

Governance of liquid neighbourhood communities and their relations with stakeholders in Amsterdam East¹

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2013

This paper discusses the fluid characteristics of contemporary communities in an ethnically diverse neighbourhood (Indische neighbourhood) in Amsterdam East, The Netherlands. These new communities developed when the welfare organisations in the urban district suffered bankruptcy and the local authority privatised its welfare activities. In this context one would expect changing attitudes between stakeholders, especially public sector organisations, who still conduct themselves in a traditional way, reflected in for example, a well-developed solid organisational structure and a SMART approach. They assume that new communities have a solid form, but these liquid communities focus on the process of networking and organizing, as opposed to a final product. The interaction between the different stakeholders shows how the new communities – with their own inclusion and exclusion mechanism - try to redress the balance of power among stakeholders. This in turn implies a rethinking and rearranging of methods employed by organisational cultures with regard to policymaking and service delivery and includes participatory processes within liquid modernity.

1. Introduction

In contemporary society new structural patterns develop, for which Boutellier (2011:7) uses the metaphor of jazz improvisation, characterized as organized freedom in which freedom and organization go together accompanied by conceivable conflict. The newly created order is formed by a process in which spontaneous and structured elements are linked, and with the assumption that identities will adjust to its organizational context. This metaphor reflects network society, in which networks should be seen as social relations, where power and authority play an important role. Network society is characterized by nodes and links, woven in mistakes, strange patterns and open spaces (ibid.: 21). Essentially, networks can be linked with other networks. The idea of such a network of networks is illustrated by Garton et al. (1997), based on Simmel, who describes how webs of group affiliations can both facilitate and constrain social networks. In addition, they show how different types of identities can be combined. The issues mentioned above play an important role in neighbourhood development.

One of the authors focusing on these new developments is Bauman (2000; 2001), who shows that globalization, deregulation, and individualization have led to a modern liquid society, characterized by horizontal networks. Here, a quick change of the composition of those active in the network results in behavioural changes that are no longer consolidated in habits and routines. In other words, individuals cease to be embedded in a solid structure; here each person creates their own identity where it fits the specific circumstances. Although the phrase ‘all that was solid melted into air’ insinuates that the building blocks of society are slowly diminishing, creating rootless people in daily life, others (e.g. Atkinson 2008; Boutellier 2011) have shown that solid institutions such as schools, hospitals and courts still have an important role in supporting society. These steadfast institutions may adapt themselves to a changing environment, but their solid nature will not disappear completely, if at all.

To make the role of different stakeholders more specific the focus will shift to disadvantaged neighbourhoods in Amsterdam, where the government has funded many citizens’ initiatives. These initiatives have contributed, and continue to contribute to bonding and democratic leadership, reshaping interaction between citizens and the government and in turn creating new possibilities and opportunities. Due to current budget cuts less bureaucratic control is aimed at, but in reality this has not been realised. The government faces problems with the changing of its control function into an enabling and facilitating one. Furthermore, government-funded citizens’ initiatives have led to higher expectations from the government. The acknowledgement of the role played by citizens has led to the assumption that more time and attention is needed, but professionals and the government alike, have insufficient time and means to meet this demand (Tonkens and Verhoeven 2011).

Against the background sketched above, the Indische neighbourhood in Amsterdam East has been selected as the area of investigation. This neighbourhood obtained a lot of attention at national congresses due to its quickly growing social capital, citizen initiatives and the formation of networks amongst citizens. Therefore, we will look at the fluid characteristics of communities in the ethnically mixed Indische neighbourhood and how the different stakeholders approach these communities, for a period ending in the summer of 2012. The research question is ‘How, and to what extent, do power based relationships and norms and values, impact upon the cooperation between stakeholders in governance networks in the Indische neighbourhood in

Amsterdam East? In order to deal with this question the paper is built up as follows. First the focus will be on communities and urban governance in theoretical perspective, which will be followed by a description of important policy changes concerning the role of civil society and the different stakeholders in the Netherlands. Next, after an introduction of the Indische neighbourhood, the working of the communities in conjunction with the local authorities will be provided with clarification. Finally, the paper will end with a conclusion.

