Making Research-Practice Collaboration work

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"How much it is to be wished that similar field work will soon be undertaken in, say, aesthetics; *if we could only forget about the beautiful for a while and get down to the dainty and the dumpy.*" J.L. Austin *A Plea for Excuses*

Plan

- Conventional ideas
- An effort at innovation
    - Organizing aspirations
    - Capture
- A counter-example
    - Learning as reframing
   - Organizing research practice-interaction in a learning as reframing mode
- Implications

A conventional approach:

- **"Knowledge driven model"** (Weiss, 1979)
  - "basic research → applied research → development → application"

- Knowledge is distinct from action.

- Knowledge can be developed independent of action.

- Knowledge precedes action.

- Knowledge <u>should</u> guide action.

A triad of concerns

Policy

Research

Practice

A triad of concerns

Policy:
Is it justified?

Research:
Is it true?

Practice:
Will it work?
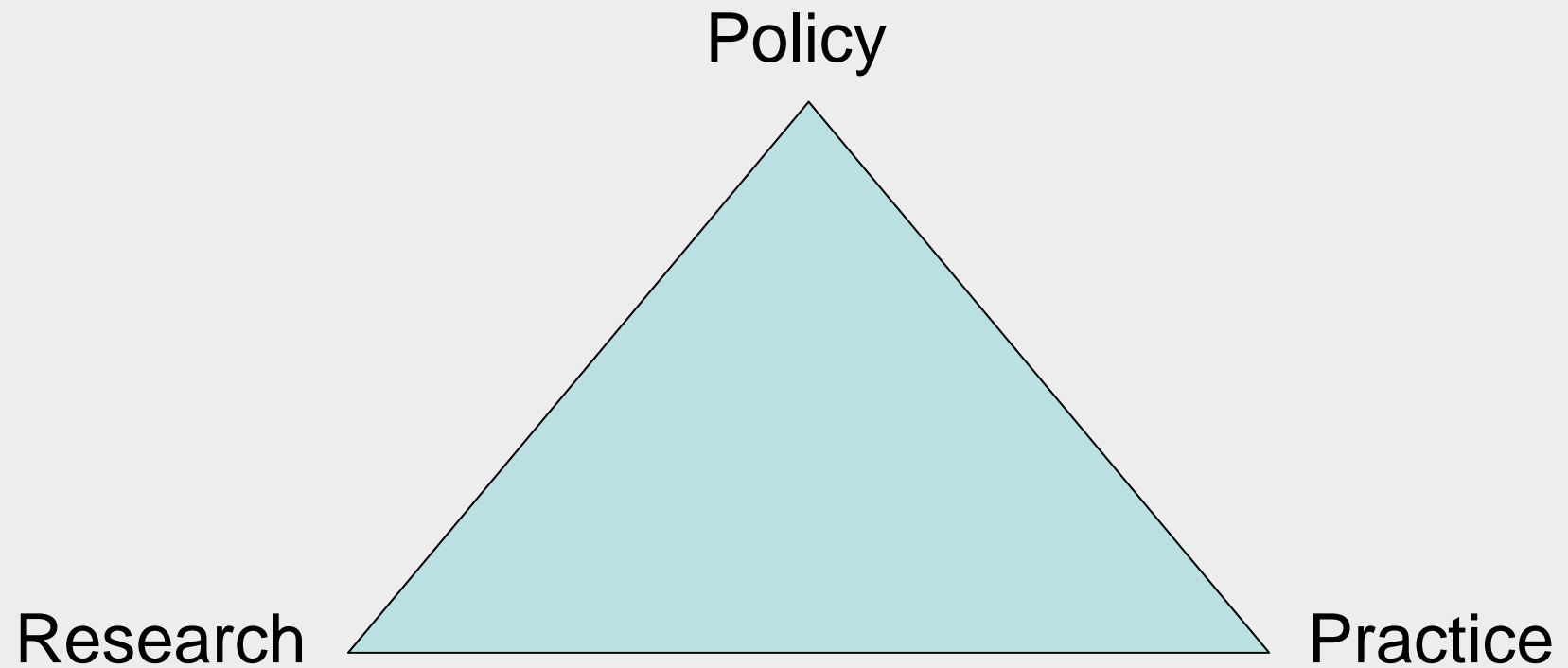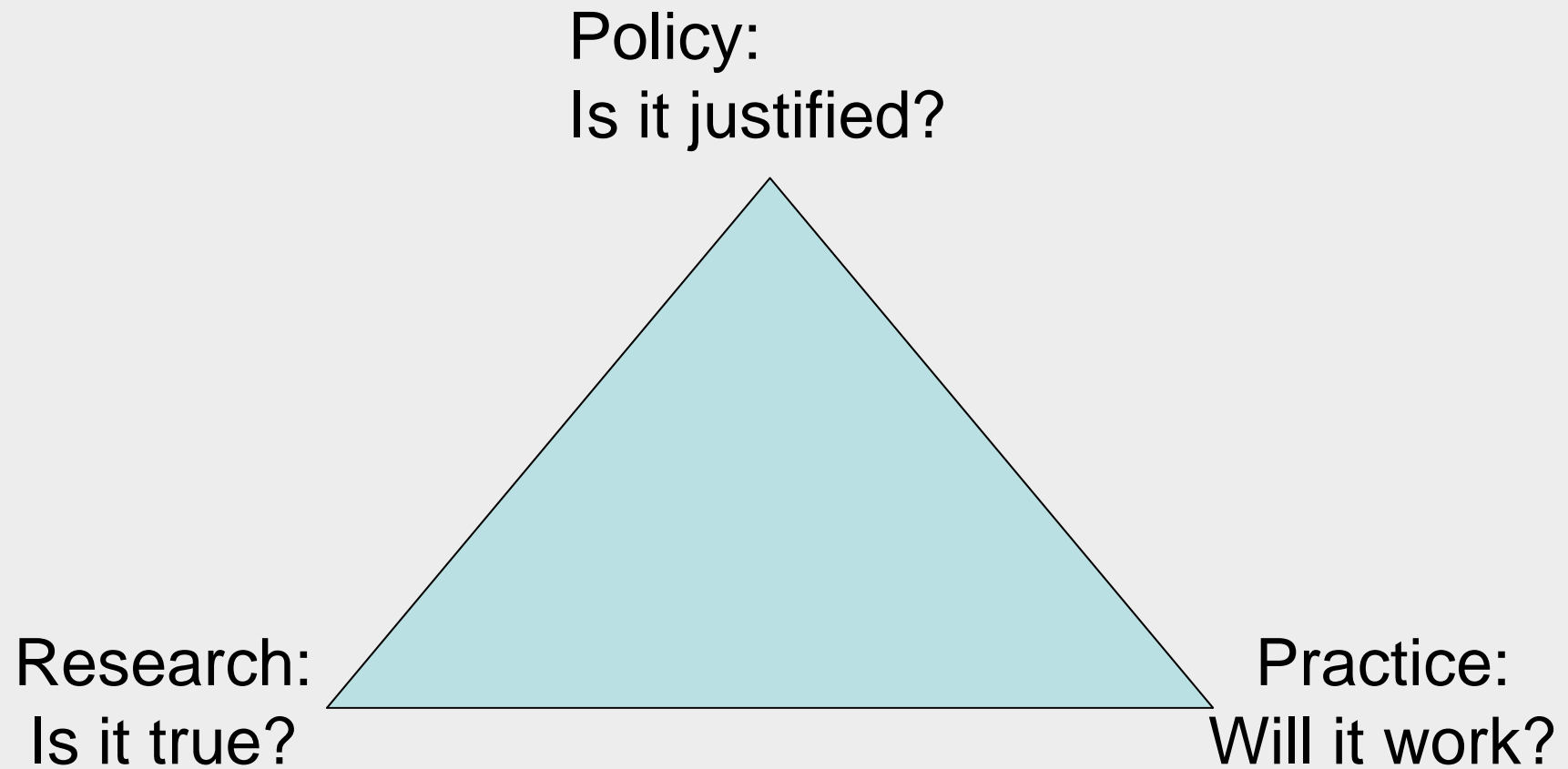
An effort to change the pattern: Nicis institute

