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A Study of Decision-Making Situations in a Jordanian Municipality

Al Khalidi, Marwa

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+46 46-222 00 00

INFLUENTIAL MOMENTS IN CITY PLANNING MEETINGS

A STUDY OF DECISION MAKING SITUATIONS
IN A JORDANIAN MUNICIPALITY

MARWA AL KHALIDI

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The interest of this research lies in how planning is officially established, managed and practiced in the setting of a Jordanian city, and its local districts. This interest leads the research to observational studies of the mechanisms of municipal council meetings and of the institutional setting of official city planning. Through participant observations and drawing on Actor-Network Theory (ANT), this research looks closely into how decision-making agency can be both formally and informally delegated to human actions, to material objects, to technologies, and to the rules and modes of institutional ordering. I investigate the conditions on which the meeting – as the most common decision-making body – depends to proceed in normal and destabilised situations. The analytical discussions that follow research's narratives bring new insights by reflecting on the observed meetings, actions, and institutional environments with the help of architecture- and design-oriented actor-network-theory and relational planning theory, as well as organisation theory, decision-making studies and meeting studies.

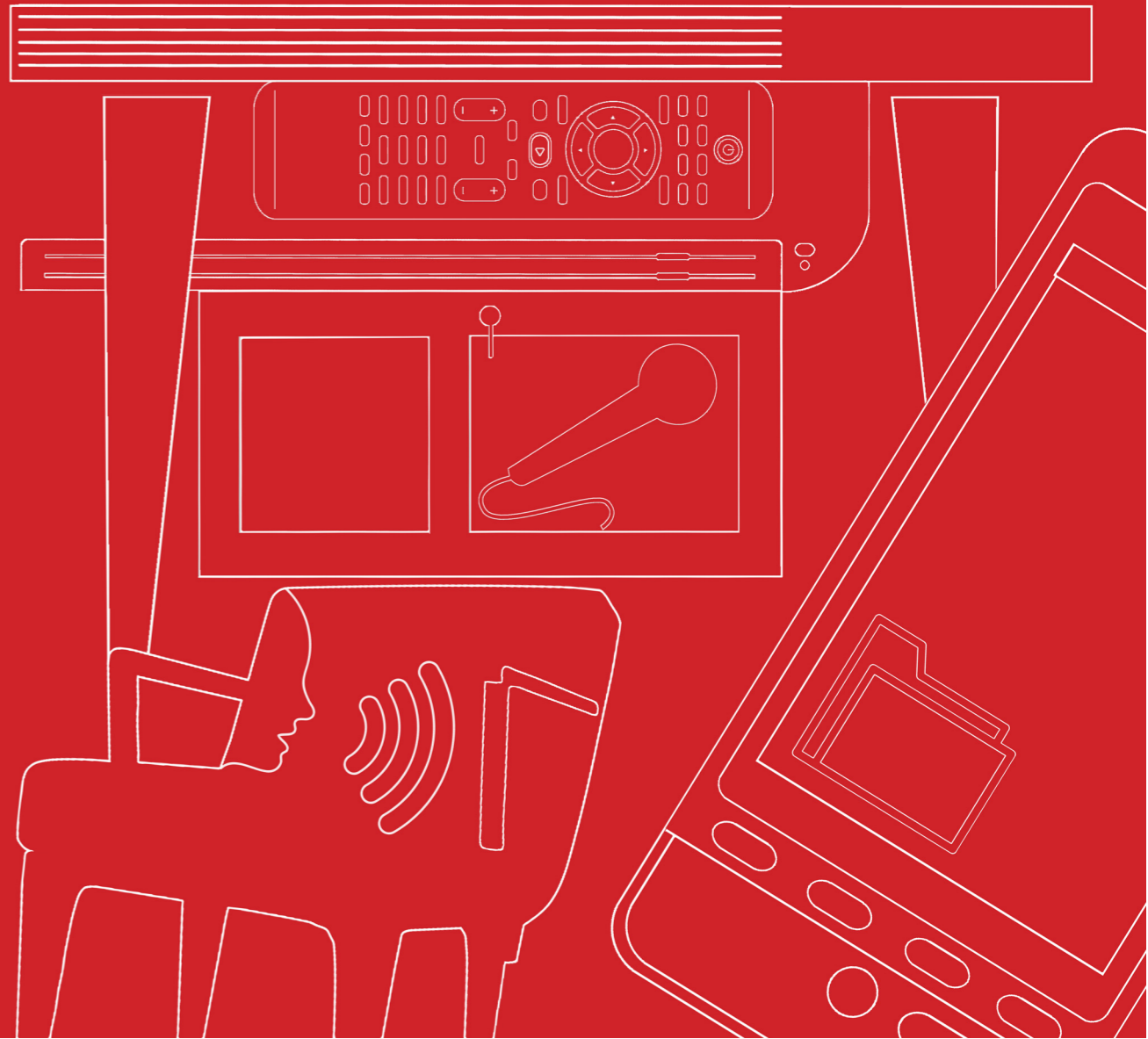
The detailed and situated studies in this thesis focus on the important role of the material and spatial components of the planning setting. The results also highlight the heterogeneity of actors with influence, and how time-related features such as timeliness and durabilization in meetings can influence the decision-making process. The research concludes in elevating several networked mechanisms and principles of influence. Principles like 'redundancy delegation', 'transistor tactics' and 'recovering destabilizations', and concepts such as 'temporal institutional territorialisation', and 'state of predisposition' represent such significant figures of thought that are found to be of interest, and that could be given further attention in the theoretical as well as practical analysis of planning and planning settings. This research hopes also to contribute to discussions regarding how to cope with emergent situations using long- and short-term planning in the development of policies and means for future modes of planning.



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Influential Moments in City Planning Meetings

A Study of Decision-Making Situations in a Jordanian
Municipality

Marwa Al Khalidi



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DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

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Lund, August 24, 2018

Marwa Al Khalidi

A Short Prologue

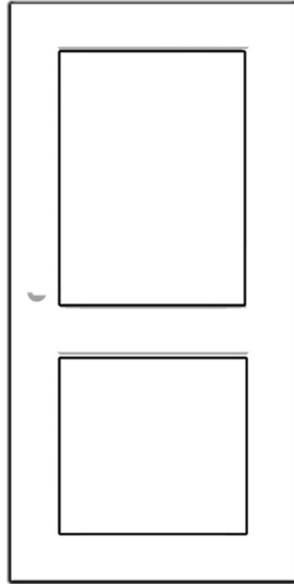
“Like life, research is the outcome of interaction” (Law, 1994: vii)

This book does not only present the results of a PhD research undertaking, but also gathers some of the personal interactions with planning practice that lie behind the investigations presented here. My interest in the subject of planning emerged through practical experiences over several years before my research education, and this interest has developed into an investigation of a planning culture and its decision-making processes. My familiarity with, and curiosity about, the institutional context of planning started with an early experience in a planning project in a Jordanian municipality. My involvement with the same municipality continued when I later had the chance to work as a civil servant there, which further reinforced my ambition to understand more about the scope of influence that the practice of decision-making can have on a city's future. Transformed through my research studies, this ambition is temporarily concluded here with this dissertation and its notes on what happens during city planning meetings – which have proved to be much more than simply a group of people coming together to meet and discuss topics as usual. I have become more aware of the close circumstances of the meetings, which lead to decisions that directly influence the spatial and architectural environment of the city. In this thesis, I propose that the closed door of a meeting room full of representatives and other attendees, sitting in their assigned chairs around a meeting table inside four walls, conceals more than simple city planning meetings in the formal sense. Following the advice of ‘just describe what you will observe’ and ‘keep your senses open to everything around you’, I carried out the empirical part of this research when I passed through that meeting room door and could attend the municipal council city planning meetings, and to some extent also the related local district committee meetings, over the course of several months. These meetings thus became my primary source of information about decision-making.

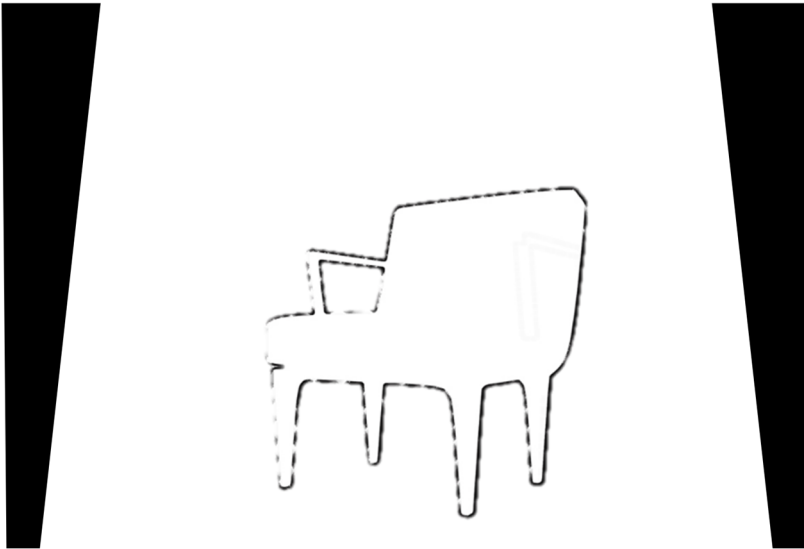
I took part in them by observing anything and anyone that could have a significant relation to the decision-making processes. When the chairperson of the council, or of the committee uttered the opening phrase: “Okay, let's start the meeting now”, the decision-making on matters deciding the future of the city would officially commence. Sanctioned by this spoken sentence, many things would start to relate to

each other and act together. Chairs would begin moving a bit, slightly reordering the positions of attendees in the room, and orders otherwise hidden to a newcomer would reveal themselves. Technologies will be turned on, microphones transmitting parts of the communication, air conditioning units blowing out cool air, etcetera. Along with the formal discussions, readings of agendas and documents about the issues of the day would be communicated. Multiple voices would start to overlap, and many hidden and half-hidden whispers would start to appear in the room. It took me a while to realize that this decision-making process was far beyond any merely rule-based social interactions. The intensity of what I encountered was such that I occasionally needed a moment to simply let my eyes rest during my observations, in order to unriddle the diversity of interrelated utterances, roles, and actions indicating a more complex construct of decisions.

Throughout the journey of this research, I crossed paths with a number of theories and concepts that would help me understand the complexity of decision-making processes. I adhered more closely to some of them, while others had to be sifted out. These theories have opened many doors, aiding the realization as well as analysis of the empirical examples that I brought into this research, and providing me with insights into views on decision-making conditioned by social, political, organizational and planning aspects. I have been inspired by all of these views; ultimately however I have striven to tread my own theoretical and methodological path, and by that hopefully opened another new door to the field of city planning studies, as well as to the practical field of planning.



PART I: SETTING THE SETTING



1

Introductory Chapter

1.1 Understanding Decision-Making in City Planning Meetings

This thesis addresses decision-making in city planning meetings, more precisely in relation to the level of a municipal council and local committee meetings, as it is situated in a Jordanian city with over a million inhabitants. For reasons of anonymity and generalization, I call this city 'Nodecity' throughout this thesis. In this research, the decision-making process in official city planning meetings is seen as an essential stage of any planning process. It is part of the nature of planning "involving a variety of actors communicating, negotiating, bargaining and arguing over the 'right' way forward" (Tewdwr-Jones, 2002:65). In Jordan, many planning processes related to the city – like spatial planning, city resources management, and other municipal services – are handled within the institutional responsibilities of the municipality, or in its departments, as is the case in Nodecity Municipality. Most of the official decisions are finalised in the municipal council, and local committee meetings have direct effects on the city. This interest leads the research in the direction of close studies of the mechanisms of these meetings and of the institutional setting of official city planning.

In this research, I do a close study of how planning is debated and decided in these institutional settings of official decision-making. Decision-making processes can be studied from an organizational point of view, with the intent of investigating rationality in decision-making (March, 1994), and could be examined as processual activity (Huisman, 2001) through which final decisions are chosen from among several alternatives (Langley et al., 1995). However, the interest of this research is not so much on verbal dialogue or on policy aspects, and nor does it investigate the rationality of decision-making that looks specifically to efficiency as regards coming to conclusions or trying to find the best communicational or organizational principles. Instead, a decision-making process, as I see it in this research, is a relational activity anchored in several domains: from human actions, legislative interpretation, and the following of institutional rules and routines, to interacting with architectural spaces, surrounding materialities, objects present, and common technologies.

Seen thus, the dynamic forces of the decision-making process can depend on the interplay between authoritative and allocative systems, influenced by situated interactions of different sets of actors and structured by institutional and governance driving forces (Healey, 2003). Most importantly, the interactions within decision-making that are seen in this research are not limited to interactions between human actors, but can instead be depicted as an activity that engages an orchestration of heterogeneous relations that can include both human and non-human agency. These relations are acted out and to some extent determined by what I define here as the planning setting. The planning setting, not least its material and architectural spaces, is a supportive network in the decision-making process that is important in its own right, facilitating various wills and purposes – not only from a formal perspective, but also with various relations that not always are regarded as formalised or basic for the stability of decision-making processes. In other words, the setting provides the socio-material space in which decision-making can relate to the surrounding local, historical, institutional, and political aspects, and the routines according to which planning is practiced, and decisions are made – routines which define the specific planning culture.

Through several episodes of decision-making processes, in this thesis I describe the everyday routines of how they are officially established, and how they are performed, managed and situated in the meetings. Thus, the notion of making is essential here, indicating the dynamic aspect, and taking into consideration the temporality aspect that made my observations open to any emergent or unexpected actors that could have influence on the process. Furthermore, I pay particular attention to decision-making processes as they are subjected to states of destabilization, i.e. when the constitutive relations of the process (dialogical, material, institutional, and legal) are destabilized from what they usually are, which can ultimately affect the final decisions. I argue, following Callon et al. (2009), that tracing the state of destabilization in the decision-making process is significant for pinpointing crucial actors, and that effectual relations that are often neglected can become visible and therefore be regarded in relation to their importance for the process of decision-making. I do not claim that the state of destabilization is particularly anomalous in decision-making processes; on the contrary, it is inevitably present or operational during any process. For instance, I cannot argue that moments of debate or voting, or using technology like microphones in new ways in meetings, are out-of-the-ordinary practices or behaviours in city planning meetings. However, I do argue that the extra attention to the working relations in the process could lead to the detection of effectual moments, which may on the one hand reveal longstanding customs, and on the other distinctive acts that

could make the meeting deviate from a smooth or normal process to sudden acts of delays, silence or the transgression of meeting routines.

I elevate such states of destabilizations in my observations through *the lens of controversy*, drawn from a methodological approach highlighting otherwise almost imperceptible disruptions of normal orders or relations (e.g. Yaneva, 2012), but which could also be moments of disruption in the constitutive relations of the process. A main intention of this research is to highlight these moments and to expose their mechanisms of emergence, thereby relating paths in the meetings to their origin. Thus, I attempt to discuss destabilizations in their capacity to influence the decisions, and the character of their future actions in the process. This way, time becomes an important factor in itself for the issue at stake in a planning process – e.g. when a destabilization appears, how long it endures, etcetera. These moments are traced here by looking at a range of actors that can help describe situations in which new forms of objectivities, or rather common understandings, may emerge, and where subjective standpoints indirectly (or directly) show themselves in the cause of events that is followed and described (e.g. Callon et al., 2009; Yaneva, 2012; Latour, 2005).

1.2 Research Aims, Purpose and Questions

In light of the previous section, it should be clear that the purpose of this study of city planning meetings is to understand more about decision-making processes by highlighting the kind of interactions in a planning setting that can influence how these processes proceed. Such a broad scope of investigations can elevate the existence of actors or effectual relations that are usually not part of a more rationalist understanding of decision-making processes; it can thus render the formal and informal procedures that are taken-for-granted more transparent, as well as the extent to which they are culture-specific or more general. A justification for this main purpose is that official decision-making processes and the interest of searching for influential moments in it can ultimately lead to concrete effects on the actual built environment of the city, as well as to effects on policies regarding planning. In other words, this thesis addresses general issues of a planning culture, such as democracy and participation, but only in an implicit and situated manner, since the study indirectly highlights how meeting practices in the planning culture provide ways of participation, achieve transparency, and express power relations, and to a lesser degree proposes practical solutions on the ground or explicit participatory instruments.

Through the careful examination of the decision-making process as it is situated in relation to the planning setting in a Jordanian city, it is my aim to render how decision-making agency can be both formally and informally delegated to human actions, to material objects, to technologies related to the planning setting, and to the rules and modes of ordering that govern decision-making. Throughout this thesis, I have attempted to look closely at these complex processes under the state of destabilization, to elucidate the relations between heterogeneous elements – not only from organizational, or legal perspectives, but also within the socio-material relations that may influence the trajectories of the processes. Through this research, I can hopefully make the understanding of such complex processes as decision-making and its interactions more transparent, exposed, and accessible, by highlighting significant elements or decisive relations. The intention has been to search for mechanisms in the decision-making that takes place in meetings and in the municipal setting that can be described in terms that are not only culture-specific, but that, by way of being explained in and out of their own situatedness, also concern planning cultures in other parts of the world, and theories of planning in general.

In line with the above, the first question of this thesis can be expressed: In what ways do destabilizations and influential moments appear in decision-making processes in a city planning context? A second, more detailed question follows: How can destabilizations in a planning process relate to human action, physical objects, and modes of institutional ordering, and indicate possible influential moments? A third question can be expressed as methodological: In what ways can tracing of states of destabilization through the lens of controversy and presenting them as narratives be a valid approach and contribute to future research on meetings and settings of city planning?

Since the key analytical aspect of this research is not only to trace destabilizations or to elevate the moment of influence, but also to elaborate more on their agentic traits as they emerge and influence the process, a general question could be formulated as: what principles of influence in decision-making can be found to be of general interest?

Ultimately and rather ambitiously, a general objective of this research is to understand better the manifold aspects that surround and make up the formal decision process of planning, and to pinpoint certain principles that show up as important, or could be important even though they are not recognised for their importance in the official sense. By getting to know these (partially hidden) influencing principles better,

possibilities could hypothetically be proposed for evaluating, affecting, or changing existing decision-making processes, or regulations regarding planning actions.

1.3 Personal Aims and Motivations

While writing this thesis over the past four years, I have sought to reach a deeper understanding of some of the mechanisms in planning practice. Being an architect with practical experiences in the planning field, and most importantly, being a Jordanian citizen who has experienced and been influenced by several emergent conditions in Jordan, have been grounds and motivation for this research. The resulting thesis could thus be seen in the light of three auto-biographical trajectories: my PhD studies bringing me into the world of academia; my previous work experiences in city planning on the municipal level in relation to different Jordanian cities; and ultimately my cultural background, including my own reflections on it and how I have been affected by its changing conditions.

My first explicit encounter with what would become my research interest started with an opportunity to work on a planning project in a municipality in Jordan several years before my research studies. In connection with this experience, my curiosity was aroused about the responsibility of the municipalities in important planning decisions and the influence that a small group of planning representatives have over these decisions and thus on the future of the city. This practical experience left its mark on my education in architecture, and my interest in understanding the field of planning grew, which led me to pursue my master studies in planning, complementing my previous background as an architect. During my masters studies, I was given another opportunity to work with a planning project in another Jordanian city, through which I became more aware of the importance of what is usually planned and determined and shapes the lives of the community. After finishing my master's degree, and before commencing my PhD studies, I gathered more experience as a civil servant, working closely with a municipal council member – a position in which I learned more about the roles of municipal representatives and the character of municipal council meetings. Having been introduced to the institutional side of decision-making and its working actors, I thus became more interested in understanding its importance and grew more acquainted with how the council members represent a community during the official decision-making processes.

These practical experiences fostered my curiosity as to how and when decisions are actually made, how they influence the city and communities, as well as what kind of background influences, or less visible agendas, might be present in the decision-making processes. Adding to this, my background as a Jordanian citizen has given me the advantage of being familiar with the general culture, making me in a sense an 'expert' (Cameron, 2001) on some of the local aspects of the planning culture and its practices. My personal relationship with the practical field of planning in Jordan and several municipal institutions was a motivation for initiating this kind of research, but it also became a source of insight into it, enhancing my ability to sense or unfold the locality aspects of the empirical domain (Amit, 2003). Being a local insider facilitated my investigations as a researcher in the course of action in the municipality without having to go through too complicated preparations, or having to make predictions about what such a presence might bring (Rosaldo, 1993). While this saved me a lot of time as a researcher, it also required me to make a sustained effort to distance my thinking and my behaviour, seeing as I am a locally conditioned native.

During these earlier encounters with the practical field of planning, as a Jordanian citizen I also witnessed and lived with the consequences of many emergent conditions in the country due to the surrounding geo-political circumstances. The location of Jordan and its proximity to countries like Syria, Palestine, and Iraq have meant that extremely high and unexpected numbers of migrants have crossed into the country's borders in the past three decades. In a short period of time, specific demands have been put on planning practice, impacting it on everyday terms and making it more responsive to planning-related aspects in the surrounding context. For instance, the tact with which demands have changed on many Jordanian cities has sped up planning operations, often with ad hoc strategies driven by scattered wills, and newly emergent motifs which make a comprehensive overview of the planning objectives difficult. Due to the influx of large numbers of migrants, and because of Jordan's limited resources, urgent kinds of problems in planning have challenged the country's practice and management system. These circumstances have also brought forth a central question about the priorities of strategic formations in many cities, and how urgency and temporality can be deliberated and handled in official planning institutions. These circumstances have not only created many practical challenges for planning in Jordan, they also have been a motivation for doing this kind of research, giving it importance on an existential level.

Generally speaking, planning research in Jordan has taken only a limited interest in these conditions of the local context (Alnsour & Meaton, 2015). Most of the research done in and about Jordan that relates to the topic of this thesis discusses planning issues and challenges from policy formulation perspectives without looking further into the daily practice that this research tackles (e.g. Meaton & Alnsour, 2012; Fraihat, 2016; Tarrad, 2014; Alnsour, 2014). Likewise, few previous international studies have addressed decision-making as situated in planning contexts in Jordan (Sqour, 2014; Alnsour, 2014).

During my PhD studies, I have read, analysed, and written a range of different planning-oriented texts that enriched my knowledge and strengthened my capabilities to approach planning with a research-based awareness. Additionally, after having spent the years of my PhD studies in Sweden, far from my original context, I recognise more clearly that Jordan has its own cultural distinctions and special conditions to which I am exposed, in part unconsciously, as a citizen, but also more explicitly or sometimes drastically, in my role as an observing researcher. This actualizes the dilemma of differentiating between experience and learning, as well as between local and general conditions of planning: “Planners who are steeped in their own national cultures and have studied planning at a national university may not even be aware that what they take for granted at home may not, in fact, be universally acknowledged” (Friedmann, 2012:96). Thus, in this thesis I bring to a certain extent my own personal experiences, my social and cultural situatedness, my planning practice insights, and my knowledge of political states and changes into the research mode where I need to assess the situations of detailed planning from an empirical base. These engagements have stimulated my research dynamisms and my urge to study and understand more about decision-making processes, and they have also had an impact on my methodological and theoretical choices, relating this research to established research domains. With this research, I hope to contribute knowledge about how current changing conditions in planning are handled – conditions that are not exclusive to Jordan nor to any other specific city, but that concern many countries in the world.

1.4 Methodological Approaches and Main Theoretical Domains

The empirical base for this thesis is in attending, working in, experiencing and studying selected planning and consultation events on the municipal level in relation to Nodacity. The empirical investigations were focused primarily in two locations: the main meeting room of Nodacity Municipality, and the meeting room in one of the local districts. I have also changed the district's name for anonymity reasons; I call the district the Downstage District¹ in this thesis. The Downstage District is an administrative part of Nodacity Municipality, and it is one of the main locations of the research investigations, where several local official decision-making processes were observed.

The field studies were conducted in two main periods: a preparatory phase, and a second period during which I collected data. In the preparatory phase, I paved the way for my data collection and introduced myself as a researcher for the study context. The methods applied in the two periods were mainly participant observation derived from ethnographic approaches, by which I pursued the fieldwork by attending and observing city planning meetings. In the main, second, data collection period, which lasted three months, I attended and observed eighteen municipal council meetings, as well as twelve local district committee meetings in the Downstage District. In conjunction with the preparatory phase a year earlier, these months of observations were enough for me to gather sufficient information covering a variety of meetings, and to allow me to develop my note-taking and literary skills as an observer (Friedmann, 2012). Participant observation served a key purpose in exploring the collective social, tracing multi-layered practices and dialogues in the meetings and in some offices, recognising socio-cultural elements, and noticing specific details about the architecture of spaces (Amit, 2003). By depending on participant observation, I was able to join the actors during their actions in the meetings and to follow their behaviours, as well as their locational and temporal relations (Kawulich, 2005).

The methodological approach also depended on other sources, such as official documents, social media websites, and semi-structured interviews; for instance,

¹ The term 'downstage' refers to the technical theatre term that describes the platform beside the main area of a performance. I chose this district as one of the main districts in Nodacity in part because when I was preparing for the data collection period, I developed good relations with the committee members of this district and its chairperson, which facilitated later investigations.

eighteen interviews were conducted with municipal council members and managers in the data collection period. All of these other sources and interviews enhanced the understanding of the research matter, and supported my participant observations whenever there was a need to extend my investigations. Generally, I intended to keep my methodological approaches flexible towards the emerging situations, following anything with the potential to provide more understanding of the context, ready to follow for instance the situations in which there were suddenly and unexpected moments of deviation from the normal pace.

The methodological approach of participant observation supported with interviews can be linked in a natural way to a main methodological-theoretical repertory for this research, namely Actor-Network Theory (ANT). Ethnographical approaches as an established discipline and tradition and ANT as an approach for studying the interaction between humans and their surroundings are both broadly inductive and attentive to the heterogeneity of entities that compose social interactions (Nimmo, 2011). With the sensibility of ANT towards different kind of actors, and most importantly the materiality aspects, the research investigations can be attentive to any agentic capacity that has the ability to influence and make a difference in the meeting procedures (e.g. Callon, 1986; 1987; Callon & Latour, 1992; Latour, 1996). ANT concepts challenge the taken-for-granted disciplinary – especially sociological – categorisation of real world events by letting human as well as non-human actors to be seen as equals, without any pre-determined hierarchy as regards their capacity of interaction, influencing each other and producing constitutive socio-material relations. Therefore, with ANT concepts in mind, the chairs, tables and other artefacts defining the totality of the meeting room can be seen not only as passive furniture and specific technologies affording a meeting to be held, but as we will see, these objects and technologies can also have other vital roles during some moments, defining influences.

Thinking in terms of ANT has also indirectly influenced the way in which different theories have been employed in this thesis. ANT has allowed and helped me to gradually build up the research theories by incorporating them successively, following the need to make explanations of situations as they show up in my reflections on observations. The theories accounted for in this research are thus not bound exclusively to any specific defined research domain or discipline. Although written from a planning theory foundation, and with the effects of the final actions in cities firmly in mind, this research takes on decision-making also by referring to domains of organizational theory, political science, sociology, or social studies, as major disciplines

that have studied decision-making before; however, as a newcomer to these fields, I do not delve deeply into these discourses.

Additionally, planning theories encompass a wide spectrum of concepts and ideas that provide relevant contextualization for many arguments throughout this research. What becomes apparent in the following is that the many ground-breaking ideas and works that the planning theorist Patsy Healey has brought to the planning field, turning the views of rationalist beliefs in structured orders into a more community-based communicational approach are considered in particular here. Some of the tenets of Healey's work align with my research intentions, especially the relational approach to planning (e.g. Healey, 2006a; 2006b; 2007; 1996), even though I do not deal directly with the worlds of end users, i.e. the concerned, geographically situated people and communities, which is central in that branch of planning theory. Healey has been recognised as understanding planning practice from details and foundations, still with a broad policy- and governance-oriented framing, seeing planning practice as "a fundamentally normative activity [...], which further means that we always have to keep tabs on exactly which norms and values are being enacted and propagated in the micro of planning 'episodes' and the macro of larger 'endeavours'" (Hillier & Metzger, 2015: 3).

In my attempts to incorporate different planning theories, or ideas from organizational theories and political science, I have mainly approached those that have established insights by relating their original fields to ANT's ideas or concepts. For instance, from the field of planning theory, I have acknowledged the views of the planning theoretician Jonathan Metzger in regard to exploring entanglements from a more-than-human perspective, as well as his concept of stakeholderiness (e.g. Metzger, 2014a; 2014b; 2015). Furthermore, discussions related to agentic spatiotemporal productions in some parts of this research have been inspired by the architectural theoretician Mattias Kärrholm (e.g. 2005; 2017). In general, I keep the different theorised concepts and well-researched domains together (and separate) by positioning them in relation to what I found in the decision-making situations studied, which makes their diverse employment above all empirically driven by the context that they attempt to explain. This also means that the overall theoretical relevancy of this research could be characterized as relational, situational, and inclusive of socio-material perspectives, as key theoretical features in the work of ANT scholars.

By referring to different scholars, a number of ANT-based concepts about the heterogeneity of influential agency, the mechanisms of delegation of agency to objects,

and the impact of arrangements related to decision-making have been employed in several places in this thesis. I have related particularly to the ideas of the sociologist John Law, because I found in my broad reading of ANT resources that Law's texts could provide relevant explanations for what I promote as studies of destabilizations, influential moments, and emergent disruption mechanisms. Furthermore, several of his case studies, such as those he discusses in relation to 'Organizing Modernity' (Law, 1994), directly highlight and relate to the context of the organization with which I am dealing in this thesis, i.e. the institution of the municipality. Mentioning Law specifically, however, should not diminish the importance of other original ANT sources for this thesis, such as the profound works of Bruno Latour and Anne Marie Mol, in addition to a range of later scholars and interpreters.

Some ANT-inspired strategies and tactics have also enriched my methodological approaches and guided me during the observation period, such as primarily following the actors and observing their interactions (Venturini, 2010). The observational notes were transcribed into 180 pages of detailed rendering of episodes from meeting events (30 meetings) and other related situations that I followed. The transcribed data from my observations conveys details and thick descriptions about the characteristics of several spaces in the planning setting: size and spatial extensions, materials and their treatment, installed technologies such as air conditioning, and other sensorial details. This is supplemented with details about the meeting attendees' physical movements, verbal and facial expressions, their tones of voices, their interactions and relations with the physical objects, as well as the spatial arrangement of the meeting rooms.

For the process of isolating and detecting the focus of this research – namely states of destabilization – I depended on what has been termed *the lens of controversy*, which helped me elevate any action that stood out as special from the normal course of actions observed. With the lens of controversy as methodological guidance, I could highlight the moments when “shared uncertainty” (Yaneva, 2011: 121) was more dominant. I was able to select almost imperceptible destabilizations of normal orders or relations, as well as moments of clear dialogic conflict, or when material disruptions to the process were more obvious in an affective sense. This way, I allowed the observed entities to participate in and to some extent steer the analysis (e.g. Law, 2004), letting them come to the fore in a way that reflected my attention to them as well as focusing on the deviating interactions in the meeting.

In order to describe these selected destabilizations as they occurred in the meetings, and to communicate the caused effects and the predisposing conditions of

their emergence, I chose to write about them in a narrative style. The key focus in my use of a narrative style in this research is the gradual presentation of the selected events of destabilizations as a coherent shape of space and time. With narratives, I was first and foremost able to render the situation of destabilization with its temporality, letting its sequential nature occur again through the text, recalling how I had experienced the sometimes scattered events as whole sequences as an observer (Rantakari & Vaara, 2016), and to convey as much as possible about the surrounding realities of facts, objects, spaces, and arguments (Bomble, 2013).

Each narrative in the chapters that follow has one coherent plot that describes one main event of destabilization, or one main character that causes or is influenced by a destabilization, which justifies my use of certain thematic titles for the narratives, such as: ‘Mobile Phones’, ‘Air Conditioning (AC)’, or ‘Welcome, Have a Seat’. Some of the narratives, for instance in Chapters 2 and 3, can be seen as captured events necessary for giving some contextual details about locations, their spatial characteristics and architecture, or some factual insights into institutional events. Thus, each narrative in the thesis has its own purpose in supporting the section where it is situated, and most importantly, each narrative makes up the core of the analytical discussions that generally follow the narrative text in each section. The writing style of the narrative text and the analytical discussions differs, and is distinguished by the discussions being entangled with theoretical reflections, drawing more general thoughts from the specific events presented in the narratives. The overall sequence of the occurrence of the narratives throughout the thesis has its own influence on the disposition of the research contents.

1.5 Disposition of the Thesis; Empirical Fragments with a Successive Theoretical Approach

The overall plot of this thesis is a cumulative tale of the story of a decision-making culture, recounted in two main parts containing in total six chapters, and a concluding part. Each chapter adds to this overall research plot with a new contribution to the understanding of decision-making from different perspectives. Generally, the chapters in the first part give the reader an overall image about the cultural context and the setting of decision-making. The second part focuses on the research’s main interest – the tracing of destabilizations – and the discussion of influential moments. Finally, a

third part summarizes the main results and concludes with some principles and notes on the role of time in decision-making in planning.

The main interest of this thesis gradually unfolds as the chapters go on. I have crafted this research and shaped its contents “by the patterns of interaction and practice that it’s immersed in”; thus, I depend on these interactions between the research contents of narratives and theories to “let the research unfold” (Law & Singleton, 2013: 488). By counting on the position of the narratives when arranging the research’s parts, I not only successively render the reality that I observed to the reader, but I also transfer a gradually developing theoretical understanding of the research matters. The theorizing in the analytical discussions after each narrative aims in part to create a distance from, or to generalize, the content of a narrative given as a plot, but above all to see how it triggers a variety of theoretical angles. This theorizing according to the situations in each narrative means that the literature review of this thesis is not gathered as a total overview in one chapter, but is scattered everywhere, situated in relation to observational findings as the text goes on. This successively presented diversity is developed along the overall text of the thesis and concerns for instance how decisive agency is delegated, how temporal smoothness of dialogues is interrupted, allowing new communicative spaces to appear, and how surrounding entities and isolated actors can act at a distance to influence decision-making. In the later chapters, the focus turns more towards how heterogeneous entities together perform a sense of organization, or how they collectively handle an organizational errand.

After this introductory chapter, Chapter Two presents a background about Jordan, describing some of the geo-political and cultural circumstances that have shaped its planning practice and its planning regulations, and how this relates to time. In regard to the situations that Nodacity and many other Jordanian cities have faced, I use a planning project to exemplify how historical, geo-political, and institutional aspects have influenced the planning practice in general. The aim of Chapter Two is to give a background to the adaptation of strategic planning to current demands, without becoming detached from traditional institutional frameworks, or in other words, from what defines, as in any planning practice in the world, the current planning culture. In Chapter Two, presented by an opening narrative, I also discuss the broader network to which I claim any official decision-making relates, with the idea of the planning setting as a supportive network providing legal, spatial, and material conditions for the process of decision-making. The final section in Chapter Two discusses a case of decision-making by which the positioning of this research in relation to traced destabilizations

in the dialogic contents, material presence, and meeting routines begins to be shown. In a theoretical perspective, certain ideas from relevant disciplines are introduced within this chapter, with the main aim of positioning the research.

In Chapter Three, which mainly concerns methodology, I expand on what I have introduced in the present chapter. A theoretical background based on my main methodological approaches for collecting, presenting, and analysing the data is provided in Chapter 3, which thus has three subsections devoted to ethnographic approaches, controversy, and narrative respectively, supported by two sections about ANT as a main repertory for sensing interaction with matter, and a short note about situatedness as part of the methodological approach. With this chapter ends the first main part of the thesis, which is about the positioning and explanation of the type of research conducted here.

After examining my initial observations, in the second part of this thesis I present destabilizations as roughly addressing three main domains, dividing the following three chapters in this second part: Chapter 4 focuses on human talking and acting; i.e. in procedures during meetings where dialogue and acting tactics are revealed as also engaging networks outside of the meeting room. In Chapter 5, I demonstrate how physical matter and technologies that are part of decision-making processes may trigger destabilizations and influential moments. In Chapter 6, I examine the process from a more diverse, or heterogeneous perspective, albeit with slightly more focus on how modes of ordering have an effect on the ways the meeting event proceeds. Each of the three chapters of the second part thus has a dominant or focused type of destabilization; however, it is important to note here that in practice, every meeting event of course contains a mix of all types of actors and several types of destabilizations (some of which are left unanalysed, while others are more in focus). The analytical discussions in these chapters have been incorporated with theoretical supportive studies about organizations, meetings, or planning in general, still with an overall attempt to extend beyond merely human actions and be more sensitive towards materials with ANT-related concepts. Each chapter in the second part ends with a postlude that summarizes the analytical discussions by highlighting significant traced moments and expanding to general concepts in planning theory and other theoretical insights.

The concluding part of this thesis contains first of all conclusions regarding what have been gained from the analytical investigations, highlighting some remarks about the planning setting, the adopted methodological approaches, and how the results of this research can contribute to the practical and theoretical field, informing possible

future research. The concluding discussions also illuminate some principles that can be described as significant figures of thought that have emerged from studying the decision-making of an institutional body, and that could be pinpointed as providing a new understanding of complex processes. A couple of brief notes are made about time in a subsection of this final part, where I briefly recall some of the findings and link them to the background purposes and drives behind this research, as well as briefly describing some of the time-related mechanisms that have appeared to influence meetings and decision-making in this study.

2

The Planning Culture and the Local Planning Setting of Nodacity

2.1 Introduction about Planning Culture

This chapter introduces some aspects related to the planning culture that contextualises this study, as well as discusses the notion of ‘planning culture’. It contains a brief outline of the history of planning in Jordan and relates this historical review to the development of the planning practice in Nodacity. I use a planning project as an example in order to demonstrate how a planning approach in Nodacity has been altered due to unexpected political, demographic and social-cultural circumstances, and how these circumstances have recently influenced the city’s planning culture. In this chapter, I also discuss situatedness as a positioning related to the study of the official decision-making processes of Nodacity’s planning meetings.

Planning can be described as a social and an interactive activity that is bound and related to specific local contexts, determining planning issues, objectives, norms, ways and methods of practicing planning (Knieling & Othengrafen, 2015; Othengrafen & Reimer, 2013). Therefore, planning is a response to the context’s conditions, influenced by its contingencies and it can be altered across historical and institutional development. Friedmann (1967) suggests that planning operates within specific frames of organizational and institutional conditions (rules and stakeholders) that determine the scope, content, and procedure of planning processes, thus identifying what could be recognized as the planning culture. These circumstances shape what Friedmann calls the ‘main axes of cultural differences’ that influence any planning practice (Friedmann, 2011: 165-166). These four axes of cultural differences can imply that the planning culture of Nodacity is different from other planning cultures in Jordanian cities and in the world, due to: (1) its institutional context, i.e. its municipality and other responsible institutions that specifically institutionalize and enact the planning practice; (2) the specific social context that distinguishes Nodacity from other cities, related to how its citizens recognize their way of understanding and interacting with the planning process; (3) the unforeseen temporalities to which planning always relates, is influenced by, and to some extent creates itself, causing for

instance the reorientation of when and how planning objectives are stated, and planning actions pursued; (4) the overall level of economic development of the country that could have a substantial influence on other national systems, such as social and planning systems. In a brief take, these four axes show some aspects of why and how planning's styles can be different, and how these differences can be related to regulation as well as social practices of different contexts, shaping different planning cultures (Friedmann, 2005; see also Abram, 2011; Healey, 2013; Knieling & Othengrafen, 2015; Young 2008).

A number of studies of planning culture have attempted to acknowledge the local situations and micro-planning practices in relation to the institutional, legislative, and historical conditions that contextualize a planning culture (e.g. Reimer, 2013; Sandercock, 2005; Sanyal, 2005). The notion of planning culture can also indicate the social richness, values, and norms that go beyond an exclusively document-based or prescribed set of rules and regulations in planning that only covers certain organizational aspects of processes and policies (Hillier, 1999; see also Booth, 2009; Knieling & Othengrafen, 2015). In this thesis, planning culture refers on the one hand to an acknowledgement of how specific practices in planning relate to an overall social structure, thus following what Healey (1997: 37) implies when describing culture as “the system of meanings and frames of references through which people in social situations shape their institutional practices”. On the other hand, this thesis also recognises that planning culture can indicate the managerial strategies of the involved group of stakeholders (Abram, 2011), the set of recognized or unexpressed traditions, unconscious routines, cognitive beliefs and orientations that guide the involved stakeholders and influence how planning is practiced (Booth, 2009; Othengrafen, 2012; Othengrafen & Reimer, 2013).

In the following, I begin by describing some of “the particularities of history, beliefs and values, political and legal traditions, different socio-economic patterns” (Knieling & Othengrafen, 2015: 301) that have gradually shaped the planning culture of many Jordanian cities, and their statutory planning, such as that of Nodcity. Approaching the traits of a planning practice by considering historical changes can be a practical way of understanding the institutional setting, organization, and the policies that influence and are influenced by these changes (Abbot & Adler, 1989). It could also reveal sustaining and underlying historical influences on planning practice, as well as objectives for its future (Othengrafen, 2012). In particular, this chapter regards – partly through a briefly sketched planning project – recent reformations in statutory planning

as new challenges have emerged, and partly international challenges that have influenced social-cultural perceptions of renewal and heritage, as well as views on time. Thus, in the following, both implicit influences and explicit legal frameworks are discussed in order to situate current conditions. While this thesis is not intended as a study of a specific culture, the situations in Jordan, and the case of Nodacity are important here to an extent, in the sense that ongoing processes of decision-making in “planning cannot be understood except in the context of the constitutional arrangements, the legal framework and a culture of decision-making which are specific to the country and are a product of its history” (Booth, 2009: 678).

2.2 Jordan and the Development of its Planning Culture

The country of Jordan is divided into three main regions: the northern, central and southern regions (UN, 2001). Administratively, these regions are also divided into a governorate system that forms the twelve governorates distributed geographically around Jordan. Each governorate is divided into municipalities, and each municipality is governed by an elected municipal council; one of these is Nodacity Municipality². The geographical borders of the municipality can include a number of villages and neighbourhoods. These administrative and geographical divisions are reflected in the division of planning levels, directly related to a responsible institution, and indicating the scale of planning responsibility and implementation (see Table 1, p.35).

In most Jordanian cities, urban expansion has been related to changes such as natural population increases, economical enhancement, and political situations following Jordan’s independence (Tarrad, 2014). With these demographic changes linked to major historical events, planning practices in Jordan started to evolve, becoming more systemized and regulated by a legal system implemented to cope with urban expansion into the city’s lands and its resources. For instance, the early foundations of Jordan’s planning system emerged in the Ottoman Empire in the late nineteenth century, and provided an early town council system that managed planning issues in many Jordanian cities (Fraihat, 2016; see also The World Bank, 2005). This system resulted in the first Ottoman Law of Municipalities in 1877 (Fraihat, 2016).

² This and all other place names in this thesis have been changed for anonymity purposes; see the chapter Methodology.

Another major turn in Jordan's planning history took place during the period of the British Advisory (1920-1946), which had a political, cultural and institutional influence on the country's formation (Ababsa, 2011). In addition to adopting the same main responsibilities as the British system in the later Jordanian governments with regard to main enacted laws for the country systems and their political delegation, it also impacted the major planning systems (Alnsour, 2006; UN, 2001). As a consequence of adopting the British planning system as a basis for city planning system in Jordan, a British legal system was adopted in part in the First Municipal Law of 1955, which stated that the official role of managing and planning Jordanian cities belonged to the municipal council in each city (Fraihat, 2016; Meaton & Alnsour, 2012). This First Municipal Law of 1955 also marked the beginning of several institutional establishments in Jordan, such as the Village and Building Law³ of 1966, No. 79, the second planning law in Jordan, which is still active today (Meaton & Alnsour, 2012; Tarrad, 2014). The contents of the law of 1966, No. 79, were based primarily on the opinions of British consultants, containing mandates similar to those in their planning system (Meaton & Alnsour, 2012). The influence of such western colonisations promoted imported practices of planning, leading to alien implants in planning practices that did not take into consideration the local needs of a broader population (Healey, 2015; see also Roy, 2009; Watson, 2009).

The Village and Building Law of 1966, No. 79 divides planning processes into four main levels: the national, regional, structural, and local – relating to and reflecting the responsible institution, the scale of implementation, and the planning outcomes in each of the four levels, (see Table 1). These levels aimed to enable an effective and flexible planning system and management for the country's resources in relation to different geographical and administrative divisions (Alnsour, 2006; Meaton & Alnsour, 2012).

³ In this thesis I will refer to the Village and Building Law of the year 1966 No. 79, as (Village and Building Law, 1966 No.79). I will also refer to the Municipal Law issued by the Jordanian Ministry of Municipalities in the year 2015 as (Municipal Law, 2015). For a full reference on both of these laws see the reference list. The Municipal Law specifies the duties of the municipal council, or the local communities in cities, whereas the Village and Building Law is more general, regulating planning issues related to the four planning levels.

Table 1: Four levels of planning process in Jordan representing statutory planning levels as stated in the Village and Planning Law of 1966, No. 79.

Statutory planning level	Responsible institution	Planning outcomes	Scale of implementation	The temporality of the planning level
National planning level	Jordanian Government	General policies in various urban, industrial, economic and agricultural aspects.	The national level, Jordan	More than 30 years; could be contingent upon the political changes following governmental reformulations.
Regional planning level	The Ministry of Planning Affairs, the Ministry of Municipalities, Higher Planning Council ⁴	Strategic policies following national policies, though specified for certain characteristics of each region, according to the existing economic, and natural variables in relation to the distributed population in each region	Three main regions (north, centre and south), within governorate	30 years
Structural planning level	Municipalities	Spatial plans of different economic and environmental activities, distribution of land use for social, cultural, vocational and industrial purposes, as well as the definition the zones of new urban expansions.	Cities and villages	15-20 years
Local planning level	Municipalities and their local district departments	Detailed plans for certain areas of the city, in addition to decisions about direct interventions actions.	Neighbourhoods and local districts	5-10 years

⁴ The Higher Planning Council is the highest administrative committee for planning affairs. Governmentally, it directly follows the Ministry of Municipalities in Jordan. The council is headed by the minister of Municipal Affairs, with other eight members: the mayor of Great Amman Municipality, the general secretary of the Ministry of Public Works and Housing, the general director of the Housing and Urban Development Corporation, the head of the engineering syndicate, the general secretary of the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, and the general director of the Ministry of Planning.

In view of this early establishment of planning laws, levels, and systems, Jordan's planning practice could be described as mostly statutory planning. In that sense, statutory planning can be directed by official land-use plans, concerned with the regulation and management of intended objects, policies, and standards determined for different planning levels (Albrechts, 2015; Sartorio, 2005). The system of statutory planning states how land and other resources should be used for urban expansions at different times in the future, according to plans and policies that must be submitted for approval to formal planning institutions, such as the municipality and its council, before gaining their status as legal actions (Albrechts, 2015). In that sense, the municipality in Jordan could be described as an independent organization with the authority to manage, monitor and plan the development of cities and villages within the municipality's borders (Municipal Law, 2015; see also Fraihat, 2016; UN, 2001).

After many waves of immigration, planning practices in Jordan have evolved into what has been described as an impasse, since it has become difficult to follow the statutory pace of planning on each level due to the actual circumstances on the ground (Alnsour, 2006; Meaton & Alnsour, 2012). The first Palestinian immigration in 1948, the second influx from Palestine in 1967, immigration due to the Gulf War in 1989-1991, the Iraq War in 2003, and the ongoing Syrian war since 2011 have all resulted in sudden demographic increases on a national level in many Jordanian cities. Thus, planning practices in many Jordanian cities have recently been coping with the sudden change and an uncertain future linked to immigration, which has altered the statutory planning system to a more strategic planning approach that follows direct intervention, ad hoc decisions, and selective focus on what is critically at stake, and what can be done in the short term (Albrechts, 2004; Healey, 2009). Reflecting on these changes in the approach to planning practice in Jordan, and in Noddecity specifically, in the following I will present a case related to a working experience: a planning project in Noddecity Municipality in which I had the chance to participate before commencing the doctoral research at hand. The dual role of planning can be seen in many Jordanian cities nowadays; it must provide some kind of stability in states of rapid change, but it must also recognize itself as an activity that aligns with that change. A statutory planning system could be criticized for neglecting sudden changes, dynamics, and uncertainty as regards population and urgent demands, as well as the outcome of previously decided plans; furthermore, the way in which plans are determined can be seen as outdated and as disregarding current data about the changing circumstances (Albrechts, 2015) or failing to see the indirect consequences of sudden societal change.

An Earlier Planning Project: Revitalization of an Area in the City

A project devoted to a rehabilitation plan of an area in Nodacity started before 2011 (the beginning of the Syrian War). The estimated duration of the project was eight years, and I was professionally involved in the beginning of this project. The main aim was to integrate the project site into the urban context of Nodacity, and to revive its daily functions. Nodacity Municipality was responsible for implementing the project's agenda, and it received direct support from two national ministries: the Ministry of Planning Affairs, and the Ministry of Municipalities. In addition to the employees from the municipality, the working team included several architects from the two ministries. Two professional foreign planners were also part of the working team, in accordance with international agreements with other planning alliances outside Jordan. Initially, the team's objective was to align the main project area with the rest of the city, but also eventually to present an updated structural plan for Nodacity.

Before arriving at a final structural plan, the path that planning process of the project followed was uncommon at that time in the planning culture of many Jordanian municipalities: namely, engaging in social interactions and consultation sessions with representatives of the community in question. This foreign approach to planning practice came to influence the usual practice of initiating a planning process. In line with the objective, the municipal employees, including myself, together with the foreign planners, carried out a number of field studies, conducted several interviews with shop owners, and managed focus group sessions with different representatives from the broader Nodacity community. Through these social interactions, the team managed to get in touch with the needs and ambitions that citizens and communities had for their area. While an in-depth discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of participatory planning is not possible here, it can be mentioned that Healey (2003) emphasizes the importance of these kinds of social interactions in any planning practice, for their enabling of an understanding of the situated values, practices and varied cultures that can be grasped during the interactions between professional planners and the inhabitants, and which could have relevant influence on the planning outcomes and the pertinent decision-making processes. The presence of the foreign planners had an impact on the planning project of Nodacity, in the sense that they did not assume that the local knowledge of the team members was sufficient, which was otherwise common in the ordinary planning procedures of that time. Instead, the foreign planners' influence on the project made it more concerned with the population carrying a "cultural diversity as a value in itself" (Hannerz, 1996: 10),

leading to a planning approach that could represent some of the main wishes of the community in question.

After the data collection phase, several meetings between the team members were held to determine a unified planning theme that would meet the perceptions of the affected community, with projects completing the vision of a comprehensive structural plan for the city. The conducted meetings were closed; i.e. open only to the working team members and sometimes a number of architects and public administrators from the ministries in Amman and from the company at which the foreign planners were employed. Sometimes, negotiations in the closed meetings were characterized by communication difficulties, especially regarding the language difference between the foreign planners and the other local participants, which affected the full understanding and communication between them (e.g. Thedvall, 2005). The meetings followed what could be considered rational processes that start by defining problems and proceed to practical reasoning for solutions, emphasising the need for context and a formulation of intended purposes as a driving force for the planning process (e.g. Christensen, 2015).

The individual opinions of the working team's members were quite varied, probably due to differences in how the team members conceived of planning culture; this was particularly evident with regard to the foreign planners' style, which was more transparency- and project-oriented. The differences in how the planning culture was conceived of were reflected in the selected projects. Some members suggested urbanized projects for the city, such as a more developed transportation system, and other team members proposed projects on a humanistic scale, such as a walking route connecting different parts of the area. Other mixed-used projects were proposed, such as a new vegetable market. The vegetable market project would return once again several years later in the scope of my PhD studies, as I will describe in one of the following observation narratives.

Regarding the general theme of the selected projects, one of my main reflections was that they at the very least addressed the issue of how to approach the affected users' needs and ambitions, but also that the proposed projects mainly followed the values and the perceptions of the working team members and Nodcity Municipality's decision-makers. Ultimately, most of the projects received the official approval of the decision-makers of the municipality and the national ministries' representatives; following this, final consultation sessions were conducted with the community in question, in order to gather community members' opinions about and responses to the

suggested and approved projects. These consultations thus opened up new ways of working more broadly, but they also had their difficulties as regards the degree of participation. For instance, a participant from the consultation session expressed her opinion about the consultations sessions: “They only invited us to inform us about what they had already selected” (interview⁵ from the field study preparation phase). I lost my insider position in this project when I left my work there. However, as a Jordanian citizen I was eager to follow the progress of the proposed projects, waiting to witness any effects from the teamwork in which I had participated. I learned that the projects and the proposed structural plan had been postponed due to financial complications that challenged the implementation of what was planned. When I returned to Nodcity Municipality several years later as a doctoral researcher to collect data by observing the institutional meetings, I was informed that the previous renewal project had been re-opened; however, the objectives had been adjusted to respond more to the current situation, bearing the effects of the large numbers of Syrian refugees arriving in Jordan, which has influenced Nodcity as many Jordanian cities. One of the interviews that I conducted was with an employee from the planning department of Nodcity Municipality who had also been part of the working team for the project:

Marwa: So, what is the most recent planning project that the municipality is responsible for these days?

The planning department employee: The most recent project at the moment is the rehabilitation project for the ‘X’ area. We re-opened the project; do you remember it?

Marwa: Yes I do, but why did the municipality decide to open this project again?

The planning department employee: Because the municipality had received an amount of funds from the World Bank, as one of the municipalities hosting a large number of Syrian refugees. They have increased the pressure on the city’s infrastructures and the rhythm of its living activities. However, the planning perspective for this project was adjusted according to the current situation with the Syrian refugees. Before the beginning of the project, there was no Syrian War; Jordan did not have the kind of diverse identity that it has now – so we had a different theme for the proposed project at that time. However, when we re-opened it recently, the funding sponsor, the World Bank, set the condition that the received funds must be spent on social

⁵ The interview date and the identity of the interviewee are omitted for anonymity reasons (see the chapter Methodology for details of the methodology in this thesis). The preparation phase is one of the two fieldwork phases of my PhD research.

development projects aimed at social integration for the Syrian refugees into the Jordanian community. Also, the consultation sessions that we had with the local community resulted in the demand for more projects that support and rehabilitate public services in the city.

To a large extent, the current situation of Nodacity – as in several other Jordanian cities – requires that there are other important aspects for the city that need to be brought into focus. It is no longer primarily the implementation of an advanced transportation plan or a proposal for a walking route, like it was back then. Nowadays, many risk operation projects or (so-called) 'problem-solving projects' are proposed to solve urgent problems in the city, for example the rehabilitation of certain old streets, which has been categorized as a necessity for the hosting of large numbers of Syrian refugees.

