

# EXPLORING THE ROLES OF WORLD HERITAGE SITES

The case of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel



*Cover image: Marco van Middelkoop/Aerophoto-Schiphol, 2017*

# Exploring the roles of World Heritage Sites

## The case of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel

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*Je kan er langs de grachten lopen  
Dat zou je eigenlijk wel eens moeten doen  
Je bent er vogelvrij  
Omdat er alles kan  
In elk mensenhart  
Daar vind je Amsterdam*

*Kris de Bruyne*

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This master's thesis has been written to successfully complete the first part of the final year of the Master Leisure, Tourism and Environment at Wageningen University.

With a lot of enthusiasm, I started this journey in August 2018, looking forward to applying the knowledge and skills I obtained during the first year of my master's programme and carrying out some of my own interesting research.

After 8 months of hard work I am now able to proudly present my master's thesis about the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel. Over the last few months, I was able to carry out some very interesting research and I therefore came in contact with and had the possibility to talk to very inspiring people. The thesis also helped me to grow and further develop myself in many different areas and allowed me to learn new things.

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For now, I hope you will enjoy reading this master's thesis.

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Naomi Höfkes

## Executive summary

The worldwide growth of the tourism industry contributes to an increased competition among tourism destinations, since they all want, to a certain extent, to attract tourists. Culture & History are according to some scientists seen as one of the core resources and attractors that contribute to the competitiveness and attractiveness of a destination. Interesting about this category and its relation to tourism is that since the 'heritage boom' of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, many heritage registers and lists have been established, which nowadays besides contributing to the protection and conservation of the heritage properties, are also used for marketing and promotion purposes. The World Heritage List, with currently over 1,100 enlisted properties of 'Outstanding Universal Value', developed by UNESCO, might be seen as the most well-known of all these lists and registers. The worldwide popularity of the list ensures that there is a rich body of literature available on this topic, but because information about the roles of an inscribed heritage property in several scientific debates seems to be lacking, this study has been carried out.

The objective of this explorative case study was to identify roles of a World Heritage property in (political) debates and to get more insight into the discursive construction of these roles. To do so, a case study has been developed, conducted and analysed from a Foucauldian perspective, whereby the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel has been selected as the case upon which this study would focus. By doing a lot of desk research and conducting over 10 interviews, this study provided some interesting findings in relation to the roles of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Site in several debates as well as the way in which these roles are discursively constructed.

Four roles of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status have been identified in several kind of debates regarding the heritage property: that of stimulus/initiator, connector, legitimizer and underminer. Interesting about these four roles, is that before the official inscription the heritage property mainly served the role of stimulus/initiator and connector in debates, while after its inscription these roles changed more into that of legitimizer and underminer. When looking at the discursive construction of these roles, it can be argued that they strongly depend on the context of the debates, the stakeholders that have been involved in these debates and on the interests and visions of these stakeholders towards the heritage property.

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### List of abbreviations

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| BMA             | Bureau Monumenten & Archeologie gemeente Amsterdam<br>(department of monuments and archaeology, municipality of Amsterdam) |
| BWE             | Bureau Werelderfgoed, gemeente Amsterdam<br>(department of World Heritage)   |
| Ministry of OCW | Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap<br>(Ministry of Education, Culture and Science)                            |
| RCE             | Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed<br>(Dutch Governmental Cultural Heritage Agency)                                    |
| UNESCO          | United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization  |
| VVAB            | Vereniging Vrienden van de Amsterdamse Binnenstad<br>(interest group for city centre of Amsterdam)                         |

## 1. Introduction

With a total of 1,322 million international tourist arrivals in 2017, the tourism industry is still rapidly growing. Expectations for the upcoming years suggest that this growth will continue, consolidating the sector as a key driver in economic development. According to the Secretary-General of the United Nations World Tourism Organization, tourism is the third export sector in the world and therefore 'essential for job creation and the prosperity of communities around the world'. These statistics show that tourism has been seriously booming since the economic crisis of 2008/2009 (UNWTO, 2018). It can be argued that because of the international tourism growth, there is a lot of competition among tourism destinations, since they all want (to a certain extent) to attract tourists. This ensures that there is a lot of scientific literature available on the diverse aspects of destination competitiveness and attractiveness (Abreu Novais, Ruhanen & Arcodia, 2018). In their model, Crouch and Ritchie (1999) argue that there are several categories defined as 'core resources and attractors' that contribute to the competitiveness of a destination. These include: physiography & climate, culture & history, events and activities among other things. The reason that the category culture & history, according to the perspective of Crouch and Ritchie (1999), contributes to a destination's competitiveness, is because tourists are looking for unique settings in which they like to experience lifestyles that are out of their day-to-day routine. Cultural and historical aspects that are embedded in the lifestyles of inhabitants of the specific destination could contribute therefore to creating this contrast (Crouch & Ritchie 1999).

Where the establishment of various heritage registers and lists in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century (defined as a so-called 'heritage boom') were driven by – among other things – 'a heightened sense of risk and vulnerability of aspects of cultural heritage' and aimed to protect and conserve traces and memories of many different pasts (Harrison, 2013: 581) (see e.g. UNESCO Convention on World Heritage), heritage lists and registers nowadays also seem to be used for marketing and promotion purposes to make people more aware of the destination and to attract tourists (see UNESCO, 2018). With almost over 1,100 enlisted properties of 'Outstanding Universal Value', the World Heritage List, as developed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (hereinafter referred to as UNESCO) in 1972, might be seen as the most well-known heritage list (UNESCO, 2019). The popularity of the list might on the one hand be explained by the large number of objects from all over the globe that have been inscribed on the list, which is every year increasing. On the other hand, this could be explained by the general perception of the United Nations organization as an authoritarian organization.

The popularity of the World Heritage List in general has also not gone unnoticed in scientific literature, resulting in many studies that have been conducted on the topic throughout recent decades (e.g. Frey & Steiner, 2011; Musitelli, 2002; Adie, Hall & Prayag, 2018). What is often seen in these studies, is that they are among other things focussing on the impacts, both positive and negative, of the World Heritage status on sites and its surroundings (Caust & Vecco, 2017). This includes, for example, the attractiveness of destinations as a result of their designated World Heritage Status (e.g. Caust & Vecco, 2017). Some scientists argue that sites benefit once they have been inscribed on the list, since heritage properties which receive the status are newly considered unique in the world, drawing a lot of international attention which can be used as an excellent marketing tool (Caust & Vecco, 2017). Attention is not only raised from the general public, like tourists, but also from decision-makers, potential donors and for-profit firms (Frey & Steiner, 2011) which could contribute to acquiring the right funds for protection and conservation (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2007). Jimura (2011) however argues that local communities might also experience negative benefits due to overcrowding as a result



of inscription on the list. A relationship between World Heritage Sites and its number of tourists has however not been proven yet according to several studies (Cellini, 2011; Huang, Tsaur & Yang, 2012). There is however also critique about the World Heritage List. Some scientists fear that the top-down nature of culture of UNESCO 'fails to address nationalist repressions' (Meskell, 2013:484), while others blame the organization for creating a flat cultural map because of the top-down approach. Furthermore, it could be that the international attention that has been raised as a result of the status, leads to conflicts between local associations of the site and the global ownership of it, therefore placing additional pressure on the physical and natural environment, as well as on the local citizens (Orbasli, in Jimura, 2011).

The above mentioned pro and counter arguments could logically influence the view and perspectives of individuals, groups and organizations towards the UNESCO World Heritage Status in general as well as towards sites that have (not) been inscribed on the famous heritage list. These perspectives could in turn logically influence debates about whether heritage sites want to be inscribed on the famous list or not. It is this question that is often the starting point for several studies that have been conducted about the World Heritage Status (e.g. Frey & Steiner, 2011; Adie et al. 2018). Other studies about the status focus among other things on the importance and impact of the status (Caust & Vecco, 2017), the branding of World Heritage Sites (Wuepper & Patry, 2017) and the effects of the status on the future development of sites and its surroundings (Kaltenborn et al. 2013).

This thesis will not focus on why the enlistment of heritage properties on the World Heritage List seems to be so important in terms of destination competitiveness or attractiveness, nor on the debates about whether having the status is beneficial or not. Instead, this thesis will focus on the roles of a World Heritage Site in several debates and the way in which these roles are discursively constructed. To do so, a post-structuralist approach will be used. Within the post-structuralist paradigm, this thesis will use the work of Michel Foucault as a starting point and will especially focus on his writings about power and knowledge relations to gain insight into the different kinds of roles which can be assigned to the inscribed heritage property based on several debates. Furthermore, power and knowledge relations will help to gain a better understanding of the discursive construction of these functions. To give this thesis even more guidance, the functions Graham, Ashworth and Tunbridge (2000) assign to heritage will be used to guide the study, whereby this thesis will especially focus on the political functions of heritage sites.

This research has been designed as a case study and will focus on the UNESCO World Heritage site of Amsterdam: its Seventeenth-Century Canal Ring Area inside the Singelgracht, hereinafter referred to as the 'Amsterdamse Grachtengordel'. The World Heritage Site of Amsterdam has been selected for this thesis since the procedure for this site to gain designation with the famous status took several years, partly due to organizational developments, but also because of debates that have taken place about the nomination among stakeholders. The stakeholders that have been somehow involved in the nomination procedure or were in another way connected to the heritage property represented several interests, which led to different perspectives towards and opinions about the nomination procedure. This makes it therefore interesting to study the roles that can be assigned to the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status by stakeholders in several debates and the way in which these roles are discursively constructed.

## 1.1 Research objective and research questions

To gain more insight into the roles that can be assigned to the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status in several debates and the way these roles are discursively constructed, the following research objective has been formulated:

*“The objective of this study is to identify the roles of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status in (political) debates and to gain more insight in how they are discursively constructed”.*

Based on the above mentioned research objective, the following research question has been formulated:

*“What roles of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status can be identified in (political) debates and how are they discursively constructed”?*

Since the central research question is quite broad, this question has been split up into sub-questions. These questions are as follows:

- 1) What roles of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status can be identified in (political) debates?*
- 2) How are these roles of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status in (political) debates discursively constructed?*

## 1.2 Outline of the report

This thesis is structured through its seven chapters. The introduction focuses on the contextual understanding of the problem statement of this thesis and concludes with the research objective and research questions. In the second chapter, the ontological position of this study will be examined, followed by an explanation of the theoretical concepts that will guide the thesis. The third chapter explains and underpins the methodological decisions that have been made regarding the research and concludes with a critical reflection on the validity, reliability and limitations of this study. To give the reader more background information on the UNESCO World Heritage Status, the stakeholders of the heritage property and the nomination procedure of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel, the fourth chapter has been designed to provide a background for the study. The fifth chapter of this thesis will focus on the results of the study whereby a distinction has been made between the opinions and roles of stakeholders in the nomination procedure and on the debates that have taken place before and after the inscription of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel on the World Heritage List. In chapter six, the results, as discussed in the fifth chapter, will be analysed. The last chapter of this report will present the conclusions of the study and elaborate on the practical applicability as well as opportunities for future research on this topic.

## 2. Theoretical framework

To be able to answer the question regarding which roles of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status in several (political) debates can be identified and how these are discursively constructed, a theoretical framework has been developed. The concept of post-structuralism will be discussed in the first part of this chapter to set the ontological position of this study. This is followed by a discussion of the work of Michel Foucault, since his concepts about discourse and power and knowledge relationships will be used to further guide this thesis. This chapter will furthermore focus on the concepts of heritage, governance and discourse, and will conclude with a conceptualisation of the theories that will be used and combined in this thesis.

### 2.1 The post structuralism paradigm

Since this study is grounded in poststructuralist perspectives, this paradigm will be discussed in this paragraph whereby emphasis is put on the work of Michel Foucault regarding power-knowledge relationships and discourse.

Post-structuralism can be viewed as a philosophy that emerged in the 1960s in France as a movement critique towards structuralism (New World Encyclopedia, 2015). Post-structuralism does not have a single definition or category (Bansel, 2015), it refers to conceptual signposts that have been collected from a diverse set of ideas based on writings of authors like Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze and Jacques Derrida instead (Springer, 2012). Its starting point is the 'destabilizing hierarchies of meanings, labels, knowledges, ideas, categories, and classifications, where the purpose is to challenge entrenched assumptions' (Belsey, as cited in Springer, 2012: 140), rules and claims to truth about objects, subjects and events (Shehu & Mokghwathi, 2007) by diving into 'the politics, ideology and epistemology of canons, representation, scholarship and documentary practices' (Apthorpe & Gasper in Shehu & Mokghwathi, 2007: 195). What makes the post-structuralist paradigm especially interesting is that it 'welcomes a variety of perspectives to create multifaceted interpretations, even if these interpretations conflict with one another' (Springer, 2012: 140). This matches with the ontological assumption of poststructuralists in relation to the versions of reality. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) namely argue that people have different constructed versions of reality and that none of these versions of reality is more true than another.

