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Communities, Heritage and Planning: Towards a Co-Evolutionary Heritage Approach

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ABSTRACT

Community engagement is becoming a key part of heritage management processes. Community-heritage engagement, however, also means that heritage management processes become more dynamic and versatile, as participation and community engagement is often complex, multifaceted, open-ended and unpredictable. This paper introduces a third, more radical perspective on community-heritage engagement, which we coin 'a co-evolutionary heritage approach'. We argue that a co-evolutionary heritage approach is alive to the adaptability, flexibility and complexity that comes with the diversity of heritage valuation by communities.

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Introduction

Nowadays we live in what is called a participatory society (Lovan et al., 2004). In a number of spatial domains, such as in nature preservation, neighbourhood management, and urban development, there is an increased attention to the involvement of stakeholders, including citizens (Allmendinger, 2009; Boonstra, 2015; Edelenbos, 1999; Healey, 2003). Since the management of heritage and the historic environment is more and more seen as an integral part of cities, landscapes, and spatial planning processes (Fairclough, 2008; Janssen et al., 2017), a paradigm-shift towards participatory discourses in heritage management is identifiable. Participation in heritage management is expressed in the context of identity, social inclusiveness, human development and democracy, and openness to diverse interpretations of heritage. There is a broad range of papers on community engagement in the international heritage literature, and the relationship between local communities and official authorities' understanding of heritage (Harvey, 2001; Vecco, 2010; Waterton & Watson, 2010, 2013). Within those papers, the growth in interest and input from non-experts in determining what qualifies as heritage and how it should be dealt with is framed as positive, as it is argued that lay discourses of heritage can emphasize a broader range of meanings (Ludwig, 2016; Mydland & Grahn, 2012), hold the potential to shape social renewal and change (Parkinson et al., 2016), contribute to a more democratic and inclusive notion of heritage (Littler & Naidoo, 2005; Smith, 2006), open up to new perspectives (Dubrow, 1998; Hayden, 1997) and enhance social inclusion (Pendlebury et al., 2004). There are also economic and societal arguments put

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forward for community-heritage engagement, which suggest that heritage management practices based on citizen involvement have a much better chance of longevity, as communities will remain engaged and motivated to participate (Harrison, 2013; Macdonald, 2013; Perkin, 2010).

These observations have been picked up and acknowledged in various governance contexts around Europe, and a call for wider participation in heritage management is increasingly heard in policy making on a national as well as an international level (among others Harvey, 2001; Parkinson et al., 2016; Waterton & Smith, 2010). Prompting a more people-centred approach to heritage can be recognized in a wide range of EU-projects and EU-policy documents. The 'European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018', and its follow-up '2018 Leeuwarden Declaration' for instance, both had a particular emphasis on participatory approaches and flexible processes. The UN's Historic Urban Landscape Approach also focusses on a people-centred approach, as it sees cultural landscapes as a repository of social history and community values. Yet, although this more people-centred approach is acknowledged as legitimate, heritage management in Western (European) countries is still very much focused on the notion of conserving a certain significance in objects – a significance that is either 'found in an objective way' or socially constructed. While the western approach is manifested in the conservation and development of the significance of a material object, it must be remembered that many cultures around the world harbour little consideration for material heritage values, but instead use the monuments to preserve the very spirit they represent (Vecco, 2010).

Despite this increased attention for community-heritage engagement across European contexts and in heritage scholarly debate, we notice that less attention is paid to what this community-heritage engagement means for heritage management approaches. Waterton and Watson (2013) point out that the involvement of communities in heritage management profoundly questions the ideas, constructs, concepts, and levels of abstraction that construct frames through which heritage can be viewed. Accordingly, we question whether current dominant approaches in heritage management are indeed able to accommodate attempts for community-heritage engagement.

In this article, we present a historical overview of current dominant heritage management approaches, in which we distinguish between a heritage-as-object-approach and heritage-as-representation-approach. Based on an analysis of the theoretical assumptions and the subsequent heritage management practices of each approach, we argue that neither of these approaches can really meet the multiplicity and dynamics that community engagement in heritage would require. In order to enhance the diversity, multiplicity and dynamic, we propose a co-evolutionary heritage approach. We link heritage management to currently emerging notions of complexity in spatial planning, of which co-evolution is one promising concept. This paper aims to show that this co-evolutionary heritage approach can overcome some of the limits inherent in the above mentioned approaches, and offer opportunities to foster community-heritage engagement.