From this interview, we can conclude that a large part of the international funds has in actuality been spent on small infrastructure renewal projects, such as street networks, water services, and small parks. However, most of these projects have been proposed to solve problems that arose with a population increase, rather than as part of a longer temporal plan.

The planning project in Nodacity offers an example of how the city's planning culture has coped with, and been shaped by, the dynamic cultural context, and the changes in circumstances. The project and the city structural plan reveal several uncertainties and flows of contingencies that have emerged due to major geo-political turns, varying and troubled economic situations, and changes in socio-cultural values during the time period of the development. The accumulation of these values, in addition to other underlying beliefs and the embedded influences in the general cultural peculiarities of the city, can affect the organization of the planning institutions (e.g. Othengrafen, 2012) and can shape the identity and the strategic focus of the planning practice (e.g. Fischler, 2000). In many Jordanian cities, planning has changed to become a co-operation with the situational dynamics and needs without a clear ultimate goal; hence, it has become more of a "planning of undefined becoming" (Boelens & de Roo, 2016: 43). Thirty years ago, planning in Jordan followed a more stabilized pace with regard to following with the proposed statutory plans that could address issues with patience for the following ten or twenty years. However, since around 2005, the waves of Arab Spring movements and a number of war-related crises have changed not only some factual situations in the effected cities, but also Jordan's statutory planning system. For instance, the time-span of twenty years for structural plans in Jordan has been replaced with a time-span of two to five years in the latest structural plans.

Another major consequence of the recent historical course of events comprises a number of contradictions in planning practices between following what is stated in the statutory plans, and how this is actually practiced on the ground, especially in relation to the structural and local planning levels (see Table 1, p.35). Being unable to cope with the circumstances, many responsible municipalities and related institutions in Jordan have gradually reoriented their planning practices on the ground to a briefer strategic planning approach, responding more immediately to unexpected situations (e.g. Abram, 2011). This means that apart from the need for more flexible plans on a day-to-day basis, the more stable proposals of the statutory planning are also challenged (Abram, 2014). This alteration-based and problem-oriented approach to planning is sometimes called ‘strategic planning’, and can be described as a dynamic and creative process, with ever-changing objectives and decisions emerging from new points of view, actual facts and underlying pressure from political conditions (Albrechts, 2004; Healey, 2009). Albrechts & Balducci (2013) propose several reasons for the need for strategic planning. One is responding to the emergence of new issues on the local level that could be related to a rapid urbanization process that moves beyond traditional administrative plans. Another one is when there is a perception that the traditional plans and policies are unable to address new situations and problems – especially when these situations could increase the complexity of decision-making with the multiplications of needs and views (Albrechts & Balducci, 2013). Healey (1997:5) describes strategic planning as a “social process through which a range of people in diverse institutional relations and positions come together to design plan-making processes and develop contents and strategies for the management of spatial⁶ change”. In Nodacity, as in other Jordanian cities, while the formal planning procedures within the structural and local planning levels still ostensibly follow the administrative frameworks of statutory planning, the practical handling of matters in the actual decision-making process has partly been reoriented on the everyday basis to be more strategic, either as separately issued decisions or as a complement to the main objectives in the statutory plans, recognizing the need to be more selective as regards actions of intervention (e.g. Albrechts, 2004). In these adjustments and changes to a planning culture, the formal plans and decisions become instruments not only for managing changes in the city, but they may also

⁶ The term ‘spatial’ should be understood in a broad sense here, referring to relations between different activities in a place including economic, environmental, and cultural aspects, social activities and policies (Healey, 2004; Albrechts & Balducci, 2013).

become assets for adjusting institutional practice in the decision-making culture itself (Albrechts & Balducci, 2013).

In accordance with the two main planning laws,⁷ as an institution the municipality is still officially responsible for the structural and local planning levels. This gives the municipality, and its municipal council, the authority to officially decide an annual budget for municipal projects, and to prepare spatial plans that control the location of public and industrial uses and determine how these can be included within the city borders (Municipal Law, 2015). Jordanian municipalities relate to local district departments that can be considered institutional extensions of the municipal centre, and part of their task is to mediate between the municipality and citizens in different neighbourhoods. The main municipality can include different offices, such as: planning, acquisitions and procurements, engineering departments, and other specialized offices in many municipal services, with similar offices in the local district departments in order to respond quickly to citizens' needs in the neighbourhood. In accordance with the Village and Building Law of 1966, No.79, with the support of different offices, the local district departments have legal responsibility for issues on the scale of the local level of planning (see Table 1), such as the allocation of specific public uses, commercial activities, and park areas, as well as updating the transportation and water supply network plans. They also attend to more detailed issues involving specific architectural considerations, controlling for instance the implementation of building regulations, issuing building permits, and monitoring building activities in neighbourhoods, as well as authorizing the removal of anything that violates these regulations (as stated in the Villages and Buildings Law of 1966, No. 79).

However, since these structural and local planning objectives have been proposed for situations of expected stability and predictability, the implementation of several objectives and policies have been challenged recently, and mostly replaced by more demanding issues, as was the case in the Nodecity project above. The planning approach in Jordan nowadays acknowledges what Albrechts and Balducci describe as “the short and the long term, [it] focuses on results and implementation by framing decisions, actions, and projects, and it incorporates monitoring, evaluation, feedback, adjustment and revision” (Albrechts & Balducci, 2013: 19) in the making of everyday decisions. Therefore, some authorised decisions from the municipality might be translated to policies that would influence the built environment of the city in the long-

⁷ The Villages and Buildings Law of 1966, No. 79, and the Municipal Law, 2015.

term, while other decisions might merely be interventions such as direct actions and solutions impacting existing architectural and spatial features in the city. In this research, the objective has been to focus on these ever-changing decision-making processes during the official city planning meetings, as these could, following Healey, involve “technical expertise and political astuteness. They [the processes] combine analytical knowledge and moral considerations. They demand a broad grasp, a sensitivity to a plurality of issues and concerns, and an awareness of the detail of experience and of what it takes for a strategic idea to shape the flow of ongoing activity” (Healey, 2009: 441). In that sense, what characterizes the official process of decision-making referred to in this research is that it is dynamic and does not follow a mere rational process. In such processes, the challenge is to proceed to a decision-making process that relates to the diversity of involved stakeholders in the process (municipal council members, consultants, and other actors), and extend to connect to the wider system of laws and objectives of statutory planning. These processes must also consider political, economic, and social challenges that might subject the ongoing flow of the process to moments of interruption (see Figure 1).

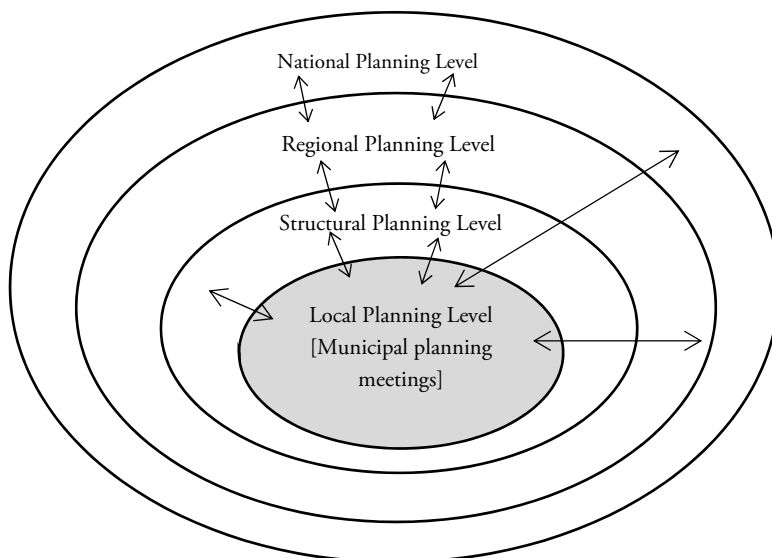


Figure 1: Schematic view of official levels of planning in Jordan. The local level is in focus in this thesis.

The constant flow of decision-making depends on “on-going interactions between facts of established and fixed rules and processes, and the mechanism used to make more deliberative normative decisions” (Legacy et al., 2014: 29). A consonance must be found between the fixed institutional frameworks in which an institutional planning practice is embedded (Reimer, 2013) and the fluid social-cultural norms that define underlying routines and systems of rules for how things should be done (Legacy et al., 2013). This match of rules and routines “is not just a process of selection and mutation” (Moulaert & Cabaret, 2006: 58) but has to be dealt with actively, creatively and interactively. The stability of previous conditions can situate the operation milieu of strategic planning (Rydin, 2012), and ensure the continued flow of its decision-making processes. In a broad perspective, the accumulated characteristics of the planning approach of Nodacity can be described as having the institutional and legal frameworks as fixed rules, combined with a responsive orientation with a strategic approach in its local and structural planning levels. The dynamics of the decision-making processes depend on details and routines in the daily business of meetings, as well as on wider contexts and specifically situated conditions, all of which merge to distinguish the planning culture.

The planning culture of Nodacity, as in other contemporary cities in Jordan and elsewhere, faces its own particular challenges. These occur on a daily basis in planning meetings as well as in the effectuation of decisions that have been made, peculiarities that impact and are impacted by the city’s emerging political and economic conditions. A range of situated micro-conditions that occur in the decision-making process contributes to the knowledge formed during city planning meetings, which can also influence the planning culture at large. The meaning-making of a planning culture is in that sense partly a self-generating mechanism, if we acknowledge that “being in the making” for planning is a rich conceptualization that recognizes the simultaneity of (a) similarities and stabilities and (b) contestation and change (Weisinger & Salipante, 2000: 384). The fact that many aspects in decision-making processes are decided due to the micro-situations where contestations and negotiations take place, and where ideas from outside are brought in, had led me to utilise the concept of ‘situatedness’ to a significant extent in this research. Each decision-making process, as it were, has its own conditions that involve actors interacting with each other to produce decisions. This situatedness is produced locally as a sufficiently stable network of legal, social-cultural and physical conditions, amounting to what I call the local *planning setting* in this study.

In this research, in addition to being the surrounding background, the planning culture formulates the significance system from which the planning setting emerges and defines itself. In other words, the planning setting – for instance, of a municipality – is both a stable and a temporal supporting construct, constituted by the setting’s activities, its intersections with other activities, and its relation to the surrounding culture (e.g. Farias, 2010; Latour, 2005). In the following, I investigate the planning practice from a primarily micro-context perspective on a dynamic meeting practice, focusing on the decision-making processes in Nodacity’s city planning meetings. I do this with a relational approach. I embrace the legal procedures, the ongoing negotiations, the personal interactions, and the organizational routines tied to actors during city planning meetings. I am particularly interested in any effectual entities that can enter the interaction of decision-making processes, including the materiality of the meeting room. Whilst the meeting room can of course be seen simply as constituted by walls defining a border towards other spaces, it can also, as here, be seen as a whole set of relations of architecture, spatial formations, and technologies, as well as other vital objects and parts activated during decision-making. In the next chapter, I will expand on how the planning setting as a supportive network provides the physical, institutional and other conditions for the planning practice, and its decision-making process.

2.3 The Planning Setting of the City

An Opening Scene

On the afternoon of an ordinary summer day, I was on my way to the Nodacity Municipal Building, where I had spent one and a half months observing the municipal council meetings. After pressing the elevator button for the intended floor, I waited for the elevator to arrive, standing on the ground floor of the municipality building and feeling bothered by the hot air pushing onto my body from the street outside. As soon as the elevator arrived and the doors opened into the foyer of the floor, (Figure 2), I was greeted by the swift and cold breeze that was being pumped continuously from the air conditioning system into the main meeting room and its adjacent offices; there was an ambience of cooler air characterizing the floor. With careful footsteps, I crossed the foyer’s polished, shiny marble tiles, walking towards the main meeting room and wondering briefly about the status of its big wooden door. Discovering that the door was still closed, I turned instead to the office of the

Municipal Council Secretary (MCS), who was seated behind his desk. I asked the MCS if I could wait in the office until the meeting was scheduled to start. He welcomed my request, and I sat down on one of the waiting chairs arranged in front of his desk. Waiting inside the MCS's office had become my habit during the observation period; it became my routine prior to almost every municipal council meeting, just as it was for many other attendees, Municipal Council Members (MCM) or municipal department managers. They sat there, talking and exchanging updates from the past week while they waited for the municipal council meeting to start. Sometimes, they showed their anticipation of the meeting events and its decisions, asking MCS about the agenda that had been prepared and the issues that would be addressed.

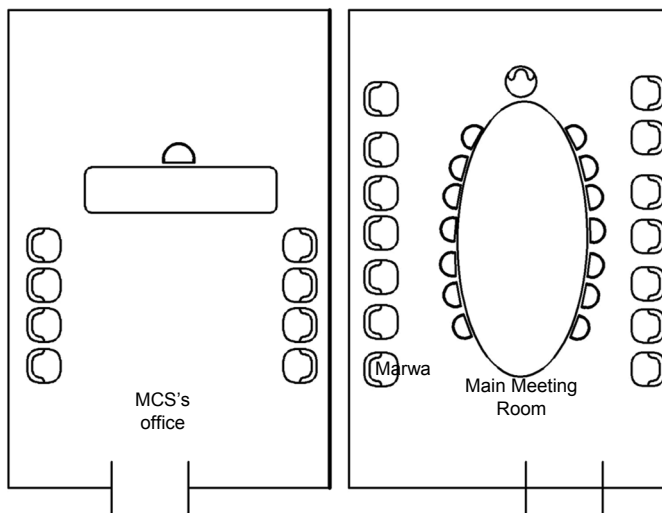


Figure 2: An approximate sketch by the author of a municipal office (MCS's office), and a normal meeting room (e.g. Nodecty Municipality).

As usual on that day, while the MCMs and department managers were sitting inside the MCS's office, busy with their pre-meeting talks and waiting for the meeting room to be opened, the MCS called one of the janitors and, handing him the meeting agenda, said: "Please open the door and prepare everything, the meeting will soon start". Then the MCS turned to me: "They will open the door if you want to wait inside the meeting room". I took his suggestion, especially since the latter's office had become too crowded with the now-large number of MCMs and department managers having their talks and discussions. I exited the MCS's office and walked towards the meeting room, pushed the slightly closed heavy rail of the big wooden door, and after managing to open it,

entered the rectangular room and sat down in my usual spot in the row along the left wall; I had managed to reserve this seat by occupying it during most of my observations of the meeting's events. Inside the room, the temperature was lower still than it had been outside; a continuous cold air flowed into the room from the air conditioning units, actively replacing any hot air that had managed to invade the room from outside. I settled into my chair, preparing my notebook and pen for my observations. From that chair, I was able to see most angles of the room whilst observing the meeting's interactions. Positioned beside the big wooden door, it was also a good location for my observations since it lay beyond most attendees' field of view. My intention was to not change this spot, in order to become as much as possible a 'fixture', a taken-for-granted element of the room's interior, just as the chair I was sitting on – I did not want to disrupt any procedures with my presence and my observations. After waiting inside the room for some time, the door opened again, pushed by one of the janitors, who entered the room with other janitors. They rushed in and out of the room, wiping and cleaning the chairs arranged around the big elliptical central wooden table. The chairs around the table were distinguished by their shiny leather covers, with extra padding in the back and seat areas; they easily rotated in 360 degrees on the four small steel wheels attached to their four legs. One of these chairs was more special than the others. It was placed between two flags at the end of the table – the municipality's flag, and the Jordanian flag. The special chair had similar characteristics as the other chairs; however, the head support in the back was longer.

The janitors cleaned and checked every chair carefully, arranging them in their usual positions around the table, and sliding them under it after they had ensured their cleanliness. Each chair placed at the table was accompanied by a paper copy of the meeting agenda, and a glass of cold water was placed on the table. When it was made certain that every chair, paper, and water cup were in position, the swarm of janitors made a quick turn, checking the other chairs dispersed along the left and the right walls of the room. The chairs along the wall were more stable, their stationary legs surrounding the other chairs and the central table. A short while passed before the slightly closed door was opened again by one of the MCMs who had been sitting in the MCS's office. The MCM entered with a group of MCMs, who greeted me and sat on their assigned chairs around the big wooden table, checking the paper copy of the meeting agenda on the table. Every now and then the door opened and MCMs or

department managers entered the room. During the moments when the door was ajar, I spotted other groups of MCMs and managers still standing on the threshold in front of the meeting room waiting for their meeting colleagues to come, shaking hands, and talking with each other. One of them was the MCM of Downstage District, talking to a citizen who was giving her a paper that was probably needed for a discussion in the municipal council meeting to come, or perhaps it was for the next local committee meeting, which this MCM usually headed herself. I recalled that I had seen this visiting citizen before, probably during one of the Downstage District's committee meetings – the local meetings that I attended most often during the period of my observations. I used to go to the Downstage District's committee meetings once a week at the morning, and sometimes at noon; the exact time of the meeting depended on the number of committee members present. These local committee meetings took place in a room located on one of the floors of a building within the boundaries of Downstage District; they were held in the Downstage District manager's office. Usually, the committee members of local meetings such as these were sitting in their few assigned chairs around a rectangular table placed in the second part of the room office. Now, in the main municipal building, my memory was jogged by the citizen that I felt that I had seen before, and I recalled this local district room and the fact that most of the MCMs sitting at the meeting table were also members or chairpersons who headed their local district committee meetings.

I was still waiting for the municipality council meeting to start. I had an eye on my watch; it was 14:00, but there was still no order in the room. The door was still ajar, occasionally permitting actors (MCMs and department managers) to flow from between the inside of the room and the outside, threshold space. After a while, the slightly closed door was held open for a slightly longer period of time, as if someone was holding the door with his/her hand. It was the MCS, holding the door with the portable microphone in his hand that he had to check in prior to each municipal council meeting. Turning on the transmission button at the lower edge of the microphone, and holding it near to his mouth, he said: "Hello, hello, one, two, three" – making sure that the microphone was wirelessly connected and synchronized with the main transmitting station beneath the meeting table. Attached to this transmitted station, there are two fixed microphones, in front of the special chair – the focal chair – at the end of the table. After the MCS had made sure that his words would

be audible, he left the doorstep, releasing the door rail after closing the door, keeping the cold air trapped inside the room. The door opened suddenly yet again – it was the vice chairperson, who entered the room quickly and walked hastily from the left side of the room towards his slightly off-centre position at the meeting table. Passing through the MCMs who were still standing and the managers who were still busy with their greeting rituals and small talk, the vice chairperson said a quick hello to me and to everyone he encountered on his hasty journey to his position. The MCS then opened the door again, holding his portable microphone and the big green meeting agenda book in which he usually documents the meetings and the decisions made. With his technological devices and the agenda book, the MCS entered the room and closed the door behind him, as if trying to control the flow of actors and to put an end to the disorder of people being both outside and inside. Before the MCS was able to proceed to his position at the table, one of the MCMs standing in front of the door inside the room stopped him. The interfering MCM was talking on the phone, probably with another MCM, since his question to the MCS was about one of the meeting procedures: “Wait, wait, I want to ask you something: Is it the chairperson who is going to steer today’s meeting, or is it the vice chairperson (pointing)? The MCM ‘XX’ is asking and wants to know before coming to the meeting”. The MCS did not answer the question; he just left the MCM on his phone and continued walking towards his position at the table beside the special chair.

It seemed like the sequence of entrances – the MCS’s entrance with his technology and his agenda book, the vice chairperson’s entrance, and the long duration of a closed door – managed to discipline the disorderly situation, and prompted the rest of the MCMs and the municipal department managers to enter the room on the assumption that the meeting would soon officially start. They entered the room and stood in front of their chairs, continuing their hello rituals and bringing their small talk into the meeting room. The MCMs usually find their chairs at the same positions at the meeting table as they left them at the end of the last meeting. Even if the chairs were moved slightly by the janitors cleaning them, the MCMs usually would recognize their assigned chairs again through certain signs. For instance, some chairs have plastic covers on their legs, and other chairs have their seats partly tilted.

Speaking into his portable microphone, the MCS tried to start the meeting: “Everyone please take a seat in your assigned chairs and let us

start the meeting; the vice chairperson is here, and we have to finish the discussions on the meeting agenda today”. However, he still did not succeed in bringing order to the meeting; everyone continued talking. Instead, the vice chairperson took the opportunity to speak through the microphone borrowed from the MCS: “Please have a seat; it is important to start the meeting, the chairperson will come in any moment”. I was waiting for the entrance of the chairperson, which usually finally settled the meeting procedures in order to actually start the discussions. However, the latter’s entrance usually had its own preparatory moment, an unspoken sign that I am not sure if anyone else was aware of than myself and the chairperson with his delegated eyes (usually one of the floor janitors). This implicit sign was evident to me as an inquisitive outsider when it was repeated as a ritual preceding the chairperson’s entrance: the janitor opening the main big wooden door and standing there for a while. He was counting the attending MCMs, moving his head, keeping his eyes on each MCM inside the meeting room, and whispering the numbers while counting them, probably confirming that the number of MCMs was sufficient to legally start the meeting, before informing the chairperson of this fact.

The attempts by the MCS and the vice chairperson to discipline everyone and everything inside the room with the closed door and the assigned chairs were unsuccessful. Their explicit attempts to announce through their microphones that the meeting would soon be opening and a stable atmosphere was necessary to start the day’s discussions were to no avail. After the janitor had stood in front of the door for a while and counted the MCMs inside the room, the small door on the side of the room was suddenly opened by the chairperson. The chairperson swung the door open wide, stood still for a short while in front of the door, and then continued walking to his central position, to his special chair between the two official flags. He sat on his chair, re-orienting the two fixed microphones towards his central position, near his mouth. With the chairperson’s entrance, most of the chairs around the table and behind it were finally occupied by their sitters, who turned to face the chairperson, waiting silently for him to announce the meeting’s start. The chairperson approached the two microphones in front of him, and said in a firm tone of voice: “Okay, let us start the meeting now”.

A Situatedness Approach to Meetings

The above narrative is a rendering of the main events that usually occur before every municipal council meeting in Nodacity Municipality. It describes a number of activities performed by actors – human as well as non-human – that are generally part of the formation of meetings: the Municipal Council Member (MCM), the Municipal Council Secretary (MCS), a chairperson, janitors, meeting agenda, table, chair, door, microphone, air conditioning, etcetera. Together, they interact and integrate in order to prepare for the municipal council meeting, as well as paving the way for its discussions and the decision-making processes. This first part of this chapter discusses spatial, institutional, and dialogical conditions that could be provided by the planning setting's micro- and macro-relations, stabilized through the actors' performances. In the second part of this chapter, exemplified by a specific meeting event, the discussions depict how a decision-making process can usually proceed, where issues of public interest are taken up to be institutionally implemented by following certain rules and routines, performed by the activation of certain traditional roles in the meeting, but also how the meeting can be influenced by circumstances that suddenly emerge as part of the frame generated by the planning setting itself.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the dynamism of decision-making process in Nodacity Municipality could be influenced by macro-conditions from the context of planning culture and the wider system of planning laws, thus bringing to the table various political, economic, and social challenges in the city. We must suppose – anything else would be unlikely – that this dynamism is also conditioned by the micro-process of the meeting itself through the relations between involved members and stakeholders, shaped by their individual cultural perceptions, identities, and societal roles. Looking into these conjoined macro- and micro-conditions and how they develop during meetings from a narrow – even deliberately myopic – point of view defines a local situatedness approach of this research. This approach can delimit the overload of actors that could otherwise be taken into account, where everything and everyone in a political or geographical realm could hypothetically be seen as connected, affected, and influencing the dynamism of the decision-making process. A close situatedness approach also makes this study a more general one, since as part of a method, the perspective itself can be applied to other contexts as well (e.g. Haraway, 1991).

The situatedness approach inevitably puts my study into the realm of what occurs before my eyes, which I described both during and after the observations of meetings. The emphasis is thus on the appearance of the institutional, dialogical, and

spatial conditions that were actively involved, shaping, influencing and becoming influenced by the decision-making process underway. Situatedness can indicate the involvement of the investigated study with symbolic and material conditions embodied by the context, emphasizing “the quality of contingency of all social interaction” (Vannini, 2008: 580). The context, here the planning setting, is then not merely an organizational or cultural container, but could be described as dynamically integrated, comprising a manifold of relations (Wagenaar, 2006). It could also be said that the planning setting is a supportive network of relations including institutional, spatial, and other emanated relations, here from the planning culture of Nodcity, that could support and provide the conditions for the decision-making process. Furthermore, the setting could be identified as a specific situation that encompasses both the status of stability and the ongoing dynamism. With stability, the setting provides the conditions that are usually necessary for a smooth progression to official decisions. Through its dynamism, the setting – if it survives – encompasses the handling of ‘destructive’ moments, when the dialogical, institutional, and material conditions spontaneously emerge, and makes the process continue in any relevant direction. For this research then, “[t]he term ‘setting’ thus transcends the dichotomy between the image of context as fixed, [...] and the ethno-methodological notion of context as purely constructed in the interactive experiences of actors. Setting encompasses both” (Wagenaar, 2006: 63).

From a broader perspective, the continual interplay between an expected decision-making process and the various, sometimes unforeseeable, conditions provided or suddenly revealed by the planning setting’s relations can be described in relation to what Healey refers to as the ‘social order’ of institutional dynamics (e.g. Healey, 2003; 1997). Healey (2003) describes this order as continuously emergent and as an effect produced by dialectical tensions between contextual decisive forces (in this case, the setting) interacting with an active agentic body (in this case, the ongoing meeting). She emphasises the importance of detailed analysis of this interplay: “explanations have to be grounded in rich analysis of specific institutional contingencies and specificities” (Healey, 2003:111). Healey’s point as a planning theorist aligns here with the Actor-Network Theory view that the social order of the planning setting is defined and stabilized through the interaction of working relations between human and non-human actors involved in the decision-making processes (e.g. Beaugard, 2015; Latour, 2005; Law, 2009a). Healey’s point here can be taken to mean that the identities of varied actors of the planning setting, and the micro-events of the decision-making process are also relationally constructed in interactions that shape and are shaped by various actors and their relations (Healey, 2013). Therefore, all of the bits and pieces

in the narrative above – not only the voices and actions of the formal representatives – must do their job and continue to perform, as some kind of informal, yet effective ‘stakeholders’, in the sense that they bring in their external relations (leading to the outside of the physically defined room) to temporally stabilize, situate, disturb and support the decision-making process. In the following text, and as shown in the narrative above, I discuss what/who these kinds of stakeholders are: their relations, and their roles in preparing and pursuing the collective act constituted by a meeting event.

Localities

One of the primary explicit conditions that the planning setting could provide for the meetings and its decision-making processes is the physicality and defined spaces necessary; here, this function is primarily represented by the main municipality building, which houses the official institution for planning. The current municipality building has the same typical characteristics as any modern official governmental building in Jordan: it is a concrete building with white façades and small black windows. The municipality represented by this building appears also as a formal societal entity with a clear identity kinship with other organizational institutions in Jordan; there are clear boundaries, power territories, and special selective tasks that define its authority (e.g. Brunsson, 2007). This identity also indicates the institution’s governmental position in planning matters. From one perspective, of course, it is simply a designed physical construction with meeting rooms. However, drawing on how the setting can relate to an expanded network that influences the practice of planning, the junction of physical space (impact of size, shape, and materiality), legal framework (officially determined), and communicative conditions are what provide the opportunity for the planning practices, and the related decision-making. The institutional building of Nodacity Municipality with its specialized offices (p.42) comprises many spaces where planning issues are continuously tackled through discussions, problem-solving interventions, and the formulation of short-term tactics, as well as long-term strategies. These spaces in the municipality building, in addition to spaces in the responsible local district departments, could be described as the arena of planning struggles (Healey, 1993), where “[t]he arena is the place or field where actors meet and interact. It is the place where a specific group of actors make choices on the basis of their perceptions of problems and solutions” (Gils & Klijn, 2007: 142).

As shown in the earlier narrative, apart from the main meeting room, there are other interior spaces in this building in which meeting attendees can unofficially

convene, discuss, and anticipate meetings' decisions. This is often done immediately prior to and following the scheduled meeting time. One such intermittent time-space location is the small office room of the MCS, where attendees of the meeting can talk, anticipate upcoming events or sign in to confirm their attendance before the actual meeting event. Other spaces of this kind include the lead-in, outdoor space in front of the entrance, as well as the foyer space behind the main entrance door. Furthermore, spaces inside – such as the main elevator waiting space, the chairperson's office, and his secretary's office – could work socially as preparatory spaces for the pending official decision-making process. Besides socially preparation for the meeting event and its decision-making processes, these spaces also represent institutional functions, such as the MCS and the chairperson. They thus symbolically and pragmatically support the meeting events as well as their preparations and proceedings. These offices stand apart from the rest as physical indicators of the planning setting network, providing the spatial conditions not only for the official decision-making processes, but also for informal supportive preparations. As informal spaces (right before meetings for instance), they can play an important role in relation to establishing social relations (Asmuß & Svennevig, 2009).

All of the localities for preparatory meetings are gathered in a single spatial structure: one floor of the municipality building. Spatially, this floor also holds the main arena of negotiation and struggle, namely the meeting room, which provides the physical conditions, and officially situates the decision-making processes when it comes to city planning in Nodecity. The specificity of the meeting room floor that contains these spaces (the MCS's office, the chairperson's office, and the meeting room) is reflected in the explicit material choice that indicates the symbolic significance of this floor and its spaces; for example, the shiny marble flooring, the extensive decorations of the wooden doors, and the cold breeze emanating from the air conditioning system. One could say that the relation between these exquisite material specificities, the location of the floor's spaces, and their institutional functions contributes to the construction of certain value and meanings, such as the importance (Müller, 2015; see also Marres & Lezaun, 2011) relating to the main event of the municipal council meeting and its formal decision-making process.

As sketched in the previous chapter, the slow evolution – as well as the quick-fix character – of official decisions demanded by the condition of the overall planning culture is officially handled here, in the main meeting room (Figure 3), where the MCMs and the municipal department managers, with their different interests, can

gather regularly – ordinarily once a week, as mutually agreed upon by the members. The usual attendees of the meetings are MCMs, the chairperson and secretary, municipal department managers, and other municipal employees who can be seen together as virtually playing a unified decision-maker role, representing strategic planning issues for Nodecity. As I argue in this thesis, not only these official stakeholders, but their interaction with the physical extensions of the meeting room, the physical artefacts and technologies inside it, can determine how meeting dialogues unfold, and how official decision-making proceeds. Certain details of meeting rooms' furniture, such as: position, size and shape of the table, and arrangements of chairs around it, have been pointed to in some organizational and meeting studies (e.g. Asmuß & Svennevig, 2009) discussing their roles and effects in conveying communicative aspects in dialogues. In this thesis I have focused more on socio-material entanglements, letting the capacity of these objects, like chairs and table, appear without their given ordinary roles. As a consequence of this argument, my method is also formed so as to pay specific attention to such roles. Before elaborating on methodology, however, in the following I will provide a more in-depth description of the role of the various parts of the setting, its details, and how it interacts with the meeting participants.



Figure 3: An approximate sketch by the author of a normal main meeting room (e.g. Nodecty Municipality).

Ordering, Rules, and Roles

Together, the physical elements of the main meeting room's space and the human acts performed within it establish the meeting's routines and its dialogue with their relations and interactions, and this ensemble of actors produces its own collective geography of associations, which are specific to every decision-making situation (e.g. Farias, 2010). For instance, the meeting room can formally attach an open-door status to the meeting procedures and routines, thus welcoming outsiders to participate in the meeting discussions. Or, a closed meeting room door can officially prevent anyone or anything from interfering in the meeting discussions, thus prohibiting direct, citizen-oriented dialogue. Such a combinatory performance of enabling or constraining the meeting appears to provide an opportunity to exercise power (e.g. Hardy & Thomas, 2015).

As described in the narrative above, the preparations for the meeting and the necessary objects are the responsibility of a group of janitors. Every week, for instance, they usually arrange the chairs around the big elliptical wooden table according to

routines and mutual agreements. That way the chairs are assigned to their occupiers; i.e. the MCMs that officially represent different local districts.⁸ The elected chairperson occupies the last chair, located at the end of the table. The arrangement of MCMs, their assigned chairs, and the centrally positioned table can also be seen as parts of one ‘formal stabilized body’⁹ (Foucault, 1977; see also Hardy & Thomas, 2015) officially bestowed with the power to make decisions.

During the municipal council meetings, municipal department managers can join the MCMs by claiming the scattered chairs along the two sides of the room, and from those positions support the decision-making process during the meeting, providing technical consultations when they are needed. Such technical consultations and the regularity by which they appear during a decision-making process can vary depending on the issue being discussed. Furthermore, the type of technical consultation needed requires the attendance of the specialized department manager in the specific issue, and s/he is usually notified beforehand by the MCS. The attendance of department managers in the meetings is part of the routine, since according to the Municipal Law, 2015, when necessary, the MCMs and the chairperson are to vote on or determine the final decisions after consultation with the relevant department managers. According to my observations, a certain number of department managers usually attend every meeting, for example the law department manager and the engineering department manager, since issues related to their departments are frequent. This also means that they get an overview of a range of issues, and they have an opportunity to link their specific competence to more general issues, and can perhaps predict certain otherwise obscure effects in the complex network of planning a city.

The MCMs are representatives elected by the communities¹⁰ of local districts. They are the official decision-makers at every meeting, and according to the Municipal Law, 2015, they are not required to be professional planners or to have a relevant

⁸ In some densely populated districts, there are two MCMs in one local district committee, such as in the case of the Downstage District.

⁹ In relation to Foucauldian understandings of the institutional body, Hardy and Thomas discuss it drawing on interrelated discursive and material practices, emphasizing the body as the “local, intimate, and intricate power relations” (Hardy & Thomas, 2015: 684) that space, objects and practices make together as a production of subjectivities, such as here, in decision-making.

¹⁰ In some political understandings, the term ‘community’ refers to the idea of an ideological unity of people, nation, or density (e.g. Brooker, 2003; Nancy, 1991). Here, however, I use ‘community’ more in a pragmatic sense, as a group of people who belong to a local district and thus share certain common interests, and who may elect their representatives to delegate the district community’s needs.

education in planning or architecture. The MCMs generally delegate and negotiate needs, problems and situations in both directions; i.e. to and from the municipal council meeting; thus, in addition to being present at the immediate municipal meeting segment, they have the mediational duty to communicate the wishes of the represented districts in the planning setting. Each MCM can be a chairperson¹¹ in his/her local district committee, which consists of additional¹² managerial members. These are usually the local district manager, the technical department manager providing the technical expertise, and a municipal officer representing the municipality in the local district committee. The municipal officer is changed every six months by the municipal council chairperson, in order to secure transparency in the decision-making processes. The local district committee members usually meet in a local district building within the physical and administrative borders of the local district. For instance, the Downstage District's committee members mutually agreed to meet once a week in a meeting room in a rented building in the Downstage District. Nodacity Municipality rented this meeting space for its good location within the district, and renting space there makes it easy for the municipality to uphold a certain level of economy, size, and presence in this densely populated area.

Generally, the discussions at the municipal council meeting can officially start whenever a number of recognized routines and conditional rules have been fulfilled, but most importantly, at the official meeting time.¹³ For instance, the presence of a meeting agenda, a working microphone, and MSC are essential to initiate the meeting discussions, in accordance with agreed routines. Also, the presence of a legal number of MCMs¹⁴ and a chairperson or vice chairperson heading the meeting procedures is legally indispensable, according to the Municipal Law, 2015. These conditional rules

¹¹ In the event of two municipal council members representing a single district – which can be the case in a densely populated district – the member who receives the highest number of votes heads the local district committee (Ministry of Municipalities, 2015).

¹² The number of local committee members can be four or five: five if the densely district is represented by two municipal council members, and four if the district is represented by a single municipal council member.

¹³ The official meeting time for the weekly municipal council meeting was 14:00, though, whenever this time was changed due to unexpected circumstances, the amended time was announced when the MCMs and chairperson had agreed on it beforehand. The official meeting time for the Downstage District's committee meeting was at 11:00, also once week, and any change was announced to the committee's members.

¹⁴ The Municipal Law, 2015 states that the legal number for the main municipal council and local committees' members must be at least a third of the total number of members. The number must be present in order for a legal meeting, i.e. for legal decision-making, to take place.

form part of the meeting's social order, as do the implicit routines, defining the set of repetitive performances of meeting actors (Abram, 2017). Moreover, correctly adhering to the framework of these repetitive performances can lend the meetings credibility (Schwartzman, 1989). Actualizing these rules and routines can also demand interactions with the room's objects, such as the janitors' checking and arranging the chairs, water glasses, and other supportive materials before the meeting time. In addition, some situations show a consistency as regards certain interactions between routines, rules, and objects, and interplay that can be decisive for the meeting procedure; an example is the slightly ajar or completely closed door after the MCS's final entrance from which it can be inferred that the meeting will soon commence. Another example is the correspondence between every assigned chair, its position around the table, and its occupant, which also influence the stability of conditions and confirm the role that every occupant holds in relation to a specific chair during the meeting. Also, the welcoming and greeting rituals prior to the meeting could have a triggering effect on the formal meeting discussions. The relations between a routine, a rule and the physical objects needed before and during the meeting convey meaning through the agency they release in specific moments (Latour, 2005; see also Magnusson, 2016) – agency that can trigger further accidental events in some situations, (Ribes et al, 2013) and this may influence the subsequent meeting procedures. In later chapters, I will show more precisely how such successive agency may emerge and proceed. As we shall see in the following, the setting is also present in the dialogical parts of the meeting; I will touch on this in the next sub-chapter, and relate it to theory that deals more explicitly with dialogue and decision-making.

2.4 The Official Decision-Making Process

After fulfilling the set of rules, routines, and positions of actors in the room, the discussions of the official decision-making process can start. This section describes the main focus of observations in this research, namely, the decision-making process during the official meeting time. Supported by details from an observed event relating to a concrete case of planning in Noddecity Municipality, I describe how a typical decision-making process can proceed institutionally and routinely when everything and every attendee adheres to the usual rules and routines during discussions in the various parts of the meeting agenda. First however, there is a brief overview of some theoretical

stances on decision-making processes in general, and of how the analytical discussions of this research addresses the entangled aspects of the process.

The process of decision-making can start as a proposal in one of the municipal offices, or in a local district department, before becoming a draft for a plan, a proposal for a strategy, or an order advising direct action. In relation to Nodcity Municipality – and every municipality in Jordan – the results of the process would not be translated to official actions in the city, unless they were first announced in “explicitly ritualized political performance” of meeting events (Abram, 2017: 30). As this research focuses on the official stage of the process, wherever I use the term ‘decision-making process’ in this thesis, it indicates the process during the official meeting time, unless other temporal and locational perspectives for the discussed process in relation to a particular situation are specified. However, it suffices here to say that not every discussion during the observed meetings resulted in final decisions; sometimes – as is common in meeting cultures in general – items of business may be topical issues for a subsequent meeting, or ‘final’ decisions may be reached, yet amended or augmented in later meetings.

Decision-making can be defined as a socially situated construct of several interactions (Boden, 1994), and as an incremental and processual activity (Huisman, 2001) in which it is possible to choose between options for further actions, concluding in the critical moment of a final choice, i.e. a decision (Langley, et al., 1995; see also Brunsson, 2007). In terms of planning studies, decision-making has been at the heart of the planning tradition, often included as part of the discussion of the broad planning process. Decision-making thus appears in, for instance, plan making as a strategic process, in the political selection of future approaches, or in suggesting proposals for future development (e.g. Abram, 2017; Flyvbjerg, 1998; Albrechts, 2003; Healey, 2007). Albrechts (2003), for instance, employs the term ‘political decision-making’ in the article ‘Reconstructing Decision-Making: Planning versus Politics’, describing it as a separate process mainly involving political actors. Here, with the help of an investigated strategic spatial planning case (Structural Plan Flanders), Albrechts (2003) reflects on the interaction between the planning process and political decision-making. He emphasizes the importance of understanding “what actually takes place in formal decision-making and implementation, in the transition from plan to formal adoption of the plan and in its actual implementation” (Albrechts, 2003: 250). During the formation of the Flanders Structural Plan and in a number of open and closed discussions, Albrechts (2003) investigated the consequence of relations between political positions, scientific justifications made by the planning team, and standpoints

brought forth by municipal council representatives. Albrechts (2003) concludes that the planning process for the structural plan was not only contingent on forces with a broader reach, but also on the dynamic micro-forces of power games played between planners (plan-making) and politicians (political decision-making). The final decision was seen as influenced by the network of participating institutions and involving the diverse identities of the strategic stakeholders. The example in Albrechts' case affirms the importance of micro-processes, akin to the focus of this research, and to some extent also includes similar political identities as in Albrechts' case (i.e. MCMs). However, the research of this thesis transcends the usual proposed dichotomy between planners and community (or their representatives) to focus more on the process itself and how it reveals influential entities of a relational kind, where, as stated previously, physical objects and spatial effects are also taken into account.

An aspect of planning studies that resonates with the decision-making approach on which this research focuses is what Healey (2007: 22) refers to as "governance processes",¹⁵ appearing in institutional settings similar to those discussed here, and describing "the routinized practices and discourses"¹⁶ of established agencies of formal government and the various informal communities and networks through which many governance activities are routinely performed". The ambition to take into account the involved networks, actors, discourses, arenas, routines, and practices is part of what Healey calls the "sociological institutionalist" approach to studies of governance performance (Healey, 2007: 14; see also Gonzalez & Healey, 2005). This approach aligns with what can be found in several planning-oriented analyses of the micro-dynamics of governance processes (e.g. Fischer, 2003; Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003). In a sociological institutionalist approach, ideas from economics, political science, sociology of organizations are combined with what may appear from case to case as the specificities of planning practice conditions in order to understand "the nature of 'implementation processes' and the relation between strategy and action" (Gonzalez & Healey, 2005: 2057). With the sociological institutionalist approach, the analyses of the interactions are often embedded in their institutional settings, which means that

¹⁵ For Healey (2003: 104), governance describes, in a relational way, an "activity occurring in complex and dynamic institutional environments, shaped by wider economic, social and environmental forces that structure, but do not determine, specific interactions". It thus generally refers to the organisation of collective actions that is not only defined by the formal laws, but also the practices of complex interaction of formal and informal relations that evolve in a historically- and geographically-situated way (Gonzalez & Healey, 2005).

¹⁶ By 'discourse', Healey means the policy languages and metaphors that encompass explicit and implicit expressions of frames of meaning for perceiving problems and solutions (Healey, 2007).

the interactions both influence and are influenced by the micro-practices, and the wider structural framework of the rules at hand (Gonzalez & Healey, 2005). With this approach, Healey attempts to capture how “the dynamic fluidity of evolving relational webs intersects with the ‘fixes’ that develop as certain ways of thinking and doing become consolidated into accepted practices”; thus, in a way, how alternative practices can “make it appropriate to challenge fixities in one context and seek to stabilize fluidities in another” (2007:15). It has become possible to develop some conceptions of governance performances at different levels by applying such analysis. Healey (2007) discusses three levels of governance performances:¹⁷ specific episodes, governance processes, and governance cultures (see also Healey, 2004; Gonzalez & Healey, 2005). According to Healey, the first level – specific episodes – concerns direct interactions between many actors in institutional sites, proposing concepts about an urban issue. The second level – governance processes – refers to the “routinised practices and discourses of established agencies of formal government and the various informal communities and networks through which many governance activities are routinely performed” (Healey, 2007:22). With the third level, the cultural norms play a significant role in providing the values and appropriate modes of governance for those engaged in the process. These three levels roughly reflect the three levels by which I have conceptualized my own research: (1) the specific decision-making situation during the process of a meeting; (2) the meeting in relation to planning setting, and (3) the planning culture.

Several aspects of this thesis align with this sociological institutionalist approach. Apart from a focus on interactions (rather than structures), the meaning of institution is seen in a sociological institutionalist approach as “expressed in formal rules and structures, but also in informal norms and practices, in the rhythms and routines of daily life” (Gonzalez & Healey, 2005: 2058; see also Healey, 2009). The sociological institutionalist approach also recalls the research approach in my study of the decision-making process in the meeting context, in the sense that attention is paid to the importance of destabilizations when “accepted practices” (Healey, 2007: 15) try to find stabilized situations again. Even though the suggestion with the sociological institutionalist approach stretches into society beyond my focus on the situated details of decision-making processes in city planning meetings, Healey’s approach can add to my study e.g. contextual dimensions to the analysis of the temporal composition of the

¹⁷ Healey (2007: 21) does not regard these levels from a traditional hierarchal perspective; instead, she sees them as “levels of conscious attention” to analytically separate activities of governance performances.

meeting, or provide socio-cultural matter for the interpretation of following protocols. Healey's interest in embedding a governance activity, such as for instance decision-making, in its transformative social, institutional, and cultural dynamics, is to some extent expressed through the dichotomy of on the one hand "planners and policy analysts" (Healey, 2007:15) and on the other, the community. In other words, there is a given division between "the state and citizens" (p.15), that is not explicated in the same way in this study, since I attempt to regard all involved actors, at least in the situation of study, as contributing to a stabilization of the process.

Already in 1969, the planning scholar Richard Bolan made an attempt to understand the influential relations between decision-making as a process, social-political culture, and other organizational aspects, elaborating on a conceptual framework "between planning and decision making in urban government" (Bolan, 1969: 301).¹⁸ Bolan's rationalist and cognitively coloured approach to the study of decision-making processes, has been referred to as the "sequenced cerebral rationality" (Langley et al., 1995: 261) by which the decision-making process follows sequential and rational steps; it starts with the definition of the problem, then choice assessment and the clarification of preferred actions, followed by an evaluation of possible outcomes, then moving towards final solutions (e.g. Clifton, 2006; Brunsson, 2007). Contrasting with this rationalist approach is the "organized anarchy" approach (Cohen et al., 1972:1), where a decision-making process can be described as a social interactive process with many decision-makers, and ambiguous goals (March, 1994). In this second approach, the steps from problem to solution follow more "opportunistic or serendipitous ways driven by the hazards and vagaries of participation in choices" (Langley, et al., 1995: 262), which open the possibilities for actors to promote interest and participation through games of bargaining, coalition building, and persuasion (Brunsson, 1982). Even if the division between cerebral rationality and organized anarchy can be seen as a somewhat constructed dichotomy today, it may serve here as a metaphor to render the simple fact that meetings, as they appear in my observations, always show both kinds of approaches – rationality and anarchy – as appearing in each case when it comes to what is expected and performed in the processes in which a decision is made. As Bolan (1969: 303-307) has already described, decision-making processes are more complex than linear classical rationality, especially since there are many actors with different capacities to manipulate available resources, and diverse skills to play their roles to influence the process. Bolan (1969) mentions actors such as

¹⁸ Bolan's article is entitled 'Community Decision Behaviour: The Culture of Planning'.

the technical expert, strategist, spokesman, mediator, and enforcer, including them in two main variables of his proposed conceptual framework for analysing decision-making processes: (1) process steps, and (2) process roles, variables that indicate both the accidental and durational effects that actors may have on decision-making process. Other variables that Bolan considers influential in regard to the decision-making process are: (3) decision field, (4) planning and intervention strategies, and (5) issue attributes. Bolan's (1969) decision field indicates the organizational and institutional arrangements discerning between formal and informal structures. With the notion of planning and intervention strategies, he points among other things to planning objectives as either short-term and selective, or long-term and comprehensive. With the variable labelled issue attributes, Bolan (1969: 307) sees the influence of a public agenda imposing uncertainty on decision-making processes.

Presented in a rationalist and confined frame, Bolan's concepts cast additional light on the nature of the areas of interest in the thesis at hand, even if my basic approach of study is more akin to the complexities of a sociological institutionalist approach that can be associated with Healey. Particularly, I see the decision-making process from the perspective of how it is situated, influenced by and influencing the meeting context, and further how it activates routines and roles, and how it is shaped by the involved stakeholders with their actions, or expressed perceptions. Most importantly, in this research I am highly attentive to the material aspects, and the physical objects that participate in the meetings' routines, obstructing and facilitating the proceedings of meetings.

The process of decision-making can exhibit a great deal of complexity, connecting different actors around one particular objective (Gils & Klijn, 2007); it is "a messy, back-and-forth process, with multiple layers of contestation and struggle" (Healey, 2007:182), and its study is complicated when "informal relations and networks create the practices through which the formal procedures are enacted" (Healey, 2009: 444). In this research, decision-making processes are primarily studied with regard to how they appear in the official time slots related to the meetings of Nodecity Municipal Council and the local district department of Downstage District. These meetings are officially defined, and constituted in relation to the network of the planning setting, and what it offers in order to make official decisions possible. Aligned with this view, "meeting[s] can be seen as dynamic sites in which networks are extended but also cut (Strathern, 1996), in situated articulations of people, documents, technology, and infrastructure" (Brown et al., 2017: 14). Furthermore, as stakeholders

bring their own institutional understandings and routines with them to these meetings, decision-making is not only about the legislations or the content of decisions, but also about “the rules of the game and a dynamics of credibility” (Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003: 9). Importantly, it is about correctly enacting the adopted repetitive performances and the officially validated legal acts that work both as constitutive and thematic parts of the meetings’ discussions, leading to decisions, and ultimately transforming them to external actions (Abram, 2017; see also Asmuß & Svennevig, 2009).

Generally speaking, meetings can be defined as gatherings of three or more people with their perceived roles, who agree to meet, with the purpose of exchanging ideas, solving problems, developing policies, or making decisions in relation to the functions of an organization or institution (Schwartzman, 1989; Boden, 1994). Such gatherings or events can be described from organizational perspectives (Asmuß & Svennevig, 2009; see also Thedvall 2005), highlighting certain situational characteristics in relation to, for instance, the meeting time and place. Some meeting descriptions can also involve dialogical characteristics that relate to interactions, such as: turning talks, roles of speech, and issue progressions (Asmuß & Svennevig, 2009; see also Jabs, 2005; Cooren, 2007).

The role of a meeting’s discursive elements in the understanding of what actually happens during the overall course of dialogue has been explored qualitatively e.g. in what has been called the interactional turn, (e.g. Cooren, 2007), and conversation analysis (e.g. Boden, 1994). Through analytical turns like these, communicative and linguistic patterns may be detected by revealing the implicit regularities of the ongoing talks during dialogical interaction (Asmuß & Svennevig, 2009). The modes of talking in the meeting and the socially situated interaction can condition not only the speech event, but also the final decision formulation, so that a “decision depends on the communicative norms of the group that is talking” Huisman (2001: 69). Huisman (2001) regards every speech event in a meeting as attuned to the participants’ identities, roles, and their interpretative norms; i.e. how they implicitly and explicitly assess the ongoing event and relate to each other in order to orient their interactions during the speech event. When it comes to communicative planning theories, we often see a dichotomized relation between senders and receivers, placing dialogue as an ideological or metaphorical centre of studies with a broad societal consideration of the planning process (e.g. Healey, 1997; 1993; 2003; Innes and Booher, 2010; Forester, 1999). This domain of studies is not linguistic in the sense of close studies of the language used, or how dialogues actually unfold as spoken sentences, but rather of the communication

act as a general model, describing the intersubjective or community-oriented character of the planning process, for instance, ‘argumentative planning’ (Fischer & Forester, 1993), or ‘communicative or collaborative planning’ (Healey, 1996; 1997; 2003).

On the whole, this research does not comprise any detailed linguistic analysis of the decision-making dialogues; nor it is a comprehensive study of the political content of the communicative discourses of the process. Both of these strands are beyond the scope of my investigations and deliberations. This thesis focuses instead on the dialogical elements in their capacity to reveal dynamic formations that activate certain situations in the meeting, taking into consideration the formal rules as well as the informal norms of the context. Nevertheless, the research approach also depends, to some extent, on the mediating verbal capacity and interactive linguistic mechanisms that contribute to the cluster of relations that determine the conditions during the decision-making process.

Linguistic actions can be seen as what appears to be the fine details of the meeting talk, defined by the ritual aspects of the meeting practices (Asmuß & Svennevig, 2009; see also Abram, 2017). According to Abram (2017), meetings are about “ritual performances in which explicit rules are enacted through tacit knowledge, where ritual correctness is met with manipulative game-playing, and formal transparency is intertwined with relational and informational withholding” (Abram, 2017: 29, referring to Garsten & Lindh de Montoya, 2008). This means that the collective order of the meeting’s interactions can be produced between the successive application of administrative acts that provide the formal legitimacy, and between the set of routines that deliberatively define the usual course of the process (Boden, 1994; see also Legacy et al., 2014). Clashes may occur during discussions between the following of rules versus silent normative evaluations of the ongoing meeting situation, especially when the statutory rules do not recognize the social-cultural conditions of that situation, or when there is an inconsistency between what is defined as a rule, or recognized as a routine; the situation can be misinterpreted by the individuals involved (Moulaert & Cabaret, 2006; see also Legacy et al., 2014).

Decision-making processes in Nodacity’s planning meetings have their own culture that recognizes how the routines, and the rules stated for planning are interpreted. This culture encompasses its own logic of appropriateness regarding how routines follow rules, reflecting the identity of the involved stakeholders. The norms of this culture are gradually acknowledged, and shared between actors, silently guiding them in their attitudes, behaviours, identities, and roles in the organization (March,

1994). Thus, the analysis of episodes of decision-making processes, including how organizational acts co-align with formal rules, is also to some extent an interpretation of the social-cultural identities and symbolic positions of the actors involved in the process. Although my observations concern above all the micro-events of dialogical content, the following of protocol, and sometimes the physical expressions of the involved members with tables, chairs and microphones, etcetera, I also attach to these actors the wider influence of economic forces and social and cultural meaning. Since such meaning sometime permeates the meetings in unpredictable ways, I consider it especially important to consider also the 'hidden' actors, human and non-human, as contributing to stabilizing the decision-making process – and not merely the actions and mind-sets of official stakeholders.

Therefore, I also keep my observational eyes attuned to entities and processes that deviate from their normal trajectories, and try to see what makes a situation uncertain, unstable or ambiguous, and how such destabilizations may lead to 'confused situations' (e.g. March, 1994). During such destabilizations or confused situations, the involved actors usually attempt to flexibly adapt to the various circumstances, and to the internal and external pressures that can redefine, reform, and regenerate decision-making, by bringing forth new parameters and perhaps achieving some kind of stabilisation again before the actual decisions are reached. A close examination of the confusion or destabilization during a decision-making process could be of significant value due to its consequence on the final result of the process, i.e. on the ultimate decisions. In the chapters that follow, I intend to trace and describe some examples of these situations, elaborating specifically on how they emerge. By following the impulses and effects of such deviations and how the different parts (like constitutive dialogical, and non-verbal, or non-textual agency such as material) in these deviating moments work and progress, in order to reveal what I call here influential moments.

