Governance Discourses and Image Management Strategies in Large-Scale Urban Development Projects—How a Shifting Context and Actor Relations Influence Planning

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Abstract: Governance processes and image management strategies in large-scale urban development projects are exposed to a range of contextual and internal actor-network-related influences. These relations are complex and, due the long realization time of these projects, cannot be entirely anticipated by management strategies. This research investigates how organizations manage these complexities and uncertainties, what strategies they employ, and how these strategies adapt over time. The research analyzes the empirical case of the Amsterdam Zuidas development through a series of interviews conducted with key stakeholder group representatives and an extensive study of the development visions at different milestones of the development. The study relates these findings to the theoretical framework of Henry Mintzberg on strategy formation and finds that large-scale urban development projects need to employ overlapping strategies and engage in adaptive learning to balance development ambitions with the internal and external influences affecting the strategies.

Keywords: governance; large-scale projects; image management; strategy formation

1. Introduction

This study investigates how image management strategies and governance discourses evolve during the lengthy implementation process of large-scale urban development projects and highlights how actor initiatives and governmental actions shift at critical milestones. Based on the work of Henry Mintzberg and James Waters on organizational strategies [1–3] and that of Phillip Kotler, Donald Haider, and Irving Rein on place marketing [4], this study develops its own research methodology for the assessment of strategic management in large-scale urban development processes according to three factors: (1) public–private actor discourses that shape deliberate image management strategies; (2) contextual (political, economic, cultural, and legislative) forces that form limitations to deliberate strategies; (3) emergent strategies with which public agencies adaptively respond to a strategic failure due to an evolving context or a changing discourse.

The study shows how multiple strategies can overlay, fail, and emerge at various milestones during three consecutive phases of project realization and clarifies how an image management strategy can be implemented despite the impediments of internal and external forces. The goal of the study is to address a knowledge gap in the academic discourse on the management of large-scale urban development projects by gaining a better understanding how strategies are formed under the complex internal and external dynamics of evolving actor discourses and a changing context. Due to these dynamics, top-down-imposed image management strategies are also challenged by decentralized, multi-actor urban management discourses, which is reflected in the organization and the morphological patterns of the built urban realm. While it is accepted that governance strategies support image management strategies and coordinate actors in large-scale urban development projects, very little academic research has been conducted to understand these strategies and interactions.

1.1. Governance and Image Management Strategies

The realization of large-scale urban development projects takes a long time—sometimes decades—which implies that the strategies employed are implicitly subject to internal and external dynamics. This change can appear gradually over time or occur as an abrupt break with previous conventions, values, or general economic conditions. Consequently, governance and image management strategies are confronted with gradual and abrupt change during different moments of a project's realization.

With regard to internal dynamics, this research highlights that a better understanding of the connectivity between the different spheres of action—as discussed in the work of Willem Salet [5]—can explain how actors in local discourses react to these dynamics. Abrupt changes at certain milestones can, for example, cause a reconfiguration of the actor groups involved or inform a changing set of values within their discourses. This can, in return, lead to shifts towards new governance or image management strategies [6,7], and may consequently reflect alternative land-use and morphological patterns. Christopher Alexander and others, stress how the organization and the management of actor networks influences urban form [8,9]. Therefore, the realization of image management strategies does not follow a strict, superimposed script, but adapts its preestablished visions according to actor discourses, their locally specific needs, and the negotiations among them. Urban marketing is an inherent part of image management strategies and is therefore affected by change. However, urban marketing is not only informed by the internal discourses and its dynamics, but also by the external context. Urban marketing has a hinge function that works as a bridge between the abstract image of a desired future development and the realized built environment. Urban marketing is particularly involved in a city's potential in terms of the services and attractions that make a city appealing to potential future users. Therefore, cities are in competition on a global scale. Cites and their marketing strategies have been integrated into global networks with an integral production of goods [10,11], which has led to increased competition for investments and human resources [4,12]. As a marketing approach to a place's development can be seen as a response to international competition among locations in global networks—as stressed by Kotler et al.—adaptations to a location's character, program, spatial design, and appeal may be following an image management strategy that responds to international competing locations but may also react to external economic and political factors. Therefore, the marketing of a place is not subject to international competition alone, but also to continuously changing local conditions and a persistent activity that must continuously recalibrate itself in order to respond to changing internal actor discourses and accommodate shifting political, economic, and cultural conditions [4].

Governance strategies can play an important role in supporting the realization of image management strategies. Governance strategies can, create institutional incentives that foster public–private partnerships and collaboration, promote transparency and communication among actors, influence discourses by implementing new institutions and directing their leadership, or create regulatory boundaries through which the actions of private parties can be broadly directed (These strategies have been discussed by Henry Mintzberg earlier. However, Mintzberg and others have not studied these strategies in an urban development context). In addition, these strategies are subject to change during the long implementation period of image management strategies in large-scale urban development projects depending on a range of factors, such as changing economic conditions, shifts in political priorities, and evolving social and environmental challenges. For example, during times of economic downturn, there may be greater emphasis on governance strategies that focus on fiscal responsibility and efficiency, which may result in a change in the image management strategies in terms of character, program, scale, target group, public space design, etc., but can also result in reduced investments and control over market actor activities. Similarly, shifts in political priorities or changes in government leadership may result in changes to governance strategies. Changing social and environmental challenges may, for instance result in the adaptation of image management strategies. For instance, increasing

concerns around sustainability and social equity may require governance strategies that prioritize environmental and social outcomes over economic growth.

Overall, the relationship between governance strategies and image management strategies in urban development projects is interactive and dynamic. Effective governance strategies can have multiple layers and should be adaptable and responsive to changing conditions. Learning how decision-making processes and marketing strategies change (or not) during critical moments in the development process exposes how flexible (or not) the strategy-making 'behavior' of actors in a large-scale development tends to perform, and whether deliberate strategies become realized.

1.2. Scientific and Societal Relevance

The outcomes discussed here might be valuable for policy makers, city marketing professionals, private sector agents, and grassroots initiatives involved in other large-scale development projects who wish to gain a better understanding of how relational structures inform image management strategies and influence the success of deliberate image management strategies in practice. The findings of this research allow for the drawing of a set of general conclusions that have not been touched upon in the current academic discourse on deliberate and emergent image management strategies in the management of urban development projects. The discussion of relational governance structures and adapting marketing strategies that unfolds in this study helps to understand how the analyzed large-scale urban development processes of the Zuidas become realized over time.