Knowledge plays a prominent role in the post-structuralist paradigm and can according to White (1996) be seen as 'a set of cultural practices which are encoded in language, resulting in the creating of a set of texts, whose emphasis and omissions help construct what a subject means and what it means to know it' (p. 109). Knowledge can in this sense be defined as the insight that has been made possible by other insights and is not necessarily restricted to scientific knowledge (Van Assche, Beunen & Duineveld, 2014). Knowledge in all its forms, whether scientific, politicized or local, is entwined with power and it therefore cannot 'claim to a direct access to the truth or can be decoupled from power relations' (Van Assche et al. 2014:42). Foucault wrote a lot about the relationship between power and knowledge. He defined power as 'a set of immanent force relations that is present and working everywhere and in every direction' (Foucault in Van Assche et al. 2014: 41). Power can be viewed as a web of forces at a micro-level that make things possible at the same time and it can be argued that power is neither good or bad and not necessarily tied to individuals or group action, desire and intentionality. Power and knowledge are always entwined in governance processes since knowledge that is independent from the web of power relations does not exist and vice versa (Van Assche et al. 2014). When looking at the relationship between power and policy – precisely the focus of this thesis –

it can be argued that 'power can limit, sustain and reproduce policy actions and reactions' (Sheh & Mokgwathi, 2007: 196).

The concept of discourse is often used in post-structuralism to identify complex power dynamics that might lay beneath a surface (Foucault, 1972) and can therefore be linked to aforementioned discussions about power-knowledge relations. It is, according to Foucault, important to take the complex and unstable processes into account whereby 'discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, stumbling block, a point of resistance or a starting point for an opposing strategy' (Foucault, as cited in Howard, 2000: 78). A discourse can transmit and produce power, reinforce it, but can also undermine and expose it, make it fragile or even possible to thwart it (Foucault, in Howard, 2000). The fourth paragraph of this chapter will dive more into the concept of discourse from a Foucauldian perspective and demonstrate its relevance for this study.

This research will use the post-structuralist paradigm as a guidance whereby emphasis is put on the role of power-knowledge relations in the discursive construction of the functions that have been assigned to the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel by its stakeholders. Since this thesis is all about a World Heritage Site, the upcoming paragraph will discuss the concept of heritage.

## 2.2 Heritage

When looking at heritage from a poststructuralist perspective, there are three ways of thinking that can roughly be identified according to Felder, Duineveld and Van Assche (2014). In the first way of thinking, heritage is conceived as an object that is assumed to be valuable and to which meanings are ascribed. The second way of thinking sees heritage more as a normative concept ascribed to objects. Waterton and Smith (as cited in Felder et al. 2014: 2) argue that according to this perspective 'all heritage is intangible as it is redefined as a cultural process in which the values and cultural and social meanings that help us make sense of the present are identified and negotiated'. Different values can be given to objects since all kind of groups of people or communities might have different constructions of the past. The third, and last, way of thinking about heritage 'considers heritage objects themselves to be the result of discursive construction' (Felder et al. 2014: 2). In this perspective, heritage values or statuses should be understood as new objects instead of new or different layers of meaning (Felder et al. 2014). This thesis will use the latter way of thinking about heritage because this approach towards heritage argues that heritage objects are a result of discursive constructions, which can be linked to Foucault's ideas about how reality is constructed, namely through discourse (Van Assche, Beunen & Duineveld, 2014). The fourth paragraph of this chapter will elaborate more on the concept of discourse. This Foucauldian way of thinking about objects will be used to get more insight into what people's reality is towards heritage objects, and especially on the (political) roles they assign to the object and how these roles are discursively constructed.

The distinctions Graham et al. (2000) make between social, political, cultural and economic functions and uses of heritage in their book '*A Geography of Heritage*', will be used in this thesis to structure people's realities towards the heritage object. This will be central in this thesis about de Amsterdamse Grachtengordel. When talking about the socio-political uses of heritage, Graham et al. (2000) argue that heritage helps to define meanings of a culture and power and therefore can be seen as a political resource with socio-political functions. Economic uses and functions of heritage can be viewed in two ways: economics of heritage and heritage that is located in economics. The key issues here are about the 'effectiveness of heritage as a means of regional and urban development, particularly in terms of the often substantial capital costs involved' (Graham et al. 2000: 257) and the development of tourism. There are three ways to view heritage as an economic activity: viewing it as an economic activity in

itself, treating heritage places as locations for economic activities or a more indirect use in which heritage is used to create and promote place images for economic purposes. Due to all these functions and uses of heritage it can be argued that it is accompanied by all kinds of identifications and potential conflicts. Heritage can also refer to places and objects, therefore also involved in issues regarding the legitimization of power structures (Graham et al. 2000).

### 2.3 Governance

The previous paragraphs have shaped the ontological context of this thesis and have dived deeper into the concept of 'heritage'. To be able to get a better understanding of the roles of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status in several (political) debates and the way in which they are discursively constructed, the concept of governance will be discussed in this paragraph.

There is a lot that can be said about governance, a word and a concept that has become very popular over the time (Mayntz, 2003). In the past governance meant governing, whereby government was seen as a process. Later the term governance started, according to Mayntz (2003), to refer to 'a basically non-hierarchical mode of governing where non-state actors (like communities, businesses and NGO's) participate in the formulation and implementation of public policy' (p. 1), on different scale levels, such as global and sub-national level (Tacconi, 2011). In science, many different meanings and definitions are given to the concept of governance by all kinds of scientists (Kooiman, 1999). Governance can, from a Foucauldian perspective, be presented as a 'continuous battle over the simplifications, reductions of complexity, or models of the world that will exert more influence over the future community' (Van Assche et al. 2014: 42). Governance produces discourses, which together with our perspectives on a certain part of reality create a social reality for us and therefore make alternatives less visible and less likely to happen. Discourses constantly compete and transform within governance and these 'paths' can therefore sometimes lead to conflicts which 'give rise to conflicting versions of reality' (p. 42). It is on the other hand also possible that different versions of reality trigger power conflicts. It is here that policy comes in, since policies are a result of governance (Van Assche et al. 2014).

Where policy can nowadays be seen more as a, 'tool of coordination of governmental and non-governmental actors and not only as a supposed final result of coordination' (Van Assche et al. 2014: 42), governance can on the other hand be seen as something that never stops. It can be seen as an, 'ongoing competition between discourses' and it will never lead to, 'a unifying discourse that fully represents the community and is capable of addressing its key issues in manners acceptable to all' (p. 43). Policy can also be linked to the concepts of power and knowledge, since policy is always everywhere and the concepts of power and knowledge decide whether the policy will be followed, ignored, reinterpreted or even forgotten (Van Assche et al. 2014).

There is a close and important link between the concept of governance and power as confirmed by Foster and Jonker (2005) who stress that engagement with stakeholders is necessary to influence the achievements of outcomes, since they are the ones with power. The relationship between power and knowledge within governance refers to the idea that power shapes the use of knowledge in governance processes, but on the other hand knowledge is also shaping the way power (governance) is exercised (Van Assche, Van Biesebeek & Holm, 2014; Van Assche et al. 2014). It is this interrelationship between power, knowledge and actors/institutes and their influence on governance (processes) that make the study of governance very interesting and relevant for this thesis.

To sum up governance can be defined as networks of governmental and non-governmental agents that are strategized with power/knowledge, which produce policies and are continuously shifting. Knowledge can be used by the actors to 'reinforce their own position of power, while de-legitimizing the knowledge of competing actors' (Van Assche et al. 2014:42).

To be able to translate the abstract concepts of governance and the power/knowledge relations which are embedded within it, to a tool which will guide the rest of the thesis, the Evolutionary Governance Theory (hereafter EGT) will be used. The EGT, as developed by Van Assche et al. (2014), is based on the idea that everything in governance is the result of evolution: its actors, institutions, organizations and discourses. Piece by piece governance is affecting the evolution of these elements. EGT is appropriate to use in this thesis, due to its evolutionary perspective. The assumption of the theory is that 'governance arrangements are always influenced by the dynamic networks of actors, discourses and institutions' (p. 4-5). The theory therefore focuses on the understanding of the constant change of organizations, perspectives and institutions and their relation to each other. This perspective on governance is especially interesting in this thesis because the research is about the roles of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status in several debates and the way in which these roles are discursively constructed. The EGT is useful to gain more insight into how, for instance, the perspectives of stakeholders towards the roles and functions of the heritage property might have changed. Besides this argument, it can be argued that the EGT helps to understand the effects of plans, policies and laws as formal institutions. This is interesting for this thesis since the EGT can help to gain a better understanding of how the roles of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status in several debates might have changed or have been affected over time.

## 2.4 Discourse

Since this thesis is grounded in the post-structuralist paradigm, and focuses – among other things – on the concept of governance, this paragraph will elaborate on the post-structuralist perspectives towards the concept of discourse, since discourses are embedded in governance.

Discourse can be defined as 'an ensemble of ideas, concepts and categories through which meaning is given to phenomena' (Hajer, 2002: 63), or in other words, but arguing more or less the same, as a group of statements belonging to a single system of formulation (Foucault, 1972). These meanings can in turn be produced and reproduced through an identifiable set of practices (Hajer, 2002). According to Howarth (2000) discourses consist of four basic elements, 'these are the objects about which statements are made, the places of speaking from which statements are enunciated, the concepts involved in the formulation of discourse and the themes and theories they develop' (p. 52).

As already mentioned in the first paragraph the concept of discourse is often used in post-structuralism to identify complex power dynamics that might lay beneath a surface (Foucault, 1972). The role of power-knowledge relations within the concept of discourse is stressed by Foucault because he argues that discourses can be viewed as 'historically specific formation rules, with particular systems of power/knowledge relations' (as cited in Howard, 2000: 77). A discourse can according to Foucault 'be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, stumbling block, a point of resistance or a starting point for an opposing strategy' (Foucault, as cited in Howard, 2000: 78). It can transmit and produce power, reinforce it, but can also undermine and expose it, make it fragile or even possible to thwart it (Foucault, in Howard, 2000).

The concept of discourse is often used and applied in studies about governance in order to make sense of shared meanings. A discourse analysis can help to get a better understanding of the relationships

within networks, which at first sight seemed to be disjointed and unstructured (Hajer & Versteeg, 2005). By exploring 'the way in which objects, concepts and strategies of political activity are discursively constructed and then articulated with specific forms of political behaviour, struggles, conflicts, decisions and tactics' (Howard, 2000: 60), it is possible to gain more insight into, 'whether the political behaviour of a society, group or class is not shot through with a particular, describable discursive practice' (Foucault, 1972:194). This entails exploring the way in which the objects, enunciative modalities, concepts and strategies of 'political activity' are discursively constructed, and then articulated with specific forms of political 'behaviour, struggles, conflicts, decisions and tactics'. (Howard, 2000: 60).

In this research, the concept of discourse will be used to gain a better understanding of the discursive construction of roles of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status in several (political) debates. This will be achieved by exploring the way in which these roles are discursively constructed and articulated with specific forms of political behaviour. To be able to gain insight into the discursive construction of the roles, power and knowledge relations will be explored in several debates. Emphasis will here be put on the relation among and between the stakeholders and the heritage property itself, but also the will that sustains these relationships and the strategic intentions that supports these power and knowledge relationships, as inspired by Foucault (Foucault, as cited in Springer & Clinton, 2015).

## 2.5 Conceptualisation

This last paragraph of the theoretical framework has been synthesised as a concluding part of this theoretical chapter. The starting point of the theoretical framework was to introduce the post-structuralist approach and to set the ontological position of this thesis. The first paragraph already mentioned that this study would elaborate on the work of Michel Foucault, whereby emphasis is put on his perspective towards **governance** and **discourse** while taking his thoughts towards **power-knowledge relations** into account.

**Governance** can be defined as networks of governmental and non-governmental agents that are strategized with power/knowledge, which produce policies and are continuously shifting. Knowledge can be used by the actors to, 'reinforce their own position of power, while de-legitimizing the knowledge of competing actors' (Van Assche et al. p. 42). In this thesis, the **Evolutionary Governance Theory** (EGT) will be used to gain more insight into how for instance the perspectives of stakeholders towards the roles and functions of the heritage property – as they have been identified in several debates – have changed. Furthermore, the EGT can help to provide a better understanding of how the roles of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status in several debates might have changed or have been affected over time.

Important elements within the concept of governance are **discourses**. As already described in the fourth paragraph of this chapter, a discourse can be seen as, 'an ensemble of ideas, concepts and categories through which meaning is given to phenomena' (Hajer, 2002: 63) and helps to provide insight into power-knowledge relations. Its link with governance in general – and the EGT – is that everything within governance is the result of evolution: its actors, institutions, organizations and discourses. By focussing on discourses in this thesis, a better understanding of the discursive construction of the roles of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status in several debates will be created. This thesis will make use of **power and knowledge relations** to be able to gain insight into these discursively constructed roles of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel in several debates.

Last but not least, will this thesis logically also use the concept of **heritage**, since the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel consists of many monuments and is therefore seen as a heritage site. Inspired by Felder et al. (2014), heritage will in this thesis be viewed, in this post-structuralist oriented study, as objects which are the results of **discursive construction**. By doing so, this thesis aims to gain more insight into the discursive construction of the roles of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status in several debates.

The reasoning behind the model – as it has been visualized in figure 2 – is that the roles that can be assigned to the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status are based on four perspectives (cultural, economic, political and social) and that these categories are based on discourses. In other words, the figure tries to explain that discourses can be divided into four basic categories and that these categories shape/construct the roles that have been assigned to the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status in several debates.

