Coproduction in urban renewal projects
(revisiting Polanyi / challenging boundaries)
Flanders/Belgium 2002-2015

André Loeckx

1. the urban condition 1990: urban decay, suburban sprawl
2. the project mode of urban development
3. brief ideology of Urban Policy/Projects in Flanders/Belgium
4. Urban Renewal Project issues: synergy, coproduction, double scale
5. urban renewal? what about territories and city regions?
6. coproduction? what about participation?
1990ies, views from the city:
the city neglected, unwanted, left behind, blamed as a realm of problems: old housing stock, inappropriate dwelling typologies, neglected public realm, traffic congestion, abandoned places of production, ethnic tension, riots, urban exodus
1990, views from the ‘città diffusa’, ‘de nevelstad’: urban sprawl, car based mobility, suburbanization, overconsumption of open space, suppression of rurality, impoverishment and gentrification, contested territories
Flanders/Belgium 1990-2000: two main concerns for urban renewal: 1 to counter suburban sprawl and urban exodus
Flanders/Belgium 1990-2000: two main concerns for urban renewal: 2 to clean up and reuse the postindustrial legacy in order to re-urbanize the city.

the urban condition 1990: the legacy of the second industrial revolution: obsolete postindustrial infrastructure, pollution, urban brownfield reserve
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Europe 1985-2005: the developer’s project mode of urban transformation, London, Rotterdam, Barcelona, Berlin…
the project mode of urban transformation in Europe

- speculative urbanization or lack of investment is replaced by superprojects that demonstrate a certain urban quality: diversity, design quality, emphasis on the public realm, elements of sustainability...
- superprojects only occur in major cities with major economic assets
- project mode is driven by major drivers: by powerful real estate market forces, by unique events generating exceptional political will (olympic games, Wende, ...)
- often waterfront developments: suitable for up-market real estate
- monofunctional postindustrial equipments are replaced by ‘mixed developments’ with limited mix: offices, commerce, middle class residence
- in spite of phasing and flexibility: relatively homogeneous developments with massification effect
- generic architecture with exceptional spots of star-architecture: the Bilbao Frank Gehry formula
- top-down development: participation as ‘infotainment’
- gentrification and social selection
- ...

Flanders-Brussels 1985-2005: the developer’s project mode of urban transformation
the absent local government, the urban debate as an act of resistance
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- the city and the urban region = realm of 21st century development

- ‘4-D development’: density, diversity, democracy, sustainability (duurzaamheid)

- ‘3-I development’: three modes of social integration [Karl Polanyi, 1944]: welfare redistribution, market exchange, reciprocity; 3 main project actors: government, private sector, civil society/community

- two complementary modes of governance: representative democracy and participatory democracy

- subsidiarity and horizontal governance versus top-down dictates and sectorial autarky

- towards triple coproduction: public-public / public–private / public-civil

- policy and project considered as complementary government actions: the urban renewal project = local laboratory of 4-D and 3-I development

- the urban government is author and director of the urban renewal project
set-up of policy and project instruments
set-up of project support programme

• elaboration and implementation of different policy instruments:
  - city monitor for 13 central cities
  - city contract procedure with public authorities and departments
  - city visitation
  - ‘at home in the city’ award for completed urban projects
  - financial and organizational support for coproductive urban renewal projects in 13 central cities and 21 provincial towns
  - establishment of Urban Policy Team within Flemisch Government
• supporting coproductive urban renewal projects:
  - ‘concept subsidy’ = subsidies and support for project definition as a mode of capacity building for local governments (project research and design, early consultation and participation, project set-up)
  - project subsidies and support for project proposals selected on the basis of quality criteria by an independent multidisciplinary jury
  - follow-up of selected projects by the Urban Policy Team + experts (incl. jury members): quality chamber, local project workshops
  - publications and exchanges
subsidizing and supporting coproductive urban renewal projects selected by multidisciplinary jury on the basis of quality criteria / quality transitions

