UNIVERSITEIT
AMSTERDAM

VU Research Portal

Senses of belonging and nonbelonging within citizens; summits in Amsterdam

Smets, Peer; Vlind, M.

Link to publication in VU Research Portal

Download date: 13. Sep. 2021

Chapter 4

Senses of Belonging and Nonbelonging within Citizens' Summits in Amsterdam

Marloes Vlind and Peer Smets

Abstract

Purpose – Based on a case study of citizens' summits in Amsterdam, this chapter examines competing aims bound up in attempts to create an in-between space where participants struggle to obtain a sense of belonging against the background of (non)diversity.

Methodology/Approach – A qualitative case study approach is used based on participant observation, informal talks with participants, and interviews with the summit organizers.

Findings – A citizens' summit can be seen as an in-between space where narratives of citizens should dominate instead of (local) governmental rhetoric. Citizens´ summits create a voice for citizens who are normally less heard in the public debate. To what extent this can be achieved depends on how a summit enables a diversity of participants to practice dialogue, create common ground and share ownership of ideas, problems and solutions. Our findings provide insight into contested belonging within the democratic system in the Netherlands and elsewhere.

Social Implications – We suggest that belonging, space and diversity affect social boundaries between those in the electoral democratic system and those participating in citizens' summits. Focussing on these can lead towards more inclusive democratic systems for all.

Originality/Value of the Paper – Citizens' summits are often seen as a democratic tool that supplements the electoral democracy.

This study looks at the interactions between participants, revealing much about the functioning of deliberative space in citizens' summits. We also focus on the issue of participant diversity and how senses of belonging include or exclude sections of society.

Introduction

Contemporary society is characterized by late modernity in which, Bauman (2000/2010) argues, solid institutions liquefy, making individuals solely responsible for their own actions. This has led to a declining sense of connectedness between citizens in combination with high levels of insecurity, which has resulted in such problems as hyperindividualism, economic crisis and rising inequality. Moreover, Western society has seen widespread populism and declining trust in politicians. Referenda about political and societal issues – such as Brexit – also challenge the legitimacy of the present democratic system in Western society (see e.g. Chwalisz, 2015; Van Reybrouck, 2014).

Citizens seem to feel less and less at home in Western society's current democratic context. In this respect, Van Reybrouck (2014) refers to the democratic fatigue syndrome caused by the electoral-representative democracy. Democratic fatigue is reflected in the less number of people who vote during elections; the increased volatility of voters, who easily change their political preference; the decreased membership in political parties and the growth of populism. Many citizens feel insufficiently represented by chosen members of parliament, who do not understand what these citizens consider important. Democracy is, currently, particularly dominated by competitive parties that discourage citizens from experiencing inclusion in the democratic domain. This connects to what Appadurai (2010) calls 'the procedural approach of democracy', which values a rational debate, the right to dissent, and the freedom of speech.

To understand frictions in the contemporary democratic system in Western society, Young's (2010) distinction between the ideals of aggregate and deliberative democracy is useful. The aggregative model, which is dominant within the contemporary electoral democratic system, reflects 'a competitive process in which political parties and candidates offer their

platforms and attempt to satisfy the largest number of people's preferences' (p. 19). In contrast, the deliberative model of democracy implies that attention will be paid to

> the place of reasoning, persuasion, and normative appeals in practical reason…Participants in the democratic process offer proposals for how best to solve problems or meet legitimate needs, and so on, and they present arguments through which they aim to persuade others to accept their proposals. Democratic process is primarily a discussion of problems, conflicts, and claims of need or interest. Through dialogue others test and challenge these proposals and arguments. (p. 22)

The deliberative democratic process includes transforming preferences, beliefs, interests and judgements among participants (Young, 2010). An example of a deliberative democratic initiative is a citizens' summit, where citizens share their stories in order to find solutions for societal issues. There are several forms of citizens' summits – one such is the G1000 (www.G1000.nu), which is widespread in the Netherlands (see e.g. Boogaard et al., 2016).

The assumption in the deliberative democratic model is that the best way of promoting social justice is through public policy that pays attention to sites and processes of deliberation among diverse and disagreeing elements of the polity. Here, it is important to find out how the direct involvement of citizens can be encouraged. This becomes even more important with growing diversity and increasing segregation between active higher-educated citizens and passive lower-educated and vulnerable people. Such demarcations often go together with ethnic and religious boundaries (Van Houwelingen, Boele, & Dekker, 2014). In this respect, Bovens (2006) describes diploma democracy, where highly educated professionals decide what will happen. These professionals more often vote and claim the right to be consulted for interactive policymaking. Less-educated citizens are, however, rarely represented in institutions and politics. In general, higher-educated citizens are involved in many different kinds of protest and have a say. This refers to a meritocracy, where output counts. The need for output implies a role for professionals, who aim at creating prudent policies and welfare for as many citizens as possible.

The deliberative model of democracy is not supposed to be restricted to output alone, but is also expected to include citizens´ viewpoints, which in turn creates the idea that their input matters. Reality provides us with

a different view. Lower-educated citizens cannot easily cope with the diploma democracy and, therefore, lack both confidence in politics and feelings of social inclusion; they feel excluded from meaningful societal and political participation (Bovens, 2006). Exclusion can be external or internal. External exclusion refers to design elements (e.g. location, timing, internet access) that prevent groups or individuals from participating in discussion and decision-making procedures. Once people have access to fora and processes of decision making, they may lack opportunities to influence this process and its outcome in an effective way; this is called internal exclusion (Young, 2010, p. 55).

