Article

Grassroots movements and the entrepreneurial city: The case of Neubad

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Abstract

Becoming more entrepreneurial in their government approaches is a concept aimed at supporting today's cities in dealing with complex challenges. However, to date, knowledge about how cities can apply such approaches still remains a puzzle. This article presents the case study of the Neubad Lucerne initiative in order to contribute to the generation of a comprehensive picture and of instructive knowledge for city municipalities on their way toward an entrepreneurial city. It asks particularly how city governments and municipalities can stimulate grassroots initiatives toward an entrepreneurial city in a play way instead of a managerial way. The focus is therefore on playful rather than managerial city government processes that stimulate the emergence and activities of grassroots initiatives, the role and organizing mechanisms of networks that develop, and the role of temporary spaces in enabling activity and the construction of social identity.

Introduction

The concept of the entrepreneurial city (for a summary, see Doucet, 2013) proposes an approach to the variety of social, technical, architectural, economic, and organizational challenges that cities face on the way toward becoming a sustainable ecosystem (Neirotti et al., 2014; Rauterberg, 2014). It suggests that cities should replace the original managerial government approaches by more business-like ones (Chapin, 2002; Harvey, 1989; Moulaert et al., 2003), that is, take more risks (Harvey, 2000; Roberts and Schein, 1993) and attract inward investment through private–public partnerships (Bassett, 1996; Bemzez, 2008; Hall and Hubbart, 1996).

Besides numerous scholarly contributions studying megaprojects in large cities (Doucet, 2013), alternative contributions suggest playful governance strategies that stimulate the emergence of grassroots movements to drive initiatives and the (re)use of temporary spaces. However, knowledge about how cities shall apply these approaches in their initiatives toward an entrepreneurial city remains a puzzle.

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The focus of this article is therefore to present the case study of the Neubad initiative to contribute to the creation of a comprehensive picture and of instructive knowledge for city municipalities. The Neubad initiative is centered on a former swimming pool situated close to the city center of Lucerne, Switzerland. The research question reads as follows: How can city governments and municipalities stimulate grassroots initiatives toward an entrepreneurial city in a play way?

Literature review

The extant literature on the concept of the entrepreneurial city includes two streams of research here called the "governance" and the "start-up" perspectives. They are summarized below.

The governance perspective

Since the late 1970s, the concept of the entrepreneurial city attracted the attention of politicians and scholars because it promises city regeneration through wealth creation (Hall and Hubbard, 1996; Loftman and Nevin, 1995). It proposes an answer to the question of how city municipalities can deal with "forces such as deindustrialization, globalization, the ideological shift away from distributive forms of governance as well as increases competition between cities" (Doucet, 2013: 2037).

In a nutshell, the concept suggests entrepreneurial, business-like governance approaches to municipalities (Chapin, 2002; Harvey, 1989; Moulaert et al., 2003). According to Doucet (2013), this includes taking more risks (see also Harvey, 2000; Roberts and Schein, 1993) and attracting inward investment through partnering with private sector actors (see also Bassett, 1996; Bemzez, 2008; Hall and Hubbart, 1996). Essential parts of urban entrepreneurial strategies are the mobilization of actors outside the municipalities (Cochrane et al., 1996) and modes of participation (Hawkins and Wang, 2012). Predominantly, prestigious megaprojects "represent the urban space where entrepreneurial strategies become implemented" (Doucet, 2013: 2038; Moulaert et al., 2003). Scholars studied the successes and failures of such megaprojects run in cooperation between the city government and local investor(s), particularly in large cities such as Rotterdam, Detroit, or Glasgow (e.g. Cochrane et al., 1996; Doucet, 2013; Fainstein, 2008; Loftman and Nevin, 1996; Moulaert et al., 2003).

Scholarly work shows that such megaprojects often bring about gentrification and seldom hold what they promise (Doucet, 2013; Hall and Hubbard, 1998; Oswalt et al., 2013). Hall and Hubbard (1996) even conclude that "in many cases, entrepreneurial strategies are attracting little inward investment or having any discernible impact on job creation" (p. 167). Further, "the grassroots reception of local development strategies is essential for their survival" (Hall and Hubbard, 1996: 165) because projects that do not take into account the needs of local communities can create strong opposition (Harvey, 1987). A grassroots movement uses the self-organized collective action of the members of a local community as driver for change (Caneparo and Bonavero, 2016). However, the role of public and entrepreneurial city initiatives based upon the engagement of citizens is still largely ignored in this stream of research. The focus on megaprojects in large cities leads to further shortcomings: The "value of temporary use" (Oswalt et al., 2013: 222) for entrepreneurial city strategies remains under-researched. Such short-term projects might, however, represent a way for city municipalities toward attracting the investment and engagement of citizens because "social and community identity (. . .) is strongly rooted in places, (. . .) the articulation of history, belonging and sense of place is often expressed through engagement with development" (Hall and Hubbard, 1996: 165). Concepts for and empirical insights into such entrepreneurial city initiatives are however rare.