2. Communities and urban governance

The use of the concept ‘communities’ is a very popular one nowadays; it is used for professionals, sports clubs, age groups, etc. and is common in policy documents in the Netherlands and elsewhere. However, it should be taken into account that a community can be interpreted in many different ways. It can point to, for instance, the classic distinction *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* (Tönnies 2001), premodern, modern and postmodern communities (Blackshaw 2011), strong and weak ties (Granovetter 1973), dealing with ethnic diversity, or not at all (Checkaway 2011; Smets 2006, 2011), and post-place communities versus place-dependent communities (Bradshaw 2008).

DeFillippis and Saegert (2008: 3-4), Massey (1994), Robertson (1995), and Savage et al., (2005) have shown that the local is very important for the neighbourhood resident. In such communities one could refer to place-specific, or place-dependent communities. Among these communities one also finds Bauman’s solid and liquid organizations. In his view, a liquid community is characterized by the quickly changing acts of members, resulting in a non-consolidation of habits and routines (Bauman 2000). Here, Velcro keeps the ties between members together – Velcro is ‘a type of fastening consisting of two strips of nylon fabric, one having tiny hooked threads and the other a coarse surface’, they form a strong bond of varying strength when pressed together. In one situation it is easy for people to rip themselves off and reattach themselves to others, while in other cases this is more difficult due to a strong bond (Godwin as discussed by Blackshaw 2010: 16).

Liquid communities and the networks of these communities, have to work together with other stakeholders, such as public and private sector organizations and civil society. To enable grassroots participation, deepening democracy is required (Fung and Wright 2001; Blackshaw 2010: 181). However, public sector organizations especially, still assume that communities have a solid form, which is reflected in for example, a well-developed organizational structure and a SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound) approach. Nevertheless, liquid communities do not aim at establishing a fixed organization, but focus on the process of networking and organizing with the development more prominent than the final product (for a discussion of liquid communities see e.g. Bauman 2001; Blackshaw 2011).

Participation is a popular phenomenon in contemporary cities, but the debate often polarizes around the theoretical discussion, consensus-building versus conflicts of interests and top-down versus bottom-up processes. However, an empirically informed focus offers the possibility of trespassing this binary thinking. In reality both mechanisms may co-exist, or can be seen as a momentum in the democratic process (Silver et al. 2010).

Once stakeholders – public and private sector organisations and civil society - work together, under the umbrella of urban governance, power and responsibility are decentralised. This implies that the local government should be part of a horizontal network instead of a hierarchical one. Here governance should be seen as an interactive process in which stakeholders on different levels and of different compositions, work together (Van Tatenhove and Laurent 2004; Stoker 1998).

The cooperation between stakeholders can be seen as blended social action, which refers to the hybrid characteristics of a project in which citizens and the government cooperate (Sampson et al. 2005). Here it is not a question of who will be responsible for what, but how bottom-up and top-down meet (Hazeu et al. 2005: 7). Once shared targets are found, fruitful, and vital coalitions can emerge (Van den Berg, Van Houwelingen and De Hart 2011: 120; Horlings 2010).

Once urban governance implies that non-governmental stakeholders obtain more influence, a more democratic governance system emerges. However, whether and how stakeholders have a say is organised in an ad hoc and non-transparent way that harms the democratic characteristic of urban governance. Moreover, power relations within the network are often determined or influenced by an economic, social-cultural and political elite (Swyngebouw et al. 2002; Swyngedouw 2005: 1993, 1999). Smets and Salman (2008: 1317) show that such a situation might harm the democratic character of urban governance, and can jeopardize the different stakeholders' trust in the openness of the process. In this respect, Cornwall's (2004) distinction between invited and popular spaces is useful. Invited spaces are made by the state, who invites communities, while popular spaces are made and defined by communities.