Another distinction that helps us understand frictions in the democratic system is Habermas' (2012) division between communication patterns based on the different narratives practiced in system and life worlds. As we translate this to contemporary society, we can apply ideal typical characteristics to both worlds. The system encompasses large organizations with professional knowledge and instrumentality. Attention is paid to standard solutions, SMART (specific, measurable, acceptable, realistic, time-related) approaches, institutionalization and long-term perspectives. In contrast, the life world is characterized by local knowledge, a process approach, flexibility and a relatively short-term orientation. Although this theoretical dichotomy is more diffuse in everyday life, conceptualizing both worlds offers insights into their underlying logics. System values can colonize the life world, suggesting that principles of the system dominate narratives linked with everyday practices from the life world. Concerning conversations between people with different mindsets (system or life world), it is important to see who determines the agenda and where the talks take place.

In this vein, critical diversity studies in organizations offer useful perspectives. Ghorashi and Sabelis (2013) highlight the need for a reformulation of concepts of diversity in relation to everyday practices of cooperation, experiments and change within and outside the systems of organizations. They also discuss Foucault's notions of discursive power as an alternative for traditional vertical power relations. This does not refer to group dominance or resistance, but to routinization, formalization and everyday practices, which are omnipresent. Here, power implies a hierarchy in which the majority, who can easily apply and extend the organization's discourse, dominates and minorities, who are not able to adjust, are subordinate.

In the context of these power configurations, one of the main challenges of our time is how society deals with the increased diversity concerning issues such as class, age and ethnicity. Diversity asks for a kind

of representation of different voices in the democratic system. Increasing diversity as well as the complexity of it, which Vertovec (2007) describes as superdiversity, can lead to social mingling that combines the sharing of important issues. However, segregation strategies can hinder such social mixing (Bridge, Butler, & Le Galès, 2014, pp. 1134–1135; Smets & Salman, 2008, 2016). Duyvendak (2011) speaks in this respect about 'the stolen home' that results in people tending to reinforce a closed identity based on beliefs, norms and traditions. Others are not allowed to feel at home unless they conform to the majority. Thinking of diversity and inclusion means organizing spaces and practices that include diversity.

Citizens' summits have the potential to form inclusive and diverse spaces, but they experience enormous challenges in reaching that goal. The creation of common ground within groups with diverse compositions goes together with dialogue or deliberation, listening to each other and respecting different views. Despite individual differences, sharing personal narratives offers possibilities for creating common ground that may stimulate common action (e.g. Fishkin & Luskin, 2005; Fung & Wright, 2001; Levine, Fung, & Gastil, 2005). Sharing narratives can be seen as a process in which individual trajectories lead to a common story with overlapping identities, which transforms bridging capital into bonding capital. The importance of individual stories for the creation of new ties implies that common narratives about attained successes and surmounted obstacles are important for making these ties sustainable (Putnam & Feldstein, 2003, p. 284; Young, 2010). This potentially enables conservation of what is shared. It is the common ground that creates possibilities for bridging the simultaneous appearance of being similar and different. Here, we see that agreement develops without being or becoming similar, where people potentially feel at home, experiencing a sense of belonging. In the words of Oseen (1997, p. 55),

> we can assert…difference without inevitably and simultaneously reconstructing hierarchy, by theorizing difference as contiguity, or difference side by side, without sameness as the norm or the anchor by which difference is constituted.

We now move to a discussion of two citizens' summits that took place in Amsterdam, focussing on the question: 'in what ways did the citizens' summits in Amsterdam act as places of belonging'? To answer this question, we used the following methods: participative observations during two summits, joining the discussion tables, informal talks with participants during coffee breaks and lunch, and semistructured interviews with

initiators and organizers. We first theoretically explore the concepts of belonging, space and diversity. Next we discuss the citizens' summit in the De Pijp neighbourhood and the citywide citizens' summit in Amsterdam and its follow-up. Finally, we take a closer look at the role of belonging and diversity within the in-between space of the citizens' summit in Amsterdam.

The House of Democracy: Longing for Belonging

This section uses theory to link the ideas of space, place attachment, feeling at home and sense of belonging. We aim to provide a theoretical framework that offers insight into the manifestations of these phenomena in the context of the house of democracy and more specifically citizens' summits. Referring to Van Reybrouck (2014), the leaking roof of the house of democracy requires renovation so that aggregate and deliberative democratic principles may come together. Home can bring people together and exclude others:

> For many people, home is a place of belonging, intimacy, security, relationship and selfhood. Through their investments in their home people develop their sense of self and their identity. Others experience alienation, rejection, hostility, danger and fear 'at home'. Houses are the material structures that provide the scaffolding for emotional investments, social relations and meanings of everyday life. (Dowling & Mee, 2007, p. 161)

It is important to understand how home inspires and comforts us (Moore, 2000, p. 213). Today, home often has a spatial dimension, a territorial boundary, connected to a certain space that is not fixed (Blunt & Dowling, 2006; Van der Graaf & Duyvendak, 2009). Feelings of home are multiscalar and multidimensional (Blunt & Dowling, 2006). One feels at home where one feels secure and protected from harm in contrast to, for example, refugees who are driven from the place they called home (Blunt & Dowling, 2006).

Home-making practices take place against the backdrop of permanency and movement, staying and leaving, continuity – practices of everyday life – and discontinuity – changes that threaten everyday practices (Mallet, 2004, p. 79; Martucci, 2013). Both home and home-making can contribute to a sense of belonging, a concept of analysis increasingly used in social sciences (e.g. Duyvendak, 2011; Savage et al., 2005;

Smets & Watt, 2013; Watt & Smets, 2014). Savage, Bagnall, and Longhurst (2005) describe belonging as:

> "a socially constructed embedded process in which people reflexively judge the suitability of a given site as appropriate given their social trajectory and their position in other fields. (p. 12)

Such a socially constructed embedded process also implies 'personally significant and emotional connections between people and places' (Kusenbach & Paulsen, 2013, p. 15). Issues of belonging become manifest once there is an opportunity to meet 'the other' (Bottomley & Moore, 2007, p. 172; Smets & Hellinga, 2014; Smets & Sneep, 2017; Smets & Watt, 2013). For a livable and pleasant atmosphere in public spaces, it is important that users of different backgrounds all have a sense of belonging. Belonging is determined by factors such as the physical environment, place images and symbols, as well as feelings of community (Duyvendak, 2011). People employ strategies to obtain a sense of belonging linked to public space, and these strategies often go together with mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion.