This article contributes to this stream of literature by presenting and discussing the findings from an empirical case study that exemplify how municipalities can benefit from the engagement of citizens in entrepreneurial city initiatives. The case also indicates that the short-term perspective of temporary use is particularly attractive to citizens who are entrepreneurial and not afraid of taking risks (Oswalt et al., 2013).

The start-up perspective

This stream of research argues that cities should create conditions supportive to start-ups. Glaeser and Kerr (2010) point to a statistic correlation between high levels of entrepreneurship and regional economic and employment rate growth. This discussion is linked to a stream of research about creative cities that suggests stimulating city regeneration through fostering entrepreneurship of the creative class (for a summary, see Sasaki, 2010). In 2002, Richard Florida identified the creative class—an emergent and growing class of people engaged in creative work—as the leading force of growth in the economy (Florida, 2002; Florida, 2012). Landry (2000) reports about the "Creative Town Initiative" of Huddersfield, GB in the 1990s as the first urban strategy project of its kind. One of the triggers for the regeneration of this declined industrial town was new forms of collaborations between private and public institutions and the city council. Several projects were conducted to achieve the aims of the 'cycle of urban creativity'—forums, trainings, and promotion projects designed to bring creative thinkers in the town, a website, a database of creative projects as well as an alliance of leading private,

public, and community agencies. The launch of UNES-CO's "Global Network of Creative Cities" in 2004 further stimulated the creative cities ideal (Sasaki, 2010).

According to Neirotti et al. (2014), city-driven initiatives "to foster the innovation systems and entrepreneurship in the urban ecosystem" often manifest in the "presence of local incubators" (p. 40), in science and technology parks with responsive business models (Mian et al., 2012) or places where creative people can meet and organize events (Landry, 2000; Sasaki, 2010). However, many of these initiatives fail because the community does not use the spaces. Merkel (2015) and thus urges cities to support co-working spaces when they emerge as bottom-up initiatives.

Extant work from this stream of literature brings up the question of how cities can engage with citizens and stimulate entrepreneurship of creative people in a grassroots-driven way. This case study will provide insights that contribute to answering this question.

Enablers for approaches toward the entrepreneurial city

Playful governance approaches, the stimulation of grassroots movements, and the selection of temporary usable spaces that bear a strong meaning for the community are mentioned as enablers for initiatives toward entrepreneurial cities in extant research. As the literature does not (yet) provide more detailed insights, we looked into further research streams to gain an overview on the state of the art on each of these topics.

Playful governance approaches. In 1971, the Philosopher Richard Burke described his vision of a desired utopia as "a community in which everyone plays at work and works at play" (p. 47). Adorno (1997) defined play as purposeless activity, compared to work, that implies selling one's labor for earning a living. Both are, however, strongly interrelated: "Creativity is important because it generates business, and business can only happen because of creativity. Here we find that imaginative play and artistic expression (. . .) are precisely what makes work productive and worthwhile in the first place." (Butler et al., 2010: 330). Borden (2007: 100) thus nominates play as one of the 13 tactics to make a city a good place to live in and defines it as "serious fun (. . .) we should all be able take part (. . .)."

The governance perspective suggests cities to act in a less risk-averse and more business-like manner, which also implies finding and testing ways of interacting with partners where cities are not in the driver seat. Even more radical, Glaeser and Kerr (2010) suggest from the start-up perspective that "the best economic development strategy may be to attract smart people and get out of their way." (p. 4). Combining these insights, an approach toward an entrepreneurial city should include efforts to develop a playful environment for fostering and attracting the

creative class and stimulating the emergence of grassroots movements. In the literature, such a need for playful approaches to city development and growth is formulated regularly: "The city lives from doubt, experiment, joy of departure" (Rauterberg, 2014). However, empirical insights that exemplify and explain how cities applied play in the sense of such nonmanagerial approaches to stimulate the grassroots engagement of creative and entrepreneurial citizens are hard to find.

Networks and grassroots movements. How to stimulate networks and grassroots movements is a widely debated topic. The governance perspective underlines the importance of public receptions and grassroots engagement for local development strategies (Doucet, 2013; Harvey, 1987; Hall and Hubbard, 1996). Similarly, the start-up perspective highlights that the setup of dedicated spaces by municipalities is not enough for creating a climate of entrepreneurship, innovation, creativity, and social inclusion but that grassroots movements must drive this (Sasaki, 2010). This is supported by scholarly work from other research areas. For example, according to Charles Landry (2000), networking and creativity are intrinsically symbiotic, as "the greater the number of nodes in a system the greater its capacity for reflexive learning and innovation" (p. 126). Consequently, the brokering of new connections and new economic, scientific, and cultural collaborations for establishing a so-called "creative milieu" is seen as key for future urban prosperity.