Current Dominant Approaches to Heritage

An Object-Oriented Heritage Approach

The management of heritage assets has long been primarily about the conservation or restoration of monuments as influenced by 19th century architects like Ruskin (1849) and Viollet-le-Duc (1858). Indeed, in its original sense, the word 'heritage' was used to describe an

inheritance, such as properties, heirlooms, legacies and values which are handed on from parents to their children (Davison, 2008; Harrison, 2010). The emphasis on inheritance, and the focus on 'things' is important here, as heritage is conceived as a physical object, already assumed valuable, worth preserving from decay (Davison, 2008). In this understanding, heritage is regarded as a property, site, object or structure "with identifiable boundaries that can be mapped, surveyed, and recorded" (Smith, 2006, p. 31). In other words, heritage is seen as something that can be objectively observed, understood, recorded, and dealt with by a heritage expert – by means of classification, listing, maintenance, preservation, and/or promotion. Heritage management approaches based on this object-oriented understanding of heritage operate in the light of threats to heritage; of destruction, loss or decay, with an operational focus on conservation. Indeed, historically, heritage is protected, through the designation of important sites and objects and supported by planning controls over potentially damaging development (Fairclough, 2006). At present, this object-oriented approach – with an emphasis on protection and preservation of inheritance – is a guiding principle for many heritage practitioners.

Various scholars have criticized this 'object' approach for its inability to incorporate the more transitional character of heritage (e.g. Mason, 2004; Thorkildsen & Ekman, 2013). As such, this approach distracts people from the contemporary and creative aspects of culture that could transform heritage (Harrison, 2010). Despite preservation efforts that take on the challenge of preserving intangible heritage, we recognize that this approach is often accompanied by a strong tendency towards safeguarding a physical heritage asset. Yet, this does not mean that other societal or immaterial values are not taken into account. In fact, material heritage objects can be a constitutive part and an expression of identity, pride, sense of place and belonging at different spatial scales (Murzyn-Kupisz & Działek, 2013). We argue that this object-oriented approach is a rather top-down organized, authoritarian approach to heritage, with only limited space for including community's heritage values. As such it disconnects heritage from contemporary social and cultural developments (De Kleijn et al., 2016; Mason, 2004). In fact, communities and other recipients are seen as a passive audience, to whom communication is directed and whose heritage is already defined (Waterton & Watson, 2013). In other words, heritage is prefigured by some – predetermined as ready-made objects and then made selectively available (Crouch, 2010). Communities and their diverse and dynamic understanding of heritage are not incorporated into this landscape. Critics of this approach disapprove of the idea of collecting heritage objects by means of classification, listing and protection – as this way of dealing with heritage is a selective, path-dependent, self-referential process based on homogeneous understandings of heritage, leading ultimately to a culture of loss (among others Harrison, 2013; Hewison, 1987; Smith, 2006; Waterton & Watson, 2013; Wells & Lixinski, 2016). Hence, there is a kind of fixed system of value attribution, in which values are inherent and unchanging. Moreover, this object-oriented heritage approach has an overriding emphasis on materiality and inherent values, and as such, when following this approach, heritage objects easily remain distanced and isolated from societal dynamics.

A Representational Heritage Approach

To overcome criticism of this object-oriented approach, scholars started to put greater emphasis on social processes that relate to heritage. Indeed, in the 1970's and 1980's – as part of a wider debate running through various academic disciplines which shifts the social sciences towards a greater

emphasis on social processes – heritage scholars (such as Hewison, 1987; Lowenthal, 1985, 1998; Samuel, 1994; Wright, 1985) began to focus on the everyday use of heritage in contemporary society by arguing that an object-oriented heritage approach distracted people from engaging with their present and future.

Drawing on these debates, later scholars (among others Graham et al., 2000; Hall, 1999; Harvey, 2001) began to question what heritage actually 'is', and reconceptualised heritage as a social and cultural process. Ashworth (2008) for example, stated that heritage is not an object but "a process and outcome: it uses objects and sites as vehicles for the transmission of ideas in the service of a wider range of contemporary social needs" (pp. 24–25). Attention thus shifted, from a focus on objects towards the modern-day socio-political and cultural process that transforms elements of the past into heritage (Ashworth & Graham, 2005; Graham et al., 2000; Harvey, 2001; Waterton & Watson, 2013). In heritage literature accordingly, scholars shifted attention towards understanding how heritage is constructed (see for example, Felder et al., 2015; Ludwig, 2016). In line with this, heritage practices in most western-European countries shifted from the protection of objects towards a widened scope of heritage approaches. Accordingly, heritage management shifted from expert-led authoritarian procedures towards more inclusive and participative community-led practices (Vecco, 2010).