When power is discussed in relation to governance, the Foucauldian notion of power becomes relevant, this implies that power should be seen as social production and not as social control. Therefore implying that notions of zero-sum power and docile bodies should be replaced by the insight that state power becomes decoupled from the state as government to be recreated at different places by the alliances of stakeholders (e.g. Taylor 2007). Due to the state having a double role - an enabling role, and the role of stakeholder - implying that the position of the state is not always clear (Jessop 1999). To enable fruitful urban governance, Fung and Wright (2001: 17) introduce the notion of 'Empowered Deliberative Democracy' (EDD). The EED model implies that solutions are found by deliberative action where participants listen to each others ideas and decisions are taken together, thus implying that the institutional framework would enable local stakeholders to find a solution for local issues together.

Eversole (2011: 68) shows for rural Australia that 'even in these shared, deliberative institutional spaces, the focus, formats, language and guiding paradigms are predetermined by the policy body sponsoring the exercise: leading to (...) tension and conflict'. Moreover,

'Unlike a Foucauldian 'governmentality' argument, which focuses on governments' often subtle exercise of power over communities, the key issue here is that governments and communities tend to see, do, and understand things differently, and this creates issues when they try to work together' (Eversole 2011: 68).

When looking at the different stakeholders we see that the state and moderators tend to look for blueprints to adhere to. Government officials and professionals both seek standardized solutions (*techne*) and refrain from incorporating local practices (*metis*), this could indicate that

professionals tend to employ top-down initiatives and refrain from enabling citizens to develop grassroots solutions. Instead, planners, policy makers and social workers focus on the diagnosis of social problems and the removal of pathologies. There is insufficient attention paid, if any, on how to overcome the stumbling block issues of communication, culture and power, which tend to hinder the consideration of local knowledge, values and culture (Scott 1998).

3. The Dutch context

The issues discussed above should be seen against the background of the contemporary policy paradigm shift in the Netherlands. The Law Societal Support (*Wet Maatschappelijke Ondersteuning*) promotes the changing role of the state from a welfare state to an enabling and facilitating role, which stimulates and supports active citizenship with regard to for instance, care issues and the liveability of neighbourhoods. The new role of citizens asks for a do-it-yourself attitude implying that citizens should primarily look for mutual help and care in their own social network. This paradigm shift will not be easily adapted; it requires a trial-and-error attitude among stakeholders.

In the 'old' system, the ambition and potential of a citizen, was mainly determined by public and semi-public institutions. Now the government should facilitate the development of the citizen's right to be ambitious by accommodating the weaker sections of society. For migrants and citizens facing exclusion, this would help them to integrate in Dutch society. Apart from the right to ambition, the citizen has also a right to enhance his or her potential. This potential can be developed once the government provides physical and mental space for development, which would lead ultimately to schooling and work for citizens and enable them to climb the social ladder (Mehlkopf 2009).

Since the Dutch Law on Societal Support was implemented in 2007, the relationship between government and citizens has been changed. Earlier the government's focus was on 'doing things for' and 'taking care of' citizens. These people were seen as consumers of governmental, public and semi-public services. The Social Support Law promoted the activation of citizens, encouraging them to be more self-reliant and responsible for their own wellbeing and the liveability of theirs and other's habitat. In other words, this new paradigm focuses on empowerment of citizens and a changing role of the state from government to governance. For the implementation of the new law municipalities and urban district councils are held responsible. Consequently, citizen participation has become an important element of local policies and politics (Van Houten, et al. 2008).

This neoliberal approach has major implications for the role and function of local care and welfare organizations, which should see citizens no longer primarily as consumers, but mainly as producers of services. Residents working together with other stakeholders from the public and private sectors are also held responsible for the liveability of their neighbourhoods. In practice, goals, priorities and methodologies are defined by the government in consultation with citizens, who are expected to play an active role in tackling problems. This process should be seen as a co-creation between citizens, the government and possibly the private sector, which goes together with a shift from a problem definition, towards the mobilization of potential energy and self-help.

The new policy aims at changes in the participation of different stakeholders with regard to the welfare of citizens. However, not only citizens but also public institutions and social professionals, have to adjust to the new situation (Tonkens 2008). The Law on Societal Support comes at a time of budget cuts, with even more severe cuts experienced since the credit crisis in the euro zone.

