Differentiating Urban Regimes in Antwerp and Amsterdam

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To everyone who supported me, in whatever form: thank you.

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Introduction

During the past year I became curious to learn more about what it is that shapes urban policy and planning. Overall, academic literature shows there is a shift away from integrated interventionist planning towards flexible and project-oriented planning, often referred to as ‘neoliberalism’. (Tasan-Kok & Baeten, 2012; Moulaert, Rodriguez & Swyngedouw, 2005).

Since the 1970s, changes in technology, economy and politics have resulted in a form of globalisation wherein large-scale capital flows move in and out of cities. These movements often land in urban development projects that in their turn provide stability for this restless ‘space of flows’. (Castells, 2010). A crucial element in these changes is the question whether urban politics still has its own role to play in modern cities, or if it is merely an afterthought to processes of increasing globalisation. At the same time the complexity that is involved, in both function and scale, is immense. Urban policy involves not only a combination of different societal functions (politics, economic, law,...), but also the dynamics of scale in which ‘global’ affairs and ‘local’ events take shape. I want to explore a small piece of this complexity, by looking at how a specific urban development project takes form in the city. This will provide me with the opportunity to look at how local governing is organised around a specific project, how its agenda is set, what resources are assembled and who is involved and in what way. I will show how these elements make up a specific governing coalition, and that they form connections with the wider societal complexity.

In order to take on this task, I will first provide some context to urban policymaking in the city at the start of the 21st century. One of the key elements here is to show how the city is placed within a wider network, wherein political and economic functioning are to a great extent dominated by inter-urban competition. In this context, the issue of political autonomy can be disputed, as the economic logic seems to determine the boundaries of policymaking. This is an important topic, because it refers to the core of modern democracy. Since I want to look into how urban policy is shaped, I will first have to ask the question where urban policy is shaped. As I will show, this question can be answered by looking between functions and between scales. Using insights from Niklas Luhmann’s systems-theory and Clarence Stone’s work on urban regimes, I set out a model that places the power to shape urban policy in the coupling of functions and scales.

Conceptually, this mean a translation of ‘urban regime theory’ into notions of systems-theory. “Theory” is in matter of fact a somewhat misleading term, as “regime theory” is not the same type of theory as “systems theory” - they deal with different levels of abstractions and have different goals. In fact, one of the main critiques on regime theory is that it lacks explanatory power and a frame for broader generalisation (Jonas & Wilson, 1999; Lauria, 1997; Davies, 2001), while systems-theory is criticised for lacking empirical quality and making overly broad generalisations (Østerberg, 2000; Brunczel, 2010)². However, both theories have qualities that make them ideally suited for the task at hand. The conclusion of this theoretical debate will be a conceptual toolbox that I will use in a research of two specific urban

1 Regarding citations, I have a made small remark at the start of the bibliography on citing from e-books that do not have fixed page numbers.

2 More precisely, systems-theory is criticised for not being able to be verified empirically, as Luhmann’s theory rejects the distinction of ‘theoretical/empirical’ observations, replacing it by a formal theory of observation. A concise overview of the most common critiques on Luhmann’s writings can be found in Brunczel, 2010: 233-240.
development projects, in Antwerp and Amsterdam. Both cases are large-scale infrastructure projects that have raised concerns about the impact on the quality of life in the city. In Antwerp, it concerns the “Oosterweel”-connection: the proposed closing of the ring road in/around the city. In Amsterdam, I will look into the construction of the “Zuidasdok” (“South-Axis Dock”), where part of the ring road is to be brought under ground.

Both projects have a history of more than 20 years, and they have both been confronted with important restructuring. These restructurings are interesting events, because they are a form of ‘crisis’, and as such offer an opportunity to observe certain changes and reactions. In other words, ‘crisis events’ can be understood as events of considerable ‘breaching’, i.e. an observable period in time wherein a system is susceptible to change. In the context of policymaking, this does not mean that a crisis automatically leads to changes in political strategies or ideologies. For instance, experience of the period following the 2007-8 international financial crisis has learned that it can also be expected that the same power-configuration as before the crisis will quickly be re-assembled (Oosterlynck & Gonzalez, 2013). I will thus focus on crises as possibilities of systemic change, without the assumption that change is inevitable — for both projects I will explore which changes occurred, and how they were formed. Accordingly, in the case of Antwerp and Amsterdam I will look at how the urban regimes at work have responded to their specific changes.

Specifically, I will try to answer the following question:

1. Have urban regimes been formed in Amsterdam and Antwerp, in order to shape the development of the “Oosterweel” and “Zuidasdok”?
2. If so, what are their characteristics and what have they achieved?
3. If not, can I identify the reasons why?

To ask how regimes form (and remain operational), also means attention must be given to why they have formed. I will propose that regimes are social systems that respond to the decentering of the political system and the diffusion of power in modern societal structure. As with all social systems, their essential role is the reduction of complexity, in this case the complexity of power formation that takes place increasingly outside the political system. Urban regimes provide stable couplings between different function systems and organisations. Regimes construct power (partly) outside the political system, and organise themselves as a system around four core elements: agenda, resources, coalition roles and a scheme of coordination. I will discuss these element in both specific cases.

There is a difference between a theory on how politics works, and political theory that proposes a model to pursue. The question above clearly belongs in the first category. At the end I will come back to the second category, and propose some elements for a political theory. These will take into account some of the observations that I have made in both Amsterdam and Antwerp, as well as respond to some of the concerns in the literature on political theory. Specifically I will argue to construct a model of democracy that tries to couple the diffuse relations of power at specific places in the systemic complexity.

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3 It will become clear that this the distinction between “in” and “around” is one of the points of conflict.
1. Conceptual Toolbox

A. Some context to 21st century policymaking

Urban policymaking and planning have undergone important changes in the last decades of the previous century. To understand urban politics, it is important to analyse how these changes have affected the place of cities in a wider network of societal functions. In general terms this historic change consists of the shift away from post-war Keynesian politics towards '(neo)liberal' politics. This shift consists of a growing emphasis towards organising politics around an agenda of 'growth' and 'competition'. Part of a broader change, this evolution played can be described with the dynamics of flows and place, which refer to function as well as scale. In this section I will explore these notions briefly, and conclude by presenting how urban development projects are relevant for understanding more about these processes. As I will show, the issue of political autonomy can be disputed, as the economic logic seems to determine the boundaries of policymaking. This is an important topic, because it refers to the core of modern democracy. The question is how politics is dominated, through what mechanisms? And what does this mean for urban politics? In this section I will present some elements as context, before turning to the question on systemic mechanisms in the following sections.

The construction of new spaces

Analysing urban functions and processes requires an understanding of society, or, in other words, a theory of society. Sociological theories of society are often a variation, continuation or refutation of theories of modernity. 'Modernity' is a concept around which most of the early, classical, sociological science developed, and in general it refers to the transition in the 18th and 19th century from 'communitarian society' to 'modern society', through the (by now 'canonised' list of) combined processes of individualisation, secularisation, rationalisation, reification, cultural fragmentation, role differentiation and commodification (Laermans, 2002: 223). For some authors modernity has entered a fundamentally different state of 'post-modernity' (e.g. Lyotard, 1984). Other authors are more nuanced and emphasise different aspects of change as well as continuity. One of those authors is Manuel Castells, who argues that society has entered the age of “informational capitalism”. This age is a continuation of modernity as it is still dominated by a capitalist mode of production, but it is also a fundamental change of modernity because "information" has become the most important source of wealth. (Castells, 2010a, 'Prologue'.2; Webster, 2005: 100-101).

Castells' theory provides some useful concepts to better understand the networks in and around contemporary cities. According to Castells, productivity in our society has become fundamentally dependent on the "capacity to generate, process, and apply efficiently knowledge-based information." (Castells, 2010a, 2.1). Information technologies have been

4 For this section, I have rewritten some paragraphs from my essay on urban regimes earlier this year for the course "Leisure and Creativity in the Information Society" (supervisor: J.T. Mommaas, University of Tilburg).

5 I will not explore it any further, but I should mention that besides communication technologies Castells also emphasises the "technologies of life" (i.e. biotechnology). Throughout his 'trilogy' it seems to be the case that for Castells the fundamental social changes he is describing are rooted in
instrumental for the emergence of this “Information Age”. Technological changes have had a deep impact on our concept of space. Castells argues that space is the result of social practices; more precisely, space is the material basis that brings together those practices (or: 'communications") that are simultaneous in time. (Castells, 2010a, 6.5.). Before modern communication technologies existed, this simultaneity was synonymous with contiguity. However, today we no longer need to be in each other’s physical proximity to be able to communicate at the same time. This has led to the emergence of a new form of space: the space of flows. These flows must be understood as a wide range of communications spanning the globe: "flows of capital, flows of information, flows of technology, flows of organizational interaction, flows of images, sounds, and symbols". (Castells, 2010a, 6.5.).

The key issue here is that according to Castells these flows are determining the quality of places. ‘Place’ resides in a second form of space (next to the space of flows), which Castells calls the space of places. This is the space where everyday life is performed, where meaning is formed – which is at once the reason why place still matters, although its function has become more than ever dependent on its position in the network of flows. Thus Castells’ theory of society is characterised in part by the dynamics between the space of flows and the space of places. The space of flows is the space of functionality, of wealth, of power. The space of places is the space of social and cultural meaning. (Castells, 2010a, preface.4.).

What is presented here, is a complex configuration whereby these spaces are mutually constitutive. This can be expressed by the concept of scale. As Swyngedouw argues, the dynamics of space (and time) as I have presented so far, can be translated into a dynamics of scale, which is, just as space, an expression of social relationships (Swyngedouw, 1997). Although Castells argues that places are being dominated by flows, places are not trivial to this process. Flows are as much formed in places as places are formed through the stream of flows. This also means that cities (as ‘places’) at once give form to as well as are formed by these flows: “Urban 'things', then, are neither the outcome of processes operating over an abstract (globalizing) space nor the local determinants that shape a wider spatial order.” (Moulaert, Rodriguez & Swyngedouw, 2003: 11). This argument serves to point out that a researcher’s goal must not be to ascertain whether the ‘local’ or the 'global' has priority in shaping everyday life – what’s important, is how these scales are themselves the result of socio-spatial change (Swyngedouw, 1997, p. 140). To illustrate these concepts, I will present the emergence of inter-urban competition, which exemplifies the abstract discussion presented so far. As I will discuss, cities have become fertile grounds for furthering the flow of capital, and urban development projects have been important tools in this process.

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6 In this thesis, I will use "communication" as the fundamental social operation, following Luhmann’s theory of society, which I will discuss later. (see: Luhmann, 2013a).
7 Next to space, Castells also distinguishes a new dominant form of time, namely timeless time. This is a form or time which is no longer linear (referring to the dominance of "clock time" which was typical of modernity), but a form of time suited to the hypercomplex simultaneous connections of the network morphology. (Castells, 2010a, chapter 7).
8 Castells does recognise the danger of a possible disconnection between the two forms of space, whereby especially the space of places is threatened. In such a scenario, place could lose its cultural significance, becoming fully immersed in a "real virtuality", a disconnected system of signs that only knows its own internally produced meaning. (Castells, 2010a, 6.7)
Globalisation, space and scale: Inter-urban competition

The above-mentioned construction of new spaces, and the accompanying re-scaling of urban policy, came into a decisive phase from the 1980s onwards – which some authors have characterised by the emergence of the ‘entrepreneurial city’ (esp. Harvey, 1989). Central to the entrepreneurial city is the emergence of *increased inter-city competition*. By the end of the 1970s, the ‘crisis of the welfare state’ unfolded. The promise of full employment and endless economic growth came under scrutiny, the demographic evolution put the pension-system under pressure, and economic crises disrupted the political balance. (Judt, 2010: 535-536). As a consequence the political system in Europe turned away from the post-war Fordist-Keynesian compromise of the welfare state, while a *post-Fordist* period of ‘liberalisation’ started. This ‘liberalisation’ comprised mainly of free-market ideology, economic rationalisation, and far-reaching internationalisation (Beaumont, 2005: 5). The roots of these ideas originated from "an earlier generation of pre-Keynesian liberals", but had now “re-emerged, vociferous and confident, to blame endemic economic recession and attendant woes upon ‘big government’ and the dead hand of taxation and planning that it placed upon national energies and initiative." (Judt, 2010: 537).

In this ‘neoclassical’ view the state was not supposed to interfere with the ‘natural’ dynamics of the market. Policymakers instead aimed at ‘creating economic growth’ through ‘competitive advantages’ (e.g: Porter, 1980), further strengthening the idea of economic globalisation and the primacy of the free-market – and cities stood at the forefront of its implementation (Peck & Tickell, 2002). Consequently, a dynamic of ‘inter-city competition’ emerged, that can be understood in terms of the dynamic between the space *flows* and the space of *places*. Because there aren’t enough capital flows to invest in every city (Peck & Tickell, 2003: 281), policymakers increasingly focus on so-called “placemaking” strategies in order to create the ‘right business climate’ for attracting these much desired capital flows. Part of this strategy builds on the notion of *individualised choice* that is implied in the concept of competition, whereby it is assumed that the choice of individual businesses for investing in a certain place reflects some deeper underlying preferences, which in their turn are reflected by market prices. This same logic gave Richard Florida the confidence to claim that “cities need a people climate as much as (...) they need a business climate” (Florida, 2012: 15). However, this assumption simplifies the complex realities of preference-structures (Storper, 2008: 5.6.). Furthermore, in the end this seemingly wide variety of *place-specific or localised* strategies turns out to be decidedly “un-local”, as Peck and Tickell convincingly argue (2003: 281). Many of these urban policies are nothing but a form of “fast policy” (Peck, 2005: 767) or, as Pratt calls them, “Xerox policies (...): policies that are simply copied with little or no variation from one place to another with no acknowledgement of the different social and economic contexts, and little attention to the policy object.” (Pratt, 2009: 14-15). Strategies that are supposed to be *local* and *place-*

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9 For this section, I have rewritten some of the paragraphs from my contribution to a report for the course “Popular Urban Cultures” which the POLIS-group handed in earlier this year: “The Corn Exchange. Past, Present & Future” (2014), Popular Urban Cultures, supervisor: S. Miles, dept. of sociology, Manchester Metropolitan University.
10 Peck & Tickell argue that ‘post-Fordism’ can only be used to denote a stabilised mode of regulation. Neoliberalism, as they see it, cannot be viewed as such a stable mode, but only as a further phase in the ‘after-Fordist crisis’. (Peck & Tickell, 2003).
11 Another often-cited critique on these policies is the doubt whether the concept of *competition* can be applied to cities, as it was developed for businesses. (Jones & Evans, 2008: 55)
specific are in fact part of a generalising ‘cultural circuit’ in which these ready-made policy-strategies are distributed (Thrift, 2005). When it comes to urban planning, the end-result is planning that is less concerned about a constructive and cohesive management of urban function, but more about reacting to changes in fashion and presenting an attractive image (Harvey, 1989: 13). As a result, urban policy has increasingly become dominated by the idea of organising the urban landscape as a place for economic growth. (Mayer, 2006: 91). Brenner summarises this evolution as follows: “In contrast to the technocratic, comprehensive, and universalizing approach to public infrastructure provision that prevailed during the Fordist-Keynesian period, an institutionally fragmented, market-oriented, locationally selective, and spatially splintered model has emerged(...)” (2004: 246).

It follows that urban restructuring is not be understood as a mere consequence of globalised economic forces, but it is in itself constitutive of these wider societal changes. It is precisely through the local implementation of these ‘competitive strategies’ that they are reproduced. Inter-urban competition is thus not about cities passively receiving capital flows from ‘outside’ who determine the form and scope of local policies. While there are clear signs of specific ‘copy-paste policies’, these policies are part of the political process, and are thus activated locally as much as ‘globally’. Therefore, it not possible to speak of a global linear transition of cities towards a generalised model of the ‘neoliberal city’. (Brenner & Theodore, 2003: 28). In fact, the distinction between ‘local’ and ‘global’ is, in a sense, a false distinction, because it reduces the complexity of these changes into a dichotomous scheme. The discussion above shows how urban development projects (UDP’s) are constitutive of the ‘local’, the ‘global’, and of what is in between. Constructing UDP’s requires a combination of societal functions that operate through a variety of scales, and the UDP emerges through the reflexive operations that constitute these functions. Because of this mutually constitutive relations, UDP’s are important mediators of these general reconfigurations of scale. (Moulaert, Rodriguez & Swyngedouw, 2003: 10; Zukin, 1991, 1.3).

Thus, scale appears as a constructed concept, not an as an ontologically fixed state of existence (Marston, 2000: 220). I will thus understand scale as the structure that emerges from the convergence of a complex network of societal functions. UDP’s are prime examples of how such a convergence takes place in the urban landscape. However, before I say more about this, I must first say a few words on how we can understand these societal functions.
B. Complexity, Functional Differentiation and ‘Steering’

Niklas Luhmann’s work offers useful insights into understanding the complexity of function and scale that I have discussed in the previous section. He sets out to create “a sociology which [reflects] the complex, fragmented and functionally differentiated nature of modern society.” (King & Thornhill, 2006: 41). For the discussion in this thesis, his thoughts on ‘function systems’ and their couplings are especially useful. With the notion of ‘function’ Luhmann develops a method of observation for a wide range of complex affairs, while assuming as little as possible about its characteristics. Above all, his systems-theory will look at the ‘normal’ as something that is “above all improbable” (Luhmann, 1995: 16; Brunczel, 2010: 29-32).

In this section, I will discuss the concept of functional differentiation. Specifically, I will argue that forms of governance need to be explored in terms of coupling between function systems, and that Luhmann’s systems-theory provides a framework for this further exploration, despite its own shortcomings in the matter. To answer these shortcomings, I will use the methods developed in the writings on regime theory, to which I will turn in the following section. I will not present a full theoretical exploration of Luhmann’s systems-theory; this would be well beyond the scope of this thesis. In the following pages I will present only the very basic concepts of Luhmann’s theory that are important for my research – leaving out many important aspects of this very complex theory, while still retaining some useful ‘tools’ for use in the specific research I will conduct. In the end these tools will serve as part of a broader conceptual framework. In this, I follow the example of authors such as Laermans (1999), Schinkel (2008), Albert (2004) and Elena Esposito (2011), who confront Luhmann’s concepts with existing theories and models, and as such construct a distinct systems-theoretical body of research.

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12 To indicate the breadth of Luhmann’s theory, it is sufficient to refer to an anecdote he recounts in the preface of Theory of Society: “On my appointment to the Department of Sociology established at the University of Bielefeld in 1969, I was asked what research projects I had running. My project was, and ever since has been, the theory of society; term: thirty years; costs: none.” (Luhmann, 2012: xi – my emphasis). He was not so far of the mark, as he published his “Theory of Society” (“Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft”) in 1997, one year before his death.

13 The reason I present this list, is to illustrate the wide range of possibilities a systems-theoretical perspective offers to critical sociological research. Laermans (1999) gives an introduction to the main themes and authors of sociology, and re-theorises its canon in systems-theoretical terms. Schinkel (2008) deconstructs the concept of "cultural integration" through a critical confrontation of discourse-analysis and systems-theory. Albert (2004) comes closest to my domain of analysis: he sets out to rethink the themes of International Relations in today’s "global societal context" (2004: 2), explicitly using Luhmann’s theory as a "toolbox" (2004: 3). Esposito (2011) builds on Luhmann’s theory to analyse the functioning of time in finance and economics.
Functional Differentiation: Polycentric Society

Luhmann developed his theory in response to existing sociological theories, and offered his own theory on ‘modernity’ (as I mentioned earlier also Manuel Castells did). According to Luhmann, society is primarily characterised by ‘functional differentiation’. This means that society is internally differentiated in systems according to different functions, such as economy, politics, the legal system, religion, science, education and arts. This process started somewhere in the late Middle Ages, and was well under way by the end of the 18th century (Brunzel, 2010: 128). Luhmann connects the rise of ‘modernity’ to the evolutionary emergence of function systems. Crucially, "functional" does not mean "useful". When systems are described as ‘functional’, this only means that they are able to organise themselves, i.e. to create order from chaotic complexity. So, to be sure, ‘functional’ does not mean that systems serve as distinct ‘organs’ or ‘limbs’ of a ‘societal body’. Furthermore, the notion of functional differentiation clearly implies that “society” is essentially without centre. Although hierarchies still exist as structures within systems, function systems are related to each other only through a heterarchical or polycentric structure. This means two things. First, society is not observed as a ‘whole’ consisting of different ‘parts’. Second, no system (e.g. politics, economy, religion) holds the societal centre from which an ultimate source of power emanates over all other systems.

