

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

University of Birmingham
Research at Birmingham

Transforming the relational dynamics of urban governance

Bartels, Koen

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098019889290>

License:

None: All rights reserved

Document Version

Peer reviewed version

Citation for published version (Harvard):

Bartels, K 2020, 'Transforming the relational dynamics of urban governance: how social innovation research can create a trajectory for learning and change', *Urban Studies*, pp. 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098019889290>

[Link to publication on Research at Birmingham portal](#)

General rights

Unless a licence is specified above, all rights (including copyright and moral rights) in this document are retained by the authors and/or the copyright holders. The express permission of the copyright holder must be obtained for any use of this material other than for purposes permitted by law.

- Users may freely distribute the URL that is used to identify this publication.
- Users may download and/or print one copy of the publication from the University of Birmingham research portal for the purpose of private study or non-commercial research.
- User may use extracts from the document in line with the concept of 'fair dealing' under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (?)
- Users may not further distribute the material nor use it for the purposes of commercial gain.

Where a licence is displayed above, please note the terms and conditions of the licence govern your use of this document.

When citing, please reference the published version.

Take down policy

While the University of Birmingham exercises care and attention in making items available there are rare occasions when an item has been uploaded in error or has been deemed to be commercially or otherwise sensitive.

If you believe that this is the case for this document, please contact UBIRA@lists.bham.ac.uk providing details and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate.



**Transforming the relational dynamics of urban governance:
How social innovation research can create a trajectory for
learning and change**

Journal:	<i>Urban Studies</i>
Manuscript ID	CUS-558-19-06.R1
Manuscript Type:	Article
Discipline: Please select a keyword from the following list that best describes the discipline used in your paper.:	Public Administration
World Region: Please select the region(s) that best reflect the focus of your paper. Names of individual countries, cities & economic groupings should appear in the title where appropriate.:	Western Europe
Major Topic: Please identify up to 5 topics that best identify the subject of your article.:	Theory, Method, Neighbourhood, Local Government, Governance
You may add up to 2 further relevant keywords of your choosing below.:	social innovation, relationality

SCHOLARONE™
Manuscripts

1
2
3 **Transforming the relational dynamics of urban governance: How social innovation**
4 **research can create a trajectory for learning and change**
5
6
7
8
9

10 **Abstract**

11 This article examines how social innovation (SI) research can coproduce transformative change
12 in cities. A key challenge is to diffuse and sustain SIs in ways that transform the relational webs
13 that constitute local spaces and their governance. The relational approach to SI is conceptually
14 promising in this respect, but its foundations and practices need to be further developed.
15 Therefore, I develop a relational ‘theory-methods package’ of practice theory and action
16 research. By co-producing immediately usable insights, experiences and artefacts in the daily
17 practice of SI, this approach enables researchers to gradually create conditions for a
18 transformative trajectory of learning and change in urban governance. I critically appraise four
19 research practices in the context of a SI in Dutch urban governance and reflect on the
20 transformative potential of this relational theory-methods package.
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29

30 **Keywords:** social innovation; urban governance; relationality; transformation; practice theory;
31 action research
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

Introduction

Social innovation (SI) is hailed as breeding ground for more just, democratic and sustainable cities (Moulaert et al., 2005, 2010; Blanco and León, 2017; May, 2017). Especially since the 2008 financial and economic crisis, policy discourse has actively encouraged new ways of thinking, acting and organising to address unmet local needs. Grassroots initiatives nurture innovative ideas, practices and artefacts in local communities that can generate radical, systemic change in power relationships and worldviews underlying dominant institutions that prove increasingly unsustainable (Seyfang and Smith, 2007).

A key challenge is how SI can have such ‘transformative’ impact—understood here as fundamental change in local practices and structural (discursive, material and institutional) contexts (Grin et al., 2010; Grin, 2018). More often than not, innovative initiatives are successful in their own local situation, but efforts at diffusion, upscaling and mainstreaming tend to falter in inhospitable environments rife with aversive actors and institutional resistances (Bartels, 2017). Going beyond a regressive David vs. Goliath dichotomy, SI research has explained this recurrent pattern in terms of strategic niche management (Smith, 2007; Seyfang and Haxeltine, 2012), the multilevel perspective (Hargreaves et al., 2013), and the relational approach (MacCallum et al., 2009; Moulaert et al., 2010; Bartels, 2017; Haxeltine et al., 2017). Whereas the former two focus on the interface between ‘niches’ and ‘socio-technical regimes’ dynamically nested in a wider ‘landscape’, the latter is explicitly concerned with unpicking “the complicated relational picture” (Cornwall, 2004: 6) of contingent factors that shape efforts at transformative change.

While most studies focus on analysing how these relational dynamics of change and resistance unfold, it has recently been argued that SI researchers can play an active role in bolstering transformative change (Pel et al., 2017; Wittmayer et al., 2014; Wittmayer et al., 2017a; Frantzeskaki and Rok, 2018). By “explicating and developing actionable knowledge through a participative and action-oriented research process” (Wittmayer et al., 2017b: 9), researchers and local actors can coproduce systemic changes in engrained ways of thinking, (inter)acting and organising. This relational approach is an attractive way of intervening in ‘SI-in-the-making’ that chimes with a major relational strand of urban studies (MacCallum et al., 2009; Khan et al., 2013; Blokland, 2017; McCann, 2017). Here I draw especially on Doreen Massey’s reconceptualisation of “space as the sphere of relations, of contemporaneous multiplicity, and as always under construction” (Massey, 2005, 148) to both

- *understand* space as constituted through the ways local actors negotiate and construct their interdependencies and institutional configurations, and

- *intervene* in these relational dynamics by developing collective capacities for relating to a plurality of knowledge, experiences, values and institutions (Healey, 2007; Fraser and Weniger, 2008; Vandenbussche et al., 2017).

The relational approach to SI research thus means engaging in processes of reproducing and transforming the social relations that constitute local spaces.

The conceptual foundations and methodological practices of this relational approach to researching SI need to be further developed (Pel et al., 2017; Wittmayer et al., 2017a). We currently lack clear guidance on how SI researchers can create knowledge of these relational dynamics (epistemology) and analytically intervene in them (methodology); that is, how to actually *do* such research. This article takes up this challenge by asking: *how can SI research contribute to transforming the relational dynamics of urban governance?* The main aim is to develop a relational “theory-methods package” (Nicolini, 2012: 7, 14, 217) that clarifies how theoretical assumptions and methodological choices can work together to produce relevant knowledge and desirable forms of socio-political organisation. I do not seek to develop an abstract analytical scheme, but to cast light on the *practice* of research: the work we do when interpreting, participating in, and representing socially patterned ways of interaction, and what this enables us to know and do differently (Jasanoff, 2004; Law, 2004; Pickering and Guzik, 2008; Bartels, 2012).

More concretely, I develop a relational theory-methods package of *practice theory* and *action research* in which knowledge is co-produced with local actors in the course of their everyday mutual engagements in urban governance. In this relational approach, SI researchers create conditions for transforming relational dynamics by *coproducing immediately usable insights, experiences and artefacts that create a trajectory of learning and change*. Transformative processes are not big leaps but are won in tiny incremental steps that SI researchers can stimulate by 1) *doing things together* to find ways to assist in and promote change; 2) *animating fleeting feelings* as invitations for mutual learning; 3) *responding to emergent dynamics* to make the research more inclusive and usable; 4) and *taking many small steps* to carve out spaces for proximal learning and change.

