is crucial also in advancing their goals. On the other, they realise they need the support of public institutions to carry out their regeneration projects, which is something that has developed from the beginning when they just wanted to involve the local actors. So there has to be a delicate balancing act between the 2 roles, one where you are truly neutral, which is not an easy one, as Francesca (Cognetti, 2019) described to me, “It’s a very stressful role, also for my personal battles, I’m not a politician and it’s really a political role”. On one hand, the fact they have been able to bring together a

group of primary agents and help them become an organised group that has the power to change social situations demonstrates that Archer's theory of corporate and primary agents has proven to be true.

In their negotiations with political actors MSS has tried to use a consensus-based approach also with the Sansheroes network, as was demonstrated by the Triennale event; It still showed that the public institutions were not ready to rescind their power to the "lesser" group. MSS is trying to combine their advocacy planning (in regard to the creation of the network) with that of traditional planning that looks to collaborate with different levels of institutions. If the theory of the morphogenetic approach proves to be true that we live in a conflict driven society, there will not be structural change unless the group is able to employ a more of a conflict or contest style approach to their mediations between the network and political actors. While there is still work to be done, I believe they have found a way to combine the conflict-consensus approach in order to make it beneficial to all the parties involved.

With capitalism intertwined in all levels of society, it would be difficult for a small level actor to achieve significant change in the structures of society; by providing social infrastructure, with support from the political actors¹⁰⁸, and working with communities to understand their needs, they can remedy the negative effects. In order to provide effect services for a marginalised neighbourhood every level of actor needs to be involved, especially seeing how the types of organisations and associations that provide these services are usually NGOs, operating due to the help of volunteers, need to obtain funding from external services. While the private sector can provide support, the public sector also needs to contribute. Is it possible to mediate with more powerful political actors using a conflict-based approach? Even groups like Cantiere have to concede sometimes in order to get things done, as they explained during our interview (Activist CASS, 2019). While they may not agree on everything, they know by collaborating with the university can also be beneficial to their cause.

The most important is not whether a conflict-based or consensus-based approach taken, the important part is knowing when to concede on smaller goals and collaborate with the actors in power in order to reach the larger goals of social change; and as I have stated previously, social change cannot occur with approaches based on the consensus theory. The importance of university aiding the community organising approach, being a semi-institutional actor and using their ability to shift back and forth between not only roles, as they are dependent on the beliefs on the type of society we live in, but also in their ability to know when to employ consensus-based or conflict-based approaches based on their objectives.

7.3.1.3 Generative Mechanisms and Middle-range theory

Although an in-depth analysis of Tesseræ and the Mehringplatz project using the Morphogenetic Approach has not been carried out, it could be beneficial to look at some tendencies that have been gathered from the analysis of the MSS case and consider if they could also be applicable to Tesseræ's case, as this is the purpose of using a CR approach. With Mapping San Siro, I was curious to see which factors made a group like this successful in the sense they were able to insert and sustain themselves in the neighbourhood without the initial support of university, while also understanding their role in the neighbourhood. In my official¹⁰⁹ interview with Lorenzo, he states that one of the things he would like to do, but has not been successful up until now, is bringing one of his explorations and social-spatial analysis to the next phase, which is acting on what they have discovered (Tripodi, 2019). In contrast to Francesca Cognetti, who has clearly stated that MSS are not a group of community activists, Tesseræ origins come from a background of

¹⁰⁸ In order to facilitate change at the policy level

¹⁰⁹ We spoke many times throughout the months I spent in Berlin, and after, this comes from a recorded interview I carried out with him in May of 2019.

activism and spatial justice that has evolved into a group of researchers able to give policy recommendations; so, the approaches they employ are more likely to be based on conflict theory. Are there some situations where a consensus-based approach needs to be taken, and others where conflict-based ones would be more effective? In attempting to determine this using the examples of the two case studies, the different phases of the MA where MSS has gone through morphogenesis where instead Tesseractae has gone through morphostasis¹¹⁰ with the Mehringplatz project will be analysed.

Looking at the aspects that have contributed to the success of the MSS in the first stage, if Tesseractae, being relatively unknown within the city of Berlin¹¹¹ and without having an office space in the area, does that inhibit them from moving on to the crucial second phase of relationship building? Even if Tesseractae were able to acquire an office space in the neighbourhood, the context of Mehringplatz is completely different from that of San Siro in the idea that when MSS opened up their space, it was something new and different for the neighbourhood to see a university group occupying a space. I still feel that it is important to have a space to become familiar with local residents and associations, as the members of the group have stated and as I have discussed before with the role of the space. Although the neighbourhood of Mehringplatz that is centrally located in Berlin is quite particular in all of the urban transformations that have been taking place over the last decade (Tesseractae Urban Social Research, 2017), I would say that MSS's affiliation with the university led to them already having a positive reputation¹¹² without having to prove their competencies, something a group relatively new to an area must develop over time. It may not always be possible to open up your own research office in the neighbourhood, but as MSS did throughout the first stage, by establishing relations with local associations, they were able to work in the neighbourhood and spend time there that way in order to start building relations and trust with several local actors. The idea of becoming a resident and a recognised face by spending time in the area and networking with local actors I would posit is more essential than having a space.