In terms of functional differentiation the most important characteristic of function systems is that they are autonomous in their operations – in his later works Luhmann describes this as autopoiesis, meaning that systems “produce not only their structures but also the elements of which they consist in the network of these same elements.” (Luhmann, 2012: 32). Even more briefly put: social systems reproduce themselves through self-produced elements. This self-referential notion will help clarify why systems are at the same time closed and open in relation to each other. This ‘open/close’ distinction is in turn of crucial importance in understanding the relationship between different systems, which will be important for the discussion on policymaking. How then is this difference between open and closed to be understood? To answer this, first I have to say something about how function systems operate according to their own specific code and medium.

Below, I present an overview (in Table 1) of the different types of function systems, with their corresponding codes, mediums, programmes and functions. Let’s look at some examples to

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15 What is commonly understood as ‘useful’ is a system’s attempt to operate in terms of another system’s code (and as such not relevant to its own). Luhmann calls this performances ("Leistungen") - which is different from operations in terms of a system’s function. (Luhmann, 1990: 73). (I will come back to this later). This footnote serves primarily as an important reminder that the critique on Luhmann as being a functionalist apologist of the ‘status-quo’ ignores this important distinction between ‘function’ and ‘performance’.

16 Moreover, I will assume throughout this work a constructivist approach to the concept “society”, an argument insightfully phrased by Willem Schinkel: “‘Society’ is a description without referent, an empty sign, a symbol in that sense that symbols don’t refer but work” (Schinkel, 2008: 278 – my translation). This remark is relevant in light of how Luhmann distinguishes between interactions, organisations and societies (see infra).
clarify these concepts. First, the codes. The code for the scientific system is “true/untrue”, which means that science selects those communications that can be selected as either ‘true’ or ‘untrue’. For law as a social system only those communications that can be selected as ‘just’ or ‘unjust’ are relevant.

Second, a programme indicates the way in which the function system is open to its environment. A scientific theory for example is an illustration of how science can ‘capture’ its environment. “Indeed, one can have a theory of anything (and even formulate a theory of everything)?” (Schinkel, 2008: 204). Within the economy prices operationalise the environment in information that is relevant for the economy. A well-known illustration is the communication of externalities in terms of prices.

Third, a medium functions within these systems as a way of making the improbable probable. (Laermans, 1999: 244). By using money we expect an economic communication to be accepted. However, in education or the health system there are no such media that ensure that we can expect the communication to be successfully accepted (i.e. to ‘learn’ or ‘heal’). Counter to this, it can be argued that observing these systems differently can solve this problem. For example, one can observe “illness” as the medium of the health system and “therapy” instead of “health care” as its function: “Therapy, not health care, is the function of a system that only works if there are enough diagnoses of illness and, therefore, reason enough for therapy communication.” (Roth, 2014: 104). Or, one can argue as Laermans does, which is that Luhmann’s theory leaves room for two kinds of functional codes. The first kind are strict binary codes that are related to the general media of communication of the specific systems – for instance, the economy communicates with the medium of money, according to the code payment/non-payment. The second kind are different from these generalised media, since education cannot ensure pedagogic success, and the health system cannot ensure healing. It can then be said that these kind of systems operate with “functionally oriented codes” that are not strictly binary (Laermans, 1999: 250).

The defining of these codes, mediums, programmes and functions is precisely what is at stake when researching function systems, as more observations will guide the furthering of theory.

This short discussion on codes and media, serves to illustrate how systems are simultaneously ‘operationally closed’ as well as ‘open’ to their environment. Being operationally closed means, firstly, that systems can only operate according to their own code (for instance: economy or politics cannot produce scientific truths), and secondly, that systems can only refer back to themselves to assure further communication. For instance, “For the political system (...) political success (however operationalized) is more important than anything else and in this context a successful economy is important only as a condition of political success.” (Luhmann, 2013a: 4.8). This means that politics can only communicate

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17 This is my own translation from Dutch: “Men kan immers van alles een theorie vormen (en zelfs een theorie van alles formulieren)?”

18 What is meant in this table, is symbolically generalised media, which are media of communication that “assume the function of rendering expectable the acceptance of a communication in cases where rejection is probable.” (Luhmann, 2012: 190). For sake of brevity I follow the general trend in literature to speak of the “medium” of a function system. “Medium” in general is a concept that is determined through the distinction “medium/form” (of better: ‘medial substratum’ and ‘form’, see Luhmann, 2012: 117) whereby medium is a loose coupling of elements and form is a close coupling of the same elements. For example, letters are loosely coupled elements that can be more closely coupled into words. Words, in their turn, can be conceived as loosely coupled elements that are closely coupled into sentences, etcetera. This medium/form distinction is part of Luhmann’s more general ‘difference theory’. (Brunczel, 2010: 82-83).
political issues, or art artistic issues. While systems cannot communicate directly with each other, it is entirely possible for systems to orient themselves to each other. To analyse this, systems-theory uses the concepts of coupling and ‘irritation’ (as Luhmann calls it). A more drastic way in which a function system (e.g. politics) can directly influence the operations of another (e.g. economic system) is through dedifferentiation. I will discuss these concepts below, ending with a discussion on the limitations of ‘steering’. 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>System</th>
<th>Code (+ / -)</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>Payment /Non-payment</td>
<td>Money, Property</td>
<td>Price</td>
<td>Distribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>Just / Unjust (Legal/ Illegal) (Right / Wrong)</td>
<td>Rulings (Norms)</td>
<td>Law (German: ‘Gesetze’)</td>
<td>Certainty: elimination of contingency of norm expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>True / False</td>
<td>(Scientific) Knowledge</td>
<td>Research (Theory, Methods)</td>
<td>Knowledge production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>Coalition / Opposition</td>
<td>Power, Sanctions</td>
<td>Ideology</td>
<td>Collectively binding decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Placeable / Unplaceable</td>
<td>Career</td>
<td>Test</td>
<td>Placement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Immanent / Transcendent</td>
<td>Faith</td>
<td>Revelation, Dogma, Ritual, Scriptures</td>
<td>Constructing determinable complexity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mass Media</td>
<td>Information / Non-information</td>
<td>Record</td>
<td>Theme or Topic</td>
<td>Information reproduction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>Innovation / Imitation</td>
<td>Taste</td>
<td>Style</td>
<td>Production, presentation and reflection on/of Art Works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health System</td>
<td>Sick / Healthy</td>
<td>Treatment, Therapy</td>
<td>Hippocratic oath</td>
<td>Health Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health System</td>
<td>Sane / insane</td>
<td>Illness</td>
<td>Diagnosis</td>
<td>Therapy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Function systems

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This table represents my selection of the most commonly observed function systems, based on the overview tables presented in Moeller (2006), Reese-Schäfer (2007) and Roth (2014). The last row in grey indicates the discussion on the health system I mentioned earlier.
Interactions, organisations and scale.

It is important to say some words on what constitutes ‘systems’ because I will use the concepts of ‘systems’, ‘interactions’ and ‘organisations’ to further understand policymaking – linking them to ‘urban regimes’ (see infra). Luhmann sets out to formulate a theory of society based on as little assumptions as possible, leading him to a very abstract theory. Systems are the most fundamental assumption Luhmann makes, in our case these are then social systems. These social systems can be understood as the complexity of relations between communications (Luhmann, 1995: 174-175). Social systems exist next to other types of systems, that all operate in a their own way, such as technical systems, biological systems, and psychic systems. (Brunczel, 2010: 27; Luhmann, 1995: 2). Social systems in their turn consist of, amongst others, interactions and organisations. Of course, the function systems I have already discussed are also social systems.

Illustration 1: Types of systems

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20 Brunczel explains very well how Luhmann locates his theory in relation to general systems theory and difference theory, see Brunczel, 2010: 24-29.

21 As the first sentence of Chapter One of “Social Systems” reads: “The following considerations assume that there are systems. Thus they do not begin with epistemological doubt.” (Luhmann, 1995: 12). The distinction system/environment stands at the core of the start of Social Systems, and is gradually coupled to further notions.

22 I will further ignore all questions regarding self-reference.

23 In “Social Systems” Luhmann also includes “societies”, but as I indicated earlier (footnote 16) I am sceptical about the analytical use of this concept. Schinkel offers a solution that pulls systems-theory beyond the limitations of Luhmann’s idea of ‘society’ as a ‘super-system’, and does away with ‘society’ as an analytical concept. (Schinkel, 2008: 247-303)
**Interactions** “include everything that can be treated as present” (Luhmann, 1999: 412), which means that these are communications dependent on whether the participants are able to perceive each other. **Organisations** are more complex systems, which don't require this contiguity. The central criterion for organisations is **membership**, such as a certain education degree, the payment of a fee, or even a more general capability (e.g. ‘football skills’ to join a football club). (Laermans, 1996: 140). For Luhmann, organisations have evolved in sync with function systems – the differentiation of the political system made political parties possible, the differentiation of the economic system made companies and corporations possible, etc. It is important to realise that organisations can be related to several function systems at a time (e.g. how universities are active in education, science and increasingly also in the economic system). (Moeller, 2006: 31). As I will explain below, both interactions and organisations allow function systems to establish connections between them. Here, I want to emphasise that a communication can at the same time be part of an organisation, interaction and function system. For instance, if I pay for my groceries in the supermarket, this communication can be part of an interaction (between “I” and “the cashier”), an organisation (the supermarket) and a function system (the economy).

In his later works, Luhmann indicates that ‘protest movements’ could be another type of social system (Luhmann, 2013a, 4.15). The late addition of this concept indicates how systems-theory is never ‘finished’ but can always be questioned through new observations. In similar vein I will explore the possibility to regard the concept of ‘urban regimes’ as a type of social system on the same level as interactions and organisations. I will discuss this possibility in the section on urban regimes.

Lastly, I want to emphasise that the distinction between function systems, organisations and interactions is not the same as a distinction between different scales. As I have discussed earlier, 'scale' is socially produced, meaning that it is a form of societal complexity that emerges from the connectivity of communications throughout all these different systems. Scale is a form of societal ordering via the operations of function systems and organisations, and must thus not be considered as a given but as a structure that has to be researched. Seen this way, an urban development project is an example of how the operations of function systems are structured not just by their abstract codes, but in how these codes operate in a complex array of various social systems such as organisations and interactions.
Coupling and the limits of steering

After this overview of the types of systems, I can now present how systems-theory understands the relations between systems as a form of “coupling.” Since every function system has communication as its basic element, it becomes possible to see how these function systems are dependent on each other. Through communications, a system can relate to the communications of other systems. In abstract terms, coupling limits “the scope of the possible structures with which a system can carry out its autopoiesis. […] It does not determine what happens in the system, but must be presupposed, because autopoiesis would otherwise come to a standstill and the system would cease to exist.” (Luhmann, 2012: 55). Coupling refers to the fact that certain possibilities for autopoiesis are excluded, due to the fact that the system in question has to be ‘compatible’ with other systems. (Brunzel, 2010: 53). Some examples can help clarify the concept of coupling. Taxes are a form of coupling between politics and economics (Luhmann, 2013a, 4.9): money is still the medium of the economy, and politics doesn’t adopt this medium as its own – but through taxes politics can influence the possibilities of the economic system. The political system does not decide for the economic system how money needs to be used, but by implementing taxes a structure emerges that the economic system cannot ignore. And as the existence of “tax havens” shows, it is difficult to predict to what extent economic communications abide by the political purpose of the taxes. Another example is the contract, as a coupling between economy and law. (ibid, 4.9). Or the university as an organisation that is the coupling of science and education. (ibid, 4.9). These examples make clear that couplings do not determine internal operations, but that they function as forms through which different systems can “irritate” each other. (ibid, 4.10). These couplings can differ in degree and stability; for instance, taxes are a ‘strong form’ of coupling, whereas an informal agreement to make certain payments can be considered a more ‘loose form’ of coupling. However, these ‘loose’ forms give a degree of flexibility and adaptability to function systems that they would otherwise lack. "In this way, systems continually integrate and disintegrate, being only momentarily coupled and immediately released for self-determined follow-up operations." (ibid, 4.1.). This notion of coupling can be used to explore the different ways in which social systems are oriented to each other in the context of contemporary cities. For instance, considering policymaking, Luhmann already states: “numerous ‘negotiating systems’ have clustered around the political system, bringing together organizations representing interests from various functional systems in the form of regular interactions” (Luhmann, 2013a: 4.9 – my emphasis). However, a lot more needs to be researched on this notion of “coupling”. Whereas Luhmann’s theory offers extensive investigations into the workings of the functions systems, it lacks a systematic exploration of the workings of ‘coupling’ - which appears too
often as a ‘magic concept’ (Borch, 2011: 139). In this regard, I want to contribute to that observation, and look more closely at some of these couplings and how ‘urban regimes’ are forms of coupling.

In terms of coupling, *policymaking or governing* can be defined as the extent to which operations of different function systems can be influenced or determined by the political system. The general idea behind this is called “steering”. However, systems-theory is quite pessimistic about this. For instance, considering the economy Luhmann writes: “No policy can renew the economy, parts of the economy or even single firms because for this one needs money and thus the economy.” (1997: 42). Steering, in systems-theoretical terms, is always self-steering (1997: 48). There are, however, some more things to be said about this.

In an article in “Planning Theory”, Van Assche and Verschraegen analyse Luhmann’s concept of steering, and identify two ways of steering that are observable in planning: steering as *meta-language*, and steering through *dedifferentiation*. Briefly stated, the first is a form of steering that operates on the level of *programmes*, which in the context of planning is well known “by the now common cry for the creation of a common language for all the stakeholders involved in a planning process and policy process” (Van Assche & Verschraegen, 2008: 275). This type of communication will necessarily be *superficial* (2008: 275), as different system-codes need to be able to connect to it. A common tool used to construct such a meta-language is the form of “partnerships”, which seeks to construct a common language between economic, political, cultural and other (e.g. artistic/aesthetic) codes. Systems-theory “allows us to analyze the role and internal mechanics of [these partnerships], as well as the productivity and limitations of the meta-language”. (2008: 276). The second form of steering can be identified as a tendency towards *dedifferentiation* of the concerned systems. Examples of this include so-called ‘technocratic’ planning, whereby scientific operations are deemed to replace political operations. Van Assche and Verschraegen follow Luhmann’s negative evaluation of these dedifferentiating tendencies: “we question the quality of plans produced in this situation, by arguing that it is de-differentiated: the scientists are not truly following scientific method, the politicians are avoiding political decision-making, the administration is making political decisions on questionable scientific grounds, and a free market and economic calculations can hardly develop.” (2008: 277). I agree with this statement to the extent that dedifferentiation indeed undermines functional differentiation, and systems-theory predicts this would probably result in major disruption26. (King & Thornhill, 2005: 98).

However, planning and policymaking is not about steering entire function systems. It is about forming the required connections between function systems so that projects can be pursued. Function systems are only abstract systems, that become structured through the operations of organisations, interactions or other types of social systems. In terms of *form*, the relation

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26 There is also the strong critique on Luhmann that he steers towards a *normative interpretation of differentiation*, whereby of course the differentiation between politics and economy invokes the most critique as being just another form of “laissez-faire”. It is indeed remarkable to see these normative remarks in Luhmann’s otherwise consistently non-normative and a-moral theory (e.g. as argued by Laermans, 1999: 256-258). Yet, Luhmann does tend to look at the separation between politics and economics as a functional necessity. This leads some authors to consider Luhmann “as a neo-liberal theorist of the political system.” (King & Thornhill, 2003: 100), or even as “aggressively anti-left wing” (Østerberg, 2000: 15). However justified these remarks are, *this does not warrant the classification of his systems-theory in general as an ideological exercise*. Luhmann’s personal view can be distinguished from the logic of the theoretical concepts themselves: we are not tied to the same conclusions Luhmann makes.
between function systems and organisations is similar to the reflexive relation between the space of flows and space of places: they are mutually constitutive. However, I want to stress that flows and places should not be considered as an opposition of abstract/specific or macro/micro. Besides form, Castells' concept of the two spaces also points to important dimension of meaning. For example, money (flows) or love (places) can both be abstract and specific; but money is a medium in the space of flows, and love a medium in the space of places. Castells' concept points to how one space (capital) dominates the other (love), which in systems-theoretical terms can be seen as a situation of dedifferentation (one system overtaking the medium of the other). Consequently, urban development projects are to be observed in formal terms (which systemic types, operations and structures) and in terms of meaning (which systems, codes, programmes, organisations, ...). Policymaking requires the capability to couple the necessary social systems in order to pursue the desired goal (or political programme). Space emerges out of these operations, and it is at the same time also present as a condition for these operations.

In terms of planning and policymaking, the question will then be how to conceptualise relations between systems that are at once stable and flexible. Urban regime theory tries to answer that question, by positing a set of relations that give form to urban policy. I propose to conceptualise urban regimes as systemic type on the same level as interactions and organisations. This will allow us to understand regimes as a response the diffusion of power in society, and the relation between function systems, organisations and interactions in urban restructuring. The following section will deal with that re-conceptualisation.
This section will explore in what way ‘urban regimes’ can be considered as social systems. To do this, I’ll first say a few words on the origins of ‘regime theory’ and its most important characteristics, before continuing to present a theoretical model for my research. As I mentioned in the introduction, regime theory is criticised for failing to develop connections with wider explanatory theories. It is however evenly remarkable that many related academic fields (specifically the field of policy research) fail to take into account the literature on regime theory (Sapotichne, Jones & Wolfe, 2007). Regime theory was developed in the context of American cities, starting from the mid-1980s, and was one of the leading approaches to urban politics by the end of the 1990s and the early 2000s (Stoker, 1998; Mossberger & Stoker, 2001; Davies, 2002; Imbroscio, 2003). It has spawned a rich body of research, but to discuss the essential concepts of ‘urban regimes’ I will focus primarily on the writings of Clarence Stone, who is one of the most cited authors in the field (Orr & Johnson, 2008: 26; Sapotichne, Jones & Wolfe, 2007). Stone provides a nuanced view on urban regimes, and opens up his theory to a wide range of applications, making it adaptable to changing circumstances. (Mossberger & Stoker, 2001: 829). Therefore it is justified to speak of regime theory as a model for analysis more than a fully fledged theory. (Mossberger & Stoker, 2001: 811). By connecting the core arguments of his urban regime analysis with the theories introduced in the previous section, I will provide an answer to these issues – as I can thus provide a wider explanatory frame as well as take up the literature on urban regimes in a broader theory of society. I will start by explaining what an urban regime is, and in what way it can help to analyse policymaking in the context I have described thus far.

In the previous section, I presented policymaking as inherently limited, because it exists in a heterarchical society, and function systems are characterised by operational closure and forms of coupling. ‘Urban regime’ is a concept that addresses this limitation, by analysing how the power to govern a city is formed. Clarence Stone found in his research that in order to govern a city it is crucial to coordinate different partners and resources around a shared agenda (Stone, 1993; Stone, 2005). A regime is a coalition, or alignment of interests from which emerges a capacity to govern (Painter, 1996: 129), and complements the formal working of the political system (Stone, 1993: 3). The relation between regimes and the political system stands at the heart of this discussion. Stone forms his own concepts in direct opposition to the idea of ‘pluralism’ in political theory. In a ‘pluralist approach’ politics is an open system in which anyone can participate, because of elections. In contrast, regime analysis considers the political process only as ‘open’ insofar as those willing to participate have the right resources and connections. (Stone, 2005: 310). Here regime analysis has the same view on elections as systems-theory, as for both they are not the source of all political power. As a function system, politics is organised around making collectively binding decisions (Luhmann, 2013: 4.7). This is a very traditional understanding of the function of the political system, however in the context of functional differentiation it has the distinct consequence that “political power is not very powerful and that political decisions do not decide much.” (Moeller, 2012, Ch.8). For example, politics can set out to regulate public institutions (organisations that are strongly coupled to the political system), yet this power to

27 In a reflection on his early writings, Clarence Stone acknowledges this limitation: “To avoid a claim that my approach constitutes a broad theoretical explanation of urban politics, I use the term urban regime analysis rather than urban regime theory.” (Stone, 2005: 335).
regulate institutions does not limit power to an exclusive use by the political system. On the contrary, this regulatory power is reflected in the operations of the other systems via the organisational regulation. Political power is thus not about the dedifferentiation of systems (i.e. the political system taking over the codes of other function systems), but about creating conditions of power in the environment of other function systems. "Hospitals, for instance, and not the government, have the power to declare people insane or sane; schools have the power to let people graduate or not; courts have the power to declare people guilty or innocent; and the economy has the power to make people rich or poor. These powers are not immediate political powers" (Moeller, 2012: Ch.8). In this view, power is a structure-dependent selection, and highly complex systems that can operate with more alternatives for selection can thus create more power. (Ashenden, 2006: 136). Systems-theory thus understands this multiplication of power via functional differentiation. Consequently, the power to govern cannot be distilled from a single societal position, certainly not the official institutions of politics. (Stone, 2013: 2).

