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**Participatory SWOT-analysis for the spatial impact study
Railway Zone Breda: a case study**

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Abstract

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Participatory SWOT-analysis for the spatial impact study Railway Zone Breda: a case study (assigned to theme **K**)

This paper on the spatial impact study Railway Zone Breda describes a participatory SWOT-analysis for assessing the impact of a large scale innercity infrastructural project on adjacent residential neighbourhoods in which residents and other stakeholders, policy officials of the municipality of Breda and researchers participated. This large infrastructural project includes the transformation of the present railway station into a shuttle station for the high speed train Amsterdam – Paris.

The redevelopment of the Breda railway station will have undeniable impacts on the adjacent neighbourhoods Belcrum and Spoorbuurt. For this reason the municipality of Breda decided to let the stakeholders in the neighbourhoods participate in the impact analysis. In the research process the emphasis was directed to the question what impacts the renewal could have for these neighbourhoods. The inhabitants and businesses of those neighbourhoods were divided in their opinions and expectations. Some of them mainly saw the positive side - they expected to gain by the new situation - but others stressed the potential dangers of the intended project, pointing at. Hence, the main research objectives were 1) to identify and analyze the current strengths and weaknesses of the neighbourhoods, 2) to foresee / estimate the potential impacts of the large infrastructural transformation and the transformation (building) process on the adjacent neighbourhoods, and 3) to identify the actions needed to maximize the positive effects and minimize the negative effects.

This case study focusses on a participatory policy analysis process (cf. Geurts & Mayer, 1996; Mayer, 1997) in which knowledge generation, exchange and application by the stakeholders mentioned, is combined with expert and practitioner's knowledge to generate new insights. The paper elaborates on how an impact study for a large scale infrastructural and spatial project can be carried out with the aim to maximize the benefits on different levels of scale.

Keywords: Restructuring urban districts, Participatory policy making, Co-production, Knowledge generation, Spatial planning

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Introduction

The stations for the HighSpeedTrain (HST) Amsterdam-Paris, including the stations for the HST-shuttles, have been pointed out in the Netherlands by the national government. They are the so-called *Keyprojects*. The city of Breda has been labeled as a halting-place for a HST-shuttle, based on the advantageous location (between Randstad Holland (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, Utrecht) and the Flemish Diamond (Antwerp, Brussels, Ghent) and it also belongs to one of the national urban networks *BrabantStad* that contains the five biggest cities in the province of North-Brabant – Breda, Eindhoven, Helmond, 's-Hertogenbosch, Tilburg; see figure 1 below). The shuttle is a rapid railway connection from Breda to the nearby HST halting-places in Antwerp and Rotterdam.



Figure 1 – Map of the HST-train route

For the region and for the city of Breda, the transformation of the Railway Zone gives new chances for spatial and economical development and there are also opportunities to realize a more attractive environment for (new) inhabitants and businesses.

To make use of these opportunities the municipality of Breda started their policy process by focusing on building a new Railway Station (including facilities for urban and regional public transport), offices, residences and service facilities. The regional and urban importance of the Railway Zone Breda has the most direct effect on the adjacent residential neighbourhoods. This will for instance come forward through the new infrastructure and the more intensive traffic use in and around the future station. This means that there should be explicit attention for the chances that the transformation of the Railway Zone offers for the local stakeholders in the adjacent neighbourhoods and how they can gain from the regional and urban ambitions for the Railway Zone Breda.

It is clear that of course the inhabitants of the neighbourhoods Belcrum and Spoorbuurt (Railway district; see picture below) are quite eager and alert to know about what is happening in their surroundings. During the process the inhabitants of the neighbourhoods and other stakeholders have requested to participate in the search for possible positive and negative impacts that will become reality through the transformation and building process. Due to the requests the municipality of Breda decided to start a special study that should give information to make an impact assessment.



Figure 2 – An aerial view on the Railway Zone Breda

The aim of this paper is to describe the participatory SWOT-analysis for the spatial impact study Railway Zone Breda. The paper gives insight in the question how the different (spatial) interests of the various stakeholders and levels (local, urban, regional) can be brought together to focus on a future implementation on behalf of the policy making process that takes place in a local community network. In the paper we elaborate on how an impact study for a large scale infrastructural and spatial project can be carried out with the aim to maximize the benefits on different levels of scale.