The narrative in the previous section ended when the municipal council meeting began. The following narrative is a continuation of the same municipal council meeting session, but now with a description of the events that followed. This description will show some of the routines and rules that are activated during the handling of a common type of issue in the municipal council meetings.

Reopening the Kiosk

After the chairperson's explicit announcement, the meeting opened as usual. Holding his portable microphone in his hand, the MCS spoke: "The first item on today's meeting agenda today are a number of acquisition issues...". The MCS began to read the first item on the agenda, explaining the need stated by a municipal department to renew some of its equipment. He read from the stack of papers in front of him after having first presented the technical and financial details of the issue. After a moment of silence – which ended as soon as the chairperson turned his head to his left towards the MCS with a slight gesture of his hand, as if asking him to continue – the MCS proceeded with his reading, moving on to the next issue. This consecutive sequence, first the reading by the MCS, followed by the chairperson's sign to proceed to the next issue, continued for the first fifteen minutes of the meeting, as was typical during the reading of 'the acquisition issues' part of the agenda.

After completing the acquisition issues from the meeting agenda, the MCS continued reading: "We have now finished the acquisition part. Moving to the next item on the agenda, we have a request from 'Company X' about a kiosk that it owns on the sidewalk of 'Institution Y'. They have submitted a request to reopen the kiosk and to reinitiate its services to the institution's users...". One of the MCMs interrupted before the MCS could continue reading: "I think, your Excellency, that we should carefully consider the reopening of the kiosk; we want to make the users' transportation easier". With the microphone in one hand and looking toward the MCM, the MCS suddenly rose slightly from his chair and lifted the paper detailing the issue in the other hand: "I also have here a detailed study provided by the company, which technically demonstrates the area that the kiosk will occupy on the sidewalk". His comment completed, the MCS leaned his back in his chair, and then leant in closely to the chairperson beside him, saying in a low voice: "I believe, your Excellency, that there were a great deal of problems regarding the kiosk's location". Because of the two powerful stationary microphones positioned in front of the chairperson, many of the meeting's attendees were able to hear the MCS's words to the chairperson beside him.

[...]

I was trying to recall the kiosk's location in my head, to conjure up the surrounding area and the details of the street around Institution Y; I had worked in the Nodectomy before, and was very familiar with that area. I

remembered a small kiosk on one of the sidewalks of a main street that passes by the institution, but I also remembered that it had been closed for several years. On the opposite side of the street are a number of governmental department buildings.

I also knew that the kiosk sold bus tickets to the institution's users; this was probably the purpose of having the kiosk there in the first place – to in order to make it easier for the institution's users, saving them the effort and the time of going to the main transportation hub. I guessed that with a nearby main transportation service, and waiting buses on the street, the kiosk owners were not only saving time for the institution's users, but probably doing a fairly good business, too. I also had heard that there had been intense competition between two large transportation companies in Nodacity about this investment. Also, having passed through the kiosk on multiple occasions while I was working in Nodacity, I had noticed that the kiosk was functioning very well for several years before it was closed down. I did not know why the small temporal structure was left standing after its closure.

[...]

The MSC's final comment: "I believe, your Excellency, that there were a great deal of problems regarding the kiosk's location", not only made me think about the kiosk's location and its surroundings in the city; it also prompted one of the municipal managers, Manager A, to raise the hand resolutely. I was sitting beside Manager A and heard a humming about the issue while the MCS was reading it. Manager A did not wait for the chairperson to notice the hand raised high in the air, nor did Manager A await permission to speak; instead, Manager A stood up suddenly with a strong defensive comment. The voice was strong enough to reach the other end of the room, even without borrowing the MCS's portable microphone: "This kiosk has already taken too much space on the sidewalk, and it has created many problems for the government department buildings on the other side. There have also been multiple complaints by the management of Institution Y about the traffic juncture created by the kiosk and its buses. So I think, your Excellency, that we must really consider the proposal to re-open the kiosk."

During these moments of the MCS's whispered comments and Manager A's arguments, which were sudden and full of conviction, the chairperson had been sitting in his chair, nodding his head, clearly listening and sometimes gesticulating to signal that he was following the

exchanges, but without any verbal comments. As soon as Manager A had finished speaking, the chairperson leant toward his microphones, and spoke in a low calm voice, looking towards Manager A: “But is there any reason in favour of re-opening the kiosk, since we want to help the institution’s users also?!”. Manager A responded non-verbally, simply waving the hand in a broad gesture, turning the head upward in negation as if to say: “No!”. After this exchange of comments between the MCS, Manager A, and the chairperson, the MCMs began differentiating their opinions. Some maintained their support for the reopening of the kiosk, whilst others began to debate with the supporting team, arguing that they should justify their opposing opinion with regard to the manager’s arguments. For several moments, the discussions were full of overlapping voices and some MCMs rose up from their chairs while papers fluttered and hands waved in refute. I was looking at the chairperson, who usually maintains order at the meetings, but his face expression was neutral, giving no indications of agreement or disagreement. After several moments of verbal and spatial disorder, the chairperson spoke into his stationary microphone again to finally try and control the discussion: “Let us finish this now; we will vote. All those who in favour of the kiosk reopening, please raise your hands!”. The chairperson’s last sentence managed to restore order again; everyone sat in the chairs they had been assigned and turned to face the focal point of the table, where the chairperson was positioned. The last request got a quick response from some MCMs, who raised their hands to indicate that they were in favour of the kiosk reopening, whilst others waited for the chairperson to repeat himself, as he sat poised near his microphone, waiting for order to return. Finally, he: “Before we make a final decision, I can tell you my personal opinion: I am not in favour of the kiosk reopening, but I also want to help the institution’s users; I hope that voting can solve this debate”. With this final comment, the chairperson’s personal opinion, some MCMs retracted their raised hands, lowering them slowly, holding back and joining the opposite disagreeing team instead. At the end, the kiosk issue was decided by vote and received a slightly higher number of votes in favour. The discussion was thus ended, and the chairperson told the MCS to enter it in the agenda book: “Okay, write it down, an approved decision!”.

Usually, when the chairperson or the vice chairperson announced: “Let us start the meeting”, it is interpreted as the official invitation to open the meeting. With this explicit announcement, the participants begin playing their usual roles as representatives, and other agentic capacities come to the surface, for example the MCS reading the meeting agenda using the synchronized portable microphones.

The meeting agenda could be described as “supporting materials” (Brown, et al., 2017:10) that can be officially referred to as a documentation of both issues and final decisions. A meeting agenda is routinely prepared by the MCS prior to every municipal council meeting of Nodecty, listing its main mandates in consultation, and approval from the chairperson. When preparing the meeting agenda, the MCS can attach any necessary supporting documents, financial reports, plans or diagrams that could clarify technical aspects of the discussed issue, such as the technical description supporting the kiosk case above. The janitors then distribute a paper copy of the meeting agenda, placing it at each MCM’s designated position at the table, while arranging the MCM’s chairs around it, as described in the setting’s narrative. The meeting agenda in the Downstage District committee meetings is prepared by the technical department manager, who usually arranges the agenda’s contents, prepares related folders for the requested issues, and classifies their orders in the agenda book according to their priority. The priority and nature of issues – in the municipality meetings as well as in the local district meetings – are colour coded. As an agreed procedural routine between municipal department and local district departments, a formal code with three main colours is used: green, pink and yellow, each indicating various degrees of priority.¹⁹

In these meetings, any issue discussed or announced between meetings’ members must be documented in the agenda book’s ‘meeting minutes’. The meeting agenda must also be signed by every municipal council or committee member and the chairperson after every meeting. The meeting agenda itself, with its contents and its arrangements, has an influence on the meeting’s proceedings. It can drive decision-making dialogues forward during the meeting simply by its sequential arrangement (Asmuß & Svennevig, 2009). For instance, the synchronization between the total meeting time in relation to each issue of the meeting agenda can prompt the

¹⁹ Green folders represent the sale or exchange of property between citizens. Pink indicates an building permit or permission to add a new architectural structure on a property. Yellow folders indicate objections: they represent the chance given by the law to make an appeal, in a case of a disapproved decision, especially if the case is considered to be missing official documents.

chairperson (the steering role) to request that the MCS move on to the next issue, for example if too much time would be devoted to a single issue.

Furthermore, the content's arrangement could play a significant role in stabilizing the meeting's proceedings. As showed in the narrative above, acquisition issues are usually discussed first. These issues encompass a number of requests to own or purchase various material or service resources for different municipal departments. The discussions over the acquisition issues start, and are preliminarily settled, before the official meeting time, since they are mere administrative formalities to explain economic expenses, though the final decision process for these issues must adhere to the meeting format to be officially announced. The discussion of acquisition issues usually takes up 15-20 minutes of the total official meeting time (three hours), according to several observations from the municipal council meetings. If the usual routines proceed smoothly and without unforeseen objections, they involve: the MCS's readings, the MCMs listening and remaining silent unless they have an objection, and gestures of response by the chairperson, including prompts to move on to the next issue. Routines such as these thus incorporate the performing actors (MCS, microphone, meeting agenda, MCM, chairperson, etcetera) as a single body forming the meeting act (Abram, 2017), either by explicitly acting – such as when reading the agenda or raising one's voice to oppose a statement – or by implicitly agreeing with the ongoing discussions through one's silence.

The closure of the acquisition issues part is usually announced by the MCS, who says into his microphone: "We have now finished the acquisition part, so let's move on to the next set of issues..." With this explicit sentence, the meeting can officially proceed to what one of the MCMs at a municipal council meeting called "the more interesting issues" on the agenda. The more interesting issues can also be accompanied by more unruly performances as compared to the preceding, acquisition part of the meeting. It is as if the closing announcement by the MCS officially invites MCMs, department managers, and other actors to have intense moments of negotiations, objections, expressions of more varied interests, and for unexpected interferences to appear. The second part is entitled 'any updated issues' in the agenda; 'updated' relates to any issues which have emerged after the agenda was prepared, before the start of the municipal council meeting. Furthermore, it was evident from observations and papers from the meeting agenda that the list of issues in this part is generally more flexible; i.e. not strict in the sense of mentioning the details about the request, or attached documents. This means that positioning the issue in either of the two parts can

influence how it is handled, and discussed – either by following a rational or monotonous routine (in the acquisition part), or preserving the chance of negotiations, and allowing for more debate (in the open issue part).

The second part of the meeting agenda (the open discussion or any updated issues) can include several topics, and usually takes up the remainder of the meeting time. Examples of topics discussed could be a proposal to allocate funds for the infrastructural rehabilitation of a main street, or it could be a plan proposal for a new street network in an area. The issues addressed in the second part have nowadays come to reflect the urgency of the everyday challenges to which Nodacity has been subjected, and evoke the reality that lies beyond the meeting rooms (Abram, 2017), demanding a more problem-solving-oriented strategic approach for the response to any recently emerged problem or need.

The narrative about ‘reopening the kiosk’ exemplifies a typical topic that could be discussed in the second part of the meeting agenda. The issue could be described as a physical planning case of deciding the location and the function of the kiosk in relation to the surrounding urban context. The issues discussed in the second part of the meeting could also involve policy-making, or determining strategies and principles that will ultimately influence the city’s physical appearance in the future. These decisions can still be considered as one step away from direct actions; rather they are actualized actions (Brunsson, 2007; see also Abram, 2017) – in the end, before they can have a real physical effect, these formalized directives can be delayed for a number of reasons. Their implementation may take longer than expected, perhaps due to unforeseen forces such as economic flaws, or direct political intervention from a higher instance.

As described in the narrative above, the discussions over the kiosk started with the MCS playing his usual role, publishing, or popularizing the facts about the kiosk provided by the company. The MCS’s presentation defined the main argument for the decision: re-opening the kiosk. The process of making a decision in the case followed, to a certain degree, rational steps that proceeded from defining the main issue, to discussing available alternatives, towards determining final decisions (Langley, et al., 1995; see also Brunsson, 2007). The sequence of these steps can vary by following “the logic of appropriateness” (March, 1994: 58), i.e. the suitable order by which each role is performed and perceived in relation to each particular situation. Speech performances during these parts of the meetings are essential to communicate the object of the meeting event (Abram, 2017). Furthermore, when speech performances involve

dialogical insistence, such as the sentence by MCS that followed his ordinary announcement: “I believe, your Excellency, that there were a great deal of problems regarding the kiosk’s location”, the ensuing decision-making process over the case might possibly deviate from a smooth final decision. For instance, this sentence prompted a renegotiation, and a reorganization of the organizational relations (Taylor, 2006) for some of the roles in the ongoing flow of the talk about the kiosk.

Statements of an overall evaluation, like the one about problems with the location of the kiosk, may have triggered the emergence of an inconsistency (March, 1994), or lack of endurance as regards the opinions of those present in the meeting about re-opening the kiosk. When Manager A, as a consultant, expressed some preferences, it was immediately following the MCS’s statement; this was essential in activating the manager’s response as a present reality about the socio-cultural situation, and the physical, locational conditions in that part of the city. The conjuring of this reality by Manager A became a substantial dialogical matter in the decision-making process. Moments like these dynamic and expertise-based interventions, which convey statements of truth about the societal and legal circumstances, can in the dialogue evoke the view that “no decision can be understood [...] apart from the perceptions of the actors and the mindsets and cultures of the contexts in which they are embedded” (Langley, 1995: 261). Neither the MCS nor Manager A can be considered an official decision-maker with authority in the final decision. Nevertheless, as we saw in the narrative above, their contributions to the ongoing dialogues were key elements in the process and final decision about the kiosk. Initially, the MCS’s and the manager’s notes provoked and intensified the debate between MCMs (official decision-makers) wanting to justify their opinions about the kiosk reopening. The unexpected and unruly disruption of calm dialogue also required the chairperson to interrupt and play his legal role (according to Municipal Law, 2015) to restore order to the meeting’s discussions. In these moments of the meeting, as in other, similar formal meetings, the chairperson, even if otherwise silent, can play the role of controlling talking turn allocations, whilst monitoring the smoothness of proceedings (e.g. Asmuß & Svennevig, 2009; Boden, 1994).

In the case of the kiosk, we saw that unexpected dialogical components appeared, expressing realities from beyond the physical borders of the meeting room and influencing the decision-making process and the final trajectory of the decision, almost as if the real conditions – such as the physical location of the kiosk, the preferences of the transportation companies, the governmental departments, and the concerned

neighbouring institution – had their spokespersons on-site during the process. Therefore, even though these facts about the kiosk's location, the involved companies, and the concerned institution's opinions were external to the meeting room, they constructed and conditioned some effectual elements in the decision-making about the kiosk. The most influential actors in the second part (the MCS, Manager A, and their notes) were interrelated as well as connected to the conditions and situations outside the physical location of the meeting. The decision-making process in this case was then not only conditioned by the meeting's routines, rules, and objects inside the room, but transcended the room's borders, bringing them temporarily outside the relations of the planning setting. The kiosk's location, the nearby socio-cultural conditions, the regulatory institutional framework, etcetera, became, as it were, remote actors in the process.

Hence, the consideration of situatedness is of central importance here, as it can be seen as articulating any material (absent or present), and non-material aspect conditioning the decision-making process. In other words, in my analysis I pay attention to the effects of the dynamic spectrum of relations, how they can permit, sustain, restrain, push, and govern the making of decisions, whilst at the same time never being isolated from the planning setting. In the following chapters, I will proceed with an attempt to closely examine these relations.

The constitutive entities addressed in my rendering of the planning settings in Nodectity thus far sometimes explicitly worked to form decisions. Sometimes they were more implicitly conceptualized when I, in my observational capacity, was unable to see their influential significance on the stage of making official decisions. I was observing and keeping in mind the strategy “to follow the actors themselves” (Latour, 2005: 12), trying to learn from them how and when they reveal their effects, and how they affect other actors. They thus also show me how they tie themselves to associations linked both to their roles in the meeting and to a wider community. In other words, I gave myself the objective to study how several actors constitute social collectives on various scales, and various temporal lengths, with their interactions and relations. I specifically devoted my attention, in my observations or my analytical reflection, to certain moments that deviated from the ordinarily smooth flow of the meetings, or when they caused unexpected changes in the decision-making process. Thus, the concept of ‘controversy’ has been given the specific purpose of foregrounding these moments whenever new collaboration, new clashes, new tensions, relation expansions or destabilizations appeared. My research strategy brings the qualitative character of the

whole investigation a step closer to the very constitutive moments of the actor-network that a decision-making process can be described as.

3

Methodology

This thesis is an interdisciplinary research project that integrates various perspectives and methods in order to investigate and understand the topic of situated decision-making processes (e.g. Skinner 2008). The qualitative research explores the situations and conditions of decision-making through a “set of interpretive, material practices that makes the world visible” (Denzin, & Lincoln, 2000:3). A challenge for this thesis is its aspiration to capture, with participant observations during meetings, the flow of dialogues, tensions, exclusions, inclusions, physical arrangements, and acts of coordination. To do this, I have combined an ethnographical approach, with a focus on controversy, presented in a narrative style. My observations have been presented as narratives and integrated into the above chapters. This chapter on methodology provides theoretical explanations of the adopted research approaches.

The sections in this chapter follow the tripartition of ethnography, controversy and narrative, and how they work together with actor-network theory (ANT) attention to clusters of influential entities. I begin by explaining my own ethnographical position as a participant observer. I then elaborate on controversy as a methodological approach derived from ANT, by which I have been able to attend to, sort and extract important moments from the ethnographical data. I also discuss how I present this data in a narrative style in order to render the studied situations of decision-making, re-situating them in this text, and relating them to my theoretical developments. These three steps – the ethnographical approaches, controversy as a methodological key concept, and the narrative style – are used here to highlight specific moments as they appeared to expose deviations, obstructions, or otherwise unexpected moments influencing decision-making and its situations. This chapter follows these three steps, as I came to develop them through my data collection, and the subsequent analysis.

Furthermore, as in this thesis as a whole, my reflections on the observed and narrated events in Nodacity align with and interrelate to the existing theories and concepts that have been deemed relevant for the situated study of decision-making in the narratives. By reflecting on the narratives that emerged from my study of the local context of Nodacity, the overall objective of the research – apart from reflecting on the planning culture of this specific site – has been to try to identify certain influential principles in decision-making processes. Drawn from this local context, but also

relevant for other contexts, the aim has thus been to enable a discussion of possible principles in planning that are valid in, or at least sufficiently discursive to apply to studies of other decision-making processes in other places.

3.1 Ethnographical Approaches

As mentioned in the chapter on planning culture, my interest in Nodacity Municipality as an institution, and indeed my focus on the official events of decision-making that occurs there, arose from my previous working involvement there. As already explained, I spent enough time in that institution, to amplify my curiosity about the importance of the municipality's official activities. This earlier working experience made it possible to shorten the time for the research fieldwork that was later to come. Although my role was a different one, upon returning to Nodacity and its municipality building I felt quite confident presenting myself to observe the official meetings in the municipal council, and in the Downstage District. Thanks to my previous experience with some municipal managers and employees, I was fortunate to meet a planning department employee on my first day of fieldwork who could help direct my investigations in the local context and also introduced me to the possibility of focusing directly on the micro-context of the main official body for decision-making, i.e. the municipal council meetings:

“You know, if you are interested in studying official decision-making, the best place to start would be by attending the municipal council meetings. Official decisions are made in the meeting rooms – the decisions that affect the physicality of the city. It does not matter what the other municipal departments may recommend; in the end it is the council who makes the final decisions.” (From an interview conducted in the preparation phase with an employee from the municipal planning department.)

I had inquired about the best department to study in the municipality institution, or the space that situates it, in order to understand how planning could affect the city's built environment through its decision-making. This response not only suggests a possible place and an invitation to study it, but it also evidences a view on the presumed order of decision-making and how it is culturally situated.

A qualitative approach to the subject matter, here the decision-making process, can include elements of established methods for collecting the data such as: observations, interviews, case studies, grounded theory approaches, document/archival studies, and discourse analysis (Berg, 2001). I have primarily relied on an ethnographic approach, more specifically on participant observation, with direct observations from meetings, supplemented with semi-structured and spontaneous interviews. The combination of these methods permits me to “see the relative messiness of practice” (Law, 2004:18). The whole field study period was divided into a preparatory phase of three summer months in the first year, followed by a more thorough observation phase during three summer months of the following year. With the preparation phase, I laid the groundwork for my main explorations later on by introducing myself in the observational context and conducting preparatory observations and interviews. Thanks to the preparation phase, I could narrow my research scope and specify a more precise methodology, and I could ensure that I would have access to the main decision-making events for data collection in the following year. The actual empirical studies during the second summer comprised my own attending, working in, experiencing and observing meetings and planning consultation events in Nodécity. Participant observation, derived from an ethnographic approach, served a key purpose in my study, and I spent considerable time at the observation sites, becoming to some extent part of the group that I was observing. I was tracing multi-layered practices and dialogues in the meetings and in some offices, acknowledging socio-cultural elements, and recognizing physical objects and other material aspects that also constituted the social order of the observed practices. Following of these elements sometimes prompted me to make ad hoc decisions on-site regarding what to study, following what John Law attributes to an ethnography that “looks behind the official accounts of method (which are often clean and reassuring) to try to understand the often ragged ways in which knowledge is produced in research” (Law, 2004:18ff).

In order to formally immerse myself in the regular everyday processes of the municipal council meetings and silently observe their routines and interactions, I followed the municipality’s official protocol on how to approach the institution in a study like this one, when announcing my research intentions from the beginning. I presented an overview of my research interests; any detailed account of my research structure would literally not have been possible, as I intended to let the actors I was following lead the way. I found good grounds for facilitating my fieldwork by explaining the research’s general objectives to capture the features of planning decisions. I also explained and stated my adherence to research ethics in general, in accordance

with Swedish law and the policies of the Swedish Research Council,²⁰ as well as in regard to ethnographic and sociological research methods in similar research fields. Thus, from the beginning, all of the observational studies were carried out through an agreement in which the informants in the study consented in writing and stated that they agreed to participate in this study. They were also informed that they could withdraw their consent wherever and whenever they wanted. In addition, all informants were given the opportunity to read the collected data on request. In order to minimize the possibility to identify the involved persons, I have taken steps of anonymization for the names of places, individuals and the time period of the study. This means that the specific dates of the study are consequently omitted from the text. Furthermore, the names of any individuals and places mentioned in this thesis – whether of regular meeting participants, visitors, meeting rooms or geographical locations – have been changed or removed, in order to preserve the subjects' anonymity. The steps of anonymization taken do not compromise the final scientific results of this research, nor its main aim of understanding the decision-making processes.

During the preparation phase, I did preliminary fieldwork that encompassed attending four municipal council meetings: three meetings in the Downstage District, and another three meetings in two other local district departments. A participant observer method permitted me to join the actors during their actions, and follow their behaviour and relations, as well as their locational and temporal interactions (Kawulich, 2005). The participant observation method allows local interpretation of the meetings and proximity to the research subjects, and thereby supports obtaining rich details about the communication and actions (Kawulich, 2005). Through the participant observation, I was able to “investigate whether and how invention occurs through the everyday reproduction of mundane activities, as suggested by situated learning, and whether it is punctuated by critical events and tasks” (Weisinger & Salipante, 2000: 388). My observations in the preparation phase were more holistic in the sense that I was more attentive to the events that took place as an ensemble, striving primarily to become familiar with the context and to gain a full picture of the number of different actors and their roles (Emerson et al., 2011).

²⁰ The Research Ethic Act 'SFS: 2008:192' (The Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs, 2008). This act aligns with research ethics in Jordan following the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Association, 2008). In accordance with these acts, the observed participants were informed about their participation in the conducted observations, and that the research content would not cause any harm to them. They were also informed that they could withdraw at any time from any kind of involvement or mention in the research activities.

During the preparation phase, I also conducted twelve semi-structured interviews with various consultants, decision-makers, and planning stakeholders, such as municipal council members, NGO representatives, academic representatives, other professionals from Nodacity Municipality, a planning manager from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, and a planning department employee from Nodacity Municipality. Most of the interviews lasted 45-60 minutes, and they were recorded with the interviewees' consent. I communicated with the interviewees a week before the interviews in order to arrange suitable dates and locations for them, and to inform them about the general theme of the interview and questions. The prepared (thus semi-structured) questions mainly concerned the most urgent issues faced by planning in Jordan recently and the challenges on the municipal level, in addition to some inquiries about the main planning laws, and the most influential official processes in Nodacity's planning practice. The interviews themselves were not intended primarily as analysable data (neither for comparison nor for pointing out important results), but rather intended as a contextualisation tool to bring additional information to the participant observations.

After having become acquainted with the meeting procedures in Nodacity during my first exploratory phase, I returned a year later, for the second, main phase of the ethnographic investigation. This second phase comprised the main collection period for the observational data in this thesis. This time, I joined the meetings with an enhanced scientific knowledge about what I was actually observing and how to do it. My ethnographical investigations became more profound as the project progressed, with in-depth focus on describing any relevant explicit or implicit interactions between humans, physical objects, and the heterogeneous arrangements as they were structured and logically produced in each situation (Othengrafen, 2012; see also Rock, 2001). The technique of observations had now been developed into a more elaborate documentation of the dialogues, including more acknowledgment of the verbal and non-verbal interactions, which augmented the actors' characters with more descriptive details. I captured and took note of certain terms and expressions, which allowed me as a researcher to understand them, as they were used in the temporal situations (Emerson, et al. 2011). In doing this, a social depth, described through entangled and multidimensional interactions between different actors, was recorded.

During this second phase I was more conscious about my own positioning. I had a more focused presence, beyond a mere open-ended observational perspective, and the training and confidence in methodological approaches I had acquired also aided me in selecting a better physical position for observations inside the meeting room. In other

words, I realized that the impact of my presence in the meeting room as a silent observer was similar to the agency of any object, in the sense that the constancy of other objects' presence, in relation to the flow of the meeting procedures, could depend on my ability to be 'present but absent' in participation, where not only my physical presence but also my constitutional absence has agency (cf. Law & Mol, 2001). I conducted the three successive months of ethnographical investigations, which comprised eighteen municipal council meetings and twelve local district committee meetings (in the Downstage District). In conjunction with the preparations made during the first phase a year earlier, these months of observations allowed me to gather sufficient information about the case. From a methodological point of view, this period of time also let me develop my attentive and literary skills as an observer (e.g. Friedmann, 2012), so that in the second half of the observation period I could be more relaxed in choosing what to actually note.

The observations were combined with other field investigations, including eighteen semi-structured interviews with MCMs, municipal department managers, the MCS, as well as ordinary stakeholders who occasionally took part in the decision-making process. In the second phase of data collection, the interview questions were more targeted at the research's focus, inquiring about the meeting's roles, usual ways of handling the discussions, and the progression of decision-making processes, following anything of interest that emerged to complement the gathered observations. In order to enhance the understanding of certain decision-making, when the need presented itself I sometimes physically expanded the traced relations, to see how they reached outside of the physical borders of the meeting rooms. For instance, during one month, I joined a team of architects and municipal officers who were conducting field studies for a planning project in one of the local districts in Noddecity. On other occasions, I followed some matters of interest in municipal departments, specifically how they were treated before and after being discussed during the meetings. Through these extra excursions into the daily handling of planning practices in relation to the planning setting, I became aware of the importance of details for the understanding of the physical and social impact that decisions and policies can have on the city context.

During the second phase of fieldwork, the capturing of the observed scenarios (Weisinger & Salipante, 2000) and the understanding of certain incidents before my eyes became more profound as time passed, especially when it came to reveal the sometimes subtle details of moments of disruption. While I was observing, capturing a variety of performing actors at work (Webb, 2016), I let myself be guided by strategies

and tactics inspired by ANT, such as primarily to: “follow the actors, [...] describe, don’t explain and do not switch conceptual repertoires when you describe” (Farias, 2011: 367). In that sense, both ethnography as an established discipline and tradition, and ANT as an approach with which to study the interaction between humans and their surroundings, are broadly inductive, and attentive to the heterogeneity of practices, physical objects, material, and other entities that situate interactions. The hybrid constitution of ethnographical observations with the inspiration of ANT, especially ANT’s sensibility towards non-human matters, contributed to how I have understood the situatedness of decision-making in the thesis, and how situatedness supports the relational view of studying the bits and pieces of meeting events. This choice of method also has an influence on my analytical approach; I have let these descriptions guide the theoretical frameworks integrated to enhance my understanding, including some organizational theory apart from facets of planning theory. For that, ANT not only offers the development of generative concepts (e.g. Farias, 2011; Müller, 2015), but it also, as Law (1992) has applauded, makes the data collection less a perfectly structured and distinct phase and more a successive connection of different parts to the study as it proceeds. In the following, I discuss how investigations of the material sensibility can be achieved with the aid of ANT, although some of the original proponents of this theoretical perspective claim that it “is not a theory. It is this that gives it both its strength and its adaptability” (Callon, 1999: 194). ANT was originally focused on science- and technology studies, and an attempt to question a taken-for-granted disciplinary, especially sociological, categorisation of real world events. It is however not a totally unstructured approach, but promotes, at least as part of its reasoning, a pragmatic level of semiotic abstraction and ontological symmetry that allows a concurrent understanding of otherwise non-congruent levels of socio-material relations, treating all included actors, human and non-human, as having equal right as influencers (e.g. Callon, 1986; 1987; Callon & Latour, 1992; Latour, 1996). ANT can offer “a coherent framework, but may as well be an adaptable, open repository” for discourses, providing them with a compatible overall scheme (Mol, 2010: 253).

3.2 Actor-Network Theory – a Repertory for Sensing Interaction with Matter

“How to write about “actor- network theory” - a wild and creative theoretical tradition” (Mol, 2010: 254).

I will not be able to respond to Mol’s request above within the frame of this thesis; instead, in the following I will begin by explaining how ANT provides inspiration for the subsequent analytical discussions to move beyond mere dialogue between human subjects, expanding my vision and the analysis of my observations, and enriching the understanding of a decision-making process. But above all, I will describe how thinking in terms of ANT has directly influenced several aspects of the pursuance of this research, both in terms of theoretical framework and analytical method, elevating the discussion beyond mere descriptive mode. ANT has allowed me, and led me to, gradually reveal the roles of importance in a successive building up of the research content, and what could ultimately be called results. It is thus vital to the structure of the thesis itself.

ANT aroused my interest in its capacity to provide tools for investigating circumstances beyond critical views that are taken for granted, and beyond normatively constructed theories. ANT allows and encourages me to include a variety of relations in planning practice, whilst at the same time revealing an unpredictable range of actors and relations in the unfolding of a decision-making process. ANT has potential to support an understanding of complexities and challenges that planning research faces and has only recently begun to address. Metzger (2011: 290) describes ANT as having been “an influential part of the intellectual landscape of planning-related academic disciplines such as science studies, sociology and human geography for decades”. Hence, ANT has recently been quite heavily employed in planning research and urban studies with a variety of orientations (e.g. Beauregard, 2012; 2015; Boelens, 2010; Farias, 2011; 2010; Healey, 2013; Kärholm: 2007; Metzger, 2013b; 2014; 2016; Rydin, 2012). Healey (2013), for instance, underlines the potentiality of ANT in planning studies, relying on ANT’s approach of understanding the world from an ontological basis and recognizing the inseparability of humans and non-humans from any evolutionary aspect of a social network of relations. Rydin (2012) has also recently turned her attention to the possibilities that ANT has to offer in terms of concrete regards for actions, materials, and artefacts, and inclusion of the culturally manifested values and instances with a communicative ability (see also Rydin & Tate, 2016).

With ANT, my attentiveness to otherwise hidden actors in planning dialogue and planning settings has been enhanced; I have, in a manner of speaking, learned to see the world again. As Mol expresses it: “[ANT] helps to train researchers’ perceptions and perceptiveness, senses, and sensitivity” (Mol, 2010: 262). For that reason, and in relation to the general disposition of this thesis, I cannot isolate ANT’s effect as merely an analytical tool for my observations; it is also vital to my own author positioning, to how I arrange research contents in the work as a whole, and for how I make theories follow the observations/narratives.

One of the core principles of ANT is its consideration of the social relations created by all kinds of actors, human as well as non-human ones (e.g. Latour, 1993; 2005). Materialities are fundamental for the configuration of human interactions, stabilizing them, enduring their ties, articulating and confirming working practices, but materialities are nevertheless often ignored, as a ‘missing mass’ in traditional views on social relations (Latour, 1992). Many of the derived ANT concepts are built on this main regard, such as how different human and non-human relations can “overcome resistance”, keeping an actor-network stabilized, and how these relations can generate various effects as “power, fame, size, scope or organization” (Law, 1992: 381; see also Latour, 2005). It is also important to note that ANT has a crucial ability to recognize not only the existence, but the formation of social space, by viewing society as patterned through “heterogeneous engineering” of many relations (Law, 1992: 381). Moreover, with aspects such as “material relationality” (Law, 2009a: 148) relations become the main matter of focus, since ‘there is no matter without relations’ (Law, 2010). Furthermore, with this aspect of material relationality, materiality is also granted a role in defining and shaping indirect relations in/to the network (e.g. Law, 2009a; 2001; Law & Singleton, 2013). In this thesis, I elaborate specifically on networking mechanisms such as delegation, transported agency and successive relational materiality when expanding the analytical discussion of the upcoming narratives. By that, I also stress temporal effects in what objects can do, and pragmatically mean (Yaneva, 2009) in the altering moments of making.

With ANT, there is great faith in the actors themselves revealing the kind of agency they provide (Latour, 2005; Sandin, 2014), allowing, in this sense, that actors themselves make a theoretical difference, and are thus able to “create their own actantiality” (Sandin, 2014: 194). With this view, it is not solely the authoring or analysing agent that can “determine what is an actant or not, perhaps only to detect actantiality [...] whenever it appears” (Sandin, 2014: 194). In my observations and my

analysis of observed actors, I have tried to remain as attentive as possible to the actors' ways of presenting themselves, well aware of course that I am the designer of the research approach and the author of texts, and thus a spokesperson, making more heterogeneous relations appear on the stage of destabilizations. The actors help me enrich the analytical discussions in the following sections by elevating relations to the plane of observation and analysis that might have been less observable with more structured or categorical analytical tools. Law & Singleton (2014: 380, emphasis original) distinguish ANT for how it provides a: "critical sensibility both analytically and politically and becomes a way of energetically undoing otherwise hampering taken-for-granted assumptions: about the *social* and the *natural*, about the *world*; about *politics*; and [...] about *policy*". In light of the material relationality emphasized here, my investigation suggests that the meetings' proceedings, routines, dialogues, and other practices are to some extent effects of stabilized networks, the agency of which is delegated to non-human actors such as walls, doors, tables, papers, phones, air conditioning, etcetera, and that they render meanings and values, including how "relations of power, get delegated into other more durable materials" (Law, 2001: 3).

Social agency reveals itself as especially efficient through details causing controversies. As stated earlier, controversy is here linked to any destabilization of a smoothly running network, "a general term [used] to describe shared uncertainty" (Yaneva, 2011: 121). Tracing controversies as a practice of ANT could invite its practitioner to "just look at controversies and tell what you see" (Latour's response in a lesson about instructions of the cartography, according to Venturini 2010: 259). Before devoting a few sections to how controversy can work for me in this research, in the following narrative I will describe an event of destabilization.

3.3 Through the Lens of Controversy

Backup Hall

Once, on an ordinary summer day during my observations, I approached the municipal building to attend the municipal council meeting ten minutes later than usual. On the meeting room floor, it appeared as if something was disturbed that day. There was an unusual amount of MCMs, managers, and other actors that I have never seen before waiting anxiously in the foyer. Everyone was standing in the foyer, although according to my watch, it would soon be time for the door to be opened

and for the meeting protocols to begin. After managing to get through the group of people, checking the door of the meeting room which was unusually still closed, I tried to get into the MCS's office to check for any updates about the status of the day's meeting. Before I could do that, a voice suddenly rang out, stopping me in my tracks and putting an end to the crowd's intensive talking, which had been dominating the foyer space. The voice belonged to one of the janitors, who announced in a loud and firm voice: "The meeting has been moved to another place, to Backup Hall"]. Pointing his hand toward the door to the meeting room, the janitor continued: "The meeting room is full of gypsum boards for the ceiling renovation".

As soon as the janitor had finished his announcement he left the foyer, leaving behind him the waiting crowd, which began walking toward the newly announced location for the day's meeting. The new room became the usual location for the municipal council meetings during the remainder of my observation period. When I approached the hall, the same crowd of MCMs and managers was waiting outside in the threshold area. They had simply moved their side talks, their hello rituals, and their mutual news updates to the new threshold area of the new room, in Backup Hall. The door was slightly ajar, and I was pushing the heavy rail to open it, when it suddenly moved, pulled inwards toward the hall by the strong hand of one of the floor's janitors. His pre-meeting routines had apparently also moved to the new room seemingly also displaced to the new locale; he was polishing the same leather chairs, sliding them under the new table, and distributing water glasses as usual.

Moving the meeting to another room required me to choose my observing position anew, similar to the one that I had had in the original room, in order to have my new routinized position in the upcoming meetings. This new position had to be as good as the old one, close enough to observe everything and everyone, but not so close so as to be unnecessarily observed by the other attendees. I finally picked a middle chair from the right row of chairs behind the table. I settled into my new position, preparing my notebook and my pen, trying to adapt with my observational senses to the new spatial arrangements, the new table, the new sound systems, and the new spatial relations between these objects. Backup Hall was larger than the original meeting room. The door opened again; an MCM peeked inside the hall and looked around, examining the interior of the hall as I had done. He then drew his head back into the threshold space where he was standing with another MCM, seemingly

talking about the new hall. The MCM was still holding the door open and I could hear their conversation: “They moved everything from the original meeting room: our chairs, the microphones, water glasses, papers, and the Jordanian and the municipality flags”, the MCM said, talking to another MCM behind him. The latter pushed the door open further and entered the room, said hello to me, then responded to the last comment: “But they did not arrange the chairs in their exact positions around the new table, look!” Then she pointed to a chair: “This is my chair, but that’s not where I usually sit.”.

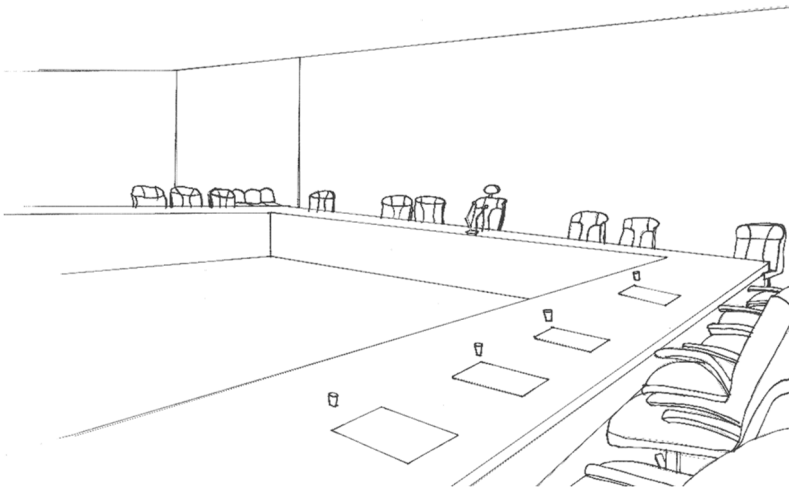


Figure 4: An approximate sketch by the author of a reserve large sized meeting room (e.g. Backup Hall).

The two MCMs left the room and left me looking at the chairs and wondering to myself “How did they know whose chair is whose?” To me, all of the chairs looked pretty much the same. They are big leather chairs with armrests, four steel wheels, and a rotation mechanism; there is nothing special about them – with the exception of the special focal seat, the main leather chair at the closed end of the U-shaped table. The janitor re-centred this chair perfectly between the two flags after extensively cleaning it. The two MCMs were not the only ones who objected to the new positions of their original chairs around the new table. As the official meeting time approached, every MCM who entered the room took a moment to grasp the new spatial arrangement. They opened the door, stood close to the door for a while, and then, with their eyes on each chair around the table, looked around, trying to find the ones assigned to them

around the table. However, not many MCMs were able to locate their exact chairs again, so most of them started claiming new chairs, estimating their original positions in relation to the chair at the focal position, the chair at the end of the table, the special chair. They made sure that their chairs would align with the new spatial arrangement. "It is all mixed up now, so choose where you were sitting in relation to the chairperson; it is important that he can see us during the meeting", said an MCM standing in front of the door to her friend before they entered. Accordingly, the spatial arrangement of the chairs around the new table changed the seating order for many MCMs, meaning that in certain ways it changed their habits towards neighbours. This was the case for instance with the MCM of the Downstage District, who sat on the first chair closest to the door and not beside the chairperson, since she had arrived a bit too late to assume her original position. Her new position became permanent for the subsequent meetings in Backup Hall. Although it was physically far from the chairperson's position, she now could have direct eye contact with the chairperson, since she was sitting exactly in front of him, at the other end of the U-shaped table.

As soon as the attendees had settled in their chairs, regardless of whether they were in the same positions as before or not, the decision-making discussion slowly began. As usual, the MCS with his portable microphone started to read from the agenda, beginning with the acquisition issues. Unexpectedly however, while the MCS read the acquisition issues, some of the MCMs spoke: "Can you repeat that? We could not hear you; we are too far away, even with the microphone". The arrangement around the table did not work well for several of them: "We must move the table so we can be closer to each other, we cannot hear the opposite side of the table, it is very big", said one of the MCMs whose position had changed. When the acquisition part of the meeting was finished, the MCS read an issue concerning a vegetable market; he did not, however, mention the location of this market: "Now we have an issue about the investment for a vegetable market".

As usual during my observations, I was watching the MCS while he read the issues, as well as the chairperson beside him, who was following his reading, nodding his head, and sometimes waving his hand to indicate that he should continue to the next issue. This time however, the chairperson whispered to the MCS beside him, interrupting his reading: "Is this the market of the 'XY' area?" The MCS quickly replied: "No, it is the one in the Downstage District", pointing to the MCM of Downstage

District directly in front of him. These whispers were probably audible for anyone who was following the meeting's interactions, as they were to me, since they were amplified via the two microphones that had been brought from the original room and positioned in front of the chairperson. However, this semi-offstage conversation was not probably caught by the Downstage District MCM, who was busy checking her mobile phone, which lay in front of her on the table. She did not react at any rate – not to the MCS's readings or the whispering, nor to the MCS pointing at her while answering the chairperson's inquiry. Since she was located further away from the chairperson than usual and outside of her previous immediate scope of his interaction with the MCS, at first she did not react when the other MCMs turned to look at her. The MCM of the Downstage District finally realized that the issue that had been raised concerned her when the chairperson spoke through his stationary microphone: "We have been not able to follow the investment of the vegetable market. Do you know anything about it?" It took a while for the MCM of the Downstage District to understand the situation around her; she dragged her chair and leant into the table, as if shortening the long distance between herself and the chairperson at the opposite end of the new table. She spoke in a loud voice: "I am not sure about the location of the vegetable market that you are talking about. We once granted permission for a vegetable market in the Downstage District, so I will look into the legal documents for that market and its location." The issue of the vegetable market in the Downstage District ended with the MCM's reply, put on hold until she could investigate the legal conditions and the exact location of the market.

Unfolding the sequence of the previous described events, starting with the changed meeting room, we can identify a number of key events, actors, causes and consequences determining how the decision-making for the vegetable market ultimately occurred. A tracing of the controversial event's timeline gives some information about effectual elements that were essential at the end when it came to resolving the decision-making situation, expanding to physically reach the city by investigating the vegetable market of the Downstage District in its context. First, there was the unplanned situation where a ceiling renovation required the usual meeting to be held in another room. Then, there were the attempts to transfer the objects usually tied to the meeting: the chairs, water glasses, flags, and microphones, that did not completely succeed in replicating the original conditions. When the discussions began, I was finally able to trace some voices

that had previously been hidden for me as an observer. The released agency of the chairs had expressed its influence through the MCMs' comments, revealed for instance in statements like: "Can you repeat that, I could not hear you" or "We must move the table so we can get closer to each other...it is very big". A destabilized relational situation had occurred between the chairs and the new table. Those were the moments when the mandatory meeting objects got their spokespersons, the human actors, to express their positions for them. These destabilizations became contextualising and influential moments of importance when the attention of the MCM of the Downstage District was brought into the ongoing dialogue. If the moment of attention focused on the Downstage District MCM had occurred earlier, it might have given the MCM the chance to recall the exact location of the vegetable market in the Downstage District that had been mentioned. Thus, what I argue for here is that the re-location of the meeting, and the change of architecture that followed influenced the dialogues regarding continuation of the discussion about investing in the vegetable market.

However, in this methodology chapter, tracing the timelines of some controversies does not merely address the causes and effects of certain events; rather, as an inspiring methodological tool the focus on controversy here guided me towards a more process-oriented issue: What were the influential moments here? Where and when they did they occur to add to the situatedness, to the turns of the decision-making process? Callon et al. (2009:28) describe controversy as a 'mode of exploration', which "make[s] possible the discovery of what and who make up society". Generally, the term controversy refers to moments in which "every bit of science and technology [...] is not yet stabilized, closed, or "black boxed"" (Macospol, 2007 in Venturini, 2010: 260). As stated earlier, it is "a general term [used] to describe shared uncertainty" (Yaneva, 2011: 121). So, even if controversy can be "a situation of disagreement among different actors" (Yaneva, 2011: 122), these do not necessarily have to be conflicts, or agonizing moments, but simply an exposure of a difference in views or actions.

The descriptions I give through my observations are explanatory for certain actions, and for how different relations emerge as the observation goes on (e.g. Latour, 2005). During the actual observation period, I strove to remain open to events as they came, trying to avoid presuppositions about what would be developed later on with regard to how the lens of controversy would be actualized in my search for influential moments. I was simply observing, jotting things down, and not permitting expectations, assumptions, or hypotheses to assert any imposed will (Venturini, 2010). The sequential unfolding of destabilizations through the lens of controversy became

possible only after I had transcribed the daily notes from the three months of observations into a 180-page file. The fieldwork file also contains interviews transcribed from audio recordings and other findings or personal reflections from visits and explorations of contexts other than the meetings themselves. The transcribed data are thick descriptions of space-time events, including the physical characteristics of the meeting rooms, people's movements, expressions, the volume and the tone of voices, the members' positions, as well as their relations to technological devices and other physical objects. I also had the chance to transcribe my observational jottings while I was still close to the observed sites in Nodacity, which gave me the opportunity to make additional insights, when extra attention to details in the setting was required to highlight, or make sense of, certain acts or actors. The transcribed writings are post-situational, but still close in time and space to the recorded situations, and can therefore be seen as part of my participant observation phase, not least because they were focused on capturing my initial impressions regarding any deviating moments. The original jottings were done in English, which made the direct transcription to detailed observation plots easier later on. However, when translating the verbal expressions of the meeting attendees included in the narrative, I used what I found to be suitable expressions in English; thus the quotes do not always correspond perfectly with the spoken Arabic.

The next step in my treatment of observation notes was the process of isolating, detecting, and unfolding specific destabilizations by reading and re-reading the transcribed data through *the lens of controversy*. By doing this, I was able to draw out some of the events from the observations that were driven by a combination of controversy, and that had some kind of destabilizing social, spatial or material effect. Through this methodological use of controversy in the sense of "shared uncertainty" (Yaneva, 2011: 121), I became more sensitive to otherwise elusive relations, to actions that were subtle but still stood out as special in the course of actions (e.g. Latour, 1992), and to agency making an effectual difference to the course of subsequent actions (e.g. Latour, 2005). For instance, in the narrative above, it becomes apparent that merely focusing on a technological device (phone) or changing positions at the table (remote instead of close) could influence how, and at what pace, decisions for future action were made. With the lens of controversy as methodological guidance, I could highlight the moments that "make specific, surprising, so far unspoken events and situations visible, audible, sensible" (Mol, 2010: 255).

Venturini (2010: 261-262) distinguishes five features by which the guidance through controversy can be described: (1) controversy embraces all kind of actors: humans, physical objects, institutions, scientific and technical artefacts, as well as natural and biological elements, which means that controversy is in itself a heterogeneous relationship when it occurs. (2) Controversy transfers the most dynamic form of the social. When controversy happens, new surprises, new clashes, or a released agency can be revealed. In the controversy, a tacit actor-network can be opened from its indissoluble state to conflicting pieces: “[I]n controversies, any actor can decompose in a loose network and any network, not matter how heterogeneous, can coagulate to function as an actor” (Venturini, 2010: 262). (3) Controversy is reduction-resistant, meaning that the actors tend to disagree on anything, even their disagreement. (4) Controversy is debated; it appears when routines and interactions that were taken for granted begin to be questioned, and when more and more objects can join the dispute. (5) Controversy is conflict in an abstract sense, revealing moments of destabilization. Venturini (2010) and Yaneva (2012) state that controversy can be a subtle matter, but that at the same time, one can look for controversy where the conflict is obvious: “[S]earch where collective life gets most complex: where the largest and most diverse assortment of actors is involved: where alliance and opposition transform recklessly; where nothing is as simple as it seems; where everyone is shouting and quarrelling: where conflicts grow harshest” (Venturini, 2010: 262). In my investigations, I acknowledge any trace of controversy, not least because one cannot know in the moment which types will actually lead to larger effects in subsequent steps. Since I sought influencing moments in the meetings, I had to, as said, also ‘reverse time’, going backwards in my notes to see how an initial destabilization came to develop.

In light of these thoughts on how and when controversies appear, I could both choose what events to pursue as narrative accounts from the transcribed data, and also see relative similarities between different destabilizations that allowed me to elevate certain moments when the involved actors were encountering uncertain situations. Reflecting on the above sequence about the meeting room changes and the discussions about the vegetable market, we could see for instance that implications from the change of the meeting’s location initiated manoeuvres where moving physical objects caused a destabilization of meeting procedures. The destabilization moments that influence the roles usually performed smoothly by actors in the ordinary stability of the network placed new demands on participation – demands that may on the one hand lead to a less clear actor role, or on the other to more accentuated actantial power, while adapting to destabilization (e.g. Kärholm & Sandin, 2011; Latour, 1996).

I have allowed the observed entities, the transcribed events, to participate in and steer the analysis, and thus I followed their peculiarities (Callon, 2006) by letting them come to the fore in a way that reflected my perception of them as causing/forming deviating situations in the meeting. I recognize them as having an impact on the proceedings and call them *influential moments*. Influential moments emerge from the situations of decision-making, and describe when events deviate in one way or another from the modalities that are tacitly accepted as norm (e.g. Latour, et al., 1992). For instance, the shift in meeting rooms in the above narrative became a destabilization that influenced later parts of the meetings' discussions, including the dialogue of the vegetable market decision. In this way, influential moments do not only have an agentic impact in a specific matter or in a specific phase of the dialogue, but they may also have power beyond that, even impacting the formal rules or the conventional protocols of governance, since they may concern, or disturb, or engage the institutional surroundings of the decision-making situation. Hence, these moments can contribute to the governance structure that rules certain relations, for instance that actors that are usually silent, or silenced, or only implicitly present in the formal acts, can be physically included. Influential moments can foreground the unexpected effects of certain mechanisms of disruption, conflicts, clashes; i.e. mechanisms at work when networks achieve a new form, when new objectivity emerges, and when subjectivity indirectly (or directly) shows itself (Yaneva, 2012; see also Latour, 2005; Callon et al. 2009). Influential moments can carry with them the decisive embedded peculiarities that normally lay outside of the considerations needed for the study of decision-making; however, through the lens of controversy, these revealed-to-be-peculiarities can prove, as we shall see, to have an effect on the processes of decision-making.

3.4 A Narrative Style Capturing and Situating Influential Moments

In the phase that followed the transcription of selecting destabilizations from the transcribed data, I had to narratively reconstruct the particular realities about influential or destabilizing moments – not only to clarify the way that they situate events, but also to articulate their specific character. I thus needed to choose a writing style that would communicate the conditions of these moments, a way of recounting that could include a lot of details from the planning culture of Jordan and the planning practice in Nodecity for a potential reader unfamiliar with the specifics of what occurs there. I had

to choose a method that would manifest the empirical reality (of Nodacity, and its city planning meetings), to depict it in the text for the reader (Law, 2004), and at the same time condense present moments by stylistic means. A narrative style of this kind allowed me first and foremost to render the factual events as temporal situations, letting their sequential nature correlate with what I had experienced as an observer (Rantakari & Vaara, 2016). I was able to construct the situated decision-making reality again, transferring the purpose and wills of the influential moments, whilst at the same time providing convincing reasoning, detailing and argumentation for what was observed (Sanahuja, 2012).

A narrative is a sequence of events in which one thing leads to another (Bomble, 2013), and where this sequence collectively and chronologically puts related actions together (Czarniawska, 2010; Felman & Almquist, 2012). Thus, the narration has the ability to successively indicate and communicate events not only to each other, but also to the narrator, as they unfold in their own processual nature of organizational complex relations with their temporality and causality (e.g. Bomble, 2013; Buchanan & Dawson, 2007; Riessman, 2003). Narratives can be seen as modes of knowledge (Czarniawska, 1995), following the causality of the presented actors, and this mode of knowledge allows for the capacity of negotiating and renegotiating meaning between the text and the reader. This creation in action is what gives the knowledge from narratives its power, and its value (Bruner, 1990; Czarniawska, 1995).

The history of narrative studies is vast. Not only literature studies, but philosophy, linguistics, semiotics and organization studies have elaborated in various ways on the constitutive role of the narrative. Narrativity has a well-identified history in the analytical work of the Russian formalist Vladimir Propp (e.g. Czarniawska, 2010). When his works, for example 'Morphology of the Folktale' (1968) were translated to French and English, they received considerable recognition from the contemporary literary study of narratives, and in later movements of comparative language and literature studies. For example, the literary theorist Tzvetan Todorov and the semiologist Algirdas Greimas made attempts to transfer the acting in recounted histories to acting in real performances (Czarniawska, 2010). Greimas makes significant contribution to the structural analysis of narratives in what he proposes with the actantial model (e.g. Greimas, 1966; 1987); specifically, an analytical approach for tracing any action (or the program of action) by breaking narratives down into a set of recurring components, or actants, such as 'hero', 'helper', 'opponent', etcetera (Deuten

& Rip, 2000; Hébert, 2018). The recent use of actantial models of space has re-engaged semiotics, but avoided the early structuralist (i.e. generalised and fixed) actor roles, for instance by merging views where certain actor types can reoccur, but other actors appear as unforeseen (Sandin, 2014; see also Kärholm & Sandin, 2011; Hammad, 2002). Such a mixed approach – of seeing space formation through both recurrent schematical actants of influence but also previously unnamed actor-types (actants) – has its place, not least in the analysis of participation in city planning (Sandin 2013). Historically, the actantial model derived from semiotic studies of folktales and narratives has contributed significantly to the development of social and material semiotics establishing the roots of actor-network theory concepts (e.g. Akrich & Latour, 1992; Callon, 1986; Latour, 1984). Since I relate quite significantly to ANT, I am of course implicitly dependent to this development of semiotics and narratological analysis, for instance in using the notion of actor. However, I do not follow any specific actantial model in my analyses, partly because I adhere more to a ‘follow-the-actors’ approach than early actor analysis did – where actions were often seen as generalizable and categorizable.