‘The Power to Govern’

Clarence Stone calls this formulation of diffused power a “social production model of power”, by which he wants to stress that power is something that is created through the cooperation of different contributors. (Stone, 1993: 8). In “Governing Atlanta” he sums up this discussion on power quite nicely: “In a fragmented world, the issue is how to bring about enough cooperation among disparate community elements to get things done—and to do so in the absence of an overarching command structure or a unifying system of thought.” (Stone, 1989: 227). The power to govern a city is thus not a uniquely political power, but one that is constructed in the complexity of scales, function systems, organisations and interactions. Urban regimes are, in a first order, social systems that reduce this social complexity through organising themselves around the function of creating a ‘capacity to govern’. Consequently, they are important mediators between different structures, giving shape to changes in the environment of these systems. Furthermore, in a second order, it can be claimed that regimes are models which urban actors can apply to assemble the necessary power to govern. This is also part of Stone’s research, as he wants to explore possible forms of efficient democratic governance, with a strong sense of social justice (Stone, 2013). I will look into this claim in the final discussion of this thesis, when I discuss the organisation of governance surrounding the two development projects I have researched. For now I want to continue with the characteristics of regimes as systems, and conclude with a general theoretical model for my research.

Mossberger and Stoker are certainly correct when they state that “urban regimes are not simply ‘networks’ or interorganizational collaboration” (2001: 831). However, counter to the rest of their argument I do not wish to limit regimes to the specific boundaries they set out, above all their sharp demarcation between ‘regimes’ and ‘governing coalitions’. I prefer to follow Clarence Stone’s own reflection on regime analysis, and the concepts that he considers to be fundamental. Essentially, regimes are social systems that distinguish themselves primarily from formal political institutions, and organise themselves around
minimally four key structures. Together they form a “strategic set of connections” (ibid: 239) that constitute the core of a governing coalition that can be called a regime:\footnote{Stone adds ‘coordination’ explicitly in his 2005 article as fourth characteristic, adding to the other three factors he emphasised in his earlier work (see esp. Stone, 1993: 2).}

\begin{tabular}{|l|l|}
\hline
Agenda & a set of issues or problems around which the regime is formed \\
Coalition & the participants of the regime \\
Resources & required for pursuing the agenda; delivered by the participants \\
Coordination & a scheme for aligning the contributions of all members \\
\hline
\end{tabular}

Regimes differ from organisations in one important regard, which is that organisations are not based on purposes, but decisions, and they do not bring similar interests together in order to gain power. In abstract terms organisations are essentially decision-making systems that primarily provide structuration for function systems. (Nassehi, 2005: 187). Regimes on the other hand are very much organised around purposes, and Stone connects this explicitly to the goal of attaining power (Stone, 2005: 325). Regimes further differ from organisations in that they resemble networks with a polycentric structure, instead of a clear outlined hierarchy (Luhmann, 2013a, 4.14). They are at the same time more than mere interaction systems, because they reach across the limitations of immediate perception. I will discuss this in more detail in the following paragraph, wherein I propose the hypothesis of regimes as a specific systemic type.

\section*{Hypothesizing Regimes as Systemic Type}

Regimes are formed in close coupling to the political system, without being exclusively coupled to it. This becomes clear by looking at the function of the political system and the basic agenda of regimes. The political system is organised around ‘collectively binding decisions’, and only this: in a centreless society politics is very limited in its possibilities for addressing problems, as I stated earlier. Regimes seek to answer these limits of steering by organising themselves as possible couplings between different function systems – in the same sense as organisations can form possible couplings. The differentiation of a social system (in this case: regimes) at once reduces and increases societal complexity. (Luhmann, 1995: 191-194). Regimes aim at reducing the societal complexity that arises from the previously mentioned multiplication of power. They achieve this by structuring the aforementioned strategic set of concepts. The more regimes reduce the complexity of power-diffusion, the more complex its internal structures will need to be. (Brunczel, 2010: 59). Of course, no regime differentiation is ever a final solution to this ‘power problem’. Regimes are, as all social systems, fundamentally contingent: there will always be an alternative. However, key to social systems is that structures are formed in such a way as to hide this contingent nature of the system (Brunczel, 2010: 153). In response to the absence of a central societal “command structure”, regimes differentiate themselves as the only way for “getting things done” (Stone, 1989: 227). In order to achieve this differentiation, regimes distinguish between those communications that affirm what ‘needs to be done’ and those that do not. At the same time regimes will have to distinguish themselves from other social systems. Consequently, the stability and nature of the coupling of the regime to the political system and other function systems or organisations, will depend on what is selected as ‘that
what needs to get done’. This also means that regimes are not limited to the local or urban scale — considering what I said earlier (section 1.A & 1.B.) scale is constructed through the process of differentiation of the regime.

Structures thus exclude those communications that are not related to the goal of regimes, which is “getting things done”, or as I called it earlier: the capacity to govern. This goal is achieved by regime formation around the mutually reinforcing structures that Stone identified as agenda, resources, coalition and coordination. These structures are always subject to the possibility of change, the dynamics of which I shall discuss as I present each of these concepts individually. As I will explain, these four concepts are reflexively connected: every concept affects, and is affected by, all the others.

An agenda forms the set of issues or problems around which the regime is formed. To be effective, an agenda must provide a “big-purpose goal” around which to mobilise (Stone, 2005: 11), and be capable of reflecting several, even conflicting, goals (Stone, 2004: 9). However, Stone does not define very clearly when a purpose is big enough and when it is too big (and can thus no longer hold the attention of the members). Systems-theory can add to this by stating that an agenda is functional as long as members of the regime expect that other members expect similar goals to be attained. Because of this the agenda provides stability to the regime. Specifically for regimes is the generalised expectation of feasibility of the goals on the agenda. (Stone; 2005). When goals are made explicit, it will soon become clear that resources are decisive in limiting what is feasible and what is not. As such, an agenda is shaped as much by available resources as the selection of resources is by the agenda.

Resources are more than just material resources, they can include organisational, technical or other skills (Stone, 1993: 11). What is important, is that the resources are observed as creating possibilities for achieving the agenda. Because of this, good candidates for resources are generalised media (see supra), such as money, property, law or even values (Luhmann, 2012: 201). Due to the fact that resources are so important in the construction and the pursuit of the agenda, the availability of the resources can play an important role in the construction of the goals or agenda. (Stone, 1993: 12). Furthermore, resources can also take the form of strategically important knowledge, and as such resources can be linked to specific members of the regime. For instance, Stoker points out the strategic importance of “technical/professional officials (...) especially in Europe” (1995: 60). Lastly, it is now clear that regime formation is not a question of equal access, but that membership can be severely restricted, depending on the required resources. Furthermore, this inequality is linked to structures in the environment of the regime: “With resources at center stage, one can see why governing tends to reflect the inequalities of society’s system of social stratification.” (Stone, 2005: 330). I would add that it shows how functional differentiation can lead to a broad exclusion of people from the performances of the function

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29 This in contrast to Mossberger and Stoker who hold on to the necessity (instead of possibility) of including ‘business partners’ (i.e. organisations coupled to the economic system): “If regimes are simply coalitions that bring together actors in a complex policy environment but where the division between market and state is not a factor, then how do urban regimes differ from networks?” (2001: 825) As Clarence Stone writes, this is the wrong question to ask: “The question is not whether a given locality passes a litmus test to qualify as an urban regime. It is about the character of local governing arrangements, what enables them to pursue an agenda, and what shapes the strength and direction of the problem-solving efforts.” (2004: 10).

30 In systems-theory, structures have the form of expectations, and more precisely expectations of expectations (Luhmann, 1995: 303-306).
systems: “the inequalities can spread from one subsystem to the other. If someone receives an education of lower quality, he will have worse chances in the labor market, so he will be badly off, and this will reduce his chances in almost every other field.” (Brunzel, 2010: XX).

The coalition is of course comprised of the members of the regime, more specifically through the construction of roles. Social systems are never collections of people, but are a collection of communications. People only enter social systems through the concept of roles. However, because regimes can be coupled to different functions systems and organisations, a combination of roles related to a single person is of course possible. When new members arrive or former members leave, this can have an impact on the maintenance of the agenda or the available resources – possibly also leading to a change in goals.

Coordination is achieved by making explicit the generalised expectations (structures) of the regime. This goes against the tendency that in most social systems expectations structure the process of communication implicitly. (Laermans, 1999: 110). Consequently, making expectations explicit places a burden on the system that has to be dealt with. This burden cannot be avoided, since regimes have to decide which expectations will be pursued or fulfilled and what resources are needed. Stone identifies interactions and organisational relations as ‘auxiliary measures’ for the regime in this regard (Stone, 2002), because they provide the regime with the ability to manage expectations between the members. For example, the use of behind-the-scene negotiations offers members the possibility of making explicit certain expectations without opening them up to immediate response by others. Coordination of a regime requires a combination of these auxiliary measures to cope with the constant burden of expectation management.

It is clear that these four elements are reflexively connected, one supporting the other: “The framing of an agenda can provide a focus for creating or reshaping networks, but the networks may also help alter the agenda as new circumstances emerge. Purposes, after all, are not static. There is a reciprocal dynamic between how a purpose is framed and the character of the supporting networks” (Stone, 2005: 321). Furthermore, despite their contingency, regimes can be very stable: “A regime once established is a powerful force in urban politics. Opponents ‘have to go along to get along’ or face the daunting task of building an effective counter-regime.” (Stoker, 1995: 65).

The complexity of its structures highlight how improbable the regime formation is. Regime analysis is thus not about describing a process of ‘inevitable’ regime differentiation, but about the difficulty of achieving a state of structural differentiation that produces a form of power to govern. (Stone, 2004: 11). In light of this, it is relevant to ask not only how it was possible for a regime to form around a specific urban development project, but also to ask why specific project was not accompanied by regime formation.
D. Conclusion: Observing Regimes as Systems

In summary, I have conceptualised the analysis of urban regimes in systems-theoretical terms, which serves a threefold goal: to provide a broader understanding of society, a framework for understanding regime analysis and a corresponding method for understanding the internal structures of regimes. I will shortly go over these arguments here, and connect these to my research question.

First, as a theory for understanding society, systems-theory offers an evolutionary perspective on 'society' as a centre-less construct characterised by functional differentiation. Part of this theory is to understand that differentiation is the prerequisite for the high degree of complexity and pluralism of modern society. This offers a broader sociological understanding to urban regimes as systems that operate in the spheres marked by differentiation.

This brings us to the second goal of this theoretical toolbox: to provide more explanatory power to regime analysis. Using the insights of systems-theory, I can analyse regimes through its links with different function systems, and therefore with broader societal structures. Here, it is key to remember that organisations are not function systems, they operate on a different level. Other social systems on the same level as organisations, such as regimes, are distinct forms that operate in a distinct localised way. Function systems are structured in the wide variety of forms, and regimes are part of that structuring. To understand regimes, means to understand the mediation that exists between the regimes and the function systems (their codes and structures). Regimes are thus observed locally, but are not trapped in a localised analysis since they are already always connected to the underlying functional differentiation in which they are initially formed. From within the political system policy can only be shaped by certain programmes that connect with other social systems, without the possibility of attaining full control over these systems. In organising coupling by legislative rules (law) or taxes and subsidies (economy), governments can exert influence without assuring success. What's more, the delegation of decisionmaking power to organisations such as hospitals (health systems), schools (education) or courts (law), means that power is diffused throughout the diverse array of function systems and organisations – this is what I referred to as the multiplication of power. Thus, the capability to assure a certain policy is not controlled by the political system, which can organise collectively binding decisions but cannot enforce these decisions without reference to the other function systems. I have discussed how organising the capacity to govern is a question of achieving couplings between these function systems and the organisations that structure them. Urban regimes are social systems that respond to this need for coupling, and they do so in a way that is different from organisations. Since regimes are social systems organised around a particular policymaking agenda, and since collectively binding decisions are legitimised in the political system, it is to be expected that regimes will pursue a close coupling to the political system – linking it to the other function systems. Consequently, to understand regimes means to understand these diverse linkages between the different systems. While these linkages are formed specifically around a certain project and place, the underlying function codes, programmes and boundaries can still be observed.

Thirdly, regime analysis can be conceptualised in systems-theoretical terms, forming a coherent theoretical framework. Specifically the four main characteristics of regimes that
Stone identified can be understood in terms of structuring elements of the regime as a social system. Regimes are social systems that operate with an agenda. This agenda is to be understood as one side of the distinction (agenda/non-agenda) that marks the boundary of the system. Regimes distinguish themselves from their environment by drawing their boundary in the affirmation of the agenda – and as with all social systems, a regime is structured in such a way that its leading distinction stays hidden for the regime itself. The agenda is fundamental in forming the regime, it is a structuring element that is implied throughout all of its operations – and therefore it is not questioned: the non-agenda can not be part of the regime. The agenda operates in the regime as a fiction in the sense that it is not immediately realised but points a reality in the future. Stone identified this as the feasibility of the agenda, which is closely linked to the available resources of the regime. Resources can be money, properties, specific knowledge or expertise, or anything that is observed by the regimes as contributing to the pursuit of the agenda. They can be closely linked to the members of the regimes, who can bring in specific knowledge or interpersonal networks. These resources and the coalition members are both reflexively related to the agenda: they are selected because of their contribution to the agenda, and by being selected they offer possibilities for the regime that can alter the future state of the agenda. Lastly, for a regime to be able to realise a specific urban project, the agenda must be explicitly coordinated inside the regimes – placing a greater burden on the system, since it cannot rely indefinitely on generalised implied notions of the eventual specific form the agenda would take.

In my research, I will analyse if and how regimes operate around a specific project, and provide some insight in how they are internally structured as well as how they are linked to functional differentiation and the theory presented above. I will focus on two large-scale projects, one in Amsterdam and one in Antwerp (this choice is discussed in the following section on methods of observation). Specifically I have three questions I will explore:

1. Have urban regimes been formed in Amsterdam and Antwerp, in order to develop the “Oosterweel” and “Zuidasdok”?  
2. If so, what are their characteristics and what have they achieved?  
3. If not, can I identify the reasons why?

Through focusing my research on two urban development projects I am attempting to locate regimes around those specific projects. However, the couplings that will be observed, illustrate the dynamics of scale ("local/global") and function (function systems) that were discussed in the first section of this chapter: while projects are a place where flows can ‘solidify’, they are not passive containers that get filled by external forces – at the very same time urban projects are ‘giving form’ to the flows that are connected to them. Both spaces need each other. Urban regimes give form this process, they structure it. Function systems and scale are structured through the operations of systems like regimes and other social systems.

To approach this complex problem, I will present urban projects that have experienced a ‘crisis’ in either their coupling to the economic or to the political system. The reason for this is that I want to create a research situation wherein I can observe changes in the function systems and the corresponding regimes. I understand a crisis as a moment of ‘breaching’, an observable period in time wherein a system experiences events that are contrary to its
expectations, and thus opens up possibilities of change (Holgersen, 2013: 1-2; Harvey, 2010: Ch.3; Fujita, 2010: 307-308). However, a crisis does not necessarily lead to change in the sense of structural adaptation to the events that occurred. As I stated in the introduction, experience after the 2007-2008 international financial crisis has shown how the same power-configurations as before the crisis can quickly be reassembled (Aalbers, 2013; Oosterlynck & Gonzalez, 2013; Holgersen, 2013). There is thus a difference between crisis (as an event) and change (as learning): a system learns when it adapts expectations to the events that occurred, but it could very well also retain its expectations despite these events. (Luhmann, 1995: 293). The crisis in Amsterdam’s Zuidas was related to the global economic crisis after 2007-2008. For the Zuidas this crisis resulted in the retreat of crucial private partners from the regime that was leading the construction of the 'dock' at Zuidas. Here, the further operations of the regime can serve to illustrate how a regime mediates between a 'global' crisis and a 'local' development, and secondly how regimes respond to internal restructurings. In Antwerp the Oosterweel-project was confronted with a political crisis. The proposed plans of the local, regional and national authorities have been confronted with a strong citizen's protest movement. One clear crisis-event here was a referendum in 2009, which resulted in only a partial abandoning of the proposed plans. As I will show, the governing regimes in both Amsterdam and Antwerp show remarkable resilience against the crisis events.

Finally, I want to acknowledge that a research of two urban projects can only serve as an illustration for the broader theoretical implications presented here. These projects are, however, still valid entry points in a further understanding of how urban regimes are systemic responses to the multiplication of power I have discussed. These points of entry can provide the right amount of friction to irritate our sociological imagination, and thus create new possibilities of learning.
E. Methods of observation and analysis

Considering the research question, and my intention of researching the formation of urban regimes in the context of a ‘crisis’, my first question was which development projects I was going to research. The first choice was Amsterdam – because there had been a major change in the organisation of the ‘Zuidasdoek’ (‘South-axis Dock’) due to economic restructuring. It changed from a public-private partnership into a project that was completely publicly funded and where the physical construction was re-planned. Furthermore, an important element was the ‘double agenda’ of realising major infrastructure to support economic growth and realising conditions for the Zuidas as a second urban centre for Amsterdam. The second choice became Antwerp, because here as well was a major infrastructure project that was confronted with a crisis of its own. Here, it was a political crisis, because the proposed building of large-scale bridge was halted after a referendum forced the government to rethink its strategy. Like Amsterdam, in Antwerp the goal of realising a ‘growth’-based infrastructure project is confronted with the goal to realise new urban space. Unlike Amsterdam, in Antwerp these agendas are part of opposing regimes. Lastly, both cities were interesting because in both projects the ‘supra-local’ government was involved in the construction project – leading to the intriguing situation of how a local government copes with a major urban redevelopment that is to a large extent determined by a supra-local government. Of course, the specific dynamics of this multi-layered political construction was different for each city. I will discuss both projects at length in the following two chapters.

The next step consisted of gathering information that I could use to understand more about these projects. In this section I would like to discuss some points of reflection that are needed to understand the data better, and the methods I used to collect and analyse the data. I want to make clear from the outset, that the methods serve to use the theoretical concepts presented earlier, without being blinded by the assumptions of the involved theories. This thesis will be based mostly on qualitative data, by which I mean mainly interviews and texts and documents. It can be hard to define exactly what the difference between qualitative and quantitative research methods is (Bryman, 2012: 387), and I will not go into this discussion here. Since systems-theoretical research is usually highly abstract in nature, there are few examples of concrete empirical research based on a systems-theoretical model. There are however some attempts at re-framing the leading principles of so-called grounded theory in systems-theoretical terms (Gibson, Gregory & Robinson, 2005; Mitchell, 2007).

The grounded-theory method in itself can be presented as shown in the figure on the next page. This model is constructed with the explicit intent not to be blinded by theoretical concepts, and to create room for empirical exploration and inductive reasoning. Connecting this method to a theoretical modelling as presented earlier might sound contradictory. However, grounded theory process emphasis a feedback mechanism between the initial research question and the resulting data collection. This feedback mechanism not only operates during the collection of interviews, but already far before that, during the exploratory phase when the researcher is still reading literature and going through databases of academic journals. Even walking the streets of the city, reading a newspaper or talking to friend all feed back into the process through which ideas become connected and form a coherent conceptual toolbox. This thesis was initially meant to be an exploration into
the dynamics of global financial flows, yet through further reading and writing it focused on
the development of urban spaces as coupling between the economic and political system,
and through that more and more on urban regimes and urban development projects.
Furthermore, as I will discuss briefly below, I first researched another city – but due to lack of
data I had to find a new project for my research. This choice of course also gave form to the
research model and the specific research question that I focused on. Again the same
reflexive dynamics are encountered here that have been referred to already several times
during the discussion.