In this context, deliberate strategies refer to the formal plans and strategies that city leaders or interest groups develop to improve the image of their city towards a selected target group [13]. These strategies may include public relations campaigns, branding efforts, and targeted investments in services or design of locations. Emergent strategies, on the other hand, refer to the actions and decisions that city leaders, civil society, and private stakeholders make on an ongoing basis that shape the city's image, even if those actions are not part of a formal plan [2]. According to Henry Mintzberg and James Waters [3], perfectly deliberate strategies need to fulfill the following conditions: first, the precise intentions in the organization must be clear and articulated in a high level of detail, so that no actors have doubts about the goals before any actions are taken; second, the goals and actions have to be shared by the entire network of actors and carried out organizationally, as through collective action of all stakeholders involved; third, collective intentions have to be realized without interferences, alterations, or concessions of external (market, political, customary, etc.) forces [3]. External contextual factors such as changes in the economy, demographics, and politics can influence the development of deliberate and emergent image management strategies. However, it is quite unlikely to find a perfectly deliberate strategy, as context variables—such as economic climate, political climate, cultural background, and legislation—cannot be under the full control of the organization [14]. Internal discursive factors such as the actors involved, their interests and power, and their ability to influence decision-making can also impact the development of image management strategies. In particular, the power dynamics among actors can influence which strategies are selected and how they are implemented. To form a perfectly emergent strategy, order consistency in action must be ensured even in the absence of intention [3]. This is illustrated in Figure 1.
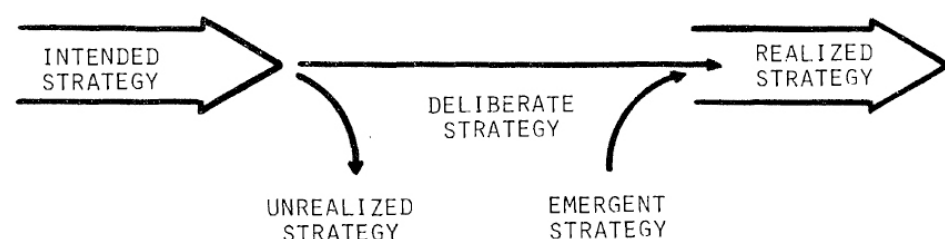
Figure 1. Types of strategy. Mintzberg and Waters [3]. Copyright John Wiley and Sons.

However, this study adds new insights to this body of knowledge and explores how the theoretical framework of Mintzberg and Waters can be applied to the analysis of complex urban management strategies. An image management strategy, even if led by the public sector, is a co-productive, socio-spatial process that provides new narratives, shapes an alternative vision for a location, and defines the means of implementation [15]. On one hand, these strategies are derived from decisions within actor networks that take external constraints and opportunities derived from the political climate, economic climate, cultural background, changes in legislation and regulations, and demographic changes [16]. On the other hand, they respond to the inherent interaction between actors in these networks and how their strategic behavior influences a collective future vision [7]. The success of actor networks depends on the ability to develop deliberate strategies supported by collective action, which again depends on the trust relations among the actors involved as well as leadership that steps up at critical moments to unify diverging stakeholder interests into collective future visions. As large-scale urban development projects tend to stretch over long periods of time, the Zuidas project in Amsterdam is foreseen to be under development for 30 years before completion [17], and the collective future vision is going to be under scrutiny during several milestones that define abrupt alterations in the context. Figure 2 illustrates how internal and external relationships influence deliberate image management strategies, how contextual forces can cause deliberate strategies to adapt or even fail, and how a multitude of uncoordinated actions can result in emergent strategies that become realized and shape the image of urban development (Figure 2).
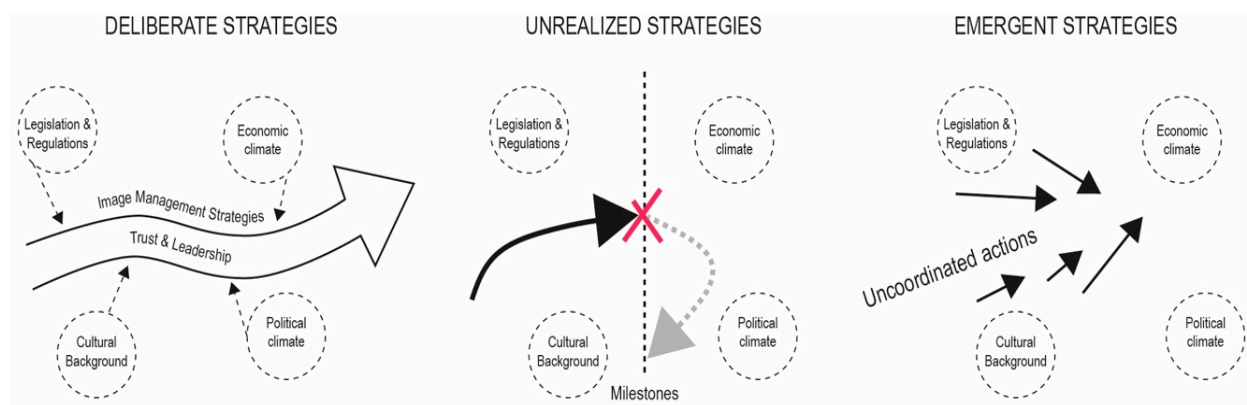
Figure 2. Internal and external relations influencing image management strategies. Source: author.

Trust among actors can be demonstrated by the successful development of a strategic project. It can be established at the personal level as a long-term professional commitment [14]. Large-scale urban area development, particularly when carried out over a long period and in a highly politicized environment, requires some degree of long-term professional commitment between the public and private parties involved to be successful. Here, stereotypes must be avoided in order for trust to build up, and measures need to be taken to maintain trust among the parties involved, especially when players change or milestones are reached [16]. Due to the long development process of large-scale urban development projects, leadership is a long-term affair [16]. That is why the management of these processes needs to combine the advantages of normative flexibility with effective management [18]. Leadership can arise from a single person or a collective of individuals. These leaders, also referred to as policy entrepreneurs, are one person or a group of persons who invest time and resources to achieve their goals, and by virtue of authority and persistence bring together political and policy streams [19]. Leadership can be considered a critical challenge in place development and marketing. Marketing leadership refers to the holistic capability of place management to direct complex development, form the right strategies, and obtain organizing power [20]. Large scale developments tend to follow a common ('cloned') approach of a city business district with mono-functional high-end offices and some amenities to serve them. The empirical case of the Zuidas shares many of

these ambitions, but the realized image also diverges from the cookie-cutter approach. At the Zuidas, the development increasingly shows local organizational and spatial patterns that infringe on this generic image. This may be due to deliberate choices in the image management strategy or due to contextual pull factors. As legislation and regulations follow local standards, local users follow culturally embedded expectations, and as the operations of the local construction industry are geared towards a local planning culture, these projects may be subject to uncoordinated pull forces that seek to merge the generic image of an international business district with an Image rooted in the local culture. This results in locally specific organizational and morphological development patterns that are realized in the built urban fabric of the Zuidas. In this sense, the study goes further than an analysis of global cities as, for example, described by Saskia Sassen [11] and insists—along the lines of Roger Simmonds and Garry Hack [21]—that the patterns according to which large-scale urban development projects become realized are influenced by top-down governance policies and image management strategies as well as the community (actors, construction industry, residents, etc.) that participates in those plans. The evidence obtained from the Zuidas substantiates the understanding of actor networks and explains how the local context transgresses image management strategies into locally grounded organizational and spatial patterns.