Although it seems as if this second approach to heritage signifies an opening up to community engagement, it can still be questioned whether it indeed does. In fact, the ways to connect people with heritage, and involve them in the related processes, can vary. One kind of involvement is not necessarily better than the other; sometimes a good and transparent informative function will do, while in other situations co-creative processes or mutual partnerships would best fit community dynamics. Applying community involvement can also be(come) tokenistic, and there are many faux engagements and consultation processes when it comes to heritage and planning where the needs and aspirations of the community itself are not fully addressed (Pendlebury, 2013; Perkin, 2010; Waterton & Watson, 2010). As heritage means different things to different people, contestations in community-heritage engagement are not uncommon. Indeed, by putting a greater emphasis on the social and cultural-political aspects of heritage, differences are highlighted and heritage becomes a source of contestation and differentiation. Acknowledging that heritage exists because people attach value to it (Graham et al., 2000) also means acknowledging that multiple and potentially competing representations of heritage can exist at the same time. Hence, it becomes important "to address the implied questions – who decides what heritage is, and whose heritage it is?" (Graham et al., 2000, p. 24). Seeing heritage as an ongoing process of practices and interactions which continuously shape and reshape the definition of heritage means that heritage is therefore constituted and delineated differently in different discourses (Duineveld et al., 2013; Van Knippenberg et al., 2020). In other words, the process of attributing meaning to heritage is intrinsically embedded within power, and that heritage is therefore defined by power relations. Seeing heritage as a discourse bound up with power, allowed Smith (2006) to observe that not all understandings of heritage are equally represented. Leading on from this the 'constructed' values of heritage also lead to a fixed understanding of heritage – as heritage values are defined when there is an encounter between a person and a heritage object. Whereas the object-oriented approach provided single and fixed solutions, the representational approach would provide a single, agreed upon solution, in which only some (and often dominant) values are incorporated.

The Rise of Complexity in Heritage

Our historical overview of heritage management approaches shows how both the heritage-as-thing and heritage-as-representation approaches have difficulties incorporating community-led understandings of heritage. We argue that one reason for this is that a turn to civic participation and community engagement in spatial domains is inextricably bound up with multiplicity and dynamism. Also within the domain of heritage, this multiplicity and dynamism is being recognized. Ludwig (2016) for instance, argues that heritage means different things, to different people, at different times, and in different contexts. Hence the meaning and value of heritage is continuously defined and redefined in a heterogeneous way so that heritage understandings can change over time (Jones, 2017). Acknowledging this means that a straightforward and universal definition of heritage is no longer valid. Likewise, communities are not just a collection of people. Instead communities can be understood in the way that Waterton and Smith (2010, pp. 8, 9) define them: "Communities thus become social creations and experiences that are continuously in motion, rather than fixed entities and descriptions, in flux and constant motion, unstable and uncertain". Crooke (2008) underlines this as she states that the concept community can be whatever is needed or desired at the time and, even when formed, will adapt to the situation. As a consequence, initiatives coming from communities tend to be rather informally and loosely structured collaborations between citizens, artists, community workers and the like – easily expanding their social, geographical and thematic scope. The intrinsic dynamism and multiplicity of such initiatives is therefore often very much at odds with unilateral definitions or single narratives (Boonstra, 2015; Van Meerkerk, 2014). Accordingly, working with heritage implies ongoing engagement in a field of controversy, potentially conflicting values and varying beliefs and points of view (Thorkildsen & Ekman, 2013).

To address complexity, scholars like Crouch (2015) argue that heritage sites are linked to a deeper mixture of relations with (for instance) other heritage sites as well as previous experiences, memories, feelings and emotions – all wrapped up in our encounters with heritage. By taking this perspective on heritage, scholars like Crouch link heritage back to simply being human and living, so that heritage emerges from the feelings of being, becoming and belonging in the flows and complexities that characterise life (Waterton & Watson, 2013). Jones (2017) called this 'Social value' which is defined as a collective attachment to a place that embodies meanings and values that are important to a community or communities. This is what Mason (2004) called a values-centred theory, one that acknowledges the dynamics of preservation by shifting attention towards a concept of 'significance' that is flexible and multivalent in order to meet the reality of multiple, contested, and shifting values as ascribed to heritage. One way to capture these fluid and dynamic aspects of heritage is by looking at the way heritage is produced, performed and emerging in the embodied and creative uses of heritage generated by people (Haldrup & Bœrenholdt, 2015). Performativity addresses the subjective engagements with things, such as heritage, and the ways in which individuals link this with personal emotions and feelings, and as such it allows us to focus attention on the mechanisms, and their potentiality, through which our perceptions and feelings may work, and may be affected (Crouch, 2015; Haldrup & Bœrenholdt, 2015). Hence, performances are never fixed but depend on situational and relational circumstances. Hayden (1997) underlines this idea of a situational view on heritage and space as she pleas for a 'pace-bound identity' in which people's attachments to places can be material, social, and imaginative.