At empirical level, Pulkkinen (2014) studied the urban pioneering movement and highlights the importance of the grassroots characteristics of paradigm-changing movements. Such movements are open, adaptive, and self-organizing systems aimed at new, citizen-led forms of urban culture. Shared but adaptable goals support the establishment of networks and relationships. Similarly, open-source urbanism research investigates approaches for the promotion of public space and resources created through activities such as reclaiming-the-city actions, critical mass bicycle rides, community gardening, and open-source programming (Carlsson, 2008; Walljasper, 2010).

In summary, the extant literature highlights the importance of stimulating grassroots initiatives because these represent networks capable of driving change, innovation, and economic growth. Empirical studies have not yet extensively studied the role of city government in stimulating the emergence and activities of such grassroots initiatives. This article will add to this by presenting a case study where a city played such a role.

Space. The extant literature on entrepreneurial cities focuses on city governments setting up new areas or buildings. The study of the temporary use of buildings and places was identified as a shortcoming (Oswalt et al., 2013: 222). Literature from other research streams suggests

that "temporary use has a strong potential to develop the economic activities of a city—for example, through creating jobs and businesses. It can do so by providing (flexible and cheap) working and networking spaces and by centralizing activities. As such, temporary places can become urban catalysts or urban incubators" (Jégou et al., 2016: 9). Such advantages of temporary use result from synergies between owners, users, and the local authority. Furthermore, temporary use can serve as a test bed to municipalities to ensure relevance and "temporary users can demonstrate their professionalism and potential as permanent occupiers" (Parris, 2014: 31). The governance perspective underlines that the location where initiatives take place has a huge impact on the engagement of citizens (Hall and Hubbard, 1996). Engagement is supported by the history of places and related social and community identity (Harvey, 1987).

Temporary used places seem to attract highly creative actors (Bishop and Williams, 2012). Bürgin (2010) reports that these are usually urban pioneers with high intrinsic motivation, flexibility, and a sense for unconventional and creative solutions. He claims a link between temporary use and the creative class: Although in the overall sample of Swiss companies, the percentage of companies in the creative industry sector is 11%, this number increases to 40% among companies in temporary used environments (Bürgin, 2010: 9).

To conclude, temporary used buildings seem to attract creative and entrepreneurial actors. The open question is how this effect is brought about. Scholars have so far not provided a detailed answer to this question.

Research question

Research on entrepreneurial cities indicates that three main variables potentially act as enablers for initiatives toward an entrepreneurial city:

1. *playful approaches* as planning and governance strategy (PLAY),
2. *brokering of new connections* stimulating the emergence of grassroots movements that drive initiatives (NETWORK), and
3. *temporary use of iconic buildings/places* that have a strong meaning to the local community (SPACE).

However, knowledge about how cities shall proceed in their initiatives toward an entrepreneurial city to make use of these enablers remains a puzzle. There are pieces and parts of such suggestions in different bodies of the literature, but they were not yet put together into a comprehensive picture. It particularly remains unclear how the enablers interrelate. The focus of this article is therefore to present a case-study instructive to city municipalities on

their way toward an entrepreneurial city. The main research question of the case study reads as follows:

> **RQ:** How can city governments and municipalities stimulate grassroots initiatives toward an entrepreneurial city in a play way?

Methods

Due to the lack of an extant comprehensive theoretical framework and scattered empirical insights, conducting an explorative qualitative case study appeared to be the most adequate research strategy (Yin, 2009). Case studies allow studying complex phenomena when there is little or no research available and "when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not evident" (Yin, 2003: 23).

Case sampling criteria and description

When searching for an appropriate case to study how city municipalities can stimulate grassroots initiatives toward an entrepreneurial city in a play way, we were looking for four case characteristics: It should be a city development initiative

1. initiated by a city aiming to transform into an entrepreneurial or creative city,
2. driven by citizens—in a play instead of a managerial way,
3. allowing for the participation of citizens who would potentially act as a grassroots movement, and
4. focused on the temporary use of a space with potentially high meaning to the identity of local communities.

These criteria were met in March 2012 when the government of the city of Lucerne, Switzerland, decided to aim for becoming a "Creative City" until 2020 (Stadt Luzern, 2012) and launched a competition for a 4-year temporary use from 2013 to 2017 of the obsolete public indoor swimming pool building (due to a newly constructed public swimming facility). The call asked for concepts that would concentrate the creative communities in the city. It included the requirement to run the place in a self-financed manner. Winner of the competition was a self-organized polycentric network of approximately 80 people representing organizations or individuals from several, partly detached actors of the creative scene of Lucerne (creative economy, cultural organizations, science, and residents). These players set up an association called "Neubad" (translated as "New Pool") for the competition entry.

The building is situated close to the city center and has direct access to public transport. The Neubad concept aimed at turning the former public swimming pool into a place for inspiration, incubation, and innovation in an open-source manner. Architects, professional gastronomes,

Figure 1. Visual insights into Neubad, pictures by http://www.neubad.org and http://www.vivaconaqua.org: (a) "From a public swimming pool . . . .", (b) "towards a place for inspiration, incubation and creativity.", (c) "Ateliers . . .", (d) "and co-working spaces.", (e) "The open pool", and (f) " . . . and the bistro.".

and many voluntary workers helped with the transformation. Today, Neubad consists of the following elements (Neubad, 2016):

- **Co-working and ateliers** for creative economy start-ups, knowledge workers, and culture producers.
- **Open Pool**—the large (empty) swimming pool and its adjacent area are used as a unique venue for exhibitions, seminars, conferences, theater/dance/ music events, flea markets, repair cafés, and so on.