1.3. Scientific Relevance

This study adds new knowledge to the field of strategic management by exploring the relationships between urban governance, city marketing, and image management strategies. In this field, Philip Kotler promotes the idea of a city as a product with respect to four main elements: the physical product, service product, image product, and cultural product [4]. Here, the image can be broken down into several key aspects such as branding and identity, reputation, positioning, emotional appeal, and marketing tools. Other authors have expanded these thoughts in different ways. Simon Anholt clarifies the difference between place marketing and place branding when he insists that place marketing is an activity undertaken by the management to push consumer attractiveness and sales, while branding is a process that pushes qualities and values to create an emotional bond with consumers that occurs internally when respect for the brand accumulates [22]. Brand communication strategies, therefore, transport the city's core values, attitudes, behaviors, and characteristics [23]. Filaret Kotsi et al. emphasized the importance of a place's stakeholder perception, which increases a place's attractiveness for potential customers [24], while the work of Marcus Anderson and Per Edmar investigated how networks of stakeholders can work as brand ambassadors in contemporary place development [25]. Other studies, such as those by Jasper Eshuis, Erik Braun, and Erik-Hans Klijn, highlight the trend of employing comprehensive strategies that include city branding, urban development, and governance practices [26]. Additional, comprehensive reviews of the fragmented discussion on city branding can, for example, be found in the work of Mihalis Kavartzis, or that of Andrea Lucarelli and Per Olof Berg [13,27]. This study, however, adds a new perspective to the discourse by connecting concepts of city marketing to governance strategies that have previously not been discussed. At the time this study was written, an extended literature study has not revealed other studies using a similar theoretical lens.

1.4. Research Question

The objective of this study is to gain a better understanding how strategies are formed in large-scale urban development projects that operate within the force-field of a changing context, dynamic trust, and leadership relations among the actors involved.

The main research question of this study asks how contextual dynamics and transgressing actor networks affect governance and image management strategies over the course of a large-scale urban development project. The study discusses the research method in Section 2, presents the findings in Section 3, examines the findings in Section 4, and draws conclusions in Section 5.

2. Research Method

In this research, the study traces image management strategies (distinct and emergent) in the case of the Zuidas large-sale development over a long period of time between 2004 and the beginning of 2020 and maps out a set of units of analysis along a timeline based on which the milestones and deliberate and emerging image management strategies are illustrated (see Figure 3). This study was inspired by the theories of Henry Mintzberg and James Waters, who tracked strategies in (predominantly private-sector) organizations over long periods of time [1–3]. Mintzberg's work provides guidelines for assessing the behavior of a manifold of organizations. However, to date, his method has not been applied to research on image management strategies in an urban context. Therefore, this study has created its own assessment framework, which, next to Mintzberg's model, makes use of Hans de Bruijn and Ernst ten Heuvelhof's theory of network organizations [28] and Fred Hobma's studies on successful urban area development [16].
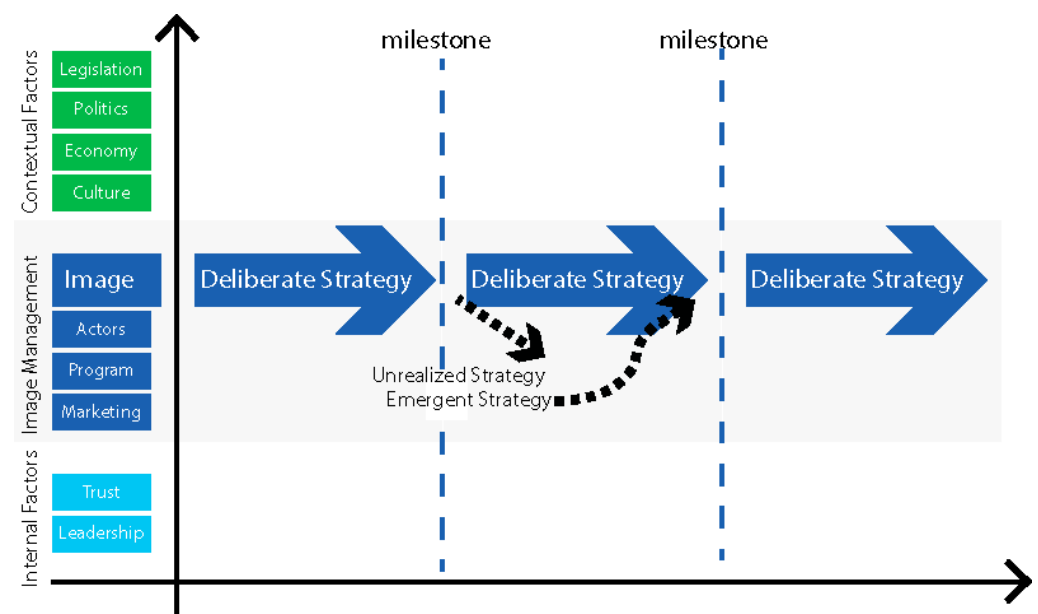
Figure 3. Deliberate and emerging strategy analysis framework. Source: author.

In this analysis, model milestones in the project trajectory were defined along the horizontal axis, and the corresponding internal and contextual units of analysis were situated along the vertical axis. Shifts from deliberate to emerging image management strategies are indicated at the center of the figure (Figure 3).

The contextual and internal factors that influence deliberate and emergent image management strategies are discussed in Section 1.1. Therefore, this section introduces the remaining three units of analysis that describe the driving elements of image management strategies: actors, program, and marketing strategies.

Governance can be considered a framework for steering networks of actors. Successful governance can bring together and bind actors from divergent perspectives. In collaborative development models, governance can create networks of actors that work as local policy communities, which shape discourses and create shared visions that are supported by collective action [6,29]. These actor networks often do not emerge spontaneously but can be driven by governance discourses on the national scale, economic or political climate, or cultural background [28]. The image management strategies produced by these networks are not plannable. They depend on collective action, which again depends on mutual trust among the actors involved and the leadership within the network.