- Goal
  - □ Change the conventional pattern.
  - □ Tighten connection knowledge and action.
  - □ Develop knowledge <u>for</u> cities <u>with</u> cities.
- Plan
  - □ Facilitate discussion between researchers and practitioners
  - □ Provide funding when/where can agree.

Experience → Change is difficult.

- Conventional expectations : 'Tell us what to believe.'
- Frames—assumptions, routines, (practice) habits—are different.
- Drift apart: Difficult to sustain cooperation.
- Hard to fight the (divergent) goals/incentives:
  - Practitioners: address problem as experience it.
  - Policy: respond to current political imperatives.
 - Research: build knowledge & publish
- Effort to innovate captured by conventional practice.

An outlier: turbulent beginning

- Eric Hulscher, 39, taxi driver
- "The atmosphere is grim after the murder. You feel strange, especially having seen that attacks [on mosques and an Islamic school] have now taken place. "It will only get worse, all the talk about integration is a lot of nonsense. "There's been talk of 'us' and 'them' and that's absolutely right."

Conventional negotiation training

I need to protect myself

How does this look to them?
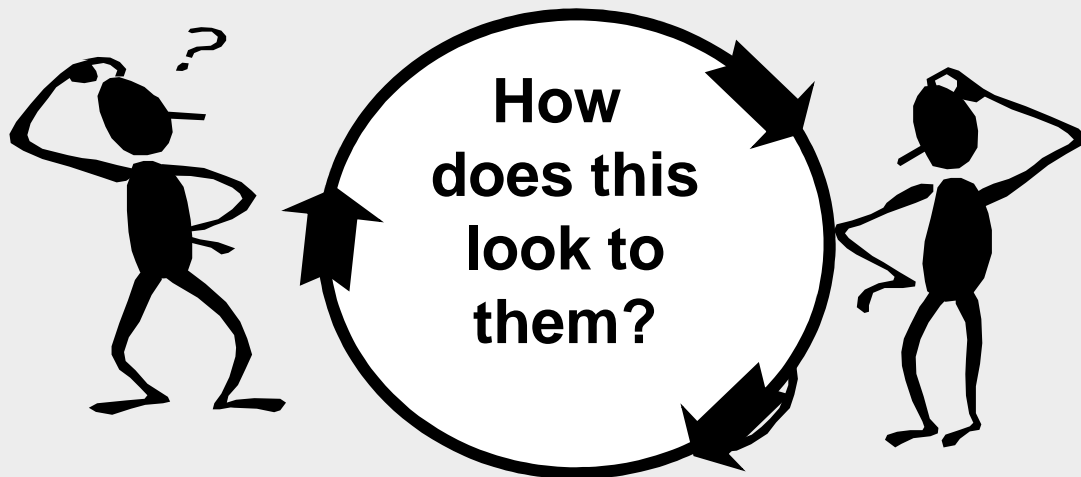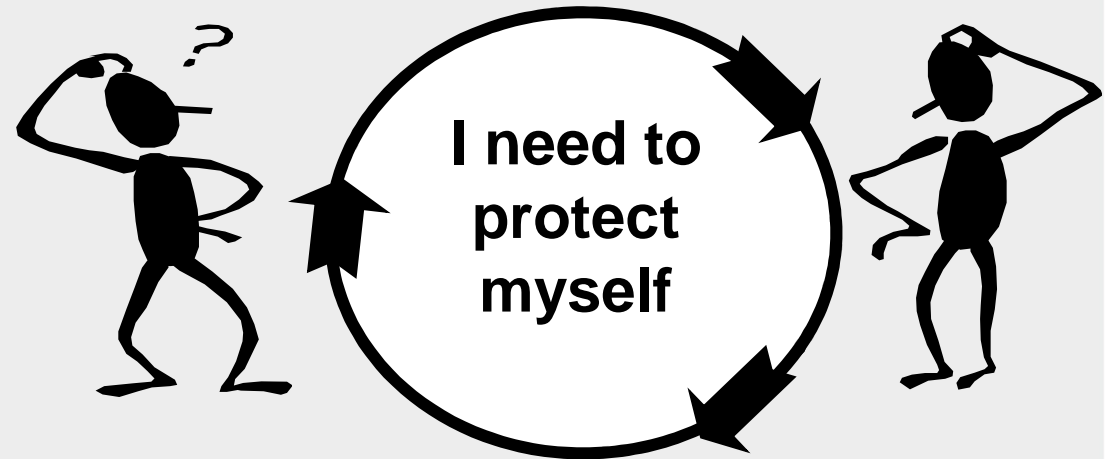
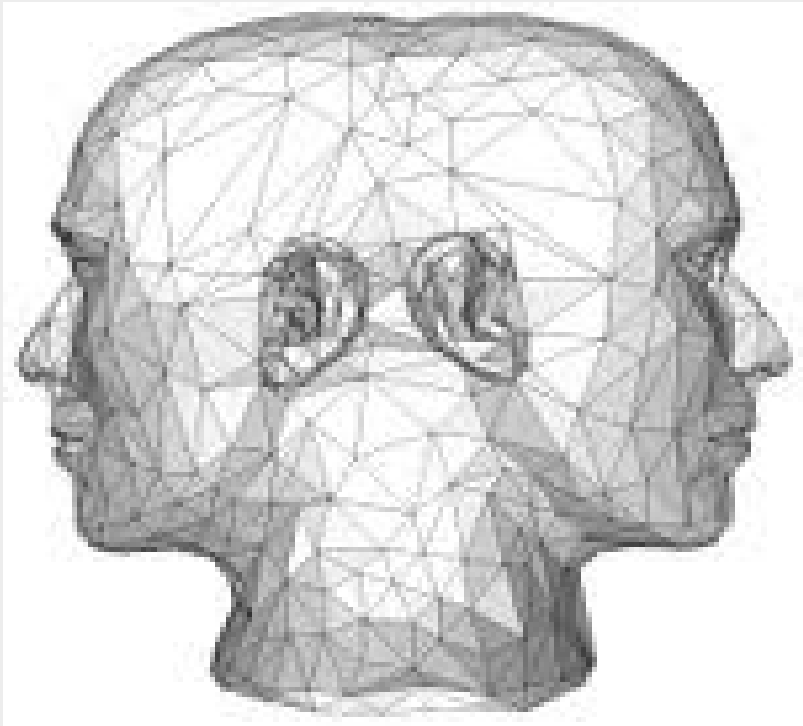If my piece is not big enough, can we make the pie bigger?
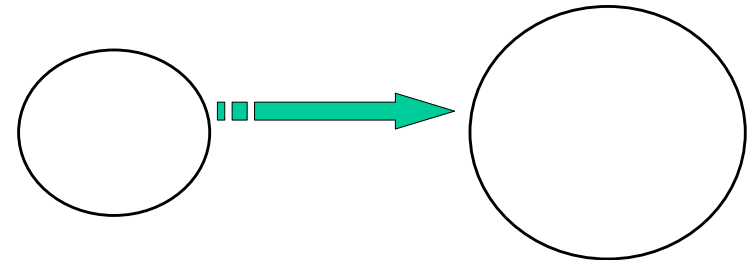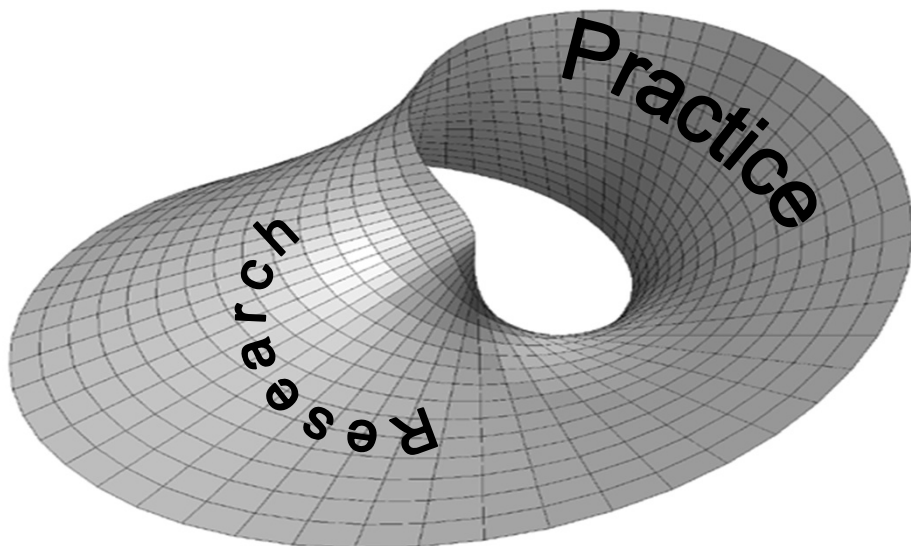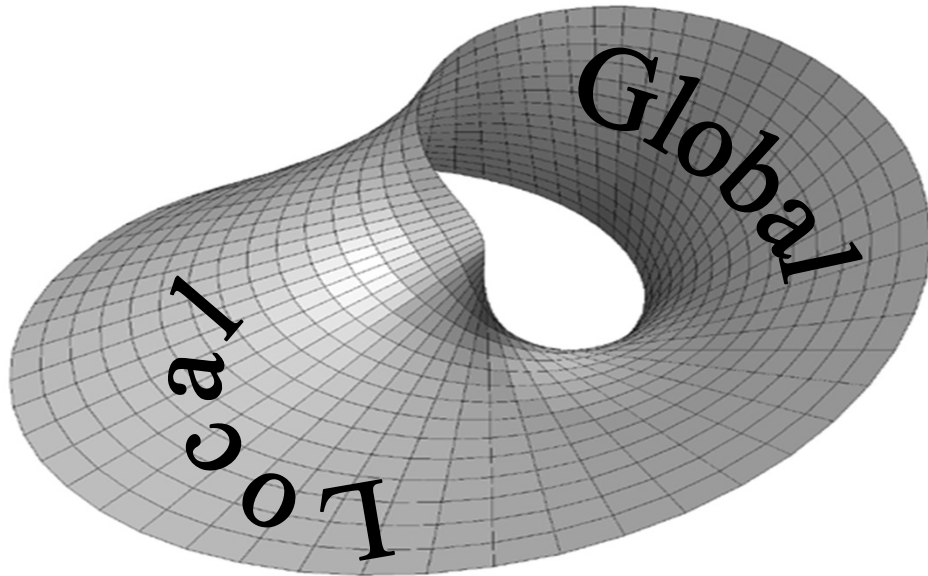
We work in a mobius environment.