- **Neubad Bistro** connects the users of co-working spaces with visitors and people from the neighborhood.

Neubad claims a central role as place for education and culture and—with its extraordinary interior spaces—contributes to the social and economic development of the city. Figure 1(a) to (f) aims at providing the reader with some visual insights and overview.

The case study focused on gathering data from the initial phase of creating and shaping the temporary use that lasted

from January 2013 until March 2014. This phase consisted of a

1. design phase where the mechanisms of financing and organizational elements were set up,
2. reconstruction phase that included the collaborative creation of new space concepts and their building, and
3. transition phase where the building started to be inhabited but was still in a provisional stage.

Sampling

A sample for a qualitative case study must include informants able to provide essential insights to answer a research question, the so-called "pivotal target group" (Davies, 2007: 143). We focused on three groups of actors strongly involved in the first phase: (1) operators, (2) members of the strategic board, and (3) volunteers and users. We decided not to interview the members of the city municipality, as we were interested in the perspective from within the process.

Data collection

As we were particularly interested in insights and subjective viewpoints of actors from the three groups, and due to the assumed complexity of interacting factors, triangulation was applied (Davies, 2007: 26) using different qualitative methods. The following approaches were used for data collection:

First, we conducted 12 problem-centered interviews (Witzel, 2000) with representatives from all actor groups (four operators, three volunteers, and five users). The interviews aimed at collecting data on the aspects of the transformation process, on the impact of space, and on the development of networks between the actors involved. The interviewers used semi-structured interview guidelines as a basis for keeping the interview focused and included additional open questions for exploration. The guidelines differed slightly between the three groups of informants. The dialogic form of the interview allowed additional themes to emerge (Flick, 2009; Witzel, 2000). The interviews were conducted face to face in the Neubad building and lasted between 20 and 60 min. They were audio recorded, transcribed, and resulted in a body of 42 pages of written interview material.

Further, interviewees were asked to take pictures of their favorite places to document important situations according to their point of view and encouraging statements about complex situations. This allowed for the researchers to draw conclusions about "the views of the subjects towards their own everyday lifes" (Flick, 2009: 242). They were given the following instruction: "What are your favorite spots in the Neubad project? Please take a photo of three to five favorite spots or room situations. Please describe afterwards why these spots are important to you. Alternatively, you may go around with the interview person photographing and explaining simultaneously."

Second, we ran two 3-h group discussions (Flick, 2009: 196) in March and October 2013, each time with six members of the Board. The aim was to identify main issues and situations when creativity and innovation occurred. To recapitulate the events and associated meanings, information was collected chronologically by means of drafted time lines that were discussed and complemented. The board members were also asked to classify events according to positive or negative impact. As Flick (2009: 196) points out, the collective discussion among participants is an alternative way to interviews and very valuable to gain in-depth insight. Group discussions help to filter extreme attitudes and render common opinions (Pollock, 1955). The group discussions were documented by means of videos, photographs, and field notes.

Third, we observed the process with the aim to get hold of changes in the space and its usage. Therefore, we used field notes and photos that we took occasionally. Researchers took photos of important spots like the pool, the co-working area, and the bistro area at different points in time to document the changes that are too complex to catch for the eye without such documentation (Flick, 2009: 241).

Data analysis

The data collected represented different perspectives and were gathered at different points in time. The data from the problem-centric interviews, the group discussions, and the collected photos were organized in different data corpora and thereafter analyzed in a uniform procedure. The coding procedure involved multiple interpreters to ensure the credibility of the data analysis (Flick, 2009; Patton, 2002) and to increase interpretive validity (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

In a first step, three researchers coded the material individually according to the main themes "play way (PLAY)," "network set-up (NETWORK)," and "temporary use and space identity (SPACE)." Each researcher went through the text and assigned codes by marking fragments of text and specifying the code. Additional themes were coded as open topics. Researchers then came together and compared the allocation of text fragments to codes and themes. They discussed the codes until they arrived at a common understanding. The individual first-level coding allowed for summarizing data through labeling units of meaning (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 69). In the second step, researchers defined explanatory "pattern codes" (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 69). This involved iterative refining of the initial

Table 1. Themes and subthemes.