Literature and Interviews.

System-theory emphasises the functioning of codes and programmes as selection mechanism in systems, and places certain theoretical assumptions on which kind of codes are used by function systems. Nevertheless, it leaves open the possibility for research to investigate the ways in which theses systems operate with their codes in a specific situation. I was focused on bringing forward the different structuring elements of urban regimes. To achieve this, I chose to work with interviews with the different ‘stakeholders’. Using the insights of regime theory, I explored the ways in which the construction of an urban policy agenda is communicated by these actors. This involves an interpretative approach to the interview data. The interviews were ‘open’, in the sense that certain moments in the development history formed the basis outline of a set of topics to be explored with the interviewees, focussing on their relation to the other players involved. The interviews were not meant to be used as an analysis of discourse, but rather as a tool to gain insight in the understanding of the actors themselves. Through their experience in the project they are the experts in the construction of the regime. By using the theory, it is then my task to place their perspective in a wider understanding of how regimes function. Of course, I did not start my research by immediately doing interviews, but by reading texts and documents regarding the development site, and analyse these in search for elements mostly related to the construction of an agenda, the gathering of resources or the presence of different members.

The findings in this thesis are based on a reading of academic journals and books, policy documents and publications from involved organisations (see the bibliography for more details). Based on this literature I then constructed a timeline of events in which I had highlighted some important changes that I wanted to explore further. If I was to gain more insight in the functioning of the relevant regimes, I needed to be able to speak to some of its members and test the ideas I found in the literature, and look for new information. This would allow me to ask specifically about the changes I was interested in, and in how the interviewees experienced them and what their own insights were. These events and changes would be the topics I would then discuss with the interviewees. However, I never imposed the timeline as a given, because I also wanted to know what the interviewees themselves considered to be important changes that I might have overlooked. Interviews where therefore very open, in the sense that I had no list of questions but a list of events and topics that I wanted to discuss. Consequently, the quality of the interviews is very important for my research, and I am not only referring to how the interview was conducted, but also to the level of insight I was able to obtain. On this last issue, I will explain more below. Also, I want to add that I asked permission from all respondents before I started the recording, and explained the recording was to be able to retain the information from the interview, and possibly use quotations.

Concerning these interviews, I should note that every interview was a lesson for the next one. Just as the concepts I developed for the theory were being redeveloped throughout the research and which each new interview, the interviews I conducted evolved with each new meeting. This is of course a good thing, but it also means that the interviews that I did first were often not as detailed as the later interviewees. For instance, in Amsterdam I was able to speak quite soon with the alderman that supported the launch of the Zuidas Masterplan, and only after this meeting did I speak with members of the administration. I realised during those few weeks that a reversed order might have given me more insight to do the interview
with the alderman, and focus more in detail on certain key events. I will present a further presentation of the interviews below, as well as some general outlines of my research.

Lastly I want to add that the interviews were analysed in terms of the information relating to the different events as well as the four core elements of regime formation that I identified in the previous section. This means that I used the interviews to confront the findings from literature and theory, and relate the elements as such. Mostly I spent time behind a screen, listening to the recording and noting down the different elements that referred to the model. I would start listing the items and seeing where they connected or conflicted. This is actually how I got the idea of looking at urban regimes not just as a form of organisation, but very specifically as a systemic type with its own dynamics. In both cities the elements of coordination that were mentioned, inspired me to look back at how regimes function, and what the role of an agenda is. Again, this is to show how feedback mechanism are constantly at work throughout the research.

To finalise this reflection on my method of observation, I want to present a short overview of the general circumstances in which I conducted the research, as well as a look at the quality of information I gathered from the interviews.

**General circumstances of the research**

As I mentioned, I had originally started some initial research in a different city than Antwerp. In March and April I tried to gain contacts with some stakeholders in Huddersfield (UK), concerning a smaller development site known as the “Waterfront Quarter”. Despite a good start with some enthusiastic people, I encountered rather large difficulties gaining access to other stakeholders – specifically the local council and the development agency. A return to Huddersfield later in June was equally unsuccessful. After talking to my supervisor, I made the choice to take up Antwerp as part of my research at the start of July. The research plan I had set up earlier, would have allowed me to finish up my research in Huddersfield in June, and allow me to do my research in Amsterdam during the month of July. This would have giving me the time to do the analysis in August. Eventually I did the research in Antwerp and Amsterdam over seven consecutive weeks, from July the 1st until August 15th. Before I visited Amsterdam, I had of course spent some time doing the necessary desktop research and library visits, collecting literature on the city and the 'Zuidas'. For Antwerp I did the same during my stay in Amsterdam in July.

However, in the end, I am pleased that, although the case in Antwerp is very complex and time was therefore not on my side, I was able to do some research on the Oosterweel-connection. Because of the many people involved in proposing alternatives to the official government plans, I was able to redefine my research topic to include a form of regime that I had originally not intended to research.

I used those seven weeks to visit and map the areas, and contact various stakeholders. I rented a room in Amsterdam during the first four weeks of July, which gave me the opportunity to visit the Zuidas regularly, see as much of it as I could, and talk to some people in the area: a lot of office workers drinking coffee or smoking a cigarette on their break, shopkeepers, gardeners in the allotment (to my surprise there is an allotment on the Zuidas, as well as a “pig resort”), students walking by from the university, etc. These were
undocumented conversations, but served to get an impression of the area, and gather some
background information that might be useful in interviews. At the very least, this helped me
recognise names of streets and squares when stakeholders mentioned them in interviews.

In Antwerp, however, I had less time to visit the city as much. Also, the area that is
affected by the proposed new ring road construction is spread-out over various parts of the
city. Understanding the complexity of the case, also requires looking at how the different
infrastructure-trajectories are drawn, and how they differ from each other. I was not
interested in the technical details of these trajectories, but in what these trajectories
represented for the different actors. In order to do so, I had to of course understand them,
and locate their construction in the timeline of events – as I will show these trajectories are
often constructed in direct response to others, and they represent different agendas. Besides
the technical issues at stake, I focused on contacting stakeholders as much as I could, trying
to a get a broad view of the issues at play. As I will show below, the results vary...

The range of the interviews

The quality of the interviews was very important for my research design. In both cities the
intention was to reach as many members of the governing coalitions (and its opponents) as
possible. In the span of these seven weeks I was able to talk to 15 people, ranging from an
hour to almost two hours per interview. In Amsterdam I was able to speak to 7 people, of
which 6 were recorded. In Antwerp I spoke to 8 people, of which 7 were recorded. It is clear
that I have not reached the point of saturation. Specifically I lack interviews with political
representatives, although I have had some very good contacts in other domains. What this
means for my research question, is that I am able to use these interviews to provide some
insightful background to the processes that I will discuss, but I cannot use the interviews to
map out an ‘entire’ regime (if such a thing would even be possible). The mapping of the
regime will be done through a combination of literature, interviews and theory – the nature of
which I will discuss in the relevant sections.

Concerning the interviews in Amsterdam, with the help of professor Mommaas from the
University of Tilburg I had the good fortune to speak to Stan Majoor, an assistant professor
at the University of Amsterdam who has done extensive research on the Zuidas. I was able
to discuss some thoughts I had with him, and I could use his name as a referral when I
approached members of the Zuidas project-agency. Also, after a good tip (again from
Tilburg, this time from Nienke van Boom), I went to the opening event of ‘Amsterdam
Summer School Thinking City’ where I was able to track down Zef Hemel, former head of the
Planning Department in Amsterdam. He was luckily very willing to make an appointment,
and also allowed me to use his name as a referral to make further contacts. So I used these
contact to look for others, snowballing from one interview to the next, each time asking if I
could contact anyone else.

Unfortunately, despite this support, I was not able to speak to the current alderman for
the Zuidas, or the alderman that came before him. Especially that last one is a loss, since he
was present at the moment of the crisis and the change of the Zuidasdok to a fully publicly
funded enterprise. In total I have been able to do three interviews within the project-agencies
of the Zuidas and Zuidasdok, and I was able to speak to the alderman who was instrumental
in placing Zuidas on the political agenda in the 1990s.
What it also missing is people from the private sector, who were involved in the public-private partnership before the crisis, or who are now still active in the area and have an interest in the development of the Zuidasdom. This would certainly have provide more information concerning the role of risk and investment on the construction of the agenda and the gathering of resources. Especially here, I will have to rely on literature, impressions from interviewees and theoretical assumptions.

Lastly, I want to note that the only ‘critical’ voice in these interviews came from the former head of the Planning Department, who was not involved in the organisation of the Zuidas as a project. Of course, the fact that the head of the Planning Department was not involved in the process is an interesting fact on its own.

Concerning Antwerp, the interviews I collected were mostly (except two) from people who were opposed to the construction of the Oosterweel-connection. The two ‘supporters’ are from the project-organisation BAM and the Flemish Chamber of Commerce (VOKA). I wasn’t able to reach other important actors in the political field. I believe this is due to two reasons. The first one is an assumption, the second one is practical. My assumption is that most of the stakeholders who support the construction and are connected to the decision-making process are hard to reach because they are not very willing to discuss the project. At the time that I was researching the project, the Flemish political parties were in negotiations concerning the formation of the new Flemish government. Oosterweel was a difficult topic, and was receiving quite some media attention because of election promises that were made by certain parties. The second reason is very practical: I had no indirect contacts via which I could approach these political actors, so I had to go via the formal channels in a short amount of time. This means using e-mail, telephones, and knocking on office doors (where I could find one). This is a difficult route to contact politicians for a research interview, and given the summer holidays it became somewhat harder. The fact that I started quite late at contacting them did not help either.

I did, however, had the good fortune to speak to three key actors from the so-called ‘action groups’ or ‘protest groups’, who made time available to discuss their motivations, organisation and history, and of course their insights in the complexity of this project. Furthermore, I contacted some researches at the research group Cosmopolis (VUB), who all replied very quickly with interesting leads to follow. I was able to speak to Maarten Loopmans and Jef van den Broeck, both very knowledgeable about urban planning in general and Antwerp in specific. And thanks to Valerie van de Velde, a former POLIS-student at the administration of the Master Builder of Antwerp, I was able to speak with the former Chief Architect of Antwerp. Overall, these interviews have helped me to understand more of the complexity of this case, especially about the construction of an agenda around which to organise a critical discourse that opposes official government policy. As a result of this specific selection of interviewees, I became more focused on the regime formation in the sphere of the ‘action groups’ than in the political sphere. Even more, because of these interviewees I became more aware of the coordination that is necessary in constructing an agenda that can support different (‘congruent’) goals. In the appendix I have included a list of contacts.

But now the time has come to dive deeper into the urban projects themselves...
2. The Zuidasdok Regime in Amsterdam

The Zuidas (“South-axis”) is an urban redevelopment area of about 270 hectares that has been in development since the 1990s. It is one of the most ambitious projects in the Netherlands, targeted as the Netherlands’ prime location in the international economy as well as Amsterdam’s second urban centre (MIM, 2012). Its most significant physical characteristic is the “infrastructure bundle” that cuts the area in half. The Zuidas Masterplan was devised to bring this bundle underground, and to create new urban space on top of the tunnels. This massive tunnelling project was called the Zuidasdok (“South-axis dock”), and is the focus of my research in Amsterdam. Eventually an agreement for development was reached by the end of 2012, and its proposed development is a lot smaller than first envisioned. The ‘dock’ will now only bring the ring road underground (not the train tracks), and the tunnels will be much shorter. Before I go into more detail, I will present some pictures and maps of the location on the following pages. Also, I want to emphasise that I will focus specifically on those developments that aimed to develop a “dock”. While there is a clear physical distinction between the Zuidas area and the ‘bundle’ in the middle, this distinction is not always clear in sociological terms. The “dock” is a spatial intervention around which different coalition members aligned for more than twenty years. Specifically, the developments in the larger area of the Zuidas are linked to the dock mostly via political and financial strategies. Therefore, after the maps of the area, I will have to present some of the political and economical history of the area.

Illustration 3: Centre of the Zuidas, with the train station and ‘infrastructure bundle’ in the middle (north is right, south is left). (Architecten Cie, 2014)

31 Unless otherwise referenced, pictures are personal as well as the maps (with the base-map as available in Google Maps Engine Pro).
Illustration 4: Scale model of the Zuidas and the proposed Zuidasdok.

Map 1: Zuidas situated in Amsterdam (indicated in red dashed lines).
Map 2: Zuidas ‘flanks’ (black borders) and the infrastructure ‘bundle’ (red area).

Map 3: The parts of the ring road that eventually will be tunnelled (indicated with two red lines).
On the following page a timeline shows some of the historical context of the development of Amsterdam, as well as some key moments in its development. The development of the Zuidas and the Zuidasdock can be linked to developments in the international and national politics and economy, as well as developments in local planning of the city.

A. Growing away from integrated planning

In the first chapter I discussed how ‘growth’ and ‘competition’ came to dominate the economic and political strategies in Europe from the 1970s onwards. In the Netherlands, national policy started focusing on the connections with the ‘global economy’. Cities were to become key elements in this new strategy, specifically the Randstad area: Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht. The Randstad was central to the Dutch economic policy in the 1980s, despite the fact that their economic growth was below the average of the Dutch economy – making it more political ideology than economic reality (Majoor, 2008: 71). A central policy instrument is the Spatial Planning Report \(^{32}\) (SPR), which describes the long-term spatial strategies of the Netherlands. In 1988 the “Fourth SPR” explicitly sees cities (and especially Randstad) as the engines of economic growth, because of their perceived role in the international economy. The state made funds available for large-scale development and infrastructure projects (Majoor, 2008: 71; Van Eekelen et al, 2014: 34). Amongst these key areas, Schiphol airport in Amsterdam was seen as a crucial mainport for international development.

\(^{32}\) By 2010 the SPR (“Nota voor Ruimtelijke Ordening”) has been integrated in the “Structural Vision on Infrastructure and Space” (“Structuurvisie Infrastructuur en Planning” - SVIR), which has further decentralised national urban policy. The SVIR has replaced the SPR, the SPR Randstad, the Mobility Report, the Mobility Approach and the SVIR for Highways.
### 1980s
Growing interest in the economic impact of spatial interventions, whereby cities are seen as the engines of economic growth. This is at this time in the Netherlands based more on political ideology than economic reality (Majoor, 2008: 71).

1988
The national Fourth Report on Spatial Planning places urban development on the policy agenda, and makes funds available for infrastructure & large-scale development projects.

### 1990s
Economic activities in Amsterdam continue to relocate in the southern areas of the city. At the same time Schiphol airport is starting to expand. Economic growth is returning, and the registered growth for Amsterdam and its surrounding region rises above the national average. Amsterdam's sectoral structure can take advantage of the growth in financial and business services. Planning policy in general is becoming more project-oriented. City council prefers the inner city and IJ-banks as areas for economic expansion. Halfway the nineties a shift occurs in favour of a South-Axis development.

1990: New City Council
Jeroen Saris is appointed Alderman of Spatial Policy. Spatial policy is considered subordinate to economic development policy.

1991: Waterfront Development + ABN Amro
Public-private Amsterdam Waterfront Development (AWF) to develop IJ-banks. ABN Amro is exceptionally permitted to build on the South-Axis.

1993: AWF is dismantled
ING bank retreats as partner.

Duco Stadig is appointed Alderman of Spatial Policy.

1996: Public-private "Zuidas Coalition"
The Dock-model is presented as one of three possible alternatives.

1998: Masterplan Zuidas: Dock
Project-organisation Zuidas is established.

1999: ABN Amro officially opens it offices.

### 2000 - 2014
Amsterdam's profile as a financial hub takes a hit after the ICT-bubble, from which it never fully recovers. Office market starts to slow down, but in the South-Axis the vacancy rates go far below the national average. The global financial crisis doesn't really stop this development. However, private partners have to retreat from the South-Axis partnership. Also, after 12 years Duco Stadig is replaced as alderman. After a period of regime restructuring, the governmental partners decide to continue with a 'smaller' version of the Dock. In 2012 they agree on a finance-structure.

2000: Consortium ABN AMRO, ING en NS
Exploring options for a purchasing guarantee of construction on the proposed Dock.

2003: Outspoken preference for public private partnership
Elco Brinkman appointed as negotiator.

2005: Zuidas Development Company
Constructed to develop the entire Dock and sell the land on top of it.

2006: New City Council
Maarten van Poelgeest is appointed Councillor Spatial Policy.

2007: Partnership ends
Private partners (Fortis, ING Real Estate and Rabobank) retreat from the partnership.

2008: Period of restructuring
Dock is re-examined. The city and the ministry are in conflict over alternatives. Ministry appoints 'State Representative' Oosterwijk.

2009: Negotiations with new State Representative
D.J. Van den Berg replaces Oosterwijk, who resigns due to illness.

2009: Three variations of Zuidasdok
In a search for compromise the Zuidasdok is re-imagined in three different versions: 'under ground', 'half in the ground', 'above ground'.

2010: New Ministry
Integration of Planning and Transport in Ministry of Infrastructure and Environment.

2010: New Project-organisation
A fully publicly financed programme will be developed by the project-organisation Zuidasok.

2011: Cancelling Real Estate
Agreement on limitation of the budget to 1.5 billion Euros. Real estate is no longer the financing strategy behind the project.

2012: Agreement
On July 12th government officials sign an agreement on the development of the new Zuidasok.
By the late 1980s and early 1990s the city of Amsterdam had evolved into a growth oriented city. The spatial ideal was the “compact city”, as outlined in the 1985 Spatial Plan “The City in the Centre” (“De Stad Centraal”). (Healey, 2007, Ch.3). The city and the regional authorities planned to develop the inner city, and densify the city to counter population decline and suburbanisation. Part of this strategy was the re-use of derelict industrial infrastructure at the banks of the river IJ as a location to cluster economic activity near the city centre (see below). The city established a public-private partnership (AWF) between the city and ING-bank, to develop the area. However, office development was taking place outside of the city centre and the IJ-banks, more towards the west (Sloterdijk) and south-east (Bijlmer/Amstel III) (Majoor 2008: 75). Companies were looking for space outside of the constraint of the inner city, connected to easy accessible transportation infrastructure (airport, rail roads and highways). The partnership disintegrated in 1991 when ABN/AMRO bank applied for a building permit on the Zuidas instead of a location at the river IJ, and finally ended when in 1993 ING was no longer willing to manage the investment. (Majoor, 2008: 73).

In summary, the end of the IJ-banks development marks the transition from integrated spatial planning towards a more project-oriented planning approach. The failure of the IJ-banks development was namely interpreted politically as a failure of integrated planning. Gradually, the idea of the ‘compact city’ was being replaced by concepts of networks and flows (Healey, 2007, Ch.3). Planning was to become more ‘market-oriented’.

Map 4: The IJ-Banks (in red) situated near the city centre.

In summary, the end of the IJ-banks development marks the transition from integrated spatial planning towards a more project-oriented planning approach. The failure of the IJ-banks development was namely interpreted politically as a failure of integrated planning. Gradually, the idea of the ‘compact city’ was being replaced by concepts of networks and flows (Healey, 2007, Ch.3). Planning was to become more ‘market-oriented’.
Political ideology was an important factor in spatial policy, specifically the programme of 'cities as hubs' in a 'global economy'. In Amsterdam, however, the inner city policy could not provide the easy access to transport infrastructure that organisations in the new service economy required. It is then that the Zuidas appears as a viable strategy for economic organisations. ‘Liberalisation’ meant that the national political programme of spatial planning became focused on providing infrastructure for economic organisations. At the same time, in Amsterdam, urban planning evolved towards a network-approach of flexible connections between different areas of the city, rather than towards a new tightly integrated planning system.


In the following years a regime is starting to get organised around the Zuidasdok. It is a regime that couples the political and the economic system, initiated by the members of the city council and their interpersonal network. The main agenda for the Zuidas area in general, was ‘to build the Zuidas as an attractive office location’. In practice a specific spatial plan (the dock) would link the different goals on a wider agenda. The core characteristics of the Zuidasdok are listed in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agenda: Dock</th>
<th>Political System</th>
<th>Economic System</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urbanisation</td>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td>Real estate Investment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zuidas Office Location</td>
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<th>Resources</th>
<th>Structural Plan</th>
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<td>Departmental Funds</td>
<td>Investment funds</td>
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<td>Land-lease system</td>
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<th>Coalition</th>
<th>City Council</th>
<th>Dutch Railways</th>
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<td>Ministry of Planning</td>
<td>Ministry of Transport</td>
<td>Banks</td>
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<td>Ministry of Transport</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coordination</th>
<th>Consultative group “Coalition Zuidas”</th>
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| Table 3: Zuidasdok Regime connections with function systems (1994 - 2000). |

It is important to remember that the individual cells express a reflexive relationship between column and row. The goal of constructing Zuidas as an "office location" is not 'caused' by the political and the economic system. Rather, the Zuidasdok has become a structuring element through the coupling of specific operations of the political and the economic system in the differentiation of an urban regime. As such, the Zuidasdok is a concept that is formed by operations in the function systems (and the organisations around it) as well as by the operations in the regime. I will explain the different cells below, and point out these reflexive relations throughout.

