

Let's create, not debate

Co-creation as the 'new wave' of public engagement?
First insights from Wallonia

MACQ Hadrien
Université de Liège

Overall approach

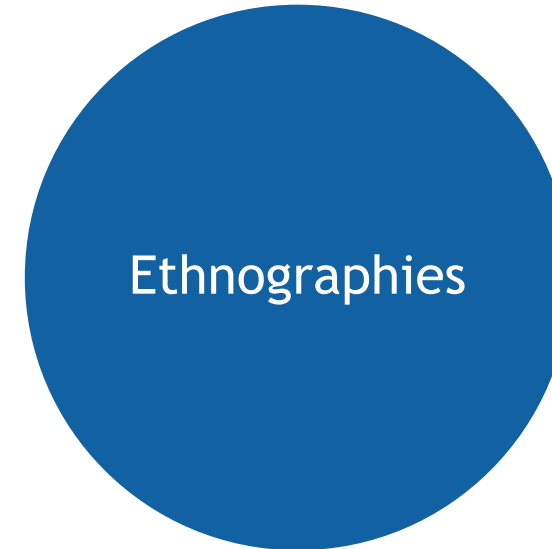
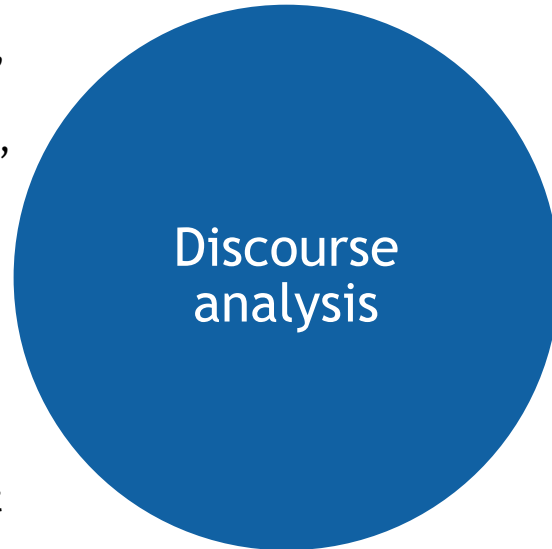
- Public engagement conceived in a broad sense
 - No pre-identification of some formats of participation
 - How public authorities seek to make « publics » participate in S&T-related issues
- Focus on the political construction performed through the promotion and enactment of certain types of participation mechanisms
 - Why do certain forms of participation matter for public authorities?
 - In which broader (economic, institutional, etc.) context do they take place?
 - What types of publics and issues are constructed?

Methods

Macro level

Oral and written discourse, both formal (policy documents, official reports, etc.) and informal (blog, informal conversations, etc.).

Analysis of images and metaphors in order to characterise the 'socio-technical imaginaries' that are deployed.



Micro level

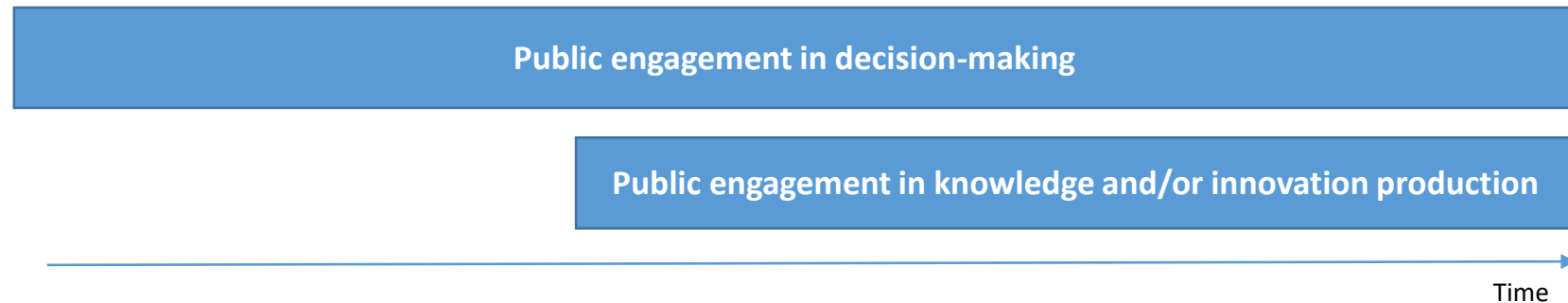
Performed through different sites of engagement in order to grasp how the imaginaries are translated into practices.

Combination of participant observations, documentary analysis and semi-structured interviews with sponsors, facilitators, and participant.

European Union (STI policies) + Walloon Region

Diagnosis

- Besides traditional (deliberative) approaches, emergence of a 'new wave' involving publics in innovation



- Analyse the imaginaries, publics, mechanisms and conception of democracy that are producers of and produced by this new wave