Narratives have been employed significantly in the work of an ANT-oriented sociology of science and technology (e.g. Latour, 1988; 1992; Law, 1994; Law & Singleton, 2013; Mol, 2012) in which a scientific reality has been drawn in a narrative style to emphasize that “knowledge lies in exemplars” (Law, 2009a: 145). Narratives have also thrived in social sciences studies, most obviously in the work of e.g. the anthropologist Geertz (1973; 1988) whose ‘thick descriptions’ of observed realities are akin to the concern of immediate (material) context that ANT came to employ in a more strictly relational manner. In addition, the narrative as a form structure of organizational communication (Fisher, 1984) has come to the fore through organizational theoreticians (e.g. Boje, 1991; Czarniawska, 1995; 2002; 2011), as narrated presentations have been used to comprehensively communicate the content of complex organizational cases that were tackled and reflected upon as temporally structured; that is, as a self-exploratory way of organizational communication.

In this thesis, I use narratives explicitly as a format for recounting the observations of this research, rendering the significant acts of actors in my analyses, even if I do not call them actors in the described events. Instead, I use common labels and fictitious names to depict their roles in decision-making situations. Furthermore, of course, as in all kinds of text, the layout of the thesis itself follows a certain

narratological pattern; in my case, it is a structure in which the explicit narratives help to illustrate both my basic outset and methods, and later the analyses. The narrative style used is primarily a way of presenting the selected events in a cohesive shape in space and time. This means, for instance, that I sometimes combine entries that commenced at one point in time and then continued another day; i.e. they were not originally necessarily observed as actually connected. The use of a narrative style for the observational descriptions has given me the possibility to link sequences and events, conjoining them in a single plot. I thus to some extent take advantage of the general quality that “narratives mix together humans with non-humans, causes with reasons, explanations with interpretations” (Czarniawska, 2010: 64). In this thesis, however, I present the observational narratives as more or less non-explanatory descriptions, or plots, recounting things as they were observed. So even if I make some clarifications of facts and circumstances for pedagogical reasons, I omit the deeper explanations. Only after each narrative sequence do I analyse and interpret some of their features, in order to highlight what I considered influential moments in them.

After I had detected and selected the destabilizations – through the lens of controversy – from the transcribed data, I began moving backwards and forwards in these events, seeking additional information by unfolding other successive events that could be put in relation to what I saw as the main destabilization. I found that many of the related events were distributed in my notebook in accordance with their time of appearance in other meeting events as fragments, ordered as registers. The related events were in that sense seemingly disconnected, but mutually and thematically related. I thus merged different timelines into more complete narratives to an extent, arranging them in accordance to the main destabilization that became decisive for the unified theme of a complete narrative. Composing a narrative like this, I attempted to let the narratives make sense in the way that I made them – at least approximately – follow a ‘minimal plot’ (Czarniawska, 2010; Todorov, 1977). A complete minimal plot for a destabilization comprises at least three parts. It begins with a fairly stable situation, then proceeds to a disturbed situation, which contains the main destabilization, often subjected to some act of power, or effectual actors, causing a “state of disequilibrium, by the action of a force directed in the opposite direction, [until] the equilibrium is re-established” (Todorov, 1977:111). I also suggest a working title for each complete narrative that relates to the main destabilization; for instance, some titles have keywords like: mobile phones, the meeting room floor, a mobilized destabilization – all of which make sense by either by hinting to the main destabilization, or to its main character.

Thus, the intention in using the narrative here is above all methodological; i.e. it is a way of presenting the main events of destabilization and their related events through a narrative style, rather than delving systematically into the recorded narrative structures as such. The methodological handling of the incorporated narratives in this research could be perceived as a common mode of communication (Czarniawska, 2010; Fisher, 1984), directly transferring to the reader a captured image about the real territories of decision-making as they are situated, in a shape “providing illustration, and entertaining the reader when the main argument became too heavy” (Czarniawska, 1995:14). The correspondence to reality and its rich variety of actors (human and non-human) – also those outside of the meeting room – has been addressed in the narratives by giving voice to the other (Callon, 1986), sometimes by giving a spokesperson a translating role for ‘silent’ actors in the narrative. This opens several possibilities of interpretation for the reader (Czarniawska, 1995), through the produced narrative, the narrative then being both a methodological approach, but also possessing and providing to the reader, as Macintyre (1990:129) has written, the ontological quality of being “the most typical form of social life”.

To an extent, the narrative style also offers this research a structure for the book as a whole by providing annotations to different sections of the research, organizing them in a single format. In the book’s overall layout, this format constitutes in the first part of the book: narratives about common decision-making in Nodacity’s planning context. The narratives about destabilizations are placed in the latter half of the book. In this way, the research story visibly emerges through the sequence of the chapters. With the logic of successive narratives in the thesis as a whole, I have also aimed to gradually present some of the main performers in the city planning meetings, who are also the main characters of several narrated decision-making events. They appear according to the importance of their roles in completing the overall mosaic of the story (e.g. Deuten & Rip, 2000). Different decision-making episodes or narratives have therefore to a significant extent mutual characters; however, their effective roles as actors (their actantiality) in destabilizations could vary between different episodes, or between different moments within the same decision-making episode.

3.5 A Brief Note on Situatedness as a Feature of the Methodology

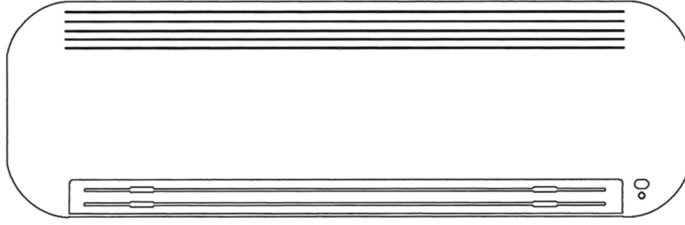
This study is situated in relation to its subject matter in several ways. It is tied to, conditioned by and reflects a set of local conditions and specific perspectives. Firstly, it is empirically situated in the context of Nodectcity, rendering a specific planning setting and conveying a certain culture. Secondly, the written narratives presented here are situated as illustrations in the book that is this thesis. Thirdly, I have conducted a kind of participant ethnographic observation myself, which situates me as an author both close to and remote from the events here rendered.

The situatedness of the subject matter, the author's position, and the compositional construct of the narratives are inspired to some extent by Donna Haraway's (1988) notions of 'situated knowledge' and 'partial perspectives'. Haraway argues for a partial perspective in which knowledge is situated locally and bodily, emphasizing the embodied nature of all visions and refusing given constructs of dichotomies such as subject/object (Haraway, 1988; 1991; see also Gherardi, 2008; Hinton, 2014). Through partial perspectives, knowledge emerges from the collective subject positions, from a network of connections in which knowledge can be exchanged, and materialized into substances that reflect the practical reality (Haraway, 1988).

These ideas on partial perspectives also reflect my personal engagement in the research process. I have let this process expand as subjective interactions with the research matter, to relationally constitute not only a mode of observation, but my own position as author, and even, to some extent, the allocation into research sections. Throughout the research process, I had subjective interactions with the actual contents of the narratives while I was situated in the planning setting, observing its interactions. So I allowed these engagements to guide some of my reflections on how I gradually understood the situations when I present them in relation to each other, in relation to the research matter, and in contact with theories and concepts. Thus, I model my positions as a distant knower and as a participating practitioner in this research in reflecting these subjective interactions, and my gradual understanding of them. The construct of the research's sections as such can, through the successiveness of the narratives, dynamically adapt to both the multiple inputs and my own research foci (Lang, 2011). Also, the overall situated mapping of the research's sections can give the

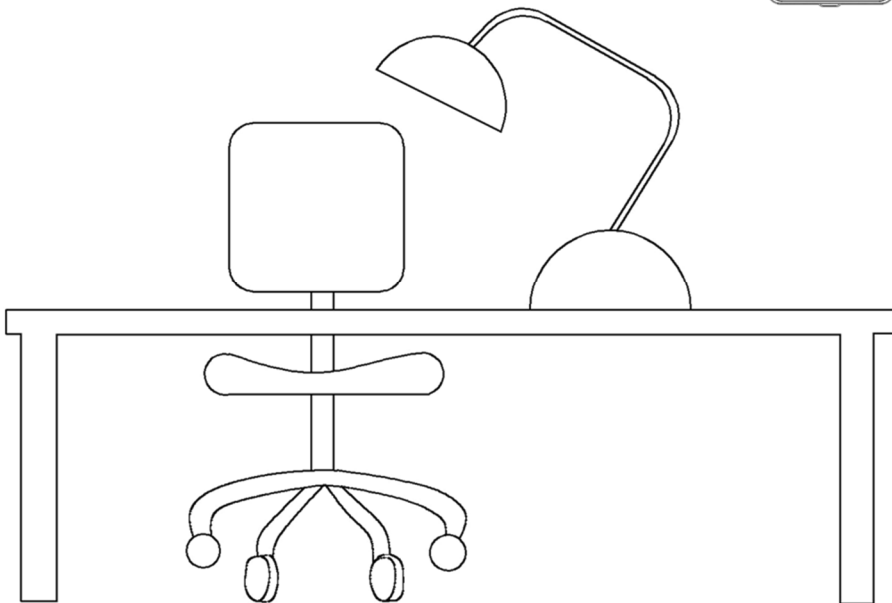
reader information about the thematic contents of this thesis, whilst also conveying my subjective interactions and interpretations consecutively, parallel to how my own knowledge about the research's matters has developed:

“[P]ersons tend to make sense of new information in terms that relate to what they already know. Their situated knowledges not only frame the boundaries and possibilities of their creativity; they also shape the ways they interpret experiences as experiences” (Lang, 2011: 89).



PART II:

DESTABILIZATION IN DECISION-MAKING



Interlude: Notes on Destabilization and Influential Moments

The previous chapters of this thesis presented some of the constitutive entities regarding the planning setting (in the case of Nodacity Municipality) and how they collectively impact the making of decisions. In the three chapters that follow, a set of decision-making processes will be presented and analysed, with specific regard to destabilizations that are considered uncommon and irregular, a deviation from the smooth, undisturbed, or taken-for-granted procedures of decision-making. I have previously mentioned the ‘lens of controversy’ as a methodological lead in observations and the treatment of observed data. A destabilization is linked to controversy in the sense that it is a state of a network that follows a controversy – here, as an alteration of the state of the meeting seen as a network. Destabilizations appear on a fairly regular basis, such as when “actors are unremittingly engaged in tying and untying relations, arguing categories and identities, revealing the fabric of collective existence” (Venturini, 2010: 796). As I see them here, destabilizations generally arise when the common relations between heterogeneous entities temporarily fail to stabilize the conditions needed for decision-making to proceed. Destabilizations appear as delays, states of conflict, or as disruptions in the taken-for-granted functions of material arrangements. The tracing of destabilizations through the ‘lens of controversy’ can highlight hidden effectual actors and unforeseen relations. As irregularities in the meeting procedures, destabilizations may cause deviating paths that can result in decisions that would otherwise not be made. I call these deviations *influential moments*, and as stated in previous chapters, one of the central objectives of this thesis is to try to elevate moments such as these, which cause deviations from expected decision-making paths.

In such influential cases of deviation, destabilizations do not only trigger material functions or dialogue proper, but may also lead the whole meeting down other paths, and may furthermore affect the recognized rules and protocols of an institution. An influential moment can be understood as such only after some time has passed, and when it can be concluded that the otherwise taken-for-granted process, or the issue at stake in a meeting, or the stabilising functions of material arrangements, have been affected, for instance by a dispute, an interrogation or a failure. Examining my initial observations, I have seen destabilizations as roughly addressing three main domains;

these three main domains also define the three main chapters that follow. The first is in human talking and acting; i.e. in procedures during meetings where dialogue and acting tactics are revealed as also engaging networks outside of the meeting room. This first domain – which is the focus of Chapter 4 – is thus mainly dominated by the relations between human actors, but can nevertheless be indicated by the presence of material objects. Secondly, in Chapter 5, I demonstrate how physical matter and technologies that are part of decision-making processes may trigger destabilizations and influential moments. Thirdly, in Chapter 6, I examine the process from a more diverse, or heterogeneous perspective, albeit with slightly more focus on how modes of ordering have an effect on the ways and the rules that dictate how the meeting event proceeds.

Hence, in the following, I have let each of these three main divisions focus on certain main components. In line with this, each narrative in the following chapters shows a dominant type of occurred destabilization, or a dominant type of influential actor. However, it is important to emphasise that in practice, every meeting event of course contains a mix of actors and several types of destabilizations (some of which are left unanalysed here). Any destabilization appears with multiple types of disrupting components; thus, even if I focus on some actors, this heterogeneous mix is what actually, in a natural way, constitutes the general flow of meetings. Before entering into these narratives and analyses, I will discuss some general characteristics of destabilizations; a theoretical background; how destabilizations can occur, and what makes them influential moments.

The revealing of destabilizations in this research highlights some effectual elements and relations that could not only temporarily influence the decision-making process itself, but also the setting and the norms by which the decision-making usually proceeds. According to Callon et al. (2009), this revelation of unforeseen relations can occur in relation to two main scenarios: firstly, in relation to “new actors who are not really new” (Callon et al., 2009: 28) – i.e. here actors that are not usually regarded as important during decision-making but that can be brought to the surface, and that become visible as they take advantage of destabilizations to legitimately enrol into the situations. The second scenario, according to Callon, is when “really emergent concerned” (p.29) actors can become visible, demonstrating unexpected interests and identities that can only appear when the reconfiguration of relations occurs during destabilizations. In other words, actors may become obvious because e.g. their presence is suddenly more necessary to stabilize the situations, or they become vulnerable, suffering from the disruptive circumstances.

Even if Callon's categorization seems to be a bit coloured by a need to differentiate different actors' tendencies to hide, this division can be used to further illustrate the description of the Backup Hall narrative earlier in this study (p.86), and how the dialogue was influenced by the meeting room being changed. When the meeting was relocated, a number of previously 'uninteresting' actors – the previous room, the new table, and the transferred chairs – were exposed. Usually, these actors would be acknowledged and classified as merely providing the physical conditions that can support the meeting event and its dialogues. However, by viewing them as part of a destabilization and a deviation from the norm, unforeseen relations appeared that emphasized certain positions and revealed decisive roles relating to other exposed actors. For example, there were many complaints about the size of the new table and its influence on the usual contact between members during dialogues, expressed as concerns such as: "we must move the table [...]; we cannot hear the opposite side of the table; it is very big".

Furthermore, tracing destabilizations can effectively point out how actors can adapt to challenges or uncertainties that emerge, expose their unexpected abilities to redefine common solutions into new themes of dialogues and meeting interactions. Uncertainties can simply indicate unanticipated situations, when the knowledge is insufficient, when there are no predefined identities, no previously constructed protocol against which the involved actors can take actions or by which they can be guided (e.g. Callon et al., 2009; Abbott, 2005). The geographer Sarah Whatmore (2009: 588) notes the impact of time on this. Whatmore regards knowledge about disordering conditions when they occur as potentially contributing to change because our "reasoning is forced to 'slow down' creating opportunities to arouse a different awareness of the problems and situations that mobilize us". Close examination of destabilizations can in other words contribute to highlighting 'concerned' but usually hidden actors, e.g. activators of the implicit work of permitting, sustaining, restraining, and governing the issues at stake in the meeting. These actors would otherwise – i.e. when there is no destabilization – not be heard in, or be eliminated from, any analytical consideration.

By closely examining the destabilizations, I ultimately intend to narrow down the discussions towards the main interest of this research, namely the influential moments. Destabilizations that occur in the working relations may evolve to become observable influential moments; I thus regard the latter as a traceable consequence of any implicit disruptions to the working relations. In my investigations, then, I rely on tracing the influential moments in the observed situations by following noticeable

consequences that might be unfolded as disrupted effects in – and on - the decision-making process. In that sense, I follow Latour's (2005: 71) advice to provide sufficient explanations for tracing the agency of destabilization by looking for the answers to two main questions in the tracing of any effective relations: "Does it make a difference in the course of some other agent's action or not? Is there some trail that allows someone to detect this difference?" Looking for the answers to these questions can contribute to heightened attention to governance orders, especially hidden mechanisms that rule certain relations, for instance actors that are silent, silenced, or only implicitly present in the norm of the meeting routines and in the formal acts.

Tracing influential moments can foreground the unforeseen effects of certain disruptions, conflicts, or clashes at work when networks achieve a new form, when new objectivity emerges, and when subjectivity indirectly (or directly) shows itself (Yaneva, 2012; see also Latour, 2005; Callon et al., 2009). A close examination of several destabilizations can provide reliable reasons for pointing out certain decisive peculiarities and constellations that include human action, effectual spatial arrangements, persuasive physical elements and legal or cultural rules. These peculiarities may to some extent be seen as outside of, or in the margins of, the considerations needed to study decision-making, since that can be done through the analysis of dialogue as speech acts or otherwise linguistically investigated. In order to contribute to studies in decision-making, but at the same time – and perhaps primarily – to architectural considerations of meetings and meeting cultures, in the final chapter of this thesis, I will elaborate on how some influential moments may recur, or otherwise be of principal importance. There, I will bring the discussion to a slightly more general level, to concern certain principles of influence in formal decision-making processes in city planning.

4

Talking and Acting

4.1 Deviations in Talking and Acting

By addressing ‘talking’ in this part, I focus on the exchange of dialogue during the municipal council meetings, and how this exchange follows certain rules. Acts of talking include for instance timeliness (when to talk) and participation (who is included in the talk), and they can in themselves be seen as what ensures stable conditions for meetings. As stated earlier, in this research, how dialogues proceed is seen as based primarily in situatedness, with a pragmatic perspective, where the spoken components of dialogues can be seen as taking part in the same plot as other situated objects and materials. For instance, in the Backup Hall narrative, the new large table, the new position of one of the MCMs, the routine of reading the items on the meeting agenda, and the other vegetable market all become possible influential elements that imposed both stable conditions and destabilizations on the dialogue procedures. To an extent, I will postpone a deeper analysis of these non-verbal, material and technological actors until the next chapter; instead, in the present chapter, Chapter Four, I focus on the verbal exchange in the dialogue and how it proceeds in relation to the culturally determined customs of the meetings. This culture determines the ways in which dialogues unfold, in relation to certain rules and according to recognized protocols with which those attending the meeting should be familiar, and which they to some extent have developed themselves through their shared history of meeting events. These routines inevitably guide the meeting’s attendees in every meeting, regulating the dialogues, supporting cohesive work that presumably leads to final decisions.

In the following narrative, I present a situation in which the final decision for a case depends on the recognition of the meeting’s routines in general, and correspondingly, where (and when) certain roles in the dialogues could be engaged according to the guiding protocol. The analysis in the upcoming section focuses on the dialogic exchange, and discusses the emergence of some destabilizations; i.e. when the modalities that normally uphold dialogues’ procedures turn to uncertainties. A destabilization can, as we will see, particularly affect meeting attendees whose position is more that of an outsider, whilst at the same time it can be regarded as a possibility

for an effectual manoeuvre for other participants more familiar with the rules of exchanging dialogues. Before the narrative begins, brief explanations are given of several mandatory rules and recognized protocols in relation to the discussed case in the narrative. There is a mandatory rule according to the Municipal Law, 2015, which states that before finally deciding about importing any necessary equipment to any municipal department, a formal request must be presented to the municipal council members. In the narrative that follows, a request is made by one of the municipal departments in Nodacity, Department Z, to bring in a new set of computers with a higher technical capacity to replace the old computers. According to protocol, before the request can be presented at the municipal council meeting, an assigned expert has to study the request to determine whether a technical report will be necessary. The narrative below shows how these kinds of rules and procedures can be important for the meeting and for the issues at stake in it.

The Status of the Computers

It was the regular afternoon for a municipal council meeting in the main meeting room of Nodacity's municipal building. I was sitting in my usual chair preparing my notebook, returning the waves of some of the other attendees, waiting for the quietening of the greeting rituals and side conversations that would indicate the start of the meeting. Whilst waiting for the meeting to start, a person whom I had never seen before quickly entered the room; this person did not slow down to participate in the hello rituals with other attendees in the room, but proceeded to occupy a chair without asking if it was reserved for any of the regular attendees. The person – called Manager Y in this narrative – sat on a chair beside the wall, behind the table, where other municipal managers usually sit.

That day as usual, the meeting agenda started with the discussion of acquisition and procurement issues. In the beginning, the discussions were steered by the vice chairperson, who replaced the chairperson. The acquisition discussions proceeded smoothly: the MCS read the cases, and the MCMs listened. Before the acquisition issues part of the meeting ended, the chairperson made a quick entrance, walking in from his office and taking his seat at the end of the table. With the portable microphone in his hand, the MCS continued reading from the meeting agenda: "Now for the last part of the acquisition and procurement issues, which concerns a request submitted by one of the municipal departments asking for a new

set of computers. We probably need to discuss this quickly, since Manager Y is present at the meeting now but can only stay for a short while and will be excused as soon as we have discussed the issue". The MCS's final sentence was met with a comment by one of the MCMs: "But why do they need to have a new set of computers; I imagine they have already computers, so why can't they keep going on using those?" The chairperson seemed engrossed in the reading of papers in front of him, and thus did not see who had uttered the last comment, and not knowing who had spoken, he had to guess the approximate location of its origin. He turned his head towards the right side of the table and spoke through his stationary microphone: "I could not hear you well or understand your comment, can you repeat what you said". However, the comment was not repeated. Suddenly, another MCM raised his hand resolutely, drew his chair closer to the table, and spoke as soon as he received a sign from the chairperson to do so: "I think, your Excellency, that the last comment was an inquiry about the department's urgent need to renew their computers; as to why the old ones should be replaced. Computers with the specifications requested will cost the municipality a lot of money, and we are not sure about the importance of this". The MCM mainly faced the chairperson, but occasionally turned his head towards Manager Y, as if directing the question at the latter. Meanwhile, Manager Y was looking towards the responsible manager of the department that had requested the computers, Manager Z, which made the MCM end the question with: "Or maybe we can ask the responsible manager of the requested department, Manager Z".

The MCM's final comment made the other attendees, the chairperson, Manager Y and me turn our heads towards Manager Z, who stood up slowly, looked down at the floor, seemingly prolonging the response time as long as possible. After a significant moment of silence, Manager Z finally said: "Department Z has had an old set of computers for a long time, and....." Without giving him a chance to finish his last sentence, the MCM interrupted: "Okay, but why do you need new computers with high technical performance?" Manager Z continued, hesitating: "Well, you see....", and then Manager Y stood up and continued, borrowing the portable microphone from the MCS: "Department Z will have a new computer program that will require new computers with good technical specifications for installation." Unyielding, the MCM replied: "Yeah, yeah, we know that – but what I

am saying is that maybe there are other departments that desperately need new computers”.

What had appeared to be a simple inquiry from the MCM became an excuse for another MCM to gather his courage and speak without even raising his hand or waiting for the chairperson to give him a sign to talk: “Well, since you mentioned that, I need to report the situation in the local district department that I am responsible for. I know from the local district manager that the computers they have now have not been renewed for a long time. Most of them do not work, and they really need new computers”. Enthusiastically, the first MCM commented again: “I think, your Excellency, it would be wise to check every computer in the local district departments; maybe there are more computers that need renewal”. Manager Y was still standing and holding the microphone, sometimes looking toward the chairperson, who remained silent, listening, and waiting for everyone to finish their comments, without any verbal signs or gestures of approval or disapproval. Manager Y followed the last comment from the MCM: “As for the district that you mentioned, we [the responsible municipal department] sent 20 new computers there last week, and the local manager of the district refused to accept them; I do not yet know why”. The MCM rose from his chair and said with a tone of surprise: “Really? I did not know that: I will check with the local department again”. All of the other MCMs and managers followed the exchanges between the first and the second MCM and Manager Y, saying nothing. When the main parties had finished responding to each other’s comments, a silence filled the room for a moment before the chairperson nodded his head towards the book in front of the MCS, instructing him: “Make a note of the approval of Department Z’s request”. He then directly turned towards the fixed microphone in front of him, and without a moment’s hesitation, rose slightly from his special chair, and leaned towards the table: “As for the other issues, I recommend forming a committee to investigate the status of the computers in the local district departments. I suggest that the members of that committee be the two MCMs, Manager Y, and...” looking towards Manager Y, “...someone from your department; an expert employee to help you”. Manager Y said an employee’s name in response. “Write it down; this committee is responsible for documenting every detail, the computers’ status, their numbers, year of service, and whether or not they are still working; we need to know everything”. The chairperson instructed the MCS to make a record of everything in the meeting notes part of the agenda in front of

him. “What about deciding a deadline for the committee work, your Excellency”, said one of the MCMs when the chairperson had finished giving instructions. There were many voices expressing their support for the last comment and encouraging the chairperson to decide a deadline. The latter finally spoke through his fixed microphone again: “Okay, I think two weeks from today should be sufficient for you (looking at Manager Y, and the other MCMs) to finish your work”. With this reply from the chairperson, the discussion about the computers was settled for that day.

What can we make of the situation described here? It renders the handling of a pragmatic issue through a dialogue procedure, following organizational rules and routines. It is an example of a decision-making process regarding a contested matter, with a shared debate among different interests. Before the discussion about the request for computers, the meeting procedures had gone smoothly. As described previously in relation to the kiosk case, the acquisition discussions usually go smoothly, with the successive performance by the MCS's reading in relation to the chairperson's gestures to move on and the MCMs listening silently, approving the presented issues. However, in the case of the computers, the discussions of the last item in the acquisitions part of the meeting deviated from the norm. Several disruptive moments arose in the discussion of this issue.

Speculating about the institutional procedures of the requested computers before the request was presented in the meeting, several possible scenarios could have taken place outside the meeting room, outside of my observational scope. In the beginning, it can be said that the decision-making process followed the usual procedures during the meeting, i.e. formal requests with technical documents attached were presented to the municipal council. Prior to the meeting however, one can assume that the process could have been initiated in Department Z, with documents prepared that detailed the need for new computers. This then underwent several departmental procedures from Department Z and finally reached the representing expert, in this case Manager Y. Beyond an assumed preparation phase such as this, another premise could be that the slightly unusual presence of Manager Y that day indicated what was to emerge in the meeting. The entrance itself – including the way the seat was claimed, and the absence of the usual greeting routines, which indicated the infrequency of Manager Y's attendance at these meetings, could be seen as initial signs of the disruptions that appeared later in the dialogues. One could also assume that the change to the group of actors who normally participated in the dialogue (in the acquisition and procurement

part) by the uncommon presence of Manager Y led to a disruption to the usual ways that dialogue proceeds. These premises might also hypothetically be traceable in a comment made by the MCS: when reading the computers issue, he stated that Manager Y could only stay for the discussion of this particular issue. One might also presume that the issues on the meeting agenda were deliberately ordered that day so that the computer issue would be the final item on the acquisition part of the agenda. These speculations are only possible explanations pointing to how some deviating moments may have appeared in the dialogues. We do know, however, drawing on the observations, that these incidents related to Manager Y's sudden presence, the manager's lack of time to participate, and the MCS's announcement regarding that lack of time; these were small incidents that appeared before the larger destabilization to come, of the dialogue and how it proceeded in that meeting.

Following the observations, the first clear destabilization occurred when the computer issue had a disrupting effect on the rules in the acquisition discussions. The impact of these disruptions could only be unfolded when the acute insight from one of the MCMs commenting on the issue created a new space for other deliberative opportunities, where an opening appeared for opposition, non-reliability, critique and new ideas and suggestions in the meeting. The initial disruptions tied to the discussion about the need for computers, creating a space where actors' identities, values and interests entered new coalitions (Forester, 2010), and where the status of the meeting became an issue in itself. These moments of what one might call *credibility questioning* then dominated the following part of the meeting procedure, reorienting it by accepting a coproduction of diverse and unexpected capacities of interests, like the unexpected comments by some MCMs. The influence of these moments of credibility questioning on how the dialogue proceeded recalls Albrechts's (2015) view of 'release' from the monolithic block of planning processes. Albrechts describes how concepts, procedures, and tools can be stimulated and altered by the capacity of otherwise concealed actors (such as the MCM's comments here) to be subjectively articulated, and released from the rigid legal framing of political systems. In what he describes as "radical strategic planning" (Albrechts, 2015: 511), Albrechts advocates more radical platforms in which the organizational procedures that regulate the relations between different actors are more open, flexible, and articulated according to actors' identities and interests. In Albrechts's conception of what actually happens in dialogues, there are no fixed, taken-for-granted rules; these are instead seen as always co-produced to mobilize available resources at each moment of the process. This approach also supports the argument – which is also considered in my research methodology – that attentive

observation of any contingent and co-produced condition may lead to a witness influence on the overall dynamics of the dialogue procedures.

Therefore, when moments of questioning the usual ways of handling issues appeared to cause deviation from the smooth proceeding of dialogues during the acquisition part of the meeting, they meant that the focus shifted from renewing Department Z's computer stock to the issue of representativeness, or to other realities outside the immediate setting of the municipal institution, such as the impact of the existence of new computer program applications, technical renewals or better versions of computers. The moments of credibility questioning here – the questioning of whether the ways of deciding an issue in relation to the acquisition part were convincing enough to merit proceeding as usual – thus expanded the immediate deliberative context of the meeting, crafting new spaces of engagement.

Through a deformation of the usual ways of procedures of this kind, a deliberation trajectory can be allowed to dynamically drift for a while. Forester (2010) suggests that such drifting of the trajectory can generally occur in three pivotal parts of the deliberation process: dialogue, debate, and negotiation. In Forester's (2010) general descriptions of deliberation in planning, these parts have their practical characteristics. First, in dialogues, mutual recognition and understanding of the issue are intentionally sought to reach an end. In the debate part, the deliberation becomes more discerned as a vindication of claims when arguing what is right and what is wrong. Then, with negotiation, an agreement on the final action can be decided when debates can be reframed and redefined to mediate between several parties' interests (Forester, 2010). I am not suggesting here that it is necessary for these parts to take place successively in deliberative discourse, nor even collectively at a single meeting time. Rather, I see these possible parts of deliberations as a way to support the idea that moments of debates, dialogues, and negotiations may overlap during the meeting discussions, as was the case in the narrative above. Even if deliberations could be described less categorically, these parts can quite naturally be seen as bringing different opportunities to the table for the deformation of trajectories, when multiple actors with varied interests, powers, and positions emerge. In smooth, or procedure-following trajectories of a meeting, many actors usually have very few opportunities to take part in what Forester calls the state of debate, even if there could be moments in that smooth trajectory when arguments could be present, such as in a supposedly more vivid or open general deliberation. However, whenever these moments of intense arguments occur in the meeting, they may be attempts to argue not only for an opinion, but, as here, they may also ultimately

facilitate other trajectories, making it possible for other actors to also, unexpectedly, take part in the negotiations. For this cause, other MCMs (district representatives) depended on that first moment of destabilization, and continued in the altered trajectory by negotiating on other computers in other districts.

Through the status of the computer narrative, we have been able to view what usually drives dialogues and their conditional interruptions as not only verbal, but comprised of other matters: protocol (the way in which dialogue is expected to proceed); material objects (the written, distributed and placed meeting agenda, the holding of microphones); and other spatial features (e.g. the taking of specific positions in the room, or directional movements in the space). The status of the computer narrative is also an example of how deformations and destabilizations of the meeting do not have to end up as conflicting, but can be seen as co-existing with dialogue, even if there were, of course, partial conflicts on the way.

Moreover, the occurrence of Forester's (2010) three processes (dialogues, debates and negotiations), and when they start and end, is contingent upon when actors decide to act. It is possible to both create and take advantage of a destabilization that has occurred, and the transition from one of these three processes to another can be seen partly as a matter of timeliness, or of an actor's capacity to recognize the suitable moment of imposing a negotiation of the rules, turning them to issues in themselves. It is likely that this sense of timeliness is gained through experienced engagement in deliberation and rules for dialogue procedures. Seen as alterable, these processes can be deliberately formulated, routinely enacted, or emerge naturally through routinized practices, recognized as part of the organization culture (Gilsdorf, 1998). These silent acts, or mechanisms, in the organization culture can be seen as developing through guidance by skilled members' organisational behaviour (Jabs, 2005). It is no surprise that knowledge about discursive rules and legislations can influence how dialogue procedures can be altered as they progress. Such knowledge can be considered as a 'tool' available to every member involved in a meeting. What is of specific interest here, in my meeting culture investigation, is how the turns during a dialogue, or the taking of chances in debate and negotiation, are also related to more than human talking or acting; e.g. how time relates to other circumstances of the setting: matter, space, institutional routines, etc.

The knowledge of when to interfere, and how to utilize time in specific moments of the meeting is contingent upon the identities of the involved members and their expected actions (March, 1994). March (1994: 57-102) establishes a conception of how

the identities of the involved members can be generally raised from processes of socialization into socially ordered relations. He refers to these identity formations as processes of learning and training for the set of formal and informal rules, such as when members learn how to behave, talk, and respond appropriately in accordance with their identification with the occurred situation. We could talk of these learning processes in terms of learning how to represent an issue; i.e. we can look upon 'representation' in a meeting as not only a position that is granted definitively and permanently, but as a process of representation. An interview that I conducted with the MCS confirmed the existence of a learning process like this to become part of, align with and enrol in a meeting culture; the MCS commented: "In the first meetings after a new municipal council formation, there are a lot of conflicts and arguments between members. Now, after three years, they have started to get used to each other, and they have learned the usual rules, and how to behave" (interview with the MCS during the first, preparatory visit). However, this is not to say that the recognition of members' identities, even after several years in the council, always appropriately matched the situations that transpired. Recognition of member identity can be disturbed by moments of inconsistency, incompatibility, or ignorance, when unpredicted situations occur suddenly, or when there is a mismatch with other occurring identities or behaviours (March, 1994). A discussion of such roles of representational identity will be continued below, after another instalment of the status of the computer narrative that describes a second meeting, showing other occurrences in the dialogue procedures.

The Status of Computers, Part II

Two weeks after the request for new computers was first presented and the recommendation was made for the formation of an investigating committee, the municipal council meeting was held in a new location, Backup Hall (see Backup Hall narrative, p.86). After observing the attempts of the MCMs, managers and usual attendees' to find their customary places in the new room, choosing their chair positions in relation to the table, since they had been moved and the order upset due to the room change, I saw Manager Y hastily entering the new room without looking around or taking time to search for a suitable position. Instead, Manager Y walked in with determination, quickly passed some standing MCMs and managers on the right side of the room, seeking a place near the MCS and chairperson positions. Manager Y directly reached a vacant chair close to the chairperson position, and sat down in

it without looking around or asking the other attendees if the chair was reserved. After taking a seat, Manager Y began reading through a collection of papers, preparing for the meeting, and waiting for the discussion to start.

The discussions of the meeting that day had begun with the chairperson and the MCM of Downstage District talking about the exact location of the vegetable market in Downstage District (see Backup Hall narrative). Encouraged by the moment of negotiation about the exact location of the market, the MCM who had spoken about the general need for new computers at the first meeting where the computers had been discussed (see above) raised his hand and asked the chairperson for permission to speak about an important matter: “If you would allow me, your Excellency, I would like to inform you about something we have found during our investigation of the status of the computers in the local districts, as one of the committee members that you assigned to the task”. The MCM spoke eagerly, pointing towards Manager Y sitting in the chair. The chairperson pulled his chair closer to the table and spoke in the direction of his fixed microphone, addressing Manager Y: “Okay, tell us what happened during your investigations of the computer status in different local district departments”. Manager Y stood up and grabbed the papers, holding the portable microphone, and spoke: “As a designated committee, we have spent the last two weeks visiting every local district department and checking the status of every computer, and we have drawn up our report. From our initial investigations, we have found that the computers in one of the districts have not been used for a long time. The administrative work in that district has been carried out using normal paper procedures, which has caused delays in citizens’ cases and prolonged the handling of application requests”.

Speaking calmly and steadily and maintaining a fair amount of eye contact with the room, Manager Y spoke, still standing and awaiting the chairperson’s response. The chairperson appeared calm, listening carefully to Manager Y’s information, while reading from the papers in front of him. Before the chairperson had a chance to respond, there was a sudden interruption from an MCM sitting along the side of the table: “Your Excellency, I am not sure if this is the appropriate time and place to discuss this issue...” Before the MCM could continue, the chairperson quickly spoke through his stationary microphone, addressing the MCM, “Okay, please wait until we know the other details about their investigational work”. Everyone, including me, was looking towards

Manager Y, who sat down again. The chairperson then addressed Manager Y: “Thank you for the work and effort you put into the investigative task that we gave to you two weeks ago”. Manager Y was listening to the chairperson, nodding while listening to the chairperson’s reply. The chairperson continued: “But I must ask, did you first notify Manager X as the responsible manager of the District X about the result of the investigations, attaching a copy of your report before presenting it to us?” Manager Y facially expressed a no. The chairperson then leaned his elbow on the table, seeking to approach the fixed microphone and read from the papers in front of him: “Then we cannot discuss the report now, since we are accustomed to certain procedures here in the meeting: before presenting any general issue in relation to one of the districts here in the meeting, the issue has to be reported to Manager X, who is responsible for the investigated district in order to provide any necessary technical or legal documents that might support the decision”.

As described in the first part of the status of the computer narrative, the final effect of the destabilization that occurred in the dialogue procedures about Department Z’s computers was the establishment of a formal committee to investigate the status of all of the computers in all other departments. The act of requesting the formation of an investigative committee can be described as an extended consequence of the destabilization that occurred during the meeting, spreading and reaching other nodes (district departments, employees, and computers) outside of the meeting room and the meeting time. In terms of influential moments, we could say that with the official formation of an investigation committee, a delegation was made that allowed other needs, or actors, to appear, and most importantly, that allowed new destabilizations to occur in the dialogue procedures during the second part of the meeting two weeks later.

In that part, when other critical needs (i.e. computers in other districts) were brought to the meeting by the investigation committee, the logically anticipated consequence would be that these critical needs would become the main focus of the dialogue. However, destabilization tied to protocol and the handling of errands gained a more central role, which deviated the trajectory away from the discussion of where computers were actually needed. Generally, in the process of dialogues, grey zones will occur between the recognition of what is legally enacted, and what is followed as routinely agreed upon. This dual recognition of the basic rules of a meeting can be described as an overlapping of protocol. This duality – of acting according to law or according to usual protocol – can be seen on the one hand as a stabilising oscillation that preserves the meeting culture, but could ultimately also foster new disruptions

regarding the handling of the dialogue procedures. In the disrupted events, there may be moments when some actors' roles in the procedure are questioned, finally leading to the reconstitution of some roles in the decision-making process as a whole, by asserting the importance of correctly following the rules and the protocol. Here, in the second part of the status of the computer narrative, I have described how such a destabilization can influence the dialogues on the issue under discussion, and also how it can alter the decision-making process.

Before ending with further analysis of the events in this narrative part, it may be prudent to clarify that according to the Municipal Law, 2015, all issues must be presented to the chairperson before they are officially announced to the municipal council during the meeting. The presentation of any issue to the responsible manager prior to the meeting, such as in this case to Manager X, is done according to protocol; i.e. the routine is established and accepted, although not in itself originally mandated in legislation. Since I cannot know the exact reasons that the revised report from the responsible manager was lacking that day, or the ways in which this lack was revealed, as an observer equipped with facts about the usual procedures in similar cases, I could only assume that a part of the usually recognized protocol had been overlooked. Furthermore, there was no verbal reply from the presenting manager to indicate that it was overlooked, but only passive body language. Thus, it is impossible to pinpoint the crucial turning point in the dialogue procedures in this case. It could be the chairperson's formal request for an explanation of the details regarding the investigated computers. But the turning point could also be seen as the rapid response from a skilled member, such as the chairperson, who realized that something had been overlooked in the handling of the issue according to protocol, and knew the right time and place for this rule/issue to be brought up in the meeting.

The moment in which the dialogue's trajectory is selected demonstrates which kind of "political conduct" (Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003: 13) was valid over others, affirming the idea that decision-making is not only affected by the matter at hand, but that adhering to the rules of the dialogue game can also have a significant influence. Abiding or not abiding by the rules could be said to potentially impact the original issue at stake, as can the temporal and spatial division of the meeting into two different occasions in different localities, which also allows time in the interim to consider the routines. The report on the overall computer status was postponed by a disruption moment that redirected the interest in the computers to interest in making sure that the protocol was being followed.

The turns in this case could be seen as caused in part by an ambiguous demand to act, either according to the agreed protocol or by following the legal rules as written. A prefatory presentation before the main responsible manager is a recognized protocol, and a prefatory presentation to the chairperson is a legislative rule. The institutional delegation of expertise that had been previously agreed upon as customary has to be known; otherwise there will be a divergence in the prioritisation of protocol versus custom. Such inconsistencies can encourage the emergence of conflicts in the procedures, which can give members who have been granted a certain authority (such as here the chairperson) the right to impose the valid rule (e.g. March, 1994). Seen thus, disruptions of smooth proceedings could here also be described as a strategic handling of dialogues and turning talks by an actor who is well acquainted with the deviation from the literal interpretation of given rules that was previously agreed upon, adding a mastery of the tactics and the necessary timeliness. In an overall institutional perspective, we could also see that the turns and destabilizations here could be described as moments that forced adherence to the protocol according to which such matters should be handled; here however, the proper time was also identified to ensure adherence to the valid rules and protocol before the handling of the issue could continue. Moulart & Cabaret (2006) argue that coordination and communication in accordance with the organizational culture are dependent on two interrelated processes: the individual member's definition of the set of rules and protocol of this culture, and the internalization process of developing an organizational knowledge. This organizational knowledge can also be seen as evolving with the lived social performances in organizations (Gherardi et al., 2007), which may influence the development of an ability to suitably express judgements in the case of ambiguity. One might reflect on this in relation to the above narrative, where one member's infrequent attendance correlated with less knowledge about the organizational culture tied to protocol.

In some ways, the status of the computer narrative sheds light on ways of influentially engaging in the dialogues, and how this influence was related to protocol, to the division of meeting time, and to the forming of new official constellations, such as the expert committee here. In other words, we saw the delegation of specific tasks that were handled in other spaces, and this delegation had a further impact on final decisions. The role of engagement in decision-making and how it links to knowledge about protocol, as well as how acting through delegation beyond the common use of the meeting space in order to affirm the issue at stake in decision-making, are questions that will be discussed further in the following section of this chapter.

4.2 Strategic and Tactical Acting

We have just seen the impact of following, or not following, protocol in dialogic exchange. We also saw that time could be won in the municipal meeting – won for members to know more, not only about the issue at hand, but also about the protocol itself. A delegated loop of expertise was also created, thereby extending the handling of the meeting issue outside the room itself. While the following case also addresses the importance of extended engagement and delegation, it also differs: what will I describe in the following includes other types of underlying rules, tactics, and manoeuvres that are not confined to an existence during the dialogues within the meeting room, or during the official meeting times. I will point more to the importance of formal and informal spaces, but remain within the social order of the planning setting. Moreover, the next narrative (entitled ‘strategic persistence and tactical moves’) exemplifies a situation in which a citizen’s presence during the meeting once again raises the issue about how the law is culturally implemented. According to the Municipal Law of 2015, citizens are not necessarily prohibited from attending the municipal meetings, but their participation is nevertheless very unusual. This part of the law becomes relevant in the following case, where I describe one citizen’s attempt to have a role, to hold a stake as it were, by creating an individual attachment to one of the decision-making processes.

Strategic Persistence and Tactical Moves

Once, I was waiting for a municipal council meeting to start in Backup Hall. I was sitting in my chair and observing the foyer of the hall from the door, which was still ajar. Many meeting attendees were still waiting, standing, and exchanging greetings. They were welcoming each other and some visiting citizens who usually gather in the foyer prior to any meeting. Suddenly I caught sight of a person standing in front of the door as if he was waiting for someone. I had the feeling that I had seen him before. I kept checking him every once in a while, whilst trying to remember where and when I had seen him. He was carefully examining every approaching MCM and manager, turning to look at every newcomer, and regularly looking inside the hall, almost as if he were there to observe the situation, as I was. The person had one hand in the front top pocket of his ironed trousers, and in the other he held the stack of colourful folders tucked under his arm. The person – I will call him ‘Jamal’ in this narrative –

seemed to be anxiously waiting for someone to appear. Jamal's consistent tracking of everyone who approached the hall or passed him to enter it ceased as soon as he saw the vice chairperson. From there on, his attention was directed mainly at the vice chairperson while he was exchanging greetings with some MCMs and managers. Jamal was closely following the vice's movements, watching carefully where he was standing.

At the doorstep, before the vice chairperson could grasp the door handle and open the door wide enough to enter the room, Jamal managed to catch the vice chairperson's glance, engaging him with his eyes and addressing him in a persistent and rather loud voice: "Hello, hello, can I please talk to you?" This stopped the vice chairperson from entering the hall. Thanks to the fact that the vice chairperson's voice was also rather loud, and due to the position in which he had been stopped on the doorstep, I was able to hear and observe a significant part of their conversation. Jamal took advantage of this moment with the captured vice chairperson, swiftly pulling a yellow folder from the stack of folders he held under his arm. He opened it to a certain page and pointed, speaking to the vice chairperson. The latter appeared to be listening to him, nodding his head every now and then whilst simultaneously continuing his greeting rituals with everyone else. Jamal spoke insistently, and the vice chairperson eventually replied "Okay, okay, I will see what can I do", before leaving him on the doorstep and entering the room.

The council meeting proceeded as usual that day. I was observing, and jotting in my notebook at all times, also documenting the surrounding details as much as I could. I was observing, though my thoughts were still also occupied with where and when I had seen Jamal before.

[...]

The next day, I attended a regular Downstage District committee meeting, and I was sitting in the meeting room, with all of my observational senses focused on the meeting's discussions, the exchange of folders, and signature rounds taking place between the committee members. Folders were mostly yellow in that day's meeting (see footnote 19, p.71); as was usual when yellow was the dominant colour in the pile of folders prepared for the meeting, the negotiations, arguments, and postponed decisions were many. Accompanying many of the objections issues classified by the use of yellow folders were the usual stock of stakeholders – citizens waiting outside the locked meeting room door.

They knocked persistently to request the return of their signed folders, and the waiting crowd of citizens outside of the room thus interrupted the pace of the meeting proceedings, causing the dialogues to be divided. Patiently bearing with these moments of interruption, the beleaguered door, and the disruptive noise, the committee members followed the routine according to which the meeting was handled. First, the technical department manager picked up a folder from the stack of yellow folders in front of her, filling in her meticulous technical explanations in the designated space. She then handed it to the chair of the committee, the MCM of the Downstage District, who read through the provided explanations, signed ‘the Chair of the Committee’, and carefully stamped it after she had sufficiently drenched the stamp in ink. After that, the folder handling reached the third committee member, the manager of Downstage District, who usually skimmed through the technical explanations very quickly before signing. With the presence of the other two members, the folders continued and were checked and signed by a fourth member, an assigned delegate from the municipality. Finally, the folders would reach the end of the signing round with a fifth member, the second MCM of the Downstage District. The final two stops for the folders were often omitted, as the last two members have a less frequent presence at the Downstage District’s committee meetings; however, the presence of the first three members provide the validity needed for the signing round according to the Municipal Law of 2015. Thus, an errand officially becomes a final decision.

On that day, the yellow folders repeatedly followed the usual order: they were reviewed, signed, and handed off to the next person, occasionally with slight delays when the negotiations over decisions disrupted the silence or smooth dialogue, or when there were moments of disturbance caused by the insistent knocking on the door. Halfway through the meeting, one yellow folder stopped in the signature round for a while in the hand of the technical department manager. “Oh I know this person, he was here with his yellow folder at last week’s meeting too,”²¹ said the technical manager before reading the request in the folder between her hands: “The applicant is asking to pay lower tax than what is due for the building he owns; the justification is that the building is used for educational purposes [public use as a school], and that it was

²¹ This comment was not only helpful in tracing the events of this narrative; it also prompted me to keep my eye on Jamal, with his yellow folder, waiting for his next appearance in my observations.

built before 2000.”²² “I think I saw the applicant yesterday, waiting in front of the hall door to talk to the vice chairperson,” the Downstage District MCM said. The folder reached the district department manager, who pulled it from the committee chairperson, curious to see more about the case about which his two committee colleagues were complaining. At that moment, the loud and insistent knocking on the door was so hard that it sounded as if the door would fall apart, and it exceeded the limits of the committee members’ patience. “Do you hear that door? It is too much now!” the Downstage District MCM said to the district department manager, prompting him to rise up from his chair to open the door and disperse the crowd of citizens in front of it for a while, before they could gather and begin knocking again. The district department manager left the yellow folder on the table and jumped up from his chair. In a matter of seconds he had turned the key to unlock the door, grabbed the door handle, and abruptly opened the door to its full width. The disrupted manager transferred the frustration of the rest of the committee; his voice sounded over the crowd of the waiting citizens, telling them to stop knocking, and scattering them all over the corridor. However, one of the citizens waiting outside seized the opportunity to enter that the open door had presented. He managed to enter the room easily, and sat on one of the chairs around the table after having been welcomed by the rest of the committee’s members. The yellow folder (Jamal’s folder) that was currently moving through the signing round was put aside, and everyone instead turned their attention to the visitor.

[...]

Six days passed before Jamal and his yellow folder reappeared in my observations. This time, I spotted him waiting in front of the open door to Backup Hall. Jamal repeatedly leaned into the door and looked inside the hall, as if searching for someone specific inside the hall. Each time he leaned in, he opened the door a bit more. I had an idea about who Jamal was looking for, because of the actor whom he had sought the week before, so I started looking with Jamal, moving my head with his head, aligning my sightline with his, looking for the vice chairperson, just as the

²² This request had its legal foundation in the Village and Building Law of 1966 and its updates, stating that if the building is used for educational purposes and was built before 2000, it can (as a conditional case) be taxed in the amount of 1 Jordanian Dinar (JD) per square meter for the building’s area, instead of 5 JD. However, the law states that the final decision lies within the local committee’s jurisdiction and depends on their evaluation of the building area and case.

last time I had seen Jamal in front of Backup Hall. Suddenly, Jamal seemed to fix his gaze on one spot in the hall, where the MCM of the Downstage District was sitting in a chair near the main entrance space. She usually sat there, checking every MCM or manager who entered, waiting for the meeting to start. As she looked toward the door to the hall, the Downstage District MCM encountered Jamal's searching eye. As usual, I was sitting on the right side of the hall, away from both of them but close enough to see that moment of eye contact, since the room was not yet full of MCMs and managers. When the MCM of the Downstage District had turned her back to me to check the door and encountered the presence of Jamal there, she abruptly turned her back to Jamal, his searching eyes and his leaning on the door. She actually turned her back to everything and everyone in the direction of the door, facing my position instead. In the meantime, Jamal continued to scan the inside of the hall through the open door, still looking for someone that apparently was not the MCM of the Downstage District.

After anxiously waiting for his sought person, Jamal seemed to give up, walking around in front the hall, leaving his post at the door and checking the attendees inside the hall less frequently. Suddenly, the vice chairperson appeared inside the hall, walking steadily towards his chair. He had apparently entered the hall from its second entrance, the one that is hidden by the dividing partition that was placed there to divide the vast hall into two main spaces; it was in one of these halves that the meeting took place. During one of his long inspection intervals inside the hall, Jamal caught sight of the vice chairperson walking, and followed his every move in the hall. The vice chairperson reached his position right beside the centre end of the rectangular table, far from, but directly facing the door. With his eyes fixed on the vice chairperson and his movements, Jamal managed to attract the vice chairperson's attention. Jamal promptly began waving, swinging his right arm in a broad arc from the far right to the far left. Finally, the vice chairperson succumbed to Jamal's extensive attempts to catch his attention and his beckoning to the doorstep of the hall. The vice chairperson walked slowly towards the door. Once again, his loud voice allowed me to hear the final sentence of their exchange on the threshold. "Okay, okay I will tell her now to look into your issue tomorrow, I promise I will do my best." With that, the vice chairperson had said his last words to Jamal, and he walked back into the hall, leaving Jamal behind him. The vice chairperson stood for a while by the doorstep inside the room, scanning the room as if looking for someone. After a short while he spotted the MCM of the Downstage District sitting in her

chair near the door, her back turned from the action near the door. The vice chairperson walked slowly towards the Downstage District MCM's position at the table, dragged his chair close to hers, and sat down calmly before he began talking. The brief whispered exchange ended with a slightly loud comment from the Downstage District's MCM: "Okay, okay; I will try my best, but I cannot promise you anything."

[...]

Despite the usual knocking on the door, which required the district department manager to rise from his chair and disband the disturbing party for a while, the meeting of the Downstage District's committee on the following day proceeded as usual. "Ah, we should change the meeting place next time, the disturbance from the knocking is becoming unbearable", remarked the district department manager while he was rising up from his chair. The meeting was centred on the same folder colour as the last time – yellow – and the time came to present Jamal's folder at the meeting table. The technical department manager pulled out the case from the stack of yellow folders. "Okay, now we have an issue from the last meeting about which we did not make a final decision. It is about a request to pay less tax for a building used for an educational purpose", the technical department manager said while reading from the folder. "I think we should finally decide about this issue; let us not postpone it any further", said the committee chair, the MCM of the Downstage District, calmly, turning her head towards the technical department manager. The district department manager rose slightly from his chair, leaning on the table towards the technical department manager's side, pulling the folder from her hand: "Well, according to the law we can approve a lower tax, but I do not know, the building's district does not seem to be that large". "Let us just vote, and get done with this folder and the waiting citizen, I agree! What do you say?" said the committee chair, the Downstage District MCM, cutting short any further discussion and taking the folder back. The folder was stamped, signed and sealed on the stack of folders once again after receiving the approval of the committee members. The conclusion of the meeting was announced with the opening of the door, allowing the waiting citizens to enter and retrieve their approved or disapproved folders. At the end of the corridor, I saw Jamal for a final time in my observations, standing, looking anxiously towards the room.