The first section builds on relational thinking in urban studies to conceptualise SIs as transformations in and of urban governance. Next, I explain how practice theory and action research can be combined to further develop the theoretical and methodological foundations of the relational approach to SI. After outlining my research on SI in urban governance in Amsterdam, I critically appraise four research practices for enacting this relational theory-

1
2
3 methods package. Finally, I reflect on how this approach contributes to transforming the
4 relational dynamics of urban governance.
5
6
7

8 **Transforming the relational dynamics of urban governance**

9
10 Following the celebrated perspective that space is socially produced, a wide range of relational
11 approaches has developed in which local interactions do not take place *within* territories, cities
12 and communities but are *constitutive of* these spaces (for an overview, see Khan et al., 2013).
13 “Physical and social spaces of the city are created out of contestation between networks of
14 actors with diverse geographical imaginations of what they want the city to be” (Fraser and
15 Weninger, 2008: 1436; see also Cornwall, 2004; Blanco et al., 2014; Blokland, 2017). Massey
16 (2005) articulates three propositions underpinning such a relational ontology: 1) space is
17 enacted through interactions, unfolding in-between interdependent local actors and physical,
18 discursive and institutional settings; 2) space is a sphere of plurality, of a multiplicity of co-
19 existing interests, identities and experiences; 3) space is always becoming, an emergent process
20 of being reproduced and transformed. This relationality necessitates attention to what she
21 evocatively calls the “throwntogetherness, the unavoidable challenge of negotiating a here-
22 and-now” (Massey, 2005: 140).
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32

33 Urban governance of these interactive, plural and evolving spaces asks for a ‘double
34 shift’ in our thinking, combining a relational ontology with epistemic, methodological and
35 normative assumptions about how to know, analyse and improve relational dynamics (Healey,
36 2007; Khan et al., 2013; Vandebussche et al., 2017; Ison et al., 2014; Paschen and Beilin,
37 2015; Karlsen and Larrea 2017). First of all, this means recognising the (increased)
38 omnipresence of webs of multiplicity, interdependency and institutional contingencies.
39 Second, it means generating knowledge and interventions “that act as catalysts to enhancing
40 connectivity and qualities of transaction in the future” (Khan et al., 2013: 294). Urban policies
41 and strategies cannot be fixed, linear and imposed, but should be evolving and adaptive based
42 on collaborative processes of sense-making, negotiating, strategy-making and relating (Healey,
43 2007; Pierre and Peters, 2012; Vandebussche et al., 2017). In other words, urban governance
44 is understood as the capacity to engage with and transform the relational dynamics of local
45 spaces.
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54

55 In the relational approach, SI is conceptualised in similar terms as “‘realities that
56 become’, rather than stable projects with clear prime movers and established goals” (Haxeltine
57 et al., 2017: 69). Innovative forms of thinking, acting and organising are not posited as polar
58 opposites to urban governance regimes, but as assemblages of social relations and practices
59
60

1
2
3 enacted at their interface (MacCallum et al., 2009; Blanco et al., 2014; Bartels, 2017; Haxeltine
4 et al., 2017). Transformation is a situated, emergent and contested process of “prolonged
5 interactions between heterogeneous elements (practices and structural contexts) that gradually
6 undermine the conditions for stasis and prepare change” (Grin, 2018: 431).
7
8
9

10 Up to now, the relational approach to SI research has mainly involved longitudinal
11 archival research and ethnographic observation to generate evolutionary accounts of
12 transformation pathways (e.g., Vandebussche et al., 2017). Recently, it has been proposed
13 that SI researchers can facilitate participatory spaces for coproducing new knowledge and
14 actions that empower local actors to transform their relational dynamics (Wittmayer et al.,
15 2014, 2017b; Richardson et al., 2017; Frantzeskaki and Rok, 2018). Yet, as the theoretical and
16 methodological foundations of the field of SI as a whole are still underdeveloped (Howaldt et
17 al., 2014; Domanski and Kaletka, 2017; Wittmayer et al. 2017a), Pel et al. (2017) call for
18 further developing a framework for this relational approach. Therefore, I develop a relational
19 theory-methods package and examine how it works and what it helps us do.
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28

29 **A relational theory-methods package of practice theory and action research**

30 Practice theory and action research are obvious candidates for strengthening the relational
31 approach to SI. Practice theories have been key to conceptualising SI (Howaldt et al., 2014;
32 Hargreaves et al, 2013; Khan et al., 2013; Seyfang and Haxeltine, 2012), while action research
33 provides a methodological basis for coproducing transformative knowledge and action with SI
34 stakeholders (Aiken, 2017; Wittmayer et al., 2017a, 2017b; Frantzeskaki and Rok, 2018).
35 However, SI research has not yet combined practice theory and action research, despite their
36 shared relational nature and grounding in classical pragmatism¹.
37
38
39
40
41
42

43 Practice theory is increasingly used in urban studies to explain change in terms of the
44 reconfiguration of everyday practices (Shove, 2010; Seyfang and Haxeltine, 2012; Hargreaves
45 et al, 2013; Ison et al., 2014; Paschen and Beilin, 2015). It does not offer a unified theory but
46 joins a family of approaches from different disciplines and philosophical traditions based on
47 three main principles (Reckwitz, 2002; Cook and Wagenaar, 2012; Nicolini, 2012; Shove et
48 al., 2012):
49
50
51
52

- 53 1. The main unit of analysis is not institutions or individual action but *practice*:
54 the practical activities routinely enacted and improvised while engaging with
55 concrete situations.
56
- 57 2. Practices are not static actions-in-context ‘out there’ (practices-as-entities) but
58 evolving, contingent activities in everyday life that dynamically reproduce and
59
60

1
2
3 adapt seemingly stable social, cultural and historical institutions (practices-as-
4 performances).
5

- 6
7 3. Knowledge is performative and situated. Learning what is going on and should
8 be done occurs through experiencing, communicating about, intervening in, and
9 reflecting on concrete situations.
10

11
12 The uptake of practice theory in SI research is predominantly situated within the
13 Continental European tradition of social theory, in which practices form habitual routines
14 which unconsciously guide behaviour (Howaldt et al., 2014). However, the classical pragmatist
15 tradition lends itself particularly well to a “relational conception of practice, knowledge, and
16 context” (Cook and Wagenaar, 2012: 5) in which practices emerge, and are sustained in the
17 course of getting things done. When we cook, play tennis or teach, we piece together a range
18 of interdependent elements—shared background knowledge, feelings, values, materials,
19 discourses, power relations, etc.—to accommodate the resistances that situations throw up to
20 our interventions. As such, practice, knowledge and context, and all the various elements
21 involved, mutually constitute each other (Pickering and Guzik, 2008; Wagenaar and Cook,
22 2011; Shove et al., 2012; Paschen and Beilin, 2015).
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30