To explore senses of belonging, Yuval-Davis (2006) suggests using a combination of place belongingness and the politics of belonging. Place belongingness refers to belonging as a personal intimate feeling of being at home in a specific place or space. That belonging becomes articulated and politicized when under threat. Yuval-Davis (2011, p. 4) developed the idea of politics of belonging, which she defined as 'specific political projects aimed at constructing belonging to specific collectivity/ies which are themselves being constructed in these projects in very specific ways and in very specific boundaries'. Finally, Yuval-Davis (2006) distinguishes three analytical levels of belonging: social location, identifications and emotional attachments and ethical and political issues. First, social location refers to people's place regarding divisions, such as class, age and ethnicity. Second, identifications – as reflected in stories that people tell themselves or others about who they are and who they are not – go hand in hand with emotional attachments to the stories told, which in turn impact a particular emotional charge in times of threat and insecurity. And third, ethical and political values are reflected in the ways social locations, identifications and attachments are valued, experienced and judged (Yuval-Davis, 2006).

According to Anthias (in this volume) belonging has to do with sharing or commonalities. Belonging to a certain category implies that others can be excluded. In other words, belonging discriminates; it includes but also excludes others (see Duyvendak, 2011, for a discussion on [feeling at] home).

Concepts of belonging and a sense of home are strongly associated with the notion of space (e.g. Duyvendak, 2011; Savage et al., 2005; Smets & Watt, 2013; Watt & Smets, 2014), for example, streets, squares, neighbourhoods, cities and nations. The former ones in particular provide the most immediate stages for our interactions, experiences and emotions and are thus very relevant for people's (contested) feelings of belonging and senses of home (McDowell, 1999). It is important to note that space can appear in different forms such as symbolic, imagined, transnational, or virtual (e.g. Blunt & Dowling, 2006; Migdal, 2004).

Spaces as described above refer to areas, which can be linked with movements from one place to another (Cresswell, 2004). Spaces can be manifest in different ways, but in the context of this chapter, we mean the concept of third space, which is a space of the so-called Third Sector (the voluntary or nonprofit sector), where 'individuals and groups daily create some of society's most important products. These products include expressions of caring and humanity, services to persons in need and calls to action aiming at righting a wide range of problems and injustices' (Van Til, 2008, xxviii). Activity in this type of space is generated in such a way that, as Van Til (2008) states, it:

1. is more directly concerned with achieving human ends than it is with securing institutional means;
2. is more directly concerned with what has been or can be personally experienced than with more remote interests;
3. expresses a concern with the welfare of self and others rather than exclusively with self or exclusively with self or exclusively with others;
4. addresses trends and elements that are not necessarily in the focus of attention of the mass media rather than issues exclusively drawn from events currently in the media's eye;
5. shows people exercising a critical or independent view of authority, rather than evincing an unquestioning acceptance or rejection of the claims of any particular authority. (p. 207)

Within the context of a third space, Ghorashi (2014) uses the concept of an in-between space, which is characterized as being a time out from regular everyday life and as offering a safe space where stories can be shared without predetermined prejudice. An in-between space, therefore, enables experimenting with viewpoints, perspectives and patterns (Ghorashi, 2014).

A citizens' summit, as a space of belonging, could be a good example of an in-between space where, according to the G1000 website (www.G1000.nu), the entire system – citizens, free thinkers, employers and governmental

employees – can come together. This implies that, when system and life world come together and when citizens from majority and minority groups are participating, all should be enabled to forget for a time their normal societal status, which is rooted in those divisions. For a productive in-between space, it is essential that a sense of belonging or of feeling at home is established, and in such a way that diversity can be included.

Although the desire for diversity is widespread, including among many initiators of citizens' summits, attempts to be diversity-inclusive have largely failed to create a space that is attractive to a diversity of people. In other words, a more or less homogenous composition of people tend to participate: mainly white, middle-aged and highly educated. Thus, voices from several kinds of citizens are missing. Initiatives to attract a diverse group of participants have been mainly restricted to the mobilization of participants. In Arnhem a citizens' summit named Working Conference Arnhem Agenda experimented with sortition by taking a larger sample from neighbourhoods with relatively low rates of attendance during elections. Despite the larger sample, those who reported as participants were still homogeneous, matching the above-mentioned profile. Next, wildcards were provided to citizens who were specifically invited. This led to a larger number of participants with a non-Western ethnic background, but they were still in minority. Obviously more work is needed in finding the best methods for recruiting a diverse mix of participants to citizens' summits.

Description of the Citizens' Summits in Amsterdam

In June 2015, an urban citizen's summit involving people from across the city took place in Amsterdam. An earlier neighbourhood summit held in the De Pijp neighbourhood was used as a trial run for the citywide summit. Both summits as well as the follow-up to the citywide summit will be discussed below. We will provide an extensive description of citizens' summits, enabling readers to take a look at the interpersonal and organizational interactions.

A Trial Run with a Neighbourhood Summit

On Saturday, 7 March 2015, a citizens' summit was held in the De Pijp neighbourhood. It was organized by citizens involved in budget monitoring[1] and the

---

[1]Budget monitoring is an instrument developed in Brazil with the aim of increasing citizens' participation in policymaking and controlling governmental budgets. Today it has spread across many countries around the globe (Mertens, 2011).

creation of neighbourhood budgets. To mobilize input from neighbourhood residents, a G250 (a meeting for which 250 people are expected to participate) was proposed, and a preparation team comprising residents, entrepreneurs and the local government was assembled. Interested neighbourhood residents could sign up for the summit. Among those registered, 250 participants were selected by sortition; in the end, however, the organizers decided to allow access to all registered people. To define the themes of interest for the summit, a questionnaire was distributed among the local population. It was completed by 1,047 residents and entrepreneurs, of which 80% were highly educated. This led to 26 dialogue themes for the summit (see the G250 Buurttop de Pijp website, www.g250buurttopdepijp.nl).

