

PDF hosted at the Radboud Repository of the Radboud University Nijmegen

The following full text is a publisher's version.

For additional information about this publication click this link.

<http://repository.ubn.ru.nl/handle/2066/127768>

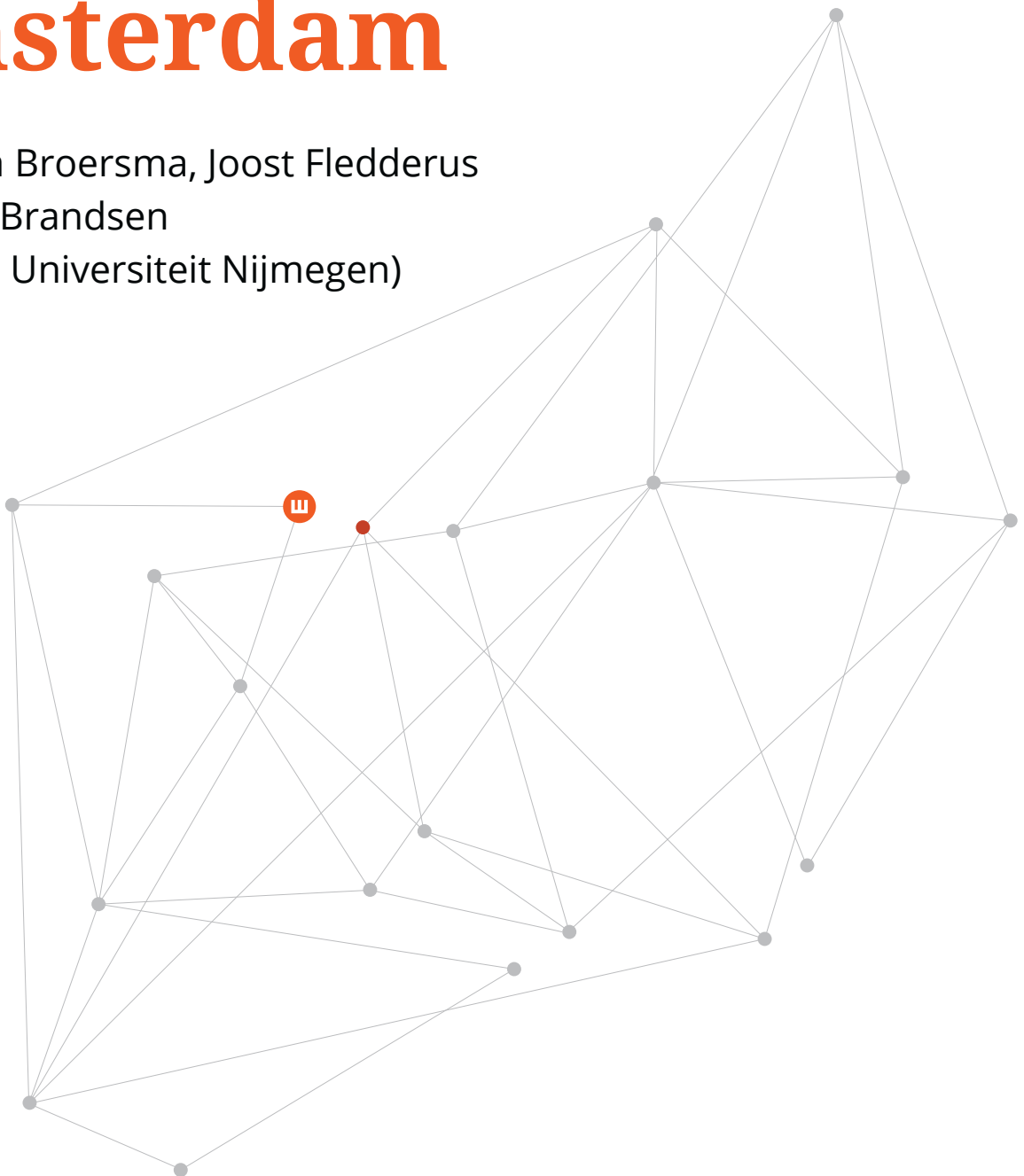
Please be advised that this information was generated on 2017-08-24 and may be subject to change.

NL

The Netherlands

Amsterdam

Francesca Broersma, Joost Fledderus
and Taco Brandsen
(Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen)



NL

Amsterdam

Authors

Francesca Broersma, Joost Fledderus and Taco Brandsen,
(Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen)

Introduction

Local background of the social innovations

Keywords:

Activation
Citizen initiatives
Diffusion
Housing corporation
Local governments
Local welfare
Participation
Social enterprise
Sustainability

In the Netherlands, it is often said how Amsterdam is “arrogant” and always wants to do things in its own way, and indeed, it is a city that is keen on having its own particularities. Internationally renowned as an open-minded, tolerant and progressive capital, Amsterdam also strives to uphold this image of being an “avangardist” city that tries to remain ahead of times, both in an international context and in the Dutch context. Despite its particular history, mentality and structure, there are broader (national/European) trends to which Amsterdam is not immune, as well as national policies and regulations with which Amsterdam too has to comply. All of this has repercussions for what are considered “social innovations” in Amsterdam and the way in which these develop at the local level.

One characteristic of the city of Amsterdam is that the Labour Party (*Partij van de Arbeid*, or PvdA) has been the largest party in the municipal council since the end of the second world war, and the mayor of Amsterdam has been a member of the PvdA ever since. As several interviewees of WP4 also underlined, it is the PvdA that has long been calling the shots in Amsterdam and, accordingly, the value of equality has long played a critical role within municipal politics in the sense that “everyone should be treated equally”. Although the Liberal Party has been part of the municipal coalition since the 1990s, the idea that equality is a basic societal foundation remains a deep-rooted belief that has a significant influence on the political choices that are made in the city of Amsterdam. Municipal integration policies based on the concepts of “diversity” and “citizenship” also stress the fact that, regardless of one’s socio-economic status or cultural background, everyone is, above all, an “Amsterdammer”.

Another important feature of Amsterdam is that it is divided in city districts (*stadsdelen*). The first city districts were established at the beginning of the 1980s. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s more city districts were created, and others were fused together again, until, by 2002, there were fourteen city districts, all of which had their own council and aldermen. In 2010, however, the number of city districts was reduced from fourteen to seven, and currently there is a discussion about the elimination of city districts all together – not in terms of the territorial boundaries that they represent, nor of the tasks that they are responsible for, but in terms of having separate councils, aldermen and budgets. Amsterdam and city districts have thus been going through a whole series of reorganisations, which, every time, cause a sense of ambiguity for the administration and insecurity among its civil servants. Yet the number of civil servants in Amsterdam is proportionately still higher than in any other large municipality in the Netherlands: a study that was carried out in 2012 (Berenschot, 2012) claimed there were nineteen civil servants per 1,000 inhabitants in Amsterdam, while other large municipalities had an average of eleven civil servants per 1,000 inhabitants (the cost of which was estimated to be 7,900 euros per inhabitant in Amsterdam, against 6,400 euros in Rotterdam, and 4,400 euros in Utrecht and The Hague).

In functional terms, city districts hold a position that is very similar to that of any other municipality, and, especially, they carry similar responsibilities regarding the provision of local welfare services/facilities. Hence, depending on the coalitions within the district councils, city districts can also set their own priorities and give their own twist to the way in which certain welfare provisions are provided. On the one hand, the formation of fairly autonomous districts within a larger municipality enables these districts to provide more “personalised” services by focusing on the provision of specific services that are deemed necessary in a particular area. On the other hand, this means that in every district there are different services, different ways of organising these services and different welfare organisations providing these services. To this day, there is a particularly large number of actors involved in the provision of welfare services and the organisation of welfare within Amsterdam is rather compartmentalised.

A national policy that clearly marked the way in which Amsterdam implements welfare policies at the local level is the “Neighbourhood Development Programme” (*wijkaanpak*) that was launched in 2007, following which a selection of disadvantaged neighbourhoods in Amsterdam was classified as a so-called “attention area” (*aandachtswijk* or *krachtwijk*). Major regeneration projects have been carried out in these neighbourhoods ever since. The approach of the *wijkaanpak* is an integrated, more holistic approach towards neighbourhood regeneration: besides improving the physical environment, the *wijkaanpak* aims to enhance the broader “liveability” (*leefbaarheid*) in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, *i.e.* to improve the social and economic environment too. Municipalities were granted additional governmental funds for the implementation of the Neighbourhood Development Programme, although housing corporations are largely responsible, both financially and logistically, for the completion of the programme. At the same time, in the *wijkaanpak*, citizen participation is key. Moreover, it encourages actors at the local level to engage in new partnerships with other actors that are operating within the same neighbourhoods. Finally, as the programme manager of the *wijkaanpak* at the municipal Service for Societal Development (*Dienst Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling*, or DMO) also underlined, the *wijkaanpak* is meant to be a learning experience, open to experimentation, that promotes

a change of culture, but that always stays focused on obtaining concrete results.