31 Practice theory has mainly been combined with ethnography to capture what local
32 actors actually do, say and feel, observe how these practices unfold in action, interpret their
33 meaning from local actors’ perspectives, and provide thick, grounded accounts (Bueger, 2014;
34 Gherardi, 2012; Nicolini, 2012). Action research extends this methodological repertoire based
35 on its orientation to collaborative change (Wagenaar, 2007; Bartels, 2012; Pain and Kindon,
36 2007; Paschen and Beilin, 2015). While doing action research inevitably includes participatory
37 ethnography, due to their historical cross-fertilization (Schatz, 2009; Erickson, 2011), it is
38 distinctly geared to becoming part of a practice *with the purpose of changing it* through joint
39 inquiry and practical action with stakeholders towards democratic societal change (Greenwood
40 and Levin, 2007).
41
42
43
44
45
46
47

48 In urban studies, action research is widely used to raise awareness of the socio-spatial
49 embeddedness of power and promote social justice and sustainability (Kindon and Pain, 2007;
50 Kindon et al., 2007; Paschen and Beilin, 2015; Karlsen and Larrea, 2017). Also action research
51 is a broad family of approaches, germinating from three main principles (Reason and Bradbury,
52 2001; Greenwood and Levin, 2007; Kindon et al., 2007):
53
54
55

- 56 1. Researchers and stakeholders seek to develop shared understandings as a basis for
57 *action* in response to a problematic situation.
58
59
60

- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
2. Actionable knowledge is generated through a collaborative *research* process of knowledge gathering, reflecting on habitual patterns, and learning about change.
3. Ensuring *participation* of a wide array of stakeholders is vital to effectively addressing complex situations and empowering them to challenge hegemony.

10 The relational foundations of action research are widely acknowledged (Reason and
11 Bradbury, 2001; Greenwood and Levin, 2007; Burns, 2014; Bartels and Wittmayer, 2018).
12 Based on classical pragmatism and General Systems Theory, it depicts a world of
13 interdependent actors and institutions related through webs of connection. Action research
14 creates spaces in which dialogical relationships, joint experiences and mutual learning enable
15 stakeholders to surface and transform their habitual patterns of interaction. Similar to practice
16 theory, knowledge is not a fixed, individually held precondition to action but a dynamic and
17 experiential process unfolding in-between people entangled in concrete situations and wider
18 systems.
19

20 Besides widespread consensus on the importance of maintaining fruitful relationships,
21 the relational nature of action research is interpreted in various ways (see Bartels and
22 Wittmayer, 2018). For instance, Systemic Action Research involves conducting multiple
23 parallel inquiries that enable systemic change of stakeholders' interrelated practices (Burns,
24 2014). Action research of SI has mainly focused on creating multi-stakeholder engagement
25 spaces that facilitate mutual learning about transition dynamics (Wittmayer et al., 2014, 2017b;
26 Frantzeskaki and Rok, 2018). While this approach engages *with* the daily practices of local
27 actors, it has been criticised for not enabling action researchers to participate *in* this practice to
28 generate change 'from within' (Aiken, 2017).
29

30 Therefore, I propose a relational theory-methods package of practice theory and action
31 research aimed at *transforming relational dynamics by co-producing immediately usable*
32 *insights, experiences and artefacts*. The pivotal attribute of this approach is that researchers
33 take part in the daily practice of SI in order to create a transformative trajectory of learning and
34 change. By addressing immediate, emergent needs, SI researchers are instantly woven into its
35 relational dynamics, encountering resistances and unearthing ways to promote change. SI
36 researchers cannot control or redesign these emotionally-laden and conflict-rife dynamics, but
37 can drive transformative change in small, incremental steps by keeping mutual learning going,
38 interactively redesigning the research, and carving out a zone for proximal change.
39

40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60
Research project: Area-focused working in practice

1
2
3 Between September 2013-2014, I conducted the research project ‘Area-focused working in
4 practice’ in Amsterdam (the Netherlands). The Municipality of Amsterdam had recently
5 developed a city-wide policy for ‘area-focused working’ (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2013) in
6 response to the national discourse of a ‘participation society’ of active citizenship and civic
7 energy trumping welfare state dependence and bureaucratic resistance (see e.g., Ministerie van
8 Binnenlandse Zaken, 2013). Area-focused working aimed to generate tailor-made urban
9 policies in response to a problem in a local area as and when it emerged, driven by the dynamics
10 of the problem and area rather than municipal policy norms or organisational procedures. In
11 light of recent decentralisation reforms coupled with austerity cutbacks, area-focused working
12 would empower local actors to take more responsibility for local wellbeing and do justice to
13 massive differences between sub-local areas. Yet, it remained unclear how to actually *do* area-
14 focused working in practice and *sustain* this new way of thinking, acting and organising in
15 urban governance.

16
17 At the forefront of area-focused working were the Neighbourhood Practice Teams
18 (*Buurt Praktijk Teams* – BPTs) in City District West². BPTs were multi-disciplinary teams
19 mandated to ‘do what’s necessary’ to turn things around in neighbourhoods caught in a vicious
20 cycle of youth crime, anti-social behaviour, and distrust, disengagement and conflict between
21 residents and public agencies. Intricately linked to often hidden problems of poverty, domestic
22 violence, poor housing and social segregation, these deep-seated problems only seemed to
23 worsen from interventions by the 10+ public agencies involved in each neighbourhood. BPTs
24 iteratively learned what was going on and could be done to transform engrained patterns by
25 being present, listening, developing a shared focus, organising small-scale activities, and joint
26 reflection. This innovative approach not only generated immediate solutions to the
27 aforementioned problems but also rekindled a sense of collective ownership of public space,
28 social activity and relationships, and trust in public agencies. The unprecedented success of the
29 first BPT on the *Columbusplein* (main square in the *Baarsjes* neighbourhood) garnered
30 widespread praise and media attention at a local and national level and led to the creation of
31 three other BPTs in City District West and several spin-offs throughout the city. The second
32 BPT also managed to turn things around in the *Landlust* neighbourhood, even though this
33 success was deeply contested by some stakeholders, while the other BPTs had significant yet
34 considerably less definite impact (for more details, see Bartels, 2016, 2017, 2018).