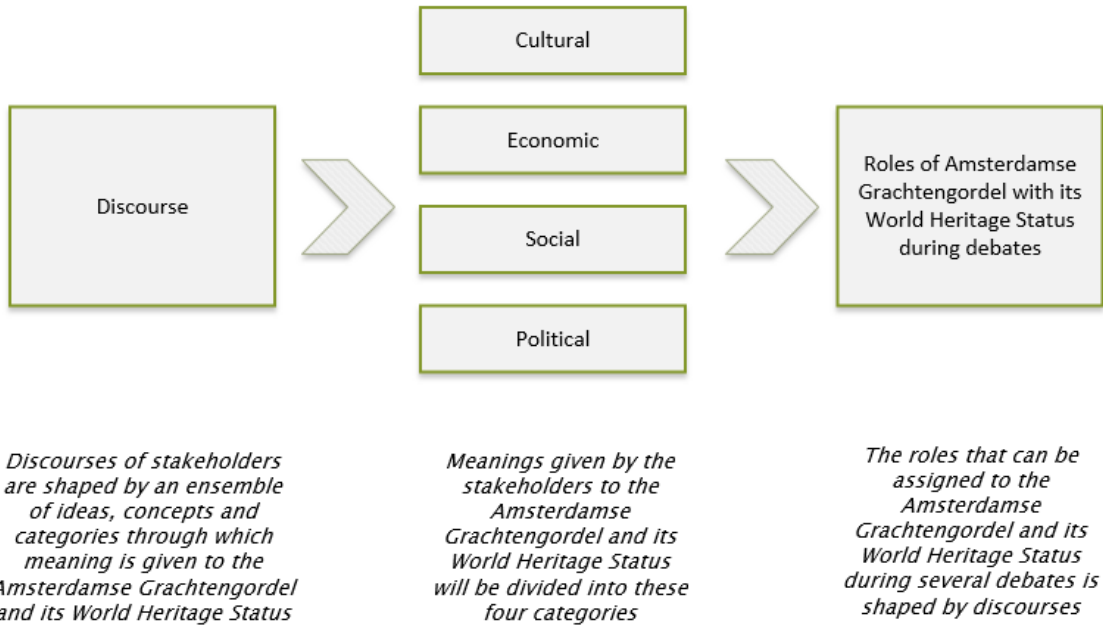


Figure 2. Conceptual model



### 3. Methodology and methods

This chapter explains the methodological decisions that have been made in relation to this thesis research. By using a qualitative research design, this study aims to gain more insight into how the roles of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status in several debates are discursively constructed. This chapter will start with an explanation of the research design, followed by an explanation of the methods that have been used. Furthermore, this chapter will discuss the way in which data has been collected and the analysis has been carried out. The last paragraphs will focus on the validity, reliability and limitations of the research.

#### 3.1 Research design: exploratory case study

As mentioned previously, this research is based on the post-structuralist paradigm whereby it focuses on the roles of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Site in several debates and the way in which these roles are discursively constructed. In order to be able to achieve the research objective as it has been described in the first chapter, the approach of the research can be described as an exploratory case study. It can be described as exploratory research because the topic does not seem to be extensively examined in scientific literature yet (Boeije, 2010). To be able to explore the topic more in depth, qualitative methods have been used since they have a very flexible approach. This made it easy to respond to unexpected situations. One of the advantages of an exploratory research is that data collection and data analysis can be continually adjusted to the emerging fields. This means that these processes need not be carried out in order, but are conducted in small cycles instead (Boeije, 2010). The flexibility of an exploratory research design was very useful in this thesis, since it was unsure as to what the outcomes would be in advance due to the topic's absence in scientific literature. A key characteristic of methods that are used in qualitative research is that they help to look for meaning (Boeije, 2010). This is especially helpful in this research because it focuses on the roles of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel in several debates and the way these roles are discursively constructed.

The reason this case study has been selected as the research design is because this thesis only focuses on the case of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel. The case study as a research design is useful in this research because different kinds of qualitative data collection methods can be combined within this design, for example a study of relevant literature, document analysis as well as interviews, which combined, increase the internal validity of the research (triangulation). Another characteristic of the case study is that it is a very intensive type of research in which relationships will be studied within a specific case (Verhoeven, 2014).

#### 3.2 Research methods

Since the research design of this thesis is an exploratory case study, there are several data collection methods that can be used. Examples of data collection methods that are frequently used within case studies are literature studies, document analysis, (open) interviews, observations and focus groups (Verhoeven, 2014). In this study, two data collection methods have been selected because they seemed the most applicable in the context of the study. The two methods chosen are interviews and document analysis. The decision regarding what kind of methods to use was already made before the start of the actual data collection, since it was quite clear for the researcher which methods would be the most relevant for this kind of research.

##### *Document analysis*

The analysis of documents can take place on different scale levels, ranging from documents on a macro level (documents of 'larger organizations' or on a national level) to micro levels, like personal

bibliographies. This method is about analysing papers, books and articles who already have been interpret (Verhoeven, 2014). In this research, document analysis will be used to analyse – among other things – policy documents, newspaper articles, webpages and the nomination file, in order to gain more insight into the debates that have taken place in which the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status are somehow involved. Furthermore, these documents could be very helpful in identifying the roles of the heritage property and its status, also embedded in these debates.

#### *Interviews*

The other data collection method is the interview. The reason the interview has been selected in this case, is because it provides information about the perspectives, experiences and language of the involved stakeholders (Boeije, 2010). In this thesis, semi-structured interviews will be carried out with the stakeholders (representatives of the organizations that are connected to the heritage property) to gain more insight into the nomination procedure of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and the debates to which the heritage property and its World Heritage Status were somehow connected. The reason semi-structured interviews are chosen, is so the researcher can work with a so-called topic list, but interviewees on the other hand also have enough space to ‘tell their story, pass on their knowledge and provide their own perspective’ on the topics (Boeije, 2010: 62).

### 3.3 Sample methods

Most of the interviewees have been selected because their names have been mentioned in newspaper articles, policy documents or on websites about the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel. The sampling method of the interviewees that has been selected for this research can be called purposive sampling, because interviewees have been selected based on certain characteristics (Verhoeven, 2014), like their connection with the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel or their involvement in the nomination procedure of the heritage property. At a certain point a combination of a purposive sampling method and a self-selection method is used. An interest group had namely been approached for an interview via their general email address after which one of the members of this interest group selected herself as an interviewee based on the request in the invitation email.

The last sample method that can be identified in this thesis is, as Verhoeven (2014) calls it, the snowball method. During mail contact with people from the involved organizations (stakeholders), the researcher was sometimes referred to other persons who might provide better contributions to this study due to their knowledge. Networks of people were used in these cases to get more names of possible interviewees (Verhoeven, 2014).

### 3.4 Data collection

The data collection has taken place between 1 November 2018 and 9 January 2019, using interviews and document analysis as data collection methods.

#### *Document analysis*

To get a better overview and understanding of the nomination procedure of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and the debates in which the heritage property and its World Heritage Status were somehow involved, LexisNexis has been used. Via LexisNexis, newspaper articles taken from several Dutch newspapers have been consulted. Besides LexisNexis, the municipality archival is also consulted several times to gather more information about how the topic has been discussed in the city councils (both the central city and the city district centrum) and what kind of decisions have been made regarding the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel. This information was often found in letters sent by the municipality to the ministry of OCW. Since this thesis is about the World Heritage Status of the

Amsterdamse Grachtengordel, the nomination files that have officially been submitted to UNESCO in Paris have also been consulted, like the 'Management plan' (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2009) and the 'Nomination Document' (Kingdom of the Netherlands, 2009).

### *Interviews*

In total 11 interviews have been conducted during the above-mentioned period, with an average duration of 50 minutes. Most of the interviews took place in Amsterdam at the offices where the interviewees were working. The interviews that have been conducted outside Amsterdam took place at Forum Café at Wageningen University and the café at the city hall in Utrecht, since these locations were most convenient for the interviewees. Two interviews have been conducted via phone. Besides the interviews, the researcher has also made contact with organizations via email and phone. An overview of all the interviewees and the organizations with whom the researcher has had contact with via email or phone can be found in appendix I.

The same topics have been addressed during all the interviews, since the same interview guide has been used each time. The topics discussed were related to the background of the interviewee, the phenomenon of the World Heritage List, the opinions of interviewees regarding the idea of nominating the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel for the World Heritage List, a review of the whole nomination procedure (1999–2010), the roles of organizations in the nomination procedure (involvement and power), debates and discussions regarding the status of the heritage property and lastly about what the interviewees think nowadays about the inscription of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel on the famous list and whether these perspectives are still the same as they were in 2010. The way the topics have been addressed changed a little however during the interviews. This was because during the conversations with interviewees it became more clear which items, impacts and roles of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel were marked as very important by the interviewees.

### **3.5 Data analysis**

Based on the data collection methods that have been used, a lot of information has been obtained. All the interviews that have been conducted were also recorded once the interviewees had given permission, except for the interviews that have been conducted via phone. Interviews were recorded for the purpose of transcription, which made it easier to analyse them later on. The complete interview transcripts made it much easier to search for and identify power and knowledge relationships that are embedded in the debates about the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status. Transcription also allowed for the identification of the roles of the heritage property and its status since they were sometimes 'hidden' in just a few words or sentences which would not have been discovered if the interviews were only summarized in main points. Minutes were made during the two interviews conducted via phone, which were directly after the interview used to summarize the conversation.

To be able to analyse all the obtained information, the concept of coding has been used. The information has first been broken down, examined, compared and conceptualized as Boeije (2010) describes in the book '*Analysis in Qualitative Research*', followed by the process of axial coding in which connections have been made between the categories. It is important to note here that the topics that have been discussed during the interviews have not been ridded out of their context during the process of coding since this could have an impact on the discourses that needed to be identified. Once the connections were made between the categories, it was easier to identify the roles of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status in several debates and to get to know how these roles are discursively constructed.

Since this thesis focuses on the roles of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status in several debates and the way in which these roles are discursively constructed, it was decided to make use of the concept of a stakeholder analysis, since stakeholders are the ones who influence the context of the debates. Stakeholders can be seen as 'those who affect or are affected by a decision or action' (Freeman, in Reed et al. 2009:1934) and a stakeholder analysis is a process that:

*'i) defines aspects of a social and natural phenomenon affected by a decision or action; ii) identifies individuals, groups and organisations who are affected by or can affect those parts of the phenomenon (this may include nonhuman and non-living entities and future generations); and iii) prioritises these individuals and groups for involvement in the decision-making process'* (Reed et al. 2009:1933).

The reason the concept of stakeholder analysis will be used in this thesis is because it can help, as previously mentioned, to define aspects of phenomena that are affected by a decision or action. The decision/action is in the case of this study the inscription of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel on the World Heritage List. The aspects of phenomena that are affected by it are the topics in the debates that will be studied. By identifying the stakeholders that have been involved in this action, the opinions they have about it and their influence on the debates, it will be possible to identify the roles of the heritage property and its World Heritage Status in these debates.

It has been decided that a scientific model – upon which to base the stakeholder analysis – will not be used, but stakeholders will be categorized based on the level upon which they operate (national versus local) and their objective, interests and connection with the heritage property. The reason behind this decision is because the researcher only wanted to categorize stakeholders in a superficial way.

### 3.6 Validity and reliability

Validity is about the extent to which systematical errors have been made (Verhoeven, 2014). According to Boeije (2010), validity refers to whether the researcher is specific about what he or she wants to set out to assess. The use of correct measurement instruments is very important here. Validity can be divided into a couple of categories: content validity, internal validity and external validity. Content validity refers to whether the researcher is measuring what he or she wants to measure and can be increased by asking more in-depth questions during interviews. This has been frequently carried out during interviews in this study. Internal validity is about whether the conclusions are correct (Verhoeven, 2014). The internal validity of the research has increased because several data collection methods have been used (triangulation) to base the conclusions on. On the other hand, the internal validity did decrease since all the interviewees knew in advanced that they were interviewed for a master's thesis and therefore might have reacted differently to the questions compared to how they would have done normally. External validity refers to the extent to which the sample is representative of the rest of the population and can therefore be generalized (Verhoeven, 2014). Since this is a qualitative study and it therefore does not pay a lot of attention to numbers (quantitative data), emphasis is put on the generalizability to other similar situations. Since only one case has been studied, the external validity decreased. The fact that within the case of Amsterdam more than 10 stakeholders have been interviewed, ensures however that the external validity was increased.

Generally seen refers reliability to the extent to which a research does not have made any accidental errors (Verhoeven, 2014). This is confirmed by Baarda et al. (2013) who argue that reliability is about the extent to which the results are independent from coincidence. If the research would be repeated, it should logically lead to the same outcomes if the phenomenon has not changed in the meantime (Boeije, 2010). A repetition of the research is however in qualitative studies relatively difficult because

interviews can generally not take place under the same circumstances. There are however some aspects according to Verhoeven (2014) that can increase or decrease the reliability of a qualitative study. Due to the fact that this study has only focused on one case, the reliability of this study has decreased. It has also decreased because no pilot interview was conducted and because the researcher did receive a lot of peer feedback during the research. The reliability has however increased a little since important decisions that have been made during the research with the corresponding arguments have been written down in a log book. The reliability of this research has also increased due to the standardization of the interview guide. For all conducted interviews, the same interview guide has been used and can therefore be seen as a relatively reliable instrument. Furthermore, the reliability did increase because the research used more than one data collection method (triangulation) and because most of the interviews that have been conducted have been recorded and literally transcribed word by word. Overall, it can be concluded that the reliability of this explorative study is limited.

### 3.7 Limitations

This thesis has, just like any other, dealt with certain limitations, which will be discussed in this paragraph. The most important limitation of this study is the lack of time. This limitation occurred since this is a master's thesis that had to be finished within a specific period of time which ensured that the topic could only be studied in a more explorative way instead of in a more extensive and detailed way. If there would have been more time, more stakeholders could have been interviewed, which would ensure that the topic could have been explored more intensively.