Another national trend that has affected the way in which welfare is implemented at the local level is the continuing decentralisation of welfare (and in particular care) policies from the central government to the municipalities. Next to the complete decentralisation of youth care services, more and more caregiving services that used to be part of the “General Act on Special Healthcare Costs” (*Algemene Wet Bijzondere Ziektekosten*, or AWBZ), and thus a (financial) responsibility of the central government, have been included in the Law of Societal Development (*Wet Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling*, or WMO) and are now the responsibility of municipalities. Although the central government supports local governments with these transitions, in times of crisis and increasing budget restraints, this basically means that municipalities have to do more with less. Furthermore, the WMO – a law that concerns the provision of services for citizens in difficult conditions, such as, for example, the elderly, people with a handicap or psychological problems, but also people with financial problems – stipulates that citizens should have an independent life and participate in society as much as possible. To achieve this purpose, municipalities are free to set their priorities wherever they feel there is a more stringent need for support. So far, generally, the municipality of Amsterdam has been responsible for the individual provisions that were part of the WMO and the city districts have been responsible for the collective provisions. Recently, in response to the decentralisation processes that are supposed to be completed by 2015, the municipality introduced a “new vision” of the WMO: the so-called “New Style of Welfare” (*Welzijn Nieuwe Stijl*). This vision is based on more self-responsibility and self-reliance - it expects the people of Amsterdam to look more for possible solutions to their problems within their own networks. Hence, the focus is now on collective provisions and informal support mechanisms – which are “happening” at the level of “the neighbourhood”.

In summary, due to the particular structure and history of the city of Amsterdam, it has an extensive and intricate network of separate and rather compartmentalised actors involved in the provision of local welfare services. Every district has its own (welfare) programme and organisations, and, due to the availability of sufficient funding/subsidies, all of

NL**Amsterdam****Authors**Francesca Broersma, Joost Fledderus and Taco Brandsen,
(Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen)

these actors have long had the possibility of working fairly independently from one another. Recently, the *wijkaanpak* and the ongoing budget cuts have encouraged all of the various actors to join forces and tackle societal problems in a more coordinated and more efficient manner. At the same time, financial “pressure” has also “made way” for the introduction of more targeted, and thus diversifying, policies. Hence, the organisations involved in the provision of welfare services in Amsterdam are increasingly “forced” to reconsider not only their (traditional) organisational culture, but also their entire approach.

36 / 77

Buurtbeheerbedrijven - Neighbourhood management companies

36.1. Short description

Neighbourhood management companies (*buurtbeheerbedrijven*, or “NMCs”) in Amsterdam were an initiative of the housing corporation Ymere. In 2007, as part of the larger national Community Development Programme (“*wijk-aanpak*”), it was decided that in a selection of so-called “problem areas” – or “*aandachtswijken*” - large-scale urban renewal projects were to be carried out: in these neighbourhoods, a significant part of the social housing stock was to be demolished and rebuilt or renovated and sold on the private market. At that time, it was expected that it would take 10 years to complete this transformation. Ymere, which owns a large (if not the largest) share of the properties in some of these “problem areas” in Amsterdam, feared that during the renovation period these neighbourhoods would deteriorate even further. Hence, Ymere decided to set up an easily accessible service point in those neighbourhoods, where tenants/residents could go to if they had any questions or problems. These service points – which then came to be referred to as NMCs – were going to perform additional maintenance tasks, on top of the regular maintenance services that were already provided by the municipality or housing corporations in those neighbourhoods, to keep them “clean, intact and safe” and to ensure that the “livability” (*leefbaarheid*) would not degenerate in these neighbourhoods during their renewal. At the same time, NMCs would address (youth) unemployment in the neighbourhoods, as they would be set up as learning/reintegration companies for residents with a distance from the labour market. The first NMC in Amsterdam opened its doors in 2009 and by now there are five of them in different parts of the city (Oost, Osdorp, Noord, Slotervaart and Landlust).

Four years ago I got a call from a director (of one of the division of Ymere in Amsterdam), and he said to me “I want something in the neighbourhood, we are doing major renovations, and I saw in...” Where had he seen it? Arnhem I think. There they had these NMCs since longer already. “That’s what I want, I want something like that too”. That’s usually how things work with a director. I said: “That’s great Jan.” [...] And that’s how the whole idea of NMCs started. It was not entirely new, because it already existed in Arnhem, and in Deventer too they had been working with them

NL

Amsterdam

Categories

Neighbourhood revitalization / Housing
Employment

before. [...] And well, then it became such a success... One director had said he wanted one of those NMCs, and then very quickly four other directors said: "we also want an NMC"

(Project leader, Ymere)

The basic framework of all the NMCs is the same: they all provide maintenance services in areas that are going through urban renewal, in order to keep them "clean, intact, safe" and "livable", and they all provide learning/reintegration places for persons with a certain distance from the labour market. Generally (although there are exceptions to this as, at this stage, some NMCs are more "advanced" than others), a NMC comprises four disciplines: 1) a technical team (*klussenteam*) – which carries out technical repairs inside the dwellings (owned by Ymere) in a particular neighbourhood; 2) a neighbourhood team (*wijkploeg*) – which helps keep the public spaces in that neighbourhood "clean, intact and safe"; 3) caretakers (*huismeesters*) – who handle social and physical problems in the neighbourhood; and 4) a receptionist (*baliemedewerker*) – who residents of that neighbourhood turn to for information/filing complaints. All four of these disciplines are (or could be) linked to learning/reintegration programmes for people with a distance from the labour market.

36.2. Conceptions and ways of addressing users

City districts, housing corporations, residents and the unemployed are all users of the NMCs in one way or another. We here focus the on the WILCO target group, i.e. the unemployed.

Initially, the idea was that people would stream in, and then, to activate the people they would first participate in one of those neighbourhood teams, and then if they work well then they can move on to the technical team. And then they can learn a real profession. And then they can get a regular job with us (Ymere). But then it turned out that those people who join a neighbourhood team, well... to put it bluntly, you cannot turn every nickel into a dime. [...] So then we thought: hey, maybe the technical teams – which require more skills, and where you go into people's homes, so you have to have more social skills too – let's focus those on young people

(Project leader, Ymere)

Today, the technical team in an NMC is composed of a professional – a mentor – and two young apprentices that are following an "all-round service staff" training programme that has been set up by Ymere itself in collaboration with a vocational school. During the apprenticeship the youngsters are paid the minimum wage plus 10 per cent. If they do well during their apprenticeship and if they complete the educational programme, the chances are fairly high that Ymere will hire them on a regular contract, since Ymere – much like many other housing corporations – is often looking to hire more "all-round service staff".

And those (apprentices) are boys that, well, also have a distance to the labour market, but more in terms of schooling – that dropped out of school. Or that had some problems with the police maybe, and they risk going the wrong way. [...] With the apprentices too, it's difficult. They also get more chances here than in a normal company. And they need that, because, well... you cannot treat them normally. [...] And it's not the target group for that. We all know that... that we need to be more tolerant with them. So that's what we do. And it works, at least with the technical team it works

(Project leader, NM)

Instead, the neighbourhood teams are composed of a professional – a front man – and between six and ten persons who are receiving social assistance benefits and whom the Municipal Work and Income Service (DWI) is trying to "reactivate". Neighbourhood teams are not focused on youngsters and participants can be of any age, but they often happen to be in their thirties and forties. The persons that are sent by the DWI to neighbourhood teams in NMCs have a relatively short distance from the labour market too (step 3 on the activation ladder), but while the "users" of the technical team are actually prepared to carry out a profession and often stream into regular employment, the "users" of the neighbourhood teams are prepared to first "get back into the rhythm". In this case, rather:

It's social activation you know. If you have been inactive for a long time, then you cannot even imagine that work can also be fun. So it is nice to see, that people, because they are sometimes semi-forced to do something, that they then say: "hey, I have colleagues!" – social contacts. "And I have a purpose to come out of my bed again". And they discover: "hey, this is actually ok". And: "I like this"... There were also people that said

at some point: "I want to do a horticulturalist course because I want to do something with gardening"... But that's really per person. Some people think it's ok as it is, they just want to hang around

(Project leader, Ymere)

Learning/reintegration programmes that are associated to the various disciplines of the NMCs are thus intended to stimulate people with a (relatively short) distance from the labour market. By working in a NMC, people have the opportunity to refresh basic skills - such as being on time, working in a team, etc. - but also to develop specialised skills and acquire new experiences so as to improve their chances on the labour market.

It's difficult, because they are people that have gone off track for a reason. And that do not work anymore. And have problems... So you have to take your time for this, to make the switch again, and tell them: "work is important, for you, but also for the people around you". And that's how we proceed, slowly slowly. [...] It's maybe crude to say, but in the end these people are usually dumped somewhere and they are just told: "do your thing". [...] And it is because we have a different concept here, that we are able to assist them better. Which is why they stay so long also. [...] It's important that we make it a broader experience (than simply collecting litter from the street), that one thinks: "Hey, do I like this? Do I want to continue with this?" And because we have so many different things to do, they usually like it. Not everything of course, but still they say: "yes, I actually do kind of like it here"

(Project leader, NMC)

36.3. Internal organisation and modes of working

Ymere provides most of the funding for all the NMCs, but one of the conditions that was set by Ymere for the establishment of any NMC was that the respective city district be a partner in this kind of venture. Subsequently, arrangements have also been made between all the NMCs and their city districts - the city district gives a certain financial contribution to the NMC so that, in return, it can make use of the neighbourhood team for a certain number of hours. In this way, the city district is basically "hiring" the neighbourhood team to do part of the (simple) maintenance tasks in public spaces (e.g. fixing pavements,

collecting rubbish, looking after green areas, etc.). This kind of "exchange" with the city district occurs in all NMCs. However, as the NMCs also look for extra (income-generating) maintenance jobs, they may seal contracts with different types of clients too - depending on their location, in some NMCs the neighbourhood team is able to carry out more "commercial" jobs for private owners/companies than in others.