This first phase of regime differentiation emerged as several organisations operated with a different understanding of the function of urban space in Amsterdam. Through physical
relocation and investment strategies, economic organisations (firms) had already indicated, that they preferred easy accessible infrastructural connections to be within reach at that time and not in some projected future (as was the case for the IJ-banks development). In the political system, the city council was evolving towards a more ‘market-oriented’ approach to planning, but had very little experience in it. At this early stage of regime differentiation, the most important element through which the regime created its conditions for differentiation, was the scheme of coordination. To understand this, I will first have to discuss the conflicting goals (agenda) of the involved organisations (coalition).

Organising the Zuidas

At first, office development at the Zuidas progressed slowly because investors feared a stagnation in the office market (Ploeger, 2004: 138). Meanwhile, the city council feared the same ‘steered planning’ as the IJ-banks – which had exposed a lack of experience in public-private agenda construction (Van Eekelen et al, 2014: 31). In 1994 a new city council broke the deadlock: it wanted to work “with” the market, not “against” it (Interview Stadig). The city saw ‘opportunities’ for the Zuidas as a strategic place in the economy of Amsterdam to attract investors and generate income. However, the city also wanted to connect the areas south of the Zuidas (Buitenveldert and Amsterdam Zuid) with the city centre (“healing the disrupted urban tissue”) (Van Eekelen et al, 2014: 47). The agenda of the city council was thus in part ideological commitment to a competitive strategy, and in part a planning strategy for a densified city. The Zuidas appeared as an opportunity to combine these ideas in a previously undeveloped area. Furthermore, in the case of Amsterdam, a very unique element is the land-lease system the city has developed. The city owns most of the land, and has thus an important resource at its disposal for redevelopment projects. (Majoor, 2008: 71).

The city worked out a Masterplan, and established the ‘Zuidas Coalition’ as well as the first elements of a separated project-agency. The “Zuidas Coalition” consisted of the most important actors in the Zuidas area at the time (ABN/AMRO, ING, RAI conference centre, World Trade Centre, Free University; City Council, National Railway Company, National Public Works). This ‘coalition’ functioned as a formally established sounding board, that was however informally organised. Concerning the administration, alderman Duco Stadig (who was responsible for Housing, Spatial Planning and Land) was convinced he needed to construct a managerial entity that was separated from the city administration. He assigned a “delegated manager” to the Zuidas, instead of the Urban Planning Department. This manager, Jacques Kwak, had to develop a financially sound solution that could encompass all stakeholders’ interests. This process was also a combination of formal and informal organisation. Kwak lived near the Zuidas, and according to Stadig he was instrumental in establishing stable relations. (Interview Stadig). He also had sufficient funds at his disposal, as well as the unflinching support of Stadig when needed, as they were in constant consultation (Interview Stadig). By November 1997, this process resulted in a municipal “project agency Zuidas”, with a new general manager. Negotiations on a possible Masterplan commenced – without presenting it to the public at large. This is an important element of the regime: the debate was kept away from ‘the public’ at first, but was ‘localised’ around the Zuidas area. Most of the reactions from citizens from the area were about parking policy or the impact on the Beatrix-park. There was regular interaction from agency officials with
inhabitants and today still there is organised interaction between the Zuidas management and the ‘Inhabitants Platform’ (Interview Griffioen).

Interesting to note, is that during these days the idea of an “international top location” was developing in the regime. Several coalition members visited the Docklands in London, Défense in Paris and Potsdamer Platz in Berlin. The idea of Amsterdam as part of this list was quite new. When I asked alderman Stadig about this, he couldn’t quite remember where this idea came from (of course, we are fourteen years later now). It appeared to be just the way politics was evolving. (Interview Stadig). Another strong indicator of this, were the “Key Projects” (19997) of the National Ministry for Spatial Planning, which identified Zuidas (amongst others) as crucial for further urban development. (Van Eekelen et al, 2014: 63).

A “dock” to bridge ‘flanks’ and ‘bundle’

The Zuidas reflected the different agendas in its spatial divide between ‘flanks’ and ‘bundle’. The ‘flanks’ refers to the area where real estate investment can take place, and where private actors, the city council, and the National Ministry for Planning were active. The real issue here was convincing the private investors of the needed investment in the urban quality of the area. The ‘bundle’ was almost entirely the responsibility of the National Ministry of Transport, who did not really care about an ‘urban agenda’. The Zuidasdok was one of three designs in the Masterplan to unite ‘urban tissue’ and ‘infrastructure expansion’, and the city preferred it over the others although it was the most expensive.33 Alderman Stadig

33 The "deck" model proposed an ‘urban’ layer on top of the current infrastructure. The “dike” model would expand the infrastructure on the flanks. And as we know by now, the dock was meant to create urban space on top of an underground infrastructure bundle. The dike was estimated at 260 million Euros, the deck at 453 million, the dock at 896 million.
stated, however, that development of the Zuidas needs to be possible even without dock: "dock-independent", he called it (Interview Stadig).

In summary, the Masterplan offered a general set of proposals that were specific enough for most members to recognise their own agenda. If the Zuidas was to be developed as envisioned by members of the city council and their partners in the financial world, these different strategies needed to be aligned. In this phase, the city council was the most active regime member, since it wanted to convince private actors and the national ministry of the dock. The proposal of the three ideas paved the way to make the different agenda explicit. However, because of the cost of the proposed plans, the available resources and perceived feasibility came prominently into play.


After the ICT bubble in 2000 the employment in business and financial industries stagnated or declined, and a gradual move to London commenced. (Engelen & Musterd, 2010: 702). The office market in Zuidas however seemed to stabilise while it slowed down in other parts of the city. (Ploeger, 2004: 140). The Zuidas was not perceived as declining by either political actors or real-estate investors, on the contrary. Furthermore, the political choice was made for a public-private partnership to finance the development. Decisive here was the Ministry of Finance, who promoted a sixty percent participation of the private sector in the partnership. The business model was based on real-estate speculation. Amsterdam planned to use its land-lease system on the flanks to earn back the investment in the dock. The private partners were of course interested in developing the plots of land that were planned. In 2000, a consortium of three major players offered a bid on the land on top of the dock.
The Zuidasdok regime is mostly integrated via the idea of “interurban competition” in the economic and political system. Firstly, the Zuidas became more important for national policy, as different ministries considered the Zuidas an important location for the national economy. Secondly, the city council started to convince its private partners that a top location needed urban quality in order to succeed. (Majoor, 2008: 90). Because of this, the amount of planned living dwellings increased to 45% of the total investment. However, the Ministry of Transport still needed to be convinced, not only on the role of urbanity itself, also on the necessity of the dock as a precondition of urban quality as well as its financial feasibility (Interview Van Eekelen).

Perceived feasibility is necessary for regimes to be able to organise themselves around a specific agenda: the generalised expectation of success. Looking back now on the proposals for the dock, one could argue in hindsight that the dock was never feasible. As some of the interviewees said, it was the sign of the times to believe it could succeed. Expectations of the Zuidasdok regime were structured by an overarching ambition to succeed on the international level – an ambition that promised matching profits (in monetary as well as political terms). However, these expectations also needed to be made explicit, if the regime wanted to succeed in bringing together sufficient resources. The defining moment here was when Elco Brinkman entered the scene, assigned to develop a business plan for a public company (a “Zuidas Ltd.”). Again, the importance of informal networks within the formal organisation becomes clear. Brinkman was well known in the national political spheres as well as in the financial and real estate world. (Van Eekelen, 2014: 91). In the end the private partners remained tied to a sixty percent participation, and the other forty percent was divided between the national and local authorities. The business case became the coordination mechanism of the regime, effectively basing the project on a real estate

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<td>Real Estate Investment</td>
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<td>International Top Location</td>
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<td>Ministry of Finance</td>
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<td><strong>Coordination</strong></td>
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<td>Consortium Zuidas</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mediator (Elco Brinkman)</td>
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Table 4: Zuidasdok Regime connections with function systems (2001 - 2007)
strategy. In 2005 the first selection of possible shareholders was limited to mostly Dutch organisations: ABN/AMRO, ING Real Estate, Rabobank, Bank of Dutch Municipalities (BNG) – but also Fortis Bank (at the time a Belgian bank – which would later take over ABN/AMRO). First of all, this raises questions concerning the ‘international profile’ of the Zuidas. Mostly the Zuidas seems to cluster mainly Dutch firms that have European or international links, not so much international firms themselves. (Majoor, 2014: 78). Secondly, Rabobank and BNG were inexperienced in real estate (Van Eekelen, 2014: 108). This could again be a ‘sign of the times’, when real estate was driving the financial markets. The Zuidas was still clearly a real-estate project for these private partners, for which the dock served primarily to create new urban land through which they could invest. Here we see how a regime mediates between different function systems. First of all, as I explained, local authorities convinced private investors of investing in the dock as part of a broader strategy of urbanisation. This strategy suited the real-estate agenda of the financial organisations. Secondly, both local and national authorities pushed for a public-private partnership, but would, in the end, still take on the final risk of the project. By 2007, it really seemed as if the sky was the limit. The regime was organised in such a way that resources were structured as real estate strategies. The dock served to maximise the real estate value (Interview Van Eekelen). A sketch of Zuidasdok at the time shows an example of the extreme ideas at the time.

Illustration 7: Sketch of the Zuidasdok in 2007 (PlanAmsterdam, 2012)
( stacked metro and road tunnels and underground parking facilities).
D. Crisis forces a new project (2007-2014)

The Zuidasdock as a real estate project did not survive the events of 2007-8. First of all, ABN AMRO was taken over by Fortis bank in 2008, creating uncertainty over its future participation in the project. Secondly, as the financial crisis of 2007-8 unfolded, financial markets came to a hold, and ABN/AMRO and ING were hard hit. (Engelen & Musterd, 2010: 702). With the retreat of the private partners the Zuidasdock regime lost that part of its coalition on which a large part of the business case was built. However, the city council still held onto the dock model, and once again ended up in the role of convincing the national government to go along. At this point, one could have expected the Zuidasdock regime to disintegrate. There was a financial crisis, and a growing pressure on government budgets. When I expressed this view to the interviewees, most responded that the overall idea of the Zuidas development did not disappear – it was the feasibility that was at stake. The agenda around which the regime operated, Zuidas Top Location, was still at play. The only difference was how it was to be pursued.

In this regard, Oosterlynck & Gonzalez made an insightful observation on the responses of urban governance to the global financial crisis: “However diverse the discursive variation of urban responses might appear, little new material is in fact being presented. The emerging response is to keep the investments going, albeit often through Keynesian measures, to bridge the crisis in the short term, and align the local economies with the global economic landscape through long-term strategies focused on knowledge-intensive, green and creative economic sectors.” (Oosterlynck & Gonzalez, 2013: 1079)

It is interesting to see how in the Zuidas the crisis had exactly that response: the project was not abandoned, the coalition restructured into a new balance, and the resources were aligned and projected onto future growth in the area. The only significant change was that the real-estate strategy was let go. “If you want something, you must be willing to pay for it”, sums up the attitude at the time (Interview Visser). Already before the crisis, the Zuidasdock regime appeared to be rather stable in terms of its agenda. With the establishment of a new council in 2006, a new alderman was installed from the ‘Groen-links’ (“Green-Left”) party. Some feared a change in policy, but besides some more discursive emphasis on the role of housing and sustainability, the policy agenda of the city did not fundamentally change.

34 The authors focused on discursive responses to the crisis in the OECD Local Economic and Employment Development (LEED) programme and the EU-funded URBACT network.
In order to organise the restructuring, the ministers of Spatial Planning, Transport, Economic Affairs, and Finance appointed an official “representative”, who was assigned to negotiate with all involved public parties. (Van Eekelen et al, 2014: 143). His role was to defend the interests of the national government, and thus was a direct response to the central role the local authorities had taken up in the development of the dock. The biggest impact of Van den Berg on the coordination of the regime was the change in negotiation strategy, according to one of the interviewees. The dock strategy was “decomposed, debundled and dephased”. As such, the different goals of the coalition members became explicitly communicated. (Interview Van Eekelen).

This strategy had the result that the parties kept negotiating, and the dock remained the leading model. When an agreement was reached in 2012, the dock was planned on a much smaller scale than first imagined, but still presented as the ‘right’ way to align the goals of urbanity and infrastructure expansion. The dock would now only bring the ring road underground, keep the train tracks on top, and abandon the real estate strategy for the projected areas on top (because the tunnels would not be deep enough to build on). The cost of the project is projected to be 1.4 billion Euros, of which 979 million is paid by the national government, 201 million by the city, 130 by the city region, and 75 million by the province. It seems that although some authors doubted the possibility of public financing of the project, given the already thinly stretched local budget (e.g. Engelen & Musterd, 2010), the Zuidasdock proved to be remarkably resilient.

35 As one can see in the timeline, Van den Berg is the second ministerial representative. He replaced Oostenwijk who suffered from a serious illness.
Conclusion: The Zuidasdok Regime

To conclude, I will come back to my initial research question, and summarise my findings to this question in light of the threefold goal of my conceptual toolbox: in terms of understanding society as functionally differentiated; in terms of understanding regimes as systemic linkages between function systems and the consequences on the multiplication of power; and finally in terms of the regimes’ four core structures (agenda, resources, coalition members and coordination mechanisms). After this, some additional remarks can be made specifically on the case of Amsterdam. Also, some preliminary remarks can be made on the question of regimes in terms of political theory – an underlying motivation for this research, as I stated in the introduction. As a reminder, the research question was:

1. Has an urban regime been formed in Amsterdam in order to develop the “Zuidasdok”?
2. If so, what are its characteristics and what has it achieved?
3. If not, can I identify the reasons why?

It is clear from this chapter that I have observed an urban regime in Amsterdam which has organised the capacity to develop the “Zuidasdok”. I focused on the dock as specific project around which a coalition was formed, and I chose to speak of a Zuidasdok-regime, instead of a more general Zuidas-regime. The focus of my research in Amsterdam was on the construction of the Zuidasdock, which served as a crucial bridge between sometimes conflicting goals of the coalition members. The dock is a spatial intervention that serves to mediate this conflict. Mediation means that something is changed, distorted, formed – something that the story of the dock clearly illustrates. The dock appeared first as a solution that offered a way out of an agenda-based stalemate between a political agenda and an economic agenda. The agenda of the regime itself was then further developed around the possibilities the dock offered and vice versa. The reflexive relation between the dock as a planned physical entity and the dock as agenda of the regime, was even more clear after the retreat of the private partners from the coalition, when the regime was restructured around local, regional and national political organisations with a physically adjusted dock that could still support the overall social function of the dock, i.e. assembling the capacity to construct a new urban space in Amsterdam that could serve as its connection point to the global economy (“an internal top office location”).

The agenda of the Zuidasdok regime thus includes two function system references. The first function system was the political system, linked through regime members that played significant roles in local, regional and national political organisations. They promoted an agenda based on infrastructure expansion and new urban space. The first of these two goals was part of a wider post-Keynesian policy to provide space for economic growth which considered urban spaces to be the forefront of this policy. The second political goal was mainly pursued by the local authorities and was part of a shift in urban planning from ‘compact city’ to a ‘polycentric city’. The city council wanted to invest in a new urban space in South Amsterdam – increasingly promoting this view in terms of its productivity gains (i.e. ‘urbanity as a climate for economic growth’). Both political agendas also linked the Zuidas to other spaces: the inner city, the regional environment, as well as the national and international environment. These links were mostly conceived of in terms of ‘productivity’ and ‘growth’. The second function system was the economic system, which operated with a
programme of real estate investments. Internationally the real estate market was booming, and the biggest national banks operationalised the Zuidasdock as a key project in providing *local investment space* for their real estate operations. The Zuidasdock provided a coupling between the *economic system* and the *political system*, by providing a possibility to unite these three goals under one agenda: the project became the possibility to achieve the different goals.

When the crisis of 2007-2008 occurred, the banks retreated from the regime: they did not give up support for the agenda of constructing an 'attractive location in a global economy', but they could no longer invest the required resources to construct the Zuidasdock. Here, the tension between the risk of investment and the time of construction was influenced because of changes in the financial markets. The Zuidasdock was essential for aligning the goals of these private investors with the different partners in the political system. The retreat of the private partners took away this alignment, and left the future of the dock in uncertainty.

**Why was the dock not abandoned?** Part of the answer could be that this is not the right question: the dock actually did disappear, since what remains is really not the same as the dock that was pursued before 2008-2009. However, although it is coming from public funds, investment is over a billion Euros, which is still a considerable sum for what could be called a *subprime dock*. The dock was thus resilient enough to assemble these funds in times of proposed budgetary constraint. So the question then becomes, *why did part of the Zuidasdock-regime continue to work out a model that doesn’t even come close to what was envisioned?*

My conclusion is that the agenda around which the Zuidasdock was organised, “international top location”, was never questioned inside the regimes. As I explained earlier, the leading distinctions of social systems are always the blind spot of those systems. A system would never be able to differentiate itself if it was to question its own leading distinction, since this would slow down communication to such a degree that the system would never achieve sufficient complexity for differentiation. The period around 2008-2009, after the retreat of the private partners, was marked by intense coordination by the remaining regime members – but it was not a displacement of the guiding agenda. The negotiations between the political organisations questioned the different goals that could be included in the agenda, and in the end both political goals (‘infrastructure for growth' and 'urban climate') remained on the agenda. For the Zuidasdock, two characteristics were crucial in this regard. First, the fact that there never was a large public debate on the necessity of the dock outside of the Zuidas-regime and the Zuidas-area. Of course, there were critical voices, but never to such an extent that the Zuidas became contested. (I will say some more on this below). Related to this is the second characteristic of the Zuidasdock-regime, namely that it is comprised of members representing roles in political and economic organisations that all supported the underlying expectation that a specific kind of *space* (i.e. the dock for the Zuidas) would support economic growth. I explained earlier that a system in its basic meaning consists of the complex relations between its elements. The basic elements and relations of the Zuidasdock-regime consisted mostly of goals, resources, and members that all referred to the same underlying *ideological programme* of project-oriented planning that I described in the first chapter. For this regime, the ideological commitment to the Zuidas proved to be stronger than the impact of the crisis in the economic system on its environment. The regime identified itself strongly with the agenda of realising an “international top location” at the
Zuidas. More than anything else, this kept the local, regional and national coalition members aligned around the Zuidasdok.

Another key characteristic in the resilience of the regime, is the role of time as structure for the regime. The 'subprime dock' offers the current regime members the possibility of restructuring their resources around the same agenda that is projected into the future. Its members can claim that no one had to give anything up definitively, since the current dock is construed as a ‘temporary’ solution which can be further developed in the future (Interview Van Eekelen). Thus, the regime provides itself with the possibility to construct generalised expectations on the value of the dock in the future. I argue that specifically for the Zuidasdok-regime the time-structure at work is one that closely resembles how time operates in the economic sphere: the value of the Zuidasdok depends a great deal on the perceived value in a distant future. (Esposito, 2011: 16). However, to fully construct this argument significantly more research is required on the form of time that operates in the Zuidasdok-regime, as well as in the linked social systems in its environment.