Another aspect that might be seen as a limitation, is the decision to use the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel with its World Heritage Status as a case study. The heritage property was designated with the World Heritage Status in 2010, so almost 10 years ago. As a result of this, some interviewees did not remember everything in relation to the events and debates that took place about the heritage property in the period of the nomination and just after the inscription of the heritage property. Because the researcher made use of both interviews and document analysis as data collection methods, 'questionable' information given by the interviewees could easily be checked by comparing the given information during the interviews with the information in all the analysed documents. This could then be checked again with the interviewees, so that it did not influence the quality of the research. This issue has now been described as a limitation of the study, but it could on the other hand also be seen as a positive element of this study.

Another small limitation of this study had to do with the agendas of the interviewees. Not all stakeholders that have been approached for this study had enough time for an interview. This resulted in the fact that two interviews have been conducted via telephone and that the researcher had to keep these interviews short with the topics quite general, since the interviewees did not have enough time to answer the more in-depth questions.

## 4. The World Heritage Status and the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel

Since this thesis focuses on the roles of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status in several debates and the way in which these roles are discursively constructed, it is important to have a clear image of what the UNESCO World Heritage Status actually is. Therefore, this chapter provides the reader in the first paragraph with some background information on the World Heritage Status. Furthermore, this chapter will give a very brief overview of the nomination procedure of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and will introduce the stakeholders that have been involved in this nomination procedure and the debates.

### 4.1 The UNESCO World Heritage Status

*From the establishment of UNESCO until the development of a World Heritage List*

During the Second World War the governments of the European countries that were occupied by Nazi Germany and its allies raised concerns about how their educational systems could be rebuilt once peace was restored across Europe. This occurred during the Conference of Allied Ministers of Education (CAME), which was held in the United Kingdom. Elaborating on the ideas of the CAME conference, a new United Nations conference was convened in London in November 1945, just after the Second World War came to an end, in which an educational and cultural organization (ECO/CONF) was established. The result of the conference was the establishment of the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization by thirty-seven countries. On 4 November 1946 the constitution officially came into force after ratification by twenty countries from all around the world (UNESCO, 2017). The purpose of the organization is, “to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaborating among nations through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed for the peoples of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion by the Charter of the United Nations” (UNESCO, 1945).

Besides the development of educational tools, access to equal education for children and fostering scientific programmes and policies as platforms for development and cooperation, UNESCO also preserves and promotes cultural heritage and the equal dignity of cultures (UNESCO, n.d.). However, the idea of preservation and promotion of cultural heritage is not something which stemmed from this time. Already after the First World War an international movement for protecting heritage seemed to have emerged. Two separate movements that focused on the preservation of cultural sites and issues concerning the conservation of nature both resulted in the organization of a convention in November 1972 concerning the protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage, which was subsequently adopted by the general UNESCO conference, also held in November 1972 (UNESCO, 2018). In December 1975 the World Heritage Convention officially came into force (UNESCO, 2019a) and in 1978 the first heritage properties were enlisted at the World Heritage List (UNESCO, 2019a), which was a result of the convention. Over the years the number of enlisted properties increased to 1,092 at the beginning of 2019 (UNESCO, 2019).

More than 20 years after the World Heritage convention concerning the protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage and the establishment of the World Heritage List, concerns were raised about the lack of balance between the type of designated heritage properties and their geographical locations. This concern resulted in a global strategy which was launched in 1994 by UNESCO and had to ensure that the World Heritage List would be a well-represented, balanced and credible World Heritage List. The effects of this strategy resulted in the number of State Parties growing from 33 to 132. Furthermore, UNESCO has promoted the new categories of natural and cultural landscapes and they

have put effort into further enhancement of underrepresented categories by limiting the number of nominations that can be presented by each State Party (UNESCO, 2018a).

Since the reason behind the World Heritage List has now been discussed, it is interesting to look at the so-called 'benefits' of the World Heritage Status on heritage properties that have been designated with the status according to UNESCO itself. Belonging to an 'international community of appreciation and concern for universally significant properties that embody a world of outstanding examples of cultural diversity and natural wealth', should according to UNESCO be seen as the overarching benefit of the convention in general. Furthermore, it shows the State Parties who have signed the convention that they join hands to protect and cherish the world's natural and cultural heritage. Being a State Party to the convention also serves as a catalyst to raise awareness for the protection and preservation of heritage. Developing countries in particular can make use of a fund for the identification, preservation and promotion of World Heritage sites. Since the World Heritage list is a concept which has been so well understood, sites that have been designated with the status are sometimes a magnet for international corporation which could result in financial assistance for conservation projects from all kind of sources. World Heritage sites could also make use of special management plans. Lastly, inscription to the World Heritage List according to UNESCO contributes to public awareness of the site, and thus increases tourist activities with all financial benefits that come across with it (UNESCO, 2018).

#### 4.2 The nomination procedure of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel: a brief historical overview

The Amsterdamse Grachtengordel was enlisted on the World Heritage List in August 2010, although the ideas for the nomination of the heritage property go back to the end of last century. In 1995 the Dutch government already officially expressed its intention to nominate Amsterdam for the World Heritage List and the heritage property was put on the 'Tentative List' in 1996 (Vereniging Vrienden van de Amsterdamse Binnenstad, 2010). The city was however not a serious candidate for inscription on the World Heritage List at that time, because it did not meet an important requirement regarding the national and local protection of the heritage property. The national protection of heritage was in that time arranged in the 'Monumentenwet' (monument law) and was called 'Beschermd Stadsgezicht' (protected cityscape) (Overheid, n.d.). The city of Amsterdam had to obtain this status first, before an official nomination could be submitted to UNESCO in Paris.

It took quite a while before Amsterdam obtained the status of 'Beschermd Stadsgezicht', partly as a result of debates in the city council, which concerned the possible consequences of the national protection for rental prices of houses in the inner city (Trouw, 1996). Despite these debates, which already started around 1989 (Respondent 1, personal communication, 9 January 2019), it was decided that it was necessary to obtain this status and so the municipality started working on it. The inner city of Amsterdam finally received the status of 'Beschermd Stadsgezicht' on the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 1999 (Gemeente Amsterdam, n.d.). The protection of the inner city with this 'status' was officially arranged and thus from this moment it was possible to work on the establishment of the nomination file itself.

The municipality of Amsterdam started to work on the nomination file from 1999 onwards in collaboration with the RCE. It took them however until the beginning of 2009 to finish the nomination file and to officially submit it to UNESCO in Paris, due to several events and debates that took place in the meantime. Debates were mostly concerned about what exactly should be nominated as the 'heritage property' (the whole inner city or only the canal ring) and what the 'buffer zone' would be. Furthermore, debates also took place about what the possible impact of the inscription of the heritage

property would mean in terms of developments in the city and regarding tourism. Events that took place between 1999 and 2009 – which had an influence on the nomination procedure – were the election of Rick van der Ploeg (former State Secretary Culture and Media) for the World Heritage Committee which ensured that the Netherlands did not submit any nomination until 2007 to prevent conflicts of interests. Furthermore UNESCO revised its ‘Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention’ and tightened up rules regarding the establishment of a management plan. All these events had an influence on the establishment of the nomination file.

After many years, with several debates and events that influenced the establishment of the nomination file, it was officially submitted to UNESCO in Paris at the beginning of 2009 (Vereniging Vrienden van de Amsterdamse Binnenstad, n.d.) and after a critical evaluation of the nomination file by UNESCO and ICOMOS (which also included a visit to the heritage property) the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel was inscribed on the World Heritage List in August 2010 during the UNESCO Conference in Brazil. Image 4 shows which parts of the city of Amsterdam belong to the ‘heritage property’ itself and which parts have been identified as the ‘buffer zone’.

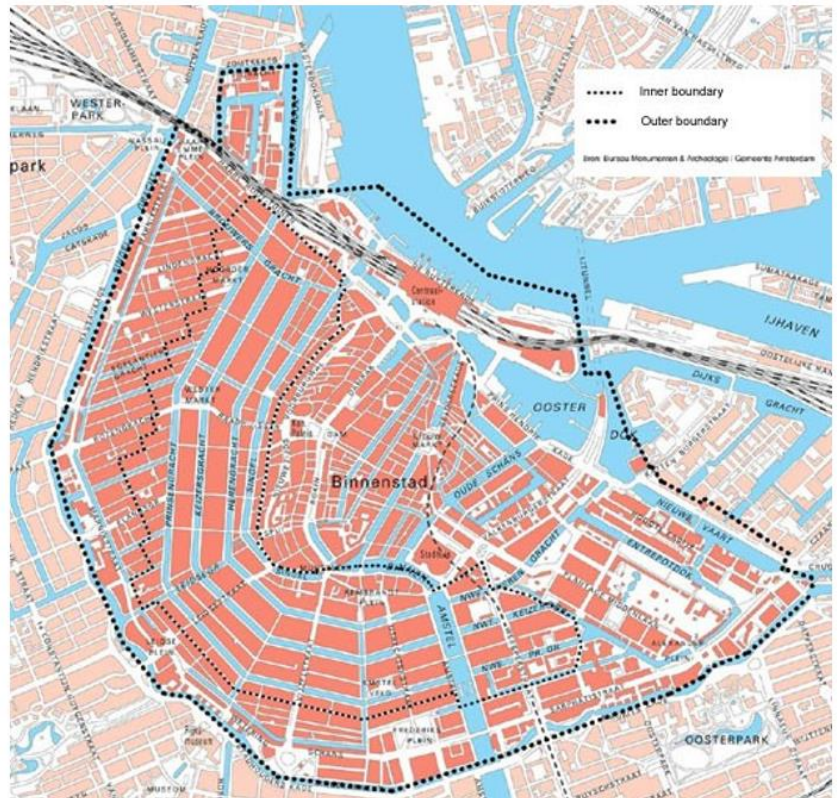


Image 4. Boundary of the heritage property and its buffer zone (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2009)

### 4.3 The stakeholders of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel

Several stakeholders have been involved in the nomination procedure of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel for its inscription on the World Heritage List. They have had their say in debates about the heritage property or can be linked to the heritage property in any other way. The stakeholders are connected to the heritage property because they are living in the specific area designated with the World Heritage Status, because they feel responsible for the conservation and protection of the heritage property or because they have to deal with the heritage property because of their hobby or work. Since there are several stakeholders somehow connected to the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel, each with their own vision towards the heritage property and the status it has been designated with, this paragraph will shortly elaborate on the different kind of stakeholders of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel, both on a national and local level.

#### 4.3.1 National stakeholders

There are several national stakeholders connected to the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel because of the World Heritage Status the property was designated with in 2010. On a national level, these are the ministry of Education, Culture and Science (hereinafter referred to as ministry of OCW), its executive



body: The Dutch Governmental Cultural Heritage Agency (hereinafter referred to as RCE) and the UNESCO commission of the Netherlands. The institutions helped the municipality of Amsterdam with the establishment of the nomination file. The Dutch Government officially submitted the nomination file in Paris while the RCE worked, together with the municipality of Amsterdam, on the establishment of the nomination file. The Dutch UNESCO commission and its office kept an eye on the nomination procedure and supported the writers in case something was not clear. Today, all these national organizations still keep an eye on the protection and conservation of the heritage property from a distance (Respondent 2, personal communication, 2 November 2018). What is furthermore important to mention, is that during interviews with representatives from the RCE and UNESCO Nederland, it became clear that both organizations were very in favour of the nomination of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel for the World Heritage List and therefore supported the establishment of the nomination file (Respondent 2, personal communication, 2 November 2018; Respondent 3, personal communication, 13 November 2018).

#### 4.3.2 Local stakeholders

On a local level, the municipality of Amsterdam was very involved in the nomination procedure of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and because city district Centrum (which is part of the municipality of Amsterdam) is the site holder of the heritage property, the city nowadays still is. Being the site holder means that the city district Centrum (supported by central municipality) is responsible for the heritage property and its World Heritage Status. In practice, the offices for Monuments and Archaeology (hereinafter referred to as BMA) and World Heritage (hereinafter referred to as BWE) are the executive bodies of the municipality regarding this topic. During the nomination procedure BMA worked, together with the RCE, on the establishment of the nomination file and nowadays still takes care of the whole inner city (including the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel with its World Heritage Status) with all its monuments by protecting and restoring monuments and sharing knowledge about the cultural history in order to create public support (Monumenten, n.d.). BWE also contributed to the establishment of the nomination file and nowadays helps to protect the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel with its World Heritage Status and spreads the inspiring story of the heritage property (Gemeente Amsterdam, n.d.b).

Besides the municipality itself with its executive bodies, local political parties were involved in the nomination procedure of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel. Since the nomination of the heritage property had to gather enough support within the municipality, the parties that are represented in the central city council and the city council of district Centrum were also asked about their opinions regarding the idea. The political parties each had their own ideas and opinions about the nomination, based on the interests their parties represented. Right oriented parties seemed to be afraid of the nomination of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel because they did not know what the status would mean for the city in terms of extra rules and regulations that could have an impact on developments (Respondent 4, personal communication, 18 December 2018). On the other hand, left oriented parties seemed to be more positive about the initiative because the status seemed good for the protection of the heritage property (Respondent 5, personal communication, 20 December 2018). They however seemed to have some doubts about the possible impact of the status on the rents of houses in the inner city. The role of the political parties in the debates about the nomination and their perspectives towards the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel after it was designated with the World Heritage Status will be discussed in the upcoming chapters.