Case and Methods: The Grünmetropole

We will now introduce a case in order to illustrate how the two dominant heritage management approaches are enacted in ongoing practices of heritage re-use, and how they ran short in accommodating – let alone enhancing – community involvement. We refer to a large scale, regional project for the conversion and re-use of various heritage assets in a former mining area. At the time of implementation of this project (between 2005 and 2008) the promotion of industrial heritage tourism had gained popularity in a number of industrial areas in the European Union (Hospers, 2002), as industrial heritage tourism was seen as an effective means to preserve cultural heritage and save it from degradation for future generations (Szromek et al., 2021). Moreover, Hospers (2002) and Vargas-Sánchez (2015) noted that industrial tourist activities are said to preserve a region's identity and are a helpful tool for regional restructuring as they stimulate the formation of local service activities and employment. Yet in practice, the effects for regional restructuring appeared to be often limited, especially since these projects are normally excessively subjective and dependent on designer's and developer's determination, giving little attention to people's needs and desires (Loures, 2015). To overcome this, Loures (2015) noted that post-industrial land transformation projects should pay more attention to creating a more harmonious relationship between the project and its surroundings, and a better connection with the social and economic interests of the community.

Our case study discusses an example of post-industrial transformation; namely a project called 'The Grünmetropole' that aimed at renewal of a post-industrial landscape, by connecting various local (heritage re-use) projects through the establishment and promotion of two touristic routes across the former mining area in the German-Dutch-Belgian border region. This case study was already predefined within the context of a research-project called OpenHeritage (for a more eleborate description see OpenHeritage, 2019). The applied heritage management approaches in combination with the (lack of) community involvement makes this case particularly relevant.

To study this case more in depth we used and combined on-site field observations, twelve in-depth interviews, and a document study. The interviews were semi-structured and thematic, allowing consideration of contextual features and respondents' subjective opinions during discussion (Yin, 2014). We conducted seven interviews with policy makers (indicated in the data section as P1-P7) in the domain of heritage and spatial planning, and five with policy officers working at the tourist departments (indicated in the data section as T1-T5), all in different municipalities in the case area in the three respective countries. The duration of the interviews was 30–100 minutes, and most were conducted between February 2019 and May 2019. Topics to be discussed during the interview were – among others – a description of the project, the cooperation in the set-up of this project, and community engagement. Moreover we asked to evaluate whether the post-industrial context provided specific challenges for urban planning and heritage management.

Next to these formal interviews, on-site field observations were conducted including six informal, conversational interviews (duration about 30 minutes) with local heritage tour guides and citizens (indicated in the data section as C1-C6). During the observations and interviews, various kinds of additional information sources, such as information leaflets and maps, were shown. These information sources are – like the information gathered from (policy) documents, articles, websites, newspapers and so on – seen as a second source of data collection, in order to complement our empirical material and to support source triangulation (Yin, 2014). For analysing both types of interviews, we

used a grounded theoretical approach, where the codes were structured in line with the review of current dominant approaches to heritage.

Based on this data, the next section will illustrate how the heritage approaches we identified in our historical overview were enacted in practice and ran short in accommodating – let alone enhancing – community involvement. The case of the Grünmetropole project is an analysis based on the characteristics of the different approaches (see Table 1 which is used as an analytical framework).