Program refers to a translation of the actors' shared vision into tangible regulations for land-use planning; the distribution of different types of programs on the site, height, and density regulations; and definitions for the provision of public spaces, community

services, social housing, and social overhead investments. The program is the most tangible translation of a location's marketing strategy into a built urban space. Often, the proposed program in the development vision of a new location works as a tool to define the competitive niche of the location and anchor its identity within the chosen competitive niche [4]. The program chosen for the envisioned image of the location can create competitive advantages and accumulation benefits when proposing business clustering for selected target industries and may be complemented by distinct niche services that create value for distinct target customers.

Cities have become increasingly global and competitive, and the question arises as to what city marketing does to make the city more livable and for whom. In contrast to a centralized planning apparatus, city marketing approaches the user with a tailored approach to the needs of individual user groups [30]. This approach brings users' needs and the city's local, contextual (historical, customary, and geographical) qualities together [29] and combines them with future ambitions into locally distinct development patterns [8,9] that result in a unique realized future image and management strategy.

To be successful, a place needs to develop marketing strategies that exploit these local, historical, customary, and geographical advantages and be aware of the resources required for the successful implementation of those strategies. An image management strategy must engage projected target audiences with a captivating narrative that is communicated consistently and effectively [4]. The key elements of the image management strategy are to define the target audience and their desired behavior, choose the right influence tools, select the right communication channels, strategize the timing of the communication, and manage conflicting media sources and messages [4], which need to be flexible enough to respond to contextual shifts, such as political, legislative, economic, or demographic changes [16].

2.1. Data Collection

The research scoured academic publications; city marketing campaigns; and national, regional, and local urban policy documents. Key image management strategies such as the 2004, 2009, and 2016 visions of the Zuidas were analyzed, which express the ambitions of the Project Office Zuidas together with the Dienst Ruimtelijke Ordering (local municipal planning agency) of the city of Amsterdam, but also press releases, marketing brochures, and other documents relating to the image management strategy of the Zuidas during the period under investigation (Table 1). Furthermore, the research added new empirical findings by conducting a set of 15 semi-structured interviews with key actors from the private sector, public sector, civil society, and academia who were involved in the project or had in-depth knowledge of the project throughout the period under investigation. These interviews were essential for understanding issues such as internal trust and leadership relations among the stakeholders involved and the weight of contextual factors on stakeholder decisions that are not openly shared in public policy or promotional documents. The respondents of the interviews were selected based on the relevance of knowledge for answering the research question from a variety of fields of expertise and their scale of intervention in the Zuidas project (Table 1). Key actors, when engaged in the project over a longer period, were interviewed more than once during different phases of the project.

2.2. Empirical Focus

The empirical object chosen for this research is the Zuidas project in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, which covers 275 ha on the southern edge of Amsterdam and is strategically located between the historical center and the Schiphol airport. This development is one of the most prominent large-scale developments in the Netherlands (see Figure 4).

Table 1. Interviewee stakeholder group representation and affiliations.

Interviewee ID	Stakeholder Group
2011~2012	
Int-A	
Int-B	Academia
Int-C	
Int-D	
Int-F	Project Office Zuidas
Int-G	
Int-H	World Trade Center
Int-I	ABN Amro
Int-J	Planning and Design
Int-K	Schiphol Area Development Company (SADC)
Int-L	Academia
Int-M	Municipal Planning Agency (DRO)
2020	
Int-P	Academia
Int-Q	Project Office Zuidas
Int-R	Municipal Planning Agency (DRO)
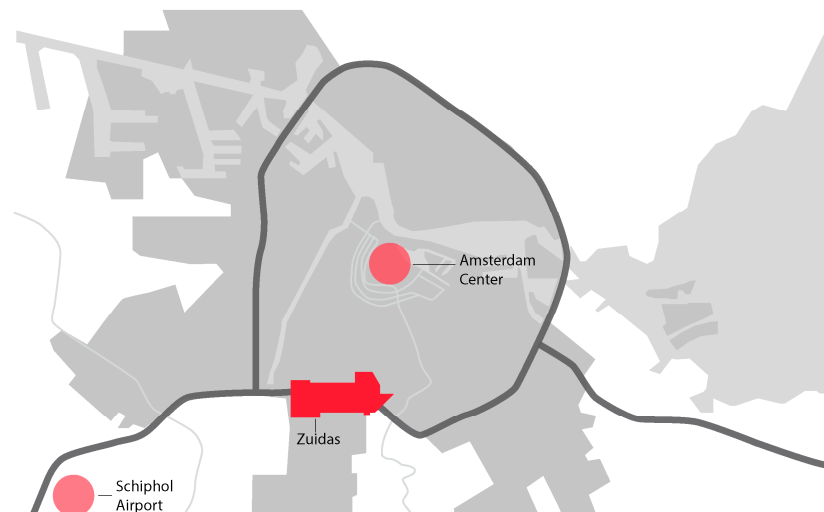
Figure 4. The Zuidas location. Source: Author, based on Majoor [31].

This large-scale development was selected as a single case study because it is an integral project that incorporates different urban functions around several dimensions of urban planning. At the same time, the Zuidas tries to give shape to the city of Amsterdam by searching for proper governance processes to steer complexity, attract finance, and create urban quality in an era of global competition [32]. The main challenge for metropolitan governance in multi-actor networks is to find ways to organize the connectivity between different spheres of action [1]. With the complexity of actors involved in multiple and, at times, overlaying policy arenas, the case of the Zuidas is well suited to work as an empirical case to analyze context and actor relations.

When ABN Amro (the major multinational Amsterdam-based bank) expressed its desire to move its head office functions from their current location (in the Bijlmer) in the

early 1990s, the City Council proposed the IJ Oevers, an inner urban site located at the river IJ, adjacent to the historic center of Amsterdam. However, ABN Amro wanted to move to the Zuidas because of its superb accessibility by car and its closeness to Schiphol International Airport (Int-M). The location was chosen by legal, financial, and business services, as well as one large university: namely, the World Trade Center (WTC), the RAI Conference and Convention Center, the Free University Amsterdam, the Insurance Stock Exchange, and the Court of Justice. These institutions formed the basis for the development of a cluster of economic activities, especially in the financial and legal sectors [32]. Furthermore, in reaction to the decision by ABN Amro, the City Council could not hold back on the development of this project and decided to create a development strategy for this area.