This paper is organized as follows. After this introduction we start in section 1 with describing the context of the study to structure the complexity. In section 2 the starting point of the study is presented. Section 3 gives the outline of the four angles that the study consisted of. In section 4 we focus on the consumers view and the interactive approach that was taken up. The participation of consumers was structured by a SWOT-analysis. The outcome of the participatory process is described in section 5. The process function has been an important element in the study (see section 6). Especially the integration and connection of the Railway Zone project Breda with the adjacent neighbourhoods was challenging, see section 7. In the final section (no. 8) we bring the paper to an end by presenting some conclusions on the management of complexity of the Railway Zone project Breda.

1. Spatial planning and research: the assignment to structure the complexity

The (spatial) planning of the Railway Zone Breda is a very complex issue. It concerns the exploitation and the maintenance of the project when it has been finalized, but also the development process of the project is complex. The complexity is revealed on different spatial and governmental levels. On one end you find the national level (where the project of the Railway Zone has been labeled as a Keyproject) and through the regional and urban level you arrive at the local level, the neighbourhoods.

The ambition of the Dutch national government is to encourage the national economy. To realize their ambition, the national government gives financial support to projects that match the goals of economical development, accessibility, vitality and intensive land use. Next to the Railway Zone in Breda, also other stations in cities with a HST-connection are selected (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, Utrecht, Arnhem).

The municipality of Breda considers the transformation of the Railway Zone to be an opportunity to expand and become an Euregional business centre. Since Breda will have a good accessibility because of the connection to the HST, the Railway Zone is suitable for

localizing the (main) offices of companies that are focused on Europe or the Benelux. But also other companies that attract visitors, for instance locations for education and congress facilities, can be situated in the Railway Zone.

To describe the ambitions of both neighbourhoods is quite a difficult task. The 'neighbourhood' consists of a wide range of stakeholders, for instance the inhabitants, entrepreneurs, shop-owners and housing associations. They have a different view on their surroundings and the quality of the spatial environment. It is almost not possible to formulate a complete and positive ambition, but more general terms as 'improving the quality of life' and 'conservating / strengthening the housing function' are applicable.

Next to the different levels of scale the diversity of (policy) themes that the spatial planning influences, also contributes to the complexity of the project. The way in which the project will be structured, influences the future physical and spatial structure, the traffic situation, the environment, the living climate, the employment, the quality of life and the safety in and around the new Railway Zone, the adjacent neighbourhoods and the city as a whole. Because of the size and scale of the project and the location where the project is situated (in the innercity), the development process will also become quite complex. To let the building activities have a minimum of hindrance, an extra effort will be necessary from both the management of the project, the coordinator of the building process and the caretaking of the building sites.

A complicating factor at the same time in this ambitious project is the interdependence between the different levels of scale. It is possible that a (positive) facility on one level will have negative consequences on the other. This mechanism of aversion between levels of scale is a great threat to the success of the project as a whole. To illustrate this, the new Railway Zone can be seen as to realize the national and regional ambitions, but if this has a negative impact on the quality of life in the neighbourhoods, the city of Breda in total will not have any benefit from the transformation. To prevent that aversion takes place, measures should be taken that have a positive impact on all the levels of scale (or at the least do not have negative impacts). During the spatial planning on the different levels this can be taken into account by defining compensating or supplementary measures for the 'effected' levels. The municipality of Breda has tried to do this by giving the neighbourhoods the room to make their own 'neighbourhood plans'. A neighbourhood plan focuses on the development in the next ten years in a certain neighbourhood. The development and exploitation of the Railway Zone will

have a big impact on the adjacent neighbourhoods and this implicates that the sight of the neighbourhoods will change drastically within ten years. Adding new functions and / or strengthening the existing functions should be seen as a 'mega incident' for both neighbourhoods. A neighbourhood plan should give the neighbourhoods the opportunity to apply the chances and to restrain or compensate the threats. In a neighbourhood plan is written how the neighbourhood will develop in the next ten years (scenario) and what measures are necessary to realize this (policy).

