

# Enhancing legitimacy of a citizen-initiative for urban green and food by reflection on perspectives

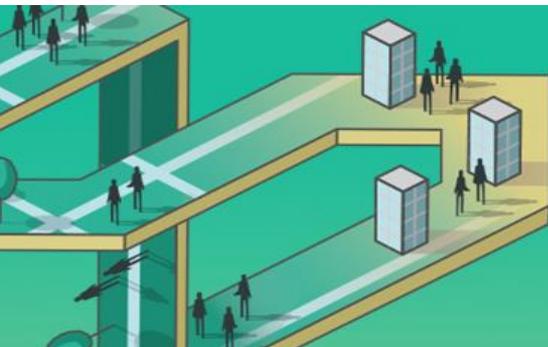
The case of *Toentje* in the city of Groningen (the Netherlands)

New Planning Spaces, University of Liverpool, 20th June 2018

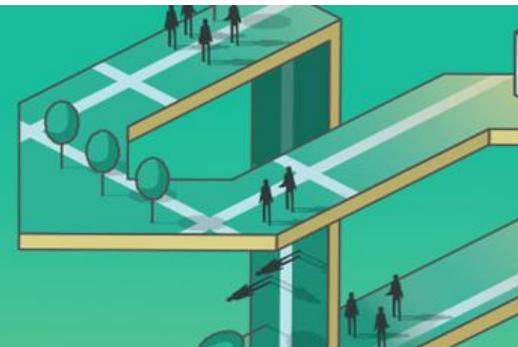
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SMART URBAN REGIONS OF THE FUTURE



# R-LINK





in toentje groeit de stad

Photography: Fabi van Berkel



Photography: <http://www.toentje.nl/over-toentje>



Everything depends on a working business plan

By the way, we need to make money

They need to be able to work commercially and independent

It costs a lot of money which the municipality doesn't have

In principle, someone need to pay rent just like anyone else and that rent needs to be self-supporting for the building.

That location is quite difficult, because, it is also about the rate of return in order to have money for all kinds of other things.





So you also have to make sure management and maintenance are taken care of properly in the initiative [...] that it is guaranteed and and done [...] and that it is a lasting initiative.

It is professional

This type of land-use needs to fit well into the park as a whole.