Results: Why Existing Heritage Approaches are Ineffective

The area of the Grünmetropole is characterized by a common denominator of the industrial past and the mining activities which have shaped the physical landscape in the region. The mining industry in this region has a dynamic history of industrial production, decline, and reconversion. The removal of industrial activities left marks in the three countries' history, and yet for a long time the heritage of the mining era was not recognized. Hence, the scars of the industrial past still characterize the cultural landscape of today in many cases. A changing attitude with regard to mining heritage, and a physical conversion policy led to the preservation and re-use of some of the mining relics. Although many former mining buildings in the region had been demolished as part of large-scale conversion programmes, (local) heritage organizations started to recognize the industrial heritage in the post-industrial period. They then started to list these former mining buildings as classified buildings, or made plans for redevelopment. It is against this backdrop that the Grünmetropole project was set up – a project that picked the mining past as the main topic for creating a common storyline and bringing a touristic element to the region. Two touristic routes were designed as part of an umbrella structure called 'Urban DNA', which was designed to connect about 70 touristic highlights related to the mining past. The designers of the project argued that a clear, defined and promoted 'Urban DNA' would help to strengthen the identity of the region (Bava et al., 2005). Selecting places of interest at which to stop were decided by the designers, and focused only on the physical objects representing the mining past. Furthermore, the two cross-border tourist routes tracing the relics of the mining past, were designed to link the post-industrial landscapes in the German, Dutch and Belgian border region, and to encourage residents and

Table 1. Characteristics of the different approaches according to the literature review (section 2) and in line with the characteristics defined by Wells and Lixinski (2016).

	Object-oriented approach	Representational approach
Characteristics	Its value system is mainly based on tangible qualities of an object; heritage is seen as rare and unique; and the significance lies in the past, not the present. OUTCOME	Its value system is based on the contemporary social, cultural, perceptions of different stakeholders; heritage can be found everywhere; and its significance lies in the present. PROCESS leading to an OUTCOME
Approach	Its value system is defined through preservation doctrine; the identification and treatment of heritage is the domain of experts; law is used to enforce this preservation doctrine; heritage values are assumed to be immutable and are fixed through the use of lists; tangible qualities of materials are conserved rather than the meanings associated with these objects. FIXED and ISOLATED	Everyone is a heritage expert; management shifted from expert-led authoritarian procedures towards more inclusive and participative community-led practices. AGREED UPON and FIXED

tourists to explore the region. It was argued that such a route could function as a common denominator of the industrial past (Bava et al., 2005). In order to implement the routes, different organizational models were set up, funding became available, and touristic organizations were made responsible for implementation and maintenance. In the former mining city of Beringen (Flanders), for instance, several locations were included as 'stops' on the Grünmetropole route, since many of the physical mining relics had been preserved there, and Beringen consequently almost feels like an 'open-air museum' (Heinrichs et al., 2008). Indeed, Beringen was selected as a site representing a 'mining experience'. This however was

> A conscious decision by the Flemish government to protect at least one former mining site, as completely as possible. The decision was made to protect as much as possible in Beringen, that's why you can read the story so clearly here (municipal policy officer).

Despite these efforts, this project did not lead to very fruitful results. Only interviewee P3 and P4 mentioned some positive aspects:

> The Grünmetropole was one of the first projects which really focused attention to a part of history which we tended to ignore until then. Until then we never paid attention to this part of our history, the Grünmetropole project tried to shift focus to this period in history (P3).

Most of the interviewees evaluated the heritage characteristics applied to this project rather negatively. In an interview with a tourist officer it was mentioned that

> The Grünmetropole was too much on 'high-level', hence it wasn't able to really have impact on the local scale. It was an abstract masterplan which was okay, but didn't lead to something, there was too much distance between this masterplan and reality (T2).

Interviewees T1, P5, C3 and C4 agree on this, as C3 states:

> This project is not well-thought-out: it is designed as a masterplan without having an overview of the region as a whole. (C3).

Moreover, the routes itself appeared to be one of the pitfalls of the project

> The Grünmetropole had some potential, but it remained a theoretical story. When it was implemented, it was a rather pathetic implementation. There were only some information signs, but these were located in weird locations. The Grünmetropole and the signs were like a weird UFO which landed here (P6).

C4 adds to this:

> The route was just not well designed; I think it was too comprehensive and not well considered". As a result, not many people use the Grünmetropole route and this route does not help with explaining the region's mining past (C3).

Moreover, it is noted that this 'promoted' storyline of the mining past only finds limited resonance among local citizens

> Especially for younger people, the mining past is now history, they have their own interests and projects, and they should be stimulated to implement them (C1).

Also, within the Grünmetropole project, we observed how the heritage approach applied has been the subject of criticism. A policy officer notes:

> Heritage is not necessarily related to objects. It is more about stories, stories that relate to the mining past, but also include present-day issues. These stories will help to explain the roots of this region (P6).