Lastly, I want to express some thoughts on what the Zuidasdok-regime can contribute to our understanding of urban regimes as a model for policymaking. This can be approached through the lack of a strong opposition which I mentioned earlier as a contributing factor to the resilience of the Zuidasdok-regime. Although there was some protest against the now proposed construction, it remained again very localised. This of course doesn't mean that the Zuidas is accepted by everyone as "successful". One critique is that the goal of constructing a new urban centre at the Zuidas falls short of its intended outcome. This is something Stan Majoor already remarked in his research in 2008. According to some the situation is improving and the space is evolving into ‘mixed-use’ (Interview Dijckmeester; Interview Stadig), others disagree and still insist that after office hours one can 'fire a cannon without hitting anyone'. (Interview Griffioen). My short experience in the Zuidas leads me to believe it is still primarily an office space with only limited urban elements (see also the picture below). Other critiques are more general as they target the project of the Zuidas and

Illustration 8: Shopping and restaurants near 'Mahlerplein'

36 Most notably this concerned the proposed relocation of the local football club, and the planned location of one of the entrances of the tunnels at the Beatrix-park. Also, the allotments on an unused terrain are located on valuable land for construction and will thus be demolished (and maybe relocated).
specifically the lack of political conception of alternative ways of urban development at the Zuidas. For instance, one of the interviewees found that the funds invested by the city, around 200 million Euros, could have been used for other, more meaningful, interventions in the city. (Interview Hemel). And others wonder about the priority of the Zuidasdok in times of budgetary constraint and economic slowdown. (e.g. Engelen, 2012). Also, Martin Cobian targets the regime around the Zuidas (and thus larger than the Zuidasdok-regime) as a prime example of how neoliberal planning ideas are entangled with the consistent lack of critical approach (2008). Generally, I have argued that the Zuidas became part of a broader political agenda aimed at economic growth already since the mid nineties. To be able to react in a *power-ful* way to the Zuidas development implies the need to react to this broader political agenda. As I will argue in the final section of the thesis, lack of political debate on alternatives has to be addressed *in terms of systemic power*. To react *politically* to the construction of the Zuidasdok, it is not sufficient to rely on individual contributions. The fact that power is diffused through multiple *systemic* couplings is precisely why *regimes* are formed in the first place. The Zuidasdok-regime is a clear illustration of this. My proposal will be to construct a form of *systemic power* that is closely coupled to the construction of *agenda* and *public opinion* in the political system. As I will discuss, there is a democratic need to assure that the political process is coupled to a wide variety of function systems. This can provide possibilities to include a wider policy agenda in the political system – and as such provide new possibilities for coupling for urban regimes.

Before I can say more on this, I will first present my findings on the Oosterweel-project in Antwerp. Interestingly, this case provided me with the opportunity to observe what I call a *citizen regime* that was formed in direct opposition to the ‘official’ (i.e. politically organised) Oosterweel-regime.
3. Antwerp’s Citizen Regime

The Oosterweel-connection is one of the largest infrastructure projects ever attempted in Flanders. Its goal is to provide a solution for the congestion issues of the ring road (R1) in Antwerp, and connect the port of Antwerp (one of Belgium’s most important economic areas) with the international highways that surround Antwerp (see map 7). ‘Oosterweel’ is the name of a former village located on what is now part of the Antwerp docks. The Oosterweel-connection is an interesting case in terms of a regime analysis, since there are at least two identifiable regimes active in the planning of the project. The first regime is formed in and around the political and economic system, including members of the Flemish government as well as local politicians, public transportation companies, project developers and private actors that are located in the port of Antwerp. The second regime is formed by several ‘citizens’ movements’ or ‘action groups’, that have united around alternative proposals for solving the issues of mobility in Antwerp – I will focus primarily on this second regime. I have already discussed one of the reasons for this choice in the methodology section: the access to members of the regimes. This also means that the first regime is an assumption based on the literature I encountered during the course of my research. The second reason why I chose to analyse the citizen regime is that it is trying to change the regime agenda of the opposing ‘Oosterweel-regime’ (I will refer to the Oosterweel-connection as ‘Oosterweel’) and the broader political agenda – all by mobilising resources through a large network of volunteers. Characteristic of this citizen regime, is that it has very few relations to the political system via political organisations. The only coupling this regime has to the political system is a network of interpersonal relations, a variety of legal procedures and a limited exposure via the system of mass media.

Like the Zuidasdock in Amsterdam, the physical layer of the project (‘Oosterweel’ and the alternative routes for the connection) reflects a specific agenda. At play in Antwerp are the goals of infrastructure expansion and economic growth (for the Oosterweel-regime) and several alternative proposals that unite the additional goals of sustainability, urbanity and participation. The basis for both agendas is the need to provide an answer to mobility patterns in and around the city. I will briefly present how the Oosterweel-regime provides this answer, and then turn my focus to the answers provided by the citizen regime. But first, I have to provide some context on the city of Antwerp and situate the problem of the ring road (R1) in Antwerp.

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37 Unless otherwise referenced, pictures are personal as well as the maps (with the base-map as available in Google Maps Engine Pro).
A. Some context on Antwerp and Oosterweel

Antwerp is located in the north of Belgium, at the mouth of the river Scheldt (Dutch: “Schelde”) which flows into the North Sea, shaping the border with the neighbouring Netherlands. The port of Antwerp is the second biggest port of Europe, and thus an important link to the international economy. Part of this harbour economy are the petrochemical industries, which form one of the largest clusters in Europe. A third link to the global economy is the diamond trade, which is mostly concentrated in the area behind the central train station (Buurtmonitor, 2014). In Belgium, Antwerp is the second largest city, after Brussels. Politically, Flanders is the organising authority in terms of general urban planning. Internally, Antwerp is organised in 9 districts. It has a medieval core and a 19th century expansion belt which are surrounded by a ring road that marks the border with the later expansions of the city.

Map 6: City-regions of Belgium (Antwerp indicated with blue circle).

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38 The following overview of events is constructed over the course of the eight interviews listed at the end of the bibliography, as well as based on the following literature (unless otherwise indicated in the text): Claeys, 2013; Claeys & Verhaeghe, 2010; Lauwers, 2014; Leysen et al, 2010; Loopmans, 2008; Loopmans, 2014; Loopmans, 2012; Stad Antwerpen, 2010; Stad Antwerpen, 2012; Vermeulen, 2009; Van den Broeck, 2008.

39 Total value added by Belgium’s ports to its GDP is 7.9%, of which the port of Antwerp contributes 60%. (NBB, 2014).

40 Belgium is a federal state with three regions and three communities – which are equal from a legal point of view. For more information: http://www.belgium.be/en/about_belgium/government/federale_staat/
The 19th century inner city is separated of the rest of the city by a combination of two roads: the R10 (or “Singel”) and the R1 (or “ring road”). The importance of this double road is at least twofold: it is a socio-spatial divide as well as a node in the local, national and international transport infrastructure. Inside the R1, Antwerp has its most densely built up area with its highest population density. The inner city also scores highest on the poverty-index and the lowest in terms of activity on the labour market. The maps on the following page illustrate this divide very clearly. In terms of infrastructure, the R1 is a major road connection with some of the largest (inter)national highways running through the country. It is characterised by daily congestion, having to process local, national and international traffic streams. Especially the southern part of the R1 has reached high levels of saturation (Vlaams Verkeerscentrum, 2014: 31-35).

Map 7: R1 ring road (red) and mayor (inter)national highways (orange).
Map 8: Population density districts of Antwerp (neighbourhood level).

Map 9: Built up area of Antwerp (neighbourhood level).

Map 10: Activity-ratio districts of Antwerp (neighbourhood level).
Oosterweel is a project that proposes to take on the congestion issues of the R1 by closing it at its northern part. This means that the river Scheldt would have to be crossed (by tunnel and/or bridge) to connect the eastern part of the R1 with the western part. In fact, the R1 was originally proposed to be part of two-part system with a second wider ring, the R2. (Van den Broeck, 2014). One the proposals for the R2 was to create a large road south of Antwerp (see the map below). Only one part of the R2 was eventually constructed in 1985, and connects the port area with the A11/E34 going west, via a tunnel under the Scheldt (the “Liefkenshoek-tunnel”). The problem with the R2 was that during the 1960s and 1970s the area where it was planned was increasingly populated, due to the increasing suburbanisation. The local resistance against the R2 organised itself in action committees, and it was actually during this time that the proposal emerged to 'solve' the traffic issues by ‘closing’ the R1. This term, “closing the R1”, means making the R1 into a fully closed ring. It was in the period after these developments, between 1990 and 2005, that a coalition of local, regional and national actors fully developed the idea into what was to be known as the Oosterweel-connection.

Map 11: The R2 that never came to be (green is the established part, grey the uncompleted part).
B. Building Oosterweel (1990 – 2005)

In this section I will be brief, since most of my analysis is focused on the period after 2005, when the citizens’ movement “StRaten-Generaal” presented an alternative route for Oosterweel. I have included a timeline of the events at the end of this paragraph, some pages below, to provide a more detailed overview of the main occurrences.

In the early nineties, one of the key actors in launching the idea for closing the R1 was the governor of the Province of Antwerp, Camille Paulus. He was part of a regime that organised itself around a network of politicians, administrators and entrepreneurs. An assignment to research the different ways in which the R1 could be ‘closed’ was given to the provincial Administration for Traffic (“Agentschap Wegen en Verkeer Antwerpen”), which produced the report “Closing of the Small Ring” in 1998. At the same time, in the Spatial Plan for Flanders (RSV, “Ruimtelijk Structuurplan Vlaanderen”), the closing of the R1 already appeared as the preferred option for the further expansion of traffic infrastructure. This RSV outlined the main vision on spatial planning in Flanders, which had only recently gained this competence in the restructuring of the Belgian federal state. By 1999, a group of public authorities and organisations had assigned a further feasibility study for the mobility issue on the Antwerp ring road to an external agency. The resulting report proposed a bridge as a viable option to close the R1. Later, in 2008, national press reported that this feasibility study was politically manipulated, urging for a ‘bridge’ solution. (De Morgen, 2008).

Significantly, in 1999 general elections were held for the Regional, Federal and European parliament. The results marked an end to a long history of christian-democratic governments, and brought in a coalition of the liberal, socialist and green parties. Meanwhile, the network around the Governor remained active, and he even organised a conference on the topic to rally support for the closing of the R1. The new government continued with the development of the ring road, even without the christian-democrats (who pushed the Oosterweel-agenda) present in the government (they returned to government in 2004, until present). By the end of 2000 the Oosterweel-connection via a bridge was confirmed as part of a Masterplan Mobility for Antwerp. Also the decision was made to establish a project-agency that would organise the implementation and financing of the Masterplan: BAM (Governance-agency Antwerp Mobile: “Beheersmaatschappij Antwerpen Mobiel”). A year later, the research-consortium SAM was exclusively assigned to initiate all relevant research for the Masterplan. (Later, TV SAM would have to analyse the alternative proposal from StRaten-Generaal, who would claim SAM is not an independent research organisation).

The final proposal for Oosterweel became a combination of tunnels and a very large bridge over the docks. In 2005 a scale model of the proposed bridge was presented, first to the city council, later to the parliament. Below is a map that locates the proposed Oosterweel route; this route is still being used in the current plans for the connection. ‘Oosterweel’ thus refers to the route, whether it is with or without the proposed bridge. The bridge was called “Lange Wapper”, named after a local folk tale of a giant spirit/tormentor. The presentation of the bridge was the first appearance of Oosterweel in the general media, and it would remain the only option for development by the Flemish government until early 2010. The bridge would

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41 Flemish Ministry for Infrastructure, the Province of Antwerp, the City of Antwerp, Port of Antwerp, the national railway company and the Flemish company for public transportation

42 “StRaten-Generaal” (‘StReets-General’) is a word play on “Staten-Generaal” (‘States-General’).
be rejected in a referendum in October 2009. Even so, in the renewed Masterplan in September 2010, the ‘Lange Wapper’ remained the ‘fall-back’ option in case the proposed tunnel-solution would not suffice. (Masterplan 2010, 2010: 7).

The proposed plan of 2005 was at first contested because of its impact on the urban development of part of the city: the bridge would be constructed over a part of the city known as “Eilandje” (Little Island). This area was part of a series of urban development projects launched by the city, which were already several years under way and confirmed in a local ‘Masterplan Eilandje’ in 2002. The proposed bridge would bring the traffic of the ring road over the area, as well as have a huge visual impact. The Flemish government came in direct conflict with the plans of the City of Antwerp. Despite this, however, in the end the city never really protested the plan for Oosterweel. (I will this discuss this later).
De beelden die Antwerpen niet mag zien

Illustration 9: Visualisation of the Lange Wapper. In 2008 a Flemish newspaper made visual representation of the Lange Wapper under the headline “The images Antwerp isn’t allowed to see”. It focuses amongst other on the impact on the well know restaurant ‘Pomphuis’ (bottom left) and the Saint-Joseph Institute for Special Education (bottom right).
### 1950 - 1990

**The story of R1 and R2**

- 1958: Government Decree planning a ‘small’ (R1) and ‘large’ (R2) ringroad around Antwerp.
- 1970s: R1 starts to become saturated.
- 1985: Part of R2 is constructed (“Liefkenshoek-tunnel”),
- 1989: Action-committee against R2 proposes the closing of R1 as alternative.

### 1990 - 1999

**Launching the idea for closing the R1**

- 1996: Governor of Province Antwerp leads a coalition of politician, administrators and entrepreneurs in a proposal to close the R1. Antwerp Administration for Traffic (AWV) is given assignment to search for solutions.
- 1999: Investigating Trajectories. ABM starts investigating 6 routes. (in 2000 a 7th route will be demanded – which would become the BAM-trajectory)

### 2000 - 2005

**History of Lange Wapper**

- **2000**
  - APRIL 7th: “General Conference on Mobility”
    Governor of Province Antwerp organises conference on Oosterweel-connection (the 7th route)
  - MAY: Consensus
    Representatives of the city, province, Flemish administration, Antwerp harbour, Flemish Bus Company (De Lijn) and others agree to closing R1 with combination of tunnel and bridge. There is also critique by the Antwerp Alderman for the Harbour.
  - OCTOBER: Local and Provincial Elections
    Leona Detiége becomes Mayor.
  - DECEMBER: Masterplan Mobility with Oosterweel
    Flemish Government approves Masterplan.
- **2001**
  - SEPTEMBER: TV-SAM
    TV-SAM will become the exclusive research organisation for the Masterplan for the Flemish Government.
  - OCTOBER: Conference
    Governor organises another conference and claims consensus.
- **2003**
  - SEPTEMBER: BAM Ltd
    is established per decree.
  - JULY: New Mayor: After scandal Detiège resigns; Patrick Janssens becomes mayor (until 2012).
- **2005**
  - MARCH: Lange Wapper is presented to media and public.
  - DECEMBER: 19th: StRaten-Generaal files appeal as part of public inquiry procedure.
2009 - 2014

**From Oosterweel To ... Oosterweel**

**2009**
- **OCTOBER:** In response to referendum DAM is organised, a ministerial committee to search solution, under the auspices of the head of the cabinet of the Flemish Prime Minister.
- **NOVEMBER:** First informal contacts Forum2020. StRaten-Generaal is hired to make a report.

**2010**
- **FEBRUARY:** Forum2020 & StRaten-Generaal propose the Meccano-trajectory. Informal approach with the cabinet of Flemish Prime Minister fails.
- **MARCH:** Government says research done by Flemish Traffic Administration shows Meccano cannot work. Promises to propose a "complete solution" in a new "Masterplan 2020".
- **SEPTEMBER:** Government restates its decision for an Oosterweel-connection following the BAM-trajectory, with a tunnel where the bridge (Lange Wapper) was planned. The City will have to pay for the expense of building tunnels.

**2011**
- **JUNE:** After request under the Freedom of Information Act the Government Administration has to admit there was no study on the Meccano-trajectory.
- **AUGUST:** Government grants building permit for prison in Beveren – on the area of the Mecanno-trajectory. (Construction started in 2012.

**2012**
- **MER is researching 8 alternatives.**
- **OCTOBER:** Municipal Elections: Bart de Wever is new Mayor.
- **NOVEMBER:** Architect Peter Vermeulen organises a meeting at library Permeke to present a project for placing the ringroad inside a tunnel. This will later be known as "Ringland".

**2013**
- **NOVEMBER:** European Commission and Flemish Government in negotiation of procedure regarding the reinstatement of Noriant as developer for the new trajectory.
  - Meanwhile, a preliminary MER-report shows a conflict between ‘price’ (BAM) and ‘liveness’ (Meccano). StRaten-Generaal and Ademloos oppose the findings.

**2014**
- **FEBRUARY:** MER is finalised. Government confirms its decision for BAM, based on ‘price’ and ‘mobility’.
- **MAY:** Ademloos, StRaten-Generaal and Ringland together organise successful gathering. About 10000 people attend a march in support of placing the ringroad in a tunnel.
- **JUNE:** Elections Regional, Federal & European Parliament.
- **JULY:** More news emerges on how European Commission would not approve the financial arrangement of the BAM-trajectory.

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2006 - 2009

**The Struggle for Alternatives**

**2006**
- **MARCH:** Jan van Rensbergen (CD&V) becomes chairman BAM.
- **OCTOBER:** Local Elections: Patrick Janssens remains in office.
- **DECEMBER:** Noriant is chosen to develop Oosterweel.

**2007**
- **FEBRUARY:** Flemish Government imposes maximum budget of 1.85 billion Euros. Later the National Budget Office ("Rekenhof") will dispute this number, saying it will be insufficient.
- **APRIL:** Project-MER rejects alternative route proposed by StRaten-Generaal.

**2008**
- **MARCH:** StRaten-Generaal and Ademloos make public statements in national and local press.
- **JUNE:** 18th: Ombuds urges Ministry to reply to questions from StRaten-Generaal.
- **19th:** Ademloos stages protest on Central Square in Antwerp. Announces to start collecting votes for a referendum.
- **27th:** Government agrees to new inquiry into three alternative trajectories (Lange Wapper, Tunnel and StRaten-Generaal).
  - Karel Vinck appointed new chairman BAM.
- **OCTOBER:** Research agency Arup-Sum is appointed to research the alternatives.
  - 26th: Documentary on Flemish Public Television on Oosterweel, comparison with Madrid’s M-30.
- **NOVEMBER:**
  - 22nd: StRaten-Generaal files complaint with Ombuds.
  - 29th: Ademloos gets started after public lecture on Oosterweel by StRaten-Generaal.

**2009**
- **MARCH:** Arup-Sum published results. Rejects all trajectories.
  - Proposes a fourth solution, built on model of StRaten-Generaal. Government is conflicted over the issue.
- **APRIL:** City Council orders additional report from Arup-Sum: to further investigate their own alternative.
- **MAY 4th:** BAM applies for building permit for Lange Wapper.
- **MAY 26th – JUNE 24th:** Public Enquiry concerning Lange Wapper. Over 17000 reports will be filed.
- **JUNE 7th:** Elections Flemish Parliament

**JULY**
- **9th:** Arum-Sum present its final research on its own trajectory, and states it is feasible.
- **OCTOBER:**
  - 7th: Municipal Advisory Committee (GeCoRo) votes a negative advice on Lange Wapper.
  - 18th: Referendum: 35% turn-out, 60% against.

---

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In what follows, I will propose to look at how citizens in Antwerp organised a protest against Oosterweel. Due to the strategically ‘closed’ political decisionmaking, an urban regime emerged in order to break into the decisionmaking process. In this case the regime is not immediately coupled to the political systems, but to other systems that are able to ‘irritate’ the political system. Because regimes are social systems that mobilise resources to “get things done” (which means to produce a capacity to govern), they require structural capacity to influence the collectively binding decisions of the political system. Specifically, in this case, the citizen regime in Antwerp must find ways to form couplings to the political system while being excluded by political organisations. The citizen regime has succeeded in producing a stable conflict with the political system, which has contributed to influencing the planning outcome to a certain degree. It has so far not been able to replace (or add to) the agenda of the political parties with its own agenda. However, its own agenda seems to have stabilised around a set of core values that are capable of mobilising a wide variety of people and resources. It is not necessary that a regime succeeds in order to function as a regime, it is sufficient that it is possible for the regime to produce structures with which it can organise itself. The core members of the regimes are linked to three or four organisations: StRaten-Generaal, Ademloos, Forum 2020 and maybe Ringland; and around these organisations a wider network of citizens’ groups are active. These organisations represent the gradual expansion of the regime over a period of 10 years in several phases – I will explore these phases in the following sections, providing a general overview for the more detailed events in the timeline above.