To enable a closer look into participation society, a distinction should be made between the producers and the consumers of support. There is a large group of support agencies, including professionals, welfare organizations, housing corporations, etcetera. Today intervention at neighbourhood level focuses mainly at improving social cohesion and strengthening the social infrastructure. Consumers of support can be characterized by ongoing consumption, where additional supply is provided by welfare organisations and professionals.

If positive connections increase among neighbourhood residents and organizations within a community, mutual support can develop. In every neighbourhood there is a framework that can support integration, or act as mentors for youth and young people. Residents may act as role models or inspiration and by strengthening mutual trust; relationships will develop, forming the basis for exchange and cooperation.

4. Indische neighbourhood

At the start of the twentieth century the Indische neighbourhood in Amsterdam East, was developed to house a large number of port labourers but once the port had shifted to the western part of the city in the 1960s, the residential status of the neighbourhood became more apparent (Samen Indische Buurt, 2009). In 2011 the Indische neighbourhood is a low-income neighbourhood with 22.806 residents (O+S 2011: 34). The neighbourhood has an ethnically mixed population with 67% of the residents of migrant origin, mainly Moroccan, Turkish, Chinese, Surinamese and Antillean. Moreover, the neighbourhood has mainly small social rental units with an increasing amount of owner-occupied housing (Samen Indische Buurt 2009: 40).

The neighbourhood houses many vulnerable people, which should be helped by encouraging self-help. If local residents cannot help themselves, or are unable to ask for help from others in civil society, professional support will be given. Residents are assumed to be responsible for their own quality of life (Urban District Amsterdam East 2011: 12).

In the Indische neighbourhood the welfare organizations have gone bankrupt twice, which forced the local government to privatize welfare activities. Civic, the welfare organization with the cheapest bid got the job. Consequently, many welfare activities were abandoned and many neighbourhood centres closed down. In 2008 Civic changed supply-led services into demand-led services. Many neighbourhood centres were closed, or changed into production houses, with the assumption that meeting places were not sufficient for encouraging self-help and that residents should be stimulated to initiate and instigate activities such as dancing, home work classes, language classes and extension services. Civic supported such activities by providing coaches who'd guide, support and facilitate residents in the employment of neighbourhood activities. In other words, the producers of support declined in number potentially offering more room for grassroots initiatives, although the local policymakers hadn't anticipated this as a by-product.

Groups of residents still met at card clubs, music groups and migrant organizations. Moreover, migrants are currently using the old playground associations mainly attributed to the native born residents. Although there are only a few sports clubs, the urban district organizes many sporting activities. Simultaneously communities developed in the neighbourhood, a point of discussion in the following section.

5. Communities in the Indische neighbourhood

At the beginning of the 21st century the Netherlands faced problems with extremism in society. In 2002 the leader of a populist political party Pim Fortuyn, was murdered by an environment fundamentalist. In 2004 Theo Van Gogh - cineaste and television programmer with distinct ideas about the Islam- was knifed by a Moroccan Muslim fundamentalist in Amsterdam East. Both incidents impacted on Dutch society, polarizing feeling between Muslim and non-Muslim, and mostly evident in the media and politics (Galloway et al. forthcoming; Vliegenthart and Roggeband 2007). As a reaction to these developments and the fear of escalated unrest in Dutch society, a group of citizens created a network called Community Veranders, a community of change makers. The goal of this network was to create a way of fighting polarization, radicalization and hate in society. This community offered a place in which people could meet and assist each other in the search for new approaches to resolve contemporary problems in society. Community Veranders have become a national network by organizing knowledge sharing sessions, training, and meet and greet events for its members.

In 2007 the urban district established a Think Tank Social Cohesion, in which local elite residents – including members of ‘Community Veranders’ - voluntarily discussed how they could improve the local cohesion in the Indische neighbourhood. This Think Tank challenges the classical role between the government and citizens, where the government makes policies and assumes that organizations and citizens implement them.

One of the ideas originating from the Think Tank was the creation of the Timorplein Community; a network of social and economic entrepreneurs, representatives of societal organizations and creative residents, they employ initiatives to improve their neighbourhood. In other words, community members stepped into the gap created when Civic limited its welfare operations due to budget cuts. Meetings between community members have led to the development of common ground, also encouraging initiatives outside the community if required.