2. Exploring the impact is looking forward

During the start of the research, august 2000, a global working programme for the Railway Zone was available. A final architectural design was not yet made and a diverse number of studies were in preparation. At this time the municipality decided, based on the request of the inhabitants of the adjacent neighbourhoods, that it was useful to start an impact study in an early stage. The outcome of the impact study could give additional and early insight in the further development of the spatial planning in all its diversity.

The concept status of the plans and documents had as a consequence that the study was placed in a rather abstract and virtual position. After all, how can you give an overview of the impact of a project that has only been presented from a global point of view. Next to that the negotiations between the different parties like the national government, the Dutch Railway Organization (an extensive organization), the province and the municipality were still ongoing. So the final decision-making still had to take place?! This is a difficult, but not an impossible case. Even though the exact knowledge on what will be situated were is not yet clear, in what form or volume, their definitely were possibilities to talk about the impact of the project on the adjacent neighbourhoods. In this case there was clarity about what functions would be added or strengthened, what physical and spatial structure is desired and what the development of the traffic structure will be. This is enough information to identify the main opportunities and threats.

The impact assessment has had an explorative character. The exploration gives the municipality of Breda more feeling to what 'all of the issues' are that should be taken into account during the development process and after fulfilling the new station. What opportunities are there for the city as a whole, especially for the neighbourhoods? And what are the threats that can be expected? On one hand this information gives the opportunity to actually make use of the strong points of the underlying plans or to strengthen them. On the

other hand there are pitfalls that can be avoided and inevitable negative impacts can be restrained as much as possible by compensation or supplementary policy.

Because of the explorative character of the study it is a fact that a lot of the experienced impacts on the neighbourhood level are subjective and can not be compared. This though is not an objection to collect the information necessary. It gives a perspective on the variety in perspectives from the local stakeholders. This however does mean that it is impossible to give a consistent and unisonous view of the perspective of the neighbourhoods. There will also be impacts that are not specific for the local level (neighbourhood). A lot of positive effects that are connected to the Keyproject are assigned to the urban and regional level. The effects have an impact on abstract themes, and are not necessarily connected to the local level. The themes that are mentioned are: regional competition, 'links and connections' in international networks of infrastructure and the location of business. To tackle all the relevant impacts the study was filled in with a multi-perspective approach.

3. Perspectives of a complex case: four angles

The impact study on the case has been performed from four angles: an applied scientific view, a benchmark view, a view in accordance with policy and from a view of the consumers.