• 1. structural impact: ‘lever effect’, correlated to urban structure planning
• 2. integral sustainability: spatial, social, economical, ecological
• 3. urban synergy: gathering, connecting, interweaving of separated functions, services, infrastructures, projects, investments, sectors, authorities
• 4. urban coproduction (1): efficiënt project oriented public - public coöperatie
• 5. urban coproduction (2): public - private partnership on the basis of mutual benefit
• 6. urban coproduction (3): responsible citizenship and participation
• 7. quality planning and design as integrating spatial frame and platform
• 8. performative project set-up and process architecture: phasing, timing, financing
• 9. steering by local government, set-up of local project team
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City of Ghent, Gasometer site and Rabot Quarter
19th century belt: substandard workers housing, social housing, postindustrial patrimony
City of Ghent, Gasometer site and Rabot Quarter:
Urban Renewal project Section 1: housing development on PPP basis: private housing, social housing (climate neutral, quality design, typological and social mix), public park, Section 2: reuse of former gas containers for community facilities, dwelling upgrading in the adjacent 19th century Rabot neighbourhood.
City of Ghent, Gasometer site and Rabot: coproductive dwelling upgrading in adjacent Rabot neighbourhood
City of Ghent, Gasometer site and Rabot: coproductive dwelling upgrading in 19th century Rabot neighbourhood

sensitizing (house visits, renovation fair, ...)

advising (technical and architectural advise, ...)

supporting (collective purchase and commission, temporary rehousing ...)

coaching (loans, subsidies, reciprocal help, ...)

activating (social economy, on site technical training, ...)

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Sensibiliseren
Woonwinkel, Samenlevingsopbouw

Adviseren
Woonwinkel, MilieuAdviesWinkel, REGent, BWT

Ondersteunen
OCMW, Stad Gent, FRGE, OTC, BWT

Begeleiden
Domus Mundi, De Sleutel, Labeur, BWT

Activeren
Stad in Werking, Samenlevingsopbouw, Sociale
City of Ghent, Urban Renewal project ‘Old Docks’
urban design competition 2004, OMA’s ‘skewer’ scheme

City of Ghent, Urban Renewal Project ‘Old Docks’
phase 1 ‘Traders’ Dock East’ (Handelsdok Oost), 2011
phase 1 ‘Traders’ Dock East’ (Handelsdok Oost), 2011-
strategic subproject 1: infrastructures of connection
2 pedestrian and bicycle bridges (inauguration of Batavia bridge summer 2012)

strategic subproject 2: restoration of the quays,
reconstruction of obsolete infrastructures into qualitative public places
phase 1 ‘Traders’ Dock East’ (Handelsdok Oost), 2011-
strategic subproject 2: socio-cultural programme DOK 2012-
‘dockyard for leisure and cultural manoeuvres’
phase 1 ‘Traders’ Dock East’ (Handelsdok Oost), 2011-
strategic subproject 3: mixed housing project ‘Skippers’ Quay’, 2013-
PPP, social housing, real estate housing, various dwelling typologies, waterfront
promenade, neighborhood parks, collective gardens, school, public facilities

work by a.o. Stéphane Beel architects, Maat designers, Pauwels landscape arch.
ReVive, Vanhaerents Developments, Van Roey Real Estate, SOGENT
phase 1 ‘Traders’ Dock East’ (Handelsdok Oost), 2011-
strategic project 5: neighbourhood park, reuse of concrete plant and yellow crane for public purpose, idea competition, workshops, PPP

Robbrecht and Daem+ Whiteread arch.  

Tractor Collective
City of Genk, Winterslag, Waterschei, Zwartberg coal mine sites and company towns renewal projects 2007-

Genk’s first industrial revolution:
coal mine sites and company towns Winterslag, Waterschei and Zwartberg, industrial heritage, monumental morphology, cultural memory
C-mine Winterslag: centre for culture and design, Thor Waterschei: research and development park renewable energy, La Biomista Zwartberg: biodiversity studio and productive park

Illustrations from: Joeri De Bruyn (ed), Genk Rasterstad, 2015 work a.o. by BUUR, photogr; Stijn Bollaert
City of Genk, Sledderlo urban renewal project, 2010-

Genk’s second industrial revolution:
the Albert canal, the Antwerp-Liège industrial corridor, the Ford Genk plant
the modernist ideal: the Company Town Sledderlo, Sam van Embden, 1963
the modernist ideal fragmented, downgraded, abandoned,
New Sledderlo: social enclave, Old Sledderlo: sprawling ribbon suburb