How can we cope?

- Start with practice.
- Describe it ethnographically.
- Explore implications <u>with</u> the practice community.

Negotiate a shared agenda

- *Setting the stage*
- *Engaging stakeholders*
- *Managing internal dynamics*
- *Generating commitments to act*
- *Setting the context for future action*

Develop working categories

- *Crisis*: critical episodes that develop around events—problematize categories

- *Controversy*: Episode rooted in background tensions

- *Dispute*: Moment of contention within established categories
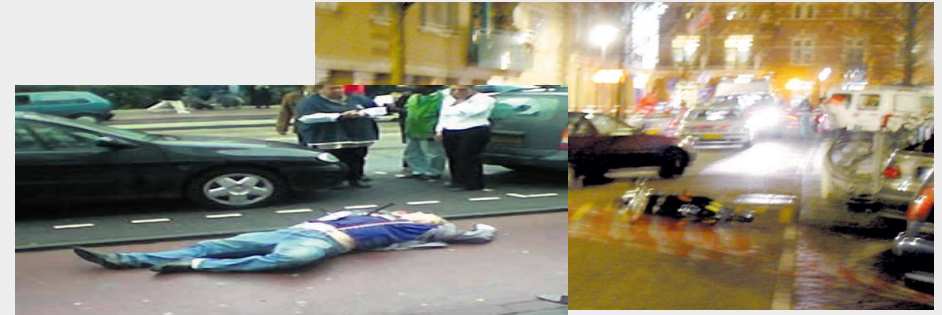
Research as modes of engagement

- *Profiles*: 'Narrative' interviews with practitioners: Reconstruct cases

- *Cases*: Multi-actor reconstructions of episodes of crisis, dispute, and controversy.

- '*Training*': Pursue shared aims: reflection and developing practice.
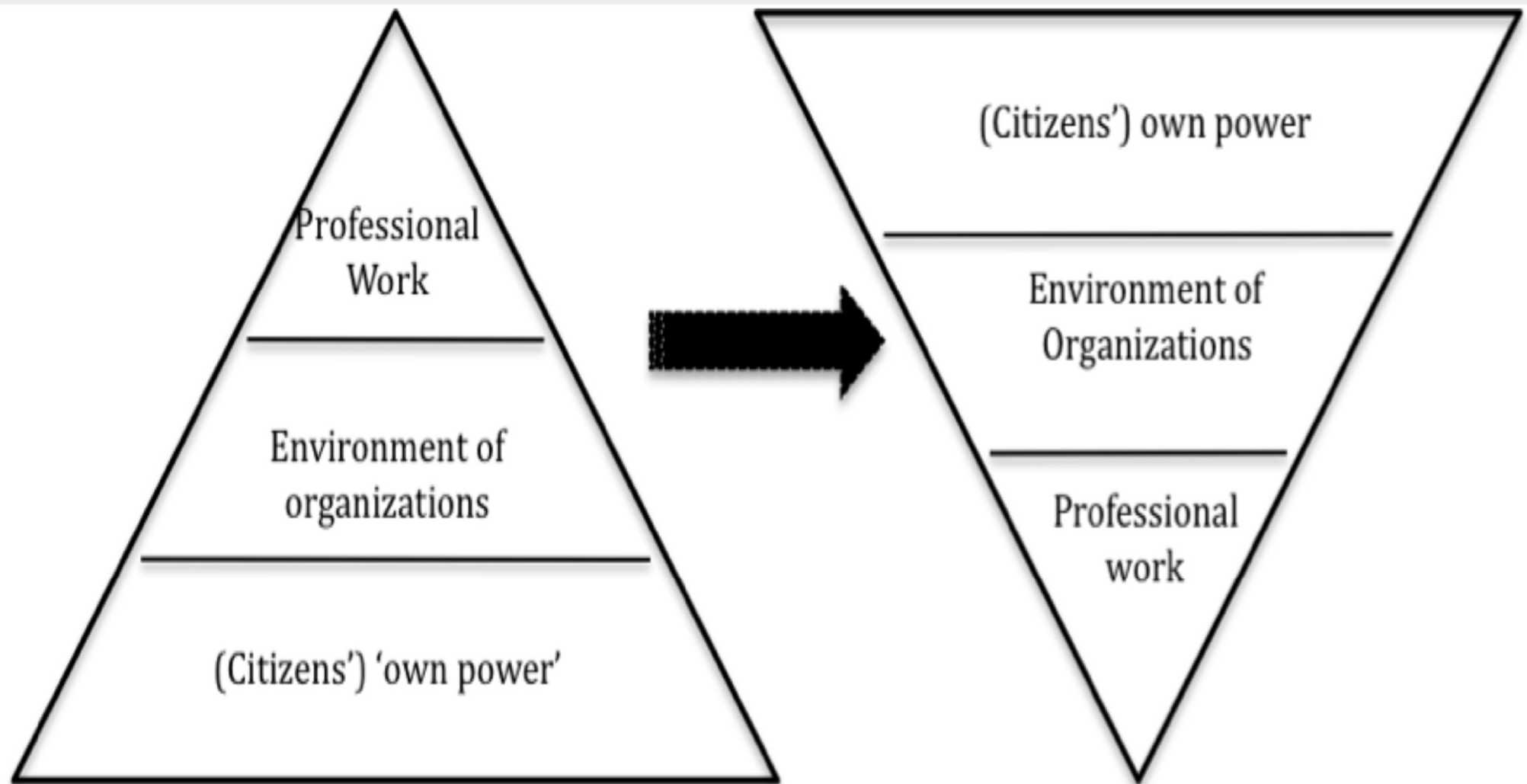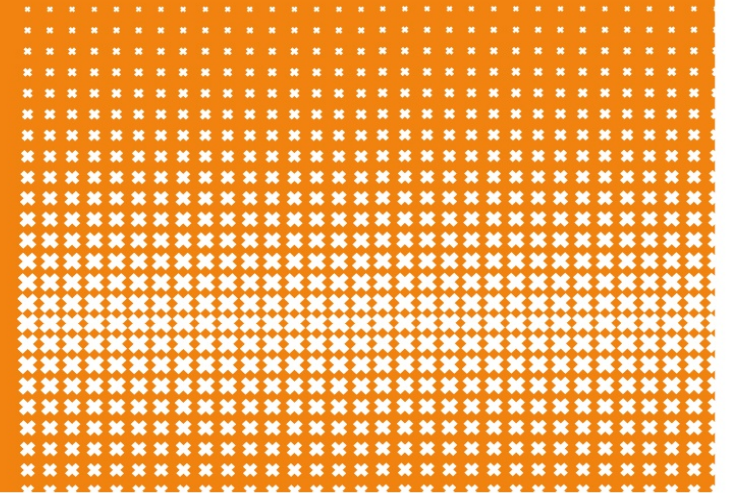
Political/Media Stream