The housing corporation always supplies the leader/mentor of the technical teams. In contrast, the front men of the neighbourhood teams (and the receptionists, and the caretakers, and the project leaders of the NMCs, for that matter) are supplied by social enterprises that specialise in working with people who have a distance from the labour market. In some NMCs, however, depending also on how the relationship is/has been between the local division of Ymere and the city district, the relationship between the NMC and the city district is closer than in others. Subsequently, in the NMC in Osdorp, for instance, the city district supplies the front man of the neighbourhood team.

We've contracted partners that have experience in working with people with a distance to the labour market. And that is a different partner in every neighbourhood, just to make things more confusing. [...] Because we as Ymere are the initiators (of the NMC), but we don't have that much expertise ourselves to work with people who have a distance to the labour market. So what those partners do, they often deliver a project leader, who is there every day, and they take care of the people in those neighbourhood teams. And Ymere sends one of their employees - the guy who normally drives around in a van and comes to fix your tap - that one is now hired by the NMC

(Project leader, Ymere)

In all NMCs, the recruitment of persons that take part in the reintegration programmes linked to the neighbourhood teams goes via the DWI. The recruitment of youngsters that join the technical teams as apprentices, however, may happen through different partners. Although all youngsters that become apprentices in the technical teams are enrolled in an "all-round service staff" training programme, youngsters can be placed in such training programmes through various social enterprises. Depending on which social enterprise is operating in a particular neighbourhood, different NMCs may recruit suitable youngsters for

NL

Amsterdam

Categories

Neighbourhood revitalization / Housing
Employment

the technical teams via different social enterprises. Similarly, the reintegration or work-experience programmes that are linked to the reception of the NMC and/or to its caretakers can be filled through different kinds of organisations that are trying to get people with a distance to the labour market back to work. The one criterion that is important for the selection of staff – or “users” – in all NMCs is that the learning/reintegration programmes be filled by people who live in the neighbourhood .

Overall, while all NMCs have the same targets and target groups, the way in which they are internally organised can be somewhat different from one NMC to another:

There is no format, of the practical things I mean. [...] It can be different everywhere. The goals are the same everywhere. And the set up, in terms of staff are similar too. But how you handle things, what tasks you do, that's different... Every neighbourhood is different, so every neighbourhood needs something different.

(Project leader, NMC)

36.4. Interaction with the local welfare system

We explicitly chose not to export them (NMCs) under Ymere's flag, because we also wanted other housing corporations that are operating in those neighbourhoods to join. But also because you are carrying out work for the city district, and if you really put your own stamp on it, then they will also tell you "it's your thing"

(Project leader, Ymere)

In fact, NMCs are constantly trying to get more and more actors involved that are providing some sort of (social) service within their neighbourhoods – be they from the municipality, other housing corporations, social enterprises, welfare organisations or even citizens. However, as yet, NMCs do not try to actually “take over” the functions of these other actors. In this respect, there have perhaps not been any radical changes to the local welfare systems as a result of the establishment of NMCs.

This is Amsterdam. In Arnhem they are much further. Because what we do in Amsterdam are merely additional tasks in the neighbourhood, on top of the regular maintenance (by the municipality). While in Arnhem they said "we are going to do all of the

maintenance of public spaces at the NMC". So there they actually drive around with the sweeping-car, and they collect the rubbish. That's the fear that people here have, that that is going to happen here too. [...] Here you see there is not enough political support for that. And in Arnhem everything is on a smaller scale, you have one municipality. Here in Amsterdam you have a lot more city districts, all with their own political alliances. [...] I also think it has to do with culture, in Amsterdam. The people from Amsterdam are of course extremely pig-headed. It's not an easy people to work with. [...] It's difficult to go up against the established order

(Project leader, Ymere)

As for the services provided by NMCs, these are perhaps not exactly “innovative” services: technical repairmen, “clean, intact and safe” services, and caretakers were already operating in these neighbourhoods long before NMCs were ever created. Likewise, there were already many other organisations/companies offering learning/reintegration places to (young) unemployed persons. As a matter of fact, the whole idea of NMC is perhaps not that “innovative” if we consider that similar companies already existed in other cities of the Netherlands. However, for Amsterdam, the innovative aspect of the NMCs is the way in which they bring different types of services together under one name, in one location, in the neighbourhood, and only for residents of that neighbourhood. In practice, trying to improve the living conditions in certain neighbourhoods while also trying to (re)activate the residents with a distance to the labour market in those neighbourhoods required innovative forms of collaboration between many different actors, including housing corporations, city districts, educational facilities, social enterprises and citizens. In this respect, NMCs have certainly “altered the relationships between actors and organisations in local welfare”.

36.5. Development and dynamics

Since the first NMC started in Amsterdam, the concept has been in constant evolution; in practice, the organisation of NMCs is a continuous learning process. Initially, for instance, the collaboration with city districts was somewhat difficult. NMCs had to find a way not to be perceived as “competitors” by other maintenance service providers that were already

carrying out maintenance tasks in the neighbourhood before the NMC appeared.

Often you see that at the management level (in the municipality) the idea (of NCMs) is very much supported, social entrepreneurship is of course a “hot” topic right now, but that at the implementation level, especially in the beginning, it encounters a lot of opposition...then the people from the municipality that normally do the maintenance, of neighbourhoods and streets, they see it as taking the bread out of their mouths. [...] We’ve had it that people would come, you know, one of those excursion of managers, and that the day before, they would throw rubbish on the streets on purpose. [...] I cannot prove it of course, but I am 99 per cent sure that it is people from the municipal cleaning services that did that. [...] They feel threatened. [...] They’re scared that if it becomes successful, that they are going to lose their jobs. [...] And also internally (at Ymere) I’ve encountered a lot of opposition. [...] Everything that is new or experimental encounters opposition in large bureaucratic organisations.

(Project leader, Ymere)

With time, however, actors operating in the neighbourhood understand what an NMC does, and how it is actually meant to assist them in performing their own tasks better. For instance, the cooperation between NMC and housing corporations other than Ymere has gradually strengthened – although here too there is still room for improvement.

Ideally we would have one location where everything is together, all the caretakers (from different housing corporations in the neighbourhood), that we all sit together, and can brainstorm, and work together much faster. But that is not really working in practice, because everybody wants his own image... and that’s a bit difficult. Also in terms of funding. Now for instance, Eigen Haard (another housing corporation) has a very small percentage of houses in this neighbourhood, their caretaker [...] holds consultation hours here (in the NMC) twice a week. And she pays for that, a small amount, so she can have a kind of “flash-office” here. And that works. But ideally we would all be sitting here together. Maybe that is something for the future.

(Project leader, NMC)

Yet the future of NMCs is still uncertain. Originally, the idea was that they would stay in the neighbourhoods as long as there were works in progress – the mo-

ment the renovation is completed, it should no longer be necessary to perform additional maintenance tasks. Moreover, at the moment, city districts are dealing with significant cutbacks. Because the NMCs seem to be so successful, however, they are currently thinking about how they could continue in case the city districts were to withdraw their funding:

There is money now. When we need something, there are reserves. At the city district, at Ymere, and everywhere really. That’s why this is possible. Because of course it costs money. [...] At the moment we do not have to make any profit...at some point, we might have to become independent. But that’s an entirely different perspective. [...] Ymere is very much of the kind to want to set up a project with residents, assist them in getting it running, and that then the residents themselves take over at some point. [...] But this... you cannot just change this. Then you get something completely different. I used to work for another company, at a facility-point. That’s an option. But then... if all the houses here become owner-occupied and you keep this (NMC) here, then you will start doing maintenance for the homeowners. That’s a completely different market. There you can ask money. [...] But then you are really commercial.

(Project leader, NMC)

NL

Amsterdam

Categories

Neighbourhood revitalization / Housing
Employment

37 / 77

*Buurtwinkels voor Onderzoek,
Onderwijs en Talentontwikkeling,
BOOT - Neighbourhood Stores for
Education, Research and Talent
Development*

37.1. Short description

Neighbourhood Stores for Education, Research, and Talent Development (Buurtwinkels voor Onderzoek, Onderwijs en Talentontwikkeling, or BOOT) are an initiative of the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences (Hogeschool van Amsterdam, or HvA). The Community Development Programme (“wijkaanpak”), which started in 2007, raised the question about how the HvA – the largest institute for higher professional education in Amsterdam – could connect the knowledge and the competences of its students, teachers, researchers and network to the “problem areas” (“aandachtswijken”) in Amsterdam, in such a way as to contribute to the socio-economic development of these neighbourhoods. At the core of the wijkaanpak lies an intensified collaboration between governmental, for-profit and non-profit organisations. Meanwhile, the University of Applied Sciences aspired to be the university of Amsterdam, for Amsterdam. After discussion with the municipal Service for Societal Development (Dienst Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling, or DMO), the HvA came up with the BOOT concept, where students, under supervision of teachers and professionals, would provide certain services and activities for the residents in “problem areas”. In this manner, students would have the opportunity to develop practical skills and to apply the knowledge they acquired at the university, and they would do so in a way that would also benefit the residents in the neighbourhoods, either directly by offering services/assistance to them, or indirectly by offering services/ assistance to partnering (welfare) organisations.