There are besides the municipality and the political parties, several interest groups in Amsterdam who care about the heritage in the city and who aim to protect and conserve it. These groups have

somehow been involved in the nomination procedure or have been connected to the heritage property since its inscription on the World Heritage List. Examples of these kind of interest groups that have been involved in this study, are the Vereniging Vrienden van de Amsterdamse Binnenstad (hereinafter referred to as VVAB), Erfgoedvereniging Heemschut and heritage organization Amstelodamum. The aims of these interest groups are all related to the protection and conservation of heritage in Amsterdam and the interest groups were therefore in favour of the nomination of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel for inscription on the World Heritage List and supported the initiative. The VVAB especially, has been identified as a group that came to the forefront several times in the nomination procedure since they lobbied a lot for the nomination and often expressed their visions about the nomination procedure and about the World Heritage Status of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel after its inscription (Respondent 1, personal communication, 9 January 2019).

Furthermore, the opinions of an entrepreneurial organization and a former action group towards the nomination procedure and the status of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel have been taken into account in this study. The entrepreneurial organization (Vereniging Amsterdam City) aims to have an economical healthy city (Amsterdam City, n.d) and argued that their opinion about the nomination of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel was quite neutral. The association was not specifically pro or against the nomination. Furthermore, the association was not involved in the nomination procedure, nor did they have an influence on it (Respondent 6, personal communication, 21 November 2019).

The last stakeholder that will be introduced in this paragraph is the action group AiAmsterdam, which inhabitants themselves formulated. AiAmsterdam was established as a result of the implementation of new rules and other developments concerning the inner city which inhabitants knew very little about. The protest group AiAmsterdam was not directly involved in the nomination procedure of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and was definitely not against the inscription of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel on the World Heritage List as it has been argued in the news (Het Parool, 2010). They rather saw the status as a compliment regarding the city's beauty. What they however did care about was that the World Heritage Status was about to be used by a group of people to push through and take over control to achieve their future vision of Amsterdam and they therefore united themselves with a mission: to stop the implementation of these rules and the developments that come with them (Respondent 7, personal communication, 7 December 2018).

A more detailed description of both the national and local stakeholders and their connection with the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel can be found in appendix II. The following chapters will put more emphasis on the influence of the stakeholders on the nomination procedure and their opinions about the inscription of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel on the World Heritage List.

## 5. The realisation of a World Heritage Site in Amsterdam

This chapter will elaborate on the findings of this study, which are divided into three parts. The first paragraph will give a detailed description of the nomination procedure of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel. Paragraph two will elaborate on the opinions of the stakeholders, introduced in the previous chapter, regarding the nomination and the roles they had in this procedure. This chapter will end by elaborating on the debates which took place during the nomination procedure and after the inscription of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel on the World Heritage List about the World Heritage Status of the heritage property.

### 5.1 The nomination procedure of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel: a historical overview

As already mentioned in the previous chapter the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel was inscribed on the World Heritage List in August 2010, although the ideas for the nomination of the heritage property go back to the end of last century. To get a better understanding of why the nomination procedure took such a long time, this paragraph will give a detailed description of the nomination procedure.

#### *From the first ideas until arranging the right protection*

The Dutch government officially expressed its intention to nominate Amsterdam for the World Heritage List in 1995 and Amsterdam was put on the 'Tentative List' in 1996 (Vereniging Vrienden van de Amsterdamse Binnenstad, 2010), since the city fitted perfectly in the heritage themes developed by the Dutch Governmental Agency for Cultural Heritage (water, citizenship & architecture and modernism in the 1920s and 1930s) (Respondent 9, personal communication, 7 November 2018). However, to be a serious candidate for the World Heritage List, the city had to meet an important requirement regarding the protection of its heritage. This requirement stated that the national and local protection of the heritage property should be arranged well. Since Amsterdam did not have an official protected status, the Dutch Government had to arrange the protection of the heritage property by Dutch law first, before Amsterdam could be nominated (Vereniging Vrienden van de Amsterdamse Binnenstad, 2010).

National protection of heritage in the Netherlands at that time was arranged in the 'Monumentenwet' (monument law), and called 'Beschermd Stadsgezicht' (protected cityscape) (Overheid, n.d.). Thus, the inner city of Amsterdam had to obtain this official protected status first. It took quite a while before Amsterdam received the status of 'Beschermd Stadsgezicht', partly as a result of debates in the city council. These debates concerned the possible consequences of the protected status for rental prices of houses in the inner city, as the following quote confirms:

*"There was mainly resistance to the status of 'Beschermd Stadsgezicht' because of the possible consequences of the status on the rental prices of houses within the Singelgracht."* (as translated from Dutch) (Trouw, 1996).

Social political parties especially were afraid that once the inner city had received the protected status, it would lead to increased rental prices of houses in general, but also to the social rental houses (Respondent 8, personal communication, 11 December 2018).

Despite the debates concerning the protected status, which already started around 1989 (Respondent 1, personal communication, 9 January 2019), it was decided that it was necessary to obtain this status, so the municipality started working on it. One of the requirements to get the status of 'Beschermd Stadsgezicht' was that cities needed to have so-called 'bestemmingsplannen' (destination plans) for the whole area (Overheid, n.d.). In a destination plan, the municipality explains what the destination of

the ground and the buildings in a certain area is. Such a plan also explains where and what can be build (Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed, 2012). In most parts of the inner city, such a plan already existed, but had to be made 'conserverend' (conserved). This meant that no further developments were allowed for these areas (Van der Schoot Advies, 2015). It took the municipality of Amsterdam quite a while to have destination plans for the whole area and to ensure that they were conserved. The inner city of Amsterdam finally received the status of 'Beschermd Stadsgezicht' on the 1st of February 1999 (Gemeente Amsterdam, n.d.). The protection of the inner city with this 'status' was officially arranged and thus work on the nomination file itself could begin.

### ***Realisation of the nomination file***

In September 1999, the municipality of Amsterdam officially agreed with the idea to nominate the historical city centre for the World Heritage List (Gemeente Amsterdam Bureau Monumenten en Archeologie, 2006) and since the protection of the inner city was arranged earlier that year by Dutch law, the RCE, together with the municipality of Amsterdam, started to work on the nomination file. In 2003, Rick van der Ploeg (former State Secretary Culture and Media), was elected for the World Heritage Committee and the Dutch Government therefore decided that no nominations would be submitted by the Netherlands during this period to prevent conflicts of interest as confirmed by the following statement:

*"Rick van der Ploeg, former State Secretary Culture, wanted to be part of the committee. In the campaign for the election of Van der Ploeg, promised the Dutch government not to nominate any Dutch heritage property, in order to prevent conflicts of interest".* (as translated from Dutch) (Hageman, 2006)

As a result of the Dutch membership of the World Heritage Committee, the further preparation of the nomination file of Amsterdam stood still until 2007, when the committee membership of Rick van der Ploeg came to an end (Hageman, 2006).

There were however some developments in the period that Rick van der Ploeg represented the Netherlands in the World Heritage Committee, which had an influence on the establishment of the nomination file of Amsterdam. First of all, UNESCO revised its 'Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention' in 2005. As a reaction to this revision, the municipality of Amsterdam agreed that the nominated area should consist of the 'kern zone' (nominated property) and a 'buffer zone', whereby the 17<sup>th</sup> century 'Grachtengordel' (canal ring) was identified as the nominated property and the other parts of the 'Beschermd Stadsgezicht' as the buffer zone. The buffer zone could namely not be outside of the area which was identified as 'Beschermd Stadsgezicht' because it needed to have the same protection as the nominated property itself (Respondent 1, personal communication, 9 January 2019). There has however been a lot of discussion about this topic as the following quote confirms:

*"An interesting development is that the whole inner city including the canal ring has received the status of 'Beschermd Stadsgezicht' and in the end only the canal ring has been designated as World Heritage. There have taken place several heavy discussions about this topic, also internationally. What should be inscribed? What has an 'outstanding universal value'?"* (as translated from Dutch) (Respondent 2, personal communication, 2 November 2018).

Several stakeholders have argued that the medieval inner city with several 'icons' such as the town hall of Jacob van Campen (well-known architect and artist in the period which is known as the Golden Age)

and the palace on the Dam square, should be part of the 'heritage property' itself as well (Het Parool, 2008a) as the following quotes shows:

*"Amsterdam should nominate the whole inner city for the UNESCO World Heritage List. The inner city has more valuable monuments which are essential than only its 17<sup>th</sup>-century Grachtengordel. Only nominating the main canals is ridiculous. The palace on the Dam, the town hall of Jacob van Campen, which is the most important monument of Amsterdam and maybe that of the whole country. That should then be unprotected? The same thing goes for de Wallen, the oldest area of Amsterdam, de Nieuwmarkt en De Waag, and de Jordaan, with a special genesis alongside the ditches of the meadows which have been there in the past".* (as translated from Dutch) (Coumou in Het Parool, 2008b).

*"On Monday the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March (2008) expressed advisors of BMA critique on the plan to only nominate the Grachtengordel. They argue that it is strange that Amsterdam does not nominate the whole inner city".* (as translated from Dutch) (Het Parool, 2008a).

After, it seems, many years of debates and discussions about what should be identified as the 'nominated property' and 'buffer zone', the municipality decided in 2008 to identify the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel as the 'nominated property' and the rest of the inner city – which already had the status of 'Beschermd Stadsgezicht' – as 'buffer zone' due to the uniqueness of the Grachtengordel as the following quote confirms:

*"There are already a lot of old cities on the World Heritage List, mainly Western cities. But we will strengthen our chances if we can put the uniqueness of the Grachtengordel in a certain era. It is then about all aspects, with the city as the centre of arts and the philosophy of the seventeenth century. (...) So we are trying to nominate the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel as a symbol for other themes where the city stands for. Furthermore, are we trying to connect the heritage property, the canal ring, with other important parts of the city, without nominating the inner city as a whole."* (as translated from Dutch) (former Alderman monuments Gemeente Amsterdam in Het Parool, 2008).

It is supposed that this discussion on what should be identified as the 'heritage property' and what as the 'buffer zone' was raised, partly because the nomination procedure had already taken a long time at this point and as a result, there was time for certain discussions, as the following quote explains:

*"I think that there was space for it because at a certain point the file has been laying on the shelves for such a long time. But in the end it has been decided to choose for the Grachtengordel as the heritage property because of several reasons. (...) There was space for discussions because it took such a long time and the time schedule had overrun. Then you always have people who start to interfere. Like why are you doing it like this and not like that?".* (as translated from Dutch) (Respondent 9, personal communication, 7 November 2018).

Next to the debates about what should be identified as 'heritage property' and 'buffer zone', according to the Dutch Government it was necessary that the municipality of Amsterdam would again give their approval about the nomination, since the nomination procedure had stood still for quite a long time, due to the membership of Rick van der Ploeg in the World Heritage Committee. Since city district Amsterdam Centrum was not yet established in 1999, when the municipality for the first time confirmed their approval for the nomination, the district was also asked to confirm its approval. Both, the central city and city district Amsterdam Centrum, confirmed their approval in July 2006 in an official letter to the ministry of OCW (Gemeente Amsterdam Bureau Monumenten en Archeologie, 2006).

The next step that had to be undertaken from the revalidation onwards, was to develop a destination document together with the executive body of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science: the RCE. This document would consist of laws and policy, a division of tasks and power which have an influence on the protection and conservation of the 'Outstanding Universal Values' of the heritage property that should lead to its enlistment on the World Heritage List. The aim of the municipality was to have this document finished in concept at the end of September 2006 so it could be sent to the minister of OCW for approval. Once the document was signed by the minister, it would be sent to the Cabinet. If the Cabinet approved the nomination, it could be sent to the secretary of the World Heritage Committee in October 2007 for a final check and could officially be submitted before the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 2008 (Gemeente Amsterdam Bureau Monumenten en Archeologie, 2006). In November 2007, the Mayor and Aldermen of Amsterdam agreed with the destination document. Unfortunately, the procedure dealt with another setback in December 2007 when the rules by UNESCO were tightened up again. It was from that moment on compulsory to deliver a management plan with the other documents for the nomination. Due to this new rule, the RCE and the municipality of Amsterdam could not meet the deadline of 1 February 2008, since a whole management plan now had to be written (Respondent 9, personal communication, 7 November 2018). The team working on the nomination file developed the management plan in the first half of 2008. The management plan of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel describes the following:

*"(...) how the responsible authorities carefully manage the societal, socio-cultural and spatial developments in and around the ring of canals by monitoring and tackling opportunities and threats, and how these processes are organised and directed"* (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2009).

#### ***From nomination file until being enlisted on the World Heritage List***

Once the management plan was finished, the nomination file was sent to the Cabinet for approval, just before the summer of 2008 (Het Parool, 2008). After years, with a lot of delays due to all kinds of setbacks, the nomination file was submitted to UNESCO in Paris on the 30<sup>th</sup> of January, just before the deadline, which was on the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 2009 (Vereniging Vrienden van de Amsterdamse Binnenstad, n.d.). The official procedure for a UNESCO nomination includes a visit to the heritage site after its nomination file has been submitted. During the visit, the site will be evaluated by the advisory body of UNESCO: ICOMOS. ICOMOS visited Amsterdam in September 2009. What came out of this critical evaluation by ICOMOS was that they recognized the 'Outstanding Universal Value' of the canal ring and therefore recommended that the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel would be inscribed on the World Heritage List. There were however some considerations which the Kingdom of the Netherlands needed to take into account according to ICOMOS. These considerations referred to; the aggressive advertising boards and video screens inside the area (scaffoldings), advice about what was allowed with regards to how buildings are treated, ensuring that conservation objects remained paramount when examining building permits, ensuring effective control over projects for tall buildings, ensuring that they were in harmony with the visual expressions of the value of the property and lastly keeping the World Heritage Committee informed about any development project that concerned the property and its buffer zone (Vereniging Vrienden van de Amsterdamse Binnenstad, n.d.a).