Further on he notes:

> It may sound logical to start from a regional story and then select individual projects, but it works the other way round: you have to start with small entities, and only then look for a connection within a certain area, or region, for example, the former mining region.

This is underlined by several interviewees (most notably C3, P1 and P5). Indeed, within the Grünmetropole project it was highlighted that the designers did not put much effort into connecting to local citizens:

> They [politicians and designers] remained deaf to what local citizens were saying. If you don't have academic titles, like professor or doctor, in front of your name, than they think you don't have any knowledge at all; they won't listen to you. But these people do in fact have the most valuable, local knowledge (C3) and

> There was a possibility to engage with citizens, if you don't do that at that moment you will never do that (P1).

A policy officer underlined this by stating that

> Eventually however such a project has to be supported by citizens, because they are the potential users. Top-down projects, organized by a bigwig, don't work. Projects only work if local stories are incorporated, you actively need to look for these stories and incorporate them in your projects (P5).

A local tour guide shared similar criticism in a Flemish newspaper as he noted that projects like the Grünmetropole demoted local citizens into users/tourists instead of seeing them as a potential source of input of local knowledge (De Standaard, 2006). A local citizen supported this statement:

> They made nice maps, and information leaflets, but there was no support, thus the projects' soul is absent (C6).

These quotes and observations from the Grünmetropole project show that the construction of a route connecting physical relics of the mining past, was indeed a strongly top-down organized process based on a fixed idea of heritage, which resulted in a project that bore little relation to the understandings and conceptualizations of the heritage of the residents in the region. To reach the project's goals of creating a strong local identity and linking heritage to socio-economic developments, the design of the project was set up around notions of heritage related to the past, where certain objects related to the mining past were preserved and promoted by experts (in this case the designers). Not only were the interviewees critical of this object-oriented heritage approach, so were the newspapers of that time, where the project was criticized for being too backwards-looking, instead of being a driver for future developments (Van den Reyt, 2006). The quotes above also illustrate that that the preservation and promotion of one heritage narrative does not capture heritage comprehensively and does not address alternative narratives. Indeed, when asking about the heritage approach, interviewees mentioned that there was only limited room for a plurality of stakeholders and their ideas of heritage, since only some people could participate in the design process, and their opinions were subordinated to the – already set – idea of creating a mining-past

route. In sum, the Grünmetropole project is an example of a project where heritage objects remained distanced from societal dynamics as the applied approach was mainly an object-oriented one. We also saw examples of a representational approach, but this mainly had a focus on tourism and not necessarily on engaging with the local community.

Also within the Grünmetropole region and its respective communities, we observed that it was difficult to incorporate more personal expressions of heritage related to the mining past. The question thus remains, what kind of heritage management approach is able to answer and enhance the complexity that comes with community engagement in heritage re-use?

Turning to Co-Evolution

Promising Examples from Spatial Planning

To answer this question we turn to spatial planning theory, where approaches based on multiplicity and dynamism is gradually being favoured. In fact, Minner (2016), who also investigated synergies between preservation and planning within the context of the United States, argues that the domain of heritage preservation can gain much from incorporating contemporary planning theory, especially with regard to participation and the recognition of a wider, versatile set of values.

Within spatial planning theory and practice, we see a comparable development as in the different heritage management approaches discussed above. For a long time, spatial planning was based on a technical-rational planning approach – an approach characterized by a particular emphasis on the physical planning result, by developing extensive plans or spatial blueprints, steadily translated into a built form (Healey, 2003). In the 1970's and 1980's planning theorists started to question the idea of a straightforward understanding of the world in which the environment was seen as something that was known and controllable. Planning practice accordingly shifted towards more strategic approaches in managing the environment. Following this so called communicative rationale approach, the environment is not shaped solely by the planner, but in the interactions of many stakeholders; a plan emerges from the context and the interpretations of multiple and heterogeneous actors (Baarveld et al., 2013). Under this new approach planning practice still aims towards reaching a consensus over plans and towards an optimally agreed upon solution. This planning approach corresponds with the representation-based heritage management approach and, as in a planning process, divergent or dissonant ideas are gradually excluded (see also Hillier, 2007). Once again, however, a confrontation with reality severely challenged this idea of planning.