Main themes	Subthemes
Play	
Preparing the field	Communication with the municipality prior to the call
	Public discontentment concerning Lucerne's cultural policies
	High communication frequency between formerly disconnected cultural sub-scenes
Defining the rules	Opportunity to create a "home" for creative scene
	Entrepreneurial challenge set by municipality
Letting things slide	No further municipal commitment or assistance
	Generating widespread public perception
	Supporters show up
	Necessity to act in an entrepreneurial manner
In the fever of the game	Financial pressure
	Conflicts between municipality and Neubad actors
Network	
Open invitation to join	Values of tolerance and openness
	Anybody invited
	Self-assigned participation
	Collective self-organization
	Opportunity to contribute own ideas
Rewards and benefits	Appreciation by the staff
	Goodies
	Good deed
	Professional supervision of volunteers
Linking supporter networks	Constant network growth
	Interactions between formerly isolated groups
	Not just "the usual suspects"
Space	
Prototyping temporary use	Interim use as something new
	Indoor swimming pool without water
Childhood memories and surprises	Space brings back memories
	Transformation surprises visitors
	Inspiring atmosphere
Playing improvised	Meeting regulations and standards
	Improvised low-budget solutions
	Invitation for creative improvisation
User appropriation and identification	Option to pitch in and modify the space
	"It is your space"

findings by grouping the first-level codes and related texts by the researchers. Table 1 presents the themes and subthemes.

In a third step, researchers draw topic maps that allowed to visualize relations between themes and subthemes and to display them as components in a network of themes (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 70–71). The visual material was used

to confirm and extend the findings from the written material (Flick, 2009: 246). A floor plan guided grouping and interpretation of visual material (see Figure 2).

The integration of findings from separate data corpora into a common interpretation followed a conceptual clustering approach that ensures conceptual coherence of the emerging clusters (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 127). Following the suggestions by Flick (2009) for reflecting findings, researcher sought to understand whether data from different data corpora were "convergent (revealing the same) or (...) contradictory or complementary?" (p. 449). Furthermore, the exchange with the informants during group discussions functioned as validation "member checks" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), where researchers sought to obtain the feedback of respondents to their interpretation of the researchers.

Findings

The case-study data allowed to present the findings concerning playful city government processes regarding (1) the activities of the municipality of Lucerne that set the "rules of the game" for the creation of Neubad and (2) the activities and measures conducted by members and network of the Neubad association.

PLAY: Playful approaches as planning and governance strategy

The city municipalities of Lucerne used a nonmanagerial approach to the temporary use of the former indoor swimming pool. After acting as initiators and offering the opportunity to create a place for the creative class, they set the entrepreneurial challenge in the bid and then let things slide.

Preparing the playing field. The data showed that the communication between prospective Neubad association members and the city municipality prior to the call was acting as a catalyst for the collaboration of creative actors. Interviewees pointed to an initiating event that happened several months prior to the call for proposals: Members of Lucerne University of Applied Science and Arts held a public round table with the City Architect of Lucerne (member of the municipality) to investigate the options to realize an "Urban Vision Lab" for exchange and knowledge transfer between local communities, municipality, and education/research. At this occasion, it was mentioned that something was about to happen to improve the situation of the city's creative scene. At the same time, a public discontentment concerning Lucerne's cultural policies was tangible. This led to a higher communication frequency among formerly disconnected cultural sub-scenes and representatives of the city municipality. When the call was published, these
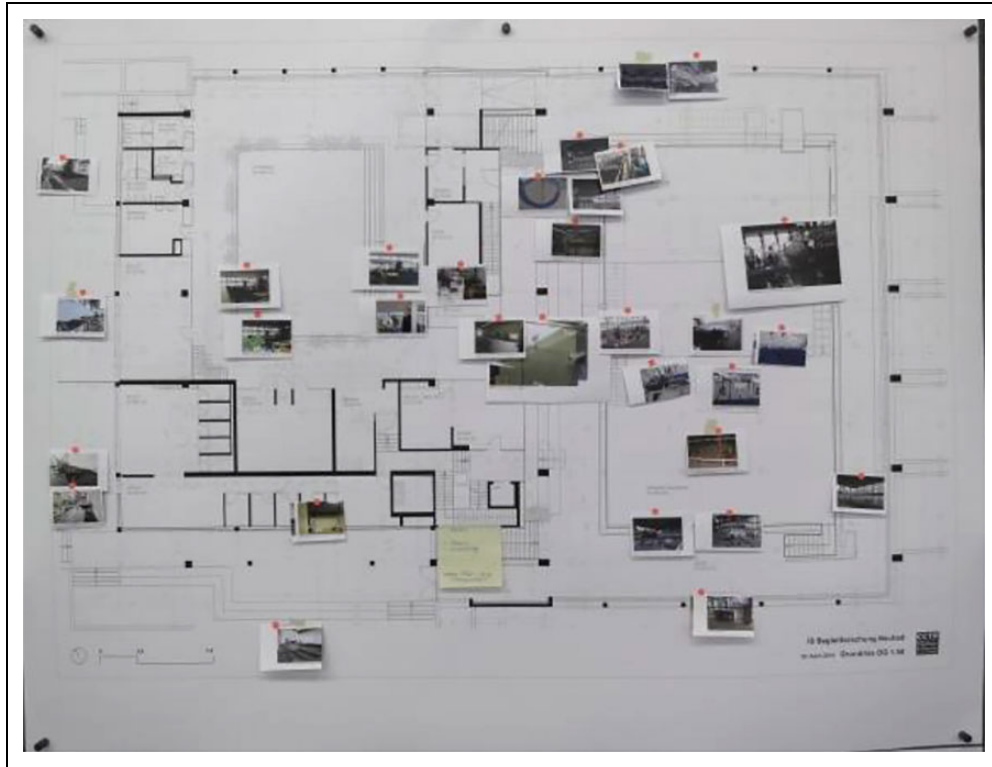
Figure 2. Topic map using a floor plan.

groups were ready to join forces as the Neubad association to meet the requirements in the competition entry.