BUUR masterplan, BBS landscape design, City of Genk, Social Housing Company
Genk, New Sledderlo, peripheral urban ghetto: unemployment, low level of schooling, ethnic concentration, substandard housing
City of Genk, Sledderlo, urban renewal project, 2010-
abolishing the peripheral ghetto condition: 11 strategic subprojects:
connectivity, social housing upgrading, mixed social proximity, densification of suburban sprawl, public facilities, integrating landscapes
City of Genk, Sledderlo urban renewal project, 2010-
strategic subproject: upgrading village center Old Sledderlo

upgrading the village centre

• supporting local commerce
• new housing typologies
• upgrading public space around the village church / reuse of the church as community center
City of Genk, Sledderlo urban renewal project, 2010-
strategic subproject: upgrading the social housing enclave:
demolition, renovation, new construction, lay-out of public realm

abolishing the ghetto stigma

BUUR masterplan, BBS landscape, City of Genk, Social Housing Company, Lava architects
photogr. OSA, Stijn Bollaert in: Joeri De Bruyn (ed), Genk Rasterstad, 2015 p158-159
City of Genk, Sledderlo urban renewal project, 2010-
strategic subproject: real estate developments on PPP basis,
negotiation by design: 1. social proximity and phases of development,
2. new dwelling typologies: compact dwelling in the green

BUUR masterplan, BBS landscape, City of Genk, developers’ tender ongoing
City of Genk, Sledderlo urban renewal project, 2010-
integrating social housing upgrading, urban renewal, landscape
redevelopment

BUUR
masterplan,
BBS landscape,
City of Genk,
Social Housing Cy
Lava architects
Town of Halle, Town of Vilvoorde

redevelopment of brownfields along former Antwerp-Brussels-Charleroi industrial axis and infrastructure corridor (the ‘ABC corridor’)

redevelopment of brownfields along the declining industrial rail-canal corridor, landscape restoration river Zenne, upgrading of the town centre, urban facilities, new urban housing, public spaces, leisure, economic development
Halle, urban renewal project Nederhem, 2006-

URP: redevelopment of brownfield between railway and canal, stitching the morphological fracture between medieval town and working class suburbs, installing a ‘third district’ as connector and attractor, public facilities (sport, carnival), multifunctional neighbourhood: mix/proximity of dwelling and working, public park, landscape restoration river Zenne

masterplan and quality management: De Smet Vermeulen architects
stad Halle, National Railway Company, Haviland intercommunale, Van Roey, Matexi
Halle, urban renewal project Nederhem, 2006-
The Urban Renewal Project reduced to a residential real estate project? The National Railway Company postpones new industrial development. After years of political discussion the local government finally launched the construction of the long expected swimming pool.

The town proposes the study of a linear River and Canal park on the scale of the urban region. (URP Concept Subsidy call 2015)
Town of Vilvoorde, urban renewal projects Watersite
redemption of the postindustrial strip between canal and railway, masterplan establishes link with Brussels Harbour, new residential urban quarters, public waterfront promenade, landscape renovation river Zenne

overall masterplan concept Xaveer De Geyter architects, 2006
phase 2: masterplan Beel-Achtergaele arch, BBS landscape design, 2008
Vilvoorde, urban renewal projects Watersite
phase 1: urban renewal project Kanaalpark, 2005
lay-out park and playgrounds, waterfront promenade, renovation of old prison
(‘Tuchthuis’), hotel-restaurants-café, housing

work by: Styfhals en Partners, Robbrecht en Daem, Bob 361, Stad Vilvoorde, W&Z, TV partnership Watersteen (Virix),
Vilvoorde, urban renewal projects Watersite, phase 2 ‘The Mills’: new housing quarters, urban housing typologies, green energy, lay-out of public domain, waterfront promenade, Zenne river banks pedestrian+bicycle bridge, railway station (metropolitan rail network)

work by a.o. Xaveer De Geyter architects, Beel-Achtergael arch., BBS landscape design, CEE-engineering, stad Vilvoorde, W&Z, PSR Brownfield Developers-Matexi

Bureau Bas Smets, landscape design

Stéphane Beel and Lieven Achtergaele, architects, CEE-engineering

the ABC-corridor revisited or transformation of an industrial armature into a (gentrified) high quality residential estate?