After many years of hard work, the World Heritage Committee decided on 1 August 2010 in Brasilia (Brazil), based on the advice of ICOMOS, that the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel would be inscribed as World Heritage on the World Heritage List.

## 5.2 The opinions and roles of the stakeholders

Since the previous paragraph has given a detailed description of the nomination procedure of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel, it is now time to elaborate on the opinions of stakeholders about the inscription of the heritage property on the World Heritage List and the roles they have played in it.

### 5.2.1 National stakeholders

The national stakeholders of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel (ministry of OCW, RCE and UNESCO Nederland) were all very in favour of the nomination of the heritage property. The ministry of OCW was even the initiator to nominate Amsterdam for inscription on the World Heritage List. This was suggested to be because the heritage property was considered perfectly fitting within one of the themes developed by the ministry, whilst the heritage property had an 'outstanding universal value'.

The executive body of the ministry of OCW, the RCE, whose primary goal is to protect heritage in the Netherlands, was also very in favour of the idea. The World Heritage Status offers the RCE many opportunities in terms of the protection of heritage properties as the following quote confirms:

*"Within that task we see a lot of opportunities because with the World Heritage Status there is another organization, namely UNESCO, who has a look at whether the protection is good enough. So it is an organization that helps us to serve our goal".* (as translated from Dutch) (Respondent 2, personal communication, 2 November 2018).

It can therefore be argued that UNESCO helps the RCE to achieve their goals in relation to the protection of heritage. In the meantime, the RCE also takes other interests into account, like the infrastructure or the establishment of houses, which results every now and then in difficult conflicts. The protection of heritage should be the central theme, but it should not mean that no other developments are allowed. Developments should be possible in relation to World Heritage Sites, as long as they meet certain requirements (Respondent 2, personal communication, 2 November 2018).

The ministry of OCW was involved in the nomination procedure of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel, since the minister had to sign the documents which were submitted to UNESCO in Paris. The RCE, together with the municipality of Amsterdam, worked on the establishment of the nomination file. The role of the Dutch Government (ministry of OCW and RCE) after the inscription was to keep an eye on the protection of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status (Respondent 2, personal communication, 2 November 2018).

Since UNESCO Nederland might be seen as an 'embassy' of UNESCO, the organization was logically in favour of the nomination of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel for the inscription on the World Heritage List. The organization seemed however not directly involved in the nomination procedure of Amsterdam in terms of the establishment of the nomination file, as the following quote explains:

*"We give advice on how a nomination file should be established, what kind of criteria should be met and how it can meet these criteria. And UNESCO Nederland gives advice about that. (...) UNESCO is not the initiator but the advisory body".* (as translated from Dutch) (Respondent 3, personal communication, 13 November 2018).

UNESCO Nederland is not involved on a daily base in relation to the management of the heritage site. What, however happens, is that UNESCO Nederland is approached by for instance, inhabitants with complaints in relation to the heritage property. UNESCO Nederland seems for several people the first contact point regarding certain issues because of its name. The organization however still functions as

an advisory body and as a diplomatic service and does not develop policies. It is not allowed to impose rules and regulations (Respondent 3, personal communication, 13 November 2018).

### 5.2.2 Local stakeholders

Logically stakeholders that are somehow connected to the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel have an opinion about the nomination of the heritage property. Some of them were even, to a certain extent, involved in the nomination procedure as this section will explain further.

#### ***The municipality of Amsterdam***

The municipality of Amsterdam supported the initiative of the ministry of OCW to nominate the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel for inscription on the World Heritage List. What is interesting about this, is that the status was mainly seen by the municipality as a 'Michelin Star' to raise more awareness among tourists as the following quote confirms:

*"You do not receive any money, but you do get recognition. It is a kind of Michelin Star; it is the honour, you emphasize the uniqueness of the inner city with the status. And you hope to attract even more tourists, who really come to see the city".* (as translated from Dutch) (former Alderman city district Centrum in Thijssen, 2008).

It can be argued that the municipality saw the World Heritage Status of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel as a tool to become even more known among tourists and that it would therefore contribute to an increase in tourists visiting the city and its canals (Stoof in Hageman, 2006).

Two executive bodies of the municipality of Amsterdam (BMA and BWE), together with the RCE, established the nomination file of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel as it already has been discussed in the previous chapter. The tasks of both executive bodies of the municipality focus – since the inscription of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel – on the protection and restoration of monuments and on sharing knowledge about the cultural history of the city to create public support (Monumenten, n.d.).

Besides the two executive bodies of the municipality, the central city council and the city district council Centrum were also involved in the nomination procedure, since the ideas and issues regarding the nomination were discussed in both councils. What is interesting about this, is that the political parties that were represented in the councils in the period of the nomination, had different opinions about the nomination based on their interest. Right oriented parties seemed to be a bit afraid about the nomination of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel because they did not know what the status would mean for the city in terms of extra rules and regulations that could have an impact on developments (Respondent 4, personal communication, 18 December 2018). However, left oriented parties seemed to be positive about the initiative because the status seemed positive for the protection of the heritage property (Respondent 5, personal communication, 20 December 2018) as already explained in the previous chapter. Some of them seemed however to have some doubts about the inscription because it could contribute to increased rent prices in the designated area. What is interesting about these debates is that the arguments mentioned by the political parties which express their opinions about the nomination, still seem important in debates regarding the World Heritage Status of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel (except for the argument about house rents). The upcoming paragraph will dive deeper into these opinions and debates about the World Heritage Status of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel.



### ***Heritage organizations***

Next to the municipality, several interests groups who care about heritage in Amsterdam also expressed their opinion about the nomination of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel. The VVAB, Erfgoedvereniging Heemschut and Amstelodamum are examples of these organizations as already explained in the previous chapter. All three organizations were very in favour of the idea to nominate the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel for the World Heritage List, since the status is known for the protection of cultural heritage. What is interesting to mention is that the VVAB had hoped that the inscription of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel on the World Heritage List would lead to extra rules and regulations, since they argued that the status of 'Beschermd Stadsgezicht' was not enough in terms of protection of the inner city as the following quote confirms:

*"We had a bit of mixed feelings because if we would be in the position to decide, the UNESCO World Heritage Status of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel would actually have led to extra rules (...) Yes, we would have wanted that the UNESCO World Heritage Status would have led to more and better rules".* (as translated from Dutch) (Respondent 1, personal communication, 9 January 2019).

Despite the fact that all three heritage organizations were very in favour of the nomination, they did not seem to be very actively involved in the establishment of the nomination file. They were however kept informed about the progress and were asked to sign a document in which they declared that they supported the initiative (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2009; Kingdom of the Netherlands, 2009). Although the VVAB was not involved in the establishment of the nomination file, the heritage organization lobbied a lot, to ensure that the nomination procedure would be finished successfully and as soon as possible. They did so by suggesting the nomination as a topic on the agenda of the municipality over and over and then by exerting pressure to ensure the nomination was arranged. The reason the nomination was so important for the VVAB was due to the two following reasons:

*"For us was the argument that the inner city of Amsterdam is so important that it simply belongs on the World Heritage List. Furthermore, is the status also an extra argument to stop things and is the status also important for a mentality change in the inner city itself".* (as translated from Dutch) (Respondent 1, personal communication, 9 January 2019).

### ***Entrepreneurs***

Some entrepreneurs and organizations which are located in the inner city of Amsterdam had their doubts about the World Heritage Status of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel. Some feared that the status would hinder the organization in their daily business. Furthermore, the nomination of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel has led to questions from entrepreneurs about what they are allowed to do and what they are not allowed to do as a result of the status. However, as soon as it became clear that the World Heritage Status would not contribute to the establishment of extra rules and regulations, entrepreneurs started to see opportunities relating to how they could use the status within their organization (Respondent 10, personal communication, 19 November 2018). Interesting, is that a local entrepreneurial association argued that they, and the organizations affiliated within the association, were not specifically pro or against the nomination (Respondent 6, personal communication, 21 November 2019). In relation to the roles of the local organizations in the nomination procedure, it can be argued that some were kept informed about the procedure because they were somehow closely connected to the heritage property (e.g. because of the location near the canals). They did however not have an influence on the procedure itself (Respondent 9, personal communication, 7 November 2018).

### *Inhabitants*

During the fieldwork, inhabitants of the inner city of Amsterdam were not extensively studied regarding their perspectives towards the World Heritage Status of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and their involvement in the nomination procedure. One particular interview however was conducted with a former action group called AiAmsterdam, which during the nomination period received support from hundreds of inhabitants from the inner city. The opinion of the action group regarding the idea to nominate the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel for the inscription on the World Heritage List, seemed to be quite neutral. The action group was definitely not against the inscription as it has been argued in Het Parool (2010). They rather saw the status as a compliment because of the beauty of the city which had been conserved so well. What the action group however did care about was that according to them the World Heritage Status was used by a certain group of people to push through and take over control to achieve their future vision of Amsterdam, as the following quote explains:

*“What we cared about was the fact that several people secretly tried to use the UNESCO World Heritage Status to push through their vision of how the city should look like”.* (as translated from Dutch) (Respondent 7, personal communication, 7 December 2018).

The action group did, despite all the inhabitants that joined, not have any influence on the nomination procedure itself as the following quote confirms:

*“We were standing down the line. I cannot tell you anything about that”.* (as translated from Dutch) (Respondent 7, personal communication, 7 December 2018).

As has become clear during this chapter, all kinds of stakeholders had different opinions about the inscription of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel on the World Heritage List and only a few were actually involved in the procedure itself. The upcoming paragraph will, based on the opinions and meanings of the stakeholders regarding the inscription of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel on the World Heritage List, have a closer look at how the opinions of stakeholders have been used in debates about the inscription of the heritage property on the World Heritage List.

## 5.3 Debates about the World Heritage Status of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel

As the previous paragraph has explained, this paragraph will take a closer look at the main debates relating to the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status and upon which opinions these are based. The debates will be divided into two categories: debates that took place before the inscription of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel on the World Heritage List and debates that have taken place since the inscription.

### 5.3.1 Debates before the inscription

Several debates about whether the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel should be inscribed on the World Heritage List or not, took place before the heritage property officially became inscribed on the list in 2010. Proponents of the status argued that it was beneficial for the protection of the heritage property. This was not because the protection would be arranged by the inscription on the World Heritage Status (the protection was namely already arranged since 1999 because of the ‘Beschermd Stadsgezicht’), but because a formally established United Nations organization would be looking after the protection of the heritage property next to the executive body of the ministry of OCW, as the RCE argued and as it has already been described in paragraph 5.1.

Another argument that has been given, is that the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel – with its World Heritage Status – would increase the attractiveness of Amsterdam as a tourist destination and therefore

would contribute to visitors numbers to the city, as confirmed by the following quote of the former Alderman of city district Centrum:

*"You do not receive any money, but you do get recognition. It is a kind of Michelin Star; it is the honour, you emphasize the uniqueness of the inner city with the status. And you hope to attract even more tourists, who really come to see the city".* (as translated from Dutch) (former Alderman city district Centrum in Thijssen, 2008).

Besides these arguments, there were also some counter arguments. The one that has been mentioned the most by several stakeholders, relates to the fear that the city would get 'locked' because of the status, as the following quote confirms:

*"That the city would get locked. This was a term that has often been used. That new developments would not be possible."* (Respondent 5, personal communication, 20 December 2018).

The fear came mostly from right oriented political parties who were afraid that because of the inscription of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel on the World Heritage List, certain developments would not be possible anymore. An example of a development which was about to happen is the establishment of high-rise buildings in the northern part of Amsterdam. Right oriented political parties were, just like the project developers, afraid that because of the height of these buildings, which would be visible from the future heritage property onwards, their plans could not be continued, as the following quote shows:

*"Several people did not want the inner city to be protected well because of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel with its World Heritage Status... Right oriented political parties had doubts about the nomination of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel because it could thwart project developers or monument owners. Their plans could all be thwart because of the World Heritage Status of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and these people did not want that to happen."* (as translated from Dutch) (Respondent 1, personal communication, 9 January 2019).

This argument has however been dismissed by the municipality since the World Heritage Status of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel would not contribute to the establishment of extra rules and regulations, as the following quote confirms:

*"In fact is the national law the only legal site of action. The whole World Heritage Status does not change anything about that. It will not lead to the establishment of extra rules. That is what the municipality also argued all the time in the political debates. It will not lead to extra rules, so you do not have to worry about that."* (as translated from Dutch) (Respondent 1, personal communication, 9 January 2019).

The stakeholders who feared that the city would get 'locked' because of the status have been 'calmed down' by this counter-argument given by the municipality of Amsterdam. Another counter-argument against the nomination of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel for the World Heritage List that was mainly raised by left oriented political parties, was the fear that rental prices of houses within the inscribed area would increase. This argument has also been dismissed by the municipality because the rents of houses are not based on whether the houses are located in the area identified as World Heritage, but are rather based on demand and supply (Respondent 1, personal communication, 9 January 2019).