3. Findings

In line with Henry Mintzberg's theory, these phases of strategy formation have been detected in the development of the Zuidas (see Figure 5). These were the initiation phase (1998–2008); development phase (2009–2015); and renewal phase (2016–2020) [1]. The demarcation between the respective phases derives from abrupt economic and/or political changes, over which the actors did not have any influence or control. This research classifies these moments as milestones in the development of the location and key moments in its strategy formation. The image of the Zuidas project as a self-sufficient business district with iconic towers and international allures emerged once trust and willingness to collaborate with the AMB Amro bank was established. The envisioned program consisting predominantly of offices reflected this (Int-J). Although alterations to this image have emerged, the ambition to create an international business hub at the Zuidas has remained at the core of the image management strategy throughout all three phases of strategy formation during the period under investigation (1998–2020). A summary of these findings can be found in Figure 5.
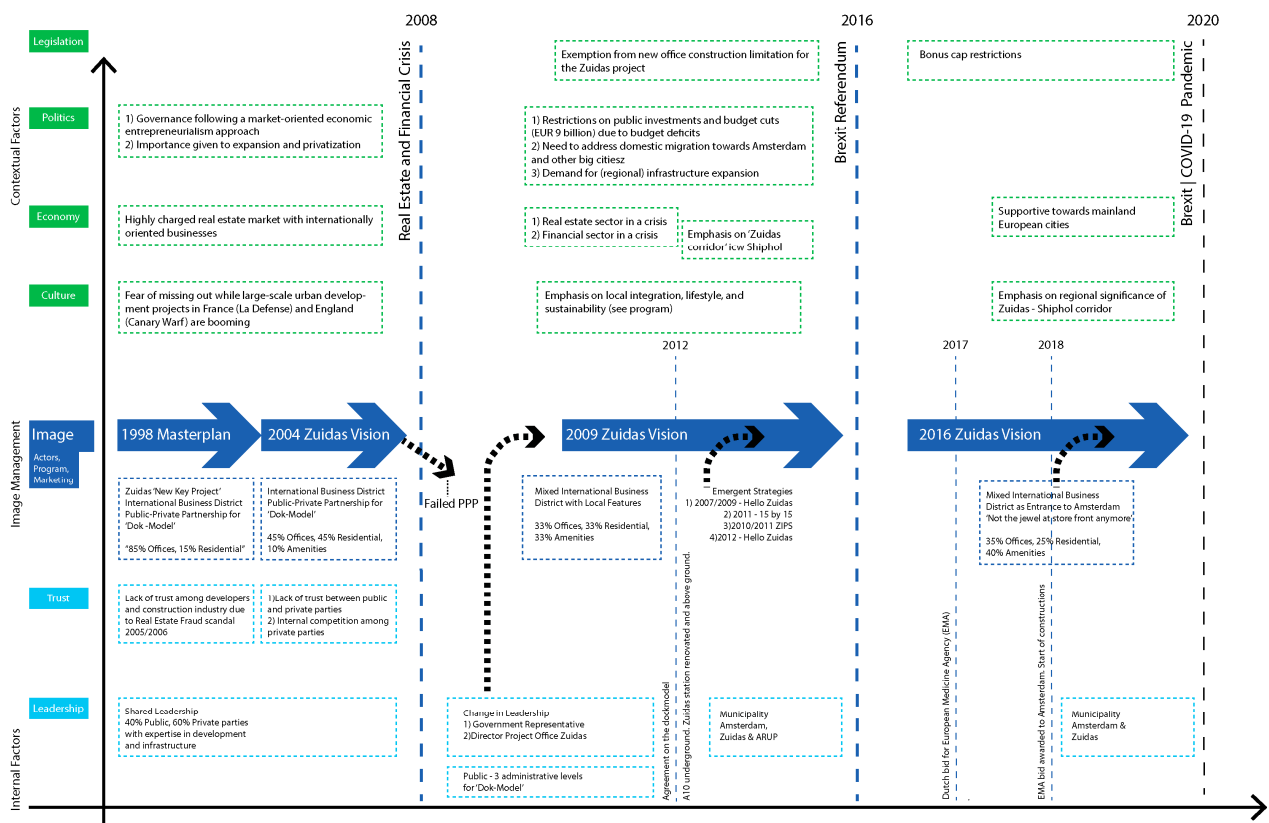

Figure 5. Deliberate and emerging strategies in the Zuidas development (1998–2020). Source: author.

3.1. Initiation and Development

The economic boom of the 1990s created trust within the economy and a national policy agenda (VINO (1988) and VINEX (1991)) which emphasized the importance of international (air)ports and distribution networks, encouraged national and international competition among city regions, and stressed the need for international competitiveness [33]. Furthermore, the possibility to create better regional infrastructure connectivity patterns between Amsterdam, Schiphol airport, and other municipalities of the Randstad became a main driver of the development. By doing so, the large-scale development of the Zuidas would be connected to smaller- and medium-size developments in the region [34]. Confident due to the supportive economic and political environment, the Zuidas project started to take shape, and the city of Amsterdam embraced competition with the established international financial centers in London and Frankfurt. For this, the main actors—the municipality and ABN Amro—imported a straightforward vision of a generic business district located at a high-speed mobility corridor with excellent connections to international, regional, and local networks, as well as various modes of transportation. Decision makers sought to generate trust among potential investors and backed the proposal by the promotion of a clearly defined image of future development that promised stability and communicated optimism. The start of the process clearly followed the initiation stage with an imported vision as described by Mintzberg [1]. However, different strategies are used. On the one hand, the management follows a planned strategy in which the image of the development provides a stable guideline of the future vision that shows traits of a planned strategy; on the other hand, an additional umbrella strategy provides another organizational framework through which governmental agencies control the environment and define guidelines within which other actors maneuver according to the deliberate strategy defined in the 1998 Masterplan of an international business center. It can be noted how overlaying strategies are at work right from the start of the project.

However, the vision for the Zuidas has been less defined in detail than the image may make it appear; consequently, the project entered the development phase when the 2004 Zuidas Vision was published. The organization evolved and changes to the composition of the program are evidence of the strategy-finding process during the development phase [1]. While the 1998 Masterplan envisions a location of almost exclusively offices (85% offices and 15% residential) (Int-J) based on the generic vision of an international business district, a process of learning develops that harmonizes the image management strategy with the contextual features. Consequently, a more realistic image emerged with the 2004 Zuidas vision, which proposed an even split of the program between offices and residences and a small number of amenities (see Figure 5). Here, the Zuidas wants to become a new neighborhood of Amsterdam in which squares in an attractively designed public realm work as, following the terminology of Christopher Alexander, 'activity nodes' with their own characteristics. The Zuidplein, for example, works as a highly active infrastructure square, while the Mahlerplein on the south side of the Zuidas caters to the new resident community and the work community in the surrounding high-rise buildings. The proposed dok-model, covering the highway and train infrastructure, is planned to provide another centrally located 'activity node'. In addition to the combined strategy for the overall development of the location, another nested strategy is immersed in the process in the form of a public–private partnership (PPP). The PPP has the goal to facilitate a large part of the infrastructure investments, referred to as the dok-model, where public agencies offer a franchising opportunity to private investors whose investment simultaneously supports a set of public planning goals during the project's operational period [35]. Furthermore, the PPP introduces an element of subsidiarity. By involving future users early in the design process, it can be expected that the design and the organization of the area is well-situated to the needs of the future users. The PPP quickly grew into a network of governmental agencies from all three tiers of the Dutch governance system and a range of private actors, predominantly from the finance sector, during the development phase. Here, the leading actors imposed a process strategy for the PPP in which consensus among the participants

was sought to emerge from negotiations and the formation of collectively supported goals and ambitions.

