Noord's Participatiesamenleving
Towards a spatial response to government participation

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Colophon

Preface

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As a little girl, I used to play outside: climbing trees, hiding under bushes, swimming in small lakes and talking to my neighbors. All this must have sparked my interest in the environment, the multifunctionality of spaces around us and the many different kinds of people using the same land in varying ways. Coming from an opinionated family, my fascination for politics also started at quite a young age.

When I discovered Urbanism in my first year of TU Delft Architecture, I quickly developed a profound enthusiasm for the field. The depth I was missing in my architecture projects I found working on the social problems urbanism aims to tackle, as well as in the context of governance which is featured so prominently in many planners' work.

So getting the opportunity to work on my own fascinations through my graduation project in Urbanism soon delivered a basis for a project which fits me like a glove: combining urbanism, governance, politics and my home town Amsterdam.

This report is one of the products made for the Graduation Lab of Urbanism at the TU Delft. In order to organize and communicate the student's own project, the thesis plan provides a framework for the graduation project, which will unfold throughout the upcoming year.

The report could not have been finished without the input by many of the TU Delft tutors, especially dr. Roberto Rocco, dr. ir. Maurice Harteveld and dr. Arie Romein. My sincere gratitude goes out to them.

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1.1 - Problem Analysis

1.1.1 - Core problem

Balkenende, 2005

Kok, 1991

Rutte, 2013

The King, 2013
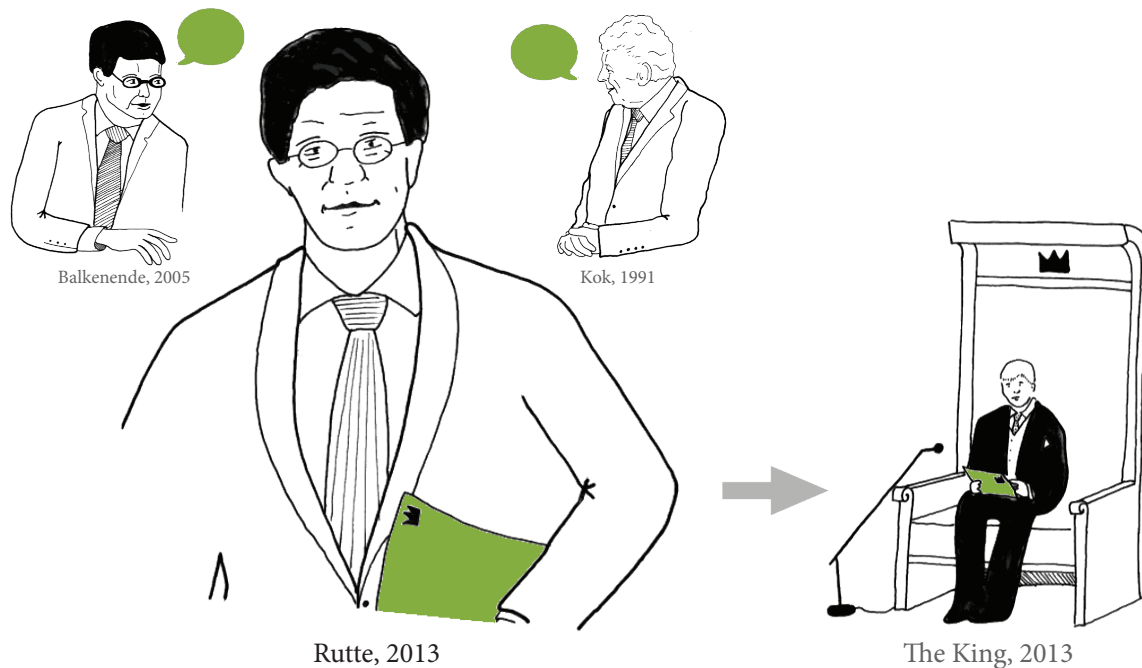
In 2013, the Dutch government led by (Liberal) Prime Minister Rutte announced they would start actively supporting a new trend in society: a heightened level of citizen participation in what used to be considered governmental tasks. In the yearly Troonrede speech, this phenomenon was labeled the *participatiesamenleving*. According to this speech, Dutch people are "clearly more empowered and independent than before", and seen as the governmental deficit needs to be reduced, this provides a framework to shift from a welfare state towards a participatiesamenleving. Thus: "everybody who is capable to do so, is asked to take responsibility for their own life and environment" (Rijksoverheid, 2013; DaP, n.d.).