Defining the rules of the game. With the decision on the bid, city officials placed the large municipal building of the public indoor swimming pool at the disposal of the creative community, thereby offering an opportunity to create a "home" for the creative actors in the city. At the same time, the municipality challenged the community to grow from "creative community" to "creative economy."

The Neubad actors were obliged to find ways to finance the necessary reconstruction of the building. Neubad members accepted this challenge as "creative play under serious conditions," because they were convinced by their vision and business case.

Letting things slide. There was no further municipal assistance after the competition, but the Neubad association took matters in its own hand. The first move the Neubad association made was to generate widespread public perception: "The media coverage was very pleasant. There was lots of press, especially at the grand opening," remembers a user." Neubad engaged in active, transparent communal dialogue with the neighborhood by means of public events at the new location. Much of the organization and communication happened via digital media (website, Facebook, Instagram), followed by newspaper articles and radiobroadcasting.

Gaining momentum and publicity, many supporters showed up, helping in various ways and pushing motivation. For example, a closing cooperative sponsored their remaining shareholder capital, and voluntary workers and professionals helped with the reconstruction of the building and setup of the bistro. The autonomy the Neubad association was provided with in the game not only implied freedom and self-management but also quite a high amount of (self-)responsibility and the necessity to act entrepreneurial. "The house is, in the meantime, run by volunteers contributing the effort of about 1000% full-time equivalent positions. It therefore requires a certain degree of organization and solidarity," a staff member explains.

Caught up in the fever of the game. The agile state of pioneering and constant renewing, inventing, reacting, negotiating, and financial pressure kept members on their toes and claimed its toll. Confrontation, misunderstandings, and frictions between the municipality and Neubad actors were inevitable. Conflict particularly arose when early financial calculations of Neubad concluded that an extension for 2–3 more years of the temporary use would ease their burden of ensuring financial success. Limited to short-term planning, Neubad depended on sponsors for the reconstruction work and in case anything of the building's old infrastructure would need replacement or repair. In 2016, the city prolonged the temporary use until 2019 (Neubad, 2016), a

commitment that could have helped a lot in earlier stages to calculate investments and ease operators' nerves.

NETWORK: Brokering new connections and stimulating the emergence of grassroots movements

The Neubad association attracted and invited actors to become part of the team. At the same time, playing the game created the conditions for the emergence of links between actors.

Open invitation to join the game: The creative network at Neubad was built on the values of tolerance and openness. A staff member puts it like that: "This mutual understanding (. . .) listening to other people's opinion, how something should look like." Anybody was invited to become partakers, actors, and producers of its atmosphere. The decision to participate was self-assigned, as this user explains: "I believe that only those people come who want to get involved." Collective self-organization fostered the identification with the network and its new epicenter Neubad. It became a place that functioned as "a platform of debate for the society," highlights a staff member.

The constant (visible) change during the reconstruction phase provided space for experimentation and visions of social communities. The opportunity to contribute own ideas led to a situation where "people simply are willing to share their ideas, their work and their energy," says a staff member.

Rewards and benefits: Volunteers' help was rewarded by explicit appreciation, goodies (e.g. free meals for helpers), and a high fun factor. "It's a feeling of high appreciation. There is really always somebody there, who says 'Thanks and hey, super that you were around'," reports a volunteer. "I'm pleased by the fact that it is a team project. And that so many different people are pulling into the same direction," adds a user.

The Neubad association openly communicated its dependence from the voluntary help of skilled manual workers and sponsors. Supporting Neubad was appreciated as good deed in the creative community and the neighborhood, and this might be an important reason why people were pitching in whenever necessary. "During the reconstruction I was astonished. Sometimes people simply turned up and said: 'Today I have time, can I help somewhere?'," recalls a staff member. Professionals supervised voluntary helpers and assured the quality of the output.

Linking supporter networks. The network constantly grew and changed. During the research period, interactions between former isolated groups were observed: "The atmosphere that diverse people are already working [. . .] You simply see people you actually know from somewhere – it is the place where you meet them again," a user concludes.

Since these groups consisted not only of "the usual suspects" but also involved voluntary workers, companies, operators, tenants in the ateliers and co-working spaces, event hosts and guests, tavern regulars, neighborhood families and crowd funders, the potential for network development was broad. Having started with 100 players in 2012, the Neubad association in January 2017 consisted of 860 members. "Our network has grown [. . .] Neubad certainly had a big share. The networks intermingle," states a user.