It is common (and in practice inevitable) for citizens to gather in front of the door of the meeting room prior to every municipal council meeting. It is also common for many MCMs and department managers to exchange quick greetings with the citizens before they enter the meeting room and take their assigned seats. It is less common, however, that one of the citizens can manage to have a short conversation with an MCM or manager when he or she is proceeding to his or her chair inside the meeting room and thus interrupt the usual routine. The routine of citizens gathering and the disrupted routine of the vice chairperson in the observational narrative above are the key events in what I see as the unfolding of the first destabilization that occurred in this case.

Before hastily judging Jamal's attempts to appeal to the vice chairperson's attention as improper or played behind the scenes to promote a personal interest, it is necessary to clarify what Jamal's legal right as a citizen actually is. Based on the Municipal Law of 2015, citizens are permitted to participate in the discussion part of the decision-making processes within the official rooms of the planning setting, whereas when these discussions proceed to a final decision phase, the law prohibits the presence of any visiting citizen. The item of the law that permits citizens to be present for certain parts of the meeting dates back to when the law was first enacted in 1955. Although there have been many updates to that particular law, many details still remain without being measured against the needs of the current situation, or against the increased number of citizens who might have an interest in the municipal council meetings (Batarseh, 2008; AlQbailat, 2006). Thus, this item of the Municipal Law of 2015 might have potential for practical complications nowadays, e.g. if it were taken advantage of by every citizen with an interest in the decisions and outcome of meetings. For practical reasons, an unwritten rule has emerged that citizens' presence is restricted during the whole of city planning meetings; when I inquired about this specific issue in an interview with the MCM of the Downstage District, this fact was confirmed. However, if a citizen requests the chairperson's permission, s/he can attend the discussions part of a meeting, as I saw at several meetings during the period of my observations. The restriction of citizens' presence by what has become a recognized custom also gives rise to devising possibilities to remotely influence the ongoing discussions inside the closed rooms. Another way to reflect on the events in the above narrative would thus be to describe Jamal's attempts to attract the vice chairperson's attention, and staying away himself, as a tactic to achieve the desired goal (Ferris et al., 2000) and to "influence outcomes, behaviours beyond those formally prescribed by the organization" (Sussman et al., 2002: 314).

The notion of tactics is well known in relation to how Michel de Certeau discusses users' interaction and appropriation of the environment around them through everyday life actions (de Certeau, 1988). Tactics, for de Certeau, could be described as "modalities of action" (p.29) that do not obey the rules of the place proper, but find other ways of operating in between these rules, even using the rules to serve alternative purposes (de Certeau, 1988). De Certeau's ideological definition, marking tactics not only as an activity of coping with emerging situations in everyday life, but also placing it in opposition to 'strategy' (instead of as part of it) has contributed to theorization on power games of 'strategies and tactics', giving rise to some of the themes of organizational studies, for instance in the practice theory that enhances the understating of actual practices in constrained situations (e.g. Whittington, 2006; Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011). The ideological division between tactics and strategy to which de Certeau points cannot always be seen as a definite attribution to the one that acts, but depends on the perspective of the act, and (with ANT) also the other types of actors linked to the act in the first place. In the case above, the recurrent appearance of Jamal and his persistence represent a series of tactical attempts, i.e. an alternative way to deal with given proper circumstances. However, they could also be compared to the situations of an insider who knows what strings to pull, aligned with what Allen et al. (1979:80) describe as "setting up the decision before the meeting is called, and getting others to contribute to the idea [...], to assure their commitment"; i.e., the actions contain also a certain amount of strategy. While the actions here cannot be placed unambiguously in a single power space thought to be subjected to another, I attempt to identify the mechanisms that support influential acting. Jamal's attempts were essentially based on being well acquainted with the recognized routines and awareness of their extent, and could thereby facilitate new possibilities to take advantage of their flexible application. Most important here were the routines of citizens gathering in front of the door prior to the meeting, and the possibility of the vice chairperson to bypass greeting them. Jamal identified both of these routines as part of a potential strategy that could be said to include the initialization of further, more tactical, associations with the vice chairperson. On the one hand, these actions align with the 'proper' (e.g. de Certeau, 1988) ways of manifesting future operations and expansions, whilst they are at the same time an alternative way of handling proper protocol. These actions required knowledge of the spatial conditions, first of all the positioning oneself in front of the door. By overviewing and seeking eye contact, the total space of official decision-making could be mastered, and certain outcomes predicted. The personal errand could thus be transformed into calculated actions inside the meeting room,

during the meeting time. Interestingly, although there was a legal opportunity available to gain legitimate access to the room, Jamal's action was here instead transformed into power manoeuvred ad hoc, and his actions thus became more tactical, or in terms of de Certeau: "[t]he weaker the forces at the disposition of the strategist the more the strategist will be able to use deception. I translate: the more the strategy is transformed into tactics" (de Certeau, 1988: 37). We can also say that in this case, the strategy extended into the involvement of a tactical "influential person" (Allen et al., 1979: 77), here the vice chairperson, which in a way also insured a further "developing of allies and the forming of power" (Sussman et al., 2002: 318). Thus, through the making of these associations, later action was enforced and activated whenever necessary during the exigent formal situation inside the meeting room and still further in the decision-making process, even when the door remains closed.

The selection of the vice chairperson as the tactical influential person was justified due to his institutional status – his role in any decision-making process was significant – but also simply for his mobility in terms of his physical presence inside the hall. The tactics were thus also sure to provide engagement with another important member inside the room, namely the chairperson of the local district in question. Through these kinds of remotely-controlled social associations, a citizen who is normally kept outside the central physical space of decision can keep a case 'hot', even when s/he is not physically present (Sussman et al., 2002; see also Stohl & Redding, 1988). Depending on what kind of impact actually being present in the room as a citizen might have, one might speculate if being absent in this situation (i.e. not present in the room) facilitated getting the errand through. Put in terms of what Law and Singleton call a 'fire typology' for stabilizing a network – namely the necessary absence of one actor (Law & Singleton, 2005) – the tactics displayed in the meeting room that day could be seen as a network stabilised by the fact that an extremely persistent and somewhat unconventional stakeholder remained outside of the room, even if that stakeholder technically had a legal right to be there.

In organization literature, the combination of self-serving tactics and the attempts to establish key strategic relations has been referred to as associative channels through the official domain of decision-making (e.g. Redding, 1972; Allen et al., 1979). The decision of tactics and the selection of channels can relate to affective factors such as symbolical context, target (to whom the channel should lead), and motivation or self-serving purpose (Allen et al., 1979; Sussman et al., 2002). Furthermore, as discussed in some organizational studies, the selection of suitable channels can also be

described in terms of social and political behaviour, as in social enactment theory (e.g. Weick, 1988; Eisenberg, 1986). In social enactment theory, social determinants such as the capability for social bonding, or the creation and maintenance of social links between actors are essential to choosing the most suitable channel of self-serving tactics (Sussman et al., 2002). However, it is beyond the scope of my investigation to delve deeper into these studies and the use of such relations; I mention them here to point to the existence of social or political behaviours, which are partly conditioned by the available potentials of co-acting. Moreover, in these theories, the explanations for these behaviours are primarily discussed as contingent on conventional sets of communicative channels, such as telephone, emails and direct face-to-face contact, which are analysed in their capability of establishing efficient communication (Sussman, et al. 2002), and conveying messages of self-interest (e.g. Carlson & Zmud, 1999). Here, what I aim to draw from situations like the above is rather a view of the communicative attachments by which the existence of a ‘channel’ is created, and how it relies on the complexity of the setting, i.e. the actor-network that situates a specific tactic through several components (as will be discussed more in detail later).

In the first part of the strategic persistence narrative, during the local district committee meeting, there was a multifaceted agency to what ended the meeting – the locked door with the key, and the crowd of citizens waiting behind the door that had delayed the discussions over the yellow folders several times during the meeting. As it happened, when a decision had almost been reached on the last folder (Jamal’s), the delay was slightly extended still by the knocking disruptions, which were considered common in these meeting procedures. The interruption was slightly longer because the manager walked to the door and opened it to demand silence and order from the citizens waiting outside; because of the moment of further delay, the influence on the usual meeting procedure of handling the yellow folders was more profound, which led to the final decision on the case being postponed to another occasion. It can of course be argued that this prolonged destabilizing condition happened by chance, and that seen in retrospect, these circumstances ultimately served Jamal’s interests: the interruption meant a second chance for the case, enabling a new act of social associations at the main municipality meeting (with the vice chairperson and the local district MCM), thus re-establishing a network of influential tactics, so as to “create coalitions and bases of support” (Sussman et al. 2002: 318). Furthermore, this time the establishment of the influential tactics was associated in such a way that it could maintain stable social configurations. This persistence over several meetings made it possible for the issue at stake to maintain a stable shape while it went from the main

official office to the local district office. In the end, the issue at stake thus came to work a bit as an immutable mobile (Latour, 1987) instead of as a case open to additional influential knowledge when moving from location to location.

The influential moments in this case (linked to the persistence tactic, the physical absence and the delegated actions) were what I term 'durabilized', in the sense that they kept acting in relation to the total setting across time and space, i.e. over several meetings. This resembles what I introduced above as tactics moving between formal and informal spaces in the planning setting, extending their reach and exerting an influence regardless of what is commonly understood as borders and official meeting times. Here, the durabilized influence ultimately gained a formal supportive position when the committee members could gather inside the room, have discussions and proceed with their handling of folders according to protocol, without letting the persistent knocking on the door become an inhibiting actor, and a final decision could thus be made.

4.3 Postlude (1): Talking and Acting from Beyond - Maintaining Matters of Concern

Knowing when to talk, how to talk, and what to talk about during meetings is not only a matter of following a specific set of rules or behaving according to protocol. As several incidents from 'the status of the computer' narrative illustrate, other conditions may influence how the dialogue would (or would not) proceed as usual in meetings. For instance, we saw that the timeliness of discussing an issue in relation to the meeting time as a whole, i.e. when to most efficiently present a statement or a fact, can influence the trajectory of a dialogue en route to final decisions; thus, this kind of temporal arrangement can be seen as a precursor to the later development of destabilizations.

Time also plays a role in the division of the agenda into two main modes; i.e. an acquisition part that usually contains dry discussions of technical issues, followed by a second, more lively part with negotiations and unexpected perspectives. This division allows a view of time itself as having agency. We saw that the discussion of the computer issue was the final item on the acquisition part of the meeting agenda. It thus appeared on the edge between more tedious, acquiescent interactions between meeting participants, and more colourful performances tied to issues that provoked more interest and engagement. We can presume then that this slot on the meeting agenda

allows more extensive final debate because it is the last item in the acquisition part, but also because the conclusion in itself prepares the members for a more lively debate. It is not far-fetched, then, that this slot for the computer issue in the meeting agenda could itself have increased the susceptibility to moments of disruption in the dialogues to come – moments that altered the orientation of discussions and led to an unexpected final decision.

Another moment that could be seen as a precursory act appeared when the manager with the main role in presenting and delegating the computer issue entered the room. The hasty entrance itself stood out as an unusual way of interacting with the other members, the spatiality of the room, and the assigned seating positions. During my observation, I realized that I, as an observer, was not alone in noticing this entrance; it was also reinforced by one of the members' comments about the manager's presence at the start of the meeting. The uncommon way of interacting with the room and its physicality was noticeable in other details as well, such as when borrowing the microphone from the MCS in order to participate in the dialogue. As several other observations indicate, the microphones are seldom used by managers or the MCMs. Small incidents like these could at first be seen as only minor disruptions of the dialogue procedures with little significance, but since they can actually relate to, or add to, other sensed, prepared, or hidden predisposing conditions, they can release latent matter, relating for instance to agency already carried by the meeting agenda, the design of the meeting room, the positions of chairs, and the technologies present, such as the microphone, etc.

Revisiting the events rendered in the narrative about the computer status, we see that moments of questioning how the dialogues usually proceed (who talks when, what to talk about, for how long, etc.) worked against the normal dialogue procedures, allowing instead new acts to govern the trajectories of the process. The internal modes of procedure are questioned during these moments of questioning; furthermore, the designated space that usually defines the borders for how members can take part can also be reformed. It appeared here when a smaller special committee was formed, designated to act in another space and time than the meeting itself. Such reformation can both add and detach actors, or the roles they play. Furthermore, when a moment of questioning emerges, it replaces the usual sequence of what issues to discuss, causing a shift in the main focus and the agreed cultural routines for the presentation of issues and deliberation of solutions. As mentioned earlier, these moments in which meeting conduct is lifted to become an issue in itself in the meeting can be labelled *credibility*

questioning. As we saw in the computer status narrative, these type of moments can emerge for instance when there is a reconfiguration of the usual set of participants or stakeholders in the dialogues, or when there is an uncommon way of interacting with the room, its physicality, and the available technology, as well as in the case of unfamiliarity with the meeting culture and its procedures.

As explained earlier, familiarity with the meeting culture can be accumulated as a combination of knowledge about the organizational culture and how an individual interprets it in each situation during the meeting time. As March (1994) explains it, knowledge about rules and culture depends on the process of social learning and training. In the observations, it became clear that this learning process needs to be developed or created through multiple successive engagements in the ongoing dialogues. The second narrative also confirms the influence of time on the social learning process, where a citizen's knowledge and familiarity with common routines enforced the possibility to influence the decision-making process. The second narrative's events also show the impact of knowledge of the site's spatial details. The influential actions here were not only confined to the borders of the meeting room or to the meeting time; other localities belonging to the planning setting, such as the threshold area in front of the doors of the two meeting rooms (main and local), formed a stage for acting a strategic and tactical persistence. The durability of Jamal's presence was crucial, and his case could only start by socially engaging in the small niches and slots of time possible in the setting due to the impracticality of participating in the meeting as a citizen, and could continue by his following up on the interest behind the closed doors of the room. A certain measure of habit was probably already developed here, in line with what Hajer (2003: 175ff) calls "double dynamics". Double dynamics refers to the situations when: "actors not only deliberate to get to favourable solutions for particular problems but while deliberating they also negotiate new institutional rules, develop new norms of appropriate behaviour" (Hajer, 2003: 175ff). Therefore, actions – such as Jamal's persistent engagement and attention to goings-on – can be seen as a challenge to the imposed impracticality. In a way, these actions align perfectly with existing rules, but they also develop certain deviating norms specific to the situation, such as waiting in front of the door and attracting the attention of influential participants in the meeting.

These actions for maintaining an issue at stake can also be seen in a territorial perspective. Territories may be seen as defined by an individual or a group's continuous efforts to delimit control (Sack, 1985: 19). A micro-example in the 'strategic persistence

and tactical moves' narrative is the threshold area in front of the meeting door, which could be established shortly before every meeting to influence at one specific point in time according to the flow of start-ups. Kärholm (2017) opens up the discussions of the analysis of territories not only as spaces that relate to each other, but also as other acts or events that relate to form territories. He thus takes a relational approach to time-space creation, or as he entitles it, the process of territorialisation. The latter can describe how different spatiotemporal claims can be produced through time-space practices, such as here, in the times slots of gathering prior to a meeting, or in the time assigned to discuss a certain issue. In light of the territorialisation process, Kärholm (2005: 3) discusses a number of forms for territorial productions: territorial strategy, territorial tactics, territorial association, and territorial appropriation (see also Kärholm, 2004; 2007; 2017). In Kärholm's terms, one can describe the repeated practices by citizens gathering in front of the door every week as events of territorialisation producing a "particular time space" that can "become objectified and salient" (Kärholm, 2017: 690).

The territorialisation in the 'strategic persistence and tactical moves' narrative can be seen as "territorial appropriation" (Kärholm, 2005: 3) which is partly produced by the timely controlling of everyone who approaches the threshold, observing and waiting for the appearance of any possible influential delegator that can preserve an interest inside the meeting room, looking for any opportunity to affect the process, perhaps without too much preplanned actions. Through timeliness and tactics dependent on face-to-face communication, the produced territorial appropriation lets the preservation of the interest of an issue at stake to be endured, and durabilized long enough to support decisions in other times and spaces of influence. This combination of strategy and tactics, attaching other actors and enduring a territorialisation process, could be labelled *transistor tactics*; here, this denotes the durable and amplified influence beyond a fixed time-space delimitation (the meeting event) or a temporal territorial appropriation (standing by the door). As we will see later, such transistor tactics – which are a relational rather than a mere individual kind of tactics – can be linked and established via other conduits (channels), such as phones, or tiny yellow sticky notes.

When discussing talking and acting, it is almost unavoidable to place some emphasis on the individual actions that were attempts to participate or engage in the process. For example, in what Swyngdouw (2005) sees as horizontally arrangements of governance, the meaning and the entitlements of participation are redefined and

repositioned in “relational networked forms of decision-making on the basis of the ‘stakes’ they [participants] hold with respect to the issues these forms of governance attempt to address” (p.1995). For instance, one can find that the visiting citizen managed to act effectively despite his participation being restricted, delegating his stake to someone inside the room, and maintaining interest in his matter in the process until it was settled. This is a contrast to the first ‘the status of the computer’ narrative, where the law and protocols were available to support the presenting manager’s case, but where the surrounding conditions failed to keep interest focused on the computers, and where the interest instead shifted onto an investigation, for the importance of appropriately following protocol.

In line with this, and in relation to both of the above narratives, one could assume that having an effective or an influential role in keeping an issue at stake is not a matter of what is dictated by the law, or how it usually works according to institutional protocol, and nor is it a matter of being constantly and directly related to the issue at stake. Rather, it is a matter of enrolment in the interest of the issue that depends on “what the [involved] actors have done or not done to establish it” (Latour, 1999: 86). Therefore, a set of actors was unexpectedly associated with each process, although these actors were not necessarily engaged inside the meeting room. Nevertheless, the exposed roles of actors, active in spaces outside and between the scheduled time-spaces of the meeting, can be considered as decisive or influential in the proceedings for the issue at stake, and as containing possibilities to actually influence the final decisions. For instance, in the first narrative, we saw that when the issue was first presented, one could not initially expect that other MCMs or computers in other local districts would contribute to an altered stakeholder position and thus change the trajectories of the decision-making process.

Furthermore, in the second narrative, about tactics, what could at first sight be a matter completely tied to the visiting citizen became delegated via one formal member to another formal member of the committee, even though the first member was not directly related (as the next one was) to the local district meetings where the issue had to pass. When the visiting citizen enrolled the vice chairperson in the interest of his stake, he did not try to change the official role of the vice chairperson, but still wanted – through a temporary shift, and perhaps a bit unconventionally – to engage him in the interest of facilitating the folder’s treatment. Thus, not only the transport and interest of the folder were delegated to the vice chairperson, but also the sense of persistence, and the urgency to convey it to the MCM of the local district in question.

The visiting citizen/stakeholder managed, in other words, to temporarily cause a “drift, a slippage, a displacement” (Latour, 1999: 88) of the official roles of the meeting attendees, to generate a fusion of interests for achieving the intended goal.

In addition, if we examine more closely the roles that were tied to the main interest, or the issues at stake,²³ in the two narratives, we see that not only the issue at stake changed, but also the setting and the character of the roles themselves. This recalls what the sociologist and STS-oriented theoretician Noortje Marres (2007) discusses as part of ‘issue formation’, by which the articulation of interest in the issue at stake “focuses on the ‘attachments’ that are entangled in issues: material, physical and technical associations that are at stake in controversies, which people are both dependent on and actively committed to” (Marres, 2007: 776). Marres regards the involvement in any public concern to be a matter of mobilizing “socio-ontological associations [that can] mediate actors’ involvement in the issue at stake” (Marres, 2007: 776). Even if Marres engages in mediational and socio-political aspects more overarching than the closer scope of the space and materiality in the settings studied here, I find it helpful that Marres (2007: 773) discusses these associations as something that should not only be understood in discursive terms, but as “being constituted by institutional, physical, monetary, and legal ties, among others”, ties that can be achieved in a process of learning to be affected (Marres, 2005: 62 in reference to Latour, 2004). She emphasizes in other words the agentic and becoming state of an issue, rather than a ‘once and for all’ given representational status of issues.

Maintaining an interest, or an issue, but also the interruptions that threaten that maintenance evokes questions about what it means to be a stakeholder, as we saw in the events in both narratives,. The matter of being a stakeholder, or rather what it means to have a transferring role for the issue at stake, can be seen in a reflection of the process of becoming, or producing, a stakeholder in a planning project. Metzger (2013a) discusses the concept of stakeholder as a category where the representational relation between the stake and the holder, or as Metzger puts it, between the stakeholder and the presumed territory that the stakeholder represents, is commonly taken as a given presumption, carrying an almost absolute ontological status in planning theory (both in rationalist and critical approaches to planning). Instead, Metzger exhibits the more attributive concept of “stakeholderiness” as a “relational effect”

²³ ‘Issue’ will here then imply not only ‘the issue (of the agenda) to be decided on’, but instead the matter of concern for the meeting discussions at a certain moment.

(p.792) that is conceptualized and “manufactured through painstaking and elaborate series of procedures so to say ‘in process’” (Metzger, 2013a: 783).

Reflecting on this line of theoretical discussions, we saw in the status of the computer narrative how the role of an official stakeholder who had the right to attend and speak at the municipal council meetings could not create stakeholderhood enough to endure in the meeting. The stakeholderhood in relation to the computer issue became a matter less tied to the concern of one specific actor, and this way it became exhausted. On the other hand, in the strategic persistence narrative we saw that stakeholderhood was formed, and endured in a process of learning to be affected. The duration of engagement from more one actor within the meeting context assured the stakeholderhood to last long enough to influence the decision-making.

The same principle of successively gained attachments, albeit with other premises, is also identifiable in the second narrative, where there is a combination of tactics and strategy. In this case, the durability of social relations became important in forwarding the issue at stake during the process. There was sufficient knowledge about the meeting culture associated to the issue at stake, which supported the setting up of persistent strategies and tactical moves that made it possible to re-adapt to the confinements of the protocol and to mobilize an influential remote stakeholderhood. This partially delegated stakeholderhood worked as a remote direction of the issue at stake, inside the ‘correct’ row of time-spaces, while engaging an influential delegator to reach another decision-maker towards a final decision.

The mechanisms of the influential moments that I have seen as emerging in these narratives, *credibility questioning* and *transistor tactics*, reflect the importance in a meeting culture of learning to be affected. Each case showed a stakeholderhood involving stages of growing accustomed to the decision-making process rather than straightforwardly and solely being supported by law or a well-known protocol. The holding together of these associations, as they appeared in the narratives, is conditioned by many factors, including the ability to align with the meeting culture, and the wider planning culture, seen as contexts that can provide the set of attachments needed to affect, to influence, or to be resilient to, the wills and conditions imposed.

5

Matter Matters²⁴

In this chapter, I shift the focus from human dialogue and actions to investigations where the emphasis is on non-human actors (Latour, 1993; 1996); here physical objects like tables, chairs, air conditioners, mobile phones as well as spatial arrangements, such as the shape and layout of rooms. These non-human actors are always present during the decision-making process, participating in the activities. They support or (de)stabilize the conditions of the planning setting through their relations with the meeting members. As already mentioned in the methodology chapter of this thesis, the term non-human, common in ANT, may include a broad range of entities, as shown for example in ‘Reassembling the Social’, where Latour (2005: 11) mentions “microbes, scallops, rocks, and ships”. This rhetoric is reminiscent of the earlier book ‘We have Never Been Modern’, where he refers to non-humans as “things, objects, and beasts” (Latour, 1993: 13). In a reflection on the early uses of the concept ‘non-human’, Sayes (2013) points out that non-human could denote for instance texts such as scientific accounts (as in Callon et al., 1986), material structure (as in Latour & Hermant, 1998), or tools and technical artefacts (as in Latour & Woolgar, 1986 [1979]). Not least within the field of Science, Technology and Society studies (STS), the term ‘artefact’ has frequently been used as an aggregate (Latour, 1993), emphasizing that it is a dynamic composition of things and relations (a network object). Artefacts are designed, produced and assembled to perform a function (Baker, 2008).

I do not strictly depend on certain ANT terminology and labels in the following analysis; instead, I try to use familiar names for the non-human actors that happen to appear in my observations, like mobile phones, chairs, tables, etcetera. I do this partly because designating the objects that I happened to trace ‘non-humans’ can sometimes be problematic, as if implying that they were a definite set existing in a particular situation. In practice, ‘non-humans’ are an indefinite number of actors relating to an assembly, such as here in my study to any decision-making process. Also, by retaining the familiar names in the analysis, I make it easier to directly relate these actors to their true working roles and how they support some arguments in the analysis. Nevertheless,

²⁴ I allude here to John Law’s (2009: 1) explanation of how materiality can make a difference in real practices; in my case it means that I am examining how objects, architectural elements and spatial arrangements can matter in keeping the meeting process smoothly going, or else how they ‘disturb’ its procedures.

my interest in non-humans and their relation to humans in the research as a whole aligns with what I believe is shared, albeit termed otherwise, by designers: namely that ‘it, he, or she’ can act equally and make a difference in a network, and it would take other actors a lot of work to replace their acts (e.g. Latour, 2005; Mol, 2010). These sets of actors can participate in the working networks through mechanisms such as ‘delegation’ and ‘agency’ (Latour, 1992) giving them roles such as authorizing, influencing, and deviating from, established actor-network events (Sayes, 2013; see also Latour, 2005). In this chapter, the appearance of mechanisms like these will contribute to what can be viewed as influence on the decision-making process.

Recently, material matters have gained considerable recognition as active parts of the planning theories discourse that has traditionally primarily involved planners, project stakeholders, and citizens (e.g. Metzger, 2015; 2016; Healey, 2010; Farias, 2010; Bruun Jensen, 2015). For instance, in suggesting an approach of “more than human planning sensibility”, Metzger (2016: 586-589) sees the need to open up for a view in planning research beyond “individual humans imagined as sovereign existences” (p.586) in the city (see also Metzger, 2015; 2014b). He argues that cities have more than human inhabitants that need the planner’s attention, and that planning methods should be cultivated with more focus on sensitizing involvement for others than humans, asking “who (or what) deserves to be taken into account or listened to in the consideration of possible urban futures” (Metzger, 2016: 584). Recently, Healey (2013) has also attributed more value to the significance of the place’s materiality in shaping multiple identities in socio-environmental contexts, explaining that “it is a world of human and also non-human agency, in which people are not simply autonomous individuals with single identities” (Healey, 2013: 1514).

Some studies in policy discourses have also made attempts at explaining objects’ roles in mediating discourses and the communications in the planning process (e.g. Hajer, 2005; Hardy & Thomas, 2015); others have shed light on the role of objects in stabilizing the process interactions. For example, Beauregard (2012) discusses the roles of site plans, scale models, and meeting rooms in a planning project, and how these might influence ongoing dialogues about a planning project. He also points to possible scenarios of how planning processes could proceed with the absence of these entities, urging for a planning theory as a theory of collective action, in which things can participate as actors of influence, not just as passive voices. Roads, streets, plans, laws, meeting rooms, etcetera – i.e. matters relating to urban environments – can be seen as involved in the planning process “in one of two ways: either as objects being planned

or as objects being used to plan” (Beauregard, 2012: 187). Beauregard points to the complexity of reciprocity and order in how planning succeeds, casting an interesting light on where objects actually play their part in the planning process and in the chains of agency. I do not, however, explicitly differentiate here between Beauregard’s two principal ways as working categories from which to start, but I see, for instance, information as something that can take material form (Law & Hetherington, 2000: 35). In my research, the material form of information may appear as meeting minutes, laws, and rules when manifested as a memo or a written decision in the agenda book. Furthermore, the broad use of the notion of ‘object’ and its ontological connotations can become complicated, since it quite often simply denotes physical objects, but in a more strict ANT view, it rather denotes what is jointly expressed through a network, and thus does not even have to be of a physical/material kind at all. An ‘object of planning’ can thus be both networked and seen as a singular thing in a specific situation, and its status can be both virtual and real.

In organizational studies that consider the role of objects in meetings, the focus has primarily been on technologies that enhance human interactions during the negotiations in meetings (e.g. Ribes et al., 2013; Suchman, 1994), or how humans engage with technologies as given repertoires in organizational interaction (e.g. Berg, 1997; Ashcraft et al., 2009). The organizational theoretician Wanda J. Orlikowski attempts through the notion of “constitutive entanglement” (Orlikowski, 2007: 1437) to release these limited considerations with the aid of post-humanist theories and ANT, recognizing socio-material relations that constitute temporal organizational practices (Orlikowski, 2007). Another theoretician of organizations with a direct relation to the ANT tradition is Barbara Czarniawska, who encourages looking into organisations through the concept of ‘action nets’ (2004), embracing the idea that organizations are products of repeated actions, such as in for instance in city management (Czarniawska, 2002). The concept of action nets sees organizations as dynamic bodies that must be observed as they are “constantly remade and renewed” (Czarniawska 2004: 785). In action nets, agentic value is translated between for instance “words, numbers, objects and people” (2004: 785), all of which can be attributed intention as a posteriori quality in social orders, including institutions.

In some political study discourses, material matters have been recognized as vital for decisions about the city (e.g. Farias, 2011; Stengers, 2010). For example, the institutional force of governments and other political frameworks has been acknowledged, following concepts from STS, to include material objects in any practice

to a more profound extent (Müller, 2015). In ANT-oriented literature, the inclusion of non-human actors has also figured in relation to public discourses or debates, for instance when opening up to spaces of a ‘hybrid forum’ (Callon et al., 2009), where oppositions between actors such as experts, politicians, technicians, and laypersons are replaced by “socio-technical arguments [and] by scenarios that articulate different kinds of considerations” in order “to arrive at a “robust” solution” (Callon et al., 2009: 32). These thoughts on hybridity in participation show an ambition where socio-technical devices become pragmatic objects, in situations where otherwise disparate opinions can be heard but are difficult to conjoin. In other studies, objects have been seen as acquiring the powers of engagement and participating in broad mediational contexts, expressing ‘explicit political and moral capacity’ (Marres, 2005; see also Marres & Lezaun, 2011).

In this research, materiality has been considered as part of every interaction of the decision-making process. Following ANT, matter can make a difference as a relational effect stabilizing or destabilizing a network (Law, 2009a), and consequently it can be seen here as taking part in the social enactment of the meeting or of the planning setting. For instance, meeting rooms, and their architectural elements, such as doors and walls, can promote as well as constrain various practices by enabling or dislocating individuals from the meeting event. An open door can be an invitation to participate, a transparent glazed wall may transmit some modes of communication between the inside and outside of the meeting room and block out others; hence, “materiality communicates and shapes” (Dale & Burrell, 2008:1).

In the following narratives, I unfold how technologies such as mobile phones and air conditioning units matter in the practices, and how they may shift from their familiar roles during destabilizations. I also address how materialities matter together with modes of ordering, thus generating effects not only in the meetings or institutional practices, but also in the organization.

5.1 Mobile Phones

The mobile phone has become a ubiquitous technological device that participates in and influences every social aspect of our lives; it is “a central cultural technology in its own right” (Goggin, 2006: 2). This well-known and broadly used technology also appeared frequently during many city-planning meetings in Nodacity. The approach

to understanding the usage of phone devices in this research concerns how it can enrol in the meeting procedures and impact their relations in the actor-networks working during the meeting time. The study thus engages the role of the mobile phone as a technology with its simplest capability of transmitting voices, which makes remote acting in the meeting procedures possible, and how it might “appear to determine or compel certain actions” during destabilizations (Latour, 1992: 151).

A Phone Call that Triggers

Once, at the Downstage District’s committee meeting, I was sitting in my usual chair beside the meeting table, on the left side of the committee chairperson. I was close enough to the table to follow and observe the meeting procedures; the committee attendees were processing folders, each handing a folder to the next person, starting with the technical department manager, to the committee chairperson, then to the local district manager. It was a typical meeting; the folders were circulating smoothly between members, who acted their assigned roles and signed their names on the designated lines. Moments of silence filled the room, apart from when the ringing of the committee chairperson’s phone temporally disturbed the calmness. “Could you answer the phone, it has rung too many times since the beginning of the meeting. Or just put it in silent mode”, complained one of the committee members. The committee chairperson responded by pushing a button to silence her ringing phone for a third time during that day’s meeting. This was neither the first nor the last time that the committee chairperson was asked to silence or answer the ringing phone. The ringing and the complaints had become routine at the meetings; as had the requests for me to move my chair slightly to the left so that the committee chairperson could in plug one of the phones into the nearest electrical socket, which was located behind my chair.

There were two phones that usually took turns charging at the socket behind my chair. After being plugged in, the mobile phone would be placed on the wide windowsill behind us. This position, as close as possible to their holder and owner, the committee chairperson, was important in case the two phones began ringing during the meetings – it made it possible to quickly mute them, or to respond. This made my position somewhat problematic; every time one of the phones rang, I had to get up from my chair while the committee chairperson reacted. I

realized that during my observation period, whenever I noticed a phone plugged into the socket behind me upon entering a room, I would choose another position around the table, usually on the other side of the table. Without me in my usual position when the phone was plugged in, it was easier for the committee chairperson to quickly approach her phone. When the committee chairperson chose to answer the persistently ringing phone, the conversations concerned brief legal consultations, information or advice regarding specific issues in relation to properties in the Downstage District. At other times, the conversations were even shorter, with only a quick response from the chairperson about final decisions on the application folders of those ringing, usually regarding whether the official procedures had been completed or not.

On this particular committee meeting occasion, I had remained seated on my chair for the duration of the meeting without being displaced by phones that needed to be plugged into the socket behind my chair. Half of the meeting time had passed with the usual procedure of exchange of folders between the members and a smooth round of signatures. The committee members were busy with the folders in front of them when one of the phones that lay on the table in front of the chairperson began to ring. She glanced quickly at the caller ID, and it rang only a short time before she pushed the green button, responding in a welcoming tone: “Ohh hello... yes I still remember your case... of course, I will see what I can do now”. The chairperson finished the short phone call, and then placed the phone again on the meeting table. She then proceeded with the folder that she had received right before the phone call and calmly handled it to the next signatory, the local district manager. After delivering the folder, she turned to the technical department manager, who was busy with the next folder. “Do you remember we had a folder with the name [...]? Do you remember if we signed it today or not? It concerns a very common case: an apartment building owned by someone who passed away; his children inherited it. One of the children – the daughter – has been living in the building for a long time now, and as agreed upon by the other children she has inherited the whole building – now she wants to sell it. But the problem is that the apartment building is still registered in the father’s name; they did not manage to issue the certificate of inheritance directly after his death. Now they did, so we need to transfer the ownership to this daughter so she can sell it”. The technical department manager responded while handing a finished folder with its explanations to the committee chairperson: “No,

I haven't seen that case, but it seems that you know a lot of details about it". This had also been my reaction; the brief phone call made it clear that she had known all of these details earlier, possibly from other phone calls, a meeting, or a conversation in front of the door before the start of a municipal council meeting. The technical department manager had replied while passing the folder to the committee chairperson, who gently closed it and placed it in front of her on the table. The chairperson continued: "Before we continue with the signing these folders, can you please look into the stack of folders in front of you for the case that I have just explained", asking the technical department manager, who was busy entering explanations in the next folder. The technical department manager rose from her chair and quickly shuffled the stack of folders on the side of the table, flipping them on the page where the applicant's name is written: "I can't find anything here, maybe it is in the other stack of folders in my office".

The committee chairperson turned to the local district manager on the other side of the table beside her, "Maybe you have seen it somewhere – have you seen the folder for this case?" The district manager replied quickly, without lifting his head from the folder that he was busy reading before signing: "No, I haven't". The committee chairperson seemed to have given up the idea of letting the district manager and the technical department manager find the folder. She gazed at the stack of folders on the table, then started looking over her left shoulder, towards me. I tried to look busy with my observations, keeping my head down in my notebook, I saw her observing me as I flipped pages and read some of my earlier notes. She seemed to hesitate for a moment, then barely turned her chair to the left and looked at me for a while before speaking: "Marwa, maybe you are busy with your observations, but would you mind looking into the stack of folders again... Do you want the name again, it is [...]." I raised my eyes to meet hers, and responded in a positive tone: "Gladly". Without any further delay, I quickly jotted down 'what a powerful phone call' in my notebook, before leaving it on my chair and heading for the stack of folders on the table.

I rose up from my chair, walked around to the opposite side of the table where the technical department manager had left the scattered folders, and I slowly flipped the stack of folders in front of me. It took some time for me to check the names on every folder whilst keeping my eye on the ongoing meeting procedures, and also looking towards the committee chairperson, who was still watching me flipping folders. "I'm

sorry, I could not find it either.” I put down the last folder, looking towards the committee chairperson, and then I returned to my chair behind her. I had been sitting again for a short time when the committee chairperson put down a folder, walked behind the technical department manager’s chair, and stood in front of the stack of folders, trying her luck at finding the requested folder that no one had found. After checking every folder in the room, the committee chairperson walked towards the closed door, she turned the key in the lock, and opened the door. She stood, holding the handle of the door with her hand to prevent the flow of waiting citizens from pushing the door open further. She shouted for the janitor, and gave him the case folder name: “Please go and look for this folder in the stack of folders in the technical department manager’s office.” The committee chairperson managed to disperse the crowd of the waiting citizens, then turned the key to lock the door again and sat down to continue with the procedures.

The committee chairperson continued her work on the folders in front of her, sometimes raising her head, and looking towards the door. After a while, a strong knock was heard and the committee chairperson’s name was called. She left the folder signing, rose up quickly from her chair, and walked swiftly behind the technical department manager to open the locked door. It was the janitor again, who handed her the folder she had been looking for. “I found it in the technical department manager’s office”, the janitor said. “Thank you very much”, the committee chairperson responded, taking the folder, closing the door, and positioning herself in front of the table, looking at the technical department manager. “Can you check this now; it is a very common legal case. It will not take up much of your time”, the committee chairperson said, opening the folder to the page designated for the technical department manager’s technical explanations and placing it in front of her. The latter pulled the folder closer, looking towards the committee chairperson, and began writing her technical explanations. The committee chairperson sat down at the centre of the table again, between the technical department manager and the district manager, received the folder from the technical manager, signed it without taking much time to read the technical explanations provided, stamped it, and then passed it to the local district manager.

The mobile phone has not only the ability to transmit voices over distances and virtually connect distinct locations; it could also interrupt meetings in Nodacity, and disrupt the procedures of exchanging folders, thus causing destabilizations of various kinds to the meeting. Before unfolding the consequence of destabilizations that the phone managed to bring to the meeting procedures in the narrative above, I discuss what could be seen as the use of the device during the meeting, starting with a description of its specific material composition and design.

Many mobile phones consist of a plastic or steel case containing technical elements: a circuit board, an antenna, microphones, a speaker, and, of crucial importance for the sake of being able to work and network at all, a battery. Technically, even if each of these parts of the phone works well, the phone cannot function and do its job without a charged battery. As we saw in the narrative, on several occasions in the Downstage District meeting, having a charged battery required regular actions to be taken in the room, e.g. the displacement of my chair from its position to allow sufficient space to access the socket behind the chair. As charging is a specific technical necessity for sustaining the work time for phones and computers in general, there are different solutions for charging in different meeting rooms, such as hidden panels in the floor, etc. Here, in this narrative, the presence of the phone caused a temporary destabilization for me, and partly for the rest of the meeting attendees, pausing my observations, and making me move to another position, as described above.

As stated in the observation narrative, this was by far not the only occasion on which a mobile phone appeared during the committee meetings in the Downstage District. The phone rang quite frequently during different segments of several meetings, to the point that the meeting attendees grew accustomed to it. As noted in several observations, the recurrent ringing was usually not a reason to stop the meeting, even if a committee member complained about it; thus, the repetitive occurrence of the ringing and the complaints had become part of the meeting norm. Additionally, there was a repetitive pattern of actions that routinely appeared in response to the ringing. For instance, the committee chairperson (who owned the phone) had to push the silent button to stop the ringing, or simply answer the incoming call. In the absence of these responsive actions, the ringing would continue to disturb the meeting, and prompt further complaints. The committee chairperson's repetition of the responsive actions of silencing or answering the phone was therefore crucial for keeping the meeting procedures stabilized, i.e. maintaining the smooth progression of the reading and exchange of folders. So, although the phone signals briefly disrupted the meeting

procedures, these short, repeated destabilizations became a common occurrence – a kind of routine of destabilizations. This is similar to how Latour (2005) discusses the concept of controversy; when it starts to take part in the events, it will no longer be a controversy, but will instead join the trajectory of the network. On the other hand, if the ringing was ended by picking up the phone to answer, this answering action could then possibly expand to other kinds of destabilizations that would risk influencing the meeting procedures, depending on the content of the phone call. In total, it could be said that the mobile phone and the use of it during meetings could be recognized as part of the meeting culture in Downstage District.

As indicated in several observations, the phone calls themselves were generally from citizens inquiring about decisions on the folders' contents, which necessitated only quick verbal responses without additional actions. In that case, the quick answering would only trigger the waiting for another ringing and the restart of the cycle of responsive actions. Therefore, the slightly longer call with a familiar voice at the other end in the narrative above broke up the routine of small destabilizations; this time, the ringing did not stop with the answering of the phone; instead, its influence expanded, causing a deviation of the meeting procedures.

Unfolding what happened after the phone was answered in the above narrative, we saw that the committee chairperson made a promise to help with a request. Until that moment, it seemed like the calls were part of the usual destabilization routine; however, answering the phone in the meeting resulted in a breaking of the norm of similar situations. Most importantly, it interrupted the meeting and stopped the flow and exchange of folders from continuing as usual. Before we continue following this disruption, I will elaborate on how Downstage District committee meetings usually proceed, with an exchange of folders free from any kind of disruptions.

“First, the technical department manager picked up a folder from the stack of yellow folders in front of her, filling in her meticulous technical explanations in the designated space. She then handed it to the chair of the committee, the MCM of the Downstage District, who read through the provided explanations, signed ‘the Chair of the Committee’, and carefully stamped it after she had sufficiently drenched the stamp in ink. After that, the folder handling reached the third committee member, the manager of Downstage District, who usually skimmed through the technical explanations very quickly before signing. With the presence of the other two members, the folders continued and were checked and signed by a fourth member, an assigned delegate from the municipality.

Finally, the folders would reach the end of the signing round with a fifth member, the second MCM of the Downstage District. The final two stops for the folders were often omitted, as the last two members have a less frequent presence at the Downstage District's committee meetings; however, the presence of the first three members provide the validity needed for the signing round according to the legislative rules.”

The successiveness aspect described above in the procedure of exchanging folders is important, in the sense that it conveys a message of regular ordering that is necessary for the stability of the exchanging pattern to proceed as usual. Therefore, it should always start with the technical explanations, which are always provided by the designated expert – usually the technical department manager. These explanations provide logical rationalizations that could be debated between the committee members, so the latter could discuss them if necessary, and then approve or disapprove the issue to settle on a final decision. However, these explanations are not to be considered final decisions; they are essential for the process since they provide a scientific (engineering) and professional reference for any discussed decision. These explanations are also essential for triggering the repetitive order, showing that it can be moved to the next member in the cycle of exchanging folders. Therefore, unless there was a need for deliberations, negotiations, or discussions about the issue of the folder, the latter would continue on its usual path to the second essential member, the committee chairperson, the MCM of Downstage District.

Due to a number of factors, the role of the committee chairperson is not only that of a second signatory in the folder exchange cycle; the signature of the committee chairperson can be considered a preliminary decision for a final, enacted one. According to the Village and Building Law of 1966, if there is an equal number of votes for and against an issue, the committee chairperson can determine the final decision, since her/his vote has the value of two voices. Also, any approved final decision needs to be stamped with the official stamp, which is reserved for and retained solely by the committee chairperson, which gives this role still more legal significance in the folder exchange procedures. The specific characteristics of the stamp are the same as those of any manual wooden stamp; it needs to be attached and pressed into an inkpad to function and stamp. The stamp is always kept with the committee chairperson and cannot be left in the room or anywhere in the building; it is official property of the committee chairperson. The municipal ministry gives the stamp to the committee chairperson as a legal instrument, and it is engraved with the name of the holder of the position as a committee chairperson, here, of Downstage District. Together, the stamp,

the inkpad, the Village and Building Law of 1966, and the committee chairperson usually assure the legal approval as if they effaced themselves to become one punctualized actor (e.g. Law, 1992) by temporarily concealing the bits and pieces of the human and non-human actors to act the legal approval on behalf of the ministry of planning on every decided folder. In a general sense, this also indicates that the stability of the procedures of the folder exchange depends on more than human relations, involving for example the stamp, the inkpad, the pens, and the law accessible in writing. It is thus not merely an abstract institution applying the law, but a matter of heterogeneous actors working and acting together. If the examination of such institutional procedures is attentive to such silent objects, it might reveal valuable principles of these objects' involvement in the routine of institutional work, how they inevitably participate in its procedures. The institution shows itself partly through these objects, which are often thought to be silently present. Expanding these thoughts about their representative and agentic force in planning practices and processes, we could say about them: "[h]ere they are the hidden and despised social masses who make up our morality" (Latour, 1992: 153).

After the committee chairperson's signature and stamping act, the folder exchanging and signing cycle can move to a third affirmative signature by the local district manager. The signatures of the other two committee members – the second MCM of the Downstage District, and the municipal officer – could be considered a matter of additional routines. In the event of an equal number of votes in favour and against a case, the votes of these last two members can make a difference in the final result.

To recapitulate the above narrative and the influence of the phone call: we saw that when the committee chairperson answered the phone, the folder exchange procedure was inhibited in its normal turns. Furthermore, the committee chairperson was able to transform sufficient information about the issue of the requested call in a detailed and explicative way, indicating that the information had been received earlier, at another occasion outside of the meeting. This pre-established communicational relation between the committee chairperson and the caller was durable enough to only require activation by this short phone call to become an influencing possibility. The phone call activated these relations during the meeting time. The phone call came to participate in the meeting; it disrupted its procedures, re-arranged the patterning of the relations between committee members, folders, and routine. It became "part of the

social. It operate[d] on them to influence the way in which they act[ed]” (Law, 1992: 382).

Moreover, the unusual consequence of the phone call, i.e. the disruption, depended on many conditions: first, the caller’s strategic timeliness in phoning precisely during the meeting that day, between 11:00-14:00; after that time, a phone call would not have been influential in such an immediate sense. Second, the absence of the caller from the meeting room is a force in itself. Not only does a ringing phone activate the relations by someone absent, but the absence itself lets the present party of the phone call mediate the message to the others. This can be seen as similar to the conditions that Law & Mol (2001) explain with their ‘fire topology’, where the consistency of an object’s presence depends on the simultaneous absence of certain actors. In addition to the timeliness and absence, there was also a need to have a charged phone, which technically allowed ringing, transferring talks and replies; this technical requirement was provided by the setting. Accordingly, the destabilization caused by the phone call depended on several conditions that are materially heterogeneous and temporally dependent, but it also shows a certain consistency. So far, we have seen that as a technology that was present, the mobile phone became a substantial part of this destabilization, acting as a replacement for the absent caller. Furthermore, pausing the folder exchange procedure came to inhibit the committee member’s actions. In the following, I elaborate more on the mechanism of how this technology was rendered a participant in the course of actions.

In theories on how artefacts and humans interact, there are a number of views and concepts that take into account what these interactions actually do, i.e. not only what they are intended to do. This difference, or this parallel effect, also has a temporal side. For instance, Law (2009b) proposes looking into ‘collateral realities’ that are done in practice. As the mobile phone enrolled in the meeting as an actor of destabilization, it had a multiple effect. Not only did it connect the caller with the committee chairperson, but it also mobilized the committee’s members to do additional work to find the requested folder. Devices such as telephones can be seen as having broad social effects. Speculating on a dictionary entry of ‘device’ as a ‘teleological patterned arrangement’, Law & Ruppert (2013) suggests several ways in which this could be a fruitful thought model. ‘Teleological’ suggests that the device has a future factual effect, and ‘patterned arrangement’, because its existence and its social and technological function have been heterogeneously assembled in a specific way. Even the meeting itself can be seen as a ‘device’ in this broad sense. In terms of ‘teleological’, we could say that

the mobile phone in the above case re-arranged the meeting in specific social and material patterns (Law & Ruppert, 2013) by creating a focus in the meeting on solving one specific issue, instead of many. Thus, the mobile phone helped constitute the meeting itself as an extended device to become a vehicle for the issue at stake, through the creation of materially heterogeneous relations involving people, such as the caller and the committee chairperson.

In the moment when the requesting caller phoned the committee chairperson with his/her phone, s/he, in Latour's (1992) words, delegated his/her need, request, and presence to the phone of the chairperson, who answered and was reminded of the case. This initial act of delegation via the device influenced the folder exchange procedures, pausing them, and destabilized from the norm. The concept of delegation appears in Akrich & Latour (1992), where they refer to the interchangeability between human and technology work, i.e., that actors can have roles in a network through technical as well as social means (Ribes et al., 2013). Delegation can be described as a transformation, a displacement, a translation or a shifting between actors of, for instance, a major effort and role into a minor one (Latour, 1992). Then, in the case of the phone call, the first act of delegation was further transformed and delegated by the committee chairperson to the other committee members, exercising influence on them and the meeting's events. The committee chairperson became a mediator, generating other transformations based in the delegation act of the phone (Latour, 2005; see also Callon, 1991).

In further examination of this act of delegation, one can unfold two minor nested steps composing this autonomous act: first, the delegation from the caller to the device (from human to non-human) that depended on a good technical base for communication, or a sufficient transmitting of electromagnetic waves to make the phone ring. Second, the step of delegation from the phone to the committee chairperson (from non-human to human) that recalled the pre-established relation between the caller and the committee chairperson only needed later activation. Reflecting on these steps of delegation, we could compare with what Latour (1992) describes in his analysis of the delegation of work made by a hinge (non-human) and by a groom (human); he notes that in order for the hinge to work, it needs only to be maintained. Similarly, the phone in the narrative needed to be connected and charged in order to facilitate phone calls and delegate messages. In order to keep the door properly closed, the human groom in Latour's (1992) example had to be trained continuously to incorporate a habit of closing the door. One could say that the

chairperson also had to learn to pay attention to the phone, pressing the button to mute it, or answering it briefly. Latour (1992) also discusses the two types of delegation (to the hinge, or the groom) in relation to the distribution of time and how the delegation modifies the time schedule to close the door. In the hinge case, this working time is decided and ‘concentrated to the time of installation’, whereas in the groom’s case, the working time of keeping the closing in operation is ‘continuous’ with the training and fluctuates according to the state of training. Usually, the pushing of the silent button is concentrated in time. Furthermore, a certain amount of training and habit is required when the committee chairperson answers quickly instead. However, in the narrative case, the usual delegation act of the mobile phone deviated from the habit of answering quickly in order to efficiently continue working, if by ‘efficiently’ we mean that this specific errand could be signed in the end.

After the act of delegation was efficiently translated from the absent stakeholder to the committee members, they began to be drawn away from their usual roles in the folder exchange procedure in order to find the requested folder. A first consequence was the order given to the technical department manager, who was displaced from her chair, to stand up and work; then after a while, the order returned to the committee chairperson when the folder was not found. One can assume that the technical department manager modified the order to find the folder after she returned it to the committee chairperson, as she amplified the need and the eagerness for the committee chairperson to find it. In that moment, the committee chairperson can be considered a second or third actor in the chain of translation, if we count the original stakeholder and the manager as two who finished their parts. But we could also see the chairperson as the “initial impetus” with the responsibility to find “fresh sources of energy all the time” (Latour, 1984: 267) so the translation chain can continue. As a pattern of governance, the role of the committee chairperson can be described as part of the protocol and culture of the institution, saying that every initiated order must be uttered by the committee chairperson at some point. In the narrative, the latter moved on with the translation chain to the next actor, the local district manager. When this actor could not find the folder, the committee chairperson had to find another source of energy to propel the translation once again, and to find the folder, she in an unusual move extended the delegation to me, disrupting my role as a mere observer. I spent most of the Downstage District committee’s meetings busy with my observations, rarely participating in any kind of interaction during the meeting procedures – trying to be a fly on the wall. I did not get the chance to participate in the side talks about general public topics that happened every once in a while during and before the meetings. That

day, to continue when every translation attempt by the committee chairperson ended without the requested folder being found, she needed to find a new source, now translating the order of finding the folder to actions taken outside of the physical borders of the room; thus, the janitor was required to hold the next turn of translation and to find the requested folder.

In relation to the description about the mobile phone above, as a remote and delegated translated order – or in the words of Law & Rupper (2013), as a teleological patterned arrangement – once can assume that the mobile phone's influence on the meeting procedures effectuated an increased flexibility. That is, the boundaries expanded to include other, atypical actors in the meeting procedures, such as me. Furthermore, these were extended outside the physical borders of the room, e.g. to involve the janitor, the other stack of folders in the technical department manager's room, and other (hidden) actors located beyond my observational scope in the room. The phone thus had the temporal influence of destabilization, displacing several actors from their usual assigned roles.

5.2 Welcome! Have a Seat

Many citizens can enter the room when the Downstage District committee meetings are being held, either by a seizing the opportunity when a door is opened or via invitation by a committee member. However, as I noticed during the period of my observations, the committee members reacted differently to these citizens; sometimes members would give a short reply to their request and ask them to leave the room again. Or else the citizens could sit on a chair on the side of the room, waiting for their folder to be processed by the committee members – here, their mere presence expressed a sort kind of urgency, or offered the committee members the possibility to retrieve additional verbal information. In the following narrative, we will see what happened with Hani²⁵ in a case of what we could call 'visitors influence'.

²⁵ As with all other names in this thesis, this is a fictive name; see Methodology Chapter.

*Tafaddal*²⁶

I was fifteen minutes late to one of the Downstage District committee meetings. I entered the building and rushed to the meeting floor, quickly crossing the main foyer in the reception area to the main corridor and heading towards the district manager's office. Someone called my name, stopping me from going further in the corridor: "They closed it a while ago, you are late". I looked back; it was the janitor, who was sitting at the beginning of the long corridor and waiting for some papers to quickly deliver by hand. I continued walking towards the door and knocked once; there was no response. "You'll need to knock harder or they won't hear you", the janitor advised me when he saw me waiting at the door. For a moment, I had a sensation of how the citizens who typically wait outside must feel – persistently knocking to get news on the outcome of their folders. After a while, I realized that the committee members would hardly open the door for me; they would assume that I was someone waiting for the result of their request. On that day however, the corridor was unusually empty; there were not many citizens waiting or disrupting the meeting by knocking on the locked door. So I turned the handle of the door, hoping that one of the committee members would notice the handle's movement, and open the door for me; however the door was locked with its key from inside as usual, to keep citizens from entering the room. My urgent need to attend the meeting and the disciplinary obstacle I faced with the locked door prompted me to act like the waiting citizens often did. I started knocking on the door continuously and calling out: "It is me, Marwa, please open the door". After continuous knocking on the door, I managed to attract the attention of the office manager inside the room, who shouted, "Who is there, go away, we are having a meeting. The door is closed!" from inside the room. His deep voice was far away behind the door, and I could tell that he was shouting from his chair; he was still sitting, not provoked enough by my knocking to rise up and open the door. So I continued knocking on the door; I needed to prompt him to come to the door and turn the key and open it for me. I needed him to hear from behind the door that I was not an insistent citizen, but that I had a different need – I belonged in the meeting, temporarily at least, during the period of my observations. Finally, after I had knocked for some time, the manager's voice drew closer to the door space, and soon it

²⁶ 'Tafadaal' is an Arabic word meaning 'welcome'. It is usually used as an expression of politeness and hospitality.

was right behind the door. I shouted out again: “It is me, Marwa, please open the door”. I heard ‘a click’ – the sound of the key being turned to unlock the door – and finally it opened showing the face of the district manager: “Oh it’s you, I thought you were one of those citizens. Please come in!” I entered the room, excusing myself to the committee members for being late, and I sat down on my usual chair position, swiftly bringing out my observation notebook and my pen from my bag to join in the ongoing meeting procedures, starting my observational notes.