35
36 Yet, BPTs constantly faced resistances that frustrated their activities and efforts at
37 transforming urban governance (Bartels, 2017). For instance, they ran into a snake pit of top-
38 down policy-making, hierarchical management and interagency competition when trying to
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 diffuse and upscale their approach. With budget cuts and the upcoming abolishment of City
4 Districts on the horizon, BPTs feared that their innovative area-focused approach would
5 ultimately be smothered by a turn to centralisation and codification. Indeed, seven years after
6 the first BPT started, all BPTs have formally ceased to exist, even though its principles and
7 practices are still enacted (personal communication main collaborator, December 2018).
8
9

10
11 My research entered the scene two years after the first BPT started, which proved to be
12 a crucial stage for transforming urban governance in Amsterdam. After their initial successes,
13 BPTs now needed to sustain their approach by widening understanding and engagement of a
14 greater range of local actors. After three weeks of shadowing and talking to a wide range of
15 stakeholders, participating in neighbourhood activities and meetings, and hanging out in local
16 offices, squares and streets, I identified three key tensions between the BPT approach and its
17 governance environment: 1) evaluating their innovative approach in conventional planning and
18 management systems; 2) collaborating with colleagues and organisations who felt criticised,
19 unappreciated and threatened; and 3) diffusing and sustaining the approach in complex
20 networks characterised by distrust amongst citizens, public professionals and managers.
21 Through a range of iterative discussions in response to emergent dynamics (see the third section
22 below), a group of seven core collaborators and I decided that my research would address these
23 tensions in three ways.
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33

- 34 1. *Conducting an evaluation* of the second BPT was supposed to increase
35 understanding of the approach amongst (critical) outsiders, help extend the team's
36 mandate, and develop an alternative evaluation approach. Within two months, I
37 conducted twelve interviews, studied thirteen policy documents, participated in
38 team meetings, went on three neighbourhood walks, worked in the neighbourhood
39 office, co-organised a resident meeting, and participated in an executive meeting.
40 Together with a professional editor, I turned the evaluation into a neat-looking
41 booklet for further distribution. Publication was deferred for several months
42 because I had to revise it in response to protests by a few stakeholders against its
43 contents, format and process.
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
- 51 2. *Co-organising a cleaning event* together with residents of the neighbourhood in
52 which the third BPT operated was different to the intervention my collaborators and
53 I had initially planned. Our plan was to co-organise an innovative initiative that
54 would help to uncover and address organisational resistances to new ways of
55 engaging with anti-social behaviour on the main square. However, this turned out
56 to be too big of a step in light of the dynamics of the neighbourhood. Over a period
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 of 2.5 months, I discovered what to do instead by meeting with various active
4 residents five times, co-organising four community engagement activities, going on
5 neighbourhood walks, participating in three team evaluation meetings, conducting
6 two in-depth interviews with active residents and taking 258 pictures of litter on the
7 main square. The resulting cleaning event for students of the local elementary
8 school was such a success that it became a regular event aimed at triggering wider
9 community engagement.

- 10
11
12
13
14
15 3. *Conducting a 'needs analysis' with a multi-agency team of youth workers* was
16 supposed to improve their abilities to engage with youngsters in a disadvantaged
17 neighbourhood, as well as embed the BPT approach within and across the
18 stakeholders in the absence of a BPT in this area. For three months, I closely
19 collaborated with the team leader, had five meetings with his managers and other
20 stakeholders, participated in six team meetings, went on five neighbourhood walks,
21 conducted two in-depth interviews with youngsters, co-organised a focus group
22 with fifteen youngsters and composed the final report based on team members'
23 daily reports. I facilitated the team in letting go of their pre-structured approach and
24 adopting a BPT approach of having open-ended conversations and interpreting
25 youngsters' stories. Despite many resistances along the way, it led to a shared view,
26 practice and collaborative commitment, as well as wider learning through a
27 reflective report (also turned into a professional booklet) and a 'whole-system-in-
28 the-room' workshop I co-organised several months later.

29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41 After four months of fieldwork, I organised four co-inquiry meetings with my core
42 collaborators over the course of eight months to evaluate the research approach, findings and
43 implications, and sustain the transformative trajectory of learning and change created through
44 the immediately generated activities, workshops, reports and collaborative processes. While all
45 collaborators and several policy-makers unequivocally praised the usefulness and impact of
46 my research on the short to medium term, it has not prevented that the BPTs have ceased to
47 operate—I will return to this issue in the conclusion.

48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60
The next sections explain the four research practices of my relational theory/methods
package (see table 1) and reflect on their wider implications. I defined and developed these
research practices through a grounded theory analysis (Charmaz, 2006) of my written field
notes (two notebooks), transcribed research diary (34 pages) and memos (four documents of in
total 160 pages). I coded these documents based on an open-ended, abductive approach that
was not guided by a priori concepts. I labelled pieces of data (meaning units) with active and

1
2
3 evocative codes that both captured the concrete issues described and broader patterns, issues
4 and themes. Coding generated 19 initial codes, which I narrowed down, synthesised and refined
5 through memo-writing and theoretical sampling, including an iterative review of practice
6 theory and action research literature. I present these practices separately, illustrated by one
7 critical example, even though in practice they strongly overlap.
8
9

10
11
12
13 [TABLE 1 HERE]
14
15

16 17 **Doing things together**

18
19 *Doing things together* is an ongoing process of performatively learning about (how to relate
20 to) the issues, people and relationships constituting urban governance, with the purpose of
21 identifying where and how to promote change.
22
23
24

25
26 By participating in the BPTs I constantly engaged in seemingly random activities. I
27 drove a borrowed scooter through the pouring rain from one meeting to the next, picked
28 up garbage in the streets, did dishes, fixed a skipping rope, cooked for eight people,
29 used a cargo bike, helped moving office, made tea and coffee, and played street soccer.
30 I was constantly doing things, scooting off from one thing to the next, racing on my
31 bike, or making some quick notes in the tram. All kinds of small things had to be quickly
32 arranged in response to sudden issues that popped up. ... I could hardly keep up, let
33 alone change something. Team members would often rapidly exchange detailed
34 knowledge, not talking about “the group of problematic youth” in general but “*that* boy
35 with *those* brothers, going to *that* school, with *these* parents, where *these* interventions
36 haven’t worked.” (research diary, November 2013)
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45

46
47 This experience of feeling both adrift and productive is part and parcel of *legitimate*
48 *peripheral participation* (Lave and Wenger, 1991). A practice cannot be known or changed
49 from the outside but only performatively (Ison et al., 2014; Law, 2004; Cook and Wagenaar,
50 2012). By participating in it, we gradually learn what is going on and what should be done
51 differently. Entering a new environment is a socio-spatial process in which the initial
52 experience of ‘strangeness’ turns into a sense of belonging and identity the more we (learn how
53 to) interact with others and concrete situations (Brown and Duguid, 1991; Wenger, 1998). This
54 is not a comfortable tag along; it involves grasping, participating in and trying to change
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 practices as they are relationally (re)produced in open-ended situations rapidly unfolding
4 beyond our control (Cook and Wagenaar, 2012).
5

6
7 The overwhelming, interactive and improvised nature of participating in a previously
8 unbeknown practice is a familiar theme in participatory ethnography (Cerwonka and Malkki,
9 2007). In action research, doing things together creates shared views, experiences, language
10 and trust *with the intentionality to find ways to assist in and promote change*. This *co-*
11 *generative learning* (Greenwood and Levin, 2007: 66, 134) is a deliberate yet emergent strategy
12 for developing joint readings of unfolding events and crystallising where to intervene and how
13 to give shape to change. It produces immediate actionable understandings by creating a
14 reservoir of places, names, experiences and stories for saying meaningful things as well as a
15 range of practices and artefacts for effectively intervening in situations.
16
17

18
19 By doing things together, I quickly came to appreciate the high-paced, varied and
20 unpredictable nature of the BPTs' practice as the key focus for promoting change. While the
21 BPTs demonstrated the ability to respond to the multifaceted and evolving dynamics of local
22 spaces, as required for area-focused working, to many local actors it was unclear what the BPT
23 approach exactly was and how it worked. Doing things together enabled me to empathise with
24 these actors; sometimes I too felt the urge to resort to more conventional, structured and safe
25 ways of working (in my case non-participant research methods) because there was so much
26 going on and to get comfortable with. And so, rather than casting the research in dichotomising
27 'they do not understand us' terms, I coproduced interventions targeted at three key tensions
28 (see previous section) that sustained unproductive relational dynamics between the BPTs and
29 other local actors.
30
31