There is also this underlying mechanism of having a personal connection to the area, which contributed to Francesca's long-term vision and commitment to the neighbourhood. As for Tesseractae, they reason they choose the neighbourhood was "the complex composition of public policies, economic opportunities and social demands influencing local development" (Tesseractae Urban Social Research, 2017), as well as their interest in exploring modernist architecture located in peripheral areas (Tripodi, 2019). So while both of the neighbourhoods could be considered disadvantaged and having characteristics of peripheral neighbourhoods, MSS's reason for choosing it were due to the personal connection of the head of the group, while Tesseractae, still with the similar objectives of the initial Mapping San Siro workshops, was to explore the area and gain a better understanding for the socio-economic scenario (Tesseractae Urban Social Research, 2017). So, once the Switch-on Mehringplatz project had been completed, the funding, and therefore the focus on developing policy recommendations based on their findings had to wait to be continued, which has taken nearly 2 years to begin their next project. Therefore, if there is a long wait to resume the project on the neighbourhood, the organisation must focus their attention on the other projects. The difference with a university-affiliated group like Mapping San Siro, researchers like Francesca

¹¹⁰ Tesseractae has been involved in a variety of projects that have demonstrated their ability to carry out meaningful research, policy recommendations and alternative pedagogical techniques, from kids to adults, to understanding and discovering the city. However, the Mehringplatz project has been the one that I have focused on in this thesis. As I have mentioned previously, they are currently involved in projects to advance their vision on the neighbourhood of Mehringplatz.

¹¹¹ Tesseractae is more an international policy-based research group, working in various countries throughout Europe, as well as being involved in projects in Brazil, Mexico and Cuba.

¹¹² In this case, I am referring to the reputation with the public actors, as they reputation with the local actors was developed over time, as some of them were a little sceptical about Mapping's purpose there.

are funded without a specific objective, which has allowed her to remain there without having to shift her focus on different projects in order to sustain their activities in San Siro.

Lastly, one of the other factors that I feel contributed to MSS's success was their initial approach, that of networking with the local associations and groups. As Francesca explained in her interview, when they first established the workshops, the local actors were their clients. Their knowledge of the neighbourhood would become the building blocks of MSS's approach in being a facilitator, working on the capabilities of both local and public actors in order to exchange knowledge with each other. While Tesserae is also focused on uncovering local knowledge of an area using action-based approaches, their focus has been on developing an online platform in order to represent and share that knowledge. Mapping San Siro has taken a more traditional approach to this in publishing a document with a shared vision of the neighbourhood, as well as one when it comes to the urban planning aspect, something that Lorenzo Tripodi (2019) explained to me has not been their main focus in their role as nomadic researchers: "I've missed the idea of the urban planner work that is very important, that you somehow have to select an amount of territories that you would like to give your contribution, your voice and participate and do something." The extended focus on one territory has allowed MSS to develop a long-term vision on the area, while creating the local network as part of that vision has allowed them to gain the trust of the local actors, something that has been crucial in the dual-role that they have assumed, leading them to be able to talk with both local actors and public institutions.

However, in one of the areas that will be interesting to see what develops is the case of the actions and interventions planned by the Sansheroes network; will they be able to advance their goals and projects independently from the ones carried out by MSS – as this is one of the areas where the network has experienced morphostasis. In the previous paragraphs I have offered tendencies that were taken from the MSS case study to the case study of Tesserae; if MSS is able to take something from the approach of Tesserae, I would suggest adopting a more conflict-based approach when dealing with the objectives of the network, as the consensus-based idea for the Triennale event proved to be beneficial for some aspects, but not for advancing their objectives. An interesting note from the Triennale event, towards the end several members from the Comitato Abitanti came to the stage and demanded their opinions be heard. In this type of setting the conflict-style approach was not given importance by the political actors, so where, when and how to employ this style of approach needs to be considered more carefully.