The summit was held in the brewery museum Heineken Experience, a central location in the diverse neighbourhood and visited mainly by white residents. At the entrance, participants received two dialogue topics of their choice. After a short plenary introduction, the dialogues began at 26 tables spread throughout two rooms. During the first round, participants expressed their wishes related to the theme of their choice. Ultimately, each group was tasked with formulating three common wishes. For example, at the table where talks focussed on diversity, participants discussed the decline in the number of social housing units and the related gentrification process. During the conversation, the formulation of the three wishes was replaced by a listing of complaints about the local government. At that point, the chairperson of the local district, who was taking part in this group, withdrew from the talks, providing only practical information and figures. After the first round, the group's three wishes were noted on a leaflet that remained at the table: (1) preserve diversity in the neighbourhood by preserving sufficient social housing units; (2) social cohesion and (3) neighbourhood-oriented enterprises.

For the second round of dialogue, participants moved to the table of their second theme choice, hence the composition of participants at each table was different. Each group was asked to use the formulated wishes left by the previous group as inspiration for developing two concrete ideas that could be implemented. Participants resisted: 'These [ideas] are not our wishes; they belong to the former group'; 'I do not understand what they mean with these wishes.' One participant remarked that the ideas were formulated passively: 'We cannot take up this issue. This is up to the municipality'. Another participant pushed her chair back and said that this made no sense, because citizens do not have a say in municipal affairs. Conversations took place in subgroups at the tables and focussed on criticizing the municipality of Amsterdam. Finally, participants voted on the ideas discussed at the 26 tables.

Citizens' Summit Amsterdam

For participation in the citizens' summit Amsterdam, city residents could subscribe online. To mobilize a diverse public, the organizers deployed well-known ambassadors with diverse backgrounds to encourage people from their networks to participate in the summit. Background information about the ambassadors was prominently published on the citizens' summit Amsterdam website.

Dialogue topics were predetermined before the summit began. Just as in the neighbourhood summit, a questionnaire was used, but this time it was distributed to registered participants only. Based on this input the organizers selected 35 topics. At the summit, participants chose a topic of interest, which would be explored throughout the day. Seated at each table were a chair and a secretary with an iPad. Both had received training and had been tasked with collecting background information about the topic, enabling them to present facts and figures if needed. They also looked into organizations that could be important for a follow-up.

At 9:30 a.m. on Saturday, June 6, the citizens' summit commenced in the Zuiderkerk, a former church in downtown Amsterdam. Once participants entered the premises, they received a sticker with their name and registered for their topic of interest. Volunteers helped with registration and guided participants to their tables. Spread across two floors (and a balcony) were 35 round tables that could seat 10 participants each. One of the organizers opened the summit and presented the five principles of the citizens' summit: (1) independent summit; (2) for and by citizens; (3) from the entire city; (4) we are all Amsterdammers (inhabitants of Amsterdam) and (5) no platform for interest groups. He emphasized that it was important to listen, especially for those who are used to talking a lot. Other instructions included:

> Speak for yourself and not as a representative of a group. If you are a government employee, get rid of your official function and behave as a human being. In between the sessions, participants may decide to move to another table where a different topic will be discussed.

The first session – from 11:00 to 12:30 – provided an orientation on the topic, and individual experiences with the topic were exchanged. Remarkably, not all tables had a sufficient number of participants, if any. Consequently, some tables merged. At the different tables participants talked about the topic, but rational/intellectual debates dominated among the

mostly 'white' participants. Individual experiences were rarely shared; instead discussions focussed on definitions and formulations of words and sentences. This session ended with each table formulating a challenging question for which the second session would try to find a solution.

During lunch, the Moroccan-Dutch chair of the Amsterdam New West district said in a face-to-face conversation: 'Where are my people here'? The proportion of Moroccan-Dutch people – and other Muslim migrants – participating in the summit did not match their percentage in the Amsterdam population as a whole. He emphasized that the summit's location was not accessible for the Muslim community. This is a typical example of external exclusion.

The second session began after lunch, lasting from 13:30 to 15:00. In this session. the participants were expected to develop ideas and solutions relating to the question formulated during the first session. At the table discussing citizen participation, however, this did not go smoothly. One participant who had wanted to go home after lunch decided to rejoin the table, but he wanted to know what this session could bring him. Meanwhile, a Surinamese-Dutch woman from the Amsterdam Southeast district joined the group as a new participant and tried to change the topic. She told the group that she was a social entrepreneur who recycles clothing and faces problems with the high rent of business premises. Today, she wanted to get information about how to cope with this problem. Instead of addressing the woman's concerns, the chair tried to keep the group on task by asking participants to write down their ideas related to the question developed during the first session. All started writing except the participant who had wanted to leave earlier. He did not pick up a pen, and he said he had no ideas. The chair reacted: 'Of course, you have ideas'! The Surinamese-Dutch participant also said she had no ideas, and she did not participate in anymore conversations during the session. Especially the woman's action indicated internal exclusion. Other participants at that table brought forward ideas, such as 'map social capital; budget policy is needed for participation; direct democracy; municipalities should have a facilitating role'. Participants were asked to review the ideas and select the five most promising ones. One participant said that an administrator would be needed for a social portal where people could meet. The chair said, 'No, that is exactly what we want to get rid of'. Another participant emphasized: 'A blueprint will be required for a neighbourhood agenda that can be applied in all urban districts'.

After a plenary energizer with African music and a dancing moderator on the balcony, the third session started at 15:30 and lasted until 16:30. During this last session, ideas and related solutions were further explored.