The PPP describes the organizational form, rather than defining the outcome, and lets actors negotiate the detailed content of the strategy. Within this process strategy, participants were given the flexibility to co-design the process under consideration of the limitations of the process framework. Due to the shared goals of private agencies who demanded a certain level of urban quality for their operation and the public agencies' desire to minimize costs of investment into intensive urban developments, the public–private partnership was the initial urban management path for this project [36]. To align diverging interests, the city of Amsterdam established the 'Project Office Zuidas' as a central institution that communicated the project's ambitions and brought actors together. This initiative is in line with the principle of subsidiarity, as mentioned above, and established a neighborhood planning center as a place for community engagement and informal discussions among stakeholders—as described, for example, by Michael Mehaffy [9]. However, private parties thought of the public sector as not being as well-informed about the market conditions as the private; and, on top of that, the private parties—predominantly banks—were competing among themselves, which led to strenuous relationships and, consequently, trust issues. Therefore, one main goal of establishing the public–private partnership—which was to foster trust and cooperation, establish mutual dependencies, and share risks in order to create added value—had not been achieved in the process. Consequentially, the willingness to collaborate among public and private actors was on shaky ground, and the process strategy was not able to influence actors to tackle the challenges collectively [20]. Finally, due to the insecure economic climate following the 2008 Real Estate and Financial Crisis, private actors shied away from risks, and the PPP evidently failed.

3.2. Renewal I

In the initiation and development phase, the organization is established, the limitations of the original image are recognized, and the participating actors are identified. However, after the 2008 Financial and Banking Crisis, contextual changes influenced the governance and management of the Zuidas project. With the real estate and financial sectors in trouble, the investment climate became colder. Public budget deficits and public agencies switched from an entrepreneurial governance discourse to a more welfare-oriented governance [37,38]. At the time, topics such as migration to big cities and the resulting housing shortage, the growing importance of sustainability, and the demand for (regional) infrastructure expansion began to dominate the political agenda. The management of the Zuidas monitored contextual changes and went through a process of learning and renewal. Owing to the growing contextual pressure to engage with local challenges, the governance and image management strategies of the Zuidas adapted accordingly. This development phase showed a process that Mintzberg referred to as an adhocracy. Here organizations *'produce individual or custom-made products (or designs) in an innovative way, on a project basis'* where managers shape their strategies in response to deliberate and emergent forces [39]. The ad hoc response to the sudden change for the Zuidas was to allow user capacity to shape the environment and rely on temporary uses with a stronger connection to local users, while recalibrating the future vision. Even farming was introduced, as the farm has a strong community element and could transform the perception of the future development among local residents [40].

For the image management strategies of the Zuidas, these changes meant that the deliberate strategy that had created the image of a self-sufficient business district with slick, iconic towers diverged in response to contextual changes. This new image management strategy, published as the 2009 Zuidas Vision, sought more coherence with the demand for affordable housing and wanted to make use of the local history and culture by introducing a larger share of amenities into the programmatic mix [41]. This vision promoted the Zuidas as a sustainable (green) development with an equal programmatic division between offices,

dwellings, and public amenities. Marketing strategies increasingly embraced the organic development of the location in symbiosis with the adjacent parts of Amsterdam, which also increasingly embraced a vision of sustainability. The larger share of amenities illustrates the shifting image that connects the Zuidas more strongly to the rest of Amsterdam. These have been essential elements in the initiatives that have been promoted by the 'Hello Zuidas' foundation (2007/2009), the '15 by 15′ pamphlet (2011), and the 'Zuidas Integrated Place-Marketing Strategy' (ZIPS) document (2010/2011). The shifting of the image management strategy can best be described as a deliberate reaction towards an emergent contextual force that pushed for local integration. This emergent force also influenced governance strategies, on the other hand. Here, the original limits of the umbrella strategy have been widened post 2008 in order to respond to changes in the image management strategy. These shifts are evidence of a learning process that caused the adaptation of the strategies. Critical for the success of a project is that strategies receive constant attention, and, if needed, learning ensures the attainment of goals [42]. This is in line with Mintzberg's theories on strategic learning [1] and has also been stressed by one of the interviewees when stating "The project's future success relies on the major players' capacity to steer, finance, and give life to a complex and risky project" (Int-C). This alteration, however, puts the image of the Zuidas as an international business district under increasing pressure. Project Office Zuidas, as the leading municipal project management authority, remained faithful to the combined strategy introduced in the initiation phase. A planned strategy was employed to promote a somewhat altered vision of an international business center with distinctive local features, and an umbrella strategy coordinated the actions of actors. At the governmental level, Minister Gerrit Zalm (Minister of Finance 1994–2002) was very interested in financing public works through private money and was a promoter of collaborations among public and private parties for the development of the Zuidas. This led to the appointment of Jan Stoutenbeek as the director of the Project Office Zuidas and consolidation to develop the Zuidas in a public–private partnership. The hope was to induce a new dynamic and to foster new trust in the projected future image of the development.

The process strategy for the dok-model was maintained even though the network of actors within the organization was not able to reach critical levels of trust to engage in collective action and tackle the challenges cooperatively [20]. Together with the insecure financial climate during the crisis, no commitment could be reached, and the PPP failed in 2008. After a period of reorganization, a straightforward planned strategy was followed for the dok-model in 2012, when only public parties were investing into the infrastructure improvements. Here, an agreement was made between the Dutch National Government, the City of Amsterdam, the Stadsregio Amsterdam, and the Province of Noord-Holland, but with no private parties.