Of course, the notion of participatiesamenleving was not a new one. In the Netherlands, the term was coined before on two separate occasions. Wim Kok (1991, cited in Plasterk, 2013), at that time prospective (Labour) Prime Minister, described the zeitgeist in 1991:

> "We are in a phase of transition; from a welfare state towards an active one, towards a participatiesamenleving. Do not overshoot towards a society in which people are left to themselves, where a lower class is bred. But also move away from a bureaucratic welfare state (…). A third road is needed; emancipatory solidarity."

Another Dutch politician to speak of the participatiesamenleving was (Christian Democratic) Prime Minister Balkenende. He stated in 2005 (cited in Kalshoven, 2005):

> "We need to develop once again into a participatiemaatschappij (…) as we were before the seventies. The 21st century version will be filled with independent, emancipated people (…). Knowledge gets more important, hierarchy and centralism belong to the past (…). People are first and foremost responsible for their own future."
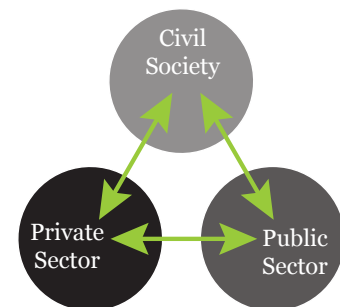
The major difference this time – compared to previous announcements of the participatiesamenleving – is the intention and the enforcement. Whereas Kok only meant to observe a trend, Rutte pursues a societal overhaul. Where Balkenende described

and desired the concept without ever achieving lasting policy, the current government immediately started building on the participatiesamenleving. This time around, the claim of a participatiesamenleving seems to be for real, and if it is not, the government will make sure it becomes reality.

Also, while the previous accounts were mostly based on an ideological concept, current developments are supposedly necessary to diminish government deficit (Van Twist c.s., 2014, p.8). As such, related policies are easily defined and justified for the sake of cutting costs. Still, few sectors have experienced a change in policy as of yet – health care being the major one (Jager-Vreugdenhil, 2012, p.13).

Other important overhauls related to the participatiesamenleving concept include the decentralisation of decision making and responsibility. This aspect has a considerable impact on many levels, from the province and municipality to the citizens and their neighbourhood safety (Wiebusch and Moulijn, 2013, p.9).

Urban planning and design is one of the disciplines which now needs to redefine the role of governance in practice (Rocco, 2013, p.2). The previous assumptions that money will always be readily available – usually from the government – and that the distribution of responsibilities remains static and similar throughout every design and production process are outdated and unrealistic for the years to come (Merrifield, 2014, p.16-18).

Because there have been no clear spatial policies defined as of yet, it is worthwhile to consider what the possible implications for our spatial environment could be, stemming from the participatiesamenleving concept. Which are the relevant actors, and which means and responsibilities will they have to deal with? And, when a policy is finally defined, what needs to be avoided at all costs? These are relevant questions for the years to come, and it seems reckless to not consider them from a spatial perspective (Hajer and Halsema, 1997, p.20; Ovink and Wierenga, 2009).