The Surinamese-Dutch participant did not come back, but the man who had wanted to leave before had remained. The chair introduced the purpose of this session, highlighting that the focus was now on 'who, what, where, with whom and why'. The energy level was low; participants were distracted from the group and looked around the room or at their mobile phones. The chair read from the script: 'Give a description of the idea in a few sentences'. Silence led to stillness. Participants thought deeply about a right formulation. One of them emphasized that there was already a neighbourhood agenda in Amsterdam East, which could also be used elsewhere. Another participant remarked that responsibilities could not be left to citizens because 'that would lead to a mess'. The participant who had wanted to leave replied: 'Why is there an official from the Amsterdam North district at this table who is not taking part in the conversations? We need you'! There was no reaction. The chair remarked that everyone was tired, but they needed to move on: 'What should be the title of the press report for this initiative'? and then 'But we can just skip this'. Next point: 'How can we measure the success'? Finally, the group was asked to develop a slogan. The chair said: 'My battery is dead…It takes too much time'. The chair wrote down a sentence and asked the group members to edit it. The final sentences were

> an open platform for citizen participation. Citizen participation is sharing in doing and decision-making with others about, for instance, the neighbourhood agenda and neighbourhood budget. We want a neighbourhood platform where citizens, government, institutions, and entrepreneurs can share ideas and knowledge about the social domain.

Eventually, the group simply gave up on developing a slogan.

After the last session, each group's ideas were projected on a large screen. Remarkably, many ideas were very abstract and lacked a person who takes the lead. Examples include 'more green to push back pollution' and 'give Amsterdam back to its residents one day a year'.

The number of participants decreased from 182 in the morning to 136 by the end of the afternoon.[2] At the end, drinks were offered and participants were told that it would be up to them to get their ideas implemented but that the summit organizers could facilitate their work by, for example,

---

[2]Counts were made by Benjamin Jansen, a bachelor's student of sociology at Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam.

arranging meetings with government employees. Everybody was invited to the summit's follow-up meeting in three months.

The Follow Up

The results of Amsterdam's citywide citizens' summit were published online so that participants as well as nonparticipants could commit themselves to one of the 56 ideas developed during the summit. To stimulate the local government and citizens in implementing ideas, the summit initiators presented the results to the board of each urban district in Amsterdam.

On Saturday, September 26, a follow-up meeting was held in de Meevaart, a neighbourhood centre in Amsterdam East. The meeting was attended by 40 people, many of whom had participated in the summit: government officials, members of the party promoting a basic income for all, summit organizers and researchers. During this gathering the preliminary state of affairs and the citizens' summit results were highlighted. Initiatives with their roots in the citizens' summit were presented, along with information about what people, means and knowledge would be required for implementation.

After the introduction, a Surinamese-Dutch woman remarked: 'I am the only 'black' here. This is really a serious point of attention'! The reply was that this would be dealt with later on, which did not happen. One of the initiators reported his experiences in contacts with the municipality and the urban districts. Two aldermen promised to tell colleagues about the summit. After the presentation of ideas – such as stimulating representative media coverage in Amsterdam in relation to social equality, providing support for starting entrepreneurs, transforming privatized services into public services, minimizing social cleavages, stimulating diversity and encounters, dealing with black and white schools, administrative renewal – initiators of those ideas could post background information and the requirements for development and implementation (e.g. people, means, experiences, ideas). The presentations showed that many projects had not been implemented and that cooperation was lacking.

The lack of cooperation may be due to the low amount of participation in the implementation of ideas. Nevertheless, 40 people attended the follow-up, but the follow-up meeting lacked concrete cohesion and emerging actions. In contrast, one participant reported that more people visited the follow-up meeting for the De Pijp summit. It may be that a neighbourhood-focussed summit leads to more concrete topics compared

to an urban-oriented citizens' summit; this agrees with what Smets and Vlind (2017a) witnessed in Kruiskamp, a neighbourhood in the Dutch city of Amersfoort.

Home and Belonging: A Matter of Diversity

Attracting citizens with different backgrounds such as age, class and ethnicity to citizens' summits cannot be easily realized. Earlier research in the Netherlands (e.g. Michels & Binnema, 2015, 2016; Smets & Vlind, 2017a, 2017b) shows that mainly white higher-educated citizens of middle age and older participate in citizens' summits. Smets and Vlind (2017a, 2017b) report an apparently open attitude towards everybody, but in reality, implicit values tend to lead to the exclusion of outsiders. For individuals to form subgroups – sitting at tables, sharing experiences and narratives with unknown people – requires communicative and language skills but also the courage to be vulnerable. A safe environment is required, but that does not come naturally at all; for example, some people feel insecure about mastering the Dutch language and habits (ethnic obstacle), others about the level of discussion (intellectual obstacle) and yet others about the alcohol served after the summit (religious obstacle). Contemporary social and political environments emphasize polarization. Young (2010) emphasizes the need for voices of the excluded:

> in a formally democratic society where there are structural social and economic injustices, many of those who suffer such injustices are likely to be excluded, silenced, or marginalized in the formal democratic political process as well. (p. 165)

For a sustainable democratic legitimacy based on a shared ownership of ideas that is not restricted to a specific homogeneous group—the happy few—but which also appeals to others outside this group, a diversity of participants is important. To achieve diversity in citizens' summits, organizers have experimented with working methods, settings and ways of inviting participants or of using sortition. In Amsterdam, all citizens could register for the summit; this differs from G1000s, where sortition is used to select participants. To bring the summit within reach of all Amsterdam citizens, ambassadors – mostly well-known, socially active key figures – were deployed to mobilize people from their own networks.

Despite these initiatives the citizens' summit in Amsterdam, just as G1000s elsewhere in the Netherlands, still attracted mainly white,

higher-educated, middle-aged participants. Surprisingly, the summit's ambassadors did not have an active role in the summit's organizational decisions. Indeed, the composition of the summit organization itself had a rather homogeneous character. Both our findings and those from Ghorashi and Sabelis's (2013) study of organizations, raise questions about whether a homogeneous organization is able to incorporate notions of diversity in its ways of working that can result in democratic legitimacy and create creativity and innovation (see also Tremblay & Pilati, 2013). If, at the organization's core, work is insufficiently backed up by diversity, individuals may lack the creativity and innovation needed to mobilize different social, ethnic and age groups.