As soon as it became clear that the municipality of Amsterdam supported the initiative and started to work on the nomination file, a discussion was raised about what should be identified as 'heritage

property' and 'buffer zone', as already elaborated on in paragraph 5.1. After extensive debates, it was decided to identify the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel (canal ring) as the heritage property and the rest of the inner city, which was already protected due to its status of 'Beschermd Stadsgezicht', as the 'buffer zone'. Arguments that supported this vision were the fact that a lot of Medieval inner cities of West-European cities were already inscribed on the list and UNESCO wanted to have more diversity. Furthermore, the canal ring was very unique for Amsterdam and the founders of the nomination file tried to use the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel as a symbol for other themes in the city by putting it in in a certain era (Herrema in Het Parool, 2008a).

What can be concluded, based on the debates that took place before the inscription of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel on the World Heritage List, is that several stakeholders were not aware of what the status was all about and therefore did not know what kind of impact it would place upon the city. By explaining decisions that have been made regarding the nomination, several counter arguments have been dismissed, ensuring that there was enough support for the nomination of the heritage property.

A final point important to mention in this paragraph, is that according to the action group AiAmsterdam, the World Heritage Status has been used by a group of people to push through and take over control to achieve their vision of what Amsterdam should look like in the future. This has resulted in several debates and even conflicts with some officials of the municipality about the implementation of new rules and regulations to achieve this 'future' vision of Amsterdam. What is interesting about this, is the thought that according to the action group AiAmsterdam the World Heritage Status of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel was already used before the heritage property was even inscribed on the World Heritage List to push a certain vision through and to take over control.

### 5.3.2 Debates after the inscription

Also after the inscription on the World Heritage List, the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel with its World Heritage Status, was an important topic in several debates. 'Over tourism' or 'mass tourism' in the inner city of Amsterdam might be seen as a debate which is closely connected to the World Heritage Status of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel. Where the municipality initially wanted to use the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel with its World Heritage Status to attract more tourists, the city is currently overcrowded with tourists. What is interesting about this debate, is that none of the stakeholders of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel blame the heritage property with its World Heritage Status for this over crowdedness, as the following quotes confirm:

*"One could question whether the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel with its World Heritage Status factually contributes to the mass tourism. I do not think so to be honest. What I think is that most tourists that visit Amsterdam, and this is proven by several studies, do not come for the World Heritage. I wish they would. I wish more tourists would visit Amsterdam because of its World Heritage haha". (Respondent 1, personal communication, 9 January 2019).*

*"Several tourists visit Amsterdam because of its red-light district and drugs. They might also come to see the beautiful canals during a canal tour, since that is tourist attraction number one. But one could question whether the amount of tourists increases because the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel is designated with the World Heritage Status. These are interesting questions. And then there is another interesting question, because I do not have the idea that tourism, but that is just an idea... There will always be tourists who want to finish their 'bucket list' and really want to go to Amsterdam because of its World Heritage Status, but I think that most tourists would also have come to Amsterdam without*

*that status because the connections are good and since there is a lot to see and to do.*" (Respondent 10, personal communication, 19 November 2018).

Research on tourism development in the inner city of Amsterdam seems to confirm the thoughts of both interviewees. Tourism in the inner city has increased a lot over the last decade, especially in certain areas such as De Wallen. Furthermore, several museums like Het Rijksmuseum, Het Van Gogh museum and Het Anne Frank Huis saw an increase in visitor numbers. What is very interesting, is that the museums within the area designated with the World Heritage Status, who provide more information about the history of the canals, argue that they would like to receive more tourists (Respondent 9, personal communication, 7 November 2018). This finding confirms the argument that the World Heritage Status of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel does not contribute to over-crowdedness in Amsterdam by tourists, since stakeholders do not blame the heritage site for causing increased visitor numbers.

Besides the debate about tourism development in the inner city of Amsterdam, the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel with its World Heritage Status is also part of debates concerning other themes and topics. What became clear during several interviews is that the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel with its World Heritage Status has been used by some stakeholders to stop certain developments from happening since they could have a negative impact on the World Heritage Site itself, or its buffer zone. A concrete example here is the hotel plan at het Leidseplein (Leiden square). The municipality agreed that the planned hotel would be higher than the surrounding buildings on the square, since the location was not inside the area that has been identified as 'heritage property'. As a reaction to this, one of the stakeholders showed that the reasoning of the municipality in this case was wrong. The location is indeed not within the area that is defined as 'heritage property', but in the 'buffer zone'. Because of that it is therefore needed to have the same protection as the 'heritage property' itself, as is written down in the law. In the end, the stakeholder decided to go to court to prove that they were right (Respondent 1, personal communication, 9 January 2019).

Another example that shows that the status is used by some stakeholders to stop developments from happening, is the establishment of high-rise buildings in Sluisbuurt, a neighbourhood just outside the city centre. The project developers wanted to establish high-rise buildings of 140-meters-high, which would be visible from the inner city. Again, a stakeholder (the same as in the previous example) criticized the plans ensuring that the project developers changed their plans so that the buildings would not be visible from the inner city (Respondent 5, personal communication, 20 December 2018). Both examples show that the World Heritage Status of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel has quite an important role in these kinds of debates, since it is considered as an important argument to stop certain developments from happening, as the following quote confirms:

*"There does not change a lot formally speaking, but factually seen there does according to my opinion. If there is a development going on somewhere in the city centre that is marked by an expert as contradictory with the protected cityscape, the World Heritage Status of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel is brought in. The power to stay away from the heritage is increased by the World Heritage Status".* (as translated from Dutch) (Respondent 5, personal communication, 20 December 2018).

One of the interviewees argued that the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status has power, since the municipality does not want to lose its status. Because of this power, the heritage

property can stop certain developments from happening when it seems contradictory to the World Heritage Status. The following quote confirms that the municipality does not want to lose the status:

*"There are cities who lost their World Heritage Status. And people do not want to let that happen one way or another".* (as translated from Dutch) (Respondent 5, personal communication, 20 December 2018).

As mentioned in paragraph 5.3.1, the World Heritage Status of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel according to AiAmsterdam is used by a certain group of people to put forward their vision of how the city should look in the future. A development in the inner city in line with the thinking of the action group is the plan of the municipality to demolish an electricity station in De Jordaan. The reason that the municipality wanted to demolish this electricity station is because the view towards the canals (heritage property) could be recovered and any graffiti or unattractive sites would be cleared. Local inhabitants of the area did however not want the electricity station to be demolished because the station meant a lot to them since it was an icon for the old neighbourhood (AT5, 2016). The building has however in the end been demolished by the municipality. What is interesting about this example is that the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel with its World Heritage Status, seems in this debate to have functioned as a good reason for the municipality to pursue a certain vision. This vision entailed recovering the sight towards the canals and therefore demolishing the electricity station, which was seen as unattractive to them, but which for many inhabitants of the neighbourhood, had a lot of value.

The last debate that will be mentioned in this paragraph is about the establishment of a Holocaust Monument, just outside the area that has been designated as World Heritage. A group of inhabitants in the area where the monument was planned to be built were – due to a variety of reasons (e.g. beauty of the monument and the location) – against the establishment of it. The group argued that the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel with its World Heritage Status would become threatened if the municipality would continue with the establishment of the monument (Buurtorganisatie 1018, n.d.). However, the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status would not become threatened due to the establishment of the monument, since the location for the monument was not inside the area that had been designated with the World Heritage Status (Schoonenberg, 2018; Holocaust Namenmonument Nederland, n.d.). The group of inhabitants however tried to use the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel with its World Heritage Status, in this case, to stop a monument from being established since it seemed not to meet their wishes and visions for that specific location (Respondent 10, personal communication, 19 November 2018). What is interesting about this case is that the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel with its World Heritage Status was somehow used as an argument to stop things from happening outside the area that is marked as World Heritage.

There might be many more debates that have taken place or which still take place today whereby the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel with its World Heritage Status has been used in one way or another. It has however been decided in this thesis to only focus on the debates that have been mentioned the most during interviews and on the examples that seemed to be the most relevant for this study.

## 6. The roles of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status: an analysis

The previous chapter has shown that several debates took place surrounding the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status during the nomination procedure, but that the heritage property has also been mentioned in several kinds of debates after its inscription. In line with the objective of this thesis this chapter will focus on analysing the roles of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status in these debates, as they have been discussed in the previous chapter. The second paragraph of this chapter will elaborate on the link between the roles that have been identified and the conceptual model as it has been presented in the theoretical framework.

### 6.1 The roles of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status in several debates

The following roles of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status have been identified in the debates that took place before and after the inscription of the heritage property on the World Heritage List:

- ❖ Stimulus/initiator
- ❖ Connector
- ❖ Legitimiser
- ❖ Underminer

#### ***Stimulus/initiator***

A stimulus/initiator is, in this thesis, identified as an object that starts something, whatever that might be, causing a reaction in its surroundings. What became clear is that before the inscription of the heritage property on the World Heritage List, the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its potential for World Heritage Status was seen as a kind of the driving force behind tourism development in the city. Once the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel was inscribed on the famous list, it was assumed that it would lead to an increase of visitors to the city. The heritage property with its status could therefore be seen as a stimulus/initiator. Furthermore, the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel with its World Heritage Status before its official inscription on the World Heritage List was linked to an increase in the rents of houses in the area to be designated. The heritage property with its status was therefore seen as a possible 'causer' of increased rental prices, and can therefore be seen as a stimulus/initiator as well. Lastly, this role can also be identified in relation to the debates surrounding the city getting locked once the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel would be inscribed on the World Heritage List. The inscription of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel on the World Heritage List was seen as a causing factor of this.

#### ***Connector***

A connector is, in this thesis, identified as an object that connects other people and objects with each other. The Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status has also functioned as a 'connector'. Before its inscription on the World Heritage List, the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel ensured that people were brought together, since the nomination file had to be prepared by several people from different organizations. Furthermore, stakeholders had to be informed about the ideas and it was necessary to find out whether there would be enough support for the initiative. The heritage property also ensured that other city districts got involved in the nomination procedure as well, even though the heritage property was not located within their respective areas. A concrete example in relation to the latter, is that city district Centrum had to discuss the plans of the northern city district of Amsterdam

regarding the establishment of high-rise buildings, which would potentially have an effect on the heritage property. After its official inscription in 2010, the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel with its World Heritage Status still serves as the role of 'connector', since several city districts of Amsterdam stay connected to the city district Centrum since they have to keep the World Heritage Status of the heritage property into account when establishing and developing certain visions and plans. It might also be argued that the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and the World Heritage Status it was about to obtain ensured that hundreds of inhabitants of the inner city united themselves within an action group. This action group formed in order to stop a certain group of people from implementing new rules and regulations and causing developments to achieve a certain future vision of the city by arguing that the World Heritage Status is a legitimate reason to do it.

### ***Legitimiser***

A legitimiser, in this thesis, is seen as an object that legitimizes a certain action or development. Interesting about this, is that the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status did function as a so-called legitimiser in several debates. In the example about the electricity station in de Jordaan, the heritage property with its World Heritage Status was used to initiate the demolishing of an electricity station, since by doing so, the view towards the heritage property would be recovered. Furthermore, a group of inhabitants from the area around the Weesperstraat, where a Holocaust monument was about to be established, tried to use the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel with its World Heritage Status to stop the establishment of the Holocaust monument from happening by arguing that the monument would damage the inscribed heritage property, although that was in fact not the case. By arguing this, the group of inhabitants hoped that their vision could be legitimized. Another example of a debate in which the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel with its World Heritage Status has been used to legitimize certain actions or behaviour is about the 'scaffoldings' on houses near the canals. A group that was against the scaffoldings, tried to use the heritage property with its World Heritage Status as a legitimate reason to remove all the scaffoldings on the houses near the canals. Lastly, according to action group AiAmsterdam a group of people tried to use the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status to push through certain rules and regulations to achieve their future vision of how the city should look and develop itself and therefore legitimize the rules and regulations they were implementing. All these examples show piece by piece that in several debates both before, but mainly after its inscription on the World Heritage List, the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status has been used as a reason to legitimate certain actions and behaviour.

### ***Underminer***

In this thesis, an 'underminer' is seen as an object that undermines/reduces the power of someone or something else. It has been identified during this study that the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status takes the role of an 'underminer' as became clear during the debates described in the previous chapter. The Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status after its inscription on the list has several times been used by some stakeholders to confront the municipality with the possible negative consequences of certain developments within the city on the inscribed heritage property. The stakeholders sometimes even went to court because they argued that the development – which the municipality had in mind – seemed in contradiction with the rules and regulations of the status of 'Beschermd Stadsgezicht' and could therefore damage the World Heritage Status of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel. As became clear in the previous chapter, stakeholders get a little scared once possible negative consequences are mentioned for the World Heritage Status of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel, since the city does not want to lose its status. It can therefore be argued that the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel with its World Heritage Status reduces the power of, for



instance, the municipality, who wants to develop the city in a certain way, potentially damaging the heritage property. Furthermore, the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status also undermines the power of, for instance, project developers in other parts of the city who want to establish high-rise buildings which will be visible from the heritage property and its buffer zone due to their height. In these kinds of cases, the World Heritage Status of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel is used as a tool to stop these developments from happening as long as they will have a negative impact on the heritage property, therefore undermining the power of project developers for example.