Concept Subsidy 2013: social-spatial survey and fieldwork: need for social facilities: day nursery, neighbourhood centre, school, kids’ homework support, rehearsal space, indoor sport accommodation, game centre, starters’ centre, art academy,...
Vilvoorde, urban renewal projects Watersite, phase 3: ‘Broek’, 2014, social knowledge, local economy, built patrimony, welfare issues, local appropriations form the basis of the masterplan.

1+2 reuse of industrial shed: community centre + indoor football
3 kids’ homework support
4 art academy
5 starters’ centre
Vilvoorde, urban renewal projects Watersite, phase 3: ‘Broek’, 2014,
negotiation by design of local development coalitions and coproductive potentials, insertion of welfare programmes, immediate/transitional uses of vacant places.
Vilvoorde, urban renewal projects Watersite, Concept Subsidy call 2015: Vilvoorde, modes and programmes of temporary appropriation in reconversion projects the Kruitfabriek experience: activating the urban debate, engaging civil creativity, supporting interregional exchange and cooperation
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Infrastructure, landscape and space uses should connect the urban projects of Winterslag, Waterschei, Zwartberg, Ford and Sledderlo into a network of complementary generators of urban and territorial development.

the territory (re)development agenda

Urban Renewal Projects and Concept Subsidy, call 2014

Concept Subsidy Genk Kolenspoor (‘Coal Track’)

Infrastructure, landscape and space uses should connect the urban projects of Winterslag, Waterschei, Zwartberg, Ford and Sledderlo into a network of complementary generators of urban and territorial development.
the ecology-sustainability agenda
Urban Renewal Project Sint-Niklaas Clementwijk

the sustainable suburb? reduction of the ecological footprint (increase of sustainability index from 35 to 65) / integration into the urban and the rural surroundings / ecological structures and soft infrastructures / social mix

work by Technum, Fris in het Landschap, EVR architecten, Grontmij, Matexi a.o.
another BHV agenda: double scale, boundary bridging

Brussels Capital Region, Town of Halle, Town of Vilvoorde redevelopment along the ABC rail-canal-river-road corridor, double scale redevelopment: canal banks redevelopment + river Zenne landscape restoration, upgrading of town centers in Flemish periphery + facilities and spatial armatures for the Brussels Metropolitan Area, ‘canal boulevard’ + adjacent neighbourhoods in the Brussels Capital Region
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what about participation?

the coproductive urban renewal project involves different methods and practices of participation
coproducive urban renewal projects: what about participation?

social knowledge, social-spatial competence, coproduction

1 ‘social knowledge’
Participation is grounded upon the ‘mining’ of social and social-spatial knowledge. This knowledge is not pre-structured or freely available around the table but requires research (including fieldwork and research by design). Often social knowledge is at the same time spatial knowledge. Social-spatial knowledge constitutes an important part of the ‘raw materials’ to be processed by urban design. It reveals ambivalences and contradictions that the design attempts to turn into co-existencies and synthesis. On this basis, ‘design for the people’ is able to create the spatial platform on which effective modes of ‘design with’ and ‘design by the people’ can be performed.
2 ‘social-spatial competence’

Effective participation is not guaranteed by immediate interaction (interviews, around the table conversations, workshop charrettes, participatory games etc..). Effective participation is the outcome of participatory awareness and capacity building processes that progressively transform both explicit and implicit social-spatial knowledge into active social-spatial competence. Provisional and experimental appropriation of vacant, often unknown or formerly exclusive places is an important mode of participatory capacity building. However, in addition, quick methods of immediacy may offer a useful complement to the slow processes of extended fieldwork and participatory capacity building.
coproductive urban renewal projects: what about participation?

social knowledge, social-spatial competence, coproduction

3. ‘coproduction’

Participants have to become coproducers of the urban project. Acting as co-producers is an act with considerable participatory impact that prepares for post-project co-management of the new environment. Coproduction considers concerned citizens as responsible stakeholders, investing into the project, contributing to the decision making and sharing the burdens and benefits of the project. Coproducers operate on the basis of complementary skills and capacities; they do not replace each others skills but challenge and enrich these within the coproductive process on the basis of their shared socio-spatial competence. As such there is no point in replacing professional design and building skills by non-professional work. Moreover the project process is not limited to design and construction: it involves many complementary skills.