In practice, there are examples of decisions that have harmed the mobilization of diverse participants, which could possibly have been dealt with if diversity had been part of the organizational team. The location of the neighbourhood summit in De Pijp, the Heineken Experience brewery museum, is a symbol for the use of alcohol, which may discourage the participation of Muslims as well as others who avoid alcohol for religious or nonreligious reasons'. And the former church where the citizens' summit Amsterdam was held could be a religious obstacle. These examples are in line with the one mentioned by Vlind and Smets (2015) about the citizens' summit in the city of Uden, held in 2014, which took place on the same day as the Islamic feast of sacrifice. All of these decisions may have been due to the lack of diversity within summit organizations, which possibly goes together with a biased perspective in organizational decision-making processes determined by mainly white middle-aged and higher-educated organizers.

Apart from the issue of diversity, it is important to pay attention to what else helps and hinders the establishment of a shared home in a citizens' summit. This is the focus of the next section.

Citizens' Summits as a Place for System and/or Life World Principles?

The 'house of democracy' implies that all citizens and government officials feel like they belong to this home. However, the differences between system and life world may obstruct a shared sense of feeling at home. Below we will show how these principles work. First, the difference between system and life world will be made clear by focussing on citizens' summits as part of the democratic house. However, keep in mind that the duality of system and life world is not as clear cut as the previous sentence suggests. People may shift from system to life world principles and back

again, depending on the context they operate in and what they assume to be more effective.

Principles from the system generally include bureaucratic and technocratic blueprint characteristics, including efficiency, which are common among public institutions. This could be seen as institutional principles that influence and normalize ways of thinking and behaviour, both inside and outside the institutional world. Principles of bureaucratic solidarity, intellectual arguments and measurable aims are often widespread in the life world, which conforms with Habermas's (2012) idea that values from the system colonize the life world. While they may notice that these values do not suffice (anymore), organizers of a citizens' summit – being part of contemporary society – tend to go for efficiency and rationality. It is therefore easy for them to resort to what we call 'system talk', a concept that describes language based on the norms and values of the system. During the dialogue sessions at the citizens' summits in Amsterdam, finding the right formulations and definitions seemed to dominate, which resembles Appadurai's (2010) aforementioned 'procedural approach of democracy'. However, Appadurai emphasizes that formal inclusion is not enough; a deeper notion of democracy is needed, one that includes cultural differences, despite the discomfort they may raise. Here Young's concept of internal exclusion is highly relevant; it shows that, even if people have access to a summit with processes of decision-making, they may still lack the opportunity to influence the thinking of others in an efficient way.

In line with system principles, the organizers of the citizens' summit in Amsterdam invested a lot of energy in encouraging the local government to support ideas formulated at the summit. The local urban districts were asked whether presentations could be held to create a kind of goodwill between them and the citizens. However, this focus on the local governments – without concrete promises from them – made it difficult to emphasize the role of the citizens, who tried to organize themselves post-summit. Many general ideas were developed during the summit, but despite the relatively large number of people at the follow-up gathering, few concrete ideas were discussed. Following the lessons of the G1000 Kruiskamp neighbourhood summit, organizers of the citywide summit in Amsterdam gave more emphasis to the follow-up meeting, with the expectation that it would facilitate participants in coming up with ideas and implementing them, alone or in co-creation with other partners. Here, the politics of belonging – including the search for incorporation into the system to achieve change – are central. With this, attention must be given to the rational determined content and process of the day. People create meaning for the future, which has the potential to surpass the present

status quo. In all phases of the Amsterdam summit – preparation, implementation and follow-up – citywide political processes were manifest. As we have shown, a place of belonging without politics does not exist. Politics are everywhere (Yuval-Davis, 2006).

At the citizens' summit in Amsterdam, a tendency towards efficiency was reflected in the way conversation topics were fixed before the summit took place, which implies that one opportunity to create common ground, sharing stories that lead to some commonality, was not used during the summit. The choice for a preset agenda has three consequences. First, people tend to commit themselves primarily to a topic and not to the group process that takes place during the summit. Second, the process of sharing experiences, developing a shared topic, and creating common ground does not occur or only to a limited extent. Although the use of preset questions may look efficient, it denies the importance of the group process during a summit. Third, predefined detailed topics for a summit agenda can encourage participants who have a hidden agenda. An example from the summit in Amsterdam is a participating entrepreneur who had found a lucrative solution for solving the problem of bicycle parking in Amsterdam: floating bicycle sheds. In a compilation of the summit by the local television station AT5, this entrepreneur was able to show his product, including the sales price. Here, commercial interests can harm the process of creating common ground, which hinders the home-making process in the in-between space.

Another obstacle for creating common ground during the summit lay in the fact that participants were asked to do such things as define a common question, develop a title for a press report, and create a slogan, all of which trigger a rational approach. Here, we saw some participants – generally those with an intellectual mindset – develop a closed attitude, while others, who were either not able or not willing to join, withdrew. In contrast, personal stories and experiences can make it possible to create common ground and shared ownership of problems and possible solutions.

As a counterbalance to system principles, life world principles are based on everyday life experiences, which are reflected in local knowledge derived from those experiences and are characterized by flexibility and a short-term orientation. Our findings show that the quality of deliberative talks among the citizens' summits studied was higher once emphasis was placed on sharing experiences. Our research on the G1000 Kruiskamp (Smets & Vlind, 2017a; Vlind & Smets, 2016) shows that an approach involving questions such as 'What is your dream for the neighbourhood'? and 'What is needed to accomplish that dream'? stimulates the sharing of personal stories, whereby participants recognize (partial) shared

experiences, feelings and values that resonate with life world principles. During a summit, group compositions should change in order to maintain a group-centered attitude and avoid the creation of vertical relations. Horizontal relations should be maintained, thereby encouraging participants to approach the other, not from the perspective of the self, but from the perspective of the other. Here alterity creates opportunities to approach the other without prejudice, which in turn enables the creation of a safe space where experiences can be shared and conditions can be met to include unusual voices that are often excluded from formal deliberations in public spaces (Ghorashi, 2014, 2015).