3.3. Renewal II

The milestone that introduced the second renewal phase emerged from the changing political climate after the Brexit referendum in 2016, when the United Kingdom decided to leave the EU. This event had a significant impact on international competition for European financial industries. Mainland European cities started to compete for high-end financial and legal services that needed to leave the UK and sought a new location within the EU after Brexit [43]. Amsterdam positioned itself as an alternative financial center with the Zuidas. This opportunity revived the original image of the Zuidas as a center for international headquarters. However, attracting international headquarters to the Zuidas proved to be difficult. This was partly due to the strong international competition and partly due to the national regulation on bonus caps in the financial sector, which made the Netherlands unattractive for professions in the field of business that tends to include a large share of bonuses in the reward structure [44]. Most financial and legal services that were attracted to the Zuidas were part of Dutch rather than international networks. In that sense, the Zuidas management learned that the original vision was difficult to achieve within the given regulatory context. As a result of monitoring and learning, the Zuidas vision shifted

again in 2016, and new opportunities arose from locational agglomeration benefits that were previously neglected [45]. Owing to its proximity to the Free University (VU), the Open University, and the attached Medical Center (VUMC), the Zuidas could promote itself as an attractive location for science and medicine. The special use patterns of hospital facilities and university campuses have been integrated seamlessly within the spatial layout of the Zuidas. The complexes have been connected to the surrounding street network and embraced as characteristic key elements of spatial design and local identity. Consequently, the Zuidas became the promoted location in the Dutch bidding for the relocation of the European Medicines Agency (EMA) in 2017. Again, we see how an emergent imposed strategy caused a shift in the overall management of development. In addition to this change, the Zuidas continued to engage more with the municipal planning agenda in terms of the program and envisioned a sustainable lifestyle after the municipality became the sole leading actor of the Zuidas vision. In line with the changes already supported in 2012, the Zuidas was promoted as a sustainable, pedestrian-priority neighborhood with high-quality amenities that respond to the needs of middle-class residents and a growing number of students [45]. Additionally, the integration of the Zuidas with the surroundings and the historic center of Amsterdam deepened. Initiatives to welcome resident participation in the upgrading of adjacent amenities, such as the Beatrixpark, remained in line with the principles of public participation introduced earlier, and new events, such as open-air cinema and neighborhood festivals, catering to a younger—and not strictly business oriented—audience have been introduced. Due to the introduction of more residential units, the design of the public spaces is also being amended. As stated by the Zuidas supervisor Ton Schaap, a rising number of families with children required public spaces to provide more places to rest and play as well as more protection from wind and exposure to the sun, which have been incorporated in the new design of the Zuidas vision. New, wind-sheltered pocket parks have been introduced, trees have been planted along the larger avenues connected to the surrounding parts of Amsterdam, and a general change in course in the spatial design from a focus on branding towards spatial quality has been announced [45]. More amenities were allocated to the Zuidas and scenarios were developed in which the location played a more prominent role within the city of Amsterdam. Clearly, these amendments have been a response to contextual socioeconomic demands and changes in leadership. Even though the image management strategies were maintained to promote the Zuidas as an international business hub, the umbrella strategy became increasingly more responsive to the contextual pressures and, through a process of learning about the locational assets (proximity to the historic center, VU and VUMC, Schiphol airport), allowed the development vision to shift again and the umbrella strategy to widen once more.

However, the management strategy for the dok-model underwent radical changes. Due to problems in engaging in collective action, the process strategy has been discontinued and a planned strategy has been adopted in place of the process strategy. Here, three levels of government (national government, province of Noord-Holland, and city of Amsterdam) agreed to collaboratively carry out the dok-model (now an infrastructure project without real-estate on top) without the cooperation of private parties. It is paradoxical how a supposedly market-led development found its realization only through the commitment of public investments.

4. Discussion

When discussing the case of the Zuidas development according to the main research question, the study finds that governance and image management strategies in large-scale urban development projects tend to consist of combined and nested strategies that pass through phases of initiation (until 2004), development (until 2008), and continuous learning and renewal according to the changing external factors and internal actor dynamics, as described by Henry Mintzberg [1]. Figure 6 illustrates how these strategies combine and overlay.
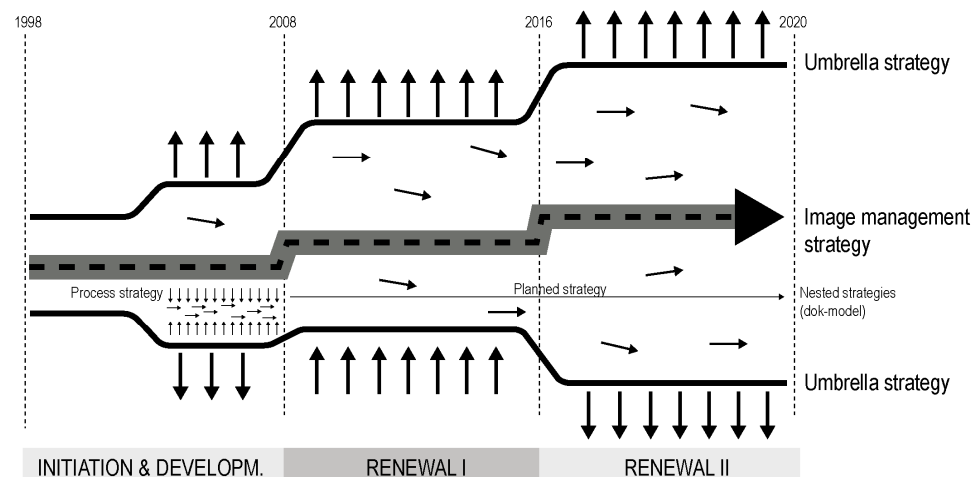
Figure 6. Shifting strategies during the development of the Zuidas (1998–2020). Source: author.

　　The project of the Zuidas shows how the management of a large-scale urban development project consists of a vast amount of unknown and non-influenceable contextual factors, which come into play at unforeseen moments and cause various changes to the planning, the organization, and the spatial layout when realizing the initial development vision. Deliberate image management strategies are planned and aim to realize a predefined image of the future development. Emergent strategies, on the other hand, are developed in response to unexpected changes and developments in the project's context which is reflected in the patterns of organization and urban form. This entails that management strategies need to incorporate some level of flexibility. The management of a large-scale urban development project such as the Zuidas could not assume all these changes prior to development. Therefore, it operates as, in the words of Mintzberg, an adhocracy organization that learns its way into new strategies [1] and constantly renegotiates its form when realizing strategies in practice.