32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 **Animating fleeting feelings**

44 *Animating fleeting feelings* means undergoing a wide range of positive and negative emotions
45 and turning these into occasions for mutual learning and change.
46
47
48

49
50 After I circulated the first draft of the team evaluation, two planners tried to block its
51 publication with harsh qualifications like "untrue", "worthless", and "unprofessional".
52 This caused me significant stress, anxiety and resentment and it took me considerable
53 effort not to respond in similar vein or see these statements as personal criticism. I
54 responded respectfully and apologetically, included their experiences and views and
55 explained why I felt certain revisions were not appropriate. As a result, they accepted
56 the final draft, which had also become more nuanced towards 'outsiders'. Upon
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 reflection, I have come to interpret their responses as a defensive coping mechanism to
4 protect their rationalistic planning approach against the innovative BPT approach and
5 evaluation format. I now also appreciate how emotionally charged and power-laden
6 evaluating a SI can be. (research diary, March 2014)
7
8
9

10
11
12 Participating in a practice is not restricted to developing an intellectual grasp but
13 involves *embodied experiences* of the ‘push and pull’ of concrete situations (Wagenaar and
14 Cook, 2011; Wenger, 1998). A practice cannot be engaged in partly; it entails learning how to
15 be a ‘whole person’ in relation to others. That is, our experiences of concrete situations
16 holistically engage our senses, bodily presence, identity, status and competences vis-à-vis
17 others. By animating a range of embodied experiences—doubt, satisfaction, frustration,
18 friendship, anger, energy, exhaustion, amazement, insomnia, stress, etc.—we learn what it
19 takes to move things along, develop relationships (who knows and is good at what, who can I
20 (not) get along with), and handle conflicting interpretations of events.
21
22
23
24
25
26

27
28 It is crucial to use these embodied experiences as “rich points” (Agar, 1996: 31)—
29 signals that something or someone is resisting our knowledge, competences and identity—for
30 mutual reflection, learning and change. Ethnographers have long acknowledged the need to
31 learn from the ways in which their “dramaturgical presence” (Prus, 1996: 107) triggers
32 emotionally charged and power-laden responses (Cerwonka and Malkki, 2007). In action
33 research, fleeting feelings are not just additional resources for better understanding relational
34 dynamics. Action researchers negotiate their abilities to transform relational dynamics by
35 animating embodied experiences with feeling (un)fit, (in)competent and (not) in control. They
36 seek to create space for change in response to the “identity costs” (Wagenaar, 2007: 323) they
37 incur when their role, findings and legitimacy are challenged. By *holistically negotiating their*
38 *positionality*, action researchers strive to strike a balance between nearness and distance to a
39 multiplicity of stakeholders in order to entice all of them to enter into a process of mutual
40 learning and change (Kindon and Pain, 2007; Bartels and Wittmayer, 2018).
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49

50
51 Animating fleeting feelings was fundamental to my ability to coproduce a more
52 inclusive evaluation of BPTs and trigger learning about their relational dynamics. The
53 governance of urban spaces is constituted through a multiplicity of experiential engagements.
54 In this case, the planners had a radically different experience of the BPTs, especially contesting
55 that it was thanks to an intervention by the BPT leader that a conflict they had with residents
56 was resolved. It is tempting to retreat to a defensive posture towards local actors critical of a
57 SI when facing distrust, disregard, criticism or hostility, while in turn feeling appreciated by
58
59
60

1
2
3 and connected to those involved in the SI. But ignoring fleeting feelings would have fuelled a
4 narrow common denominator between the normative orientation of the BPT actors and myself
5 uncondusive to transforming the relational dynamics of evaluating SI.
6
7
8
9

10 **Responding to emergent dynamics**

11 *Responding to emergent dynamics* means adapting the focus, assumptions, methods and
12 findings of the research to emergent needs and unforeseen developments in order to make it
13 more inclusive, usable and, hence, transformative.
14
15
16
17
18

19 My initial plan to co-develop and implement a resident initiative fell flat. It took weeks
20 just to get together with an active resident and we failed to get other residents to get
21 involved in our idea to tackle anti-social behaviour by children on the recently
22 refurbished main square. From subsequent talks with the local elementary school's
23 principal about levels of parent engagement and domestic problems we learned that a
24 cleaning event would be more appropriate to start addressing this. Adapting our
25 ambitions and impact accordingly actually reflected the BPT approach: pragmatically
26 enacting small-scale interventions that accumulate into structural change interwoven
27 with—rather than detached from or imposed on—the texture of the neighbourhood. The
28 cleaning event was a success to those involved, but, based on earlier experiences, the
29 BPT leader and I felt that his line manager would dismiss it as ambiguous and
30 insignificant. (research diary, December 2013)
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40

41 Our hold on practice is inherently provisional and constantly evolving through
42 *dialogical processes* of 'coming to an understanding' (Wagenaar, 2007). While a rationalistic
43 worldview drives us to monologically apply knowledge we 'have' in our minds to concrete
44 situations, taking a practice approach means dialogically adapting our pre-held assumptions,
45 beliefs and knowledge when the situations in which we intervene 'talk back' (Schön, 1983;
46 Brown and Duguid, 1991; Pickering and Guzik, 2008). Dialogical does not imply dyadic; it is
47 multi-directional communication with the diversity of views, experiences, relationships and
48 materials inherent to any practice (Greenwood, 1991).
49
50
51
52
53
54

55 Adapting to sudden turns of events or emergent needs is a common ethnographic
56 strategy (Cerwonka and Malkki, 2007). In action research, "*ongoing and purposive redesign*"
57 (Greenwood and Levin, 2007: 133) is a relational process in which action researchers and
58 stakeholders collaboratively craft interpretations, adapt research methods and stimulate change
59
60

1
2
3 (Kensen and Tops, 2003; Loeber, 2007; Pain and Kindon, 2007). Multiple methods and work
4 forms can be used depending on what knowledge turns out to be needed (Greenwood, 2007;
5 Greenwood and Levin, 2007). However, such responsiveness can also render the research
6 ambiguous to rationalistic actors (for whom research should paint a clear, orderly picture of
7 reality instrumental to their goal achievement), make it dependent on stakeholders with
8 significant hinder power, and limit its scope, pace and impact (Greenwood, 1991; Bartels and
9 Wittmayer, 2014).

15 *Responding to emergent dynamics* meant I repeatedly had to explain to various local
16 actors who I was, why I was doing research and what this meant for them. The case of the
17 resident initiative shows how immediate action can be delayed, and more fundamental change
18 inhibited, by accommodating the views, feedback and consent of various local actors. Urban
19 spaces such as this neighbourhood—with its complex mixture of increasing anti-social
20 behaviour, a refurbished main square, concentrated civic activism, domestic problems and
21 history of youth gangs—are always becoming. By responding to its relational dynamics, SI
22 research can produce insights, experiences and artefacts that actually help to coproduce a
23 transformative trajectory.