1.1.2 - Trends

Several ongoing trends have contributed to the eventual constitution of the participatiesamenleving concept.
Partially, it was inspired by the British Big Society, which is elaborated in Appendix I. It is
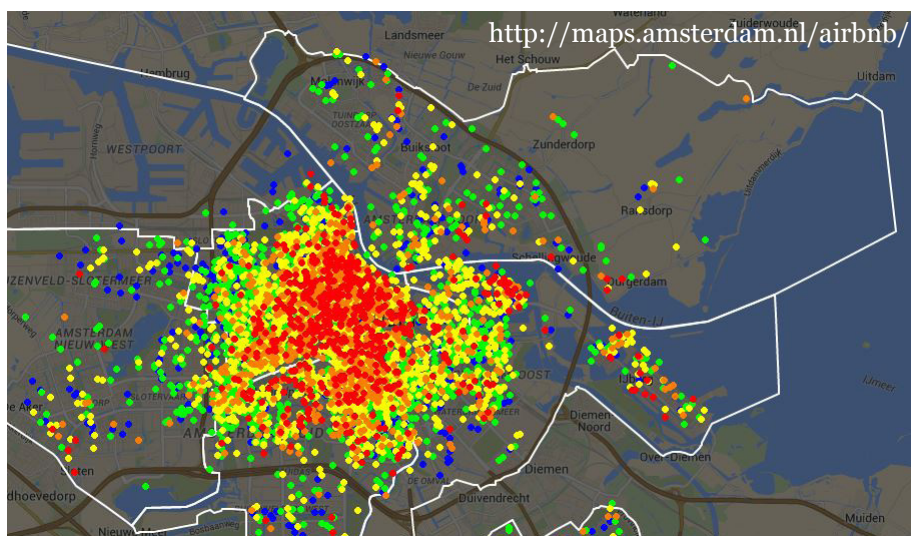
Amsterdam Airbnb-prices: a service which allows users to rent space directly from other users, making everyone who signs up a potential landlord, and their house a potential hotel.

Most expensive

Least expensive

well-known PM's Rutte (Dutch) and Cameron (British) have a bond which transcends their colleagueship: they are friends. Sources say they meet regularly, supposedly to discuss policy and ideology (Van Hulten, 2015; Niemantsverdriet, 2013). At one of these meetings, something seems to have stuck on, as Rutte decided the participatiesamenleving was the way to go – mirroring the Brits in their Big Society.

Another trend which likely inspired the participatiesamenleving is the sharing (economy) wave. With the internet readily available to a large part of developed countries' population, people rapidly develop more and more ways to share goods, services and data, both formally and informally. Examples of this trend include Airbnb, Leftoverswap, Open Data-initiatives and Electricity-sharing (some which are illustrated below). According to Christopher Choa, this trend will change the way our cities are shaped as well, seen as "people may be less territorial" (2015).

THE BIG SOCIETY
inspiration

2008 CRISIS *urgency*

Participatiesamenleving

RIGHT OF SAY *incentive*

trend
SHARING (ECONOMY)

Relation scheme between contributing factors and the problem.

A general call for more consideration of citizen's input and -initiatives in Dutch governmental matters was another incentive for the participatiesamenleving to come into existence. In 2011, Commissie Deetman – an advisory committee for the government – reported citizens having a lack of say and involvement in neighbourhood development (Deetman c.s., 2011). Societal movements like the Dutch LSA ('National Partnership for Active Residents') (2011) attempted to research and experiment with new forms of participation.

Finally, a very direct motive for action was the 2008 crisis, which Rutte took very seriously. Although it remains unclear how big of a societal (and/or economic) overhaul the Prime Minister intends or intended to develop through the participatiesamenleving, he certainly saw possibilities for governmental deficit reduction through the outsourcing of expenses – much like Cameron did (Kisby, 2010, p.489). By making formerly governmental services which are expensive to maintain into the responsibility of civil society and the private sector, the government hopes to dramatically decrease costs.

1.1.3 - Noord

One place where many of the aforementioned trends find their form is Amsterdam-Noord: the Northern borough of the Dutch capital, which is separated from the city center by the IJ water. Amsterdam-Noord (also referred to as 'Noord') originally consisted of a series of villages which housed a large part of the Amsterdam harbor workforce, and has developed into a legitimate part of the city over the course of the last century (Roemer, 2009, in Gemeente

http://www.thuisafgehaald.nl/maaltijden/item5?q=amsterdam
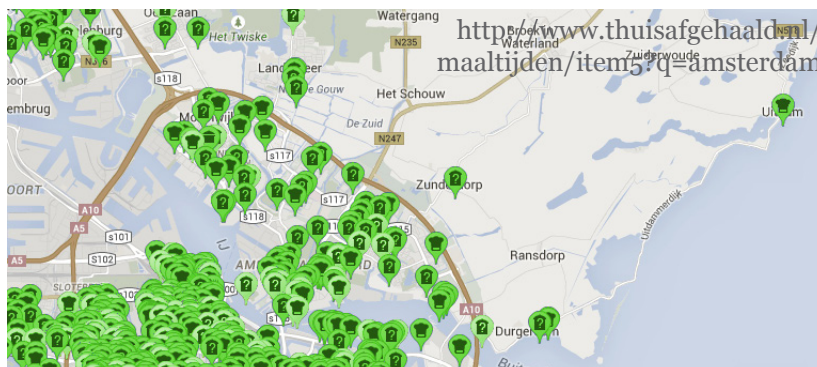
Amsterdam-Noord version of Leftoverswap: a website which connects consumers to people who have leftovers or to people who enjoy cooking for others.