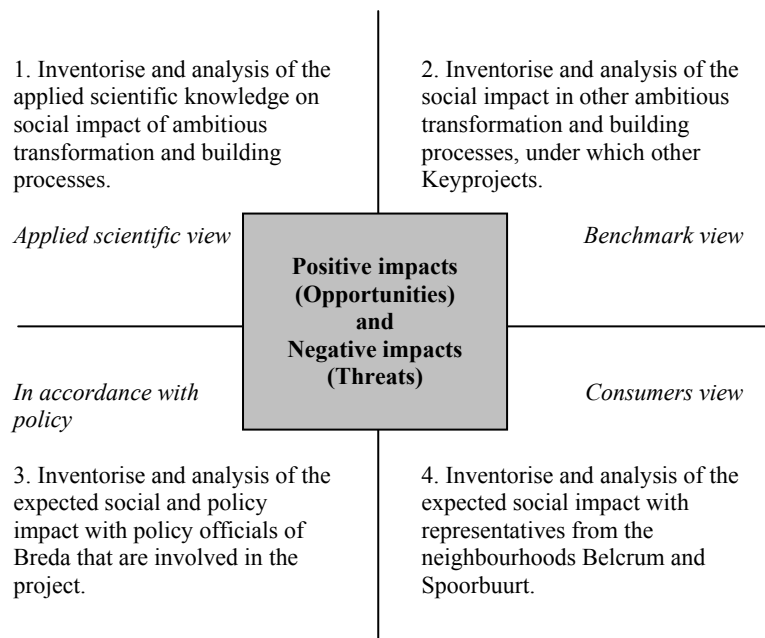


Figure 3 – The four angles of the study

The applied scientific view had a function as a frame of reference for the impact study and consisted of a study on literature. This study was focused on publications that handle on the impacts of redevelopment and transformation processes in innercity areas, mainly of Railway locations. The benchmark has been carried out through eight interviews with officials and stakeholders (in neighbourhoods). They were connected to the redevelopment of the Railway areas in four other municipalities: The Hague, Arnhem (both Keyprojects), 's-Hertogenbosch and Leiden. Next to that relevant and current (communal) plans of these projects have been studied. The view in accordance with policy contained of two workshops with the policy officials of Breda that were involved in the project. The goal of the workshops was to examine which (policy) impacts are to be expected from the redevelopment operation. Finally the project group held four interactive sessions (workshops) in the neighbourhoods and an amount of meetings with representatives of both neighbourhoods Belcrum and Spoorbuurt. In this way the perspective from the neighbourhoods had a prominent place in the exploration of the possible impacts.

4. The consumers view: an interactive approach

In Europe quite some innovations have taken place on planning methods concerning railway infrastructure and redevelopment of stations. There is a broad acceptance in the science of public management and policy that interactive policy making is more successful than the traditional way of planning projects, but still planning processes stay unpredictable. It is therefore an interactive process in which individuals, groups and other stakeholders are dynamic in their dimensions and point of view. During the redevelopment of the King's Cross station in London the inhabitants of the Railway Zone for instance passed by their own local authority to directly interact with the owner and developers of the area (Newmann and Thornley 1996, p.140-141). Bertolini and Spit (1998, p.84) mention a few efforts to create an internal and external quality in the planning process of Euralille (the TGV-station in the northern French city, Lille): 'To create as well cohesion as to guarantee support and acceptance by external interests, innovative negotiation and communication instruments were invented and implemented. These innovations were: quality groups in Japanese style, gauging opinions with the local population, discussion panels and public conferences with experts.' The social acceptance of spatial investments (see for instance OECD 2000), i.e. legitimacy, is mainly focused on interests. To create understanding, acceptance and possible support different instruments are used, like meetings between investing parties and information meetings (in which for instance also experts participate) specifically for the stakeholders.

These are ways of connecting the interactive policy making to specific spatial investment project.

One of the bottlenecks that perform at redevelopment of Railway Zones is that it can be reacted on in two ways: the stakeholders see chances for an upgrading of their direct living surroundings, but they can also define the high ambitions as to be a threat for the current social environment. The sense of involvement that the ‘station neighbours’ have, is encouraged by giving their desires a place in (the process of) the project.

Another bottleneck is that the ambition level and the pursued value of the redevelopment often isn’t connected to the daily life of the citizens. Miscommunication (‘they won’t listen to us’) and opposition during the realization of the project can be the consequence. Interactive policy making can prevent the divergence of the different ambition and planning levels. In the process management it is necessary to have an open dialogue in order to make steps forward in the planning process.

5. The outcome of the workshops: an interactive spatial SWOT-analysis

Measurement of the start-situation and the impact study are the two components of the overall SWOT-analysis. The impact study gives an overview of the future positive and negative impacts of the Railway Zone project in opportunities and threats for both neighbourhoods. The measurement of the start-situation presents the current situation in the neighbourhoods in strengths and weaknesses. The next figure gives an overview of the total SWOT-analysis:

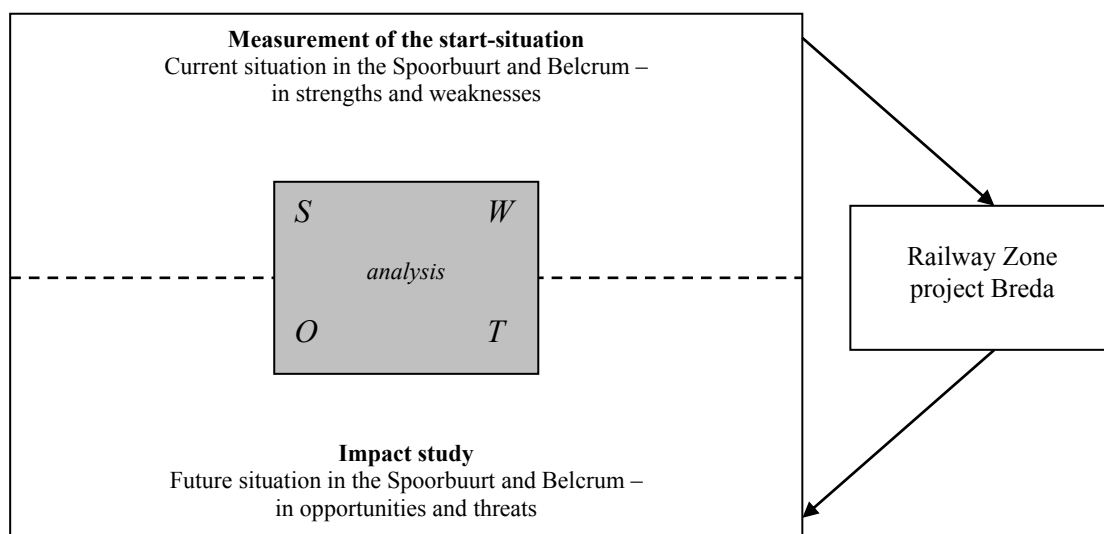


Figure 4 – The SWOT-analysis in relation to the Railway Zone project Breda

The goal of the impact study is to estimate what the possible positive and negative impacts are of the Railway Zone project. And also in what way the project can contribute in strengthening the actual situation in the neighbourhoods: reinforce the strengths and contribute to preventing and fix the weaknesses. The relation between the current situation, the intervention by the Railway Zone project and the future situation can be visualized as follows:

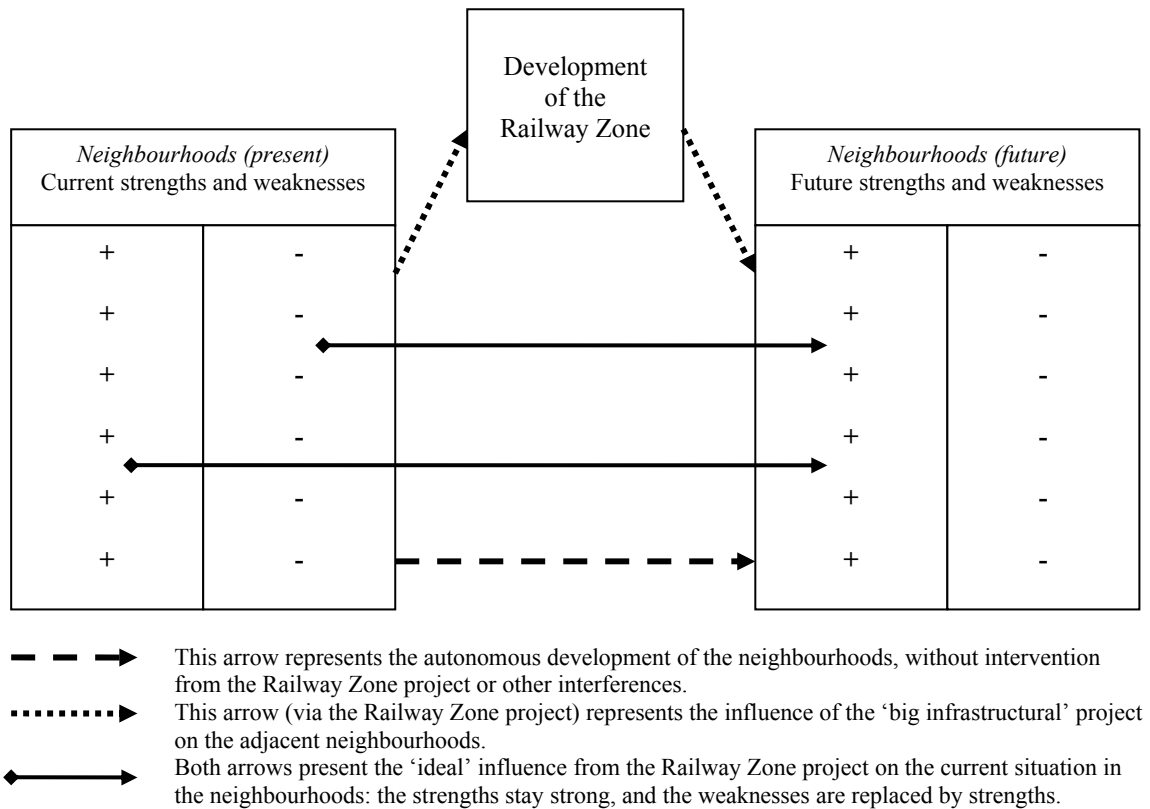


Figure 5 – The relation between the current and future situation in the neighbourhoods

Impacts on the neighbourhoods

In the discussions and workshop the neighbourhoods addressed four main issues that needed to be taken up. In the first place the *physical integration*. An explicit choice should be made as to how the integration of the new Railway Zone will connect to the adjacent neighbourhoods in the new design. The project definitely needs to be put in a wider perspective. By integrating the station with the neighbourhoods this has advantages for instance by making connections to the already existing

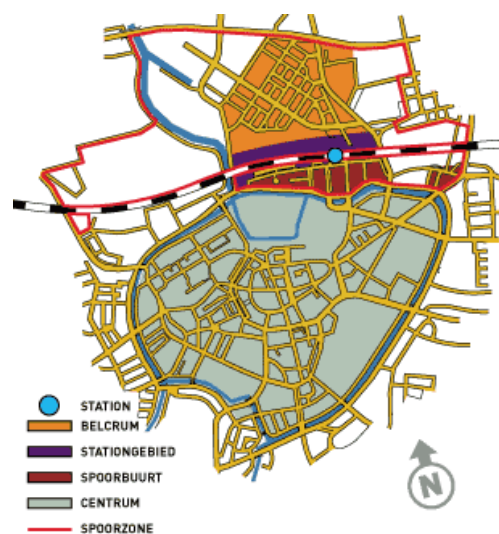


Figure 6 – Overview of the Railway Zone and its neighbourhoods

routes and current services, that are already functional for the neighbourhoods. It also has implications for the relation that the new design of the Railway Zone has with its surroundings.

The project must be seen as a whole and not as a total of bits and pieces. If it is a whole it will give a strengthening link to the different elements. In fact the spatial quality of the area is the main goal, that will be improved and there are enough chances and opportunities that the development of the Railway Zone brings forward.

In the second place the *functional integration* is important. The neighbourhoods are or will be, certainly after completion of the Railway Zone, desired living areas. Since there is a possibility to create more expensive residences it is important to protect the wide range and differentiation of living environments in the area. This implicates that the total project area (Railway Zone, Belcrum and Spoorbuurt) needs to have a differentiated population as is the case now. Next to that it is important to give attention to the living desires of the population that is getting older.

If there will be a successful spatial and economical development in the area of the Railway Zone the area will be an attractive settling area for new businesses and citizens.

The Railway Zone will be an important visiting card for the city and is also determined by the quality of the adjacent areas. The intensive use of the area will have high demands on the level of maintenance. This quality will also need to continue in the adjacent neighbourhoods. The charisma will be an important issue.

The 'social' safety in the area is also a point of attention. New offices in the area will implicate a 'spooky' location in the evenings. There must be enough 'evening functions' in the area to enlarge the social safety. For instance situating cultural and leisure services in the area will attract people after working time. In this way the Railway Zone will always be a dynamic area.

In the third place they mentioned the procedures concerning the *traffic flow*. The traffic occupation in the project area will increase. If the traffic is to be resisted in the neighbourhoods, the inhabitants need not to be the victim of the new situation. Also the safety of the inhabitants must be guaranteed. A consequence is also that the parking needs to be regulated and rules need to be maintained. The inhabitants of the area need to receive an easy and cheap solution for this expected problem.

Interaction between the neighbourhoods will increase, especially when the area is scaled up and new services (care, education and retail) are added. This is directly connected to safe and 'slow' infrastructure routes (for walking and cycling) that can be seen as safe routes within the neighbourhoods. Vulnerable groups as children, elderly and handicapped need to be the measure in designing these services.