The first BOOT was opened in 2008,

and we did that together with housing corporations. They gave us a premise so that we could really be in those neighbourhoods with the students. Because we also could have chosen to do it from here, out-reaching projects, from the University itself. But we deliberately chose to let those students actually live in those neighbourhoods as much as possible. [...] And the programme that they offer, that is decided by the residents themselves, and by the organisations that are in that neighbourhood. That can be the library, the ABN-AMRO, banks, medium-small businesses, but especially social organisations, like social councillors (sociaal raadslieden), social work (maatschappelijk werk), business one-stop shops (ondernemersloket). So it's not only focused on social work, but also on urban development [...] and on starting companies, on the guidance of medium-small businesses. So the range of services that we offer in BOOTs is very diverse. [...] But they have to be concrete services that benefit the residents themselves. Or the organisations in that neighbourhood that work with residents - that it works indirectly like that. That's actually the most important criterion that we have.

(Manager, BOOT)

By now there are four BOOTs in four different districts (West, Oost, Zuid-Oost and Nieuw-West) and a headquarters that is located within the university in the centre of the city. Various programmes of different domains of the university give their students the opportunity to do an internship for a minimum of 5 months and a maximum of 10 months, 4–5 days a week, at one of the BOOTs. These domains include, for instance, the Domain of Economics and Management (Domein Economie en Management, or DEM), the Domain of Technique (Domein Techniek), and the Domain of Society and Law (Domein Maatschappij en Recht, or DMR). Accordingly, various services are offered at BOOTs. The “standard” set of services that are provided in all the BOOTs comprises financial, legal and social consultation hours (and in most cases also a nutritional consultation hour), homework support for 6–10-year-olds, and an atelier for urban renewal. In addition, depending on the needs of the neighbourhood/residents/organisations, the BOOTs may also engage in different activities.

37.2. Conceptions and ways of addressing users

In reality, there are different kinds of “users” of the BOOTs. From the perspective of the university, the main users are the students – BOOTs are set up and supported by the HvA so that their students can gain practical experience and so that their teachers are more in contact with their work field. Ultimately, for the university, what matters the most is that through the BOOTs, they are able to educate better social workers for the future. At the same time, the students at BOOTs are also “used” by city districts and local (welfare) organisations to conduct research projects and/or to help them in their provision of services. Last, but certainly not least, BOOTs are meant to provide services to residents – in terms of knowledge/advice as well as activities/hands-on manpower. The fact that there are different kinds of users is perhaps one of the most appealing aspects of the BOOTs, but, as the following quotes indicate, it is also what makes it particularly challenging, since it is not always easy to combine different interests:

You are there with students, your purpose is to bring in assignments for students in higher education. And the neighbourhood and the partners quickly tend to see students as “welcome hands”. On that very practical level. And every time you have to explain that you are looking for assignments that are of a certain level for the students. And that those hands are also there - because I understand that the neighbourhood also wants to see those hands - but it's not volunteering that those students are doing. They do it all within the framework of their studies. There are points/credits involved. And it is difficult to always find a balance in that.

(Coordinator, BOOT)

See, students have to be guided by people who can give knowledge. Residents definitely have a lot of knowledge too, but they don't always have that academic character that is necessary for an assignment for the university. Thus, you have to find an organisation that fits with that, that is coupled to that. So you really want to introduce students into the world of residents' initiatives, and you want them to support that, but there has to be a professional framework on top of it for the student in order to guarantee the quality of the assignment. And that is a bit difficult sometimes.

(Coordinator, BOOT)

NL

Amsterdam

Categories

Neighbourhood revitalization / Housing
Employment

For the WILCO target group – i.e. the residents of disadvantaged neighbourhoods to which students in the BOOTs are offering their services so as to improve their living conditions – BOOTs appear to be an easily accessible point of information and assistance. While some residents, for one reason or another, may be more hesitant to approach “formal” services that are provided by more traditional (municipal) welfare organisations, they seem to be less hesitant to approach the (students in the) BOOTs for help. Moreover, residents who resort to BOOTs value the fact that students take their time to figure things out for them and that they try to offer more personalised assistance than that offered in other existing welfare organisations/associations.

As one of the users mentioned:

I noticed they try to make an extra effort on offering you information, but also on gathering information for themselves. You know, because it is different the approach when you work as a professional and it's different when you work as an apprentice. [...] The mind setting. Your mind is different. Because in one you feel: "Oh, I've done this. I've been through this. Oh, I've been through much worse scenarios than these". And when you are learning you try to avoid trouble, so you try to learn it properly so you won't advise wrongly in the future. [...] Because I think the previous time - when I was asking for advice on this kind of things - was with the Juridische Loket (another organisation that provides legal advice for free). [...] And it's the approach that you have to them, it's like...I went only to the centre of Amsterdam, and the way that they are covered in a cage, that gives you another approach. They don't offer you any coffee, you just pick a number...

In fact, that on average 350 to 500 residents visit the various BOOT locations every week clearly indicates that residents of disadvantaged neighbourhoods appreciate the existence of a BOOT in their vicinity.

What I find most surprising is how many residents still make use of the services. Because in the beginning something may be interesting, or a hype, or that you want something different than social councillors that are in the office of the city district because you have a certain relationship, a certain history with them. But that now, 5 years later, there are still people coming to BOOT West to have their tax form filled in by students there - I never expected so many people

to systematically come back every week. New people, the same people, we also have ninety children in every BOOT that come back every week. Some children have been coming for 4 years now, and for 2.5 hours per week they get help with reading, writing, and they get courses about eating healthy, about bullying, about professions... You don't know this on forehand. At the time I did think: students will learn something either way. Even if you put them in front of a window in one of those neighbourhoods, next to a mosque, a Turkish coffeehouse, in front of a square that is being renovated...well, they've learnt more in half a year of looking out the window than they probably would have learnt at school. But that residents also would see the added value of it - that was a very big surprise.

(Manager, BOOT)

On the whole, so far, BOOTs are focusing more on “simply helping” the residents than on “actually empowering” them by teaching them new skills. The most “empowering” approach that is applied in the BOOTs is perhaps the homework assistance that they provide to young children, as this will, in the long run, enable these children to perform better in school and thereby also later on in life. During the consultation hours though, residents are mainly perceived as “clients” that come with specific questions that need to be answered, by the students. However, BOOTs too realise that the “new style of welfare provision” tries to encourage people to come up with solutions themselves and/or in their own networks. Although (students working in) BOOTs do attempt to stress this idea of “self-reliance”, it is something that is not always very easy to accomplish in practice.

Students of social work and service provision also learn during their studies about the “new style of welfare” and self-reliance and all that, and it's all woven into the consultation hours. And we'll be training them for that more and more throughout the year so they pay extra attention to it – that they look at the background of a person and what kind of network there is around them. How is that network and can people make use of that? But it's not always that easy. Or it is not easy to organise. With some people yes, but there are also a lot of exceptions.

(Coordinator, BOOT)

We now also have consultation hours that are based more on giving people a fish than on teaching people

how to fish. So people come with their forms, and we try to explain them to them, but in the end they are filled in with someone else. Then that person leaves and thinks "oh that was nice". Next letter they get, well, that letter also comes to us. So we are looking for other ways of providing services, to be innovative in that too, in order to break that "revolving door" effect. Primarily by providing information, by giving courses... Migrants for instance often have their own network – migrant organisations. If we train people there who are in charge or who have a good relationship with a certain group of people, then they can explain how to fill in a tax form. So then you are building more of a kind of circulation of knowledge, rather than just having students do the work. Which can sometimes be like mopping with an open tap. [...] It's not like everybody has to do everything themselves always, but as much as they can yes. Not just because it is cheaper, but also because people really like to understand things themselves. In the end it is just nice - people gain a lot confidence when they start to understand the letters themselves.

(Manager, BOOT)

37.3. Internal organisation and modes of working

The way in which the BOOTs are internally organised is mainly decided by the HvA. The HvA delivers most of the staff for the BOOTs (be they students, teachers or mentors), it supplies the bulk of the funding (most of the participating "domains" at the university contribute a certain amount of money to be able to pay for the staff and the necessary equipment), and its academic schedule decides the timeframe of the activities that are carried out in the BOOTs.

City districts gave us the Neighbourhood Implementation Plans (Buurtuitvoeringsplannen) – the BUPs – and those are actually the plans that were made when they got the extra money from Minister Vogelaar (for the "wijkaanpak"). And with their regular occupancy they did not really have the means to implement those plans. So that's what we mainly started working with. So we got input concerning content. But the concept itself, and the organisation, and moving students and teachers from the University to there, that has been a very internal process within the HvA.