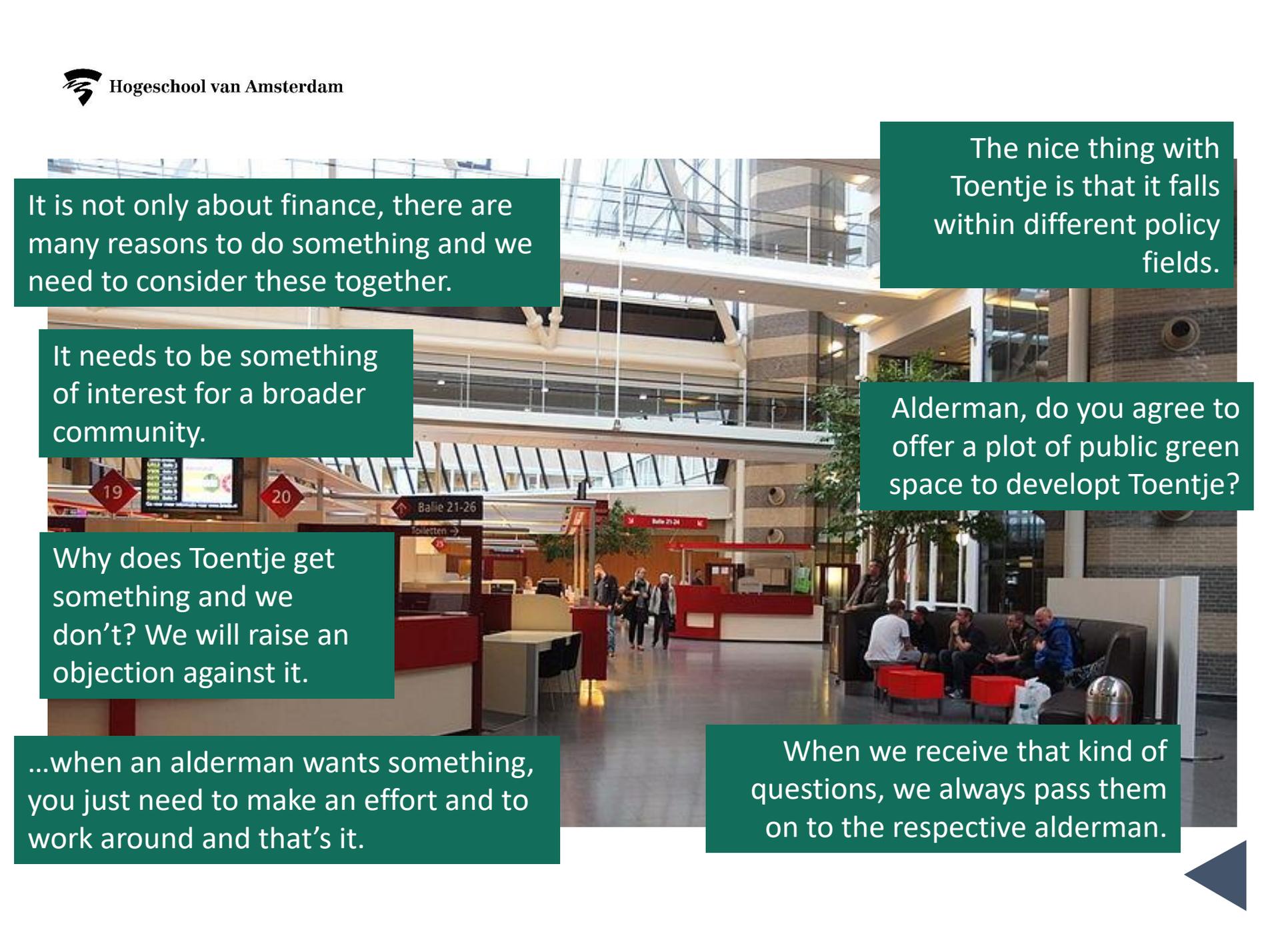


With more  
meaning for the  
neighbourhood

Supported by the  
neighbourhood

Some people in this  
neighbourhood feel a  
hurdle to participate in  
the project. I think,  
that's a problem.





It is not only about finance, there are many reasons to do something and we need to consider these together.

It needs to be something of interest for a broader community.

Why does Toentje get something and we don't? We will raise an objection against it.

...when an alderman wants something, you just need to make an effort and to work around and that's it.

The nice thing with Toentje is that it falls within different policy fields.

Alderman, do you agree to offer a plot of public green space to develop Toentje?

When we receive that kind of questions, we always pass them on to the respective alderman.



How can you make people enthusiastic to dedicate oneself for the project?

To move control

An experiment

In retrospect you see that you should have done that differently. But everyone's enthusiastic, and the project is just so nice!

We need to stop to value citizen initiatives with questions about appropriateness and whether they have been adapted correctly to all procedures. When you treat an initiative like that and parcel it of, you take away all the energy.

The essence is that something new can develop. Things that hadn't been thought of at city hall, outside of existing frameworks.