Also the railway traffic is a risk, especially if it concerns riskfull transports. The inhabitants are quite fearful for these transports and suggest that the risks are minimized as much as possible, for instance by having an evacuation plan.

Finally, the *building phase* needs attention. The building process will take quite some time and will cause an amount of hindrance for the adjacent neighbourhoods. By providing clearness on the building method including the compensation of damage or other disadvantages a lot of negative energy can be cut down. By communicating directly and on time the exact hindrance can be forecasted so the inhabitants know what they are up to.

6. The process function of the study: a gain for the neighbourhoods and for the municipality

When the project was granted by the municipality of Breda, they explicitly noted that the stakeholders from both adjacent neighbourhoods needed to be involved during the collection of information. Keep in mind that due to the pressure of the neighbourhoods the municipality decided to give the project concerning the impact study to an external party.

The concern of the neighbourhoods does put forward specific demands to the design of the research. Collecting the information and structuring it needed to be done as open and transparent as possible: the workshops needed to be accessible and also triggering so that all of the stakeholders felt welcome. The participants had to be taken serious and know that their view on the issues was appreciated. Because of this the decision was made to make separate reports for the two neighbourhoods. In the reports the participants should find their own analysis and point of view on the impact of the Railway Zone projects on their own neighbourhood. In this project TNO fulfilled the role of independent intermediary that collected the information, structured it, reported back and translated it to a the bigger context of the 'total' project.

The process function of the impact study was not only presented in the collection of information, but also through the interaction between the municipality and the neighbourhoods. They discussed the ongoing of the project and the results. The municipality

and the neighbourhoods have intensively participated in the study process. During the study they have seen how the outline of the advice came to place and have contributed to sharpen the advices. In this way also the understanding between the parties was strengthened. This has been an important side effect of the study.

In the years before a gap was created between the municipality and the stakeholders from Belcrum and Spoorbuurt. They had been talking about the Railway Zone for quite some years without a clear result, and that is how the gap was created. Because of all the talking there was a lot of misunderstanding and speculation. The base on which the parties should work on the project was gone. Because of the impact study by TNO, not only did the municipality have useful information, but it also had a function as to break the gap between the municipalities and neighbourhoods. The communication and interaction needs to be continued!

7. The challenge: integration and connecting

An ambitious and complex project as the Railway Zone Breda can be developed in two ways. By putting the Railway Zone in a context and create integration with its surrounding or by appointing the Railway Zone as an island in the existing city. From the beginning the ‘integration model’ was chosen. It was expected that this would give the most additional value to the adjacent neighbourhoods. You can also define it in a more negative way: if the Railway Zone were to be realised as an island the adjacent neighbourhoods would probably have no profit from the new development. The principle of integration for the development and use of the Railway Zone made clear that the project should accurately connect the different levels with their points of view. So for instance the question was asked if the facilities could have a function not only for the city but also for a wider scope. In this way the Railway Zone is not only connected and interesting to the city but also to the region. This meant that the interests of the stakeholders had to be taken into account from a local, but also from a regional and national point of view. The view from the local stakeholders also should be seen as an improvement even though they might not always have a direct link with the Railway Zone; as a whole it can give more basis if it is taken into account.

The challenge was to give the Railway Zone a charisma that served more purposes. It should be an integral and indissoluble part of the existing city concerning the adjacent neighbourhoods, but also in relation to the historical city centre. The project had to be

designed in such a way that the city would embrace it and not reject it. Its part of the city and not an island that no one can be proud of.

The integration principle should focus on the functional programme and on the spatial structure and design. To create integration, special attention is needed concerning these two elements. The two adjacent neighbourhoods, Belcrum and Spoorbuurt, both have their own characteristics, this is connected to the spatial structure and prevailing architecture. Belcrum is a neighbourhood where the centre of gravity is focused on living. There are a lot of big and desired residences in the style of the 1930's. The spatial structure of short asymmetrical streets creates an enclosed and village like atmosphere. The Spoorbuurt is a small neighbourhood in dimension and amount of inhabitants. The neighbourhood has a mixed character, next to residences there are also businesses present, especially in the service sector. The presence of end nineteenth century buildings, relatively big and multilayer complexes and mansion houses, attracts these companies (especially financial advice services and other service providers). The neighbourhood is directly connected to one of the city moats and to the historical city park Valkenburg.