The Timorplein Community aims at improving the revitalization of the neighbourhood by means of grassroots initiatives. The community should be seen as a warm nest for all those who bring innovations to the neighbourhood, where expertise and knowledge can be exchanged and new ideas and methods developed. This would ultimately lead to the creation of a business network that enables the formation of alliances between stakeholders aiming at the implementation of ideas for innovation. The Timorplein community has also established the Timorplein Academy, which combines an open space approach with the World Café Method to develop ideas, share ideas and reflect on them. During the gatherings of the Timorplein Academy an active neighbourhood resident will highlight a relevant societal issue. Next, several stakeholders - e.g. employees from the local government, housing corporations and welfare organizations, also academics - express their point of view. The result of this gathering is that the questions that

arise during such a meeting become sharper, which helps in the generation of insights into how citizens can formulate a response.

The example of the Timorplein Community has mushroomed and became a trademark for the development of other communities, or network organizations, organized around a specific theme or interest in the neighbourhood. In addition, entrepreneurs work together and create links to the neighbourhood. An example is the yearly Food Night in which entrepreneurs, as part of the Timorplein Community, join hands to promote the main shopping street (Javastraat) in the neighbourhood, involving the ethnic food shops in the process.

In another part of the Indische neighbourhood, the Karrewiel Community developed around a closed neighbourhood centre. Residents and artists joined hands and succeeded in reopening the neighbourhood centre on the basis of self-management. The Karrewiel Community was the first self-management experiment in the neighbourhood. The community members met biweekly under the guidance of a professional, who was partly paid by the local government. During these meetings the community members discussed the programs and use of the space available in the Karrewiel community centre, along with issues such as cleaning and daily maintenance. The tight mutual ties between the community members had led to a closed community, strengthened by the process of meetings and programming. The centre could only be opened when community members had fixed appointments. This exclusivity is not always wanted or effective. It appeared that the tight ties between community members depended on the moderator (cf. Sterk 2011). Once the moderator stopped work and no other leader replaced her, the community fell apart.

The link between the Karrewiel Community and the Timorplein Community becomes manifest once joint activities were employed. When the Karrewiel Community looked for board members for the management of their premises, they found them in the Timorplein Community. This shows that new networks have been created out of existing networks, thus becoming new places of inspiration and action. The network of communities also creates the opportunity to find volunteers who are willing to partake in neighbourhood activities, along with a breeding ground for ideas regarding change, or consolidation of activities, such as the local neighbourhood festival *Indische Buurfestival*, and other small-scale activities like food groups and walking clubs, or movie evenings.

Apart from citizens' initiatives encouraged by welfare organisations, central and local government, the communities mushroomed. These communities are networks of people living and/or working in the neighbourhood.

In 2010 the Makassarplein Community developed around the Makassar square, here residents and social professionals partake with the aim to improve their physical and social living environment. One of the first activities employed is the implementation of the Oasis Game, a Brazilian intervention model which aims at improving the living environment by transforming dreams of a better living environment and putting them into action (Kiessouw 2012). Once the

Makassarplein Community was seen as a copy of the Timorplein Community, many other projects were launched. Due to the range of projects being implemented the community then faced problems of developing and sustaining the community.

The Makassarplein Community focuses on the weaker sections of society. Many community members initiated projects and submitted project proposals to the local government. These project driven activities of community members raised questions like, who was responsible for the quality, and which criteria should be applied for the allocation of means. The Makassarplein Community was increasingly characterised by tight structures and therefore conflicting with the open network principle of liquid societies. In the meantime, the community decided to dispose of the tight structure associated with the so-called project machine, and refocus on the empowerment process of community members.

After the closure of the Karrewiel Community Centre, 'De Meevaart' - a larger community centre of 18.000 m² with a theatre and restaurant - has been opened in 2012. The Meevaart Community, which encompasses all residents interested in the community centre – producers, as well as consumers of activities - manages this community centre, it tries to determine ways in which this centre should be organized. They make use of the Karrewiel Community experience, taking into account that more people of a different ethnic and class background partake. Some members of the former Karrewiel community joined hands with residents living nearby the Karrewiel Community Centre and formed a new community; the Ambonplein Community. The finance needed for the maintenance and technology required comes partly from governmental subsidy and partly from profit made by, for example, the hiring of space to non-community members. The operation of the community centre resembles that of the English Community Development Trust.