(Manager, BOOT)

However, in most cases housing corporations provide the location, and the city districts pay the fixed costs such as gas, electricity, water and Internet. In some cases BOOTs have set up a so-called "neighbourhood partner agreement" (*wijkpartnerovereenkomst*), which is an agreement between the BOOT and partnering organisations, in which BOOT promises to provide certain services in return for a location/compensation of the fixed costs. In other cases it is the city district itself that asked for a BOOT to be set up, and thus also provides a location for them. By now all BOOTs have a "standard" set of services that they provide, but they also carry out additional services/activities depending on the specific needs and desires of residents and organisations in the neighbourhood: "It's a bit like a menu, where you can choose: I want a BOOT with the standard set of services. But if you want BOOT to carry out extra projects on top of those, for which other people need to be hired, then that is also financed separately" (Manager, BOOT).

The modes of working, though - in terms of the services that a BOOT offers - are very much based on the needs of the neighbourhood in which a BOOT is located. In fact, BOOTs seek to fill the gaps in welfare provision that are left by other (municipal) welfare organisations that are already active in the neighbourhood – either by offering specific types of services, or by targeting specific groups of residents. To be able to fill this gap and to adjust the services that are offered by BOOTs to those that are provided by other organisations, close collaboration with existing (welfare) organisations in the neighbourhood is crucial.

The students actually offer extra services, in addition to the existing offer. We discuss it very well also so that they do not do the same thing just around the corner. That there are not more office windows than there already are, but that we look at things that "Vluchtelingenwerk" (an association for refugees) is dealing with, or what the "sociaal raadsliden" (social councillors) are dealing with, the "Formulierenbrigade" (a brigade that helps people understand/fill in forms)... And then, in consultation with those organisations we make a programme, so that they (i.e. the students) offer supplementary services. A lot of times the professionals come to BOOT to guide the students. That is the whole idea – that we do it together, with the residents and with the professionals of the neighbourhood.

(Manager, BOOT)

NL

Amsterdam

Categories

Neighbourhood revitalization / Housing
Employment

We now have very steady collaborations with organisations, so by now half of the clients come through other organisations, because their waiting rooms are full, and we are a reliable partner. So we share their caseload. But the existing contacts, how we built those up during the first year - because then we had much less direct working relationships with other organisations - that just happened with trust that came via via.

(Manager, BOOT)

37.4. Interaction with the local welfare system

As BOOTs focus on providing welfare services that are not yet being offered (enough) in a particular neighbourhood, there is a strong interaction with the local welfare system in the different neighbourhoods in which they are located.

You try to collaborate a lot with existing organisations that already do a lot of work, to see: how can we work together, and especially, how can we support you in your work? If you were to start a BOOT and you provide a financial consultation hour, for instance, it could be that a welfare organisation thinks: "Hey, what are they doing here? [...] Are they our competitors?" So you try to look for that collaboration as much as possible. That you say: "No, we are doing something different than you, and we support you as much as we can by sending people to the right organisations". The clients that we help, those questions are actually very practical, material questions. And when the questions become deeper and more complex, then we want to redirect them to our partners in the neighbourhood. So the collaboration with existing initiatives - both of residents and of organisations - is very important.

(Coordinator, BOOT)

In fact, the most innovative aspect of BOOTs is the binding role that an educational facility like the HvA - as a "fresh" and more "neutral" actor in the field of welfare provision - plays between different (welfare) organisations that are operating within the same territorial boundaries, yet not necessarily cooperating much. When BOOTs first started, for many welfare organisations that were already in those neighbourhoods, this was a difficult transition to make, as they had been used to providing a particular service in a particular way and they were generally very much

focused towards the inside - on their own activities/organisation. BOOTs bring many of these different, so far disconnected, actors together, which not only provides a clearer overview of the facilities/services that are present in a certain neighbourhood and of those that are lacking, but it also stimulates all partnering organisations to have a more "outward look".

The most important is that we chose not to - even though we had those Neighbourhood Implementation Plans - fill in the Neighbourhood Store with "ok this is what we are going to do". [...] We invited a lot of organisations that, at first, didn't understand what... because it was all a little...when it's an offer you can't refuse, when it is too good to be true - that makes people uncomfortable. So when you ask community workers: "well, just tell us what you want us to do", and not just a little project, but structurally, long-term, fulltime students...well, they thought: "what is this?!". They were a bit afraid that we were stealing the bread out of their mouths, like they were going to become redundant. So you have to give it a lot of time to build up a trusting relationship. And, the most important - and in that you can educate other organisations a bit too - is that you put the residents at the centre of it all. Because it's actually a bit weird that you would see this as competition... You have been put there with money from the government to carry out services for the residents. So if you can do that better with someone else's help, it is a bit weird if you wouldn't want to do that. But well, that is something that with the Community Development Programme ("wijkaanpak") was... a cultural process also. Organisations were very much turned towards themselves, and well, they had to start working more result-driven. They were very busy with that internally, like "Oh, we have to start registering. Or registering more. Counting heads. And how many people do we have to talk to in one hour?"... While, the point of the "wijkaanpak" was that you would bring your forces together to solve societal problems. [...] And I think that we...because we were there, and we were independent - so we were not part of the municipality, or of housing corporations, or welfare organisations - we tried to get everybody to turn a bit more towards the outside. Yea, they were kind of forced to collaborate more. And, well, that's still going very well now actually

(Manager, BOOT)

37.5. Development and dynamics

BOOT tries to bring together all the various actors that are active within a neighbourhood and maintain a closely cooperating network of partners. Not only it takes time and effort to gain the trust of local (welfare) organisations but, as the following quote underlines, it is also a necessary to convince the HVA and the city districts to “think outside of the box”. In practice, a constant challenge for a BOOT, which seeks to reflect the dynamics of (fast-changing) neighbourhoods, is that its functionality requires a certain degree of flexibility.

Both the university and city districts are bureaucratic environments. And they are very much framed in what they do. So you have to try to lure them to step out of those frames. And with a bit of steering and willingness, persuade them that collaboration is always possible somewhere. [...] Sometimes I meet people who are too much into those frames and who only see impossibilities in terms of collaboration. And I try to challenge them during a conversation - with somebody from the city district or with a teacher. [...] And that sometimes requires quite a bit of creativity.

(Coordinator, BOOT)

Flexibility is required not only from all the partnering organisations, but it is also required within the BOOTs, as they are reliant on the funding of these partnering organisations. In fact, the entire BOOT concept is based on non-profit-making growth-model, which may be difficult to maintain in a future where all partners are facing budget cuts. Hence, BOOTs too are constantly looking for ways to innovate themselves, so they can still somehow offer their services in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

The difficult thing is that there are so many different parties involved - which is our starting point, and we are very proud of that - but every party also has its own interest, a different agenda, and they typically think short-term. Not that they have a short-term vision, but they can only make plans for a year, because the availability of money is decided on a yearly basis. So that means that I am very dependent on that, and my team has to react to that very flexibly and dynamically. [...] I can't tell these people: “I am going to invest in you for the next 10 years, and this is going to be our growing model, and if you just do your jobs well, then it will all be fine”, because other people decide

over our destiny. But that is because we are there where there is a need for it. And if that need is no longer there, or if people are no longer able to invest in that, yea, then you should leave actually. [...] So that support is very important.

(Manager, BOOT)

At some point the city district is going to pull itself back more, simply because they are not getting any money for this anymore. And then you have to look at how you can, with certain projects, creatively... how you can keep this going, without costing more money, but that you still grow. In reality it is a very weird growing model, because the better we perform, the higher the cost because we have no income. So the more people come, the more it costs, rather than the more income you have, which is how it normally works. [...] So you have to look how you can create an exchange system with existing partners, so they can keep their costs low by using students. So that you do bring that innovative influence of students in that organisation, in that neighbourhood. So that, eventually, what we are doing now, that it can stay. It will change a bit. Now of course we have a very anonymous, neutral attitude. And if we are going to be linked more and more to other organisations you lose that a bit. But well, you also have to look how you can survive. And we are especially busy with looking how residents - because there is of course a lot of knowledge also with residents, and time, unfortunately these days also with people who are highly qualified, but that are unemployed - to look how they can guide the students for a part. And then all we need is a location. But that would be great, matching the trend that residents themselves are looking for themselves how to organise things.

(Manager, BOOT)

NL

Amsterdam

Categories

Related to all policy fields

38 / 77

Buurtmoeders Catering - Neighbourhood Mothers Catering

38.1. Short description

Neighbourhood Mothers Catering is an initiative of three girlfriends who live in Nieuw-West - one of the areas that the “wijkenpak” has defined as a so-called “attention area”.

Within the framework of the “wijkenpak” residents may apply for funding for so-called resident initiatives. And we saw that a lot of international women – of our international background – came together and somebody had the idea to apply for a cooking book. And they made that cooking book. In the neighbourhood, with all those residents - women that live there made their own recipes, with pictures and all. But that’s where the story ended. And we thought: see, that’s such a pity! There are a lot of subsidies that are invested into those kinds of things, but they don’t have a structural character. What you really want is that those women are trained...and that that idea of the cooking book is professionalised. And that those women structurally gain from their initiative. Within the neighbourhood. That was the beginning of it all. So we thought: well, why wouldn’t you ask those women that made the cooking book if they want to structurally offer their cooking activities – in the form of a catering service?