Street-level practitioners

Enkele tientallen mensen hebben dinsdagavond in de Derde Oosterparkstraat rondom de boom waar de 19-jarige Ali B. maandagavond om het leven kwam een spontane herdenking gehouden.

Practical dilemmas of citizenship

A joint venture of IPA researchers and the City of Amsterdam
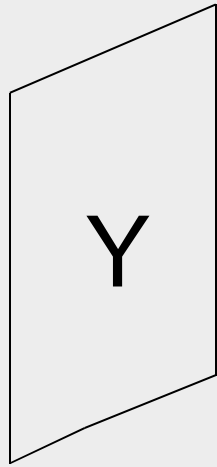
Rethinking Maakbaarheid

• Engage the working frame:

• Respect its history, relevance,ongoing influence.
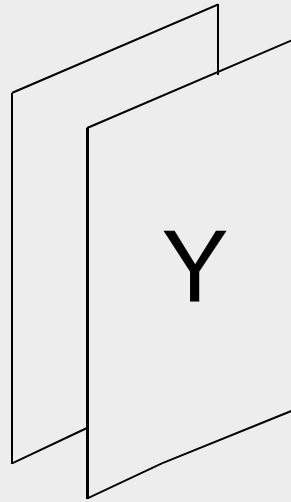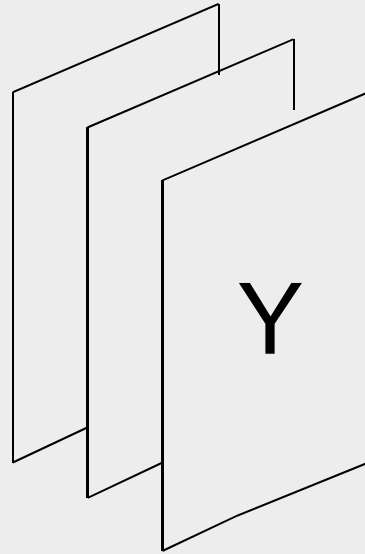
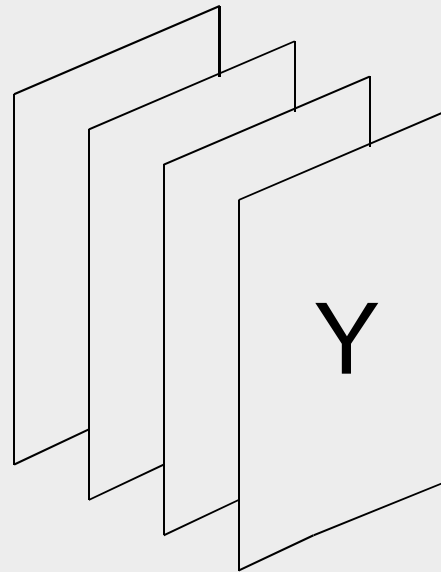• See learning as a remaking.