By July 2012, one could find different large communities in the neighbourhood, such as the Timorplein, Makassarplein, and Meevaart Communities, also the Amikino Community, Ambonplein Community, and a youth community, plus many other initiatives.

6. The operation of communities

Communities are network organizations around a specific theme, interest or physical asset. The membership of a community is not fixed but changes regularly. This implies that the composition of a network can change over time. Active members can show up when a specific theme that interests them is being dealt with, and withdraw when their theme has run its course. At a later date they may well, once again partake in specific activities. Each community acknowledges a number of people who belong to the core of the network; these are the spokespersons to the outside world. This core takes care of the moderation of the community and enables bonding focused around themes and interests. The spokesperson is personally responsible for what he/she proclaims. A community is not an action group, but is organized on the basis of, for instance, an interest or asset without necessarily agreeing on how it should be given shape. In the community one discusses problems within the living environment. Some initiatives require the support of other organizations, especially when funding is required. The consequence could be that certain activities become independent. Once a legal entity is required implement activities the community becomes more like a classic citizens' organization, where it is not the shared link to a theme or abstract that dominates, but the organization of activities. For example, the Food Night has become an independent activity with non-disputed ownership, however, without external funding it could not take place. With Food Night, members of the Timorplein Community can establish a legal entity as long as mutual trust exists and risks remain

relatively small. If risks increase the Food Night will become independent and will develop into something more businesslike. Another example is the Karrewiel Community, where formal responsibilities are in the hands of a board and its users have a self-regulating network, guided by a coordinator.

All these communities cannot speak with one voice. Although every member has a vote, these votes will not be counted, instead they form a mix of sounds from which a melody is created. To enable this ‘melody’ to grow into a song, it is assumed that rules, procedures and different points of view divide a community rather than binding people together. This bonding within the community asks for the warmth of a nest, a place for meeting, for the creation of knowledge and the sharing thereof. The functioning of the community does not comply with extremist points of view, but asks for a certain freedom of operation for its members. Therefore self-responsibility for acting is needed. It is not the community which employs activities, but its members (see Fiere, Mehlkopf and Wüst 2013).

The appearance of the communities was not well understood by the local government, who expressed prejudices. These communities were assumed to refrain from cooperation and co-creation. Moreover, the pioneers were stigmatized in different ways, such as: they would be an elite few and without links to society; they would be entrepreneurs who wanted funds; they would not represent the neighborhood; they are not ordinary people; they look for power; they are utopists without any sense of reality; they are one day flies; and they are hype sensitive cosmopolites.

In the meantime the different communities in the Indische neighbourhood can be divided into the following: the asset-based community, the profession-based community, the target group based community, and the theme or interest-oriented community (see also Table 1).

Table 1. Community types in the Indische neighbourhood (2012)

Characteristics communities					
	Asset-based	Square-based	Target group-based	Profession-based	Theme or interest – oriented
Name Community	Makassarplein Community, Karrewiel Community, Meevaart community	Timorplein Community, Makassarplein Community, Ambonplein Community	Amiko Community, Youngsters Community	Community of Arts	Informal care

The asset-based communities are concentrated around assets such as buildings and playgrounds. Examples found in the Indische neighbourhood are: Makassarplein, Karrewiel, and Meevaart Communities. Some of the moderators working within this type of community will specialise in the physical assets, such as buildings and the maintenance thereof, while other moderators focus on community development and the capacity of self-management. Here, the asset ‘owned’ by the community should be seen as an instrument for the development of the community. This differs

from the ‘traditional’ view, where the asset is given primary importance and the community is only an instrument using the asset.

The square-base community is organized around a square (in Dutch ‘plein’), and its connecting streets. The physical area is a demarcation within which the community exists. Members use the public space and work to improve social cohesion and social control. Examples are the Timorplein, Makassarplein and Ambonplein Communities, where moderators focus on the development of the community within the associated area.