Dijklunch Nieuwendam: a yearly neighbourhood lunch where everybody brings a homemade dish to share with their neighbours.

NDSM IJhallen: Europe's biggest flea market, set in old harbour buildings in Amsterdam-Noord.

Allotment garden Volewijck: a Noord communal garden.

Amsterdam, n.d.).

In Noord, several aspects of the participatiesamenleving are visible – some relatively new, some classically typical for the area; neighbours appropriate shared public spaces, citizens start common initiatives, local small scale goods- and foodproduction (and trading) keep gaining popularity, bottom-up community events are numerous, and near-by residents keep an eye out for the elderly (i.e. Sajet, 2013).

However, these trends do not seem to benefit all Northern residents equally. Since citizen initiatives have become one of the driving forces for neighbourhood development and -maintenance, the municipality has gradually reduced the amount of governmental community service initiatives. This could lead to serious problems for parts of the borough, where citizens are less active or incapable of starting their own services. With the municipality focusing its attention on the young urban professionals starting their community enterprises, the elderly and poor tend to be left behind: thus reducing equality in Noord.

1.2 - Problem Definition

1.2.1 - The dream

If all the above trends are combined and distributed over the Netherlands, the participatiesamenleving could prove a truly promising future: where everyone can enjoy the benefits the other groups provide through their proximity. In a sense, this could be interpreted as developing towards utopia, where vital neighbours take care of the elderly and the weak, where goods and food are produced for and with each other, where public space is maintained and utilized together. Of course, for this to work, a government would be needed to support such trends, and at the same time make sure no one is left out of this new system.

1.2.2 - Issue statement

The Dutch government is retracting their support and involvement in many formerly public services, leaving the citizens and the private sector to deal with these – chipping at the foundation of the welfare state. Also, governmental decentralization forces municipalities, regions and provinces to make decisions on topics and scales they have never legislated on before. In order for this to not create a climate of social injustice – where the vulnerable lose their access to these services – and to prevent spatial inequality, it is important to define responsibilities, policies and frameworks for (non-)public actors to work with.

Urban planning and design is one of the disciplines which now needs to redefine the role of governance in practice (Rocco, 2013, p.2). The previous assumptions that money will always be readily available – usually from the government – and that the distribution of responsibilities remains static and similar throughout every design and production process are outdated and

unrealistic for the years to come (Merrifield, 2014, p.16-18).

Because there have been no clear spatial policies defined as of yet, it is worthwhile to consider what the possible implications for our spatial environment could be, stemming from the participatiesamenleving concept. Which are the relevant actors, and which means and responsibilities will they have to deal with? And, when a policy is finally defined, what needs to be avoided at all costs? These are relevant questions for the years to come, and it seems reckless to not consider them from a spatial perspective (Hajer and Halsema, 1997, p.20; Ovink and Wierenga, 2009).

Especially in Amsterdam Noord, where the municipality seems to remain uncertain about their interpretation of the participatiesamenleving, it is important to consider the spatial implications to these policies. Even if the municipality does not explicitly talk about the participatiesamenleving, they still have to deal with the decentralization and the aforementioned trends in society.

One example in which the Amsterdam municipality maybe did not deal very well with the role of citizen initiative in Noord, was in the definition of the sustainability ambition for Buiksloterham. This new development site in Noord had not been defined in an official urban plan yet, but the municipality allowed a group of enthusiastic citizens to start building their own houses already, in one particular street. These citizens decided to build 'as sustainably as possible', with the knowledge they had among themselves. When the municipality heard about this, they decided to adopt the ambition for the entire (3500 residences) development area. Thus, the municipality spontaneously hopped on the bandwagon the residents had installed, putting the responsibility for their ambitious decision not in their own hands, but on the citizens shoulders (Van den Aakster, 2015). Questions of gentrification and yuppification are being cast aside by the municipality, because "the people wanted this" and "what could be wrong with sustainability", while Buiksloterham's residents shrug off any responsibility for the municipality's behaviour.