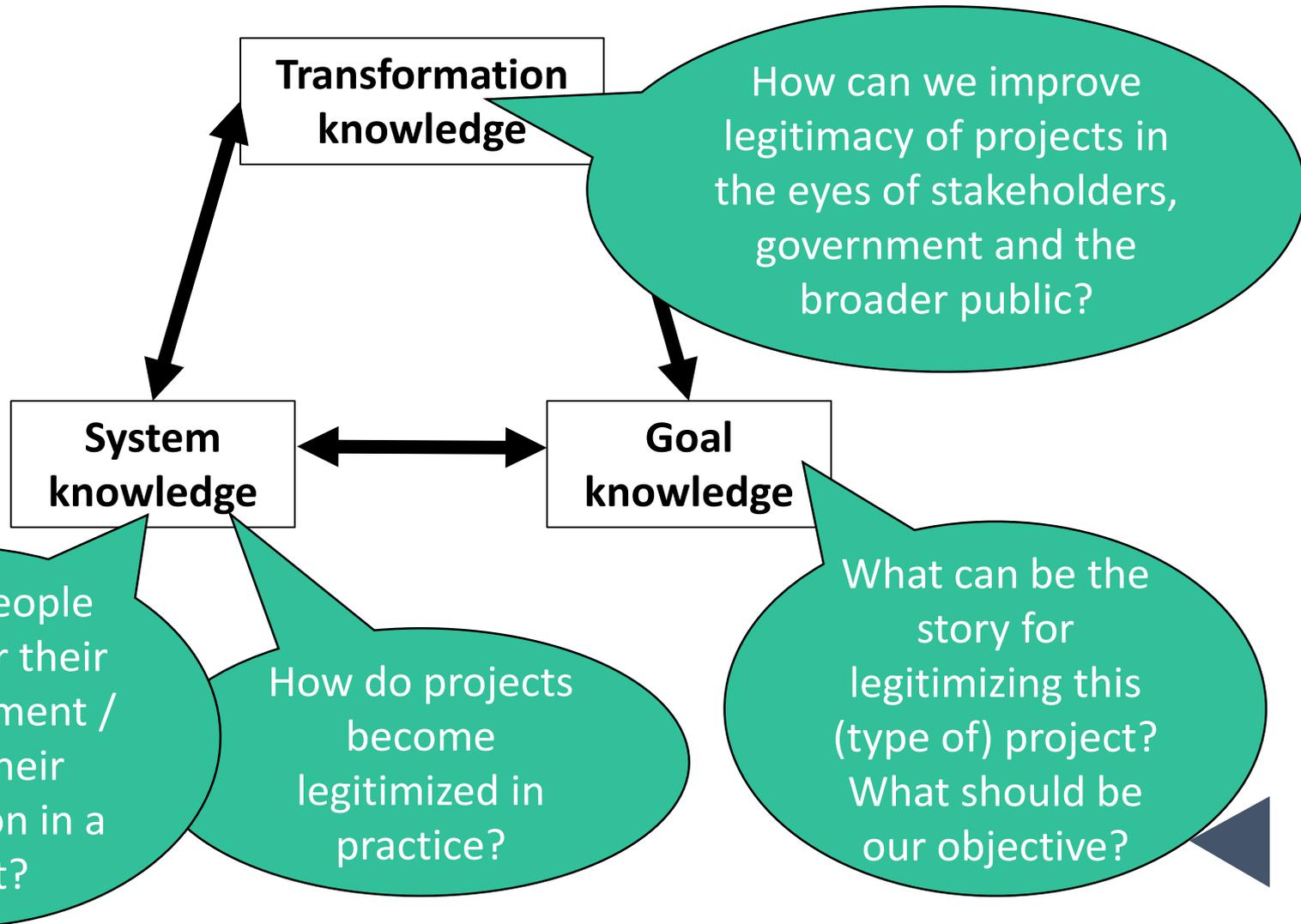


# Research question

- What legitimizes these projects: their existence and their use of (public) resources?
  1. **Local government:** how do we cope with these projects and on what ground do we allow these projects? What should be our framework for assessment?
  2. **Projects:** what strategy is best for us to follow if we talk to municipalities and try to gain support? In what playing field do we operate? How can we legitimate what we are asking for?