The target group-based community focuses on specific groups within the community, such as women or youth, for example the women’s community group, Amiko. With regard to the youth community, it is questionable as to whether or not this is a liquid community. Here, the community is possibly more fashion like, where moderators focus on the empowerment of the target group and it is not necessarily neighbourhood based.

The profession-based community is a network of neighbourhood residents with a similar profession, such as artists and creative people in the Indische neighbourhood. Among the members of the artists community are moderators, focusing on community development.

The theme, or interest-based community can be found in informal care networks and in the control of irritations caused by youth. Here, moderators bring together community development activities and the classic role of welfare organisations.

7. Cooperation between communities and public institutions

The cooperation between the communities and public institutions can be illustrated by many examples, but only three examples will be provided below. These will give an impression of the blended social action in different governance networks.

7.1 Co-creation of Rumah Kami

Situated in the Makassar Square is a small neighbourhood centre, the Rumah Kami- managed by a local welfare organisation – and used by several groups including the Makassarplein community. The local government aims at renovating this centre by means of co-creation, and thus involving the different stakeholders. One of the stakeholders is the Makassarplein Community, who reported to the local government that they knew of citizens - neighbourhood residents and architects - who wanted to partake in the process of co-creation. Moreover, the community members suggested a meeting with all stakeholders should be arranged. The reaction of local government followed, ‘the Makassarplein Community is too enthusiastic’. Sometime later (mid 2012), no agreement had been reached with either the community or the housing corporation that owns the building. The local government had requested that the community liaison person, stop spreading information concerning co-creation with regard to the renovations of the Rumah Kami.

The community member interacting with the local government had reacted in an enthusiastic manner, he'd said that the residents, some of whom are architects, were willing to have a meeting in which all stakeholders could introduce themselves, in order to obtain an idea of who is willing to cooperate and how residents' cooperation could be facilitated. The reaction from local government was that the community member wanted to proceed too quickly, that the renovation of a small community centre was a minor issue. Again the local government representative asks the community member to refrain from any further communication on this issue.

The community member reminded the local government of the various other stakeholders who should be involved, such as the local welfare organisations, and suggested that the local government should communicate with all stakeholders over the process of co-creation, and renovation of the Rumah Kami Community Centre. Moreover, he proposed to organise a pressure cooker session with all the stakeholders involved, enabling insights and expectations to be aired openly, and to determine the role of different stakeholders. This could in turn, facilitate a sense of ownership and involve the incorporation of cultural elements attaining to the different ethnic groups currently utilising the building.

This description of pre-phase cooperation between stakeholders shows that community members are eager to partake in a co-creation process and that the local government feels a distinct discomfort. The local government wants to ascertain the role of their own institution, but tends to refrain from an open dialogue among the different stakeholders in the early stages of the governance process.

7.2 Meevaart community centre

In January 2012 the Meevaart community centre was started as a 'social experiment' in which the community centre and its users are held responsible for choices made, thus seeking equilibrium between the demand and supply of services in connection with the centre. Although priority groups can use the neighbourhood centre free of charge, the community centre faced a deficit of approximately € 50,000 in 2012². To cope with the deficit, opening times were restricted. Today shortcomings are recognised and dealt with accordingly, for example the financial deficit was answered by increasing the participation of volunteers, the introduction of a theatre programme and the further development of the neighbourhood restaurant. In this respect, the focus should not only be on the community centre itself, but also include the entire neighbourhood. Moreover, social property would enable new forms of citizen participation in conjunction with working, learning, income generation and self-sustainability. The community tries to develop alternative uses for temporarily unused space in social property. Moreover, new links are made between real estate owners and residents, to strengthen the neighbourhood economy.