32 **Taking many small steps**

34 *Taking many small steps* means very gradually creating a trajectory for transformation and
35 embedding it in practical opportunities for learning and change.

39 After the needs analysis, I wrote a reflective report about our experiences and emailed
40 the executive of one of the youth work agencies about organising a learning workshop.
41 He never replied to me but casually consented to one of my collaborators a few weeks
42 later. Over the next months, I had numerous meetings and email exchanges with three
43 collaborators to prepare the workshop. When the executive realised we were going
44 through with it, he requested to first have a meeting to discuss my report and the
45 necessity of a workshop. This delayed our plans by two months but did get him on-
46 board. And even though it took another two months before I received his input and
47 feedback on the report, he supported its publication and enthusiastically participated in
48 the workshop. Taking such ‘baby steps’ helped to gradually spread the BPT approach,
49 with systemic change lying far beyond the horizon of my research. (research diary,
50 November 2014)

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
A practice does not change by forcing big leaps in a multiplicity of engagements with it, but by facilitating learning in everyone's *zone of proximal development* (Vygotsky, 1978: 86-90): a space of budding but not yet matured development potentialities. A practice is not a coherent and singular entity but an assemblage of a multiplicity of realities (Law, 2004; Law and Singleton, 2014). We might allegedly participate in the same practice but will perform (do, see, feel, value) it in such different ways that we are really not 'doing' the same thing. Incongruent daily routines, frames, moral stances, emotions, identities, etc. trigger (explicit or implicit) misunderstanding, friction or unintended consequences (Wagenaar and Cook, 2003: 164-171). These relational dynamics can only be transformed through *social* interaction with other participants in the practice. This is not a steady accumulation of knowledge but a trajectory of confronting our diverse practical engagements to gradually learn to adopt qualitatively different ones more in tune with one another (Wertsch, 1984).

24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
Facilitating such a transformative trajectory requires that action researchers *keep the conversation going* (Greenwood and Levin, 2007: 72, 133). By having meetings, sending emails, making phone calls and organising activities at various places and points in time, they create handles for next steps. This gradually carves out a trajectory for transformation that includes an increasing multiplicity of stakeholders in mutual learning and change and embeds it in the flow of their everyday practice. Working through the discords of their relational dynamics like this creates "a politics of possibility" (Fraser and Weniger, 2011: 1440). It does not achieve a final resolution but accrues small, yet significant, temporary improvements that accumulate into transformation (Greenwood and Levin, 2007: 61; Wagenaar 2007).

39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60
Taking many small steps is a long and, at times, frustrating process with no guarantees that it will have any effect beyond getting something done there and then. Since I was already responsive to emergent dynamics, it was all the more frustrating when not getting the little help, feedback and cooperation I did ask for. This could be people not responding to emails, not turning up for meetings, not or only half-heartedly doing what was agreed, or posturing with critical-aggressive or vague-hesitative questions. By taking many small steps to organise the workshop, I stimulated local actors entangled in a web of decentralised responsibilities—four youth work agencies, social work, police, neighbourhood management—to start working on ways to address their 'throwntogetherness'. SI research can thus achieve successes that might seem small at the time but actually create a trajectory for transforming relational dynamics.

Conclusion

1
2
3
4
5 This article has explored how researchers can address a fundamental challenge of SI: how to
6 spread and sustain locally successful initiatives in ways that are transformative of urban
7 governance regimes? Transformative ambitions for more just, democratic and sustainable cities
8 are reshaped by the intricate, emergent relational dynamics that constitute local spaces and their
9 governance. Building on relational thinking in urban studies, the relational approach to SI aims
10 to enhance capacities for transforming these relational dynamics by coproducing actionable
11 knowledge with local actors. But more needed to be done to develop its theoretical and
12 methodological foundations for conceptualising, analysing and improving SIs ‘in-the-making’.

13
14
15
16
17
18
19 Therefore, I have developed a relational theory-methods package of practice theory and
20 action research focused on *transforming the relational dynamics of urban governance by co-*
21 *producing immediately usable insights, experiences, and artefacts that create a trajectory of*
22 *learning and change* (see table 1). The notion ‘package’ should not create the impression that
23 it is a neatly wrapped, abstract scheme; it is a strategy quite systematically enacted in various
24 dynamic, interpersonal practices, as well as a stance as the orchestrator of a learning and change
25 process in an emerging context. It provides a bundle of research practices for gradually creating
26 a transformative trajectory for learning and change embedded in the daily practice of SI in
27 urban governance. By doing things together, animating fleeting feelings, responding to
28 emergent dynamics, and taking many small steps, SI researchers can experience everyday
29 resistances to innovation, unearth practical opportunities for change, and stimulate a sequence
30 of proximal learning moments that accumulate into transformation.

31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39 Rather than creating reflective spaces that take local actors out of their daily practice,
40 the distinguishing feature of my relational theory-methods package is that SI researchers take
41 part in the relational dynamics of urban governance and embed a transformative trajectory in
42 the course of local actors’ multiple engagements with its daily practice. An important
43 advantage of this approach is that it produces immediately usable knowledge, actions and
44 artefacts. For instance, besides the multitude of mundane things I did together with local actors
45 to address specific situations, my evaluation helped to extend a BPT’s mandate and became a
46 resource of wider legitimacy and learning; my efforts at co-organising a resident initiative
47 fostered joint reflection on how to engage with the neighbourhood; and the ‘needs analysis’
48 activities, reports and workshop created a shared view, practice, commitment and learning
49 (Bartels, 2016, 2017, 2018).

50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60 My approach does not negate the need for reflective spaces; a key issue for further
developing the relational approach to SI is how to link systemic learning and everyday practice

1
2
3 (Greenwood and Levin, 2007; Ison et al., 2014; Wittmayer et al., 2014; Frantzeskaki and Rok,
4 2018). Another issue to explore is what timescale is conducive to transformative change; my
5 research project turned out to be too short to sustain the transformative trajectory it generated.
6
7 It is also advisable to better include the voice of local actors in research reports and publications
8 than I have admittedly done in this paper (for one possible approach, see Bartels and
9 Wittmayer, 2018). A final lesson is that SI researchers need to critically reflect on ways to
10 balance their inevitable tendency to share a normative orientation with SI actors with the need
11 to be inclusive of other local actors resistant to SI. Further unpicking the relational nature of
12 researching SI along these lines will be key to supporting transformative change in cities.
13
14
15
16
17
18
19

20 **Note**

21
22 ¹ Classical pragmatism is a stream of philosophy that understand the world in terms of human
23 experience in association with others and the ability to exercise practical judgment while
24 engaging in concrete situations (Healey, 2009). Practice theory and action research have both
25 been influenced by this experiential and relational worldview (see Cook and Wagenaar, 2012;
26 Greenwood and Levin, 2007).
27
28

29
30 ² The BPTs originated from the innovative efforts of a public safety officer, policy advisor and
31 consultant who got charged with resolving alarming youth work problems that emerged in City
32 District West.
33
34
35
36