Over the last decades, several planning scholars have explored a complexity perspective on spatial planning, in order to understand diffuse planning processes (De Roo, 2012; Portugali et al., 2012). In a complex system, each part influences the others reciprocally, thereby exchanging information mutually and in accordance with the specific circumstances or contexts (Boelens & De Roo, 2016). According to these scholars, notions of complexity theory can help planners to address some of the irreversible, irreducible, and non-linear changes they are dealing with, and to understand the interrelatedness, interdependency, diversity, and multiplicity of contemporary planning (De Roo & Boelens, 2016; Thrift, 1999). In order to deal with this complexity, the notion of co-evolution is increasingly being applied. Co-evolution is a term – related to, but beyond generalized Darwinism – that is used to describe the process of interaction between two (or more) systems, where these interactions cause change in the

nature of these systems (Kallis, 2007). The emphasis on interactions and on reciprocity makes the concept of co-evolution different from mere evolution. This means that evolution does not take place in a vacuum, but rather in reciprocal selective interaction with its biotic circumstances, including with other organisms or systems. The concept of co-evolution thus places emphasis on the reciprocal interactions between two evolving systems within and in interaction with a specific context (Gerrits, 2008).

Within spatial planning, the notion of co-evolution is increasingly being applied in the context of complexity, especially in cases in which neither the involved actors, the context, nor the precise challenges or objects of planning are clear (Boelens & De Roo, 2016). Instead of a more technical or communicative planning approach, in which a problem is delineated and an optimal solution is sought, a co-evolutionary planning approach acknowledges a lack of clarity, overview and control, (Boelens & De Roo, 2016). While co-evolutionary planning influences its context by proposing targeted actions, it also adapts to contextual changes and emerging developments (Bertolini, 2010b). As such, it acknowledges that urban development does not always follow the trajectory that was originally intended (Bertolini, 2010a; Gerrits & Teisman, 2012). Co-evolutionary planning thus combines adaptiveness and proactiveness – adapting to contextual changes, and acting in anticipation of future problems, needs or changes (Boelens & De Roo, 2016; Kosunen et al., 2020). With regard to planning practice, Bertolini (2010a) suggests that in the face of uncertainty, planning goals and means should be defined for compatibility with various future developments. In planning practice, the application of co-evolutionary approaches (and other governance approaches in which the complexity regarding actors and setting is acknowledged) provides promising examples (Bertolini, 2007, 2010b; Duineveld et al., 2015). Kosunen et al. (2020) notes that the combination of adaptiveness and proactiveness by "doing what is decided and adjusting to what is emerging" (Gerrits & Teisman, 2012, p. 214) is one of the main strengths of this approach.

To sum up, complexity is emerging as a dynamic process of diversity and the multiplicity of stakeholders involved and the values attributed, now characterizes spatial planning. Spatial planning contexts involving heritage are surrounded by dynamism and multiplicity (Baarveld et al., 2013), hence notions of complexity theory, in particular co-evolution, could also be suitable in the field of heritage to deal with changing circumstances.

Towards a Co-Evolutionary Heritage Approach

Complexity in the field of heritage emerges partly because heritage comprises aims such as incorporating a coalition of stakeholders into the re-use and maintenance process; empowering communities in the redevelopment process of heritage; an integration of resources; and exploring innovative financial, economic and business models. The use of heritage continuously takes place in a specific context and within interactions between various stakeholders, resulting in various understandings of heritage. Heritage thus comes alive through the active and creative ways in which people use heritage, and this is situational and relational.

To address this complexity and to understand the interrelatedness and multiplicity of contemporary society, attention should thus shift to situational and relational performances of heritage. Linking heritage to a deeper mixture of relations, and embracing the multiplicity of ways of understanding heritage is however not reckoned with and included in object-oriented or representational heritage approaches. Therefore we now introduce a co-evolutionary heritage

approach which addresses dynamism and multiplicity in order to deal with an ongoing heritage valuation process by communities and other stakeholders. Within heritage management, a co-evolutionary approach would then see material and immaterial heritage assets, local and/or heritage communities and spatial (re-)development, as continuously and mutually related and responding to each other's changes. Such a co-evolutionary heritage approach starts from the notion that heritage is an open and responsive system in which many actors and ideas – as subsystems – act in parallel, and in unforeseen, non-linear, and spontaneous ways due to changing circumstances. Indeed, when talking about a co-evolutionary notion of heritage, it is not just one of these aspects that should be present, or a combination of several aspects. Instead it is of particular significance to address the interrelatedness and interconnectivity of material and immaterial heritage assets, local and/or heritage communities and spatial (re-)development. Heritage, for instance, influences people, just as people and actions are reciprocally influenced by space itself, who in turn–etcetera (Amin & Thrift, 2002). This leads to a process of reciprocal interaction between evolving systems.