These developments ask for a reconsideration of the relationship between the Meevaart Community and the local urban district that subsidizes the community in order to guarantee access of priority groups to the centre, however the amount of funding proves insufficient. For a financially healthy exploitation, more volunteers and residents have to partake in the self-management of the community centre. The community aims at getting rid of the subsidy

relationship, instead it wants to charge the local district for the use of space by specific target groups and the hours invested in them. Under such circumstances the government may subcontract specific tasks, which helps the Meevaart Community to develop a budget strategy where all users will be charged the same amount for services and space required. Moreover, once a welfare organization also becomes a rental agency with an interest in the occupancy rate, the use of social property should be optimized. Here the entrepreneurial attitude of the community can be clearly seen.

7.3 Communities united

The Makassarplein, Meevaart, Karrewiel, Timorplein, Youth and Assadaaka Communities have collectively joined hands and agreed to cooperate for the years 2013-2014. They approached the local government to become a real stakeholder in the process. In September 2012 they will submit their own participation policy proposal that fits the local government budget cuts. The communities aim at creating a cheaper, but more efficient and effective management of social property. Moreover, within the budget constraints the communities state that they can reach more vulnerable citizens, create more jobs and entrepreneurship, and involve more citizens. Apart from public funding, non-governmental funding will be mobilised. Furthermore, the communities want to move away from project subsidies to investments in dynamic processes and cooperation between representative and participative democracy in which council members and citizens alike, play a role.

In the meantime, the district council has agreed that governmental data could be used in the participation process, which forces the board to start a pilot with open access to area based data and raw digital data. For this purpose, local communities have formed an alliance with an ICT group 'Hack the Government' (*Hack de Overheid*). In 2010 active residents had introduced the idea of budget monitoring in the Indische neighbourhood. These residents search for effective ways of improving citizen participation and have acquainted themselves with budget monitoring techniques applied in Brazil. In their view budget monitoring – as an instrument for transparent government spending - has to do with conscientiousness, democracy and human rights (Cadat 2012).

Conclusions

The micro setting of the communities in Amsterdam East offers insight into how communities create 'popular space' and governmental organisations 'invited space'. In Amsterdam East the communities create their own popular space and tend to be eager to enter the invited space created by the government. In this invited space, communities dealing with their daily practices (life world) also have to cope with the system. Here one can trace frictions between, for example local knowledge (metis) and professional knowledge (techne), organisation structures and cultures (solid versus liquid), and policy approaches (SLIM versus SMART). This is also the place where stakeholders work together, with the public institutions determining to a large extent, the issues and how to handle them. The invited space communities aim at working together with other stakeholders, asking for a greater say in neighbourhood development. That is

exactly why the communities – mainly the asset- and square-based – started to join hands once they needed the local government. Here it appears that communities seek methods to organise themselves in such a way that their liquid nature will be maintained. In the case of the Meevaart Community, a buffer organisation was created to operate between the community and the local government. Moreover, empowered deliberative democracy develops at the grassroots, which in turn causes friction with public institutions who adhere to a representative democracy. However, the government institutions do not aim at the participation of citizens, they operate as a solid institution with their own organisational structure and culture. In the meantime, communities develop skills of budget monitoring and aim to have a serious say in the management of social property in the neighbourhood. Furthermore, the facilitating and enabling role of the government is enforced by the operation of the communities, in part due to the severe cuts in public spending in the Netherlands as a result of the European credit crisis. Moreover, the blended social action of governance is characterised by the declining influence of politicians and the local social, cultural and economic elite becoming active in the communities, therefore altering the role of power and influence. Here the positive results realised by the local communities has contributed to these changes.

So far, this paper has provided insight in the operation of communities in the Indische neighbourhood and their cooperation with public stakeholders. These developments will go on however, it is remarkable and worth noting, the communities themselves seek ways of maintaining their liquid nature, ultimately offering community members a sense of ownership and in turn encouraging participation in neighbourhood affairs.

Endnotes

¹ An earlier version of this paper was written for the RC21 session Community Governance: Contesting Power and Socio-Spatial Inequality at the Second ISA Forum of Sociology Social justice and democratization. Buenos Aires, Argentina, August 1-4, 2012.

² For the first half of 2012 the Meevaart Community obtained 150,000 euro for running and managing the community centre. This would imply a government subsidy of 300,000 euro per annum which is 500,000 euro less than the welfare organization received earlier. Due to severe public budget cuts the community could not expect more subsidy.

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