　　The analysis identifies the fact that image management strategies and governance strategies overlay and distinguishes different macro-level strategies with the Zuidas project that support image management strategies (Figure 6). This is characteristic for the relation between governance and image management strategies in an urban development context. Here governance and image management strategies collectively respond to context dynamics and internal uncertainties deriving from unpredictable actor behavior by overlaying two strategies. First, an image for future development with a planned strategy that formulates goals and development targets is defined to create certainty about future development plans among the actors. Additionally, as a second response, an umbrella strategy is introduced that defines strategic boundaries for the development but leaves enough leeway for actors to engage in various ways and absorb emergent patterns deriving from the context. The boundaries are relatively narrow in the initiation phase when a generic vision is being imported (1998–2004). However, the choice of strategies widens in the first development phase (2004–2008) when the plans are becoming more specific and the positions of different actors became clearer. During the first renewal phase (2008–2015), the boundaries of the umbrella strategy shifted according to the changing context and the deliberate vision. In the second renewal phase (2016–2020) the umbrella strategy widened in order to enhance and incorporate certain locational qualities, such as the presence of the VUMC, and started to respond to societal needs such as the demand for affordable housing which were originally (and deliberately) ignored in the initial image for the Zuidas. To summarize, the management of this large-scale urban development project uses deliberate planned visions on the macro scale as a tool to create reliability about the future plan, which is essential in order for the selected target group to engage in the project. The Zuidas is well-integrated into the international network of global cities, the polycentric regional pattern, and the local urban context of the city of Amsterdam. This gives the Zuidas

exceptional locational qualities that seamlessly tie in with the ambitions of the projected future image. By selecting for a comprehensive design that situates the Zuidas as part of a mobility corridor, several qualities can be achieved at once. Businesses relate to global hubs, while residents are connected to the regional economy and can easily take advantage of the amenities of Amsterdam and the surrounding region. The umbrella strategy allowed emergent contextual demands, such as affordable housing, public amenities, or new target groups, to incorporate new organizational and morphological patterns into the original development strategy. A greater connection to the city of Amsterdam has been sought and appropriate institutions to negotiate between investors and residents have been established. Furthermore, other external pull factors widened the boundaries of the umbrella strategy in the second renewal phase. With the vanishing involvement of the ABN Amro in the strategic decision making and the dominance of the local municipality as the main actor, the Zuidas has attempted to become increasingly incorporated in the existing urban and social fabric of the city. Public spaces designed for families with small children—previously unthinkable within the development vision of a global business center—emerged in the form of pocket parks, human-centered design of public spaces, and an emphasis on green landscape features in public space. Consequently, the implementation of the strategy for the Zuidas over time diverged rather widely from its original vision as an international business center. Additionally, nested strategies appear to be characteristic for the governance strategies in urban development processes for parts of the development, such as the dok-model. Here, the leadership made use of a process strategy when introducing the PPP. The goal was to include users into the design process in order to provide optimized, tailor-made solutions by employing principles of subsidiarity. However, after this effort failed due to the lack of trust among the parties involved, a lack of willingness to collaborate, and an unsupported economic climate, government agencies introduced a straightforward planned strategy to realize the dok-model (now an infrastructure project) through the collaboration among public entities alone.

This research finds that the two overlapping strategies on the macro level have two functions. The deliberate image management strategy formulates a project vision, while the umbrella strategy defines the boundary of what is possible. In the case of the Zuidas, external contextual factors have over time widened the boundaries of possibilities within the Zuidas project and have been clearly influential for the shaping of governance and image management strategies, which evidently is reflected in the organizational and morphological patterns found in the realized development. The strategies intended to support collective action (PPP), however, failed due to a lack of trust and willingness to collaborate and, therefore, did not substantially contribute to the realization of the project.

The research also finds that the development vision has a tendency to shift according to changes in the context and its emergent imposed strategies. A strong leadership and a coherent group of actors who were efficiently cooperating in the overlaying networks could have created a counterforce to the contextual push and pull factors. However, the inability of these actor networks to unite behind shared values and a coherent development vision prevented the image management strategy from fulfilling this anchor function. Consequently, the Zuidas project management learned during the process that it could not live up to its ambitions to manifest itself as an international business location that competes on eye-level with Frankfurt and Paris. Considering the regulatory limitations for salary caps and the preexisting agglomeration advantages of other European financial centers, it appears to be a reasonable adaptation of the image management strategy to address a different target group which play to the location's qualities. The initial actors were carried away by the supportive economic climate of the 1990s and the fruitful partnership with a major national bank, which led policymakers to develop an unrealistic vision. However, the governance and image management strategies of the Zuidas have been able to expand the portfolio of Dutch real estate with a location that is capable of catering to international institutions while being flexible enough to renew its ambitions and introduce new land-use patterns as well as urban forms that aim to be in line with the needs of the local context.

Nevertheless, the implemented result of this strategy has benefitted from the initial bold vision and the perseverance in supporting this vision throughout more than two decades. Due to the bold vision, Amsterdam was able to improve its position as a national business and finance center, grow its international relevance, and attract a major international player to the Zuidas (European Medicines Agency, EMA). This might not have been possible without choosing a relatively rigid image management strategy and a set of flexible strategies that respond to contextual changes through a process of learning and adaptation in an ad hoc manner.

5. Conclusions

Organizations that manage governance and image management strategies in a large-scale urban development process cannot overlook the influence of contextual dynamics and transgressing actor relations. These relations are too complex, and the length of these processes is too expansive, to make predictions with certainty. Due to the prevalence of emergent strategies, the case of the Zuidas shows that it takes adhocratic organizations to learn their way into the local context and actor relations to adapt strategies according to these factors. New spatial and organizational patterns will emerge that ground large-scale urban development projects within the local context.

The Zuidas shows that there is a latent tendency of the context to pull the project back into the local status quo. The widening boundaries of the umbrella strategy during the development of the Zuidas are evidence of this. Especially when being led by a municipal planning agency, this constant undercurrent of emerging strategies deriving from the context challenges compromised the pronounced vision of the Zuidas as an international business hub. The case of the Zuidas, however, shows that ambitious municipal planning agencies ought to pronounce a strong image for a location, even if this vision is not meant to be literally realized as planned. It appears to be necessary to utilize combined strategies in large-scale urban development projects in which, on the one hand, a deliberate image management strategy provides the organization with the necessary vision to insist on a particular type of development—attracting an organization such as the EMA would probably not have been possible without this vision—while, on the other hand, embracing a practice of strategic learning is necessary to adapt this vision when the context and actor network configurations change. This two-tiered approach of implementing overlaying strategies in which the ambitions for the location are being managed through the image management strategy and the realized development is being governed with adaptive umbrella strategies appears to provide large-scale urban development processes with a resilient management framework. Balancing future ambitions with the realizable potential of a location is at the heart of urban governance. Other large-scale urban development projects might learn from the approach employed at the Zuidas in Amsterdam.

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