Design impression for Buiksloterham, a new development in Amsterdam Noord which will house 3.500 new residences and 200.000 m2 of office space.

1.3 - Problem Statement

The participatiesamenleving is a concept which the Dutch government is currently implementing into policies. One of the aspects of the participatiesamenleving is decentralization: a movement which impacts local urban and regional responsibility structures. This delivers a complicated situation, in which there is a lack of clarity for all actors involved.

There is a disconnect in Amsterdam-Noord between several groups of inhabitants. All of these groups in the end have similar goals, namely to live happily, to be healthy, and to enjoy their environment. In the participatiesamenleving concept and policies, these groups are conceived as being one, which causes a worrying perspective: if all groups are supported in their particular development, they will only grow further apart.

The perfect future for Amsterdam Noord would be one where all groups could live together

in harmony, enjoying the (participatiesamenleving like) benefits the other group provides through their proximity. In a sense, this could be interpreted as developing towards a utopian participatiesamenleving, where vital neighbours take care of the elderly and the weak, where goods and food are produced for and with each other, where public space is maintained and utilized together.

1.4 - Research Questions

1.4.1 - General Hypothesis

A general hypothesis could be:

> If implemented without extensive spatial deliberation, policies stemming from the participatiesamenleving concept will likely cause or aggravate segregation and spatial fragmentation between groups in society, when the rich and educated have the means and knowledge to take care of their own environment, but the more vulnerable citizens do not.

1.4.2 - Main Research Question

The main research question for this project is defined as follows:

> How can the spatial implications of the participatiesamenleving concept and -policies be developed into a desirable environment for Amsterdam Noord?

1.4.3 - Sub Research Questions

Related to the described subject and project aims, the main research question plays a central role in the graduation research. One main question has been posed, which is divided into a series of sub questions.

1. What is the participatiesamenleving concept?

It is crucial for the start the research to have a clear understanding of the concept at hand, as well as its theoretical basis and historical background.

2. Which policies does the participatiesamenleving concept inspire?

The participatiesamenleving remains an abstract concept for most Dutch citizens, since there have been few related policies defined as of yet (Jager-Vreugdenhil, 2012, p.13). However, it is likely to soon inspire policy for many layers of society, impacting every sector. As such, it is relevant to not only explore existing related policies, but also consider the possible directions for future and planned policies.

3. How have similar British Big Society policies impacted the spatial lay-out before and elsewhere?

In Great Britain, the government has implemented a similar concept, calling it the Big Society principle (see Appendix I). The Big Society policy included several 'vanguard areas', where the ideas were tested over the course of several years (Roberts, 2011, p.2). Because this started earlier on, (spatial) effects have been visible and examined for quite some time now in the UK – where the planning field is comparable to the Dutch one, including recent developments of decentralization in decision making processes (Janssen-Jansen and Woltjer, 2010, p.914; Dutt, 1970, p.325). These similarities in background and policies render the UK to be a perfect case for policy and impact comparison.

4. How will the participatiesamenleving concept impact Amsterdam Noord spatially?

In Amsterdam Noord, multiple aspects of the participatiesamenleving are already visible or are coming into being. Because Noord is developing rapidly, as it has for several decades

now, this location could be an interesting test case for the policies stemming from the participatiesamenleving.

5. What needs to be done to ensure a future desirable environment for Amsterdam Noord?

Not all effects of the participatiesamenleving policies will necessarily be desirable. In order for Noord to remain a pleasant living and working environment, spatial design and/or policy will have to provide a framework for future developments.

2 - Theoretical Framework

Several authors have elaborated on themes related to this graduation research. In the theoretical framework, their theories are briefly covered, after which their relevance to the project is explained. A critical note will conclude each section, exploring the applicability for both the project definition and the spatial design.