# Project approach: knowledge co-creation





# Stakholder Canvas

## Project and place

1 Activity

2 Needs & problems

## Means

4 Means needed

## Users and stakeholders

3 Stakeholders

5 Means available

## Moti- vation

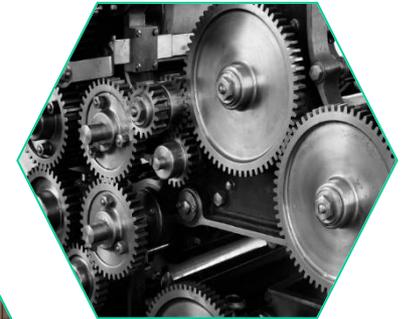
6 Motivations and legitimization



**'Market World'**  
*Making money*



**'World of Fame'**  
*Public opinion*



**'Industrial World'**  
*Effectiveness and  
professionalism of actions*



**'Inspired World'**  
*Inspiration,  
flexibility,  
experimentation*



**'Civic World'**  
*the State and its  
procedures*



**'Green World'**  
*Sustainability*



**'World of Health and Well-being'**



**'Domestic World'**  
*The local community and traditions*



# Our research project: Bottom-up projects for urban green and food

- Co-productions of citizens, social entrepreneurs, municipality, housing corporation: many different public and private partners and stakeholders.
- Make use of public resources:
  1. Public space
  2. Permits
  3. Possibly many other (time of staff for example)
- *Informal* spaces of engagement



# Results: system

- Different stakeholders legitimize the project on different grounds



# Conclusion: system

- The project is legitimized in many different ways and it serves multiple goals
- All in all there seems to be a lot of support for the project
- The grounds on which the project is legitimized are not always established clearly. This conflicts with codes of good governance
- Municipal departments have difficulty to come to a joint decision-making and evaluation/ monitoring framework



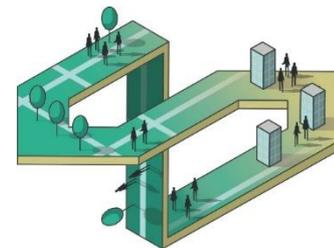


Legitimization is about...

... to strike a balance between different worlds and ways of legitimization

... to find a way to cross bridges between different worlds

... and to find solutions within a specific world



# Conclusion: goal

- A list of criteria to assess legitimacy is not possible
- There are multiple ways to legitimize projects like these.
- It is not necessary to have just one story: many things together can legitimize a project and can make it stronger.
- But for the purpose of political decision-making, good governance (transparency of the process, legal certainty etc.) it helps to make motivations more explicit
  - Strive for a better understanding of own motivations and way of legitimization and that of others
  - Separate own motivations and motivations at the organizational level
  - Enable to discuss these differences and prepare a joint understanding of criteria for decision-making and evaluation



# Research: transformation knowledge

- Feedback after workshops
- Feedback survey: before and after workshop we asked participants about their understanding of the project and their own motivations and that of others



How can we improve legitimacy of projects in the eyes of stakeholders, government and the broader public?



# Results: transformation knowledge

- Participants in our workshop were positive about the stakeholder canvas to get to know the different views on a project
- But how to integrate it into a working process and to analyse these easily without a researcher remains a question



Thank you!

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# Legitimacy

- The acceptance of the policy-making body, the process and the outcome (input, throughput, output, outcome legitimacy)
- Informal planning spaces legitimacy is about legitimacy of these aspects in the eyes of:
  - Those directly involved in the informal planning space and the project
  - The formal institutions of government and policy-making
  - The broader audience
- In a pragmatic and institutional way of reasoning



But you know, there're also some people who work there and can unload their baggage, get the thoughts off of their minds.

What also is important, is the contribution to the goals with respect to health and the healthy city.

... we want people to get to know more about local and healthy food

...It contributes to health.

Healthy food for the food bank

Healthy aging

... how to diminish health differences between neighbourhoods?





To bring the cultivation of greens back to its core, not far away, but close to home.

To create enough green space

To enhance sustainability

It fits into the need to intensify urban green space and closer to the neighbourhood and people in the city.





I think that is very important. To make sure to be well known outside the Municipality. To be rooted in society.

... the alderman received some signals, because people had read in the newspaper that Toentje got 100 000 euro to move to a new place. And why didn't they get that? The rest has been just pretty much a coast downhill

And then, it became a hype. The knock-on effect.

...and then, we said to Toentje: it is good time now to start to inform your surroundings. [...] and then, it becomes exciting.

Or you get a call. Like: there's some moaning going on and there is unclarity. Look at the news coverage in the media. That does not always work in favor of the Municipality. Nuances are missing.

You need to sell your product in a way



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