(Project initiators)

In fact, the start of the catering project is related to the initiators’ own experiences, as women of Turkish and Moroccan descent who have regular jobs themselves, and strongly support the idea that women should be financially independent so as to be able to develop themselves in whichever way they like to. The initiators saw, however, that, to this day, many women (in particular, but not only, women of Moroccan and Turkish descent) are still reliant on either their husband’s income or on social assistance benefits, and that existing re-integration and/or emancipation initiatives fail to successfully address this particular issue. They therefore thought of professionalising certain “basic” activities that these women do, and of establishing a kind of (cooperative) platform that women can join to make/raise their own income by doing that which they do best – in this case: cooking.

If you look at it anthropologically also, the generation before us at least, [...] they were taught how to cook ever since they were little children. And to care. So you could say that those women have been learning how to cook their whole lives. And to be good in what they do. Also concerning caring, towards your parents, your children, your husband. It’s part of your identity. Those are core competences. [...] Everybody has a talent, their own strength let’s say. Well, in

business you talk about competences then. Well, look at this! And what you see is that there is a mismatch in society, or at least in the municipality, that they do not approach those women on the basis of what they can do really well. [...] When they see a woman with a headscarf, then that's often perceived as "pitiful". And stupid. That's the first prejudice. And then they also talk to them as though they are deaf and dumb. They just can't look past that. It's not an accusation! But that's how it is – those are the facts. Often not knowing Dutch well, or wearing a headscarf, well, that means you're stupid, incompetent. While those women can do a lot.

(Project initiators)

The idea of Neighbourhood Mothers Catering is that mothers, or, more broadly, women in the neighbourhood, collectively form a catering service. Every mother/woman is specialised in certain dishes, but alone they would not be able to take on large orders. Together, they can. Neighbourhood Mothers Catering therefore seeks to coordinate women who would like to have a bit of an extra income and brings them together,

and those women can, from the beginning, work from home – their kitchen has to comply with certain conditions – but they can cook their best dish from home. And sell it. So then they are not being pitiful, they're not holding their hand up, but they are making a product that companies, individuals, governmental organisations, can buy, and order.

(Project initiators)

38.2. Conceptions and ways of addressing users

The way in which Neighbourhood Mothers Catering addresses its "users" – in this case the mothers/women of the neighbourhood – is by focusing on the capacities that these women already possess, rather than on those that they are lacking. As the following quote also indicates, Neighbourhood Mothers Catering is clearly following a capacity-building approach:

It started from a kind of frustration also that women, or mothers – and then especially those with a lower education – that they are often approached on the basis of what they cannot do. They cannot speak Dutch well; they do not have any qualifications; etc. And you see that social initiatives, or organisations that play a

role in that, that they try to emancipate women and give them a role in society from that perspective. [...] While we think that financial independence can play a big role for the emancipation of mothers, of women, and for their role in this society. And so also for their integration. [...] In the end, every person has a talent. And those women too. So go and look at what they already can do, and try to help women develop themselves from that perspective.

(Project initiators)

The women that take part in Neighbourhood Mothers Catering are recruited mainly via via - through the personal networks of the initiators, or because somebody heard about the project and approached the initiators asking if they could join. Sometimes it takes a bit of convincing for women to participate, as many of those who are receiving social assistance benefits – one of the groups of women that Neighbourhood Mothers Catering is targeting - are afraid they may be penalised if they were to engage in (paid) catering activities.

The first question is often: "is something going to happen to my benefits? Are tax offices going to come after me? Or is DWI (the municipal Work and Income Service) going to get mad?" [...] They are terribly afraid. Because, especially when you are talking about people on benefits, [...] those people are financially less well off. So the risk for them is simply too big, whereby they are also very anxious and hesitant to act. Until we explain that "it does not necessarily have to affect your benefits". Which means that you are limited to... or rather, that you say: "you have the opportunity to go until..." - rather than talking about limitations - say that they have the opportunity to earn up until x amount of money extra. And that could just be that little bit of support and space that these women need to discover themselves in another way. To give them that bit of self-confidence. And perhaps that then they will take that step towards...even just a part-time job. That is also secretly the thought behind it all.

(Project initiators)

If women decide to participate, though, the kind of guidance that they receive depends on the personal circumstances of each and every one:

Guidance can be in any kind of form. [...] Take the simplest form, and that's a lady for whom doing the groceries is already a pretty big step. A person like that is guided in how to do her groceries. How should

NL

Amsterdam

Categories

Related to all policy fields

you conserve your receipts? What is important, and why is it important? How do you declare your costs? What are the costs that you made? [...] Then we look at the dish – delivering on time, the quality requirements... So it goes from those simple kind of things – the guidance – to how do you make an invoice? We have ladies that are self-employed, but that maybe do not know much about the administration yet. Or who find that a bit scary. Well, then you have to explain to them, or you organise a course on how to handle your administration. [...] And, in addition, we also consider the acquisition of clients, and getting in touch with clients – the matching – as a form of guidance. Because those women are often not able, or they are not part of circles from which they can get assignments. And we do. We can switch between their world, and the world in which we are. And we couple those two. We are able to couple those two worlds, and get assignments/orders out of them.

(Project initiators)

Indeed, there are different kinds of women who participate in the Neighbourhood Mothers Catering project. Some do it as a regular job; others see it more as a way of making a bit of extra money. By now there are three women who, with guidance (for instance, concerning food safety issues and/or administrative issues), have managed to become self-employed, and are thus acting as a kind of supplier/subcontractor of Neighbourhood Mothers Catering – meaning they also send in a job application for every order that they do. There are approximately ten women who receive social assistance benefits and when they participate in the completion of an order for Neighbourhood Mothers Catering receive an additional “compensation for volunteering” (*vrijwilligersvergoeding*). For these women:

...there is maximum, something that we always keep in mind, because you cannot ask those women to work every day because there is a certain maximum amount that you can give to people for volunteering. They cannot go over that, or they will get in trouble.

(Project Initiators)

And, last but not least, there is a group of women that is perhaps not receiving social assistance benefits and “that is not too ambitious, but that does like it to get a compensation for volunteering every now and then because all the small bits help. And so they also do a catering job every now and then” (Project initiators).

38.3. Internal organisation and modes of working

From the very beginning, the project initiators intended Neighbourhood Mothers Catering to be a cooperative that would fund itself – they were going to guide the professionalisation of the women’s cooking services, and the profits that the catering orders would generate would be used to pay the participating women. However, to get the project started, the initiators took part in a competition that enabled them to get a hold of 5,000 euros.

To start (in 2011), we – as the board of the Association of Neighbourhood Mothers in Amsterdam (Stichting Amsterdamse Buurtmoeders, or STAM) won a prize from the municipality of Amsterdam. That was within the framework of the Women-Monitor. Which showed that a lot of women, especially women with a Turkish and Moroccan background, were not working, that only 27 per cent was working. And that many young women, between 20 and 60 years old, didn’t work, and were not financially independent. So we then applied with the Neighbourhood Mothers concept, to win that prize. And we won the main prize of 5,000 euros. With those 5,000 euros we set up the association, the website, the material and well, basically paid for the initial costs.

(Project initiators)

When they won the prize, in fact, they were “simply” three single individuals – the association (STAM) did not exist yet. At that point, the initiators resorted to a friend of theirs, who happened to be a logistic consultant, to set up the association and get the project started. As the quote below indicates, setting up the association was a strenuous process, yet one that eventually turned out to be worthwhile:

We got this kind of lotto-feeling, you know, you get a card on which it says 5,000 euros, and then you think: ok, what now? Very nice and all, but how are we going to get that money? It says so on the card, but it’s not yet on a bank account. And then it turned out...because we had this idea of a cooperative, where those women would work together. You know, one is good in making desserts, the other can make a good soup, and another can make a good steak. Well, you don’t just want a steak. And you don’t just want a dessert. But if they do it with the three of them, than you can serve the client in its totality, and three women have

a job. Well, that's of course a great idea. But, how are we going to organise this? And then, one of the conditions of the subsidy giver – because it was of course just a hidden subsidy, they may call it a prize, but it's just a kind of subsidy – and you cannot give that to a company, it has to be an association. [...] So I took it on me to set up that association, to figure that out. So I set up the association, and well, there is so much hustle and bustle that comes with that, you cannot even imagine. So before you can even start doing something... But then we also saw chances: if you are going to set up an association, then don't just do it for catering. Let's then try to expand that whole concept of catering – because it all started with cooking, because those women can often cook really well – maybe you can expand that whole idea to other branches too, like child care, care...you could set up Neighbourhood Mothers Care. Or something like an atelier we thought, because maybe those women can repair clothing or sew really well too, you know, sowing curtains, or whatever. It was very much based on our own experiences too: I don't feel like sewing my curtains, you don't have the time for that if you are working full-time. And I don't even know how to. But those women do. So why would you not just buy each other's services? So that's how the whole idea grew. And that's how we realised that the burden of having to set up an association, that that was also an opportunity to make it even bigger. So then we thought: this whole thing of the association is actually a good thing. Because the association can approach the women, and help them. And then you can place them in different branches, where they can develop themselves. And then you can start those other projects through the association as well.