Storyboarding Workshop

19 mei, 2011

Ivar Halfman, David Laws, Nanke Verloo

Amsterdam Centre for Conflict Studies

Department of Political Science

University of Amsterdam

Y

Y

Y

X
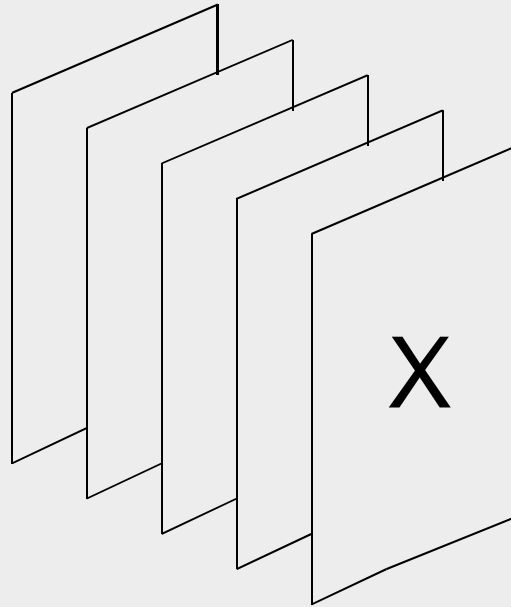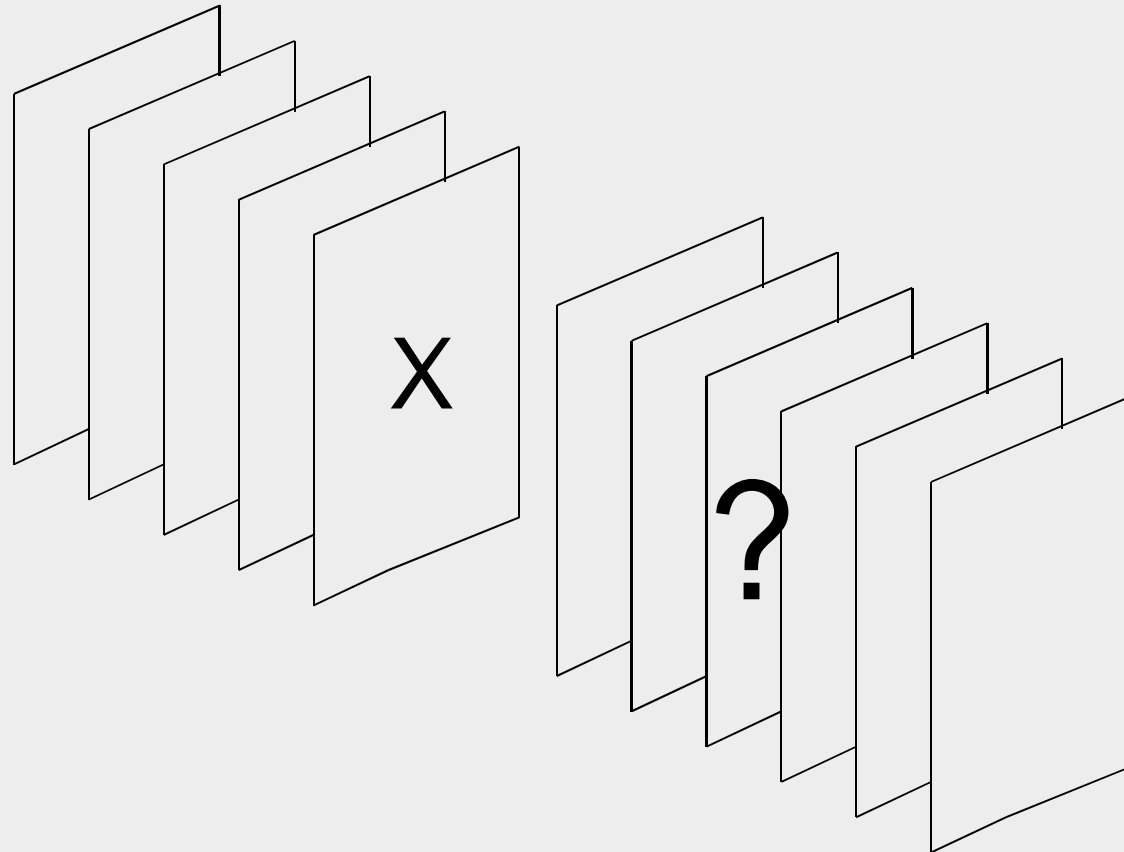
- Work with leadership
- Focus on own practice.
- Tinker with new behavior …
- To get insights into tacit structure of practice

Old Way

- Technical; behind the design table
- Outside the soup
- Knowledge/know-how resides in government
- Work by the rules
- Long discussions; little implementation
- Little change in the perspectives of others

New Way

- In the soup, but with our own story
- Do you listen or are you just waiting to talk
- Let residents do things themselves and react to their initiatives
- Story that is open to others' stories
- Knowledge is comes from residents
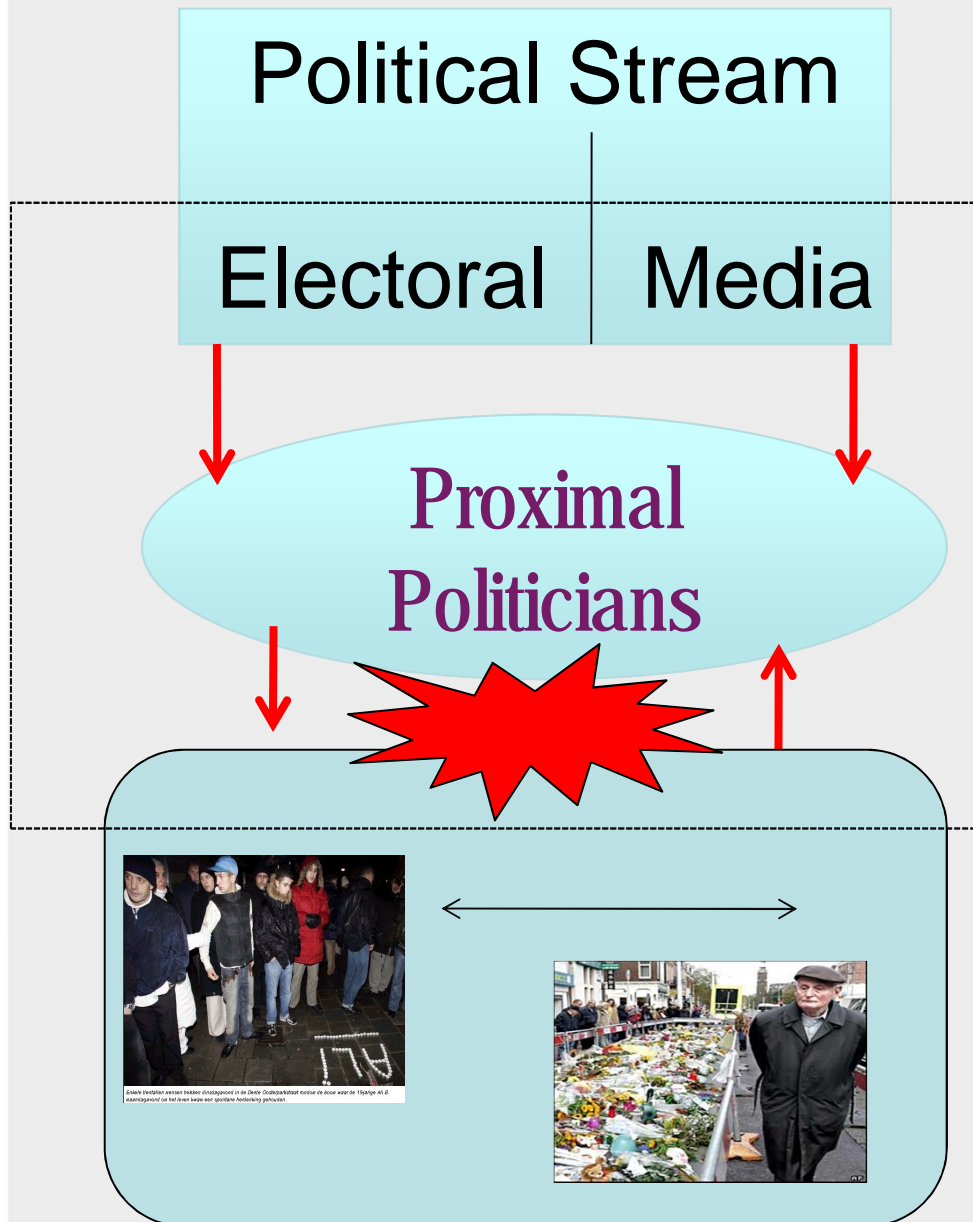
Dynamics of the institutional setting