As argued by Hedstrøm and Swedberg (1996, from Bygstad, et al., 2011), the aim of theorising in social sciences should be to develop middle range theories that clearly explain the generative mechanisms that produce the observed relationships. As part of the abductive approach to the research, I have attempted to offer some middle-range theories that connect the theory presented in the initial chapters to the observations and results in the case studies. As mentioned previously the dual-role played by Mapping San Siro has, in my mind, been one of the most significant generative mechanisms resulting in their morphogenesis throughout the 3 stages, leading them to be an actor involved in PAR in the conflict-based society, but also as a public institution when negotiating with other public actors. Therefore, the university as an urban actor has the ability to assume a dual-role, one that allows it to represent actors at the local level while also giving it the leverage to negotiate with public institutions, leading it to be an ideal actor in community development.

With the university involved in various stages of the community organising and urban regeneration process, it has the potential to offer a new model of intervening in a neighbourhood in decline; it is also important to be part of a local network with diverse personalities to also hold community-based research

organisations accountable for their actions and those of the public institutions, or else the CBROs could drift more into the role of traditional planners, which focuses solely on a substantive social problems and a consensus-based approach. I would also suggest that by including members from various disciplines (e.g. sociology, anthropology, etc.), as MSS has done with Paolo Grassi, it has the potential to include the different perspectives that is required to provide an all-encompassing view. This has to be done through a process of participatory action-research, where the ideas and perspectives of the different stakeholders are taken into account and there is a process of reflective inquiry, as Winter, et al. (2001) state, “this sharing process enables us to recognise the existence of alternative rationalities, the limitations of our immediate interpretations, and, consequently, possibilities for change”. This is where the university plays a key role, being an institution of research and a facilitator of the AR process, and gradually they also learn how to become actors within a context, as part of the learning and self-reflexivity required to adapt to new roles and environments.

7.3.2 Reflexivity, critical pedagogy and taking action

We should be taught to not only be critical of the urban environments we live in, but also our learning environments, as this thesis has questioned how knowledge is traditionally viewed and how we are conditioned to believe that the most valuable knowledge is obtained through programmed instruction. In order to be critical of one’s environment, we must understand the forces and structures behind the immediate experiences we face, and that as human agents we can chose our actions and whether they will conform to societal norms or if they will disregard them; and if they do, what are the consequences of the intended course of action. Social action is shaped by the relationship between people’s most pressing concerns the context of their environment, which result in the mode of reflexivity they practice (Archer, 2007). Courses of action, which Archer (2007) calls projects, are taken in order to promote our concerns and are produced through the reflexive deliberations and internal conversation. We can choose not only to be critical of our situation, but to also be active agents of change, and “once self-consciousness has emerged, we each engage in interplay with all orders of reality, including the social” (ibid.).

For critical realism, social sciences must be considered as a way of increasing the autonomy of human action, a way of enabling people to “see themselves under a new description in which they have helped create” (Winter, et al., 2001). The action-based approaches that have been experimented with by Tesseræ and Mapping San Siro have provided examples of agents taking social action and going against what was considered traditional modes of learning about the city, and how as experts of a more technical knowledge, we can enter in an exchange with experts of a situated knowledge, that is just as valuable. This is the basis of AR, PAR and AL, the action-based approaches as I have termed them, that start out with a process of inquiry with the facilitators in the role of the learner, and in the case of community development, learning and understanding the needs of that community.

These approaches were created to give people the tools and skills necessary to be able to be critical of and change their situation, and for that I have chosen the path of wanting to learn about AR and AL myself. People like John Dewey, Kurt Lewin and Reginald Revans questioned traditional pedagogical and research methods, and in turn presented with what they believed education should be, and how to develop what Paulo Frieré called a critical consciousness. By accepting just what we are taught and being essentially “banks” of information, we allow our creativity to be inhibited and our critical consciousness to be diminished. Frieré wanted to highlight the importance of experienced-based learning and knowledge, and that be engaging in a two-way discussion it would allow people to self-reflect on their situations (Freiré, 1999). Action and situated learning encourages the community approach to construction of new knowledge (Schell, et al., 1997), and with this new knowledge the emancipation and the empowerment of the ones

involved, where people are pushed outside their comfort zones and force to self-reflect on these experiences.

The 2 experiences with Tesseract and Mapping San Siro provided diverse contexts and approaches to situated learning, AL and AR, using the city as a pedagogical environment and array of actors as partners to their research. While I was able to learn about Tesseract's creative action-based approaches and how they are applied to understanding urban contexts, Mapping San Siro was later in their stage of development of their community-based research and had adopted a different approach. I was able to experience several of the solutions they had originally proposed during their initial workshops and exploration of the neighbourhood, as well as the progress of the network of local actors who were tasked to address other important social issues. Being able to be part of the meetings with the local network and public actors, I was able to gain an understanding of how processes of change work: the different political and intuitional structures that are involved, the various motives and beliefs that are shaped by the culture and external experiences of human agency.