Our findings, detailed above, on how a citizens' summit emerges as a place of belonging can inform the design and organization of future citizens' summits. In summary, they are as follows: heterogeneity is needed within the organization preparing the summit; conversation themes should not be predetermined but should instead develop as part of the group process; during the summit, public-sector participation only bears fruit if principles of the life world – such as storytelling and a process approach – are taken seriously and finally, participants should be facilitated in a follow-up trajectory. Although we have studied citizens' summits only, we think these findings will contribute to what Van Reybrouck calls stopping the leaking roof of the house of democracy.

Conclusions

The search for improving the present democratic system in the Netherlands has led to potential deliberative solutions such as those being practiced at citizens' summits. The citizens' summits in Amsterdam show that different worlds – system and life world – meet during a summit. The aim is to bring both worlds together, but this is only feasible when the conversation takes place in such a way that it fits the everyday practices of the life world. Therefore, government employees and politicians have to refrain from system talk. The life world offers possibilities for coming together in an in-between space – a temporary home where, in Young's (2000) words, the 'silent voices' of the marginalized can be heard. This connects to Appadurai's (2010) notion that a procedural approach to democracy, on its own, no longer suffices within the context of contemporary societal (super)diversity. Instead home-making practices based on life world experiences are necessary for establishing interpersonal relations in such a way that sharing narratives creates mutual connections. The practices create a basis for common ground and shared ownership of

problems and solutions, which in turn leads to a sense of belonging. Life world principles will be more able to stimulate a home-making process if they are not overruled by system talk, which is bureaucratic, technocratic and focussed on efficiency.

Diversity at citizens' summits does not necessarily imply a representative sample of the population but rather a bringing together of different voices. However, creating an in-between space where the diversity of voices actually come together and feels at home is a challenge that has not yet been overcome. The citizens' summits we studied show that it is difficult to understand the practice of hidden codes that include some and exclude others. It is possible that these codes were typically for intellectual/rational conversations among white, higher-educated participants during the summits in Amsterdam. Studies on intersectionality show that class, ethnic and religious backgrounds can strengthen hidden codes. To obtain insight into these codes, the focus needs to be placed on formalization of routine daily practices present in the life world.

Working from the viewpoint of diversity, this chapter has discussed different exclusion mechanisms such as the selection of participants, the composition of people in the organization and the dominance of an intellectual/rational way of debating. Citizens' summits that provide the conditions for a third space encourage inclusiveness, which in turn is needed to form an actual answer to the democratic fatigue syndrome of the electoral system. Challenges for creating such in-between spaces are found in enabling the life world and system to come together – and life world principles to dominate – and in neutralizing hidden transcripts of internal and external exclusion where citizens with diverse backgrounds feel at home. The increasing discussion about diversity within citizens' summits – which is not limited to the Netherlands – reflects the need for establishing democratic values in such a way that citizens have a sense of belonging to the home of the democratic system.

References

Appadurai, A. (2010). Fear of small numbers: An essay on the geography of anger. In G. Bridge & S. Watson (Eds.), *The Blackwell City Reader* (pp. 138–143). Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.

Bauman, Z. (2010). *Liquid modernity*. Cambridge: Polity (Original work published in 2000).

Blunt, A., & Dowling, R. (2006). *Home*. London: Routledge.

Boogaard, G., Michels, A., Cohen, J., Smets, P., Binnema, H., & Vlind, M. (2016). *G1000: Ervaringen met burgertoppen*. Den Haag, The Netherlands: Boom bestuurskunde.

Bottomley, A., & Moore, N. (2007). From walls to membranes: Fortress polis and the governance of urban public space in 21st century Britain. *Law Critique*, 18, 171–206.

Bovens, M. A. P. (2006). De diplomademocratie: Over de spanning tussen merito-cratie en democratie. *Beleid en Maatschappij*, *33*(40), 205–218.

Bridge, G., Butler, T., & Le Galès, P. (2014). Power relations and social mix in metropolitan neighbourhoods in North America and Europe: Moving beyond gentrification? *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, *38*(4), 1133–1141.

Chwalisz, C. (2015). *The populist signal: Why politics and democracy need to change*. London: Rowman & Littlefield International.

Cresswell, T. (2004). *Place: A short introduction*. Malden: Blackwell.

Dowling, R., & Mee, K. (2007). Home and home making in contemporary Australia. *Housing Theory and Society*, *24*(3), 161–165.

Duyvendak, J. W. (2011). *The politics of home: Belonging and nostalgia in Western Europe and the United States*. London: Palgrave MacMillan.

Fishkin, S., & Luskin, R. C. (2005). Experimenting with a democratic ideal: Deliberative polling and public opinion. *Acta Politica*, *40*, 284–298.

Fung, A., & Wright, E. (2001). Deepening democracy: Innovations in empowered participatory governance. *Politics and Society*, *29*(1), 4–41.

Ghorashi, H. (2014). Routed connections in late modern times. In U. M. Vieten (Ed.), *Revisiting I.M. Young on democracy, inclusion and normalization* (pp. 49–67). Houndmills: Palgrave Pilot.

Ghorashi, H. (2015). Levensverhalen doorbreken het wij-zij denken. *Tijdschrift voor biografie*, *4*(2), 51–58.

Ghorashi, H., & Sabelis, I. (2013). Juggling difference and sameness: Rethinking strategies for diversity in organizations. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, *29*, 78–86.