Political Stream

Electoral | Media

Proximal Politicians

- Local politics and SLB merge: "Impossible to not communicate"
- Actions interpret and comments on relationships.
- Whose meaning is practically legitimate?
- Acts become memories that provide the stage for later acts.
- What does leadership mean?

Cases and Contingency

Relationships
Communication

Interests
Options
Legitimacy

Alternative
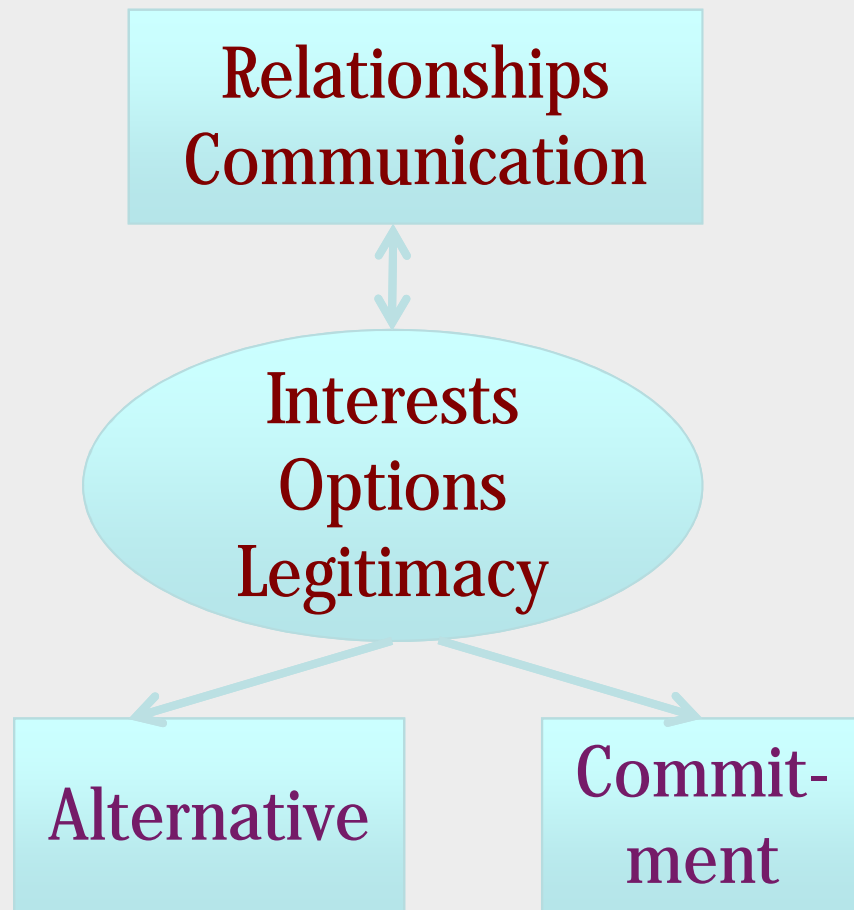
Commit-
ment

- How do we explain contingency?
- Negotiation: How do we engage and develop it?
  - Social: network of relationships
  - Interactive: communication
  - Instrumental
  - Interpretive: Meaning ethical/normative
  - Tests: Commitment to cooperate or alternative(s)