(Project leader)

At the moment, Neighbourhood Mothers Catering is still “a project” of the association STAM, which, in turn, is composed of the three initiators. The board of STAM does, however, due to the lack of time and knowledge on specific items, resort to professionals from time to time, whom they manage to pay out of the turnover of the catering service (the project leader being one example hereof). In practice, the board of the association is extremely hands-on: from marketing to administration, from the trainings of the women to the delivery of their dishes – all of it is organised by the board of the association together with the project leaders they hire, and, increasingly, also

with other (welfare) organisations. As a matter of fact, STAM is now, in collaboration with a social enterprise located in Nieuw-West, in the midst of turning the “project” into an actual “cooperative”:

The association remains, and her goal, i.e. guiding, supporting those women. But Neighbourhood Mothers Catering is now going to be part of a cooperative. Because in a cooperative you can make profit. In an association you can do that, but it's different, legally it's a different structure. And for that cooperation we deliberately looked for a collaboration with Coffeemania, because Coffeemania has a status whereby it can offer women a traineeship (“werktestplek”) [...] Because at the moment we don't have that yet, and Coffeemania can add that – offer traineeships to those women.

(Project initiators)

Noticeably, the approach towards Neighbourhood Mothers Catering is mainly commercial. In practice, the board of STAM has a business minded view – the idea is that the women cook, STAM assist the professionalisation of the process, and the women subsequently sell their services. In this manner, it is also supposed to fund itself. That STAM wants it to be in the form of a cooperative is to make sure that the profits that are generated also come back to the participating women rather than to any stakeholders. At the same time, the board of STAM also realises that they are targeting a particular group of women, who thus also requires a particular kind of approach. Hence, “success” is measured in relative terms:

From day one, I think our approach was different, it was more of a business approach. After all, we say that we want things to be lasting. We don't want to be a 1-day-fly. We don't believe in that. But we do believe in different approaches. For a woman for whom getting a volunteering compensation of 20 euros is already a huge financial independence – because those women really exist – then that's fine no? You don't have to push that woman – also because it is not realistic – to become self-employed. That doesn't work. There are different situations, and it's important that you approach people according to their situation, and help them from their position. Because we always say that they have to be able to, they have to want to, and they have to be allowed to – those three things always have to come together.

(Project initiators)

NL

Amsterdam

Categories

Related to all policy fields

38.4. Interaction with the local welfare system

Let's be honest... I don't think the municipality is accessible. You have to take a whole lot of steps just to see, to understand how it all works, to figure out if there are any funds available anywhere. And then you still have to figure out how to get access to those funds. And what is also new for us...see, we come from regular businesses. And we don't know that whole municipal, participation, association, projects, programmes, one city district here, the other one there... Really, when we entered into this whole thing we were business minded. So we thought, ok, you have the municipality, then you probably have a few departments, and then there is a fund, on which hundreds of parties are living, and then they divide that money. But it turns out to be more complicated than that. So that's also something that we are slowly discovering. [...] It's not transparent - while the entire world is basically screaming for transparency, towards everyone. So, as far as I'm concerned, this whole thing...(i.e. the municipalities and the world of subsidies) it's not transparent, or not accessible.

(Project initiators)

In reality, Neighbourhood Mothers Catering is a project that was started by single individuals in reaction to the current re-integration/emancipation programmes/initiatives, which they think often do not approach women in very a positive or sustainable manner. Although they got a (subsidised) prize to get the project started, the interaction with the municipality was, especially in the beginning, minimal. Moreover, it was an initiative of women who are not all that familiar with the world of subsidies, and who never intended the existence of the catering service to be dependent on municipal grants – they want it to be a self-funding cooperative that will thereby be able to have a more lasting impact.

However, STAM does collaborate with social enterprises and (welfare) organisations that have similar goals – i.e. helping women to gain a certain level of financial independence - or that could somehow help them in the organisation and functionality of the catering service. For example, to know the steps they had to follow to professionalise the cooking services they have made use of the "Ondernemershuis" – a municipally funded service that provides informa-

tion and advice for starting enterprises - and for the delivery of the dishes they have sought to collaborate with other associations that are working with people with a distance from the labour market (e.g. *Stichting Fietsdienst*). Moreover, they realise that they are operating within a particular (bureaucratic) setting where certain rules and regulations apply, which they need to adhere to if they wish to expand their initiative:

That's why I got in touch with Coffeemia, to see if we could work with them...because they have the possibility of taking on women with social assistance benefits...they also have people that can guide them in that. Because we had some talks with Pantar (a municipal re-integration service), and they thought it was a great initiative, and they had quite a few women that wanted to do a traineeship (werktestplek) while keeping their social assistance benefits...but there were all sorts of conditions attached to that. They had to have a traineeship with so many hours of guidance. So I thought: what, do they have to come and do this in my kitchen at home then? [...] And then you have to comply with all sorts of ARBO-conditions. [...] So if I put them behind a table and a chair, they say "eheh", because there has to be a desk, and a certain chair, and I don't know what else more. Well, we couldn't offer that. And then what, I have to guide them? Yea, sorry, but I have other things to do too. I can't do that. So yea, those are the kind of things that I was up against. Then you do not have the possibility of helping those women that you actually want to help. But they can do that here (at Coffeemia), because they are open, the staff is always around, the kitchen meets all the requirements, and they also have – it's part of their whole concept – they have a lot of people that are doing some sort of re-integration programme here. So they can do that too. So then we thought: well, that's a nice addition, we can work together in that.

(Project leader)

38.5. Development and dynamics

The driving force behind Neighbourhood Mothers Catering have been individual residents who wanted to come up with a sustainable, lasting concept that would help women gain a certain degree of financial independence, at their own pace. A remarkable aspect of the project is the fact that there were no professional municipal/social workers directly involved in the set up of the whole project. This means that the startup of the catering service has been a “learn-as-you-go” kind of process that perhaps took more time than the initiators ever anticipated, but it also means that it is a concept that keeps evolving, and that remains open to developing itself further. Finally, it is a concept that its initiators firmly believe in, and which they are eager to expand, both in terms of the kind of services they could “sell”, as well as the locations they could “serve”.

We are constantly looking for: what can we do now? Thinking about new kinds of collaborations...looking for chances and possibilities. And grabbing whatever comes our way. [...] The way this whole thing started also – the thought that: why does everything have to be temporary? Why can't we all think a bit more long-term for once? Set up lasting things so that people can do things a bit longer also. And enjoy their own accomplishments longer too. Otherwise it's huge peaks and valleys, where the valleys become even deeper, or harder. And if you have that thought, then it's not smart to take every step that you want to take so quickly, without thinking it through. So we deliberately chose to take it easy. So not take on 100 neighbourhood mothers immediately, give them hope, and then say “oops sorry, didn't work”.

(Project initiators)

We want to expand the concept further. That's why we do it at the neighbourhood level... We want to build the website of the cooperation in such a way that you as an individual, man/woman, two-earner households, that do not have the time to cook a healthy meal, that they can buy a subscription with a Neighbourhood Mother in their neighbourhood, and that they can get a healthy meal twice a week for example. [...] So that you have Neighbourhood Mothers in every neighbourhood that do not only handle large catering orders together, but also on a smaller level, cook a healthy meal for the neighbourhood. [...] It stimulates

the social cohesion within such a neighbourhood too, the interaction between a highly educated two-earner household, and their neighbour with six children. And that's how you hope to have an effect on those children too, that they get in contact with each other. [...] You hope that those children [...] maybe go and visit the two-earner household once. And that the child says: “hey, I want that too. And what he does, I can maybe do that too”. [...] And another side-effect, one of the main ones, is of course that those children see that their mother is working. And that she is earning money. That's a really good example. A lot of children don't have that. [...] Because we still think, despite all these idealistic things about emancipation – super! – still, a mother is a different kind of example for the children. [...] Fathers also participate, but mummies have a bit more visible of a role. That's why it is important for the mother to set a good example. And show that working is part of you, of who you are, and of who you are going to be. And that you are developing. Seeing other things. That's a richness. The more knowledge, the broader your horizons. We really see that as a kind of richness. And if children see that in their mothers, then they will start thinking “that's normal”.

(Project initiators)

Our plan is to make it much broader, as an association. [...] There are a lot of easily accessible branches in which these women can play a role and be financially independent. So we thought, ok, catering, caring, well, child care. [...] And like that there are some other branches of which we think that they are easily accessible, and it's not too much of a hassle to guide women into those branches. And the intention at some point is to scale it up. We started in Nieuw-West, but we also want to scale it up to other city districts of Amsterdam. And if possible, also to other cities in the Netherlands.

(Project initiators)

NL

Amsterdam

Conclusions

Sustainability

Undeniably, financial contributions by the municipality/city districts played a role for all three social innovations that were presented in this report. Without the financial support of the municipality (and the additional funds that were available for the implementation of the *wijkaanpak*), all of these social innovations would have been more difficult to set up, and perhaps some would not have been set up at all. However, whilst the availability of governmental funding may stimulate/fasten the start up of social innovations, in times of “crisis”, continuous budget cuts, and general instability, it is questionable to what extent municipal funding also benefits the sustainability of these innovations.