What is interesting to see when looking closer at the roles of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status in several (political) debates, is that there seems to be a shift in terms of the roles the heritage property has and the status it has been designated with since the summer of 2010. This is very clear when comparing the roles of the property before the inscription with the ones after the inscription. Before the official inscription of the heritage property on the World Heritage List, the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel with its future status was often seen as a stimulus/initiator and as a connector. After its official inscription, the roles of the heritage property changed in several (political) debates, making it more comparable to that of legitimizer and underminer. A possible explanation for this shift might be that stakeholders got to know the World Heritage Status better in general and as a result of that, saw opportunities relating to how the status could be used to pursue their ideals.

Since the roles of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status in several debates have now been identified, it is time to have a closer look at their discursive construction. This will be carried out in the next paragraph using the conceptual model that was presented in the theoretical framework.

### 6.2 The discursive construction of the roles of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status

Initially, it was stated that the conceptual model (figure 6.1) discussed in the theoretical framework would be used to guide this thesis. The reasoning behind this model is that the roles that can be assigned to the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status in several debates are based on four perspectives (cultural, economic, political and social).

These categories are on their turn based on discourses. In other words, the figure aims to explain that discourses can be divided into four basic categories and that these categories shape/construct the roles that have been assigned to the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel with its World Heritage Status during several debates.

During the fieldwork and data analysis, it became clear however that the four aspects of the model, based on the work of Graham et al. (2000), might not be as 'isolated' and 'static' as it first seemed to

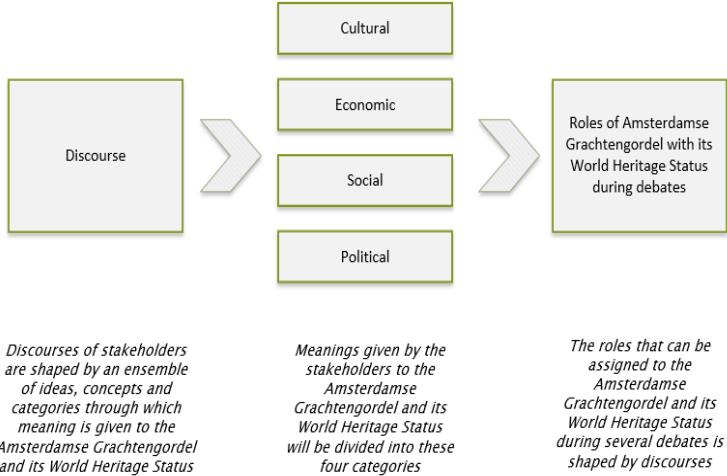


Figure 6.1 Conceptual model

be in terms of its four separate boxes. The separated categories seem to have quite some overlap with each other instead. Tourism development as a result of the inscription of the heritage property on the World Heritage List is one of the examples that show how economic and policy are intertwined. The heritage property with its status might contribute to increased visitor numbers (economic development). However, it is also linked to policy since several debates have taken place about whether Amsterdam would like to have these extra visitors and what their impact on the city would be. A possible explanation for the overlap between categories can be found when looking more specifically at the first phase of the model: discourses. It might be argued that the discourses that have been identified cannot be separated from each other and be put into different categories since the ensemble of ideas that have been produced (and are called discourses) have a lot of overlap with each other and are intertwined instead. It has therefore been decided, taking the post-structuralist approach of this study into account, to focus on the political aspects that can be found within the discourses and how these political aspects have shaped the roles of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel with its World Heritage Status in several debates. This means that the conceptual model from now on will look as follows (figure 6.2):

The first box of figure 6.2, discourses, are shaped by an ensemble of ideas, concepts and categories through which meaning is given (Hajer, 2002) to the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel with its World Heritage Status. By critically looking at

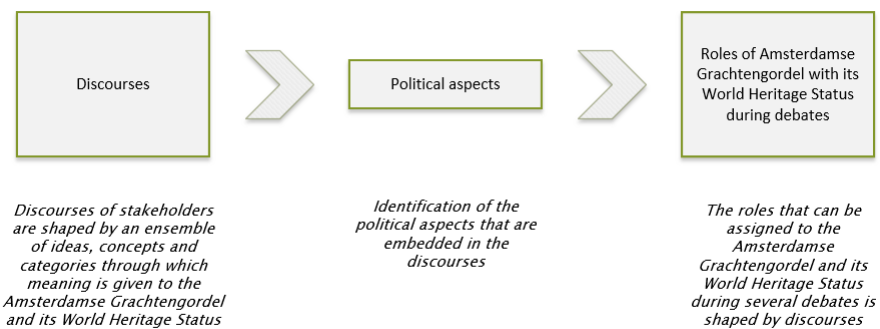


Figure 6.2. Revised conceptual model

discourses, it is possible to explore how in this case the roles of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status in several debates are discursively constructed and how they are 'articulated with specific forms of political behaviour, struggles, conflicts, decisions and tactics' (Howard, 2000: 60). In the figure, this has been identified by the second box (political aspects). Once these aspects have been identified and explored, it will provide insight into how the roles of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status in several debates are discursively constructed.

It can be argued that the inscription of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel on the World Heritage List has given the heritage property (lots of) power. This became clear in the previous paragraph. Before the official inscription of the heritage property on the World Heritage List, the property mainly served the role of stimulus and as a connector. That changed however, once the heritage property officially got inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2010. The role changed from a stimulus/initiator and a connector towards a legitimizer and underminer. Due to this shift in the roles the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status served, the power that was laying within the heritage property and its status became more visible. In relation to the knowledge, it can be argued that as soon as it became clear what the World Heritage Status of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel actually was about, stakeholders tried to use the heritage property in such a way that it would help them to achieve the interests they represented. They 'reinforced their own position of power, while de-legitimizing the knowledge of competing actors' (Van Assche et al. 2014:42).

As introduced in the theoretical framework, the roles assigned to the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status in several debates can be linked to the Evolutionary Governance Theory (Van Assche et al. 2014). The roles of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status that have been identified in several debates have affected and still affect the evolution of the actors, institutions, organizations and discourses that are connected to it.

To sum up, it can be argued that when looking at the discursive construction of the roles of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status in several debates, a shift can be identified. Where the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status before the official inscription mainly functioned as a stimulus/initiator and connector, its role has shifted towards a legitimizer and underminer after its inscription. This shift might on the one hand be explained by more stakeholders becoming familiar what the World Heritage Status is about and how it could be used. On the other hand, the debates and the backgrounds and interests of the stakeholders also play an important role in the discursive construction of the roles.

## 7. Conclusion and discussion

This thesis started by stressing the importance of the attractiveness and competitiveness of tourist destinations in a world in which tourism is a rapidly growing industry and destinations start to look like each other. What followed was an explanation of how according to the theory of Crouch and Ritchie (1999), a destination's culture and history can contribute to its attractiveness and competitiveness. It has been noticed in scientific literature that nowadays several heritage registers and lists are used for the marketing and promotion of destinations by emphasizing their culture and history, while they were initially established for the protection and conservation of heritage. With almost over 1.100 inscribed properties of 'Outstanding Universal Value', the World Heritage List, as it has been developed by UNESCO, was highlighted. A lot of research has been conducted about this well-known status of which most has addressed the positive and negative aspects of the status, its impact, branding and its relation to tourism development. A study about the roles of a heritage site that has been designated with the World Heritage Status in several local debates seems however to be lacking in scientific literature. The aim of this study was therefore to identify the roles of an inscribed heritage property in several (political) debates and to gain a better understanding of the discursive construction of these roles. It was decided to focus on the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel as the case upon which this study would be based. In order to delineate the scope of this research, a central research question was formulated, which was split up into two sub-questions. These questions will be answered in the upcoming paragraph. The other two paragraphs of this chapter will focus on the practical application of this study and future research opportunities on this topic.

### 7.1 Research questions

This chapter will provide an answer on the central research question, but before one can do so, the two sub-questions first need to be answered.

#### *1) What roles of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status can be identified in (political) debates?*

Based on the debates that have taken place in which the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status were somehow mentioned, or even the central topic, four roles have been identified:

- *Stimulus/initiator*
- *Connector*
- *Legitimiser*
- *Underminer*

The role of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel as '**stimulus/initiator**' has been identified during this study because the heritage property with its status caused a reaction in its surrounding as became clear in several debates. The heritage property and its status were seen as driving forces for tourism development or as causing factors of increased rental prices in the designated area. Furthermore, some stakeholders were afraid that the city would get locked once the heritage property would be inscribed on the famous list. The inscription of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel on the World Heritage List was therefore seen as a causer of a locked city according to some stakeholders. Another role that can be assigned to the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status based on several debates is that of a '**connector**'. The heritage property and its status functioned as a connector since it brought people and stakeholders together during the preparation of the nomination, both in the city district itself, but also in other city districts. Furthermore, people were brought together in order to gain enough support for the initiative to nominate the heritage property for inscription on the list. After its

official inscription, the heritage property was still a connector since other city districts are connected to city district centrum in terms of plans and developments that might have an influence on the heritage property. The third role that has been identified is that of a **'legitimizer'**, since the heritage property and its status seemed to be a good instrument to legitimize certain actions, developments and behaviours as became clear during the study of several the debates, both before but mainly after the inscription of the heritage property on the World Heritage List. The last role that has been identified in this study is that of **'underminer'**: The Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status reduced the power of others in certain cases. The Amsterdamse Grachtengordel has after its official inscription on the World Heritage List, been used by some stakeholders to confront the municipality for instance, with the possible negative consequences of a certain development within the city on the described heritage property. The fear of the municipality of losing the status as a result of certain developments ensured that the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status reduced the power of the municipality. The heritage property with its status is also seen as an 'underminer' because in some cases it has reduced the power of project developers, for instance with the establishment of high-rise buildings. The World Heritage Status of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel is in these kinds of cases used as a tool to stop these developments from happening as long as they will have a negative impact on the heritage property.

*2) How are these roles of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status in (political) debates discursively constructed?*

When looking at the discursive construction of the roles of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status in several (political) debates, it can be argued that they have slightly changed when comparing the roles before and after the inscription of the heritage property on the World Heritage List. Before the official inscription of the heritage property on the World Heritage List, the heritage property often played the role of 'stimulus/initiator' and/or 'connector', while after the inscription it changed more towards that of 'legitimizer' and 'underminer'. The shift in these roles can be explained because of the content of the debates. Before the status, debates were about the possible impact of the status on the city and about what should actually be inscribed on the World Heritage List. What became clear in these debates is that not all stakeholders were aware of what the status was actually about and what it included. It seems that after its inscription on the World Heritage List, stakeholders became more aware of what the status was about, and how they could use it to achieve their ambitions and visions. In debates, this became clear because the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status were used to stop developments from happening that could damage the inscribed heritage property and the status has been used to legitimize certain actions that according to some stakeholders would contribute to achieving the future vision of how the city should look and develop itself in the future.

What is important to take into account is that the discursive construction of the roles of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status in several debates strongly depend on the context of the debates, but also on the stakeholders that have been involved in these debates. This is due to the interests they represent which have quite some impact on the content of the debates.

It is now, based on the answers on the sub-questions of this thesis, possible to answer the main research question of this thesis, which is as follows:

*"What roles of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status can be identified in (political) debates and how are they discursively constructed?"*

The roles of the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status that have been identified in several (political) debates, are the one of 'stimulus/initiator', 'connector', 'legitimizing' and 'underminer'. The role that can be assigned to the Amsterdamse Grachtengordel and its World Heritage Status in several debates is strongly dependent on the content of the debates and on the stakeholders that have been involved in these debates. Furthermore, it has become clear that a change has taken place in the roles of the heritage property and its status in several debates. Before the inscription, the heritage property and its future status seemed to function more as a 'stimulus/initiator' and as a 'connector', while after its inscription that changed more into a 'legitimizing' and 'underminer'. What is interesting in relation to this shift, is that it might have occurred as a result of the content of the debates changing over time. However, it could also be because stakeholders seemed to understand much better what the status was about after the heritage property had officially been inscribed and how the status could be used by stakeholders to help them achieve their ambitions and visions.

## 7.2 Discussion

This study contributes to the existing body of literature on the UNESCO World Heritage Status. In contrast to most of the studies on this topic, this thesis provides insight in the discursive construction of the roles of a World Heritage Site in several debates. In a broader perspective, it contributes to the existing literature on the discursive construction of the roles of heritage objects in several kinds of debates and the influence of stakeholders on this object formation.

### *Practical applicability*

One could ask him or herself the question what the practical applicability of this post-structuralist oriented explorative case study is. By exploring the roles of a heritage property that has been inscribed on the World Heritage List in several debates and the way in which these roles are discursively constructed, a better understanding has been created about the impact of the inscribed heritage property on the city. It could therefore help other destinations that are considering to nominate heritage properties for the inscription on the World Heritage List in making their decisions. Furthermore, the outcomes of this study can help the municipality of Amsterdam to gain a better understanding of how the roles of the World Heritage property have an influence on several debates to which the heritage property is somehow connected. It can also help to provide a better understanding of the behaviour of some stakeholders: because they assign a certain role to the heritage property and use it in a certain way.

### *Future research*

In terms of future research is it important to carry out further case studies on this topic whereby other heritage properties will be studied that have been inscribed on the World Heritage List to see if the findings of this thesis are the same at other locations. It might namely be the case, that the results of this study differ per type of inscribed heritage property (e.g. inner city versus a single monument or versus a nature area), per country or even per continent due to a variety of reasons, which are currently unknown. Once more cases have been explored, it is possible to conduct studies that will dive deeper into the discursive constructions of the roles of inscribed heritage properties in several debates.

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