37 **Acknowledgements**

38
39 I have hugely benefited from feedback by Hendrik Wagenaar and Davydd Greenwood on
40 earlier drafts. I am grateful to three anonymous reviewers and the Editor for their
41 exceptionally supportive and constructive comments. Finally, I am indebted to all research
42 participants, especially to Martien van Rijn, May-Britt Jansen, Joep van Egmond, Ron de
43 Groot and Enrico Kruidenhof for their extensive support.
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

References

- Agar MH (1996) *The Professional Stranger. An Informal Introduction to Ethnography*. Bingley: Emerald
- Aiken GT (2017) Social innovation and participatory action research: A way to research community? *European Public & Social Innovation Review* 2(1): 17-33.
- Bartels KPR (2012) The actionable researcher: Cultivating a process-oriented methodology for studying administrative practice. *Administrative Theory and Praxis*, 34(3), 433–455.
- Bartels KPR (2016) Doing what's necessary: How encounters in practice shape and improve interactive governance work. In Edelenbos J and Van Meerkerk I (eds) *Critical Reflections on Interactive Governance*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, pp. 352-375.
- Bartels KPR (2017) The double bind of social innovation: Relational dynamics of change and resistance in neighbourhood governance. *Urban Studies*, 54(16), 3789-3805.
- Bartels KPR (2018) Collaborative dynamics in street level work: Working in and with communities to improve relationships and reduce deprivation. *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*,
- Bartels KPR and Wittmayer JM (2014) Symposium introduction: How usable knowledge means in action research practice. *Critical Policy Studies*, 8(4): 397-406.
- Bartels KPR and Wittmayer JM (eds) (2018) *Action Research in Policy Analysis. Critical and Relational Approaches to Sustainability Transitions*. London: Routledge.
- Blanco I, Griggs S and Sullivan H (2014) Situating the local in the neoliberalisation and transformation of urban governance. *Urban Studies*, 51(15): 3129–3146.
- Blanco I and León M (2017) Social innovation, reciprocity and contentious politics: Facing the socio-urban crisis in Ciutat Meridiana, Barcelona. *Urban Studies* 54(9): 2172–2188.
- Blokland T 2017. *Community as Urban Practice*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Brown JS and Duguid P (1991) Organizational learning and communities-of-practice: Toward a unified view of working learning and innovation. *Organization Science* 2(1): 40-57.

- 1
2
3 Bueger C (2014) Pathways to practice: Praxiography and international politics. *European*
4 *Political Science Review* 6: 383-406.
5
6
7
8 Burns D (2014) Systemic action research: Changing system dynamics to support sustainable
9 change. *Action Research* 12(1): 3-18.
10
11
12 Cerwonka A and Malkki LH (2007) *Improvising Theory. Process and Temporality in*
13 *Ethnographic Fieldwork*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
14
15
16 Charmaz, K (2006) *Constructing Grounded Theory. A Practical Guide through Qualitative*
17 *Analysis*. London: Sage.
18
19
20
21 Cook SDN and Wagenaar H (2012) Navigating the eternally unfolding present: Toward an
22 epistemology of practice. *The American Review of Public Administration* 42(1): 3-38.
23
24
25 Cornwall A (2004) Introduction: New Democratic Spaces? The Politics and Dynamics of
26 Institutionalised Participation. *IDS Bulletin* 35(2): 1-10.
27
28
29 Domanski D and Kaletka C (eds) (2017). *Exploring the Research Landscape of Social*
30 *Innovation*. Dortmund: Sozialforschungsstelle.
31
32
33
34 Erickson F (2011) A history of qualitative inquiry in social and educational research. In: NK
35 Denzin and Lincoln YS (eds) *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. London:
36 Sage, pp. 43-59.
37
38
39
40 Frantzeskaki N and Rok A (2018) Co-producing urban sustainability transitions knowledge
41 with community, policy and science. *Environmental Innovation and Societal*
42 *Transitions*, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eist.2018.08.001>
43
44
45
46 Fraser J and Weninger C (2008) Modes of engagement for urban research: enacting a politics
47 of possibility. *Environment and Planning A* 40: 1435-1453.
48
49
50 Gemeente Amsterdam (2013) *Gebiedsgericht werken: een kwestie van dóen [Area-focused*
51 *working: a matter of doing]*. Amsterdam.
52
53
54 Gherardi S (2012) *How to Conduct a Practice-based Study. Problems and Methods*.
55 Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
56
57
58
59
60

- 1
2
3 Greenwood DJ (1991) Collective reflective practice through participatory action research: A
4 case study from the Fagor cooperatives of Mondragón. In Schön D (ed) *The Reflective*
5 *Turn. Case Studies in and On Educational Practice*. New York/London: Teachers
6 College Press, pp. 84-107.
7
8
9
10
11 Greenwood DJ (2007). Pragmatic action research. *International Journal of Action Research*
12 3(1+2): 131-148.
13
14
15 Greenwood DJ and Levin M (2007) *Introduction to Action Research: Social Research for*
16 *Social Change*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
17
18
19
20 Grin J (2018) Stasis and change. In: *Handbook on Policy, Process and Governing*, edited by
21 HK Colebatch and R Hoppe. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, pp. 418-437.
22
23
24
25 Grin J, Rotmans J and Schot J (2010) *Transitions to Sustainable Development: New Directions*
26 *in the Study of Long Term Transformative Change*. London: Routledge.
27
28
29
30 Hargreaves T, Longhurst N and Seyfang G (2013) Up down round and round: connecting
31 regimes and practices in innovation for sustainability. *Environment and Planning A* 45:
32 402-420.
33
34
35
36 Haxeltine A, Pel, B, Wittmayer J, et al (2017) Building a middle-range theory of transformative
37 social innovation. Theoretical pitfalls and methodological responses. *European Public*
38 *& Social Innovation Review* 2(1): 59-77.
39
40
41
42 Healey, P (2007) *Urban Complexity and Spatial Strategies. Towards a Relational Planning for*
43 *Our Times*, New York, Routledge.
44
45
46
47 Healey, P (2009) The pragmatic tradition in planning thought. *Journal of Planning Education*
48 *and Research*, 28, 277-292.
49
50
51
52 Howaldt J, Butzin A, Domanski D, et al (2014). *Theoretical Approaches to Social Innovation*
53 *- A Critical Literature Review*. Dortmund: Sozialforschungsstelle.
54
55
56
57 Ison R, Grant A and Bawden R (2014) Scenario praxis for systemic governance: A critical
58 framework. *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy* 32(4): 623-640.
59
60
61
62
63
64
65
66
67
68
69
70
71
72
73
74
75
76
77
78
79
80
81
82
83
84
85
86
87
88
89
90
91
92
93
94
95
96
97
98
99
100