[...]

On another occasion, the status of the door and the presence that it allowed in the room were slightly different. I was inside, observing the meeting that was proceeding as usual with the repetitive order of handling and exchanging folders, with silence dominating the room. There were knocks on the door that disrupted the silence and attracted the committee members’ attention. They lifted their heads from the folders in front of them and turned their heads towards the door. There were long intervals between the gentle, repetitive knocks. A long moment of silence had passed after the last knock before the door handle was turned from the outside and a person appeared on the doorstep. His entrance on that day did not require the kind of effort I had had to make in order to get in. He did not need to force the local district manager out of his chair, or verbally convince him of his need through the closed door – it seemed that the door had been left unlocked that day, simply closed, without the key being turned. The person, whom I call ‘Hani’ in this narrative, came in. Hani said hello to everyone inside the room. The local district manager and the committee chairperson welcomed Hani’s entrance, and Hani accepted the warm greeting with a small smile. Hani stood beside the chairs along the side by the door. “Please have a seat here with us if you’d like,” the local district manager said, pointing to one of the empty chairs around the table. “Thank you, I think I will sit here, it is better!” Hani replied calmly, sitting down on one of the side chairs. Some time passed, and silence filled the room again: the committee members continued their routine of exchanging folders and I observed them, keeping my eye on Hani in front of me, as he was sitting on one of the side chairs silently watching what was going on. “What would you like to drink – a cup of tea, or maybe a coffee?” the local district manager said, turning towards Hani. “A cup of tea would be good, thank you”, Hani replied. “Would anyone else like tea or coffee?” asked the local district manager, addressing me and the rest of the committee members before rising from his chair to

open the door and call for the janitor, who was sitting outside as usual. “Bring us a cup of tea, and three cups of coffee, please!” the local district manager instructed, and then closed the door again. ‘A cup of tea’, became a small note in my notebook. This was not the first time that someone, a citizen, had somehow managed to enter the room during the meeting; however, it was unusual to be received as Hani was, with a warm invitation to come in, followed by an offer to sit on one of the chairs around the meeting table, and with the gesture of hospitality to have a cup of tea or coffee.

Waiting for the tea and coffee, and for Hani’s errand to be revealed to me, I sat, curious, and continued my observations. A short while after Hani’s entrance, the committee chairperson asked the technical department manager: “Can you find Hani’s papers and look into them to provide the technical justifications? Let us finish it now.” The technical department manager put aside the current folder, turned towards the stack of folders on the side, and started looking for the folder with Hani’s name. A quick glance between the folders was enough for the technical department manager to locate Hani’s folder. She opened it and began writing the technical explanations in the designated space. Hani’s folder then continued the usual trajectory to the next member, the local district manager, while Hani was watching from the side chair. Hani’s folder was moving from hand to hand, it was stamped and signed, approved and decided, and the local district manager handed it to him: “Here you go; you’ll need to complete the other official procedures personally”. Hani accepted the folder from the local district manager, smiling as he stood up, and said: “Thank you very much, I really appreciate it.” “Please stay if you want; at least finish your cup of tea,” the committee chairperson offered. Hani sat down again calmly, placing the folder beside him on one of the empty chairs and drank the cup of tea that had been placed in front of him.

During the last fifteen minutes of the meeting, the phone of the committee chairperson, which had been placed in front of her on the meeting table, began to ring. She glanced at the caller ID and then answered the call: “Oh hello ... yes yes of course, he is sitting in front of me right now... oh we already did, no worries at all, it only needed the usual legal procedures”. The committee chairperson finished the phone call, and replaced the phone on the table. “It has been a pleasure to see you”, the committee chairperson said.

Before unfolding the influence that the uncommon presence of a citizen like Hani brought to the meeting, I start the analytical discussion reflecting on the locked door that I faced – the locked door with which most citizens were faced in many meetings, such as the one described above. Similarly to the municipal council meetings, during the Downstage District committee meetings, citizens' presence had been restricted according to usual protocol in order to maintain order over the procedures, especially when there was a possibility of many citizens with interests and requests to be decided during the meetings. The restriction came as a consequence of the practical difficulty of applying exactly what is stated by the Municipal Law of 2015; namely, permitting citizens to be present during the discussion segment, and closing the doors to the meeting during the final decision part. This difficulty is elaborated further and contextualised in the 'strategic and tactical moves' narrative (p.119).

On the day I arrived late and was met with a locked door, I knocked. At first I knocked reasonably, but when gentle knocks failed to produce the effect I sought, I began knocking more persistently. I then began acting against the 'discipline' door, constituted by the combination of the silent symbolic prescription of a closed door (e.g. Latour, 1992), the absolute physicality of the key, and the local district manager's loud dismissal. This hybrid combination of the discipline principle was intended to prevent insistent citizens from entering the room, if it would not keep them away from the door, especially the local district manager's statement. The disciplining principle of the joined heterogeneous actors (the door, its key, and the manager's voice) renders a social enactment usually maintained to keep the stability of the meeting's procedures. When looking into this social enactment of the discipline principle, we could take Latour's suggestion into consideration: "we should not state that 'when faced with an object, ignore its content and look for the social aspects surrounding it'. Rather, one should say that 'when faced with an object, attend first to the associations out of which it's made and only later look at how it has renewed the repertoire of social ties'" (Latour, 2005: 233). The committee members' need to stabilize the course of the meeting, protecting it from any intruders, is delegated to this heterogeneous principle (door, key, and the manager's statement). The principle joins with the door's status *-closed-*, its wooden material *-opaque-* and the key *-turned-*, and together with the voice *-raised-* it becomes a set of intended social relations (Latour, 1996). This disciplining principle constitutes a social tie in itself (Yaneva, 2009), in the sense that "it transcribes and displaces the contradictory interests of people and things" (Latour, 1992: 153). This discipline principle authorizes access only to those who are able to alter any of these conjoined parts. In my case, knowing my inherent rights as an observer, I managed by

my persistence to bring the local district manager to the door, and to temporarily dismantle the discipline principle.

Hani was also faced with a closed door, but not a locked one; when he tried the handle of the door, he found the door open. When a citizen like Hani manages to be temporarily present inside the room, his/her presence could be considered uncommon for the normal procedures of Downstage District committee's meetings. This uncommon presence triggered a variety of invitational gestures from the committee members. For instance, after entering the room, Hani was invited to take a seat on one of the vacant chairs around the table or beside the door. Not only could the locations of the chairs offered to him differ, but the offer to have a cup of coffee or tea could or could not be made. I look into these different invitations or possibilities from the point of view of a relational materiality (Law, 1992), which means that the citizen's temporary presence inside the room is seen as an effect generated by various associations and interactions with common objects inside the room. In other words, having influence as well as being able to alter the meeting's procedures are effects that can be generated in a relational manner with these common objects.

If we look more carefully at how these relations between citizens and objects can generate an influence, it is reasonable to begin considering what effects might be shaped by these relations, and how they can be distinguished. For instance, concerning the chairs in different locations in the room, one might assume that the two locations offered can hold different possibilities of adjacency, accessibility or eye contact between the visitor and the committee members. However, what can distinguish the two locations of the offered chairs – at the meeting table or beside the door – is also shaped by the relations these chairs can have, e.g. with the meeting table, or with the door. Moreover, we can also say that the meeting table has an effect that is shaped by the committee members who are usually seated around it acting their institutional roles during the meetings. It is also important to say that not only the relations between members and the meeting table have an effect, but also the relations that the table has with the folders, signatures, and stamps, among other objects that are a direct part of the decision-making process. In short, an influence is an effect generated by the patterned relations the meeting table has with heterogeneous bits and pieces that stand in direct relation with a tradition of decision-making processes. Thus, one can assume that the offer to sit on a chair at the meeting table is an invitation to have a direct or accessible relation with the decision-making process. However, this is not to assume that any temporarily present citizen, like Hani, can know this kind of possible influence

in advance. Nonetheless, it is a pragmatic possibility that became obvious to me as an observer judging from similar empirical incidents. Whenever the offered chair to the visitor is at the meeting table, an easy influence on ongoing decision-making processes inside the room was more possible, including having one's folder signed and approved quickly.

The analysis regarding the relations of the meeting table can be repeated for the chair beside the door. As elaborated on above, the door has a role in delegating the discipline principle needed to stabilize the meeting's procedures, resisting attempts at intrusion from outside the room. So the door, just as the meeting table, is related to any decision-making process, keeping it stabilized. However, when citizens, like Hani, can enter and stay in the room after this discipline principle has been dismantled, the relational effect that the door has on the decision-making process is also dismantled. This means that the matter of discipline by the door for the outsider visitors would no longer matter; i.e. it would not make any difference on the decision-making process, since the visitors would already be part of the room, "something becomes material because it makes a difference" (Law, 2010: 173). Hence, after entering the room, what would matter more for any citizen is influencing the decision-making process to facilitate personal interests.

Another kind of invitation that can imply the possibility of having an effect or a power of influence that can be seen in the case above is the offer of an establishing artefact, like a cup of coffee or tea, that the committee members made to Hani. Seen in a cultural perspective, this gesture of hospitality indicates to any citizen that his/her presence is welcomed by the hosts, here the committee members. Seen from a relational materiality perspective, this added artefact would create more relations to the citizen. The presence of the cup of tea makes these relations more durable, adding agency to the issue at stake, since "durability is yet another relational effect" (Law, 1992: 385). It provides a more stable effect of influence on the decision-making. This line of argument – that by joining different actors, different effects of influences are produced – became clear when other citizens were not offered the cup of coffee or tea, or not offered to take a seat on a chair at the table. In these cases, processing the folders took a longer time than usual, and it was sometimes necessary to support the processing with verbal comments. In Hani's case however, the generated effect of influence was almost instantaneous, without any need for further verbal persistence from his side, or deliberations from the committee about the case. What we have seen here, then, is that the relations brought when the cup of tea was placed on the table added to the relations

that a citizen had already established to the committee work. Hani did not speak about his need, insist, or even express it; rather, it was delegated to the exercised agency of these heterogeneous relations. Agency can be described as an achievement produced by the network interactions and relations (Müller, 2015). Therefore, agency is always re-produced when actors come together and then become temporally distributed in new ways (Latour, 1996; see also Magnusson, 2016).

In this case, what first appeared to be a silently expressed act of delegation (Hani did not say anything) established through the existing heterogeneous relations was also supported by the occurrence of the phone call. The heterogeneous relations (with table, chairs, cups, etcetera) became part of an effect that influenced and paused the folder exchange procedures, and this influence spread over the committee members, starting with the technical department manager and ending with the district manager, when each of these members left their tasks to add their signatures, stamping, or modifying Hani's folder with their explanations to be quickly decided. The incoming phone call became another agency, spatially situated in the room, because it was delegated to the mobile phone. In that sense, the phone and what was delegated to it came to participate in the ongoing influence of the decision-making process for the issue at stake to further stabilize and durabilize the effect already generated by the heterogeneous relations (between Hani's presence, the chair, the meeting table, and the cup of tea) (e.g. Akrich, 1992). To precisely unfold how the need to support this folder issue by delegation via phone and describe what happened beyond the space of the room and the meeting time would obviously be beyond my observational capacity, but from the character of the call we can roughly assume that in another space and at another time before the meeting, the errand that Hani represented had been translated, involving the caller, and delegated to the device to assist or confirm Hani's presence during the meeting time. In that sense, the telephone came to interact with what was going on inside the room, and the boundary of this interaction can be traced outside the space of the room and the meeting time.

What I attempt to offer with this line of analysis of an object involved in a line of influential moments is how entities distributed in various spaces and times collectively generate an influence on the discussion of an issue at stake in the meeting. So in general, and by returning to the outset of this analysis, what first appeared as a collectively composed channel of delegation (the relations between the chair, the table, Hani, and a cup of tea) became further stabilized by a second channel of delegation, the phone, initiated from outside the meeting room. The two channels worked together

to secure the influence, to stabilize it, and maintain its shape until the folder was signed and stamped. If the phone call had not occurred, the first chain of delegation, including Hani's presence, would probably have continued to influence the decision-making process in the same direction nonetheless. But the delegation by the phone came to secure it, and ensure that similar facilitation, in other times, and during other presences in the room, was still possible. The simultaneous and complementary parts played by these actions could be termed a *redundancy delegation*. In the semiotics of communication, redundancy is primarily employed in e.g. information transmission processes, where it describes a "deliberate duplication of circuitry or information to decrease the probability of communication failure" (Adorini, 1988: 209). The principle of redundancy delegation may appear generally in other occasions during municipal council meetings, for instance when two members are present inside the meeting room at opposite sides of the room, distant from each other. As we shall see later, observations of these kinds of incidents indicate that in cases of communication difficulties due to distant positions in the room, MCMs and managers could use their phones to contact each other while having face-to-face contact over a distance inside the room. Their devices replaced their voices, delegated their direct conversations as it were, but still secured communication by facial expression. In cases like these, visual contact only could be insufficient, so technological and auditive delegation may secure successful communication and become part of this principle of redundancy delegation.

5.3 Air Conditioning (AC)

In the following section, I describe certain events in relation to another device, or technology; namely air conditioning (AC). I will show how this technology may influence, and have dominance over other working relations during some moments of the decision-making process (e.g. Latour, 1984; 1992), or more specifically, how the presence of an AC unit in a room could have an agency that influences social relations between a meeting's members (e.g. Yaneva, 2009). The following narrative demonstrates the role of AC units inside the meeting room, but also shows them as an issue that is discussed in itself, as part of the meeting agenda.

From an AC Unit to a Hole in the Wall

Hot and arid describes the atmospheric conditions during most of my observation periods in Nodacity. The summer weather conditions seemed to gradually diminish along the course of my weekly rush from the entrance door of the municipal building to the elevator, towards the meeting floor, and finally inside the meeting room. Not only I was more comfortable with the presence of a valuable technology such as air conditioning (AC) – especially ‘valuable’ during the summer in Jordan; for multiple reasons, the presence of this technology also appeared very important in my observations during several occasions of attended meetings, especially the municipal council meetings.

Due to the position of my chair at the side wall beside the door, directly below one of the AC units in Nodacity Municipality’s meeting room, I had to reply often to the request: “Marwa, can you please hand me the AC remote control” by taking the remote control (Figure 5) from its holder on the wall over my head and giving it to one of the MCMs or managers. As soon as the remote control was in the hand of one of them, the AC would go on or off, which was not always agreeable to everyone else inside the room. With comments such as: “Why did you turn it off, can’t you see it is very hot”, “Oh we are freezing, it is too much with the AC on inside this room”, the remote control for the AC would pass between the hands of the protesters, who turned it on or off, until a compromise was made.

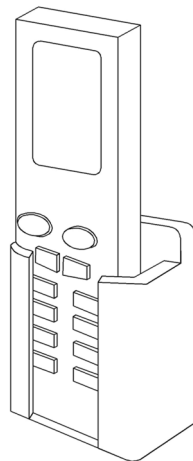


Figure 5: An approximate sketch of an AC remote control by the author, similar to that in the narrative.

Finally, in order to not lose the remote control and thereby lose control over the room's temperature, the remote control always had to be returned to its holder on the wall (Figure 5) by me or by the second municipal council secretary. A set of AC units hung on the two long walls of the room. The units huffed continuously, pumping cold air into the room at every meeting.

On one occasion, the weather was extremely hot, and the municipal meeting started as usual with acquisitions and procurements, in accordance with the meeting agenda. For several moments, the room was filled with the voice of the MCS reading, transmitted through the portable microphone. In other moments, when the MCS paused his reading and put his microphone aside to find a report to support a discussed issue, the room was dominated by another sound – the sound of a machine working continuously. This was the sound of the AC becoming more obvious and more dominant in the otherwise silent room.

During the first ten minutes, everyone inside the room was listening silently and following the MCS's reading of the meeting agenda attentively. The meeting's attendees continued to concentrate on the MCS at the end of the table beside the chairperson's chair, which was occupied by the vice chairperson that day. The first issues of the acquisition and procurement part continued with the successive performance from the MCS and the vice chairperson beside him. The MCS held his microphone in his left hand and a paper in his right, taking time to read every issue clearly, lifting his head from the paper occasionally to attempt to make eye contact with every present MCM and manager in the room, especially those involved in the issue being read. Pausing for a moment at the end of each issue, he was waiting for a verbal sign or a hand gesture (waving) from the vice chairperson beside him that he should continue reading the next issue. During this, everyone else watched them silently. I had been observing the MCS and the vice chairperson's performance for the last ten minutes, keeping my eye on the audience.

“Now we have the last of the acquisition and procurement issues, which concerns a number of AC units that are requested for the ‘X’ governorate building”, the MCS read, glancing at the vice chairperson, whose head was down. When the MCS had waited for a while, the vice chairperson spoke: “Approved; move on”, the vice chairperson said, encouraging the MCS to continue to the next issue. Other sounds and

movements started coming from the many MCMs shifting in their seats, straightening their backs, shuffling in the paper copies of the agenda in front of them, some having been busy with their phones. Humming sounds were heard, not only from the MCS and the AC, but a distinct humming sound rose from the end side of the room in particular. “Wait, wait, can we please discuss this first before just approving it? As you know, last week many MCMs requested a number of AC units for many local district department buildings, and we postponed the decision”, commented an MCM at one end of the room. Almost everyone in the meeting room turned towards the vice chairperson and the MCS at the end of the table, expressing their disapproval and requesting a discussion of the issue. Some MCMs stood up, walked towards the other MCMs or the managers inside the room, while waving their hands and saying that they did not approve the AC units for the governorate building.

For a while, the vice chairperson looked in the direction of the MCMs, and then speaking into the microphone, which he had borrowed from the MCS beside him, said: “Listen; will everyone just please sit down again so we can discuss this.” His voice was firm, trying to control the many overlapping noises in the room. When there was a relative silence, the vice chairperson spoke: “It is just a routine issue of bringing in new equipment”. After the last sentence, still more MCMs stood up from their chairs, and more calls of “We want to discuss it, let us vote” started to fill the room again. “Okay, we can vote, we will vote” the vice chairperson said. He managed to bring some silence again, then continued: “But there is one thing you should know. This is a different case from what you requested last week, since the AC units discussed last week were not included in any supply issues. The decision came from outside the management of the municipality and directly to the local district department; the request did not follow the hierarchic procedures. As for the AC for the governorate building, the municipality would buy them as they are part of an acquisition request, since the municipality owns the building”. The vice chairperson’s final statement brought on further protests.

During that intense discussion, I was trying to keep my observational focus on everyone and everything inside the room – on the MCMs who had risen from their chairs, on those protesting, and on the MCM of the Downstage District. Since I was regularly attending the Downstage District’s committee meetings, I got to know the district’s MCM more, and I had also been given the chance to follow her two days

a week. During these moments of overlapping voices and protests against the decision in favour of AC units for the governorate building, the MCM of the Downstage District remained calm. She leant back in her chair, looking at everyone without saying anything, just observing, like me. When the conflict between ‘no, we disagree, let us vote’ and ‘approved, just move on’ was reaching its peak, I noticed the MCM of the Downstage District rising up from her chair with a small pink notebook²⁷ in her hand, walking slowly behind the vice chairperson’s and the MCS’s chair and towards the door of the chairperson’s office. She opened the door of the chairperson’s office and entered the room. The door was open wide enough for her to enter, and for me from my position to see the chairperson sitting on his chair, reading papers. The MCM of the Downstage District abruptly closed the door behind her, and disappeared inside the office for a while. After a while she reappeared, walked back slowly behind the chairs of the MCS and the vice chairperson, and sat down again at the table. The vice chairperson was still busy trying to control the large number of voices around him, and finally said: “Okay, let us vote now. Who is in favour of the decision?” Turning his head, the vice chairperson counted the number of the raised hands from MCMs – “And who is against the decision?” When he had counted the hands, the vice chairperson turned his head towards the MCS, lowering his head towards the agenda book in front of him pointing with his hand, “Okay, write it down, rejected by vote!”

[...]

On the day after that meeting, I was sitting in the Downstage District’s meeting room, following the usual folder exchange procedure. Suddenly, while signing a folder, the local district manager said: “I was wondering about the ACs for the building here; did you ask about them at the municipal meeting yesterday?” The question was directed at the chairperson, i.e. the MCM of Downstage District. Without raising her head from the folder in front of her, she replied: “With all of the disruptions yesterday I barely managed to enter the chairperson’s office, and no, the ACs were not approved. I am not even sure if we’ll be able to keep this one.” She indicated the AC unit hanging on the wall above the manager’s office with her hand. “No... And why is that? They want to

²⁷ This pink notebook is the official book for the documentation of any request for acquiring or purchasing any kind of office- or building supplies, such as furniture, AC units, papers, folders, etc. Any approved request requires the committee chairperson’s official stamp and the municipal council chairperson’s approval.

take this one also?” said the local district manager abruptly, raising his voice and dropping the folder from his hands. “It is so hot right now, how would we survive without AC?” said the technical district manager at the opposite side of the table, shocked by the committee chairperson’s last sentence. “Well, they announced a new rule yesterday relating to anything received by a district department building; it has to be registered as an imported item or included as a supply issue following the hierarchic procedures. So I am not sure about this AC, since it did not follow that process.” “What do you mean?” The local district manager asked the committee chairperson. The latter put down the folder she was holding and looked up: “When I went to the chairperson’s office yesterday, I asked him about the extra three AC units that we had received and whether we are to include them in the supply notebook. The chairperson asked me how many AC units the office has. I told him that we only have one unit, and that we need the extra three for the other offices and for the foyer area since it is very hot now. But I thought that he would deduct that the AC unit that we have now was not included as an item in the supply notebook following the recently announced new rule.”

[...]

I arrived on time for the following week’s meeting in the Downstage District’s building and was approaching the meeting room from the main corridor when I saw that the door was open wide, and there was a lot of noise coming from inside. I stood in front of the door, where there was a lot of dust and hot air flowing in from one of the widely opened windows. There were tools scattered around the room, and three technicians were removing the hanging AC unit from the wall. They removed the only AC unit, leaving a hole in the wall. The district manager commented on it in the next few meetings: “Now we don’t only have hot weather; we also have a hole in the wall!”

It is hard to overestimate the importance of air conditioning during the summer months in Jordan. The cooler conditions it creates provide decent working conditions for some, though not all offices. AC is not a possibility available for all spaces. On the one hand, it is a question of economy, but it would also be hard to get air conditioning to function properly in large open spaces, for instance, where the air cannot be enclosed. However, this was not the case in the corridors, the foyer spaces (lounges), and the offices in the municipal building that I visited during my observations. For instance,

there is usually a great difference in temperature when one approaches the meeting floor from the stairwell of the building, leaving the heat behind for the cold air of this particular floor. In terms of temperature, this floor – partly a large open space – is influenced by the adjacent rooms on that floor, such as those of the MCS's office, the meeting room, and the chairperson's secretarial office. In these rooms, the AC units are mounted on the walls and run continuously, so they did not only condition the air inside the rooms, but also influenced the air in the common spaces of the meeting room floor, making it relatively colder than in any other open space in the municipal building. Since the doors of these spaces were often open all day to accommodate the flow of a large number of visitors and employees in these offices, the conditioned air could flow from inside the offices and cool the air in the common area.

The spaces with their AC units and the institutional roles of these space as the 'homes' of the MCS, the meetings, and the chairperson's secretary are interrelated, producing the environmental effects of the cold air, but also social effects in relation to these institutional roles (e.g. Law, 2001). Having or not having good working or welcoming conditions produced by the ACs and their cold air make these objects "trappings of power" (Law & Hetherington, 2000: 37), pointing to a larger governmental network. Moreover, the different materials present in these offices – the floors, cold air, marble tiles, the presence of MCS, of the chairperson and the secretary, etcetera – all of these bits and pieces expressing symbolical and factual power – make relations that "participate in the [further] generation of information, of power relations, of subjectivities, and objectivities" (Law and Hetherington, 2000: 37).

Moreover, in discerning different effects produced by different relations, most importantly from different AC units, I describe the power of ACs that I noticed in several offices, including also environmental and electrical power. While my intention here is not to present numbers or specific technicalities, I nevertheless follow what I observed and felt in these spaces – 'simply' the sense of coldness that I had when I was there experiencing the produced social and institutional effects related to the different cooling capacities of the ACs. One may have to sit in the MCS's office for five or ten minutes before feeling the difference in temperature – even when coming directly from the outside street, as I was. The size of the MCS's office is similar to that of the chairperson's secretary; in the latter however, the conditioned air and the sense of refreshment arrives faster, although there are a similar number of people coming in and out of both offices. Therefore, a more powerful AC unit can deliver a faster conditioning sensation, which can also relate and reflect the symbolic hierarchic

differences between the MCS and the secretary's offices. With its closed door, the main meeting room was the coldest space of all, in comparison with any other spaces with an AC system on the meeting room floor, despite being the largest space of all.

In the meeting room, control of the AC units was afforded through a remote control device, which was always replaced in its holder on the wall below the AC unit (see Figure 5). The remote control allows the person holding it fast and comfortable control over the shared temperature and the indoor climate. The first time I noticed the negotiations over this control – turning the AC off or on – during municipal council meetings, they appeared quite natural, since not everyone is comfortable with the same temperature. However, the remote control device was not only designed to grant access to a technical actor-network (comprising the function details of the AC unit) (Akrich, 1992), but its function also expresses an access to a performance of power. Therefore, the remote control is part of the socio-material network which entangles everything and everyone connected to it, characterizing its relations (Law & Singleton, 2013), and could create power and hierarchy as effects of how these relations are configured (Law, 2009a).

Even if we cannot pinpoint its impact on the decision-making process, the AC's presence in the room can, as we have seen, provide both symbolic values and trigger some moments for temporal negotiations, thus acting as part of the social construct of the meetings (e.g. Latour, 2005). The AC's presence influenced some activities during decision-making processes and caused some destabilizations that altered the trajectory of some dialogue procedures. For instance, the managers and MCMs sitting with their backs to the hanging AC units sometimes complained about the temperature of the cold air being pumped out. One occasion, one of the MCMs stood up from her chair, grabbed the remote control from its holder and turned off the AC while everyone else was busy following the meeting. The MCM's action brought on many complaints and negotiations about the status of AC, and this argument temporarily kept the MCS from continuing his reading, paused the course of dialogue, and forced the chairperson to intervene to re-establish order. Ultimately, when the AC was turned on again despite the MCM's attempts to turn it off, she dragged her chair to another part of the room where the cold air being pumped from the AC was less keenly felt, which also led to further delays in the meetings' procedures, as some MCMs along her path had to move to let her pass with her chair. That also destabilized the meeting procedures, and halted the reading of the meeting agenda while everyone resettled in their seats.

In the narrative above, several premises can be discussed for the destabilization that occurred in relation to the AC units requested for the 'X' governorate building. Before the AC issue, the dialogue in the acquisition and procurements part had proceeded smoothly as usual. As described earlier, the performance between the MCS reading and "approved, just move on", uttered by the vice chairperson while the MCMs were listening, show what can be considered the usual, stabilized conditions for the meeting, especially in the acquisitions and procurements. With these performances, repeated in every meeting, a mode of ordering could be said to run in a way reminiscent of what Law (2001:1; in reference to Foucault, 1977) regards as "mini-discourses". In the case of the Nodacity meetings, a mini-discourse in this sense arranges materially heterogeneous relations between MCMs, the MCS, the meeting agenda, the line "approved, just move on", the vice chairperson, the physical positions, amplifying technologies, etcetera. However, with the AC issue for the governorate building, followed by the hastily spoken "approved, just move on", the first traces of a destabilization appeared to me.

Looking into the AC issue being debated and its relation in the destabilization that occurred, the AC issue was initially a translation, a replacement, a delegation of the need of the institution of the governorate 'X' to improve the condition of the air inside its building. As an item on the meeting agenda, the AC issue came into being and was materialized through its relation with other actors: the supply issues in the agenda, the MCS, the microphone. Moreover, the AC issue was also relevant for the MCMs present, as evidenced by their comments about previous requests for ACs for other buildings, and with the line "approved, just move on", new objectivity emerged (Yaneva, 2012; see also Latour, 2005), thus starting a destabilization. This means that in its attempt to represent power when it was brought into the discourse, "approved, just move on" became a challenge to any whose opposed approving the request for the AC units (e.g. Hardy & Thomas, 2015). Then, with one objection following another, the usual norm of the meeting procedures was subjected to questioning by the group of the MCMs with an opposing view to that of the vice chairperson, which in turn facilitated other negotiations, deliberations and a vote that settled the decision.

Beyond the disrupted course of dialogue that could be observed within the spatial limits of the municipal meeting room, the AC unit in the Downstage District was ultimately removed. How precisely can the removal be related to the destabilization in the municipal meeting? First, it can simply be assumed that the removal of the AC unit was a result of the fact that the Downstage District management did not follow

the institutional rules, or work according to the protocol. Therefore, the chairperson merely acted his role according to the authority resources to which it was linked, applying the rules in any city district institution in Nodacity, such as the Downstage District, in adherence with the municipality's laws. Looking at the removal of the AC unit from a relational materiality perspective (Law, 1992; also Law & Mol, 1995) however, the interactions between the two meetings mediated through objects of one kind or another, also other deductions can be made about how this destabilization extended into the office of the Downstage District.

In the municipality, the layout of the meeting room, the MCMs, the MCS, the microphone, the meeting agenda, the discussions, the AC units requested by the governorate, even the moments of disruption, and other endless relations between human and objects together stabilized the bits and pieces keeping the meeting event going. In addition, the chairperson and his office can be considered as actors in this large network, supporting and constituting the meeting, as could the chairperson of the Downstage District, as well as a municipal council member attending the municipal council meeting. When the MCM of the Downstage District walked to the chairperson's office during the destabilization and talked to him, seemingly unaffected by the on-going dispute, she communicated and connected certain facts and actors from the Downstage District with the municipality, as she said in the local meeting the next day. With this short visit – this timely effort of communication – the two meetings, distant in time and space, were connected in a new singular network. Looking at the decision to remove the AC unit in terms of a network analysis, I can speculate a bit and say that the creation of this temporary network was not the equivalent of eliminating the factual distance between the main and the local meetings. Rather, the distance could have become actualised in this moment because of the interaction work done by the MCM of the Downstage District (Law & Hetherington, 2000). Through this actualisation of a distance, and perhaps also through additional information given about acquisitions at the short visit, we could say that the effect was that the chairperson could execute the removal of the AC unit from the Downstage District's building. This is only hypothetical however, since the communication in the short visit was beyond my observation, and one can consequently also describe the chairperson's act as a general act of authorisation, issuing an order transferred through the usual kind of governance, successfully translated into the removal of the AC unit and the making of a hole in the wall. What is interesting in this speculation is that a network view on connections (in meeting situations and elsewhere) allows a connection to increase other

actual distances between actors. The relative physical proximity traditionally established in a meeting room is partially there to maintain distances.

Moreover, the chairperson's order and the hole in the wall could be described as a "play between different material forms" (Law & Hetherington, 2000: 41); that is, the chairperson's authority was delegated to his order (as a memo), and this delegation act was then translated to the action of removing the AC unit, finally resulting in a spatial effect (the hole). Moreover, through the actualisation of distance, the AC issue and the destabilization in the meeting and in the protocol regarding how to make renewals in the official buildings were diffused in several locations. The AC unit requested by the governorate building became an object, as well as a first trace of destabilization. It did not only remain an issue to be discussed as an item in a meeting agenda, but turned into an issue of representativeness and governance in another space and time in Downstage District after a week or so. The AC issue became 'charged' with a capacity that was powerful enough (Marres, 2014) to have a 'negative' physical influence, in a sense the opposite of the 'positive' conditioning of the air, and to create a hole in the wall. However, in relation to other possible networks with all other local offices, larger personal and institutional consequences could have ensued if this dismantling had not been executed. In conclusion, what began as an act of delegation for the governorate first destabilized the normal flow of dialogue procedures. The destabilization was then diffused through actualised distances to other locales in the planning setting network. It influenced other actors and other networks, leading to still other destabilizations, or as it were, to a power act that substantially displaced matter, and had the additional physical effect of a hole in the wall.

5.4 Postlude (2): Objects and Technologies Designating the Boundaries of Influence

In this chapter, we saw how objects in the meeting room, such as tables, chairs, mobile phones and ACs, enrol in many decision-making processes with their familiar, well-known functions. For instance, they can condition the meeting environment, transmit voices, and assemble multiple meeting attendees in one location. Beyond that however, as elaborated in relation to the narratives of this chapter, these objects and technologies can matter more than we might usually expect, especially during states of destabilization. Apart from supporting a range of agentic presences in the meeting, they

can also participate by acting from a distance, and not least, they can influence pauses, interruptions or ‘shivering’ in the meeting procedures.

In addition to providing their holders with remote reach, mobile phones can have substantial roles beyond common functions in the meetings as devices for, or producers of, social and institutional deviations. For instance, with a short interval of ringing, followed by a response (i.e. answering the phone), the phone can stop the usual meeting procedures, most often just to initiate another procedure with a specific other purpose. There are certain technical conditions (such as a charged phone), and social configurations (such as pre-established relations) that must be in place to start a rearrangement of this kind. Nowadays, everyone can have a phone device with a charged battery; for a phone call to have a major impact in a meeting however, it is more important that there are pre-established social relations that could be actuated at an opportune moment during the scheduled meeting time. Such established relations predispose the meeting to developing a short temporal destabilization triggered by only a short ringing sound, to facilitate temporally longer destabilizations. As we saw, this might lead to a rearrangement of dialogue and new priorities in the meeting procedures. In its ringing and being answered, the phone afforded transistor tactics (previously explained in Postlude 1); in this case, because the phone remotely created space-time for the caller during the meeting. With the phone, the caller transmitted his/her efforts from outside the physical borders of the room to hold a stake during the meeting long enough for it to be facilitated.

We have seen how the mobile phone enabled an action in the meeting of different registers all at once; it transmitted a voice, delegated an interest, allowed participation, and facilitated the handling of a folder. In Callon’s (2009) words, the phone allowed a ‘co-articulation’ (see also Marres; 2011; Muniesa et al., 2007) that reconfigures the predetermined set of functions that the device is thought to do into multiple registers, rendering them visible when how the phone works in the meeting is followed. The phone’s capacity to transmit voices is important, if compared to a message from outside being delivered on a piece of paper written by the stakeholder. In the simplest of worlds, access to the meeting could be inserted as an extra instruction with every application folder. However, influential data is seldom perfectly expressed and seldom durable or re-actualised enough to fully reach its purpose. The usage of the phone provides other types of affordance – not only actualizing data; the voice being transmitted by phone might be more efficient for sufficiently conveying a sense of need,

political importance, or a tone of urgency or sympathy to effectively influence the decision-making process inside the room.

In other situations, the usage of the mobile phone was seen as more calculated and prepared in terms of the timeliness of its use (i.e. the precision with which the phone rang). For example, in the ‘Welcome! Have a seat’ narrative, the phone did not ring at a random moment during the meeting time, but was synchronized with the moment in which the citizen was present inside the room. The role of this opportune ringing was different than a simple disruption of the ongoing procedures or the initiation of another procedure. A double delegation occurred, facilitating the need for the errand to be handled both through the physical presence and through the presence of a device as part of the same time-space, which came to support the influence of disruption needed to pursue a specific errand. I have labelled this kind of two (or more) simultaneous channel activations *redundancy delegation*. Redundancy can be seen as an “operative security function on a technical level or as an enforcer of a product’s message on the semiotic level” (Sandin, 2001:37). As an integrated function in technical systems, redundancy appears for instance in transmitting processes, duplicating the circuitry or channel of information to decrease the probability of failure in conveying a message (e.g. Adorini, 1988). As an adjective, the word redundant can sometimes indicate an unnecessary overflow or superfluous action, but in linguistic or technological operations, it denotes the existence of a principle of integrated safety (Landau, 1969; Downer, 2009) – such as here in a decision-making process, where the function of redundancy is integrated through a delegation securing the issue at stake, for instance with a mobile phone.

The two narratives about the impact of phones in this chapter were not the only occasions during my observations where phones played major roles in the meetings. On other occasions to which I will return later, phones were also used for two actors to verbally communicate at a physical distance from one another – positioned, however, in the same room. In these cases, the receiver and the sender were at a distance from each other, but their positions were calculated so as to make facial communication possible; i.e. again a double channel situation, and hence once again a type of redundancy. In most of my observations, delegated communicational acts occur in relation to disrupted seating positions, when colleagues were not able to sit beside each other as they used to do, and e.g. whispering as usual was not possible. Or when the communication between a receiver and sender had to be done surreptitiously and at a distance without attracting the attention of other meeting participants, especially when

the meeting situation would not allow the explicit expression of a personal opinion, for instance in tense discussions. In these cases, the receiver and sender were still often able to see each other, but could not hear each other's voices, and the mobile phone came to complement the communication between attendees, thus with a redundancy principle of communication.

The insights hitherto mentioned in relation to the usage of the mobile phone and how it can influence access to the room, supporting the presence of voices, or the guarding of issues at stake from outside the meeting room, can bring forth a broader discussion about aspects of involvement. In what she calls a "device-centered perspective" on public participation, Marres (2011, 2012) discusses how participation can be materialized and afforded by different modalities of co-articulation, which indicates the multiple registers of usage effective at the same time through technologies (see also Callon, 2009). Marres (2011) revises the approach to public participation by urging attention to the material devices deployed in the performances of participation, believing in their role as making the "doability" of engagement possible, or easier. Marres (2011: 518) involves objects of a "public performance", because they can directly "constitute public participation as a form of material action". Such objects of public performance could be for instance a petition, or a web-based checklist for participation in an environmental action. This view on performance is slightly different from how my investigations consider mediation, as I count more on acts of delegation as a tool-like quality that is socially incorporated in the decision-making process. The materialization of participation that is articulated in Marres's conception as a "result of an operation afforded by the device" (p.519) still aligns with the view in my analysis that the mobile phone materialises²⁸ a remote voice affecting the meeting.

In a book chapter about the interaction between an organization space and mobile technology, Leclercq-Vandelannoitte (2013) discusses several case studies in which mobile phone use is seen in the light of organizations, with a specific interest in aspects of control. She explains how mobile technology can "disrupt the spatial and temporal framework of the organization" (Leclercq-Vandelannoitte, 2013: 198). The use of phones in the anthology is also seen as having corporeal effects by which "[t]ime-space constraints disappear [...], the body becomes motile, that is more dependent on communications prosthetics" (Willcocks, 2004: 289, in Leclercq-Vandelannoitte,

²⁸ The materialization here takes a form that Marres (2011) also discusses with a virtual process of influence and having a sensed effect of 'a materialized voice', in regard of inserting it in the meeting, and influencing the decision-making process.

2013). In the context in which Leclercq-Vandelannoitte (2013) discusses her case studies, control was sought through the usage of mobile technologies, and it was asked how this technology could substitute the working situation from a distance, or monitor timetable registers for employees through their mobile phones. While the research context is different than that of the narratives here, it actualises the effect of time-space disruption and consequences for physical behaviour. The usage of the mobile phone, as explored in the meeting research context here, was unrecognized as an explicit tool in protocols and rules; to put it differently, it was rather silently familiarized as an influential technology that can interfere in the decision-making process. This technology was appropriated sufficiently in situations when participation was needed, disrupting the traditional spatial frameworks of closed doors, walls, and restricting protocols, thus making any involvement in the meeting easier. What could be concluded from these meeting culture examples is that mobile phone usage is characterized by a ubiquity, which transcends the activity mediated by the phone itself beyond directly observable boundaries, extended to create temporal virtual frameworks²⁹ flexible and inclusive enough to reach the distant (or remote) voices and bring their participation into the procedures.

Other objects, like the meeting table, the door, the chairs, and the socket on the wall, also appeared to have influential roles in the context of the meetings rendered here. Citizens' attempts to interfere and to influence the decision-making process usually appeared in relation to these common objects of the meeting room. For instance, citizens are required to state their needs from behind closed doors, insistently knocking on them to come in, or citizens are inside the meeting room sitting beside a table, or beside a door – this shows how efforts invested as attempts at participation or to influence the meeting can be codified differently, according to varying influential abilities or networks. For instance, the status of sitting at the meeting table or beside the door can determine how the uncustomary presence of a citizen may affect the ongoing meeting procedures. A position directly at or near the table can be sufficient to facilitate the processing of a folder, whilst a seat near the door may indicate less power to influence or less possibility to have an immediate disruptive effect on the process.

²⁹ With frameworks here I do not address conventional walls, doors or any physical limitations. The frameworks to which I refer here can describe the limit of the socio-material interactions and their effects, which are dynamically changing and always sensitive to (re)contestations (e.g. Kuhn, 2008; Ashcraft et al., 2009).

The meeting table itself has a fundamental role to play in deliberations and negotiations around the world, and as we have seen, it may play different roles (regular work, not-regular work, remote contact, etc.) in ongoing meeting procedures. If we assume for a moment that the meeting table was removed from the municipal council meeting, new constellations would be possible; for instance, the municipal managers that usually sit behind the MCM could have more similar positions to the MCMs that usually sit at the table. That in turn might encourage different modes of participation in the meeting's discussions, since the MCMs would not have the symbolic and communicational priority given to them by the table. Such a hypothetical and radical proposal of removing the table recalls what Hammad (2002 [1990]) experiments with when removing a conference table as an 'object of certain value' that can influence by transforming from a "polemical configuration (an opposition rostrum/room with a relation of domination) to a contractual configuration (a group sitting in a circle around a central void, with a relation of equality)" (p. 35). In that sense, the table in the municipal and local district meetings in Nodacity can be described as an object of classification for the meetings' attendees. It organizes their different locations with its geographic position in the meeting room, and at the same time, it can classify their enrolment in the process as legal decision-makers, behind which are consultants (municipal managers), or (sometimes more behind or remote) temporary visitors.

Focusing on the relationship between these objects (table and chairs) and the produced spatiotemporal claims in relation to them or their usages, one can find a form of territorialization process (e.g. Kärholm, 2005; see also 2017), which I call a *temporary institutional territorialization* here. The product of the temporary institutional territorialization is an identifiable area within the meeting room or the planning setting. It is not necessarily visualised as an official area, belonging to specific roles or pertaining to fixed physical borders, but it nevertheless has agency that can influence decision-making processes pertaining to a certain temporary official or unofficial usage. For instance, in the example above, the area around the meeting table could be associated as an official territory for expressing a voice, but it could also have an agentic value of providing silent participation in the process, in the case of an unusual presence of a citizen at the table. Temporary institutional territorialization can have different agency of influence in relation to the actors involved in it. For instance, the agencies of a meeting table differ from those of the meeting room door, since the area in front of or beside the door could be associated with unwelcome visitors (usually restricted, remaining outside the room), or marginalized visitors (inside the room, but not offered a seat at the table) during decision-making processes. Time is also a factor

here. A temporary institutional territorialization attributed to a meeting table can be created during the official meeting time, whereas at any time beyond that, the same approximate area as that around the table would not have the same kind of agency. A temporary institutional territorialization of a door is also different at different times. Before the meeting time, the area close to the threshold of the door can have a considerable influence on the process, for example as a stage for transistor tactics (e.g. being temporarily present to drive a cause for an issue). During the meeting time, when the door is closed, the same area is less of a stage for transistor tactics, but could be activated as a stage for persistent knocking. Furthermore, when the door is closed during the meeting, the area closest to it on the inside of the room can have a potential effect on the meeting, as a spot remote from the table, closely linked to the exit, indicating the way out. Thus, objects such as the door and the table could be described as objects of influence (activating a temporary institutional territorialisation) in relation to different usages, users and times. Other objects, such as official flags, or technologies like the fixed microphone, could also participate in the creation of a temporary institutional territorialization that has certain influences at different times in relation to the official meeting time. From a design perspective, it is reasonable that when spaces for this kind of decision-making are being built or renovated, they should address these kinds of areas, and possible area functions. The notion of temporary institutional territorialization can draw attention to such partially invisible, still influential and communicative aspects of space and matter as a vital part of the institutional setting.

Another device presented in this chapter is air conditioning. As discussed, as a technology AC can have other influences on the meeting and on activities related to other areas of the planning setting; it does not simply technically condition the air. Firstly, the AC air filling the foyer of the meeting room floor and constantly replacing invading hot air significantly distinguishes this space from other common spaces in the municipality building. Secondly, the cooled air also distinguishes the inner environments of the office rooms as tied to specific institutional roles. In the offices of the MCS, the chairperson, and his secretary, we saw that the difference of AC air quality to some extent created borders between the spaces of these rooms, distinguishing the different institutional authorities assigned to these rooms. Hence, the physical borders that are part of the institutional planning setting are not only defined by walls, and doors, but also by conditioned air. The lattermost has the advantage of usually being more easily exchangeable than the more fundamental architectural elements. We also saw that the AC units hanging on opposite walls in the meeting room created partial

temperature-conditioned borders and caused minor disruptions in the meeting, mediated by the invisible but perceptible pumping of cold air from the AC units. Furthermore, the AC narrative also conveyed that the AC remote control, which allows control of the indoor environmental conditions, could mediate an authority materialized by the flowing air.

One could say that the more noticeable the difference in the cooling effect is, the clearer the borders between different spaces become. For instance, the difference in the cooling effect between the meeting room and the foyer space is more noticeable, or distinctive, than the difference in the cooling effect between the meeting room and the chairperson's office. This fact could also be said to reflect the close institutional relations between the chairperson's role and the meeting event by reducing and diffusing the border between these spaces. Furthermore, in the rooms of the MCS, the chairperson and his secretary, the AC units are hung on the walls behind where these actors usually sit; thus, the AC unit can mediate institutional roles whilst at the same time supporting the bodily appearance of the 'owners' of the spaces while practicing their duties. These kinds of spatial effects and their impact on visitors will be further elaborated on in the following chapter.

The aspects of using and placing ACs can be reflected on in relation to what Brey (2007) sees as technologies that create and sustain certain social relations such as power and authority. ACs can be described as "technological delegates" (Brey, 2007: 82), functioning independently and pumping cold air into the institutional spaces whilst at the same time exercising authority on their behalf (see also Latour, 1992). Similarly to Latour's early examples – with the groom and the door and its advantages and losses in delegation (1992), or the attached weights to the hotel keys by which the latter can be delegated to the closing of the door, or to specific return patterns (Latour, 1992) – the AC devices can be delegated to a function where the "design features of a technical artefact or its configuration in an environment are organized so that the artefact affects users or bystanders in such a way that they carry out desired behaviours or refrain from carrying out unwanted behaviours" (Brey, 2007: 83). Cool air and AC units can be recognized by visitors who vaguely sense protocol, but also sense unfamiliarity with the exact rules of the unfamiliar spaces like the meeting room, chairperson's office, or the secretary's office. Thus, here, the technological and material devices can convey an authority significant enough to require a certain kind of visiting behaviour.

As a final note on the AC, when it became an issue on the meeting agenda and caused disruptions in the ongoing dialogues during the meeting, it revealed itself as an area of contention between the governorate and the MCMs. As we saw, the effect of this debate and disruption was due to the absence of representative actors being located outside the ongoing meeting on the day of that observation instead. As an object, the AC expresses an agency of authority, and this related agency can positively enhance the environmental conditions of the space by mediating a sense of welcoming air, but it can also worsen conditions by leaving a building or a room without an air-conditioned environment. In other words, the AC can be described as an object with an agency of authority that can have an ambiguous or Janus-faced influence, materializing differently in relation to the actor-network it creates in a planning setting.

What can be concluded in this chapter is that objects and technologies such as tables, chairs, mobile phones, and ACs are not always still or smooth objects present during meetings without any particular influence on the decision-making process. These objects and technologies can have different sorts of significance, as substantial actors; in a redundancy delegation; as objects of classification; or as technologies of an agentic authority, all of them participating in the decision-making processes.

6

Modes of Ordering as Related to the Setting

In the previous analyses, we saw how interior objects such as tables and chairs, setting-specific supplies such as folders and printed agendas, as well as mobile and stationary technologies such as mobile phones and AC units have all been enrolled into the meetings, delegating needs, expanding networks, and triggering destabilizations in the ongoing procedures. Looking into the effects of and the interaction with these objects, we could see examples of how objects triggered destabilizations. These objects have been followed here to see how they took part in disputes within the larger network of relations that is usually stabilized to allow the meetings to proceed smoothly. This is not, of course, the equivalent of granting autonomous power to these objects, nor does it attribute the destabilization effect to them, but they are nevertheless part of an end product of patterned networks (the setting and meeting) that in some cases failed to overcome their materiality-based resistance, their non-human agency as it were, resulting in destabilizations that made a difference. In this section, I continue to regard destabilizations as actor-networks including also other material matters and their spatial arrangements, unfolding their causes and effects on the ordering processes and principles of the planning setting that make up the background for the meetings.

In Chapter 4, I traced and followed destabilizations by looking into the interactions of ‘talking and acting’ and regarding dialogue and activities in the meetings as not solely dependent on human relations, or human interaction. Much of the analysis in Chapters 4 and 5 pointed out the roles of legislation, microphones, foyer spaces, doors, etcetera, and how they have contributed to the mediating and performance of the meeting interactions. For instance, in the narrative about the status of the municipality’s computers, the whole of the events and controversy were virtually based on the need for computers to be updated – a need that was translated through a sequence of procedures, re-groupings, and mediations through papers, stamps and signatures until it was announced and made public via a microphone by a secretary at a meeting who was sitting in his assigned chair at the meeting table. In this chapter, Chapter 6, the argument that will be studied in greater depth is that the routines, rules, and procedures in meetings, including objects such as papers, tables, chairs, etcetera, are organized, ordered and transported according to a “materially heterogeneous set of arrangement processes” (Law, 2001: 1), generating the resulting meeting event, the decision-making process, or the institutional setting.

In his article ‘Ordering and Obduracy’, Law (2001: 1-14), referring to his early book ‘Organizing Modernity’ (Law, 1994), sets out six principles that can describe an organization: firstly, organizations can be described as processes rather than as things, since it is for Law – and for this research – a matter of arranging, ordering and patterning. Secondly, organization is not only an ordering process for social interaction, but it also implicates and is implicated by material matters “including and producing documents, codes, texts, architectures and physical devices” (Law, 2001: 1). In this research, material matters such as these are always available, sometimes but not always directly observable, and participate in stabilizing the conditions. They are provided by the network of the planning setting through which the interactions need to form themselves and proceed. The network of these materially heterogeneous actors can make the organization run through processes of ordering and organizing, something that has been described by Law as “heterogeneous engineering” (Law, 1992: 381). Such collective engineering systems indicate a ‘mode of ordering’ of the networks (Law, 2001). Law’s concepts could imply a term often used here, namely ‘protocol’. However, since ‘acting according to protocol’ in this research implies an overarching cultural principle that form(ulate)s agreed ways of how meetings should generally be conducted, or how procedures are routinely recognised and handled, in this chapter I prefer to talk about ‘modes of ordering’, which implies that these modes are somewhat less formally agreed upon or represent symbolical orders, but exist more as an implicit force in the everyday goings-on. Law emphasizes that when describing an organization, modes of ordering can have characteristics such as “different or multiple”, “complex”, and “non-coherent” (Law, 2001, pp. 2-7).

Generally speaking, multiple modes of ordering can be found in the planning setting. For instance, in the preparation of the municipal meeting, janitors, the meeting room, the door, the MCS, meeting agenda, MCMs, microphones, the meeting time, ACs, among other heterogeneous actors, all assemble according to various modes of ordering and complex organizing processes that support each other to generate an effect of a coherent meeting. In the upcoming analysis of two narratives, I explain several organizing processes in different locations and in different situations of stability and destabilization. First, in the section called ‘The Meeting Room Floor’, I discuss how a minor disruption during one of the common procedures for handling a request appears because of the ill fit between objects in organizing processes. Second, in the final narrative of this thesis, I describe how a destabilization can move, change its form, influence and reside in different organizing processes and different locations.

6.1 The Meeting Room Floor

As noted previously, the Nodacity Municipality building has separate areas and floors for its institutional functions. For instance, some parts are dedicated to regular municipal services that might be required by many citizens on a daily basis, with departments for survey, property tax, and acquisition and procurements. In this section, I focus on the meeting room floor and on some procedures and uses within the floor space. This floor has distinctive spatial, material and institutional characteristics that distinguish it from the rest of the municipality building, such as: marble tiles, the cold air, the meeting room, the special wooden door, the MCS's office, the offices of the chairperson and his secretary, and the rooms and activities of related human actors, staff and visitors.

Yellow Folders vs. White Papers

With an official letter from my PhD supervisor and the registered request from the municipality's main administrative office, I rushed to the meeting room floor in order to continue the other procedures necessary to officially begin attending the municipal council meetings and commence my observations. I arrived in the foyer of the floor after climbing the stairs, and for a while I stood, catching my breath and looking around with the cold breeze gently stroking my face. I had done an entrance procedure of this kind the previous year before I was able to attend the first municipal council meeting for my pilot studies, and now I had to repeat the process before beginning data collection. A few metres from the closed big door of the meeting room was a sign indicating 'the chairperson's office'. The sign was close to another closed door – a large wooden door similar to the meeting room door, with extensive ornamentation carved into its top rail. Next to that door, several meters away, with marble tiles continuing the extension of the flooring, was another big wooden door that opened onto a large, bright office.

I knocked to announce my presence and request permission to enter. "Yes, come in" responded someone sitting at the end of the room. The sign hanging beside the door indicated that he was the chairperson's secretary. I walked over the threshold into the office, and stepped carefully on the marble tiles, passing three leather chairs on each side of the room,

some of which were occupied by visitors. I wove through a group of three coffee tables with their shining glazed tops, careful not to bump into them with my legs. The further into the room I came, the stronger the sensation of freshness and brightness was, and I arrived at a large, bright window with an AC unit hanging above it at the end wall of the room. Two wooden cupboards with glazed doors stood tall on either side of the room, with colourful folders and paper dossiers arranged on their shelves. The chairperson's secretary was sitting behind his wooden desk on his big leather chair between and behind the cupboards. The table occupied the space furthest in the room, stretching from the right to the left side of the room.