SPACE: Temporary use of an iconic building

The building of the former swimming pool was of major importance for enabling activity and the construction of social identity.

Prototyping temporary use. The notion of interim use was new to the citizens of Lucerne and Central Switzerland. This unfamiliarity was particularly attractive: "I like the project in general, it is so young, so dynamic and something totally new and different,", underlines a volunteer. "I never saw interim use in this sense. It was very exciting and this is probably the reason, I felt so attracted to it."

In addition, the building made the setting of this temporary use project so unique. It provided the spatial experience of a large empty swimming pool with its diving platforms—where one can walk on the ground of the pool instead of swimming in water. "I've never visited an empty indoor swimming pool before. [. . .] It is crazy; the pool can be used as a stage," outlines a volunteer.

Childhood memories and surprises. Many people felt connected to the Neubad building in a special way because the pool was the place where they went for their first swimming classes. "Most people from Lucerne [. . .] earned their swimming badges here," outlines a user. "The element of surprise and nostalgia for those who know the swimming pool and are now able to sit on the ground of the actual pool and participate in cultural events" allied this user and many others with the place.

The personal connection to the history of the place created community identity. The space brought back memories—at the same time, new elements surprised visitors. For example, nowadays users "are using the former girls' shower as dye factory." Another user adds, "The spaces did not change much. And that is what is about [. . .], to use the spaces totally differently by changing little things." Neubad users and visitors perceived the atmosphere as inspiring and helping to generate creative ideas. One staff member comments, "I believe, the unique ambience or atmosphere [. . .], especially the pool as it is with its huge volume, there is so much air for many new ideas."

Playing improvised. To make new use of the former public indoor swimming pool, the Neubad team was obliged to meet several building standards—for example, emergency exit doors or handrails around the empty pool. Many measures were implemented on low budget and convey an improvised character. They were recognized by users as "interim solution, but a good one".

Nevertheless, the interim character was highly appreciated by users: "I feel attached to the creative, dynamic environment of Neubad and probably also to its state as interim situation. I believe, that creatives and inventors feel at ease with temporary places which change constantly." The building invited for creative improvisation, in making as well as in thinking, as a user explains: "Inventers like me are comfortable in temporary changing spaces, where there is space for novelty and one can change things."

User appropriation and identification. As an outcome of the collective activity and work during the reconstruction, the participants adopted the former swimming facility. This led to connectivity and identification with the place as this volunteer comments: "Everybody gave a part of her- or himself, you notice that. The spaces have a lot of personality [...], everyone pitched in."

The option to modify the space was deeply appreciated and important to the creative users. Atelier space was given by the staff to users as their space: "This is your space—do with it as you please" was the comment of a staff member when an atelier user asked whether it would be possible to commission an interior designer. "Everyone finds an own way how to use the space or how to rebuild lockers. They are inspired by each other," the staff member explains to the researchers.

Discussion and conclusions

This article aimed at answering the research question "How can city governments and municipalities stimulate grassroots initiatives toward an entrepreneurial city in a play way?" Its contribution to extant literature on entrepreneurial cities lays in describing, analyzing, and discussing the empirical case of Neubad Lucerne that exemplifies approaches of playful rather than managerial city government processes that stimulate the emergence and activities of such grassroots initiatives and is thus instructive to city municipalities. The case study shows that besides the playful process, the mechanisms in which networks of creative players develop, the temporary spaces that enable activity, and the construction of social identity play a major role.

Regarding the *process*, the case study showed that it was important that time was ripe for creating a place for the creative community. In Lucerne, several actors had already started discussions and networking; and the city municipalities had formulated the strategic objective to aim for becoming creative city until 2020 (Stadt Luzern, 2012).

An educational institution had initiated a link between municipality and entrepreneurs from the creative class (Rae, 2009). In this situation, the city municipalities offered an opportunity to the creative scene. As proposed by extant literature (Hall and Hubbard, 1996; Sasaki, 2010), they addressed this call to a grassroots movement, thereby ensuring that it would not create protest but engagement by citizens (Harvey, 1987). The case study shows that the decision of going for temporary use of an existing building (Oswalt et al., 2013) was important as it attracted particularly entrepreneurial actors in the creative scene who started to engage (Bishop and Williams, 2012; Bürgin, 2010).

After having decided about the bid and set the entrepreneurial challenge to run the temporary use in a self-financed manner, the city municipalities took Glaeser and Kerr (2010) who suggest "to attract smart people and get out of their way" (p. 4) almost literally and let things slide. With this highly risky approach the city authorities dropped any managerial approaches as suggested by scholars (Harvey, 2000; Roberts and Schein, 1993). Literature foresees partnerships between the city and actors from the private sector for attracting inward investment (Bassett, 1996; Bemzez, 2008; Doucet, 2013; Hall and Hubbart, 1996). The game created in Lucerne represents a new form of such partnerships, with the city authorities completely handing over a public building to the citizens.