De Hallen: A case of practical innovation

- Conflict→Paralysis/Alienation

- Social Innovation
  - Development plan
  - Financing
  - Governance
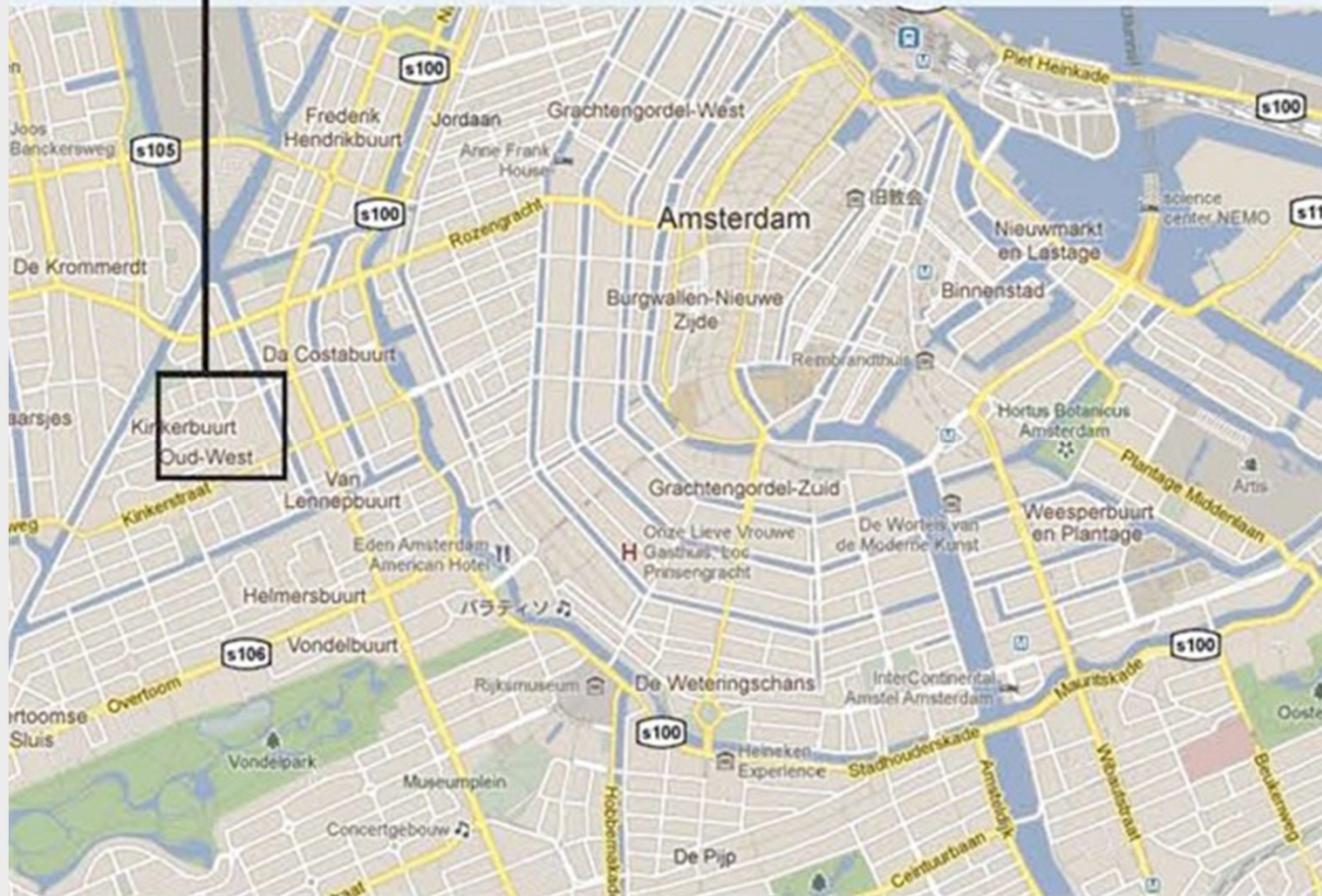
Act I -

- City given monument
- Early process engage residents: many ideas
- No capacity/commitment to follow through
- Conventional proposal accepted.
- Citizens block.
- Pattern repeats.
- Distorted / Non-communication/ paralysis

Distorted/Non-communication

- Ritual meetings.
- Disengaged.
- See others' comments as threat.
- Construct other as uncooperative, responsible.
- Marginalize impact on working frame: 'it's not about us.'

The players

- Local government: owner; wants to redevelop.

- Staff stuck.

- Council: keep to the budget, worried about the state of the building, keen to keep citizens close.

- Citizens : engaged but insecure about role; very worried about development.

- Developers : find ways to develop and make money.

Act II : The conflict hardens

- New investor launches a big plan for entertainment complex.
- Citizens form action group; protest increases.
- Squatters occupy the building.
- Local government defends plan / developer.
- Council is deeply divided: meeting after meeting, do not know what to decide.
- Investor becoming increasingly insecure and finally withdraws.

Act III : an opening

- Institutional reorganization.
- Local elections bring in a new council.
- Financial and housing crisis reframes all development projects.
- New residents move into the area.
- The citizens: reset the agenda.
- The architect: develop a new plan.
- Local entrepreneurs: enter the scene.

Improvisation

- Building is decaying.
- Stop = demolish.
- Can't go back: Stop or radical change.
- Start to make the rounds with stakeholders.
- Conversations
  - Open up the agenda,
  - Provide opportunities for influence.

Reaction…

- ## Staff rebels
  - □ "It's not the way we do these things."
  - □ "You've lost your mind"
  - □ "People don't know."
  - □ "Doomed to fail." "Will it ever happen?"

- ## Council skeptical; resists.
  - □ 'You can't do this'
  - □ Sought own legal advice

Act IV: playing a new game.

- Change staff
- Alternative plan emerges (citizens, entrepreneurs and architect)
- Commitment to developer
- Can we create a new, level, playing field?
- Design competition (terms, rules) with stakeholders.
- Government participates.
- Everyone agrees is fair.

Outcome

- Mixed development.
- Funding from investors and community.
- Governing board for project that extends into the future.

And so …

- Initial escalation:
    - □ Conflict cut deep: instrumental and existential.
    - □ Interaction polarized & created complexity.

- Turning point: Local government drew on interaction with research; improvised a new role.

- What changed?
    - □ Relationship politics & administration.
    - □ Role: Active at the table with stakeholders.
    - □ Action is site democracy.

- Procedural innovation → substantive innovation.

Conclusions

- Learning is a remaking (reframing) at level concepts→skills and across the organization.

- Change is hot.

- Implications for the organization of research practice relationship

  □ Situate in practitioners work

  □ Create potential for reflection

  □ Invent "the things that follow from" insights.

- Authority & discretion → Improvisation and leadership