The new station in the Railway Zone should in an ideal situation be connected to both neighbourhoods. Or at least shouldn't be in contrast with the structure and design. It is interesting to create an entrance / exit on both sides of the station that is designed as to have one side that is in a 1930's style (connection with Belcrum) and on the other side an end nineteenth century style (connection with Spoorbuurt). Next to that, the Railway Zone project also needs to be economically profitable.

8. Management of complexity by catching opportunities

What can be learned from the experiences in Breda by others? The Railway Zone project in Breda is special because the municipality wanted insight in the possible impacts on the adjacent neighbourhoods of the large scale infrastructural project in an early stage. Even though it will still take some years before the actual building will start. The case of Breda is less special because it focuses on the definition of a problem concerning a complex decision-making process about the redevelopment of a central urban area.

We will note some crucial elements of the Railway Zone project that describe the management of complexity in the case of the Railway Zone Breda.

The request to give insight in the impacts of the redevelopment on the neighbourhoods and the possibilities to implement opportunities and stand up to the threats.

The residents of the neighbourhoods have a lot of knowledge about their own surroundings. This has had a lot of surplus value when the 'neighbourhood plans' were made. Next to that a lot of information was brought forward about opportunities and threats and what possibilities were seen in what way they could be picked up. Not only the actual results of the study on opportunities and threats, that are documented in a report, are important. In fact, the interaction process with the participants was essential to make the plan work. In this way the gap between the neighbourhoods and the municipality decreased.

The communication will stay a crucial element in the interaction between the municipality and the stakeholders in the neighbourhoods. Through an adequate communication structure the involvement of the stakeholders should be ongoing during the realisation phase. This involvement is necessary also during that phase because the inhabitants are in fact the experts of the Zone. They can identify problems and together with the municipality they may be able to find quick solutions. The study in this way realised a more positive interaction between the municipality and the neighbourhoods, but it is important that this initiative is continued.

There is a great interlocking within the decision-making processes on different levels.

It is inevitable that the decision-making processes on the 'Keyprojects' are interlocked with a lot of other decision-making processes, for instance on the local level in (neighbourhood plans). This is inherent to the Dutch system of decision-making. It has no use to avoid each other and to separate the different paths. The challenge is to connect the processes and the management of the processes to each other. There are a lot of opportunities that are hidden within the tuning of different paths. The best way to handle this complexity is not to deny, but to implement the information within the process.

The ambition of developing a Railway Zone as a crossing point of different scales and levels and connecting this with the adjacent neighbourhoods.

Keyprojects are especially developed from a regional, national and even international perspective. The local perspective is under exposed. The project of the Railway Zone is a good example of connecting the different levels, as noted in the beginning of this paper. The project has a higher goal and is also focussed on uplifting the adjacent neighbourhoods. The Railway Zone is of 'European' importance for the region. But to create spatial quality it is necessary to have a direct link with the local dimension. On this level the quality is defined,

because there is attention for the attractiveness of the surroundings, concerning physical, social, economical and cultural themes. By letting the stakeholders from the adjacent neighbourhoods participate in the process the municipality facilitated their input and it had a place in the broader project. In this way more value is added to the project, and in the future there will be less disturbance because of delay or everlasting procedures. From this case the lesson can be learned that the local perspective gives new and extra opportunities to create spatial quality for the Railway Zone project and the process as a whole.

The study has definitely had a positive impact on the process. Even now, in 2005, the neighbourhoods are still actively participating in the process. The neighbourhood plans have been a good base to continue the participation process. Every year the neighbourhoods make an *annual report*, to update the plans and to do a check on the developments of the Railway Zone in relation to the neighbourhoods. The neighbourhood plans from 2001 are the starting point of the update up till today.

It can be concluded that the Railway Zone is shaped more and more and the neighbourhoods are still a very important participant in the project.

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