The pullout of the city municipality from the game was on the one hand attractive to the Neubad actors as it provided them with high autonomy; on the other hand, it also generated high uncertainty and a precarious financial situation. This in return created a citizen movement that supported the project with voluntary work and sponsorship. The city government took over the role of a playmaker setting the rules and not as a partner as suggested in literature (Doucet, 2013). The case study indicates that this was one of the important reasons why the Neubad association was successful in mobilizing a grassroots movement and the necessary support. The role of authenticity in appropriation processes of potential creative spaces and city disengagement in initiatives toward the entrepreneurial city as a way of play management and risk-taking approach is from our perspective an important one for follow up studies. We conclude here that this extreme variant of a playful approach is particularly successful if city governments aim at turning a creative into an entrepreneurial community that supports local development. On the other hand, more communication with the Neubad actors, for example, through a municipality department concerned with connectedness and networking for which Landry (2000) calls might have benefited both sides, particularly through setting a reliable time frame for the temporary use.

Regarding the *network* formation, it was essential that the Neubad association managed to ensure the engagement of people who were not the "usual suspects" of the creative

scene of Lucerne. The case study confirms Charles Landry's (2000) theory that the brokering of new connections and new economic, scientific and cultural collaborations for establishing a so-called "creative milieu" is key for future urban prosperity. The Neubad associations' strong grassroots characteristics (Pulkkinen, 2014) were important as drivers. For all actors involved, the Neubad was their first common project, and like that they were able to play the game free of burdens of the past.

The "anything goes groove" based on the values of tolerance and openness allowed anybody to contribute ideas and provided rooms for experimentation and visions. Support was appreciated, and former isolated networks mingled. The case shows that the new network—today about 860 actors—engaged in reclaiming (Carlsson, 2008; Walljasper, 2010) the former indoor swimming pool and turning it into a space for creativity and innovation. We conclude here that city municipalities aiming at becoming an entrepreneurial city should in one way or another set frames for open participation of diverse actors that make an initiative truly their own.

The *physical space*, that is, the building of the former swimming pool, played an important role. The case study confirms extant literature that despite developments such as globalization, mobility, and worldwide Information and Communication Technology (ICT) networks, space-oriented local identity provides individuals with meaning (Christmann, 2008: 2). Iconic architectural places "with a special meaning that is symbolic for a culture and/or a time" (Sklair, 2006: 25) stimulate the construction and negotiation of meaning between people (Christmann, 2008: 1). In the case of Neubad, the building created a sense of identity among the community members as it mobilized childhood memories. To city municipalities this implies that they should make sure to select a place that citizens can relate to their personal history and identity (Christmann, 2008; BMVBS, 2010). The topic of space identity was so far rather a side topic in the discourse on municipal initiatives toward the entrepreneurial city. As our case study indicates that the choice of the playground for such initiatives as well as the process of space-related identity creation play a crucial role for the engagement of citizens, we call for further studies that help to conceptualize these issues.

The case study confirms the assumption by Oswalt et al. (2013) that temporary use can stimulate entrepreneurial engagement. Complementary to extant findings, it underlines that it is important that the chosen physical object allows for appropriation and implementation of own ideas. Given that there are several empty buildings in Lucerne where the same movement could have created co-working offices and cultural spaces, this happened only in the former swimming pool. The characteristics of the improvised, open, changeable, and temporary use attracted innovative actors. In line with actor–network

theory (Latour, 2007), the physical space stimulated action due to its characteristics. We invite follow-up studies using the perspective of actor–network theory to elaborate this further.

To researchers and practitioners interested in urban entrepreneurialism, this case study suggests watching out for city development initiatives that allow citizens to temporarily use iconic buildings. Our case suggests that attempts to give the responsibility for old city owned buildings back to the public can be successful if citizens feel that these initiatives are so special that they voluntarily start investing time, effort, and money. In the Neubad case, the iconic space "and" the entrepreneurial nature of the challenge probably turned the balance and made the grassroots movement emerge. This assumption should, however, also be tested by future research.

One contribution of this case study are the policy implications that can be drawn from it—particularly concerning the role of citizens in city development processes. A suggestion to policy makers is to rethink the very popular approach of setting up buildings for creative and entrepreneurial initiatives that are then not used (Merkel, 2015; Sasaki, 2010) and instead to provide entrepreneurial citizens with the opportunity to transform existing places into creative hubs. Furthermore, the Neubad community was driven by the will to meet the entrepreneurial challenge and managed to sustain the space financially. Another challenge to cities would therefore be to continuously keep up the interest of the community into these spaces—and temporary use is one of the strategies that might be of help here because there will be a need for continuous redevelopment of creative spaces.

As a single case study, the findings are limited regarding their generalizability beyond the case studied. The research question needs therefore to be investigated across cities with similar initiatives under analog conditions. Similarly, follow-up studies need to systematically address the question under which circumstances the extreme version of a playful approach toward entrepreneurial city might or indeed might not be the most promising approach to achieve goals, as compared to others.

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