First Phase: Organising dissent

After the public announcement of the plans for Oosterweel, Manu Claeys, an experienced activist, wrote a report on what Oosterweel would mean for urban development in Antwerp. Claeys lives in Borgerhout, a district that is cut in two by the R1, and he was active in the neighbourhood-group that proposed “Ringpark”: a tunnel over the R1 in Borgerhout. He was also involved in the community protest against the development projects in the Kievit-quarter in Antwerp. Claeys soon realised the potential impact of Oosterweel on urban projects in Antwerp, such as Eilandje and Ringpark. He was also a member of StRaten-Generaal, a network of volunteers that actively engages in participation for spatial planning processes. Together with another member of StRaten-Generaal, Peter Verhaeghe (not from Antwerp but from Diest, a small town in the province of Flemish-Brabant), they set out to analyse Oosterweel. By the end of the summer they have worked out an alternative proposal, and in September they organised a press conference. They formalised their proposal in an appeal as part of the public inquiry procedure on the Oosterweel (on the legal procedures for formal participation in the planning process, see the box below).

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43 Note that every alternative route that will be presented in this section is always more than just a shift in location. Every model also has its own view on public transportation, bicycling, as well as their own systems of traffic flow regulation (with for instance congestion charging and tolls).
44 http://www.antwerpencentraal.be/ringpark/
45 http://www.manuclaeyb

Table 7: Legal procedures allowing for 'formal participation' in the planning process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Documents</th>
<th>Formal Participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plan-MER</td>
<td>Possible alternatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRUP</td>
<td>Public Inquiry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project-MER</td>
<td>Remarks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development permit</td>
<td>Appeal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental permit</td>
<td>Appeal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Plan-MER & Project-MER
- MER = Environmental Effects Report
- Plan-MER: report based on the guidelines and possible alternatives
- Project-MER: based on the detailed outline of the project

GRUP = Regional Spatial Plan of Development - determines the different land-use elements, which are the basis for further permits. Needs to be approved by the Flemish Government. Supreme Administrative Court checks the procedure for the GRUP, to see if all remarks were taken into consideration.
StRaten-Generaal proposed to use tunnels instead of a bridge, and placed the link to close the R1 farther north, away from the urbanised area. At this point it became clear that StRaten-Generaal and the Oosterweel-regime have opposing agendas. Oosterweel is built with the explicit intent of making the port-area easily accessible, and above all through a ‘swift’ political process. The proposed Oosterweel-connection is seen as a priority project for the Flemish government, and the action groups are only seen as constraints to an otherwise efficient process. StRaten-Generaal proposes a plan based on the goals of creating more urban space for Antwerp, and taking traffic as much as possible out of the city. Consequently, in the project-MER (see box above) the proposal of StRaten-Generaal is rejected. The analysis, however, has been done by the BAM itself – the project-agency of Oosterweel: a strong indication of the extent of its political dependency. Another indication is the political ‘colour’ of its board members (and to a lesser extent its management, as seen in the table below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Party</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fernand Desmyter</td>
<td>Chairman</td>
<td>Christian-democrats</td>
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<tr>
<td>David van Herreweghe</td>
<td>Vice-Chairman</td>
<td>Liberals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greta Bernaers</td>
<td>board member</td>
<td>Christian-democrats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guy Braeckman</td>
<td>board member</td>
<td>Liberals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leo Clinckers</td>
<td>board member</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabriel de Buysscher</td>
<td>board member</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingrid Lieten</td>
<td>board member</td>
<td>Socialists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sofie Luyten</td>
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<td>Green</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wivina de Meester</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Liberals</td>
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<td>Rik Haekens</td>
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<td>Camille Paulus</td>
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<td>Jan van Rensbergen</td>
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<td>Ivan Costermans</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leo van der Vliet</td>
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<td>Socialists</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yvan Verbakel</td>
<td>Operational Manager</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 8: Overview of political affiliation of BAM in 2005.*

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46 I used the yearly report of BAM in 2005 for the list of names, and searched online for party affiliations (some were clear from the outset because they were working at a cabinet of a minister).
A comparison in terms of regime structures illustrates the main opposing elements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Oosterweel-regime</th>
<th>StRaten-Generaal</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Agenda</strong></td>
<td>‘Growth city’</td>
<td>Quality of life</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Port Connection</td>
<td>Urbanisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time-efficient</td>
<td>Participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resources</strong></td>
<td>Budget 1.3 billion Euros</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research Agencies (&amp; Administration)</td>
<td>Experience in activism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Legal Procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coalition</strong></td>
<td>Political Parties on multiple levels:</td>
<td>Core of volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Flemish Government</td>
<td>&amp; connected</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Province of Antwerp</td>
<td>neighbourhood groups</td>
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<td></td>
<td>● City of Antwerp</td>
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<td>Port Authority</td>
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<td></td>
<td>National Railway Company</td>
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<td>Flemish Public Transportation Company</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coordination</strong></td>
<td>BAM Ltd.</td>
<td>Interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Back-room politics’</td>
<td>Meetings</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lectures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Website</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: Oosterweel-regime and StRaten-Generaal in 2005.

At this time there are two questions concerning the regimes. The first question is whether it is possible to consider StRaten-Generaal as a regime. Here the remark from Mossberger and Stoker (see 1.C.2) comes to mind, when they argue that there is no difference between a network and regime if the different coalition members and resources cannot be divided along the lines of market and state. However, I mentioned in the first chapter how this is not the right question. The relevant observation is to ask is whether a social system has differentiated itself in the pursuit of governing power, and what its structuring elements are (i.e what are its agenda and resources, how can it pursue them, and can it maintain a stable arrangement). Given these characteristics I am inclined to designate StRaten-Generaal as the core of an emerging urban regime. Although I would like to maintain a difference between StRaten-Generaal that is organised around the R1 agenda, and StRaten-Generaal as the general citizen’s platform in other areas. While various members and resources of its network might be activated for the R1 agenda, it is only when these are structuring the regime that they become relevant.

Given these circumstances, the next question is which coupling can be identified and what the role of the regime in each coupling is. The first coupling initiated by StRaten-Generaal is with the legal system (filing an appeal) and the media system (press conference). Let’s look at both couplings, and see to where they lead. By participating in the planning procedures, StRaten-Generaal has made itself part of the legal proceedings of Oosterweel. However, this does not yet mean they are politically relevant. This can be observed in the fact that BAM dismissed the proposed alternative. StRaten-Generaal challenged this project-MER on grounds that it wasn’t objective, to which the Flemish Governmental Mediator responded by
urging the Flemish Ministry to respond. Through its knowledge of these planning and legal procedures (thanks to its network), StRaten-Generaal can “irritate” the political system frequently. Eventually, the Flemish Government assigned the task of analysing the alternatives to an external research agency, Arup-Sum, which presented its results in July of 2009 and rejected all proposed routes (incl. Oosterweel). Instead it proposed an alternative, and under assignment from the city council it was asked to further develop its alternative into a detailed model. The Arup-Sum route is of course not a necessary outcome of these events. One element that provided some conditions for this course of events, was the internal political conflict between the Flemish government and the city council, who have different views on the affected area (see supra). The city council gave Arup-Sum the final assignment for a new alternative. Tensions would remain between these two levels of government throughout the following developments. The city council had a double agenda it had to manage. On the one hand there was the party-loyalty, on the other hand its own urban development plans. Most of the times, party loyalty would win.

The other function system at play was the mass media system, making it possible to spread the citizen regime’s agenda to a wider audience, with the goal of gaining support and putting more pressure on the political system via public opinion. A remarkable fact is the significant presence of the media system in the following expansion phases of the regime. This was certainly when members of Ademloos (“Breathless”) joined the regime, an organisation that was started after one of StRaten-Generaal’s public lectures. Key players for Ademloos were Wim van Hees (former marketing manager), Guido Verbeke (former gynaecologist) and Marcel Peeters (former project developer). Ademloos was concerned with the health impact of major traffic roads, and their media-campaign drew widespread attention from the press.
The second strong media reaction happened with the addition of ‘Ringland’, a proposal to transform the R1 into a tunnelled ring road with open urban areas on top. I will come back to this later. First I would like to look a bit closer at the first regime expansion with Ademloos.

Second phase: Regime Expansion

Ademloos would prove to have a significant impact on the regime. It is immediately clear that Ademloos specifically brings in a new goal on the agenda, and resources to pursue its goal via the media system. Like the previous table, this table below presents the main structures of the regime, focusing on the links of resources and agenda to the different regime members.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coalition</th>
<th>StRaten-Generaal</th>
<th>Ademloos</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Volunteers and Experts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agenda</td>
<td>Mobility Antwerp</td>
<td>Health Impacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>Urbanity</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Supporting Network</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Legal &amp; Technical Knowledge</td>
<td>Marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Activist Experience</td>
<td>Medical Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordination</td>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meetings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10: Overview of the second phase of the citizen’s regime.

The sketch below presents the relations between the regimes and the function systems. The boxes with dotted lines represent the couplings. Again, I want to emphasise that relations in this context are reflexive relations. With the expansion of the regime via Ademloos, more connections were possible (complexity!) specifically via the coupling with the media system, as well as further support for mobilising networks. These networks consist of experts that can contribute to the agenda, or help with procedures. Despite expansion of the regime and its supporting networks, there still is no direct coupling with the political system – although there certainly is increasing indirect ‘irritation’.

One interviewee described how a large report, like a plan-MER which can have over 2000 pages, was divided into separate pieces, and assigned to volunteers who then each look for one specific thing – this way the workload is minimised for each individual.
The impact of ‘marketing’ can be seen in Ademloos’ success in focussing media attention on “health”.49 Another strong element is the referendum, which was organised because Ademloos and StRaten-Generaal gathered sufficient signatures. The referendum shows us two important things. First, the referendum itself is relevant only for the political system in terms of possible constraints on its political success. This meant that as long as the agenda could be maintained, the referendum is only “irritating” because it takes up time. After the referendum was announced, discourse in the political system decided what the ‘right’ question for the referendum was, attempting to retain control over its outcome.50

When the Oosterweel-regime lost the referendum, the outcome was quickly reframed as a rejection of the bridge (and not the route), and as a victory of a ‘loud minority’ over a ‘silent majority’. What is significant for the discussion on the citizen regime, is that the political

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48 I did not include the fact that some of the members of the regime coalitions have or used to have ties to the Green Party. I decided this because to the fact the relation was either no longer relevant, or an individual characteristic that was too small to make a significant impact on the regime. Furthermore, the Green Party was part of the opposition, and, despite being active in the Oosterweel discussions in parliament, it was not able to break the coalition-loyalty.

49 more specifically the topic of ‘particulate matter’

50 In the end the question was: “Does the city of Antwerp have to give a positive recommendation for the planning permit of the Oosterweel-connection on the current route between Zwijndrecht/Leftbank and Merksem/Deurne?” (my translation).
system did not learn from the crisis that had occurred. The referendum seemed to have been a setback in terms of progress, not in terms of actual agenda-setting. The lack of coupling between the citizen regime and the political system provided a large degree of stability for the agenda of the Oosterweel-regime.

New coalition members for the citizen regime also meant an increase in coordination efforts for the regime. Despite the hypothesis that this would add a burden to the system, this particular regime did not seem to be bothered that much. Quite possible, the ‘fit’ of their congruent goals, and the good interpersonal relationships facilitated an easy exchange of views. In fact, the only ‘conflict’ that arose was only so communicated by news media, not by the regime members themselves. According to an interviewee, there was a slight difference in interpretation on the changes in Oosterweel, leading some newspapers to claim disputes between the coalition members. In the regime itself, the overarching agenda of providing an alternative solution to the mobility issues provided sufficient stability for the different goals.

**Third Phase: Second Regime Expansion**

After the referendum, a group of entrepreneurs and academics (well-known in the Flemish region and in the political system) asked Claeys and Verhaeghe if they would like to work out a detailed proposal for the mobility issues. Verhaeghe takes a leave of absence from his job, and together with Claeys they publish a report that proposes 4 alternatives. Their preferred solution is called “Meccano”, because it consists of different pieces (east, west and north) that each have their own function independent of the overall goal of the route as a whole.
With the expansion of Forum 2020\textsuperscript{51}, several important results were achieved. First of all, the Meccano route as the direct result of the combination of knowledge, experience, budgets and trust. The regime now had a new, extensively researched, proposal to approach the political parties. Secondly, because of the interpersonal network of the members of Forum 2020, the political parties seemed to be more accessible. Thus, early 2010, the group agreed to meet in private with the Flemish Prime-Minister, without Claeys and Verhaeghe (who were not really welcome). The agreement was that the prime-minister could use the plan as if it was his own. It turned out very unexpectedly, with BAM having already prepared an internal report rejecting the Meccano route the next morning.

In the meantime the Oosterweel regime was back on track. The Prime-Minister installed a commission (called “DAM”\textsuperscript{52}) to investigate alternatives, and promised a new Masterplan 2020 with a new integrated plan for the mobility issues in Antwerp. This commission was again heavily politically controlled, and by the end of 2010 the Oosterweel route was re-confirmed, but with tunnels instead of a bridge. The bridge remained the fall-back option, however. Moreover, in an attempt to block the Meccano alternative, the government issues a building permit for the construction of a prison on the western entrance point of the Meccano route. At the end of 2011 the public inquiry for the plan-MER of the new proposal was launched, and StRaten-Generaal submitted Meccano through these official procedures as an alternative. At the start of 2014, the Flemish government confirmed its decision on Oosterweel, signalling it will keep following this same path. After the elections of 2014, the Government coalition now matches more closely the Antwerp city council coalition, with Flemish Nationalists leading both coalitions (the party is in favour of Oosterweel). Its coalition partners are the Liberal party and the Christian-Democrats. There is some doubt on the stance of the Liberal party on Oosterweel, but no one expects them to reorganise their other priorities in favour of an alternative for Oosterweel.

\textsuperscript{51} Forum 2020 was not a complete newcomer on the scene, three of its core members already tried influencing policy makers in 2007, by organising a press conference at the International Press Centre in Brussels on the Wetstraat / Rue de la Loi (this street is the symbolic centre of the Belgian political system).

\textsuperscript{52} DAM stands for “Duurzame Antwerpse Mobiliteit” (“Sustainable Antwerp Mobility”),

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Coalition} & \textbf{StRaten-Generaal} & \textbf{Forum 2020} & \textbf{Ademloos} \\
\hline
Volunteers and Experts & Entrepreneurs Academics (e.g. Economists) & Volunteers and Experts & \\
\hline
\textbf{Agenda} & \textbf{Mobility Antwerp} & \textbf{Quality of Life, Environment & Health} & \textbf{Health Impacts} \\
Participation & Cost Effective; Direct Added Value; Feasible & \\
\hline
\textbf{Resources} & \textbf{Supporting Network} & \textbf{Economic knowledge and experience} & Medical Knowledge \\
Legal & Technical Knowledge & Budgets for research Political networks & \\
Activist Experience & \\
\hline
\textbf{Coordination} & \textbf{Interaction} & \\
Meetings & \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Overview Third Regime Phase}
\end{table}
The relationship between the citizen regime and the political system hasn't changed much. The indirect, interpersonal connection via Forum 2020 wasn't strong enough to influence the Oosterweel agenda. The expansion did result in a strong proposal, *Meccano*, that would from now on be used as the physical expression of the regime agenda. I will discuss the connections with the function systems more in general after a brief note on the next phase of expansion, when ‘Ringland’ appeared.

**Fourth Phase: From Ringpark to Ringland**

Peter Vemeulen, an architect, first came up with his idea in 2012, and gave a presentation in the Permeke Library in Antwerp. He was featured in a small article in an Antwerp daily newspaper, but nothing more came from it – except that the idea was born, and some years later was developed into Ringland, with the help of his family, friends and his architecture agency (Stramien). The idea of Ringland is presented as an integrated solution to the mobility issues in Antwerp. The plan promotes, amongst others, to put the R1 underground, create new urban spaces and regulate traffic flows in separate lanes for local and transit traffic.

What is most crucial about Ringland in terms of the regime-formation, is that it presents itself as **incompatible with Oosterweel**, not only because of infrastructural differences, but also because of a different vision on mobility and traffic\(^{53}\). Since Ringland is a very recent addition, there is not a lot to say on stability, except that so far two factors seem to be important. The first one concerns **feasibility**: given the complexity and high costs of Ringland, can it remain to be perceived as a feasible combination with the Meccano route? It's also not easy to predict what would happen if Ringland were to be perceived as not feasible. Would this have an effect on the other members of the regime, or not? Will Meccano for instance lose its credibility? This leads to the second factor: the media connections. For the citizen regime it is key to maintain its by now very broad overarching agenda, while being able to irritate the political systems further via couplings to the mass media systems.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coalition</th>
<th>StRaten-Generaal</th>
<th>Forum 2020</th>
<th>Ademloos</th>
<th>Ringland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Volunteers and Experts</td>
<td>Entrepreneurs</td>
<td>Volunteers and Experts</td>
<td>(Semi-) Professionals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academics (e.g. Economists)</td>
<td>Quality of Life, Environment &amp; Health</td>
<td>Cost Effective; Direct Added Value; Feasible</td>
<td>Health Impacts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility Antwerp</td>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>Supporting Network</td>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Legal &amp; Technical Knowledge</td>
<td>Economic knowledge and experience</td>
<td>Medical Knowledge</td>
<td>Engineering Architectural Knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Activist Experience</td>
<td>Budgets for research</td>
<td>Political networks</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordination</td>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>Meetings</td>
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</table>

*Table 12: Overview Fourth Regime Phase*

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\(^{53}\) They confirmed this position also ‘officially’ by joining StRaten-Generaal and Ademloos in filing a formal complaint as part of the public inquiry in the GRUP-process (see supra).
Conclusion: the Antwerp Citizen Regime

I will end this chapter in the same way as the previous chapter. This means I will repeat my initial research question, and summarise my findings in light of the underlying research model. I will thus discuss the regime dynamics in three ways: in terms of understanding society as functionally differentiated; in terms of understanding regimes as systemic linkages between function systems and the consequences on the multiplication of power; and finally in terms of the regimes' four core structures (agenda, resources, coalition members and coordination mechanisms). Also, like in the previous chapter, I will conclude with a question on regimes in terms of political theory. As a reminder to this conclusion, it is good to repeat the research question:

1. Has an urban regime been formed in Antwerp in order to develop the “Oosterweel”?
2. If so, what are its characteristics and what has it achieved?
3. If not, can I identify the reasons why?

The first conclusion for this particular case in Antwerp is that I identified two regimes at work – one strongly coupled to the political system, the other an ‘opposing’ regime that lacks these linkages. I focussed mostly on the evolution of this second regime, that I named a citizen regime because its members come from networks around different citizen’s movements. The relevance of this case is that it shows how regimes can form without strong coupling to the political system – although for the eventual success of its agenda this coupling still plays a significant role, but I’ll say more on that below. I will first say a few things on the Oosterweel-regime, and the construction of the agenda in both regimes.
The Oosterweel-regime was formed mainly by politicians, administrators and entrepreneurs. From the late nineties the regime was organised around the goal of setting up the "closing of the R1" as the ideal solution to take on the congestion issues on the ring road and provide a new connection for the port area to the national and international highways around Antwerp. Since the early 2000's this agenda has been stressed as “sufficiently researched and debated”, and the imperative of “swift construction” of the Oosterweel was central to the communications. Politically, the Oosterweel-regime emerged in a time of increasing bureaucratisation of the planning systems in Flanders (Van den Broeck, 2008: 278), creating linkages in order to 'speed up' the process. The key characteristic of the Oosterweel-regime is the fact that its coordination is mostly structured around members and strategies of the Flemish political parties. Here the organisation of the regime is strongly tied to the structures of the political process in Flanders. The Flemish (and Belgian) political system is to a large extent characterised by a far-reaching *particracy*, meaning that its political decisionmaking process is largely shaped by political parties (Dewachter, 2001: 466). A strong indicator in the Oosterweel-case is the political control over the development-agency BAM and how it dismisses proposed alternative solutions. Another important characteristic of this particracy is the fact that the *government* is the only strong opponent for the political parties in Flanders and Belgium (Dewachter, 2001: 376-387). Part of the resilience of the Oosterweel-regime can be attributed to, firstly, the fact that its members were linked to members of government (which indicates that the regime lacks significant opposition *within* the political system), and secondly, the fact that the agenda of Oosterweel subjugated the local council's urban agenda to the more general strategies of the Flemish political parties.