Papers in hand, I stood in front of the desk, looking at the secretary while he continued to read and sign papers in front of him. I watched him for a while, waiting for any sign – eye contact or a verbal signal indicating that I should speak. While I stood in front of the desk waiting for my sign, a person wearing a freshly ironed shirt and trousers and holding a yellow folder appeared suddenly from somewhere behind me. The person passed by me, walked through the small space between the secretary's desk and the wall, and turned behind the desk. I was standing there in front of both of them – the secretary and the person with the yellow folder – and the visitor opened his folder to a certain page and placed it right in front of the secretary, on top of the papers that he was busy with. The person slowly approached the secretary on his chair and spoke: "Can you check these papers?" The secretary replied in a positive tone, "I'll see what I can do". Having disconnecting from his papers, the secretary turned his head towards me where I stood, still waiting in front of his desk. "Yes, what can I do for you?" he asked. "Hello, my name is Marwa, I am a PhD student; I was here last year if you remember, attending the municipal council meetings..." "Yes, yes, what can I do for you now?" the secretary quickly asked me again. I extended my arm, holding my papers closer to him so he could, if he wanted, take them from me. "Could you please tell me if his Excellency the chairperson is here today, and whether I can meet him?" "No, he is not here. What do you want from him?" the secretary replied. "These are formal letters from my supervisor, signed and with the required papers attached, which I acquired from the main administrative office here in the municipality. I need his Excellency's signature on them, and I need the permission to attend the meetings again this year", I said, taking my time with my reply and still holding my arm outstretched. "Okay, let me see the papers." The chairperson's secretary took the papers

from me, and began flipping through them as he read them. “The chairperson will come soon. I do not know when exactly. But he has a municipal council meeting today, so he will come”. The person with the yellow folder was still standing next to the secretary, behind his desk, looking at me while I was explaining my need. The secretary placed my papers in front of me on the visitor’s side of the desk. “Is it okay if I wait for him here?” I asked, taking my papers again. “Okay, you can sit here” the secretary said, pointing with his hand towards the chairs in front of him.

I turned around and looked at the row of chairs along both sides of the room. Some were occupied by visitors who also seemed to be waiting for the chairperson. I chose a chair close to the secretary’s desk. All of the chairs had two fixed arms, and fixed frames anchoring them to the ground. The person with the yellow folder retreated with me, choosing a chair directly across from me on the opposite side of the room, placing the yellow folder on the small coffee table. Then the person leant back in the chair, and began busying with two mobile phones, checking them and texting. Ten minutes had passed during which everyone was waiting, sitting in their chairs, when a person in a white loose shirt and holding white papers appeared on the doorstep. The person stood there briefly and looked around in the room, seemingly also choosing a chair to sit on. Then the person entered the room and walked quickly towards the secretary’s desk and stood in the same spot where I had stood. The person looked at the secretary, who was busy reading and signing papers. The secretary gave no indication that he would notice the person with the white papers in front of him, and the latter suddenly started coughing loudly in order to attract the secretary’s attention. “Yes, what can I do for you?” the secretary finally asked the person with the white papers. “I want to see the chairperson please; is he here?” the person replied in a low voice. “No, he isn’t, but he will be soon. A lot of people are waiting for him”, the secretary replied, gesturing toward the many people waiting in their chairs. The person with the white papers did not say a word after hearing the secretary’s reply, but simply turned, looked around at the chairs, and slowly walked towards a chair at the end, on the left side of the room, beside the entrance door. The person with the white papers then sat down, folded the white papers and put them on the chair, staring at the marble tiles, checking the time every once in a while, waiting and looking around in the room continuously at the visitors waiting in their chairs.

Suddenly, there was a noise from what sounded like a lot of people walking and talking in the floor foyer. Then, the secretary stood up from his chair, arranged the papers that he was busy with in a small stack and placed them at the end of the table. He buttoned up his suit jacket and walked slowly towards the doorstep. It seemed that the chairperson had arrived. As the noise drew closer, I could hear what seemed to be the chairperson, greeting people around him. The sound was now very close, and when the chairperson appeared on the doorstep everyone in the room stood up – the visitors, the person with the yellow folder, the person with the white papers and myself and the rest of the visitors. The chairperson stopped briefly near the doorstep and shook hands with the secretary as he looked around, then handed him the stack of papers that he was holding. Then the chairperson walked to the door of his office, before the group of visitors and the person with the yellow folders approached him, wanting a handshake with the chairperson. “Hello, hello, everyone... nice to meet you”, the chairperson said quickly, welcoming everyone and shaking some hands before entering his office through the big wooden door. I stood by my chair, looking from a distance at the chairperson’s entrance with the visitors and the person with the yellow folder around him and waiting for a sign from the secretary to follow them. Then the secretary looked back, pointed his thumb at me as if asking me to come after them, and disappeared inside the chairperson’s office. I grabbed my papers and followed the chairperson, the other visitors, the person with the yellow folder, and the secretary into the chairperson’s office. I entered the chairperson’s office, looking back at the person with the white papers walking slowly behind me as he entered the office.

I entered the chairperson’s office with cautious steps, walking carefully on the marble tiles and taking my time to look around. Directly after entering the room, I saw the closed door of the office that I had seen before entering the room, which led directly to the foyer. The room was divided into several main parts; one part had a small meeting table with chairs around it, a second part held the chairperson’s desk. There was cold air coming from the AC inside the room, and bright light from a wide window behind the desk filled the room. I followed the crowd to the second part of the room. There, a row of leather couches filled the second half of the room, arranged along the perpendicular walls, and there was a big space at the end of the couch arrangement where the chairperson desk was placed, see Figure (6).

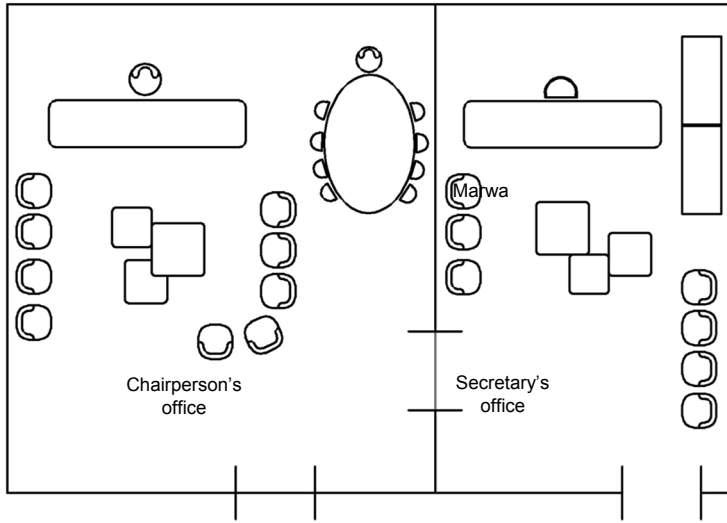


Figure 6: An approximate plan sketch by the author, of two adjacent municipal offices (e.g. the chairperson's office and the secretary's office).

The chairperson was sitting behind his desk, preparing some papers in front of him, and the group of visitors was seated on the couches. The person with the yellow folder managed to claim a space on the right side of the room, which left me, the person with the white papers, and the secretary standing towards the side, holding our papers in our hands. The chairperson leant back briskly on his chair, looking around and smiling towards everyone inside the room, as if to welcome them. Abruptly, the person with the yellow folder stood up and walked towards the chairperson's desk, rounded it and placed the yellow folder in front of the chairperson, covering the stack of papers on his desk. Then the person with the yellow folder spoke calmly: "Can you please check these papers?" "Okay, I'll see what I can do now," the chairperson said. He looked into the yellow folder, then signed it. "Thank you, your Excellency", the person with the yellow folder. The latter shook the chairperson's hand, took the yellow folder back and sat down on the couch again. I was standing beside the leather couch, waiting for any sign from the chairperson or his secretary to come closer and explain my errand. A sort of coughing was heard behind me, and I turned around and saw the person with the white papers slowly walking from behind me towards the chairperson's desk. With careful steps on the marbled tiles and looking down, the person with the white papers stood by the chairperson's desk in the same spot where the person with the yellow folder had been

standing. The chairperson was busy talking with the secretary, who was now standing in front of him, instructing him about some details that needed to be arranged before the municipal council meeting. Slowly taking the white papers to read, the chairperson stopped talking with the secretary, looked at the papers in front of him, and then turned slightly towards the person with the white papers standing behind the desk: "I cannot sign this now; it needs further processing before I can sign it", the chairperson said, handing back the white papers. The person with the white papers turned away, walked from behind the chairperson's desk, and retreated slowly to his original spot behind me.

Smiling again and looking around at the visitors sitting in front of him, the chairperson invited them to speak their needs: "Please, what can I do for you?" A person from the group of visitors stood up and spoke for five minutes before handing the chairperson a folder to sign, standing in front of his desk. The chairperson signed the folder and returned it to the person, who thanked him. There were smiles and grateful expressions from his peers on the couches also. It seemed that everyone inside the room had spoken their needs except me. Finally, I got my signal from the secretary: "You can speak now", the secretary said to me. Slowly and resolutely, I walked towards the chairperson's desk, stood in front of it, gently handed him my papers and requested permission to speak my need: "Hello your Excellency, my name is Marwa. If you would allow me to speak". The chairperson stretched his hand, taking the papers from me. He read them with a smile on his face and gestured that I was allowed to speak: "I am a PhD student, and I was attending the municipal council meetings last year, if you remember, after you kindly granted me permission. I also need to attend the meetings this year, mostly every week because I will begin collecting data. These papers explain my need in Arabic, with an official letter written and signed by my supervisor. I would appreciate if you would allow me." The chairperson signed my papers, and gently handed them back to me: "We need to introduce you to the other attendees, so you can start attending the meetings with us. But you are very welcome." He continued looking at me, as if waiting for me to thank him again. "Thank you very much, thanks a lot", I replied with a big smile, and returned to where I had come from at the side of the couch.

"Is there anything else?" the chairperson said, addressing the secretary standing in front of him. The latter shook his head no. The secretary turned to the visitors, including the person with the yellow folder and the person with the white papers and said: "Please follow me,

the meeting will start soon and his Excellency needs to prepare some papers before the meeting starts.” Then the secretary abruptly turned towards me: “You can enter through that door,” he said, pointing at a small door at the side end of the room beside the chairperson’s desk, “You should reserve your chair on the side before the room fills up”. The secretary led the way out of the room, with everyone following him through the office again except me. I entered the meeting room from the chairperson’s office, chose a chair on the right side of the room, and sat there waiting to attend my first municipal council meeting that year.

Based on the premises of the main event in the narrative above, more precisely the attempts made by the two people with their different coloured folders and papers, I will discuss how heterogeneous organizing processes govern institutional processing and the presentation of folders and papers. Apart from folders, these heterogeneous organizing processes also include other actors, such as the MCS, the furniture, and the cold air. I discuss what could be recognized as a destabilization in the above events, based on the argument that disruptions occur when one object does not fit properly into a specific mode of ordering, and how this ill fit could be architecturally and spatially articulated in the secretary’s and the chairperson’s offices. But first, I will begin with some elaborations on the meeting room floor, its space, materials, connected offices, institutional roles, and the social activities in relation to the meeting event that render the floor important and reflect the hierarchy of the municipality building.

The meeting room floor has distinctive characteristics related to the type of functions and the materials used in its spaces. I encountered these materials several times during the period of my observations, as well as during my previous working experience in Noddecity Municipality, which heightened my attentiveness to certain details of these materials. During the many times that I stood in the foyer on the meeting room floor waiting for the meeting to start, I encountered the cold air generated by the AC units in the surrounding offices whose doors opened to the common space of the floor. Standing on the clean, polished marble floor of the meeting room enhanced the sensation. These material elements – the marble tiles, the cold air, or the details of the wooden doors – can be found separately or together in other common indoor spaces in Jordan. However, when together on the meeting room floor, these materials relate to the activities, users and their preferences, including connecting visitors with the MCS, the chairperson’s secretary, the chairperson, or the meeting event. All of these institutional roles and activities, including the materials (marble tiles,

wooden doors, etcetera) participate in wider networks: “[W]hen we look at the social we are also looking at the production of materiality. And when we look at materials we are witnessing the production of the social” (Law & Mol, 1995: 274). That is to say that the “material networks [...] imply a different form of space”, and at the same time, these spaces are shaped and affected by these materials, here generating an effect of both expected and unexpected uses of the meeting room floor (Law & Hetherington, 2000:36). If we consider the meeting room floor as a main structure for holding these materials, objects, and institutional functions together, then the floor could be described as what Moser & Law (2003) identify as the ‘centered articulation’. As a centred articulation and by holding these materials, objects, and institutional functions, the meeting room floor creates “new relations by juxtaposing objects, bringing them together and arraying them at the same time and the same space” (Moser & Law, 2003: 496). That is also to say that without the floor’s structure assembling these functions and materials together, they would only be recognized as disparately distributed objects in space and time, without the power they give each other by means of adjacency.

Functions in relation to the secretary and the chairperson’s offices can be considered important for specific institutional procedures within the floor, especially in relation to what happened to the two persons in the narrative above. The main event in the narrative depicts a common procedure that citizens follow to continue the processing of their requests with the municipality and its local district departments, as part of a necessary institutional circulation system. According to the Village and Building Law of 1966, before attempting to erect, modify, or add services or buildings to one’s property, each citizen must first carry out certain institutional procedures. This particular procedure starts with a request submitted to one of the municipal offices, accompanied with technical explanations and other official papers. For instance, if the issue concerned building a house on a piece of land that required electrical or sewage systems services, the request would be submitted to the building permit office in the municipal building, accompanied with detailed architectural, electrical, and construction plans. The request with the detailed documents would then be transferred to the local district department within which the land is located. In the local district department, the requests with any explanatory or legal documents are first classified and put in a coloured folder, then discussed between local district committee members, after a surveyor checks the case on the actual site to provide any further explanations, or supportive drawings. The request can be rejected if papers are missing, or if the application case simply does not follow the regulations. If the local district committee approves the request, the folder (i.e. the request with the attached documents) is

returned to the municipality. In the municipality, the approved requests must also be approved, signed, and stamped by the chairperson, or someone else that has been temporarily delegated this task by the chairperson. The approved requests are then archived in the municipal office where they were initiated and delivered to the citizens who made the request, who can then convert the approved decision to physical actions in their properties.

The aforementioned procedures outline multiple organizing processes for the handling of requests submitted by citizens. An organisation can apply several materially heterogeneous processes of arranging, according to varying modes of ordering (Law, 2001; see also Law & Moser, 1999). The handling of any application from a citizen is organized within two main processes: first in the local district department with its committee members, and second in the municipal building with the main procedure of signing by the chairperson, as well as archiving in the main office. Moreover, the municipal institution ensures that any request that might alter any feature in the city or for the applicant's neighbours cannot be approved as a final decision or action unless it is approved, or has passed the processes in both locations. This aligns with what Law (2001: 2) explains, namely that in any organizing there can be multiple strategies "intersecting with one another, and [...] there is no single key order in the organisation". The municipal institution ensures that these two processes are sustained and secured as quasi-stability by material delegation (e.g. Law, 2001). Part of the stability of the procedures following citizens' requests in Nodecty is achieved through the delegation of some agreed rules and codes into, for instance, different coloured folders, stamps, inks, and vehicles transferring folders between the two locations. Furthermore, with this material delegation, the municipality makes sure that the two processes work as instances of what I call durabilization; i.e. every action applied for by citizens is run through several temporary obstacles, taking place in the local district department and Nodecty Municipality.

Usually, folders are transferred between the municipality and the local district department by conventional means, for example by a janitor who moves the folders from building to building in a vehicle. The coloured folders are mobilised from location to location, first as a request from the municipality to the local district, then to the municipality again after the folders have been reviewed and approved by the local district. This process is reminiscent of what Latour (1987) – speculating on the agentic logistics of knowledge production in science and in general – calls a 'cycle of accumulation'. In terms borrowed from Latour, we see the typical elements of such

cycles of accumulation in the case of Nodacity, namely a ‘centre of calculation’ at the main municipality office and ‘places of expedition’ at the local district offices. The issue at stake is evaluated at the ‘places of expedition’ and returned to the municipality office, kept in a stabilized status, more or less ‘immutable’ and ‘combinable’ in order to become archived, stored and accumulated at the ‘centre’ of the municipality, thus in the end also representing the handling of similar future cases. According to Latour, in order to obtain and fulfil this cycle of accumulation and to define a centre of calculation, “captains, customs officers, [...and an] accounting book” are important (Latour, 1987: 222). This is similar to what the municipality in this case seeks with things like coloured folders, transportable errands and pursued rituals of approval.

If we suppose that the means of mobilisation (a conventional vehicle operated by a janitor) could be altered in these cycles of accumulation when errands are transferred back to the municipality from the different districts – for instance by making the transports more individualised, involving the applicants as escorts, or what could be called the unofficial ‘captains’ of folders’ mobilisation (e.g. Latour 1987) – what total difference would it make in the institutional procedures? It could, of course, result in a shorter wait for the folders to be returned to the municipality, decreasing the time it takes for cases to be processed, as there would be no need to wait for a certain number of folders to be accumulated. On the other hand, if this was the usual process, large numbers of individually delivered folders could not be as effectively accumulated and handled in the municipal office. In the case of Nodacity, as in other cities in Jordan and in the world, certain errands may be considered more urgent than others, both from the point of view of the administration, and from individual citizens. In relation to the narrative above, we might suppose that the person with the yellow folder, the person with white papers, and the others in the group of visitors might simply attempt to continue the procedures by themselves, because their requests might be too urgent for them to wait for the normal means of transfer.

Colour-coding folders for organizational purposes forms part of the stability of the procedures following citizens’ requests. As explained earlier, the colours yellow, pink and green³⁰ were selected to indicate and classify different urgencies, types of issues, and mobilisation in the institutional framework. In the narrative above, the yellow folders usually indicate re-examination cases, representing a second chance given by the law to make an appeal on a request that has been rejected by the local district

³⁰ The green folders represent the sale or exchange of property between citizens. Pink indicates an application for a building permit or a permission to add a new architectural structure to a property.

committee, especially in the case of rejections on the grounds of missing formalities that could be provided later. In addition, any pink or green folder could, after being rejected, be put in a yellow folder to distinguish it as a second round request.

The yellow colour has other symbolic meanings in the organizational culture of Nodacity Municipality, besides being the colour of appeal folders. As seen in several observations in the Downstage District's committee meetings, this is also the colour of small sticky notes that appeared, usually inserted into certain folders. Committee members occasionally commented on these small notes, which were intentionally attached to the folders and were frequently associated with complications. As one manager commented: "I don't like it when I see a yellow 'hidden' note in the folder, I sometimes intentionally put off looking into the associated issue". I later came to know that these small yellow notes were often inserted into the folders of cases involved in legal entanglements. Thus, through certain traditions of production and reception, the yellow colour came to signify an "imputed agency" (Brey, 2005: 62) in the organizational culture of Nodacity Municipality, usually relating to ambiguous conditions that are sometimes difficult to interpret quickly.

The colour white,³¹ however, – white papers without a folder – does not have a set meaning in the colour-coding system for folders; thus, any paper that is not associated to a case or a folder being processed – i.e. lacking a supportive material form – might be handled if there is sufficient evidence of urgency, such as a valid verbal explanation. Loose papers without folders might indicate that the applicant has not followed the complete procedures exactly, or might not have gone through the first process in the local district department, where papers are usually classified and sorted into coloured folders. Thus, in relation to the narrative above, one could assume that the white papers errand did not go via the previous process in the local district department before the issue arrived at the municipality, and nor did it in any other way relate to sufficient actors in the second process in the municipality. This assumption can be indicated with the comment from the chairperson to the person with white papers: "I cannot sign this now; it needs further processing before I can sign it". In that sense, the white papers errand was disrupted, causing a minor destabilization in the related modes of ordering. Below, I describe more precisely how this ill-fitted material handling (the lack of a folder, a proper colour or a link to other actors) unfolds in the secretary's and the chairperson's offices, and how this is spatially and architectonically

³¹ The white papers here are normal, white A4 or letter-size office papers known in Jordan and around the world. My request was not stated in relation to municipal services, but related only to my specific research concerns.

articulated. Through this description, the disciplining and ordering effects of material circumstances will appear as part of the institutional setting.

Yellow Folders vs. White Papers in the Offices on the Meeting Room Floor

My intention here is to look into how the different colours of folders and papers handled by their bearer can function as tickets of entry to institutional spaces, but also how different materials can fit together to perform an organizing process (e.g. Law & Mol, 1995). Materialities in the offices of the secretary and the chairperson – and not only legally granted institutional authority – can perform as parts of heterogeneous organizing processes that participate in sustaining the institutional procedure (Law & Hetherington, 2000; Law 2001).

At first, from a floor circulation point of view, or a spatial transition perspective, both the secretary and the chairperson exist adjacently on the meeting room floor. A citizen who intends to pursue a request because s/he requires or desires a signature immediately would probably seek out the chairperson's office first, as I did in the above narrative. However, entry to the chairperson's office from the common floor space was designed to be restricted from visitors, and this was sustained by virtue of the fact that access to the chairperson's office is gained via the next open door, namely the secretary's office. In other words, whenever these citizens are confronted with a closed door, they must logically search for the next open door. That open door can grant the secretary's office the function of filtration, rendering it a checkpoint through which anyone or anything must pass before proceeding to the chairperson's office.

Moreover, in an institutional logistics perspective, the chairperson delegates the secretary the task of organizing any citizen, folder, and paper before these can proceed to the chairperson's office. This means that the secretary's role can also work as a disciplining mode, organizing, ordering, and allowing the passage of visitors, papers or requests to the chairperson. Discipline as a performance is well known from Foucault and his descriptions of "docile bodies" (Foucault, 1977: 135). In Foucault's terms (1977: 141), we could say that the secretary's space is where "discipline proceeds from the distribution of individuals in space" by utilizing several techniques, such as enclosure, partitioning, and rank (classification). Reflecting briefly on these techniques in relation to the secretary's role, citizens, papers, and any requests must first be brought together, enclosed in one place so that they can be approved, possibly distributed in the office space for waiting, or dismissed from the enclosure of the office. This act of

partitioning can combine specific functions of communication between the secretary and anyone submitting a request, checking their supportive materials, such as folders and documents. This act can then allow the secretary to divide those making requests into categories according to the urgency of their errands; i.e. to “rank” and classify (Foucault 1977: 145) who or what has the priority to proceed, to talk, and to be presented to the chairperson.

The secretary’s office has special groups of furniture that can accentuate the restriction and sustaining of the disciplining performance of the flow of items on their way to the chairperson’s office. The leather chairs grouped closely to each other on both sides of the room, and the centrally placed coffee tables that stand close enough to relate to each other when one passes them play their role before the secretary participates in stabilizing the organizational process. This heterogeneity of spatial actors mediates the necessity to follow certain routines in order to communicate with the secretary. For instance, before being able to proceed inside the office to stand in front of the desk, one must pass the arrangement of tables with their glazed tops, walking with caution, as if preparing for the cautiousness of etiquette required for communication with the secretary.

Faced with the cold air pumped from the AC further inside the room and confronted with the two large cupboards and the big desk, a visitor senses barriers that should prevent intrusions into the secretary’s private space around his big leather chair. Spatially and architecturally, these objects and barriers also allow the secretary to perform his role. In contrast to what I and the person with the white papers perceived as impediments that made us stop in front of the desk and wait to present our needs, the person with the yellow folder was able to penetrate these barriers, arrive at the other side of the desk and communicate with the secretary from behind his desk. This could suggest that the combination of the yellow colour of the classified folder and the visiting person acting confidently in relation to the institutional rules jointly made it easy to relate to the secretary and the set of objects around him. On the other hand, the actor-network of the person with the white papers, who did not belong in any agreed classification within the institution, had a weaker chance to relate to all of these objects. The yellow folders and the furniture are interrelated to support one procedure: they are partially connected, as varied “patchworks” (Law & Mol, 1995: 274), sewn together to constitute one institutional procedure.

When some folders, papers, and citizens have managed to enter to the chairperson office, another group of furniture, another institutional role, and another

mode of ordering waits to receive them in the final process of signing. First, the institutional role of the chairperson grants him with an authority given by the Municipal Law of 2015 to finally officialise any decision reached by any local district committee; the chairperson can officialise any folder with the material representation of his signature. This also makes the chairperson's physical presence a part of this 'centre of calculation' (Latour, 1987), ending with errands being accumulated and archived in the relevant offices. Secondly, the chairperson's role can also be seen as a centre of calculation in the sense that it legally steers the municipal council meetings. This central role for the chairperson is also mediated through the design of his desk, the spatial divisions of his office, the presence of waiting chairs and related furniture, and the well-functioning distribution of cold air, which all participate in stabilizing and generating an effect for such a significant role. Upon entering the chairperson's office, any infrequent visitor – like myself – would immediately notice a small meeting table with chairs, expressing the authority of an executive who leads meetings. Another explicit reference to the chairperson's pivotal role and authority is the small door at the end of the room. This door directly leads to the meeting room where official decision-making takes place, and where issues are discussed, and decided.

When one enters the chairperson's office gradually, the effect of the cold air blowing from the AC unit mounted behind the chairperson's desk becomes increasingly intense. The visitor is greeted by an enclosure consisting of leather couches that surrounds the area in front of the desk. With their relation to the desk, the chairperson, and the office space, the leather couches jointly produce an organisational effect on the visitors before they can talk to the chairperson. In the narrative above, when the two abovementioned individuals, the other visitors and I took seats on the waiting chairs, I knew that not everyone could always simply manage to access a seat here. But as I experienced it – as soon as I arrived in this part of the room with its extensive desk, the cold front from the AC, and the light from the spacious window behind the desk, all with their relations to the chairperson role – a certain uneasiness was also established, weakening my capabilities to act directly, and to claim a seat. Some interior design details, including the desk, the marble tiles, and the AC, looked similar to the ones of the secretary office. However, since it is a matter of material relationality (Law, 2009a) involving the chairperson himself, his legally granted authority, and his role in any decision-making, these objects and anything or anyone relating to them appeared to be more impressive and important in the institutional context. One could assume that previous experience or successful attempts to associate with or be linked to this ensemble of institutional paraphernalia would mean a greater repertoire of influential

abilities and probably facilitate achieving the final decision desired on a request. In other words, the ensemble of heterogeneous relations may work to reinforce, but also, when there is a missing link or actor, to actively resist any attempt to associate further (e.g. Moser & Law, 2003).

In conclusion, what I have discussed here, staying very close to the design, layout, and physical appearance of things, mainly shows how institutional modes of ordering are maintained through materially heterogeneous organizing processes. These modes of ordering become more obvious when there are, as in this case, minor obstacles or disruptions in the daily running of errands aimed to reach decisions. We have seen how architectural spaces, interior designs, furniture and other physical objects of various kinds, activated in relation to officials, managers and visitors' roles, have an impact on the manoeuvring of errands. Taking the issues that I have addressed here into account in architectural design endeavours in spaces like these is potentially enriching, as the role of architecture is both to manifest and sometimes break with established modes of ordering. I have also shed some light on how close studies like these may point out possible alternative modes of ordering (e.g. logistics) in a planning setting, and thus also on the handling of planning issues in practice. The analysis above has actualized the modes of ordering in offices in the planning setting, and I will end the second part of the thesis by returning to the meeting room events, and the modes of ordering in these locations.

6.2 A Ripple of Disruption in the Setting: A Mobile Destabilization

In this section, discussions continue on investigating how certain procedures in a planning setting tie in to different organizing processes. The modes of ordering with which I will concern myself here are those that perform an effect on a municipal council meeting and its preparations. The discussions on tracing how a destabilization can travel to different locations in the network of the setting will also be expanded. The narrative below is the final narrative of this thesis, as well as a depiction of my final days of observations. It describes events at a municipal council meeting during which there was a great deal of turmoil due to an urgent incident in a local district departments of Nodecity that I call the Margin District in this narrative. As we shall see, several kinds

of influential moments that were discussed in relation to the previous narratives in this thesis re-appear here, and there are new types of destabilizations as well.

Disruption Chain

The day before I attended the final municipal council meeting for my data collection, I approached the municipal building finishing some work to ensure that I had gathered all of the complementary field data that I needed before going back to Sweden to continue my PhD studies. When I approached the foyer of the meeting room floor, there were many MCMs and managers standing there, especially in front of the MCS's office, which made it hard for me to see if the MCS was inside his office or not. When I approached the threshold of the MCS's office, there were a great number of MCMs sitting on the chairs inside, busy talking or answering constantly ringing phones. I was not able to fully grasp what the MCMs were busy talking about, except that all of them were mentioning an incident that had happened in one of the local districts of Nodacity.

After standing by the doorstep for a while, trying to understand the turmoil inside the MCS's office, the opportunity came to sit on a recently vacated chair. The MCMs invited me into their conversations, but before I could, I heard my name being called loudly: "Marwa, Marwa, hello!" It was the MCS. I stood up and walked towards his desk so that I could hear him above all of the commotion. "I'm sorry, I didn't notice you – as you see there is a disruption here!" said the MCS, talking to me in front of his desk. "That's okay, I just want to give you the letter that I talked to you about last week, since I am leaving soon for Sweden and I won't be here next week. I wanted to properly express my thanks to everyone who has helped me during my data collection", I said, speaking loudly so he could hear me. "Yes, I remember. This is very nice of you, but now I am not even sure if we are going to have a meeting tomorrow", the MCS said with a sigh. "What happened? Why wouldn't there be a meeting tomorrow?" I asked in surprise. "Ohh, so you don't know". The MCS turned to his computer screen for a moment, typed some words on his keyboard, and then turned the screen towards me: "Read this, and you will understand", he said pointing to the tilted screen with his finger. The text stated that an urgent institutional incident had interrupted the daily work in Margin District. The MCM began talking again: "The

chairperson asked me to call many local district managers to attend; it would not be only us. The chairperson needs to understand what happened and resolve the issue, so I don't think we will have time to finish all the issues on the agenda tomorrow. That's why I am not sure if we will have the time to read your thank you letter, but you can give it to me and I will let the chairperson know about it". I handed the MCS a printed copy of my letter and left his office wondering about what would happen the next day.

[...]

The next day arrived – the last day of my attendance in the municipal council meetings. I made sure to arrive twenty minutes early so I could check with the MCS whether he would read my letter or not, and if there was any specific protocol I would need to follow. I was worried that there might be no chance for my letter since it was an unusual meeting, as the MCS had suggested the day before. I rushed to the meeting room floor, and noticed a number of MCMs, municipal managers and other people wearing more formal clothing than usual, with crisply ironed shirts and trousers. I assumed that they were the extra local district department managers that the MCS had said would attend that day. I had not seen them like that before – they were all standing in the foyer, talking to each other and on their phones. I walked towards the MCS's office to check for any updates on that day's meeting. I approached the threshold of the office, which was full of MCMs and municipal managers. As I tried to enter, the MCS spotted me on the doorstep. "Marwa, Marwa!" he called out, "Make way, let her pass!" waving with his hand to indicate to the MCMs and managers that they should make room so I could pass through the crowd to his desk. "Ohh, it's good that you came today", the MCS said when I had arrived at his desk. "Yes, of course I came. I was wondering about my letter – are you going to read it today?" I asked the MCS, speaking more loudly than usual to ensure that he could hear me. "Ah yes, I am going to read your letter at the beginning of the meeting today, not to worry. And you won't need to say anything, I think it is enough to read what you have written – it is good. I showed it to the chairperson yesterday and he liked it." I thanked the MCS, excused myself, and left his office. Then I walked towards Backup Hall, the room to which the main meetings had been moved and where they were held for almost the whole last month because of renovations in the usual room.

I approached the threshold area outside the hall. There were many MCMs and municipal managers standing there, as well as the other local district department managers who had been invited. When I finally reached the doorstep of the hall and crossed it, I stopped for a moment, trying to grasp what was happening inside the hall that day. Many of the local district department managers who had been invited were filling the chairs at the meeting table, as well as most of the chairs on the sides behind it. The chair that I usually sat in had been also occupied by one of them. I had been given the opportunity to choose and reserve that chair when the meetings changed venue to Backup Hall, and I had selected it as a good position for my observations – not too far from the chairperson at the end of the table, and not too close to the main door. This spatial position inside the hall was similar to the one I had had in the original meeting room, with almost the same distance between me and the table, the chairperson, and most of the MCMs seated around the table. Without my usual chair as an anchor, I stood for a while, trying to comprehend what was happening with all of the new people inside the room. A polite cough brought me back from my contemplation. I turned my head and I saw an MCM, who asked me to allow her to pass. I moved out of her path and stood in front of the meeting table, trying to find any vacant spot. I suddenly spotted two vacant chairs beside each other. They were a little bit closer to the chairperson’s position – not as close as my usual chair, but as far as I could see they were the only available option that day. I walked there briskly.

One of the municipal managers who usually attended the meetings was sitting to the right of the two chairs. I greeted him and asked: “I’m sorry, do you know if this seat is taken?” “Oh, hello Marwa, good to see you, how are you. No one is sitting here, please have a seat”, he replied with a welcoming tone. I thanked him and sat down, leaving one empty chair between him and me. When I had settled in and taken my notebook out of my bag, I looked around and took a moment to see what was happening inside the hall. I noticed that the MCM who had asked me to move when I was lost in thought by the door was still standing there, looking around with an expression of surprise on her face. She was probably lost in her own thoughts about what was happening inside the hall, or perhaps her special leather chair had also been taken by one of the local district department managers who had been invited. From the position in my new chair, I saw people with whom I was already familiar, whom I had been observing for the past three months. Some MCMs had

arrived before me and succeeded in claiming their usual chairs at the meeting table. They were standing not far away from their chairs around the table, keeping an eye on them and stopping anyone from occupying them with a verbal warning: “Excuse me, this seat is already taken!”

It seemed that the special chairs at the table in front of my new position had not yet been claimed by their usual occupiers, the usual MCMs. I saw the manager of Downstage District entering the hall, smiling broadly and taking long steps, greeting people and shaking hands in front of the door. He scanned the room, probably looking for a vacant chair. Without searching for long, the manager of the Downstage District walked towards one of the empty special chairs in front of me. Arriving at his chair, he greeted me warmly: “Oh Marwa, you’re here, how are you?” I replied with a friendly smile.

Twenty minutes past the official meeting time, almost all of the chairs inside the hall were occupied, the majority of them taken by the local district department managers who had been invited. Some of the MCMs and municipal managers who usually attended the municipal council meetings had come into the hall to discover that their usual seats were already taken, and they went out again. Then they came back, bearing chairs brought in from another room. Attendees sat in chairs scattered around the room, surrounding the central big wooden table, along the side walls, and even in front of the door. Various noises, chatter, and greeting rituals filled the room, and everyone was still waiting for the last special chair to be filled with the only occupant permitted to sit in it – the chairperson – according to protocol. The attendees were not only waiting for his entrance, but also wondering what his reaction would be regarding the incident.

On the day before the meeting, I had read on the MCS’s computer that a conflict had occurred –there had been a disagreement between the district committee members and the MCM during a committee meeting that resulted in interruptions to daily operations in Margin District. But what does this have to do with what happened the last time I attended a municipal council meeting? This was my first thought when I was in the MCS’s office the day after the incident, and this is also the matter on which this section focuses. Depending on what was available to me as an observer or as someone following the municipal meeting, I firstly rely on what happened in the Margin District as part of the information available on social media websites, and on the MCS’s computer. I started to unfold the chain of destabilizations with the assumption that the

incident that had occurred was the triggering event that then spread to other series of destabilizations in Nodecity. While the primary cause for the incident in Margin District is beyond my expertise and my interest here, it is sufficient to determine that the incident in the Margin District had a traceable effect, as it perpetuated a manifest disruption in many other locations.

I follow this destabilization in its travels between various locations and its effect during different moments in time – how it was localized, re-distributed, and connected (e.g. Latour, 2005). This destabilization could be sustained and materialized in several forms, influencing decision-making by hindering procedures in Nodecity Municipality and its council meeting. The conflict produced in Margin District had an effect on a number of the relations that constitute the setting of Nodecity Municipality. The original destabilization began to spread and connect to different sites, such as the municipality building, through the flow of information disseminated for instance on websites and social media. These collectives of media became the ‘medium’ (Latour, 2005) through which the urgent incident was translated as local (Nodecity) breaking news, and the statements that circulated most on social media created new deployments. Law & Hetherington (2000) discuss how information can be sustained and have effects as a material form when it interacts and relates to other socio-material networks. In the narrative above, the network of the urgent incident, the conflict, the committee members, the building, the social media statements can all be related to the information about the incident, giving it a total effect of a major disruption, durabilized to last longer than a mere piece of information about an incident. Media became the window through which this particular message was magnified and widely recognized. If we assume that the urgent incident in Margin District were left ‘as-is’, namely as a local conflict, without being spread as statements via social media, or without exposing previous conflicts in the Margin District, without the additional writings and discussions about it, and without being translated to the municipal meeting preparations that day, then the urgent incident would have remained in the site where it was produced – Margin District.

With information about the incident being materialized, spread, and translated through the internet medium, the effect of destabilization was brought into being in the municipal building as a statement that appeared online and was read by the representatives, the employees, me, and many others. The people in the municipality building perceived it as an incident that struck the institutional foundation of the city, since it emerged as an incident in one of the official institutional bodies. In the

municipal setting, it disrupted a number of working processes, apart from the main event of the municipal council meeting. It undermined the usual meeting preparations and came to disrupt the meeting procedures themselves. Previous narratives have shown how the municipal council meeting depends on a set of routines, objects, and roles that assemble according to specific modes of ordering, following certain explicit and implicit rules, for instance when preparations are made for the meeting, or when it proceeds into following an agenda in a certain divided order.

As we saw earlier, it could be regarded as a norm that when a municipal council meeting is prepared and about to start, a number of MCMs and managers gather in the foyer of the meeting room floor, or sit inside the MCS's office, exchanging updates on their municipal work, and possibly anticipating the decisions to be made in the upcoming meeting. In similar normal situations, meeting preparations would be initiated according to several modes of ordering; for instance, a meeting agenda is presented, microphones are tested, ACs are put on if needed, the meeting room's furniture is arranged, MCMs are counted as present, chairs are ordered, doors are opened or opened slightly, janitors carry out checks, water glasses are placed and filled – among all other heterogeneous acting. However, these actors do not usually start working by themselves, or separately at different times, but are usually connected to the work by one institutional role in particular, namely the MCS, who also directly activates the opening by stating: “open the door, we will start the meeting soon”. As we saw above in an earlier narrative, these words activate the modes of ordering described here.

Even if the MCS's role is legally dependent on the authorization of the chairperson, the MCS defines the tasks that have to be performed and organizes the work of several actors that initiate the meeting event. Thus, the MCS's role is what Law & Hetherington (2000: 37) call the “knowing location”, positioned at a “point of surveillance, [...] because he is at the right place in a network of materially heterogeneous elements” preparing for the meeting. From this knowing location, every piece of information, including the effect of any destabilization and its influence, can be transcribed and distributed to other locations. Thus, when the destabilization (following a conflict) reached the MCS, it disrupted the relations between the elements that usually constitute the meeting, and it undermined the mode of ordering and the organizing processes, making them “degenerate into a failing network” (Law, 1992: 385), since the normal order of things was absent from the central knowing location, i.e. the MCS's role. Nevertheless, the meeting could ultimately be held, which is

evidence of a certain resilience of the protocol, or of the rules according to which the meeting proceeds. Here, the effects of destabilization over the usual modes of ordering explicitly caused for instance the displacement of several MCMs and managers from their usual physical locations when waiting in the MCS office, where they could not sit in their usual chairs, or when they were deprived of their usual positions. These displacements in the preparatory phase of the meeting also had effects on the official network of the planning setting of Nodécity, since the unusual invitation of other local district managers meant that these were also displaced from their usual institutional duties. Temporarily gathering them in a single location – the main municipal building – meant suspending ordinary work in a number of other workplaces, thus causing new destabilizations. Furthermore, because of the influence evidenced in the pre-meeting conditions, the MCS predicted that it would be impossible to hold a normal meeting with stabilized, usual relations the following day; he also suggested that it was improbable that my letter could be incorporated into the meeting agenda.

The destabilization effect and its influence was growing, moving and being distributed in different forms within the municipal building, through what Law & Hetherington (2000:41) describe as a “series of tiers”. This means that the influence of the destabilization increased as its disruptions were magnified, moving through several modes of ordering, pushing several series of tiers, such as the conflict between the district members, the urgent incident reported in the social media, the internet actors, the MCS’s office, the MCS’s computer, and the preparatory processes for the meeting. Moreover, through these series of tiers, the destabilization influence, as a single act, was durabilized by being materialized through several characteristics, while still remaining a consistent whole that had an effect on different locations and times. Thus, these series of tiers were not only a medium for the diffusion of the destabilization, but they were also accelerators of the destabilization’s influence, including that at Backup Hall.

Thirty minutes had passed when the hall door opened quickly and widely. The chairperson appeared suddenly in the door opening. Whether it was the sudden sound from the door’s squeaky hinge, or the quick opening itself, the impact of the sound made everyone sitting in chairs in front of the door jump to their feet and grab their chairs, stepping aside to clear the way for the chairperson to walk through. Everyone sitting around the table and on the chairs on the right side of the room also stood up. The attendees turned to look at the chairperson as he entered. He walked swiftly from the doorstep, mostly looking down at the ground, and passed

along the right side of the table, quickly acknowledging the formal greetings from those who rose up from their chairs. The chairperson reached his position beside the MCS – his special leather chair, centrally positioned between the two flags. Almost everyone inside the hall kept their eyes on the chairperson from the moment he entered the hall until he sat on his chair. The meeting's attendees adjusted in their seats, abandoned their side conversations, and concealed their phones in their pockets, watching the chairperson as he entered and settled in his chair.

The chairperson put on his small reading glasses, then verbally signalled to the MCS beside him to start the meeting discussions. "We will start the meeting now. I would just like to thank everyone for being here today, especially the local district department managers who were asked to join us for today's meeting." The MCS held his portable microphone in his right hand, holding what seemed from my position to be my letter in his other hand, "Before we begin with the meeting agenda, I have a thank you letter from Marwa," he said, pointing towards me. "As many of you know, Marwa has been attending meetings with us during the last three months". I stood up from my chair, placed my notebook aside, and looked towards the MCS while he read my letter. Many attendees, especially the MCMs and the municipal managers, turned their faces and their chairs towards me and smiled. The MCS read: "Marwa would like to express her thanks and appreciation to the chairperson and the MCMs before she returns to Sweden to continue her studies". I turned my head towards the chairperson with a small smile, then I turned towards the MCMs at the table, who were smiling; some were waving goodbye to me. I remained standing while the MCS read the rest of my thank you letter. The chairperson turned towards me and spoke into his stationary microphone with a warm, easy voice: "Thank you for being here with us and for the kind gesture of writing this letter. We wish you the best of luck." He looked down again, then turned to face the meeting's attendees: "May you return with a great benefit for the city, its municipality, and its people." I was smiling while receiving the chairperson's warm thanks and good wishes.

After my letter had been read, the chairperson spoke in a low tone, pointing towards the papers in front of the MCS: "Let us start the meeting now." The MCS started with acquisitions and procurements part as usual. Some of the MCMs were watching him as he began reading the different issues. Others glanced at their watches and then at each other. There was silence among the attendees; there was no humming, no side talks, not

even any verbal approvals or disapprovals. When the acquisition and procurements part was finished, the MCS took a few moments to flip through his papers, looking for the next issue. All eyes were on him, anxiously anticipating the next issue. “Oh yes, we now have a request from the ‘D’ department manager to extend his service”, the MCS said into his portable microphone, ending the silence. One of the invited local district department managers raised his hand, and after he got the sign from the chairperson he said: “He is a very valuable employee, and I think the municipality should extend his services since he is the only qualified employee in his position.” Another invited local district department manager raised his hand, waited for the chairperson to nod that he could speak and said: “I suggest, your Excellency, that since he is a very good employee, we should find or train someone else to fill his place for when he leaves us”.

The chairperson was nodding his head in agreement with both of the comments from the invited local district department managers, while the MCMs were silently following the comments and watching for the chairperson’s reactions. The chairperson spoke in a calm and firm voice. “Thank you for your comments; this is valuable feedback.” The following silence and observation from the opposite MCMs turned to spoken expressions: “Your Excellency, I also appreciate the comments from the local district managers. But perhaps it would be better if we, the municipal council members, vote on it, since we are the decision-makers here in this hall”. “Yes, I have not forgotten that”, the chairperson replied. “Let us vote. It seems that keeping the ‘D’ department manager in the municipality service for as long as possible is a good idea, until we find or train someone else to be as qualified as him. How many are in favour of extending his service five years?” the chairperson said, and then counted the number of raised hands. “Five years then, write that down,” the chairperson instructed the MCS beside him.

A latecomer MCM entered the meeting room from the main door. She stopped at the same spot as others had before, clearly wondering what was going on. She looked for her usual chair at the table, which was now occupied by one of the local district department managers. It took a while before she determined that there was no vacant chair at the table, then she noticed a vacant chair on the side behind her usual chair. She walked to it, holding her handbag, and sat down beside another municipal manager, looking around all the while. The meeting was progressing as usual, even with the late entrance of the MCM, until the municipal manager who

was sitting beside her poked the local district department manager who had occupied her original chair that meeting. The late MCM was looking at them: “It is okay, I am fine sitting here,” she said, loudly enough that it could be heard by those close to her. Most of the managers and MCMs sitting around her turned their heads in her direction. The manager of the Downstage District stood up from his chair and pointed towards the late MCM, offering her his seat. “It is okay, I am fine sitting here,” she repeated, refusing the offer. Suddenly, a voice ended the negotiations about where the late MCM should sit: “Please sit in the chair at the table where you should sit as an MCM.” It was the chairperson, speaking into his fixed microphone. The MCM rose up from the chair on the side, moved to the chair by the table and sat down. She continued looking around; it seemed as though she was looking for familiar faces from her usual group of meeting peers. Finally, the latecomer MCM found someone she recognized at the opposite side of the table, and waved to attract her attention. She gestured with her hand, as if to say: “What’s up?” The MCM on the other side of the table appeared not to understand the gesture, so the latecomer MCM took out her phone from her bag, holding it up high so the MCM on the opposite side of the table would notice it, and pointed to it to indicate that she should use it. The latecomer MCM appeared to dial the number of the other MCM on her phone, since the latter suddenly took out her phone and looking at it. From my position, I saw her phone, clearly in silent mode, flickering with the notification light of an incoming call. Looking at her phone, and turning her head towards the chairperson, the MCM decided to answer the phone call, covering her mouth with her hand and lowering her head. For anyone who had missed the beginning of the exchange, it looked as if the MCM was whispering into her hand, covering her mouth while talking into her phone, hiding her whisperings from the opposite side of the table. The caller however seemed more relaxed, holding her phone openly beside her ear on the side facing the chairperson’s position, talking in a normal tone and leaning back in the leather chair, and sometimes swivelling back and forth. The two MCMs – the late one and her friend on the opposite side of the table – continued talking on their phones until the latter suddenly seemed anxious, when the chairperson had turned towards her side of the table more than once. Suddenly, the MCM who had received the call lowered the phone from her ear and bent down, grabbing her handbag from the floor and putting her phone inside it. It was as if her use of the phone had been interrupted, noticed by the chairperson or another delegate close to that end of the table.

During the phone call exchange and the sudden disconnection of the two MCMs at opposite sides of the table, the readings and the meeting agenda had proceeded as usual. An issue came up for discussion about the municipal manager who was sitting two places to the right of me. “Now we have an issue concerning [...] extending his services as a municipal manager”, MCS read from the meeting agenda. “Okay, let us vote. All in favour of extending his services for more than two years, please raise your hand.” The chairperson spoke rapidly into his fixed microphone, and then counted the raised hands. Then he continued: “And who is in favour of extending his service for more than five years?” He counted and said: “Okay, only two years then.” The chairperson pointed to the MCS, indicating that he should record the decision in the agenda in front of him. The municipal manager beside me was looking at me. I tried to feign disinterest in what was happening, closing my notebook, laying it on the vacant chair beside me, checking my phone, smiling as if I had read something funny. Then the manager poked me: “Did you notice what happened? This was a quick decision, there was no chance to discuss it”, I was nodding my head to show that I was listening but did not necessary agree or disagree with what he had just said. “Did you write it in your notebook? Maybe it’s important to document that.” I opened my notebook and wrote: ‘My notebook became involved’.

The meeting had almost arrived at the last part. “Okay, let’s finish up,” said the chairperson suddenly, interrupting the MCS beside him. Speaking into his stationary microphone, he said: “We have to discuss the urgent incident.” The MCS closed the meeting agenda book in front of him and put his portable microphone aside. The chairperson took off his small glasses, adjusting in his comfortable big leather seat, and then lowered his fixed microphone so it was closer to his mouth. Then raised his eyes towards his audience, speaking through his microphone: “The first thing that all of you must know is that I do not agree with what happened yesterday, and I don’t think any of the MCMs present do either.” There were many nods of agreements among the attending MCMs. One of the MCMs raised his hand, received a sign from the chairperson that he should speak, and said: “You have to know, your Excellency, that we do not agree with what happened. And we are here to help and to represent our communities”. Looking at the invited local district department managers, the chairperson said: “What we want now is for everything to go back to normal,” he said, and finished the meeting. “The meeting is now adjourned.” Everyone stood up from their chairs

and headed towards the chairperson's position. I stood up, moving closer to the chairperson's position, trying to hear what they were talking about after they all suddenly gathered around the chairperson. I was able to hear some of what they were saying – they were explaining their views on the incident and their agreement with his opinion. It grew more and more chaotic, with voices coming from all directions. I made a final note and closed my notebook.

As explained earlier, during meetings and in similar discussions issues, everyone and everything usually acts in accordance with their more or less given roles. When the turmoil of destabilization reached Backup Hall, it started to alter the organizing processes that usually support each other to generate the effect of an organized meeting. At first, it disrupted the relations between chairs, MCMs, managers, the meeting table, the chairperson and how they were organized in preparing a meeting. In the final passages of this chapter, I will explore how the disrupted positions of the meeting attendees affected other modes of ordering. With the local district department managers who had been invited, adaptations to the larger group of attendees had to be made in regard to the seating in the hall. Some of these re-arrangements presented an opportunity to observe otherwise concealed relations and other meeting behaviours.

The influence of the diffused destabilization that originated in the Margin District and was transported into the hall can be described as a major substantial displacement of the location of actors and objects in the hall – displacements that influenced other processes in relation to the meeting procedures. For instance, in the dialogue procedures: although the MCS was in his usual position at the table and read from the meeting agenda as usual, it was hard to hear him, even when the microphone was being used, and even from a close position. The procedures with their modes of ordering were affected, making it slightly harder to communicate the contents of issues, but this also created new space for other deliberative opposition, allowing new ideas and suggestions to be welcomed. For example, in the dialogues and discussion during the issue concerning extending the services of the municipal department manager, the invited local district managers contributed with insightful opinions before voting on the issue.

Another example of how the meeting attendees' disrupted positions affected the dialogues can be traced in another incident (in the Backup Hall narrative, p.86), when the municipal meetings had just moved to Backup Hall. Because of this spatial displacement, the location of usual objects – chairs, water glasses, flags, and

microphones – had to be changed, or moved to the new room. However, one object that could not be moved with the others was the meeting table. This disrupted the usual relations between objects, resulting in a slightly new order around the new meeting table. These disrupted relations with the table that usually supports the meeting dialogues were articulated in comments of disruption from the MCMs such as: “Can you repeat that, I could not hear you” or “We must move the table so we can get closer to one other...it is very big”. Therefore, reflecting on the Disruption Chain narrative (just as in the Backup Hall narrative), the smooth proceeding of dialogues is not only a matter of the presence of expected objects and functional technologies. It is also a matter of securing the quasi-stability of their interrelations, and by that also linking the meeting to wider institutional and cultural associations: “[O]rganizing is about complex relations between the different modes of ordering” (Law, 2001: 2).

In the second part of this narrative, a particular consequence of a substantial displacement to the sitting positions could be seen, starting when the MCM arrived late and began using her phone. Usually, even if arriving late, this MCM would find her chair vacant, reserved for her as it was recognized by routine. Besides her usual chair, she would normally find a colleague with whom she could usually talk or discuss questions discreetly, and this would normally stabilize the relations taken for granted in preparing for the meeting. With this whispering from adjacent positions, the dialogues would proceed smoothly without any disturbance. But when the MCM came late to that meeting, she found that the influence of the destabilizing turmoil had led to her chair being occupied by another attendee (the invited local district manager, who offered to find another chair). Even after she managed to sit at the meeting table at the end, the usual relations to her MCM colleague and the latter’s chair were still disrupted, making their usual whispering and side talk impossible. The whispering was then delegated to the mobile phone, used simultaneously with face-to-face interaction in order to secure the communication. This formed a type of communicative redundancy; two channels were used to secure messages, making a synchronized mediational support. Dialogic information between the two members was ‘filled in’ via separate channels, by auditive and visual means of communication, at the meeting table, whenever a facial expression or gesture was added or when a word was unclear or insufficient.

Following Actors – Following Disruption: A Methodological Note

The substantial displacement in the seating positions that reached not only the Nodecty attendees but also my status as an observer gave rise to a couple of methodological reflections. I usually sat in a specific chair that had become established as reserved for me, stabilizing my acts of observation. As time passed, my position became a more natural part of the routines and part of the stabilizing of relations in the room. The agentic heterogeneity of me as an observer, my chair, its position, my notebook, and my practice of taking notes had become part of the modes of ordering of the planning setting that stabilized the meeting (e.g. Law, 2001, Law & Singleton, 2014). My relations as an observer therefore become actuated; I felt them more profoundly when the destabilization in the sitting positions separated me from my usual chair. As I will describe here, the incidents that day thus came to disrupt my observational role.

For instance, instead of my usual, distanced, ‘notebook relation’ to the day-to-day events, which allowed me to observe remotely from inside the room, it was significant that I became enrolled in another participant role in the meeting and the surrounding turmoil, even including a suggestion by one attendee to “write it in your notebook; maybe it is important to document that”. In that moment, I realized that I was in a methodological and research ethical dilemma, and I asked myself whether it was preferable to preserve the image of my ordinary place in the meetings by attempting to stabilize my ordinary research position and thereby maintain observational stability in relation to the ordinary meeting attendees and objects. Another possibility in that moment was to allow myself be drawn into the surrounding turmoil and allow things to take whatever direction they would, and through that also accept that my observational position would change. I intuitively chose the latter, convinced that while my ‘fly-on-the-wall’ position would change, it could still survive as I was determined not to interact in other ways, but that the regularity of my spatial view would somehow be changed.