Habermas, J. (2012). Civil society, public opinion, and communicative power. In S. A. Appelrouth & L. D. Edles (Eds.), *Classical and contemporary sociological theory* (pp. 696–707). Los Angeles, CA: Sage. (Original work published in 1996).

Kusenbach, M., & Paulsen, K. E. (2013). *Home: International perspectives on culture, identity, and belonging*. Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Peter Lang.

Levine, P., Fung, A., & Gastil, J. (2005). Future directions for public deliberation. *Journal of Public Deliberation*, *1*(1), article 3.

Mallet, S. (2004). Understanding home: A critical review of the literature. *The Sociological Review*, *52*(1), 62–89.

Martucci, S. (2013). Rethink your public space: Community events in gentrified Brooklyn. *The Open Urban Studies Journal*, *6*(Suppl 1: M4), 50–56.

McDowell, L. (1999). *Gender, identity and place: Understanding feminist geographies*. Cambridge & Oxford: Polity & Blackwell.

Mertens, H. (2011). Budgetmonitoring naar Nederland: Omgekeerde ontwikkelingssamenwerking. *MO/Samenlevingsopbouw*, *30*(230), 52–55.

Michels, A., & Binnema, H. (2015). *De G1000en in Amersfoort, Uden en Kruiskamp en de realisatie van democratische waarden* (G1000 Working Paper). Den Haag, The Netherlands: Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken.

Michels, A., & Binnema, H. (2016). Hoe divers, invloedrijk en deliberatief is een G1000? Het ontwerp van een burgertop en de verwezenlijking van democratische waarden. *Bestuurswetenschappen*, *70*(1), 17–36.

Migdal, J. S. (2004). Mental maps and virtual checkpoints: Struggles to construct and maintain state and social boundaries. In J. S. Migdal (Ed.), *Boundaries and belonging: States and societies in the struggle to shape identities and local practices* (pp. 3–26). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Moore, J. (2000). Placing home in context. *Journal of Environment Psychology*, *20*, 207–217.

Oseen, C. (1997). The sexually specific subject and the dilemma of difference: Rethinking the different in the construction of the nonhierarchical workplace. In P. Prasad, A. J. Mills, M. Elmes, & A. Prasad (Eds.), *Managing the organizational melting pot: Dilemmas of workplace diversity* (pp. 54–80). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Putnam, R. D., & Feldstein, M. F. (2003). *Better together: Restoring the American community*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.

Savage, M., Bagnall, G., & Longhurst, B. (2005). *Globalization and belonging*. London: Sage.

Smets, P., & Hellinga, A. (2014). Belonging and microsettings in a Rotterdam housing complex. In P. Watt & P. Smets (Eds.), *Mobilities and neighbourhood belonging in cities and* suburbs (pp. 80–99). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Smets, P., & Salman, T. (2008). Countering urban segregation: Theoretical and policy innovations from around the globe. *Urban Studies*, *45*(7), 1307–1332.

Smets, P., & Salman, T. (2016). The multi-layered-ness of urban segregation: On the simultaneous inclusion and exclusion in Latin American cities. *Habitat International*, *54*(1), 80–87.

Smets, P., & Sneep, K. (2017). Tenure mix: Apart or together? Home-making practices and belonging in a Dutch street. *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment*, *32*(1), 91–106.

Smets, P., & Vlind, M. (2017a). Een G1000 gun je iedereen: Participatiebevordering in Kruiskamp, Amersfoort. *Mens en Maatschappij*, *92*(1), 93–118.

Smets, P., & Vlind, M. (2017b). Deliberatieve democratie: Ervaringen met diversiteit in burgertop Amsterdam. *Beleid en Maatschappij*, *44*(2), 122–137.

Smets, P., & Watt, P. (2013). Exclusion and belonging in urban public and quasi-public space. *The Open Urban Studies Journal*, *6*, 27–29.

Tremblay, D. G., & Pilati, T. (2013). Social innovation through arts and creativity. In F. Moulaert, D. MacCallum, A. Mehmood, & A. Hamdouch (Eds.), *The international handbook on social innovation* (pp. 67–79). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Van der Graaf, P., & Duyvendak, J. W. (2009). *Thuisvoelen in de buurt: Opgave voor stedelijke vernieuwing: Een vergelijkend onderzoek naar de buurthechting van bewoners in Nederland en Engeland*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Van Houwelingen, P., Boele, A., & Dekker, P. (2014). *Burgermacht op eigen kracht? Een brede verkenning van ontwikkelingen in burgerparticipatie*. Den Haag, The Netherlands: SCP.

Van Reybrouck, D. (2014). *Tegen verkiezingen*, The Netherlands. Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij.

Van Til, J. (2008). *Growing civil society: From nonprofit sector to third space*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Vertovec, S. (2007). Superdiversity and its implications. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *30*(6), 1024–1054.

Vlind, M., & Smets, P. (2015). Diversiteit als uitdaging voor de nieuwe democratie: Een kijk op de Burgertop Amsterdam met uitstapjes naar andere burgertoppen. G1000 working paper. Retrieved from http://g1000.nu/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Diversiteit-als-uitdaging-voor-nieuwe-democratie-VlindSmets.pdf

Vlind, M., & Smets, P. (2016). De rol van dialoog: G1000 Kruiskamp in microperspectief. In G. Boogaard, A. Michels, J. Cohen, P. Smets, H. Binnema, & M. Vlind (Eds.), *G1000: Ervaringen met burgertoppen* (pp. 73–87). Den Haag, The Netherlands: Boom bestuurskunde.

Watt, P., & Smets, P. (2014). *Mobility and neighbourhood belonging in city and suburb*. Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan.

Young, I. M. (2010). *Inclusion and democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Yuval-Davis, N. (2006). Belonging and the politics of belonging. *Patterns of Prejudice*, *40*(3), 197–214.

Yuval-Davis, N. (2011). *Power, intersectionality and the politics of belonging* (FEIA Working Paper no. 75). Aalborg, Denmark: Aalborg University.