Within the region of the Grünmetropole we noted a discrepancy between the implemented project and the communities' understandings of heritage. Indeed, a policy officer once more makes this clear by saying:

> There is now a generation who is not familiar with the region's mining past, but who is nevertheless looking for their roots in order to understand developments in their living environment (C4).

We observed that various local communities within the respective mining regions deployed small scale initiatives related to the mining past, which were set up to address this issue. Such initiatives, we argue, can be regarded as co-evolutionary, as there is an interaction and relatedness of material and immaterial heritage assets, local and/or heritage communities and spatial (re-)development. In the former mining employees' neighbourhood of Eisden (Flanders) for instance, citizens undertook all kinds of social activities aimed at strengthening the community, and also its identity – being a former mining neighbourhood. A small scale museum was erected, documentaries were recorded, and art projects were launched, all about life in (a former) mining town. These initiatives were initiated and supported by the local community. Some of these activities particularly addressed the special character of the former Garden City-designed working class neighbourhood. As part of an art-project, trees in the neighbourhood were decorated with small statues of Saint Barbara which referred to the mining past (as this saint is known as the patron saint of miners). Next, a project was launched to plant new hedges in the neighbourhood. This was done to strengthen the Garden City-design of this area, but also to teach new residents and the younger generation about the, for some unknown, history and identity of the neighbourhood. These projects were not necessarily linked to the preservation of an object, but were more about identity, practices, and immaterial aspects. These practices, or 'ways of doing' are rather informally dealing with heritage, and even the citizens themselves would not regard these as heritage management practices. Yet, these practices are an expression of how a community and individuals understand and value heritage. This is also underlined by a local tour guide who states:

> Heritage is about symbols, it's about local stories, not just the authorized stories: that's what we try to do here, preserving local personal stories.

Such personal engagements with heritage were, however, not incorporated into the Grünmetropole project. Hence, a co-evolutionary heritage approach would have resulted in a better and more

precise understanding of communities' and individual's ideas about heritage and its values, which in turn could have been incorporated into the project-design.

Discussion and Conclusion

A co-evolutionary heritage approach is not about providing a single, specific definition of heritage. Rather it focuses on expressions of heritage- such that heritage becomes a manifestation of continuous processes of valuation and re-valuation and as something that is always involved in the process of 'making'. The meaning of heritage then would not be intrinsic, but always relative to or, better still, relational while receiving meaning only from the context and from other subjects, and the influences on them in turn (Boelens & De Roo, 2016). As such, co-evolution allows us to see heritage as an open and responsive system in which many actors – as subsystems – act in parallel, and in unforeseen, non-linear, and spontaneous ways, due to changing circumstances. This, we argue, helps us to better and more precisely explain communities' and individual's ideas and values of heritage as it allows us to engage with the very real emotional and cultural work that the past does as heritage for individuals and communities (Smith, 2006). But the question remains; how should this approach be applied? Scholars like Jones (2017, p. 22) explored methods to capture "the dynamic, iterative and embodied nature of people's relationships with the historic environment in the present". Jones argued to make more use of qualitative methods derived from sociology and anthropology in order to gain understandings of communities' heritage values. Among various techniques like focus groups, qualitative interviews and participant observation, Jones (2017) argues that the most productive approach to identify communities' values lies in forms of collaborative co-production that involve both professionals and members of relevant communities. Also Wells and Lixinski (2017) argue for the adoption of tools, such as dialogical democracy and participatory action research in order to come to an adaptive regulatory framework for heritage. In addition to new methods to deal with communities' heritage values, Wells and Stiefel (2018) argue for a better balance between professional heritage practice and the needs of everyday people in how the management of heritage is addressed. Indeed, in this regard, a co-evolutionary approach moves away from the idea of a central entity that 'manages' heritage towards a dynamic process of heritage governance in which many actors take part. The role of the heritage expert, therefore, becomes one of co-creating the conditions under which evolutions occur and flourish, as well as activating the self-organization of different actors including local heritage communities. While a co-evolutionary approach appears to be theoretically possible (see also Della Torre, 2019), the challenge will be to translate this approach into practice as there does not appear to be any precedent for its implementation. How to apply this co-evolutionary approach should therefore be a part of any further investigation, and especially of an experiment in, for instance, living labs as there is room to learn more about ways to better address communities' needs and their understandings of heritage.

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