The agendas of both regimes are constructed as a solution to the mobility issues in and around Antwerp, however the agendas differ in the subsequent goals that are linked to it. For the Oosterweel-regime, the underlying goal is to swiftly start construction and provide an efficient connection for the port of Antwerp. This goal is closely linked to the programmes of the political and economic systems to which the regime is coupled. Politically, Flanders has seen, as most of Europe, an increasing liberalisation of its planning policy: creating spaces for economic growth. Economically, the port area is an active hub of national and international economic flows. The citizen regime does not deny the importance of this economic function, but places it under an agenda that combines it with the goals of citizen's *participation* in planning, *sustainable* growth and public *health*. In both regimes, the traffic infrastructure is again linked to different *spaces*, like I also pointed out in Amsterdam. Both regimes mediate between the place that contains the mobility issues with other spaces through different system references. The economic space appears in similar fashion in both regimes, by linking the 'local' economy of Antwerp as a strong hub in the international economy. The difference between the regimes is how this form of space is linked to how the political space is constructed. As we saw, the political space appears differently in the two regimes. For the Oosterweel-regime, the project is a clear-cut case of expansion of infrastructure, that needs only to include a limited set of 'stakeholders' in the decisionmaking process. The political space is formed around these identified organisations, which are seen to be representative of the wider 'society'. In the citizen regime, this limitation of the space to stakeholder-participation is contested, and the construction of a wider political space is pursued. Here, citizen's, politicians, scientists, entrepreneurs, artists, physicians, etc... are all included in a networked space in which decisionmaking is then to be operationalised.
The ring road project in Antwerp thus provides a clear example of how regimes are not trapped in a localised analysis since they are always formed within the surrounding societal functional differentiation. Function systems are themselves organised through a wide variety of local and regional forms (i.e. organisations and equivalent social systems – see section 1.B), and operate through those forms in the environment in which the regimes differentiate themselves. Of course, due to the autopoietic nature of social systems, every regime constructs its own environment – and the occurrence of two regimes in Antwerp illustrates one particular variation of this general principle, whereby every regime construct its own external references to the systems in its environment. The most striking difference between the regime is the reference to the political system, which in the Oosterweel-regime is mainly referred to in as performing a representative function whereas the citizen regime refers to its as performing a participatory function. Here, the question of regimes as political forms becomes relevant again – which I will pick up in the final part of the thesis.

A last element I want to discuss, is the link to the different function systems. I argued that this coalition can still be called a regime because it contains all the necessary structures of a regime (its four core structures), and regimes are not necessarily coupled to the political systems. However, what has become clear, is that the lack of coupling to the political system severely limits the capacity to attain its agenda. When StRaten-Generaal entered the 'Oosterweel scene', they first presented an alternative to the proposed route, in an attempt to become part of the ongoing decisionmaking process. For the political system, this was mostly seen as an irritation that could be handled through the formal participation procedures. The Oosterweel-regime also never opened up its membership criteria to include these new actors, not even when some years later interpersonal relations (via Forum 2020) opened up new possibilities of coupling between the regimes. Because of this lack of coupling to both the political system and the Oosterweel-regime, the only way to organise influence on the Oosterweel-project has been through coupling with the legal system (via formal participation procedures and legal appeal) and the mass media (press conferences, opinion pieces in newspapers, public events, social media, news broadcasts, …). The coupling to both these systems were possible through the acquisition of resources in the form of legal knowledge its surrounding network of volunteers. In terms of regime formation these coupling have been largely successful, as the regime was capable of expansion over the course of almost ten years. Systems-theory states that the more a system tries to reduce complexity in its environment, the more complexity it needs to develop internally. The citizen regime seems to be able to do this. In every phase of expansion the agenda is able to incorporate new goals that emerge with the arrival of new members. And every expansion brings with it significant new resources.

In terms of the achievement of its goals, the outcome has been less successful. The regime has not succeed in placing itself as a mediator between the urban space and the operations of the political system. Crucially, while the current proposal of the Oosterweel-connection has been changed (the same route, but with changes in its implementation), the agenda of the Oosterweel-regime has not. Like in the Zuidasdock-regime in Amsterdam, this is the crucial area to reach in order to be able to construct a successful capacity to govern. Two identifiable crises occurred in the political system, opening up possibilities for change. There was the organisation of dissent by StRaten-Generaal after the Lange Wapper was publicly communicated, and there was the rejection of the official proposal in the referendum. In both cases the Oosterweel-regime applied “non-learning” techniques, in that it tried to neutralise
the effects by manipulating research results, falsifying reports or by simply ignoring critique. Looking at the different coupling for both regimes, again it becomes clear that questions regarding the 'success' of the regimes, as well as questions regarding the political decisionmaking process, are intrinsically related to systemic functions and structures. In terms of the capacity to govern, it is also again clear that regimes respond to the multiplication of power in a functionally differentiated society by organising themselves around an agenda capable of structuring multiple functional couplings. To be able to influence these agenda there is a need of a form of systemic power in the environment of the political systems and the regimes surrounding it.

However, the Oosterweel-regime is, like the Zuidasdok-regime, also illustrative of the autopoietic construction of its members, its agenda and its resources. The danger in both cases has been the lack of public debate and the lack of democratic control on the impact of the regime projects on the city. In the following chapter, I will look at what we can learn from Antwerp and Amsterdam on how urban regimes can function as models for policymaking.
Discussing urban regimes as a model of democratic governance.

In the present chapter, I will conclude my thesis with a critical discussion on the role of urban regimes in light of political theory on democratic participation. This discussion is inspired by the literature on urban regimes as well as the research I conducted in Amsterdam and Antwerp. In his writings Clarence Stone is obviously concerned with the emancipatory ideal of a regime as a model for governance, specifically arguing for regimes as instrumental for community development (Stone, 2004; Stone, 2013; Orr & Johnson, 2008). However, he also argues that regime analysis should stay focused primarily on the interdependence of the internal structures of regimes, and not on the relations of regimes with their environment. (Stone, 2004: 14). In contrast to this approach, I have taken up regime analysis as part of a broader theory of society, with the explicit intent of observing the relations between regimes and their environment. In the systems-theoretical perspective that is developed here, this relation cannot be ignored, since it stands at the centre how a system is formed (see chapter 1). In this chapter, I will now briefly present how this same theory of society can help to understand urban regimes as a model for democratic governance. In Amsterdam and Antwerp, it became clear that the agenda of the regime could not be questioned, and that it was supported by congruent resources as well as by a scheme of cooperation that was able to increase the complexity of the regime without losing its coalition members. I indicated in my findings, how these internal structures were coupled to different function systems, and to reflexive relations that exists between regimes and function systems. A localised regime cannot determine an entire function system, but the fact remains that function systems are structured throughout a variety social forms (such as regimes and organisations). I also argued how specifically the agenda of both the Zuidasdock-regime and the Oosterweel-regime was not fundamentally questioned – a core characteristics of urban regimes as I have identified them. The citizen regime in Antwerp further illustrated how difficult it is to gain access to a governing regime's agenda-setting structures. In the following paragraphs I will briefly repeat why urban regimes need a stable coupling to the political system in order to achieve some level of 'success' in terms policymaking (although I have also illustrated in the case of Antwerp, that the first relevant success for a regime is its own reproduction). Consequently, to influence the agenda of the urban regime, a form of systemic power needs to be constructed that limits the possibilities for regimes to become disconnected from a wider political programme of 'democratic inclusion'. My argument thus contains two key elements. The first concerns the nature of democratic politics and how this relates to urban regimes. The second element is the nature of the systemic power that can respond to a possible democratic deficit of urban regimes.

Functional differentiation and the scandal of democracy

I have identified how urban regimes respond to the diffusion of power in a centreless society by establishing structures around which new relations of power can be formed. As such, regimes are an example of governance: “the activity of coordination communications in order to achieve collective goals through collaboration” (Willke, 2007: 10). In the context of my research question, I have explicitly identified urban regimes as forms of governance that operate outside of the political system. They might be coupled to it, but do not fall entirely within the function system of politics. As I stated in my conceptual outline, this is due to the fact that functional differentiation implies far-reaching multiplication and diffusion of power. Regimes are systems that respond to this diffusion of power, by organising the capacity to
shape urban policy through the coupling of function systems. A key observation is that regimes are also always mediators – it is through the emergence of the regime that its agenda (and thus the project that will be governed) takes form. The project does not exist before the regime: “while its objects may indeed pre-exist governance attempts as potential ‘raw material’, they only become real objects of governance to the extent they are subject to specific, more or less effective governance mechanisms” (Jessop, 2013, III). Furthermore, in typical systems-theoretical perspective, there is no normative judgement to be made here: regimes are ‘good’ nor ‘bad’ – this judgement will depend on subsequent observations. Regimes are in first instance forms of systems that reduce complexity. A second-order observation is needed to be able to come to a normative answer, and this in turns requires an observation of the function of the concept ‘democracy’ and its relations to urban governance.

In the first chapter I already argued how democracy cannot be equated with the organisation of elections. This would not correspond to the sociological reality, but also in terms of normative political theory this view would exclude many of its constitutive social conditions (e.g. Amartya Sen argues with Rawls that democracy is essentially “the exercise of public reason” - 2009: 321-337). In my understanding of society I have argued extensively how the political system is limited in its steering capabilities – certainly regarding other function systems. The fact that a political system is democratically organised does not change this situation: democracy is not a question of increased steering capabilities through forms of representation, participation, community- or consensus-building. However democracy is described, it does not change the autopoiesis of the political system. Saying what democracy is not does not suffice, of course. The most fundamental question remains: “Of what do we speak when we speak of democracy? What is the underlying rationale?” (Agamben, 2011: I).

Democracy can understood in terms of form as well as in terms of self-description or semantics. Formally, democracy is that description of a political system that organises itself around the distinction government/opposition (see table 1 in chapter 1). (Luhmann, 1990: 232). This code provides variety to the political system, as governments can change to opposition and vice versa. At the same time stability is acquired, since the system itself is reproduced with every new affirmation of this code. Democracy uses elections not to base power in voters as 'representatives' of 'the people', but to achieve systemic stability through the reproduction of the function code. Through elections the political system is also able to construct an 'audience' – which serves to legitimise the political process (Moeller, 2006, Ch.8). To be clear, the audience is a construct of the political system itself, not a collection of people outside the political system which constitutes the grounds for political power. The political construction of an audience shows the symbolic dimension of democracy, which serves to legitimise politics. I illustrated this dynamic in the political communication after the referendum in Antwerp. Equally, the recurring publications of opinion surveys on the Oosterweel-connection serve as tools with which politics creates audiences to legitimise its policy.

Democracy is thus not a method for the inclusion of people in the political system. In a situation of functional differentiation inclusion cannot be the prerogative of the political system, but becomes a question for all function systems. People are never included in function systems in their totality as persons, but only as internally constructed roles that are
relevant for the system (Brunczel, 2010: 169). Therefore, people (in the sense of human beings in their totality) belong to the environment of social systems. Important to note is that exclusions from function systems are usually connected to exclusions from other function systems. For example, if a person is excluded from the political system (i.e. isn't recognised as a 'citizen'), they will most likely experience exclusions from other function systems. In summary, democracy cannot include people into society because there is no society in which to include them.

Essentially, democracy is a fully self-referential system, that has no ground outside itself. As such, there is no moral or ethical underpinning to democracy. The fact that anybody at all can become part of the 'governing' side of the political system, makes democracy scandalous. (Dean, 2011: 84 – referring to the writings of Rancière). Moreover, the form of “government / opposition” can only be critically observed from outside the political system. Indeed, as I explained earlier, social systems operate in a manner that blinds themselves from their own leading codes. Were systems to open up the possibility of observing the distinction by which they operate, they wouldn't be able to continue operating – there would be no code left with which they could select new operations. There is thus a difference between change that reproduces the function of the political systems (as is done by elections), and change in the sense of replace this leading distinction. Swyngedouw argues for a form of “true politics” that strives for this second possibility. This “new radical politics” would constitute “great new fictions” that create new possibilities outside of those that are presented in currently operating political narratives. (Swyngedouw, 2009: 614). His argument is that systems such as protest movements and urban regimes do not change the form of democracy or its legitimising function for the political system. His view is normatively constructed in a second-order observation, and regards democracy as fundamentally egalitarian – which is why in this view regimes such as the citizen regime in Antwerp would be considered fundamentally flawed: they still do not include those who are 'power-less' (or 'resource-less'). What is more, the political system is structured in such a way that it can readily deal with these 'protests', either through formal participation processes or through marginalisation. (2009: 615). I already mentioned how the referendum in Antwerp serves a good case in point. On the matter of the possibility of questioning the political agenda itself from within urban regimes, my analysis of Amsterdam and Antwerp show how this was limited due to the selective coordination between agenda, resources and coalition members as well as the coupling between regime and the political system. What's more, the citizen regime in Antwerp is an illustration of how a regime that does try to question the political agenda is excluded from the political system, which results in diminished possibilities for the regime to create a sufficiently strong capacity to govern. In general, the only form of politics that Swyngedouw acknowledges as “truly political”, is one that can be the start of a critique on the “entire social space” (2009: 616) – a political act that negates the function of politics. Swyngedouw builds his observations primarily on the insights of Rancière, Badiou and Žižek, and convincing argues that the underlying mechanisms of societal exclusion are not fundamentally challenged by governance through urban regimes. However, rather than “re-invent utopia” (Zizek, as cited by Swyngedouw, 2009: 616-617), I propose to intervene in the space around the political system, by exploring new possibilities of coupling that can increase the probability of expansion of its audience and its agenda.
A New Council of State

The most fruitful way to influence the agenda of the political system, and its connection to the agenda of urban regimes, is by organising a form of systemic power. The proposal by Willem Schinkel to organise a new Council of State is meant to do exactly this: the institution of a systemic power to influence the political agenda (Schinkel, 2012: 180). The current Council of State (“Raad van State”) in Belgium and the Netherlands is an administrative entity that advises the government on its legislative proposals, but also serves as the highest administrative court. Schinkel proposes to construct a new Council, outside the political and legal system, that would primarily function to place items on the agenda of the national (or regional) parliament. This would serve, in first instance, as a counter-power to the strong coupling of the political agenda to the economic system (as in the 'growth policies' I identified in Antwerp and Amsterdam). This proposal could be mistaken as a modern re-interpretation of Karl Mannheim's “‘intelligentsia” (1985: 153-164), whereby a 'detached' group of people is able to judge ‘objectively’ over the needed political interventions. On the contrary, what this new Council would achieve is not the creation of some form of consensus, but a form of conflict with the political system. This new Council is formed as a coupling between the political system with other function systems, such as art, education, the health system or science. As such, the council would serve as a systemic addition to the many negotiation systems that surround the political system (such as economic lobby, labour unions; cultural organisations, etc.). The Council does not need to negotiate with the political system, as its role is to set the conflict on the agenda – not determine its outcome. Indeed, the problem this proposal is trying to solve is not the lack of negotiation around the political agenda, but the content of what is negotiated. And just as democratic legitimacy in the political system is acquired via the construction of audiences, this Council would face the same legitimising requirements. It would have to construct its own audiences (Schinkel, 2012: 182), which would indeed again function as legitimization techniques of the Council itself – however now new audiences would be formed around agenda-items that are missing from the political agenda.

The strength of this proposal lies in the fact that it takes into account that in a functionally differentiated society, people are only relevant if they are included by the function systems. By organising an institutional coupling between the political system and other function systems besides the economic system, new opportunities arise to construct politically relevant audiences as well as alternative agendas for the political system. Clarence Stone already identified that being able to set the agenda is not enough to be able to determine the direction or urban policies (2004: 12); but in his view regime analysis was not an adequate framework to link this important observation to the societal environment of urban regimes – he linked it back to other internal structures that needed to change together with the agenda to be able to change the course of urban policy. Via the theory of functional differentiation, I argued in contrast that it is possible to see how besides these internal structures, regimes are also always coupled to systems in their environment. Because regimes operate outside of the political system, they need to be able to construct some form of stable coupling with the political system in order the create some form of policymaking power. And as could clearly be seen in the case of the citizen regime in Antwerp, if the agenda of the regime is perceived by the political system as incompatible, the regime will most likely be excluded from the political system. Both the governing regimes in Antwerp and Amsterdam could only operate by staying blind for their own constitutive agendas, whereby the coupling with the
political system proved vital in the reproduction of the agenda. Like urban regimes, a new Council of State would operate outside of the political system, and serve primarily to organise new couplings between function systems in order to construct a form of power. However, this would not be a 'power to govern' or 'to get things done', but a 'power to place themes on the agenda' or to question the political agenda. This also means that the Council would not be directly coupled to urban regimes operating around specific development projects or regeneration plans. It would have an indirect impact via the coupling of themes from different function systems in the environment of the regimes. As I explained, systems constructs their own environment, and thus it is very probable that what the Council deems important for the regimes might not be observed as such by the regime. Or as Jessop states it more clearly: “In functionally differentiated societies ‘context steering’ procedures work on an inter-systemic level by encouraging operationally closed systems to take account — even as they try to maintain their operational autonomy — of their resource dependence on their environment, functional interdependence with other such systems, and high levels of contextual interpenetration.” (Jessop, 2013, IV)

To sum up, what a new Council of State contributes to the balance between urban regimes and the political system, is its influence on the agenda-coupling between regimes and politics. The Council is constructed in the coupling of the political system with other function systems, and as such includes other persons in the political decisionmaking process. Because of this change the coupling between the political system and regimes becomes affected. Again, this is in line with the idea that all steering of social systems is 'self-steering'. However, some critical remarks are also in order. Firstly, the original proposal by Schinkel does not take into account the great extent to which the political system is dominated by political parties (esp. in Flanders, see chapter 3), or the fact that in general government is more powerful than parliament in the political system. One of the interviewees in Antwerp identified how the parliamentary oversight commission for the Oosterweel-project was in a sense a theatrical performance to give the impression of critical participation, but that in essence it was a continuation of the strategies of party politics. Therefore, the creation of a new Council of State should not be limited to the a link with the parliamentary institution, but should include possibilities to directly call on government. A possible supporting structure here could be to link the new Council of State to the oversight authority of the existing Council, creating a legal incentive for government to take account of the new Council.

Secondly, this proposal focuses on national politics, and as such ignores the scale of urban politics. Considering the role of cities and urban development projects I have discussed in the first chapter, it is useful to consider urban equivalents to this Council. Again, the organisation of a form of conflict should be the assignment of the proposed urban institution – not the negotiation of policy with the political institutions.

To come back to my initial question at the start of this chapter: can urban regimes be regarded as a model for democratic governance? I have shown how this question needs to be rethought, because of the form of democracy in a functionally differentiated society. I argued how regimes and democracy are both inadequate forms to tackle the issue of inclusion, to which the semantics of "democracy" refers. The proposal for a new Council of State takes into account the way inclusion operates in function systems. It forms an institutional coupling between the agenda-setting structures of the political system and other function systems, which in turn increases the probability of newly emerging politically
relevant audiences. Through interventions on the national/regional and urban political scale, the influential coupling between regimes and the political system can thus be affected. Will this proposal then lead to more inclusive urban regimes? That cannot but remain uncertain. The outcome lies in the creation of possibilities for systemic change – not in its necessity. Proposing change that reaches beyond the existing political agenda cannot denying its self-referential nature.


Buurtmonitor (2014). URL=http://www.antwerpen.buurtmonitor.be/ [Online database with of statistical data on Antwerp – provided by the City Administration]


De Morgen. (2008, June 28). *De beelden die Antwerpen niet mag zien* (Transl: “The images Antwerp isn't allowed to see”)


Stone, C. (2004). "It's more than the economy after all: continuing the debate about urban regimes". In: Journal of Urban Affairs (26,1). pp.1-19


List of interviews
(see the details in the methodology section)

Amsterdam:

2. Zef Hemel: Former deputy director at the Spatial Planning Department in Amsterdam.
5. Ivo Visser: Project-manager Zuidas dok at “Dienst Zuidas dok”.
6. Robert Dijckmeester: Deputy-Director Zuidas at “Dienst Zuidas”.

Antwerpen:

1. Maarten Loopmans (Unrecorded): Geographer at the department of Earth and Environmental Sciences at University of Leuven (KULeuven).
3. Dirk Bulteel: Director Advocacy Management at Flemish Chamber of Commerce
5. Peter Verhaeghe: Member of StRaten-Generaal, and together with Manu Claeyms at the forefront of the protest against the Oosterweel-development since 2005.
6. Dirk Avonts: Member of Ademloos. Physician. Professor at the Department of General Practice and Primary Health Care at the University of Ghent (UGent).