An important aspect of the larger framework of the Neighbourhood Development Programme is the explicit emphasis of the municipal *wijkaanpak* on “result-driven” projects – if a certain social innovation is considered to be successful, it will continue to be supported by the municipality/city districts, both politically and financially; if not it will be considered “an experiment” that failed, but that was a good “learning experience” nonetheless. In welfare provisions that are especially innovative in the way in which they bring different actors together, there are bound to be many different goals. To assure the continuation of a particular innovation it is therefore important that there is some sort of understanding, or at least compromise, between the various actors involved about what those “results” should be. Regarding the “success” of BOOTs for instance, what some actors may deem to be the main goal, others perceive to be an “extra bonus”.

In general housing corporations and city districts are very happy, because with a minimal investment they do obtain quite some results in a neighbourhood. And then, “results”, that’s something you have to be careful with, because it is very difficult to measure some things. Also the children that have been with us for 4 years now: is it really measurable that they have become better at math and language? We are trying to measure it now, but I am always very careful with this, also because I do not look at it like this. It would be great of course! But the fact that these children have structurally been coming for 2.5 hours, and have been working with the students, that is a result on its own

already. And that’s how we look at it too - that a lot of the things that we are doing, the dynamic between students and residents, that creates a lot of things that are very difficult to measure. And that’s why you have to be careful not to get involved with huge organisations with a lot of money, because...well, that’s not of these times. And you shouldn’t do that either, because for that you cannot clearly indicate what the investment is worth. So you have to keep it very informal, and especially (focus) on the fact that it’s the students that are developing themselves. That’s where the win-win situation is at for BOOT: that we have a better view of the working field, and that students can develop themselves within that field. And everything that this concretely adds to a neighbourhood, things that make a neighbourhood better, well that is a welcome bonus of course.

(Manager, BOOT)

For innovations that rely on municipal funding, “success”, and thus sustainability, is partly determined by the municipality, who wants to see tangible results to justify investments. A noteworthy difference between BOOTs (and Neighbourhood Mothers Catering) and NMCs in this respect is the extent to which they depend on governmental support. In the case of NMCs, city districts are providing funding on a structural basis. In the case of BOOTs, city districts are important sponsors as well, but the financial reliance is far less structural - proportionately the HvA invests much more (funding, personnel and time) than city districts. The HvA thus also has a greater right of say in the “right to existence” of BOOTs.

As for NMCs, the main goal for the housing corporation is to provide a service/information point for the residents in areas that are being renovated, and to be more visible/accessible - as a large, and otherwise more “distant” organisation - in those neighbourhoods. And in this regard, NMCs are indeed successful - which makes them a worthy investment for the housing corporation. The fact that, on top of that, they can also organise this in a way that creates traineeships and activation programmes for people with a distance to the labour market is an added bonus for the housing corporation, whose primary focus is still the (physical) renovation of the neighbourhood. Instead, city districts may be more interested in the re-integration trajectories that NMCs offer to (young) residents with a distance to the labour market. Even though housing corporations are now also expected

to contribute to the “liveability” of neighbourhoods, considering the (traditional) division of (welfare) tasks between different kinds of actors, city districts (and the organisations they subsidise) are still more focused on the social and economic development of a neighbourhood than housing corporations. The fact that merely two youngsters at a time can follow a traineeship in a technical team, and that of those two, one might get a job in the regular labour market, may not be considered enough of a “success” by the city districts - at least, not in proportion to their investment. Yet, within the present construction of NMCs, city districts are crucial partners. In a context where funding is directly linked to performance, which, in turn, depends on one’s perspective, the sustainability of NMCs is most at risk.

Of the social innovations that were presented here, the importance of the availability of municipal funds for the functioning and the sustainability of a particular innovation is thus most striking in the case of NMCs. However, since the municipality and city districts have been known to be dealing with budget restraints for some time now, “social innovators” are generally also constantly innovating themselves in that regard too, preparing themselves for the fact that there will be less municipal subsidies to resort to in the future. Hence, what is equally important for the sustainability of social innovations (and perhaps even more so than financial support) is that the municipality and city districts support change, first of all administratively, but also “culturally” - culturally in the sense that the local governments must play a leading role in steering and stimulating a change in the traditional patterns of behaviour of the organisations that are involved in the provision of welfare services.

Furthermore, in a city with such a large and divided public administration, the challenge is not only to bring about movement among third sector welfare organisations and “novice” actors on the scene, but also to change the attitude of its very own public sector, and then especially of its civil servants. At the moment, as a result of a long-standing history in which the public sector has been subdivided into many very specific clusters, civil servants too are still very much anchored in certain modes of thinking and/or doing. As the case of Neighbourhood Mothers Catering in particular also suggested, to stimulate sustainable social innovations, the public sector too needs to “go with the flow”, so to speak.

That’s the difficult thing – on the one hand people want to do all sorts of things, and on the other hand there comes a civil servant from the municipal Work and Income Service and says: “Yes but you are retracting yourself from the labour market, and you are not allowed to do that”. And if they get paid even just 100 euros, they immediately get penalised on their social assistance benefits, so people lose all their motivation. In that sense the Netherlands is a bit weird, the system... People are hindered from taking any initiative. Also in the neighbourhood – at the moment you hear a lot about how citizen initiatives are the solution for the lack of municipal funds. But then when citizens take initiatives, they have to make all sorts of budgets and those budgets have to be according to all sorts of rules. While, these are volunteers, they cannot make such complicated schemes...yet it all has to be professionally all of a sudden. And well...that’s where it clashes. Something goes wrong there.

(Assistant Professor, Dept of Political Science, University of Amsterdam)

Diffusion

To assess the potential for diffusion of social innovations, one must look at what kind of actors initiated a particular project, and, especially, what interests and rights of say they have. In terms of the kinds of actors involved in the social innovations presented here, within the Netherlands, if the willingness is there, all three could be diffused to another city. In fact, there are already concepts in other cities in the Netherlands that are similar to those of NMCs, BOOTs and Neighbourhood Mothers Catering. Outside of the Netherlands, though, some of these social innovations may be “easier” to introduce than others. NMCs are the most “typically Dutch”, considering the role that housing corporations play herein. Yet, similar constructions could be envisaged in contexts where local governments are in charge of both employment and housing policies, and are able to match different policy-fields at the local level. The BOOTs - for which the motivation and the driving force comes from more “common” educational facilities – are perhaps a type of innovation that is more likely to be diffused in an international context, and, as a matter of fact, already is:

NL

Amsterdam

We talk a lot with other educational facilities - like Regionaal OpleidingenCentrum (ROC, Regional Education Center) InHolland, the University of Applied Sciences in Nijmegen - to see how they could do that within their own context. And that gives us a lot of interesting information. So there are also other BOOT concepts in other parts of the Netherlands, who do it in their own way. That fits with their university; that fits with the needs of the residents that live in those neighbourhoods. And that is a movement that I think has been very good, to see how higher educational facilities can do more than just education in the traditional way. But how can you really use that exchange with the city? And that's a trend that you see in the whole of the Netherlands, even in Europe.

(Manager, BOOT)

What certainly helps the diffusion of social innovations that were discussed in this report is the existence of an extensive network of third sector (welfare) organisations and the presence of local governments that take on a leading and steering role. In the case of Amsterdam, the fact that there are already many local welfare provisions in place means that knowledge and personnel are often there, but it is a matter of coordinating efforts more efficiently. While local governments may not be able to provide financial support the way they used to in the past, it is all the more important that they remain active in bringing scattered and disjointed (welfare) organisations closer together. In Amsterdam, although the public administration surrounding welfare provisions is bulky and fragmented, the fact that it is a capital city that wants to “set an example” in the Netherlands also puts pressure on the administration to be innovative and dynamic. In other words, politically, a change of (organisational) culture must be supported, and encouraged.

Last but certainly not least, especially now that local governments are increasingly calling on citizens to be self-reliant and take on more individual responsibilities, it is critical that the inhabitants of a city support the social innovations. With regard hereto, in addition to having certain “institutionalised” structures, Amsterdam is also “blessed” with a particular social structure – its people are generally “social” and “entrepreneurial” at the same time. In recent years, the entrepreneurial attitude has perhaps become more pronounced, yet the people of Amsterdam (many

of whom are highly educated) also have a long-lasting history of “active citizenship” (think of the local squatting movement) and the desire of individual citizens to want to “mean” something for a fellow-citizen is still strong. In reality, despite the fact that Amsterdam is often externally perceived as arrogant and perhaps even uncooperative, it is, internally, still fairly solidarity-based and social. As the case of the Neighbourhood Mothers Catering showed, at a time in which local governments are retrenching, “social” and “active” citizens are vital for the emergence of sustainable social innovations. The challenge for local governments is to be (administratively) responsive and (politically) supportive of such societal dynamics.

Reference

Berenschot (2012, May 14th). *Berenschot verwacht massaontslag ambtenaren*. Accessed 09-12-2013. Available online at <http://www.berenschot.nl/actueel/nieuws/nieuws/nieuws-2012/berenschot-verwacht>