Notable about that day, of course, was that I became a ‘lead person’ who had stood up at the table to express my thanks and receive greetings and wishes when my goodbye letter was read; this also disrupted my usual ‘fly-on-the-wall’ position and intentions. I was suddenly spotlighted as someone who had both the intention and agency to say something about the meetings as a researcher. This announcement and the moment of direct participation also actualised my method for me, raising questions about the degree of engagement in what is observed. Somehow, I saw my mission as

already completed by then, but these changed engagements nevertheless merited some final notes related to my own methodological approach.

In retrospect, my intuitive choice during the disrupted seating situation to accept the involuntary change of my position in the hall is an example of how a quite remote actor – i.e. the urgent incident in the Margin District – had an impact on my research methodology. First of all, I must humbly admit that my research concerns were much less consequential on a personal level than the concerns of the managers and MCMs directly affected by this incident, but from an actor-network perspective, the disrupted events that day can show at least two important things: by ‘following’ the actors, i.e. by allowing the turmoil of destabilization to change my position and my field of attention as an observer/ researcher, I could trace certain things such as the phone call across the table, and the search for satisfactory positions by the table – things that I would not have noticed the same way, if at all, had I fought for a strict observational research schema.

In conclusion, what started as a conflict in one location was translated, durabilized, transported and materialized into several forms of destabilization. The urgent institutional incident did not remain within the Margin District, but travelled through various media such as verbal interaction and internet dissemination to the municipal building, where the destabilization started other influencing transformations over other modes of ordering, trying to conquer the meeting itself. The destabilization was not so strong that the meeting could not be held, and almost according to protocol at that, but it deformed several organizing processes that usually work to stabilize the meeting preparations and triggered a sequence of substantial displacements in the MCS’s office and in the hall that shuffled usual actors and brought new ones from other nodes in the network. The destabilization also brought new chances for opinions to be expressed by unusual actors (the invited local district managers) at the meeting, which had also a more long-term influence by altering, and thus questioning, the usual ways in which dialogues proceed. The turmoil of destabilization also showed me as observer another type of redundancy situation involving the delegation of voices to phones, and expressions of will to facial expressions, when a phone used at a short distance challenged the disrupting influence by allowing communication between two meeting attendees who had been physically separated at the meeting.

6.3 Postlude (3): Modes of Disciplining and Recovering in a Planning Setting

The discussions about the narratives in this chapter have looked into the relations of the planning setting not only as making up the background for meetings and official decision-making processes, but also as playing a role in managing several institutional matters. The narratives and their analyses highlight the importance of the planning setting, which supports the transportation of institutional matters: on the one hand errands such as folders, and on the other hand how a conflict within the larger municipal setting (Marginal District) is transported to also influence the modes of ordering in the central municipal meeting. The tracing of destabilizations in these common institutional processes has rendered the modes of ordering of these processes more visible.

Both narratives emphasise the significance of positions and extensions in physical space as an apparent institutional representation of the setting. Both narratives have discussed a concrete example of how physical space has a governance impact, in the sense that access to and participation in decision-making processes are conditioned to some extent by architectural and artefactual matters. Whether observable in details of materials, in cold air, in groups of furniture distributed in office and meeting rooms, or in the important institutional role that a gathering space has, these heterogeneous elements can be significantly distinguished, instead of simply being deemed a generic institutional backdrop or as an aesthetic ensemble without deeper agentic traits.

The meeting room floor appears in both narratives as the most obvious physical representation of the setting, encompassing major institutional roles that are responsible for issuing final decisions for a number of different procedures. The meeting room – the central official station for enacting decisions – has a working relation to the office of the chairperson, who is the leader of the meeting events and the final official signatory for many institutional errands. Therefore, these institutional functions endow the spaces of the meeting room floor with a disciplinary mode that is part of the official decision-making processes in Nodecty, just as in many other cities. As we saw in Chapter 6, disciplining movement and behaviour requires the convergence of several heterogeneous actors. Burrell (1988) discusses the concept of the panopticon as “the metaphor for the disciplinary mode of domination”, stating that in many contemporary organizational settings, “built into the architecture and geometry of disciplinary organizations is the distinctive arrangement of observation and close

surveillance” (p. 226). Disciplinary modes of space are not necessarily panoptical in the sense that they contain central perception positions, but instead there is a disciplining principle and effect built into the physical arrangements and layouts. The meeting room floor itself is comprised of offices and rooms, where issues, users, and folders are evaluated, examined and checked to ensure their obedience to the set of legislations before final, authorized decisions can be made. The meeting room floor is therefore charged (occupied) in every segmented space contained within it, with material representations such as furniture, tiling and cold air implicating and emphasizing the disciplinary mode, or power, that this space has. For instance, the furniture, air from the AC, and light, and all of the other materials in the secretary’s office are all essential in this network and must be present for the ordering performance of a certain discipline, not least before the occurrence of any verbal communication between secretary and visitor.

Objects of interior design, such as those in the secretary’s office, permit and restrain the ways in which users and visitors can pass through the arrangement, for instance as regards pace and order of attention, before one is able to stand and talk in front of the secretary’s desk. Steps of ordering, such as preparing to achieve a certain priority status, are also needed to communicate with the secretary. Although the descriptions here did not go deeper into elaborating on material specifics, such as the wooden sign in front of the office doors, the pile of folders on the secretary’s desk, or details on uniforms such as the formal suits of officials, were seen as non-human details that merge with human roles in a “mixing together of such materials with bodies that constitutes subjects of a particular kind” (Dugdale, 1999: 118).

As we saw in the narrative, colours – such as those of folders – can become a symbolic ticket of entry to pass through the disciplinary modes of the setting, granting their bearers the ability to be facilitated through offices, authorizers, and finally archives. Such codification through coloured folder acts works in part as a silent “police in a collective organization, uncovering irregularities. Such irregularities appeared first in deviation” (Akrich, 1992: 218), pointing out violations in following the proper protocol. Thus, objects – in this case folders – can be delegated to “establish norms and punish those who transgress them” (Akrich, 1992: 218) by not allowing them to continue their procedures. Attaching papers to the right kind of artefact, such as coloured folders, can thus be seen as a result of an institutional coding that relates rules, protocols, signatures and stamps of (dis)approval, all of which are essential in forging correct institutional bonds between the citizens and the municipality.

Destabilization Recovered

In the last narrative of this chapter and this thesis, a destabilization in one area managed to travel to other areas of the planning setting. Whilst travelling through several points of the setting network, the destabilization changed its form, although its disruption capacity remained preserved over time. This conservation of disruption energy could be described in terms of what I call here *recovering destabilization*. The recovering in this case implicates a principle of possibly conserving the state of destabilization with its disruption capacity in one medium or in one network (such as the planning setting) over time. With the recovering principle, the destabilization had many shapes; for instance, a conflict in the Margin District, an overflow of attendees at the meeting in the MCS's office in the municipal building, disruptions in the usual ways of exchanging dialogues, etcetera. With these transformations, the destabilization also moved into several points and locations of the network. The idea of mobility and change in a network is reminiscent of the topology of 'fluidity' (Mol & Law, 1994; see also Law & Mol, 2001; De Laet & Mol, 2000). With the fluidity principle, an object can spread into many points of the network because it changes shape, and it can "work differently from one setup to the next" (Law & Mol, 2001: 613), though without "abrupt changes", only "invariant transformation" (Mol & Law, 1994: 658). In a comment on the rigidity of the existing two topologies of space: Euclidean (close geometric spaces) and network (remotely related actors), the fluidity in Mol and Law's topology was seen as managing to transform an object as "an Other to the network and its spatialities, something outside a network" (p.613), and by that it could stabilize the object's transportation by maintaining flexibility, through gradual and incremental changes in the forms of attachment of the object in the network. There are similarities between fluidity as such and what I call recovering destabilization here, but here, the reference is to the destabilising force itself, and not to a fluidly stabilised object that is recovered over time while travelling and taking new shapes.

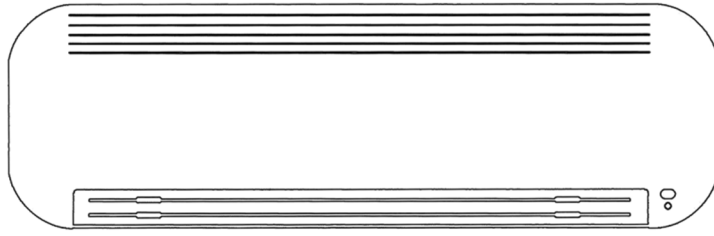
Furthermore, although the destabilization in the narrative above was transformed and working in new networks, its disruption capacity and its provocation of deviations from normal procedures were preserved. It was neither created nor destroyed, but rather received, and reformed in different locales. What, then, preserves the capacity of destabilizing in different locales? Capacity preservation is retrieved when moving from one state to another in networks including, as here, the local district office, newspapers, social media, and the generic space at the central municipal building, before reaching the main official municipal meeting event. In a sense, the

reformation of destabilization from one state to another, and its movement in different locales are essential in preserving the capacity of disruption. Also, relations, and conditions that are destabilized in the process become important for the endurance of the destabilization.

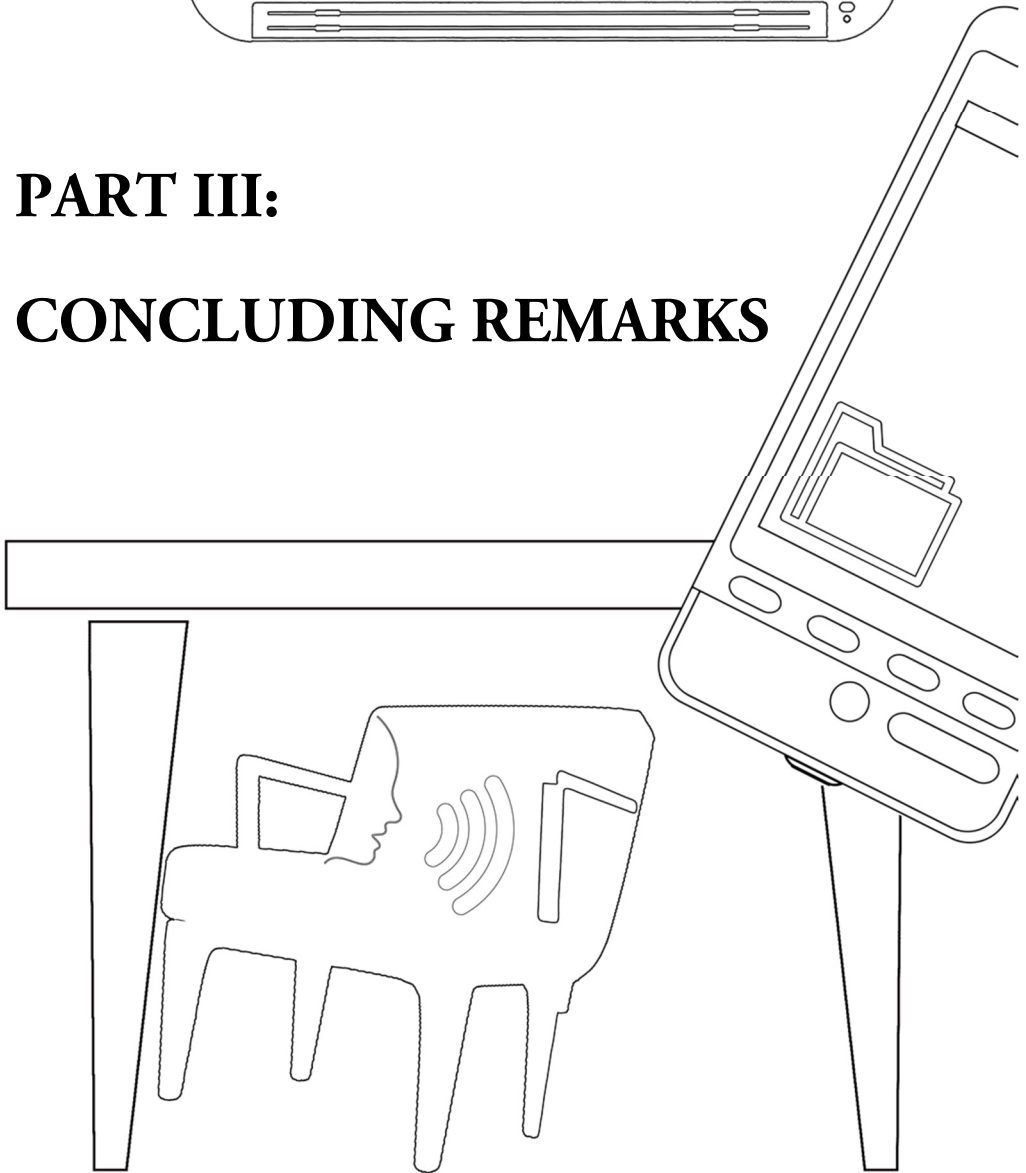
From an observational point of view, this preserved disruption did not destroy the nodes it passed, but rather revealed new actor-networks and organizing processes, such as those that became apparent when the meeting was ultimately held more or less as usual thanks to a sufficient reliance on ordinary protocol. In a way, carrying the meeting through also depended on the fact that the meeting, with its modes of ordering, was prepared to host the coming destabilization from the Margin District. The meeting was part of a setting that provided: certain changes in the presenting of the issues, extra chairs for the additional attendees, and certain extensions of the usual protocol when it came to acknowledging the voices of managers who were not usually present. Taken together, these adjustments managed to retain an official form of the meeting despite the diffused destabilization, almost as if the network of the setting was in a *state of predisposition*, anticipating a pending destabilization. One conclusion that can be made from the analysis of this incident is that since destabilization can be recovered while taking new forms in different situations, with a repeated impact of disruption, the original influential moments maintain their power, but can have different successive forms, even forms that are ultimately experienced as not only disruptions, but as supplements. The principle of recovering destabilization, which has also featured in earlier narratives in this thesis as when one influential moment leads to another, implies that destabilizations can be stabilized (conserved as energy) due to perpetual motion in several forms, reserving the capacity for disruption, and causing it to travel to ubiquitous locales in the deployed network.

The many forms of destabilization that occurred on the day after the urgent incident show us that despite the extra number of modes of ordering (for instance: letting new people speak, occupying a room in a different way, bringing in new chairs, etcetera), the meeting could go on. This indicates that there was a sufficient or ‘moderate number of orderings’ that worked well enough, and that these have a stabilizing effect. The number of the modes of ordering that participated in stabilizing the meeting that day was unusual, but not unmanageable. Based solely on initial observations, I might easily have presumed that the extra attendees who had been invited would simply require extra space and extra chairs, and presumably also extra work and additional preparations, to ensure that the meeting at least proceeded to

address its vital questions. But it then became clear that it was possible to keep certain modes of ordering stabilized when a certain amount of time was given to stabilization. With this in mind, we can say that the stability of the setting only requires a sufficient or moderate number of orderings, as long as these work together, or “rescue” each other (Law, 2001: 4), and this could, to some extent, be a question of time. Thus, the modes of ordering of a setting may reveal the setting’s flexibility.



PART III:
CONCLUDING REMARKS



7

Concluding Remarks

This research has discussed official decision-making processes in city planning meetings. The study was conducted in a Jordanian city that I call Nodcity, and the focus has been on official decision-making processes, ultimately because these are the processes that determine which decisions will be effectuated to shape the city in the contemporary context of the study. To identify influential moments in the manifold conditions surrounding the making of official decisions, I have closely investigated several states of destabilization and highlighted how these can relate to human actions, socio-material relations, and modes of ordering in relation to the setting. These investigations have led me to pinpoint some influential moments and how they emerged, elevating the importance of some heterogeneous actors and effectual relations for the course of the decision-making processes. I have also made a specific effort in my analyses to see the influence of spatial, material and time-based actors. Since time was revealed as a decisive factor in a number of situations, a separate section is devoted to the agency of time here, casting light on its value and its role in decision-making related to planning. Furthermore, I have made an effort to highlight some principles for the specific significance of these actors in influencing decision-making processes, which could contribute to further studies on decision-making in planning contexts in general. This final section sums up these findings, and recapitulates the overall contributions that this thesis offers.

7.1 Recapitulations

Contemporary planning practices in Jordan have faced unexpected demands due to the extremely high number of migrants entering the country in recent years. This research has reflected only indirectly on the influence of the migration issue, by looking more specifically how planning matters and recent decision-making processes on a daily basis have dealt with changing circumstances. The context selected for the empirical investigations here was made with regard to Nodcity as one of the Jordanian cities that have faced these challenges and changes to the planning practice. With minimal resources of land and other natural resources, planning in Jordan has gradually had to cope with these urgent geo-political circumstances, with planning practices changing

from low-paced statutory planning to more acutely strategic or problem-solving approaches driven by daily demands. Above all, and more specifically, this research has given insight into the practice of an official planning culture (in its decision-making) and how it has become subject to continued revision, but also maintains its working mechanisms, attempting to keep a flexible margin towards the changes of dynamic everyday problems, and the influence of uncontrollable emergencies.

In light of similar consequences of such dynamic changes, some perspectives in planning studies (e.g. Boelen & De Roo, 2016; Hillier, 2010; Abbot, 2005) discuss how those responsible for city planning can have an adaptive approach with multiple alternatives, with an openness towards unstable futures that cities like those in Jordan face. As these proposals are inevitably needed in such circumstances, I would also like to support Hillier's (2015) argument about how to react to contingent circumstances of "unseen shifts in actors and rules" (p.99), and what prompts their leading to destabilizations and transformations. What Hillier (2015) proposes is a "[c]hance, coupled with necessity" (p. 99) for the future, which implies a focus on orienting the planning process towards coping mechanisms for contingencies, not seeking for stated results of the process. It is therefore "neither pure necessity nor pure chance or contingency, but interferences and intertwinings between them" (p.103). Hillier's proposal can allow us to reconsider the way in which we think about emergent problems in planning, or unexpected contingencies, encouraging us to turn these contingencies to chances, to critically reflect on our ways of planning, and to always re-think new solutions: "Between chance and necessity lies thought, the construction of new ways of understanding, acting, and becoming" (p.105). In line with these discussions, one can also envision organizations like the municipalities responsible for planning becoming "adaptive social structures that are in dynamic relationship with their external environment [...] to maintain a balance between their stability and their flexibility to change in response to changing external circumstances" (Abbot, 2005: 242).

Envisioning adaptive structures responsively acting in accordance with the dynamic processes of decision-making has been considered an important aspect in this thesis, where institutional or official decision-making has been seen as including legal, spatial, and material conditions responsively providing stable and flexible circumstances of the planning setting. The heterogeneous relations of the conditions that the planning setting provides have been seen here primarily as what is present in the meeting room itself, but also to some extent what emanates from beyond the meeting room's borders, involving a broader institutional and cultural context. By

linking the working relations of the meeting to events outside the meeting room itself, the view maintained in this thesis acknowledges the decision-making process as an activity engaging the simultaneous orchestration of heterogeneous elements that influence the meeting procedures, ranging from socio-cultural norms and institutional conditions to material conditions, as well as the use of objects and technologies. All of these domains could thus be given value as stabilizing or destabilizing agents for the decision-making processes.

Some investigations in this thesis have shown how the roles in formal decision-making relate to circumstances that emerge or change suddenly, as part of how the planning setting itself influences the meetings. For instance, it has been shown that influential aspects of any issue discussed in the meeting are not only confined to what is actually spoken about in the meeting dialogues, in the agenda, or in the documents presented, but also in what is conveyed through how technological, spatial, and material means may suddenly change. It was also shown here that some influential aspects may relate to bodies absent from the meeting but present in the city context – actors that could nevertheless condition the meetings with the help of various types of delegation. From the situations and incidents that have appeared in this study, examples of possible future investigations could be offered as relevant for research in a planning context, as well as for planning practitioners working in the field. For instance, one such issue emerging here is the flexibility of planning settings. Such flexibility could concern whether settings are responsive enough to adapt to deviations as they arise, or if they materially support a variety of voices (whether absent from the meeting or marginally present inside the room), or if the settings have the capacity to offer the different kinds of participation that are required of planning and architecture today.

Following a participant observation approach, the field studies of this research have relied mainly on attending official meetings, primarily in two selected locations, belonging respectively to the main municipality and to a local district, but also to some extent in adjacent offices and generic space, in which I observed, documented, and narrated interactions of the following kinds: human-to-human, human-to-material, or human-to-rules and -protocols. During the field studies, I strove to achieve a situated perspective as a main approach for gaining insight into different interactions related to decision-making; however, my presence as a silent observer was at times influenced by unexpected situations of destabilization, as noted in the observations and narratives. For instance, during the final municipal council meeting accounted for in this thesis, my role as a silent observer became inevitably altered due to a destabilization of the

ordering and the increased number of meeting attendees; as a result, 'I' as a person and my notebook as an object were invited to participate directly in the observed situation. This kind of participation as observer could tend towards a more auto-ethnographical mode of participation where the 'I' is included in the narrative, but I have seen it here more as occasions on which the ethnographic approach in general clarifies a situation by the inevitability of including the role of the ethnographer herself in a subjective sense, as an actor situated in the networked context, participating in the ongoing events. When certain actors urged me to attach to them with my role, my sense, or my notebook, a certain form of persistence followed from my side as a necessary part of my own role as follower. Sometimes, incidents of this kind tend nevertheless to trigger a methodological reconsideration of the original intention of a participant observation approach, in which an objective perspective is continuously sought for the observed situations. However, with the 'I' that was inevitably included in an event, one can instead think in terms of 'observant participation', whenever a true following of actors requires a situated approach.

The data for this thesis was obtained by following actors without any prior categorization, typological classification, or restrictions regarding what and whom to follow. The investigational method has thus not only opened a view on decision-making beyond the usual institutional and legal explanations, but also adhered to a ground rule of ANT practice to 'just observe' (e.g. Venturini, 2010). As a result, it has drawn attention to unexpected actors, albeit with a specific interest in non-human actors in the planning setting, and by that revealed agentic influences that are usually marginalized on the stage of studies where certain groups of concerned actors, certain types of stakeholders, or certain types of dialogue are highlighted. To mention a few examples, it has been seen here for instance how cold air could determine, restrain and facilitate certain kinds of interactions within institutional spaces, or how a mobile phone could re-arrange, or at least facilitate the re-arrangement of, the priority of issues handled during the meeting procedures.

Looking into states of destabilization has been specifically important for the analytical studies of this thesis. Like Callon et al. (2009), throughout this research I have argued that during destabilizations crucial actors or effectual relations that are often neglected can become visible and therefore be regarded in relation to their importance for the decision-making process. This is not to say that the states of destabilization need to be particularly unusual in the process; on the contrary, destabilization is seen – in line with how ANT views the moments in which actors'

relations deviate from smooth or normal linkage – as an ordinary part of the daily business of decision-making, that still can become crucial when actors struggle to sustain their relations keeping the process going. It has been shown here that following such struggles by individuals or by constituents of the institution can reveal who/what can be counted to reach certain predictable outcomes. The lens of controversy was utilised to select events to show states of destabilization. Broadly speaking, one could say in relation to ANT that there are no considerable differences between the state of controversy and the state of destabilization. In this research however, I have considered controversy mainly as a methodological tool, which allowed the practice of tracing states of disruptions in the relations of decision-making processes. I have also been very conscious of the fact that the concept of controversy has been highlighted previously in discussions of more mediated influences covering general public debates (e.g. Marres, 2005; Yaneva, 2012; Whatmore, 2009; Venturini, 2012). My research has instead above all focused on the states of destabilization that occur in the close relations that constitute the everyday interactions of decision-making processes. States of destabilization, as theoretical descriptions, are not necessarily on the scale of clear dialogic conflict or obvious material disruption, but can be, as here, almost imperceptible deviations that prompt a later change to a process or a discourse. Reflecting on my own close perspective, at times in my analyses I have wondered what actually is a destabilization, and what normal proceedings are, but I have then tried to stay true to my original sense of detecting any slight deviation in an observational stream. The ethnographic approach with which I adapted to the context more as time passed had a strengthening role here: by attending several meetings, it became clearer to me what could be regarded as states of destabilization.

I chose a narrative style to convey my observational descriptions about the conditions surrounding the selected destabilizations. Using narratives to present observations has various consequences for the representation of reality, and how it appears in relation to the moments when it was observed. This writing style builds up an additional capacity of providing recursive analytical treatment of data, i.e. how observations can be closely re-examined, and entangled with the different theories, thus elevating the originally noted observations from the situated reality where they were registered. In line with the cumulative potential that the narratives have brought to the research, I have seen, in line with Healey (2015), that sensing situatedness and learning about the contingencies in the observed situations by successively re-writing them as narratives has been valuable for reaching an understanding of what was actually seen,

what was universal, and what was originally not clear enough to say anything in particular about in these observations.

Presented through narratives and divided into three main chapters, the second part of this thesis has been devoted to discussing the tracing of several destabilizations in the constitutive relations of heterogeneous actors and conditions participating in decision-making processes. The approximate framing into the three main chapters: human talking and acting; material agency concerning physical objects and technologies; and modes of ordering of official decision-making, captured what I roughly saw as three main domains of impact. These three foci became also a rough division into chapters, in which I nevertheless kept – through all chapters – the general concern with the heterogeneity of the present actors, or actor types. Through reviewing and studying different kinds of destabilizations, the intention has been to trace and elucidate the mechanisms of their emergence, and the extent to which they could be seen as influential moments. Methodologically, this required a traceable quality of disruption in the process with an effect that lasts long enough to influence the following procedures, causing deviations from what was expected. This kind of tracing is always interpretational to some extent, which leaves this investigation with the possibility that there could also be other relevant tracings that have not been detected or accounted for here.

The search for influential moments has led to the detection, in some cases, of *states of predisposition*, i.e. when sudden constellations of relations between regular and unexpected actors are formed to become the ground for later destabilizations. Recognition of states of predisposition in the course of the meeting or in the setting can anticipate the situations as upcoming disruptions. These states of predisposition also prepared me as an observer, before following further effectuations, to sense a mechanism of emergence of what would become influential moments and their effects. Examples of this principle of predisposition can be, for instance, when attendees who are not usually present have uncommon ways of interacting with other actors in the meeting room, or when a door through which entrance is usually restricted suddenly allows the visitors to enter into the room. Another example could be when short, but interruptive phone calls temporarily allow a reactivation of social configurations, to have further effect in a meeting.

The narratives in Chapter 4, with their focus on the ways in which talking and acting in the meeting relate to the planning setting, have exposed that when influential moments like *credibility questioning* appear, there might also be questioning of how

the dialogues usually proceed (who talks when, what to talk about, for how long, and according to what protocol or rule, etc.) and how this in itself can become a main matter of concern in the meeting. Furthermore, if these moments last long enough, they can change the attention to the issue at stake, influencing further deliberations or the way in which it is handled. During such moments of credibility questioning, it became clear that rather than relying on institutional, physical and legal ties, the influencing capacity can be attributed to those who/which can articulate themselves through chances given in the meeting, or through turning destabilizations in the dialogue trajectories to be appropriately used in protocol-based behaviours, such as by gaining extra time for certain issues or by reshuffling priorities. It was seen here that timeliness in dialogic participation (when, how, and about what one talks in the meeting), can have substantial influence when it comes to stabilizing or destabilizing the meeting procedures, and where the competence for timeliness was seen as enforced through social learning of the meeting culture, its rules, and protocols. Timeliness and etiquette could furthermore be seen as not only due to humans talking and acting, but as related to, thus partly manifested by e.g. written rules, or unspoken routines, latently appearing in the use of technology or in corporeal interaction, as well as in both ad hoc and conventional making of positions in the room.

Even if my perspective on the whole has been devoted to the study of particular actions in specific rooms tied to the official planning procedures, the focus on human actions has not only been confined to the physical borders of the room. The tracing also transcends into the informal spaces as part of the wider planning setting. In the second narrative of Chapter 4, persistency was seen as a way in which citizens affirmed their territorial appropriation outside of the designated official time-space (the meeting event), to remotely mobilize an issue through what I labelled *transistor tactics*. By this principle, I highlighted the fact that certain issues could be supported remotely, i.e. actively and despite the physical absence of their stakeholders. Transistor tactics can be pursued via several means from certain points in the space-time supported by the planning setting, for instance through a corporeal proximity to the meeting room to make associations with effective meeting attendees (that have the legal and protocol-related prerogative to be inside the meeting room), or by using a common technological device (like a mobile phone), the use of which is culturally accepted during the official decision-making process, or by using an artefact as part of the organizational culture (such as a small yellow sticky note). By relying on the capacity delegated to human and non-human actors, the issue of an outsider at stake could be activated by engaging a number of temporary stakeholders and keeping the interest in an issue active until the

need is fulfilled. What/who to select as a mean of transistor tactics can depend on the efforts employed in pursuing the effects after initiating the transistor tactics. By letting one of the official meeting attendees carry the issue further, a certain extent of persistent corporeal proximity and the activation of secured social relations are enough to durabilize an issue at stake through possible obstacles. In this case, transistor tactics may – as seen here – also determine a specific slot in the space-time of the setting by a corporeal presence directly before the meeting. On the other hand, when a technological device like a phone, or an extra supporting artefact like a small yellow note are employed, a calculated time (during the meeting) can be all that is needed to complete the process of delegation, i.e. without detailed preparatory instructions requiring face-to-face communication and corporeal presence.

Persistency was also seen as an essential part in the holding of issues, in order to keep planned attempts to engage actors' interest in an issue long enough for it to be processed. Persistency, in the sense of the durabilized activation of the interest in the issue at stake, and the conditions devoted to pursuing transistor tactics, was sometimes seen as specifically located to threshold areas adjacent to rooms of official decision-making before the meeting time; i.e. a kind of waiting for a result that is also part of many other settings in the world. In light of these conditions, one can ask what should be taken into account by institutional programs, or by architects (most specifically, of course, designers of official buildings like those discussed here) when constituting the borders of rooms, and how flexible they should be. One can also re-phrase the question thus: what is 'official' in this case, and how can that be spatially negotiated in design? As I have argued in this thesis, any time-space borders confining a process of official decision-making could be recognized as the occupation of official time and official space; at least this is ultimately what decision-makers and architects would have to consider. What this thesis has also shown in this regard is that during some influential moments, the 'official' can be re-located to the outside of the presupposed borders, due to historically unnoticed but recently emerging forms of territorial appropriation.

Certain narratives in this thesis, specifically in Chapters 5 and 6, have been devoted to exploring destabilizations relating to materialities distributed in the setting, and how sometimes the agency related to and carried by these materialities appears during meetings or consultations. Objects like chairs and tables, as well as technologies like ACs and mobile phones, were specifically highlighted here. In Chapter 5, the roles in formal decision-making, as well as the common roles of these objects themselves, were seen as subjected to creation and change in the meetings. It was shown for instance

how – with the timed occurrence of phone calls, and/or with beforehand preparations – phones can allow an affordance of extra verbal participation in the decision-making process. Phones, as material facts and aggregates of heterogeneous relations, establish a securing conduit for an involvement from a remote space to support an act of delegation present inside the meeting room. Mobile phones can also fortify communicative attempts within one space, for instance when corporeal proximity is insufficient and restricts usual modes of communication such as free talk and whispering. In that sense, phones with their characteristics of being efficient for conveying and securing communication of say, political importance, or a tone of urgency, are part of what I identify as *redundancy delegation* in this thesis. It implies how an action (whether of delegation or communication) can be carried by two or more elements, or channels, each of which can stand up when the action needs efficiency or reliability. In redundancy delegation, the act of delegation by the different channels is simultaneously alert in both or all channels, whether they are in the same space (like two distant meeting attendees in the same room), or spatially separated from each other (a remote phone call and a visitor present inside the room).

Another technological device that has been seen to contribute in some way to altering the inner environment of meeting room were the AC units. The huffing AC units influence certain behaviour in the spaces related to the institutional roles of the chairperson and the secretary. While one could presume that the AC units are present only to improve the working conditions in these spaces, the investigations here also show that they are related to disciplining and authority. In light of the analysis here of common technology such as the AC units, one could propose future investigations of the roles of technologies in tracing other possible types of influence.

Another part of the investigations has been attentive to details in the interior design or the architecture that define spatial delimitation, like the furniture and its spatial layout, the shape of the rooms, the status of doors (closed or opened), and other design details. Besides treating chairs and tables as essential accessories for meeting events, for sitting and gathering respectively, these objects have been seen here as part of events influencing the decision-making process. For instance, a meeting table can not only define the roles of the official decision-makers, i.e. those sitting around it, but it can also be a substantial part of the near space-time territory for visitors for the duration of their presence inside the room. I thus also discussed a kind of territorialisation process (Kärrholm 2005; 2017) as producing certain agentic influence on the meeting procedures. I labelled this *temporary institutional territorialisation*,

denoting situations where physical objects like tables, chairs, microphones, or doors relate to certain official or unofficial usage, or allow users to create certain zones of impact. Time is an essential factor here; for instance, a slightly closed door right before the meeting time is different from a closed door during the meeting time. A slightly closed door indicates that a meeting is supposed to start soon, and it has the potential to invite visitors who have associations to or eye contact with the meeting's attendees before they take their positions in the room. The institutional interest of a closed door is that it requires more effort (like persistent knocking) to influence what is going on inside the room. These different territorial productions are flexible to a certain degree as regards the possibility to have an influence in the meetings, and can be seen as processual parts of the planning setting, parts that are created in action.

The highlights mentioned here can help us start perceiving objects and technologies as relevant to decision-making processes, not just as still objects in the room, designed for specified functions; as this thesis has shown, they have a different significance at different occasions. Regarding these objects and technologies as heterogeneous multiple entities in stabilizing and destabilizing processes can contribute to knowledge and studies about other contexts for meetings, planning and decision-making, pointing out an interest domain that emphasizes materiality issues related to the impact of technologies and other artefacts and how they relate to verbal dialogue, to the handling of meetings, and to the organizational context at large. The aim here is not to give specific advice for direct architectural intervention. Nevertheless, with attention to some spatially conditioned details or arrangements, some proposals could be made here, such as: allowing intermittent modes of seating layouts, for instance without a central position, creating possibilities to increase the number of chairs, or to scatter them around the room; making walls and doors adjustable to the needs of different stages of, or types of, meetings. Such domains of design could open up new ways to practically pursue negotiations, enforce voices to equally participate, or simply make it easy to handle an unforeseen number of attendees. Simple suggestions such as these may open a discourse and a possible rethinking to the architecture and design field as regards spaces for decision-making. Apart from such specific suggestions, the situations presented here also offer a more open and general possibility to evaluate, in designerly interpretation, in some narratives of this thesis, where spaces and furnishings for instance have been seen to regulate visitors' speed and motions, controlling flow and imposing cautions on movement. Architectural approaches that make an effort to include a variety of actors, aspiring to look into socio-material relations and human-

object interaction in the moment when acts are acted in specific situations, can use these analyses as an open source of reflection.

What I bring here in this research about articulations between human and non-human actors can as said not offer any absolute truth about what goes on in closed meeting rooms, apart from certain significant moments of destabilization. This could be an incentive to further ‘slow down’ (Yaneva, 2012; Whatmore, 2009) investigations, and slowing down is perhaps required if one wants to look into what/who really can influence, stabilize, and be counted on, in decision-making processes. By spending more time on, or by including more of interviews, further empirical investigations could be proposed to open up and demystify the complexity of decision-making in planning. In terms of methodology, although my familiarity with the study context as a Jordanian citizen was a privilege that allowed me to quickly understand certain underlying cultural norms, I felt that this familiarity sometimes also hindered me from seeing things from a foreigner’s perspective, which would have brought other insights and different focuses, and thus probably also other significances to the study. Nevertheless, as a Jordanian citizen familiar with the broader context of the planning culture, and with some experience of planning projects, I felt that to an extent I was a foreigner myself when it came to the inner administrative circle of the meetings with the right to contemplate and determine the future. On a theoretical and referential level, it could be said that as much as I have attempted to incorporate contributions from organizational, political, and social sciences, not to mention interesting recent planning research, I am well aware that these represent only a fraction of what could have been included, offering glimpses of what could be. It is still my hope that these glimpses have helped to open up for new aspects of architectural and planning research, and perhaps also contributed with some ideas on materiality and space to organization theory and studies of decision-making.

I will end this recapitulation by highlighting three specific principles that have been found in the search for influential moments. They have appeared in several situations of the decision-making processes studied here. Some of these findings may at first seem a bit ‘myopic’ in a larger political landscape, but as I see it they indicate mechanisms that may have an effect in wider decision-making or governance policies, the exact consequences of which I have not analysed in any detail in this thesis.

A first mechanism is what I have labelled redundancy delegation here: a substitutional mechanism for securing basic delegated functions, and it appeared as a communication mechanism involving meeting attendees in a room, or as a prepared

participation from outside the meeting room. Redundancy delegation can appear in the normal conditions of the institutional environment; however, with the aid of a familiar technology such as the mobile phone, this mechanism became more obvious as part of dealing with some contingent conditions of impracticality, for instance when there is a urge to express different opinions at once. A query for the future can be made in this regard, of how technological objects and extra-somatic memory devices, even if not being officially acknowledged, may become necessary for supplementing traditional forms of participation in meetings. Are extra channels simply more appropriate for meeting the current needs of planning, and more specifically of communicative planning?

A second mechanism, labelled transistor tactics (see above), can be seen as an escape from what becomes imposed due to the impractical presence of citizen stakeholders inside the meeting room. In choosing a suitable temporary agent – a meeting attendee, a phone, or a small yellow sticky note – transistor tactics can be mobilized to take part in but also transcend the official designated time-space of the meeting, hence also influencing its processes. Transistor tactics also involve delegation, and are devoted to ad hoc possibilities of influencing sequences in planning as they go on.

When a destabilization manages to be recovered several times, in various forms and involving several networks, it presents what I have called “recovering destabilization” in this thesis. In this third principle, a disruption capacity is preserved while transporting through a network, without necessarily causing a major collapse. Recovering destabilization could reveal effectual actors and relations by either highlighting “new actors who are not really new”, or by bringing the “really emergent concerned” actors to the surface (Callon et al., 2009: 28ff). Recovering destabilization can thus be important as a mechanism for achieving a sense of transparency and lucidity, allowed precisely by a state of imposed destabilization. We saw the effects of this mechanism for instance in the last narrative, where unexpected new institutional roles were added to the usual set of roles of the meeting, thus potentially causing new and different types of destabilizations in future meetings. We also saw that an institutional network, such as a planning meeting, can be in a state of predisposition, prepared for destabilizations, thus also allowing more chances for transparency to occur.

As I see them, these three principles: redundancy delegation, transistor tactics and recovering destabilization, are neither explicit tools nor finished analytical recommendations, but should be seen simply as three significant figures of thought that

have emerged from studying the decision-making of an institutional body. They could, as such, be granted further attention in the theoretical as well as the pragmatic analysis of institutional settings of planning, as well as contribute to what we know about decision-making processes in general. Such knowledge can be further discussed in relation to the problem of coping with emergent situations when developing policies and means for future modes of planning.

The last section of this final chapter is devoted to a short reflection on an actor that appears in virtually all of the narratives. It is an actor crucial for planning: time itself.

7.2 Notes on Time

I started this concluding chapter with reflections on some time-related factors that have played a role in the theme of the thesis, for instance, in relation to historical and political changes influencing planning, with ad hoc adjustments made on everyday terms. In this final section, I continue with some insights on time brought about by the research. However, the task of writing about time can rapidly become too vast, since time issues are implicated in many aspects of planning. To begin with, planning is unavoidably “an archetypally modern expression of both time and space”, a “temporal field, one that is concerned with transformation through time”, by which “time is materialized, mediated, or brought into conflict” (Abram, 2014: 129).

Nevertheless, this thesis has mostly related to a very specific and mostly determined form of time, namely the official meeting time, and something can thus be said about time here. The meeting time, as I describe it here, can be viewed as an official temporal construction for making decisions. Additionally, while the meeting time can be measured in a clock-based framing of time, it is also, as we have seen, a process experienced and constructed as an event with a sensed beginning and end, associated with a variety of actors and with other events. Thus, the meeting time is both clock-based and event-based. For instance, the time 14:00 does not itself announce the start of the municipal council meeting; this is done by the open door of the meeting room, or the MCS checking the technology, or the entrance of the chairperson, which actually announce the start of the meeting.

In my observations, when I slowed down and tried to sense destabilizations, I found that there were specific time lags while actors were silently experiencing some

sort of hesitation or when ‘shivering’ states of destabilization occurred with no clear progress. These time lags appeared as a mechanism of possible influential moments. It could be interesting to note that these time lags sometimes appeared both within and outside of the chronological flow of official meeting time, such as when transistor tactics (or remote controlling of an issue at stake) occurred in a time-space frame that began and ended outside of the official confined time-space – starting before the meeting time outside of the meeting room, continuing in the meeting room during the meeting, and ending in processes that took place after the meeting. In light of this, an influential moment in this research could be sensed when there was a “critical opening”, or “penetrable opening, an aperture” (Hedaa & Törnoos, 2001: 18) in the continuous expected flow of the meeting time, or the expected flow of my total observational time.

Certain time-dependent factors appear in several places in the narratives, affirming their importance in drawing influential effects into the events of the planning meeting. One is the division of the meeting agenda into two parts with different modes of discourse: a first, monotone part followed by a second, more unruly or lively negotiation part. As we have seen, placing issues within these two slots can, despite an ordering, and hence stabilizing, effort, also contribute to allowing destabilizations and influential moments, tied to dialogue or protocol, to dominate the process and make it deviate from expected flow of current issues.

As stated above, I also found that the emergence of influential moments appeared rather often as an aspect of timeliness, timeliness being a temporal qualifier of an action being done “at the right time” (Brunelle, 2017: 2). As some of the investigations here show, timeliness, or talking or acting at the right time, as organizational practices could be conditioned according to unspoken protocol, written rules, or physical circumstances in the meeting room and its facilities. In relation to that, Orlikowski and Yates (2002) discuss what they call “processes of temporal structuring”, as a practice-based perspective on time, which is enacted routinely by actors temporarily determining appropriate structures in relation to certain situations that might occasionally occur as part of the everyday adaptations. In that sense, one can describe timeliness not only as doing things at the right time in the course of a dynamic temporal structure of a meeting or a consultation, but also as how the estimation of time intervals and events can be determined differently according to different social situations. Timeliness corresponds to actors’ presence and knowledge about the most dominant modes of ordering at a specific time, as well as corresponding to their ability to recognize moments as providing a “strategic manipulation of time” (Bourdieu, 1977: 6).

Another temporal aspect that has been vital for certain events here is what I call durabilization. Although it might not be indicated explicitly within the flow of the meeting time, the durabilization – of an issue, or of the meeting itself – can become a decisive mechanism. Sometimes, a durabilization can also be needed as a singular approach by one or several actors. This occurred here in transistor tactics, the remoteness of which requires a stakeholder to prolong the interest of his/her stake, without requiring close supervision, thus enduring a stakeholderness, as it were, that keeps an issue actively at stake to secure its facilitation, as was seen above. There is also a durabilization present in keeping the relations with the setting active, or on longer terms, in getting used to attachments with the setting's relations. Thus, durabilization can be part of what we normally refer to as behaving appropriately, effectively, and influentially in stable and destabilized situations. We can obviously see that several of the mechanisms mentioned above are bearers of durabilization, just as they are of timeliness – for instance when the redundancy delegation depends on acting simultaneously at the right time, or when the recovering destabilization can durabilize its disruption capacity.

Official city planning meetings have been seen here in relation to how they deal with issues that suddenly arise relating to everyday requests, sometimes related to broader temporal demands on decision-making; broadly speaking, this happens due to cultural, economic, and political conditions. I have tried to show how changing circumstances – abrupt or slowly emerging changes – cause actions of temporal kinds in the conditions of planning, actions that adapt to the demands and actions that maintain the traditional culture of planning. It is my hope that with the detailed and situated studies of this thesis, I have showed not only how multiple actors have a heterogeneous influence, but also how time-related features themselves influence meetings and decision-making, and that these views can be recognized as relevant for further studies in the planning field.

Epilogue

“The text is the secret weapon of science. [...] by virtue of its transportability, its durability and its structure, it is often able to operate as a relatively autonomous agent thousands of miles from those who sent it” (Law, 1986: 67).

When I started to write this thesis, I was motivated by trying to understand more about what happens behind closed doors in the meeting rooms where final decisions are made. I knew that decision-making processes are more complex than simply a rational convening of representatives for the making of decisions. Three hours of official meeting time would encompass more than formal dialogues, or written documents of approved decisions, and it was this ‘more’ that I wanted to understand better. Through my tracing for various forms of destabilizations, I discovered endless interactions between official and unofficial activities, and I have seen that these activities are often both restricted and unrestricted by any designated border. Influential moments, and the deviations that they cause in official meetings and consultations, have enriched my knowledge about what/who significantly takes part in decision-making processes. Furthermore, and in more detail, they helped me realize that a mobile phone, an AC unit, a tiny yellow sticky note, a folder, not to mention a clustering of tables, a scattering of chairs, and the organization of rooms, are not just things with once-and-for-all, given functions, but objects deeply involved in the interactions that significantly influence the voices, decisions and planning strategies tied to them.

The subdivisions and highlighted concepts of this book show, I hope, some possibilities to stimulate new research about decision-making in planning. Destabilizations. Influential moments. Planning setting. Credibility questioning. Temporal institutional territorialisation. States of predisposition. Transistor tactics. Redundancy delegation. These are some of the figures of thought that I have found, and sought to bring to life in this book, and it is my hope that they will also contribute to future routes of interest.

Summary in Swedish/ Populärvetenskaplig sammanfattning

Inflytelserika händelser i stadsplaneringsmöten. En studie om beslutsfattandets rum i en jordansk stad

I flertalet städer i världen behandlas och beslutas stadsplaneringsfrågor på institutioner och styrelser inom den kommun som frågorna gäller. Efter olika slags beredningar blir kommunledningen på så sätt ytterst ansvarig för planering av bostadsområden, granskning av byggnadsprocesser, anläggning av nya vägar, bevarande av äldre bebyggelse, hantering av stadens resurser i allmänhet samt för ekonomin i dessa sammanhang. Normalt behandlas detta därför i kommunstyrelsemöten, där representanter för stadsdelar, förvaltningschefer, tekniska experter, även ibland i närvaro av medborgare, diskuterar och interagerar för att komma till beslut. Denna avhandling undersöker dessa beslutsprocesser genom en närstudie av officiella möten och beslutsprocesser i en stad i Jordanien. I avhandlingen ges staden det fiktiva namnet "Nodecity" dels för att ge anonymitet åt de observerade deltagarna, dels för att studien görs mera generell, så att resultaten sträcker sig utöver en speciell stads förutsättningar.

Möten som på olika sätt behandlar stadens planering följer normalt en dagordning, och beslut föregås i regel av debatt och omröstning mellan medlemmarna. Denna forskning studerar emellertid inte så mycket dessa formella beslut i sig, men mera de aktiviteter, dialoger och institutionella förutsättningar som på olika sätt utgör en informell grund och bakgrund för de formella besluten. Tidsfaktorer, ritualer, fysiska objekt och teknologier kan t ex ha inflytande på mötena och beslutsfattandet. En vanlig sådan teknologi idag är till exempel mobiltelefonen, som kan användas för att stödja en viss fråga under en beslutsprocess, eller som kan tillåta dialog mellan olika medlemmar i en beslutande kommitté. En annan teknologi som kan ha inflytande är luftkonditionering (AC), som förutom att rent tekniskt skapa behagligt inomhusklimat även kan användas som en symbolisk social faktor, genom att förekomsten av sval luft i ett rum kan ses på som en auktoritetsfaktor i beslutsprocesser. Dessa faktorer, och många andra, ses i avhandlingen som att de har aktiv inverkan på de sociala ordningarna inom planeringsinstitutionen, dvs. de är inte enbart objekt designade för ett särskilt

syfte, men har egenskaper som påverkar dialoger, hantering av möten, samt utformningen av det sammanhang där beslutfattande äger rum.

Avhandlingen är en närstudie av vissa officiella planeringsprocesser, och har på så sätt även en relation till hur planeringen praktiskt omsätts i staden, samt vilka förutsättningar det är i staden som kräver vissa typer av planering. Även om dessa förutsättningar i stadsutvecklingen enbart belyses indirekt i avhandlingen, så har studien relevans för en idag ofta diskuterad fråga, nämligen hur mycket stadsplanering skall anpassa sig till rådande sociala, klimatologiska och politiska förändringar (som kan vara snabba), och hur mycket den skall vidmakthålla traditionella, och mera långsamt utvecklade ordningar. Den rådande situationen i Jordanien, som ett land under senare tid omgivet av, och delvis indraget i, kraftiga konfliktsituationer, ställer vissa speciella krav på stadsplanering, exempelvis ifall bostads och arbetsmöjligheter för en kraftigt ökande befolkning (flyktingström) skall ges prioritet framför bevarande av kulturell identitet. Dessa ofta akuta politiska frågor, som påminner om hur det ser ut i många länder idag, påverkar hur man ser på tidsfaktorn i planering. I avhandlingen analyseras inte de samhällsliga konsekvenserna relaterade till stadsplaneringens nya utmaningar, däremot så speglar tidsfaktorerna kopplade till beslutsgången i planering hur de rådande ordningarna inom planering hanteras, och hur dessa används på nya sätt. Vardagens ibland snabbt förändrade behov kan göra att invanda rutiner måste hanteras på ett mera kortsiktigt strategiskt sätt, och forskningen inriktar sig här på hur detta kan te sig i den officiella stadsplaneringen institutionella centrum.

Avhandlingen visar på hur tidsfaktorer, såsom fördröjningar, förlängningar, samtidighet och läglighet kan påverka, och aktivt användas, i beslutfattande. Under möten kan till exempel deltagare ha olika rätt att yttra sin åsikt vid olika tillfällen, där mötes-rollen samt erfarenhet kan ha betydelse vad gäller att hitta lämpliga tillfällen att göra sin sak, eller någon annans, till en prioriterad fråga. Även här kan t ex deltagarnas rumsposition, preparering av möteslokalen, eller hur man använder mikrofon, komma att spela roll, dvs. materiella och rumsliga faktorer spelar roll även här. Medborgare eller andra sakägare kan även följa möten och på olika sätt göra inspel till möten medan de pågår, även utan att vara fysiskt närvarande i själva mötesrummet.

Studien beskriver även den interiöra miljön i och nära den huvudsakliga möteslokalen, som mötesledarnas kontor, korridoren och de allmänna uppehållsrummen. I själva möteslokalen kan det till exempel spela roll om man sitter nära eller långt från bordet vad gäller möjligheten att yttra sig. I rummen utanför

möteslokalen kan det spela roll hur dessa är möblerade för att åstadkomma särskilda rytmer, rörelsemönster eller avstånd när olika ärenden behandlas.

För insamling av data till avhandlingens studier har jag deltagit som observatör i kommunstyrelsemöten i två perioder om sammanlagt cirka sex månader, samt observerat även enstaka konsultationsprocesser. Det har varit viktigt i observationerna att försöka fokusera på avvikelser från det normala mönstret, och särskilt hur avvikelser i en jämn mötes-ström kan ge upphov till förgreningar i beslutsfattandet som annars inte syns. Förutom dessa deltagande observationer har jag intervjuat vissa nyckelpersoner, såsom ordförande i stadsdelsnämnd och administrativ personal i kommunen. Jag har observerat interaktioner mellan mötesdeltagare och hur dessa interaktioner också involverar fysiska objekt såsom bord, stolar, foldrar, pappersdokument, luftkonditionering, telefoner, etc. Tillsammans ger alla dessa 'aktörer' en bild av vad som händer i beslutsfattandets processer och med tiden blev denna mångfald mera hanterbar, då jag i mina observationer kunde bli mera uppmärksam på vissa moment och detaljer, som gick att urskilja som just avvikande.

Efter en period av observation beskrev jag dessa avvikande situationer som korta fristående berättelser (narrativ framställning). Genom att återgå till observationsanteckningarna kunde jag få fram narrativa förlopp som följer vissa teman (t ex hur någon äger en sakfråga) eller vissa objekt (t ex luftkonditioneringens sociala effekter). Detta berättande förfarande följer delvis metoder utvecklade inom etnografen.

Genom att fokusera på avvikande situationer blev det tydligt vad det är som normalt håller samman mötesprocedurer. Det blev också möjligt att se hur vissa aktörer, handlingar eller objekt, kunde bedömas som att de har reell påverkan på följande förlopp i mötet. Varje berättelse, eller narrativ i avhandlingen beskriver följandet av en viss huvudsaklig händelse i observationerna, så som hur en mötesregel tolkas under mötets gång. Det kan också vara följandet ett visst föremål, som hur en telefon hanteras eller ifall en folder används på ett felaktigt sätt. På så sätt blir varje beskrivande berättelse underlag för en analys och en teoretisering vars karaktär och referensapparat kan skilja sig något mellan de olika berättelserna. Avhandlingen som helhet är därför också komponerad så att den presenterar ett antal berättelser, eller narrativ, som kräver sin teori, och i avhandlingen utvecklas på så vis teorin allt eftersom de narrativt bearbetade observationerna presenteras. Avhandlingen får därmed också i vissa delar mer fokus på planeringsteori, i andra delar mera på organisationsteori eller på antropologisk teori om mötesstudier. Tvärs igenom hela avhandlingen används dock mestadels nätverksteori

om den sociala interaktionen mellan mänskliga aktörer och materiella, rituella, och organisatoriska faktorer.

Avhandlingen resultat öppnar upp nya idéer inom arkitekturfältet vad gäller dynamiken i de funktioner som blir föremål för design. Istället för förgivet tagna stabila funktioner, så belyses här det faktum att ständiga förändringar inom vissa ramar behöver ges utrymme, dvs. de tidliga faktorerna är viktiga att ta hänsyn till. Också det faktum att det finns en mångfald synliga och initialt osynliga faktorer som tillsammans utgör hur officiell planering kan genomföras belyses genom avhandlingen. Frågan ställs också om hur design av beslutsfattandets interiörer och ritualer kan varieras, som t ex på vilket sätt det vanligt förekommande mötesbordet är en given förutsättning, och hur denna fråga kan kopplas till hur och när deltagare kan yttra sig. På så sätt kan denna observationsstudie även ställa frågor till den praktiska utformningen och hanteringen av beslutsfattandets rum.

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