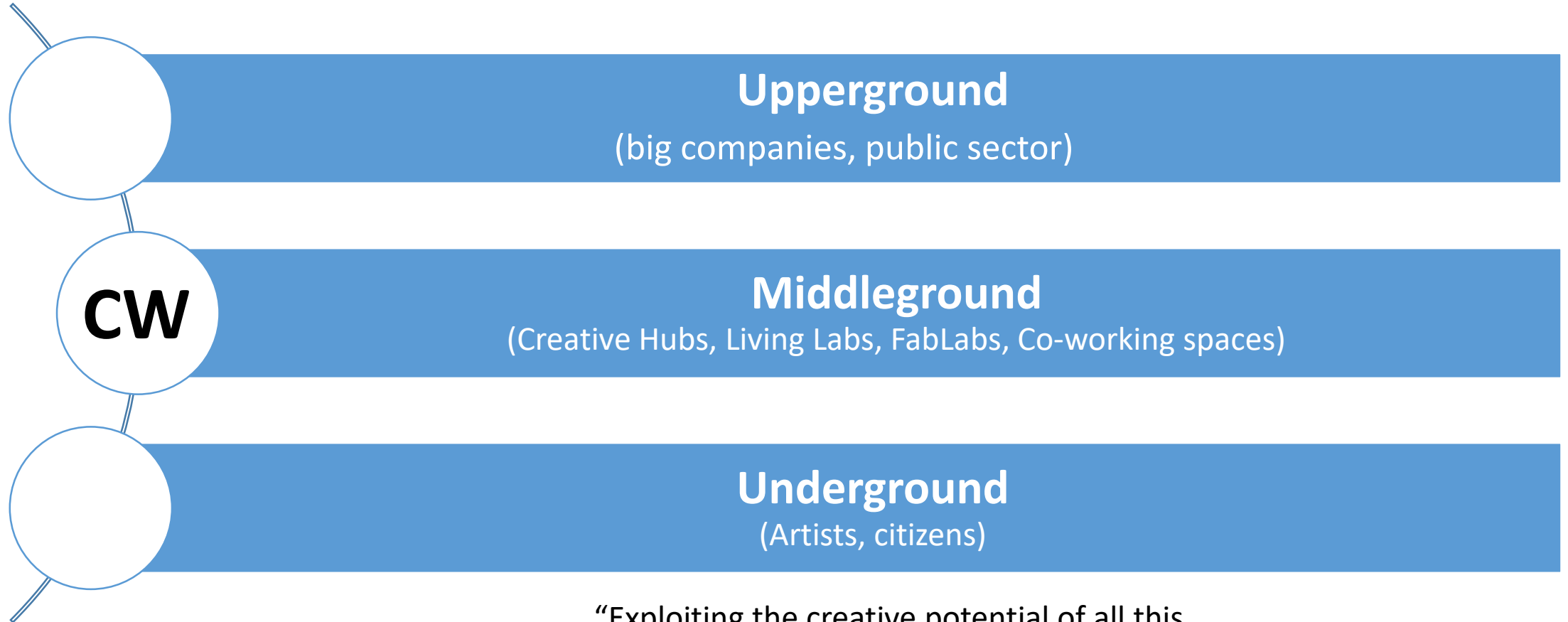
New wave at the EU level

- New research and innovation strategy: ‘Open Innovation, Open Science, Open Innovation’ in 2015.
- Role attributed to citizen scientists : collecting data; “valid producers of knowledge”
 - “And just as people offer spare rooms via AirBnB, why shouldn’t they be allowed to offer spare brain power via citizen science?” (EC, 2015)
- Open Innovation
 - “Combining the power of ideas and knowledge from different actors (...) to co-create new products and find solutions to societal needs” (EC, 2015)

Co-creation in Wallonia

- “Creative Wallonia” (2008) : framework programme that:
 - “... places **creativity and innovation** at the heart of the **Walloon project**. (...) promotes a Walloon society and economy which are transforming and contributing to **value creation** by intensively and positively exploiting creativity”.
- Concepts central to Creative Wallonia: **design thinking; co-creation, makers, etc.**

« Make Wallonia a creative and innovative society »



“Exploiting the creative potential of all this ‘breeding ground’ to stimulate innovation”

7 CREATIVE HUBS IN WALLONIA



WAP'S HUB // TOURNAI – WALLONIE PICARDE



OPENHUB
Garage for Innovators

OPENHUB // LOUVAIN-LA-NEUVE – BRABANT WALLON
www.openhub.be



PLUG-R // PROVINCE OF LIÈGE
www.plug-r.be



TRAKK // NAMUR
www.trakk.be

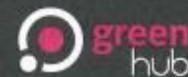


Creative Valley
WALLONIE – HAINAUT

CREATIVE VALLEY // MONS – HEART OF HAINAUT
www.creativevalley.be



BUBBLE HUB // CHARLEROI – SOUTH HAINAUT
www.bubblehub.be



GREEN HUB // PROVINCE OF LUXEMBOURG
<http://green-hub.be>



Creative Wallonia and technologies

- Strong socio-technical imaginary: technologies will allow for the industrial restructuring of Wallonia (« Industry 4.0 », « Digital Wallonia »)
- Important to raise awareness, especially among young people

Concepts that appeared through data collection

- **Empowerment:** “... and so the empowerment axis is “**how do we transfer the methods and tools of creative economy to the general public?**” ...”
- **Democratization:** “... allowing everyone to make innovation”
- **Power:** “in a Living Lab, there is no power (...) a Living Lab actually works like a private company, they are asked to create innovation with users” → **No debate on “societal aspects or on public decisions”.**

Conclusion

- Same dynamics in the EU and Wallonia (and many other examples?) → Broad 'new wave' ?
- No debate on politics in co-creation?
 - No engagement in decision-making → Engagement in value-creation
- Link with the STS critique of 'traditional' deliberative approaches (instrumentalization, consensus, etc.)
 - Allowing for different points of view and visions of future to be expressed and argued is not present
 - Unique vision of the future (linked to the socio-technical imaginary) → engagement practices as a 'tool' for making it happen
- If any, where could be the critique?
 - In the grassroots 'maker movement' itself? Hackerspaces refusing institutionalisation