As Dewey (1897) stated, education is a process of living, and not a preparation for future living. His idea that school must represent life reminded me of the type of experience that one who is situated in their area of study has a distinct advantage of getting to intimately know the situation. By taking in knowledge from all sources, it allows the individual to constantly learn from their surrounding environment. Willis (2010) stated that "trust relationships are a proven natural outcome of genuine action learning". If the insiders, or local communities, to begin to understand and take action on issues that are most important to them, then the insiders sent to facilitate these situations need to stay in the locality and learn from and with people.

Even though a pragmatic approach does not intend to completely understand society, something I believe is necessary to offer better solutions to urban problems, when coupling it with an approach like critical realism, allows for an approach that is able to counteract each other's disadvantages. While situated and action learning help us understand the empirical level of society, critical realism helps us to dig deeper to the actual and eventually the real level, trying to understand the underlying mechanisms that cause the things we experience on the empirical level. When you become part of the reality that you are researching, the personal connection that is developed not only offers motivation to not only want to understand the situation, but to actually improve it, which should be the objective of more researchers and universities, where action and change are at the centre of research.

As Attia and Edge (2017) argue for a developmental approach to research, one that shifts focus away from objective research and puts the constant growth of the researcher at the foreground of the research process. Learning about these alternative philosophies and approaches to research like critical realism and PAR has also allowed me to more critically aware of my situation, as they are not only meant to emancipate the participants, but also the researchers, to be more self-reflective of the situations they are facing and see them from a different perspective. They improve our understanding of how to change a situation so that it is no longer determined by the unjust or oppressive forces we experience, but by those we accept or desire (Winter, et al., 2001). In addition, this experience has shown me the capacity for universities to step outside the classroom and engage in the environments in which they study and experiment with new forms of community development.

"We don't have to reach the power...We can't change the whole system, but we can create an experience that can be replicable". This is something that the CASS Activist (2019) said during our interview that struck me as the contribution of AR as set of methods to carryout meaningful research with an experimental

approach that is cyclical, inclusive and empowering. In order to encourage change on the larger scale, it has to be tried and tested on a smaller scale, and from there it can be replicated, which is what Mapping San Siro has offered: an alternative experience to learning, research and community development that can be replicated, and something that other universities, especially in Italy, could use as an example. As I have learned through my studies and life experiences, true learning and personal development comes not only from programmed instruction, but from our ability to question what and how we are being taught. And for that, I advocate for more programmes in urban studies to adopt action-based approaches into their curriculum, something that will allow not only for more personal development, but also as an approach that focuses on the development of the people and communities that are being studied.

7.4 Limitations

Even though my study was not truly action-research, even with the justifications presented in this thesis it could still be discredited by positivist thinkers who believe the world can only be studied objectively through traditional research methods. By choosing CR as an ontological assumption, one that has been criticised for taking the middle road between positivist and constructivist views and “when interpreting research data [it] maintains the illusion of objective reality” (Taylor, 2018), I have potentially left my theoretical and methodological frameworks open for criticism. Using Margaret Archer’s Morphogenetic Approach for the analysis of the activities, one that requires a deep understanding of the social theory of structure, culture and agency, initially presented me with some difficulties. I did not have someone to guide me through how to apply it, especially to the field of urban studies, and for that it was a learning process. So, I have not used all aspects of the MA in the analysis, as I felt the parts I did use presented a sufficient analysis of the situation and allowed me to extract some generative mechanisms and middle-range theory from it.

I did not carry out stakeholder interviews with Tesseræ due to the fact I was focusing on learning the methodology for carrying out an action-research project, as I have mentioned previously. Due to the costs of implementing an already established platform for collaborative mapping, as I do not have the skills to develop mapping software, I was not able to go through with this plan. Also, the fact that I had arrived in Berlin in a period of inactivity for the Mehringplatz project and Tesseræ, I was not able to witness their methods in action, which could have contributed to a more in-depth analysis of their approach. Also for that reason I did not carry out a comparative analysis of the two cases.

During the first months with Mapping San Siro when I realised the mapping project was not going to happen, I changed my approach to studying the organisations, their various approaches to community development and their relationships with different levels of actors. While I attempted to gather a diverse range of perspectives from the interviews, by choosing other organisations, in and outside the Sansheroes network, as well as members of the community, I could have received different points of view on the activities of Mapping San Siro. Since I was limited on time, I also did not follow up with interview requests with several public actors that I had wished to interview, especially that of ALER and public officials from the city of Milan that were involved. Also, when I had to interview in Italian, which is not my native language, I was not able to promptly follow up with questions to some of the interviewee’s responses, although the data I collected from the Italian interviews were still useful to the research.

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