- 1
2
3 Karlsen J and Larrea M (2017) Moving context from the background to the forefront of policy
4 learning: Reflections on a case in Gipuzkoa, Basque Country. *Environment and*
5 *Planning C: Politics and Space*, 35(4): 721–736.
6
7
8
9 Kensen S and Tops PW (2003) Interaction research: Joining persons, theories and practices. In
10 Bogason P, Kensen S and Miller H (eds) *Tampering with Tradition: The Unrealised*
11 *Authority of Democratic Agency*. Lanham: Lexington, pp. 149-171.
12
13
14
15 Khan AZ, Moulaert F and Schreurs J (2013) Epistemology of space: Exploring relational
16 perspectives in planning, urbanism, and architecture. *International Planning Studies*
17 18(3-4), 287-303.
18
19
20
21 Kindon S, Pain R and Kesby M (eds) (2007) *Participatory Action Research Approaches and*
22 *Methods: Connecting People, Participation and Place*. Hoboken: Taylor and Francis.
23
24
25
26 Lave J and Wenger E (1991) *Situated Learning. Legitimate Peripheral Participation*.
27 Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
28
29
30 Law J (2004) *After Method: Mess in Social Science Research*. London: Routledge.
31
32
33 Law J and Singleton V (2014) ANT, multiplicity and policy. *Critical Policy Studies* 8(4): 379-
34 396.
35
36
37 Loeber A (2007) Designing for phronèsis: Experiences with transformative learning on
38 sustainable development. *Critical Policy Studies* 1(4): 389-414.
39
40
41
42 MacCallum D, Moulaert F Hillier J, et al. (2009) *Social Innovation and Territorial*
43 *Development*. Farnham: Ashgate.
44
45
46 Massey D (2005) *For Space*. New York: Sage.
47
48
49 May, T (2017) Urban crisis: Bonfire of vanities to find opportunities in the ashes. *Urban*
50 *Studies* 54(9): 2189–2198.
51
52
53 McCann E (2017) Governing urbanism: Urban governance studies 1.0, 2.0 and beyond. *Urban*
54 *Studies* 54(2): 312-326.
55
56
57
58
59
60

- 1
2
3 Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken (2013) De doe-democratie. Kabinetsnota ter stimulering
4 van een vitale samenleving. [The Do-democracy. White Paper for Stimulating a Vibrant
5 Society.] The Hague: Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken.
6
7
8
9
10 Moulaert F, Martinelli F, Swyngedouw E, et al. (2005) Towards alternative model(s) of local
11 innovation. *Urban Studies* 42(11): 1969–1990.
12
13
14 Moulaert, F., Swyngedouw, E., Martinelli, F, et al (eds.) (2010) *Can Neighbourhoods Save the*
15 *City? Community Development and Social Innovation*. London, Routledge.
16
17
18 Nicolini D (2012) *Practice Theory, Work, and Organization: An Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford
19 University Press.
20
21
22
23 Pain R and Kindon S (2007) Participatory geographies. *Environment and Planning A* 39: 2807-
24 2812.
25
26
27 Paschen J-A and Beilin R (2015) ‘Avoiding the certainty trap’: a research programme for the
28 policy–practice interface. *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy* 33(6):
29 1394-1411.
30
31
32
33 Pel, B, Dorland J, Wittmayer J et al. (2017) Detecting social innovation agency:
34 Methodological reflections on units of analysis in dispersed transformation processes.
35 *European Public & Social Innovation Review* 2(1), 110-126.
36
37
38
39 Pickering A and Guzik K (eds) (2008) *The Mangle in Practice. Science, Society, and*
40 *Becoming*. Durham/London: Duke University Press.
41
42
43
44 Prus R (1996) *Symbolic Interaction and Ethnographic Research*. Albany: State University of
45 New York Press.
46
47
48 Reason P and Bradbury H (eds) (2001) *Handbook of Action Research. Participative Inquiry*
49 *and Practice*. London: Sage.
50
51
52
53 Reckwitz A (2002) Toward a theory of social practices: a development in culturalist theorizing.
54 *European Journal of Social Theory* 52: 243-263.
55
56
57
58 Richardson L, Durose C, Perry B (2018) Coproducing urban governance. *Politics and*
59 *Governance* 6(1): 145–149.
60

- 1
2
3 Schatz E (ed) (2009) *Political Ethnography: What Immersion Contributes to the Study of*
4 *Politics*. Chicago IL/London: The University of Chicago Press.
5
6
7
8 Schön DA (1983) *The Reflective Practitioner. How Professionals Think in Action*. New York:
9 Basic Books.
10
11
12 Seyfang G and Haxeltine A (2012) Growing grassroots innovations: Exploring the role of
13 community-based initiatives in governing sustainable energy transitions. *Environment*
14 *and Planning C: Government and Policy* 30(3): 381-400.
15
16
17
18 Shove E (2010) Beyond the ABC: climate change policy and theories of social change.
19 *Environment and Planning A* 42: 1273-1285.
20
21
22
23 Shove E, Pantzar M and Watson M (2012) *The Dynamics of Social Practice: Everyday Life*
24 *and How it Changes*. London: Sage.
25
26
27
28 Smith A (2007) Translating Sustainabilities between Green Niches and Socio-Technical
29 Regimes. *Technology Analysis & Strategic Management* 19(4), 427–450.
30
31
32
33 Vandebussche L, Edelenbos J and Eshuis J (2017) Pathways of stakeholders' relations and
34 frames in collaborative planning practices: A framework to analyse relating and
35 framing dynamics. *Planning Theory* 16(3): 233-254.
36
37
38
39 Vygotsky LS (1978) *Mind in Society. The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*.
40 Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
41
42
43
44 Wagenaar H (2007) Philosophical hermeneutics and policy analysis: Theory and effectuations.
45 *Critical Policy Studies* 1(4): 311-341.
46
47
48
49 Wagenaar H and Cook SDN (2003) Understanding policy practices: Action, dialectic, and
50 deliberation in policy analysis. In Hajer MA and Wagenaar H (eds) *Deliberative Policy*
51 *Analysis. Understanding Governance in the Network Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge
52 University Press, pp. 139-171.
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60 Wagenaar H and Cook SDN (2011) The push and pull of the world: How experience animates
practice. *Evidence & Policy: A Journal of Research Debate and Practice* 7(2): 193-
212.
- Wenger E (1998) *Communities of Practice* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

1
2
3 Wertsch JV (1984) The zone of proximal development. Some conceptual issues. In Rogoff B,
4 and Wertsch JV (eds) *Children's Learning in the 'Zone of Proximal Development'*. *New*
5 *Directions for Child Development*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
6
7

8
9 Wittmayer JM, Schöpke N, Van Steenberghe F et al. (2014) Making sense of sustainability
10 transitions locally: how action research contributes to addressing societal challenges.
11 *Critical Policy Studies* 8(4): 465-485.
12
13

14
15 Wittmayer JM, Pel B, Bauler T et al (2017a) Editorial synthesis: Methodological challenges in
16 social innovation research. *European Public & Social Innovation Review* 2(1): 1-16.
17
18

19 Wittmayer JM, Hölscher K, Wunder S et al. (2017b) Transformation Research. Exploring
20 Methods for an Emerging Research Field. Dessau-Roßlau: Umweltbundesamt.
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

Table 1. A relational theory/methods package for SI research

Relational practices	Practice theory	Action research
Doing things together	Legitimate peripheral participation	Co-generative learning
Animating fleeting feelings	Embodied experience	Negotiating holistic positionality
Responding to emergent dynamics	Dialogical understanding	Ongoing and purposive redesign
Taking many small steps	Zone of proximal development	Keeping the conversation going