The theories are organized into four categories: governance, planning, space and Amsterdam. The theory paper – attached as Appendix I – can be read as part of section 2.1: governance. Most authors fit into more than one section; their interrelation is shown in the adjacent diagram.
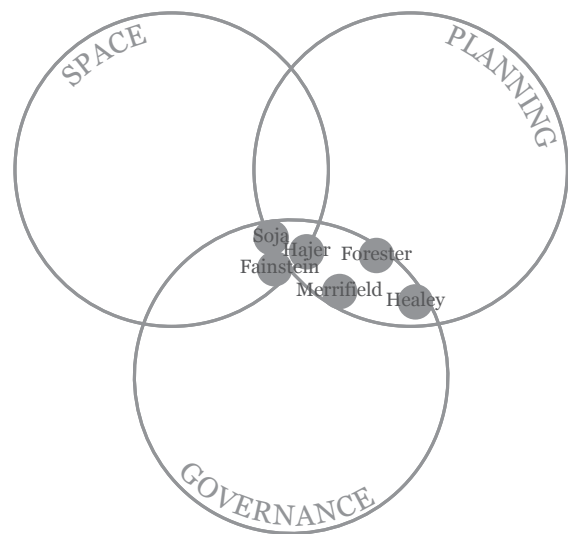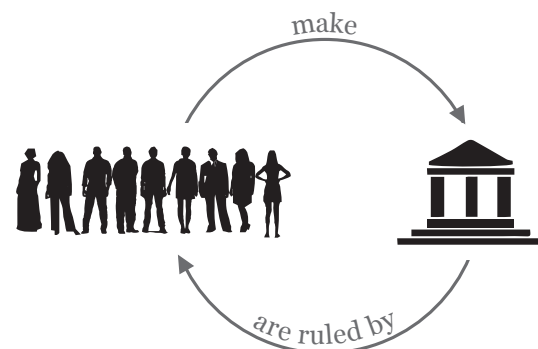

Theoretical Framework diagram: The position of each author discussed in this section in comparison to the others and to the main themes (by author, 2015).

2.1 - Governance

2.1.1 - Healey

British urban planner Patsy Healey defines governance as the "processes by which societies and spatial groups manage [their] collective affairs" (2003, p.104). Her research focus lies in collaborative planning and communicative planning theory. She researched the extent to which development plans were being implemented, suggesting strategic spatial planning would eventually become redundant in the new globalizing economy. Later on, Healey adjusted her statement, claiming spatial strategies stabilize market conditions and reduce risks; thus, playing an important role for modern day capitalist society. She treats planning as mediation, as conflict solving, as an arena for struggles (1997, p.224): the spatial design often is no more than a side note in her literature. Healey argues all planning activity involves some interactive relation, and some kind of governance process

Healey bases her position on Giddens' Structuration Theory: The duality in the relation between the structure (government) and the agents (citizens) is accepted as a constantly shifting balance (by author, 2015).

(2003, p.107). She suggests spatial planning derives its legitimacy from "the growing social demand for place-focused public policy" (with Graham, 1999, p.643).

Healey presents a convincing argument for passing down (some) responsibility for the physical environment towards citizens, asserting " 'place quality' was more neglected in areas dependent on public resources, which were typically poorer neighbourhoods than in areas dependent on private resources" (2003, p.104). However, she does not discuss the effects of private investment for poorer areas, which begs the question: is private investment in local spatial matters also preferable when private resources are limited? Healeys research evidently provides motive for implementation of the participatiesamenleving-model for spatial policies
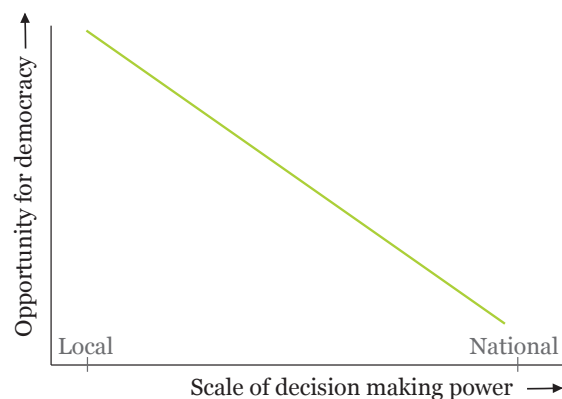
in richer areas, but does not deliver adequate handles to deal with poorer neighbourhoods.

2.1.2 - Fainstein

American urban planner Susan Fainstein announced the expiration of the urban welfare state already in the 90's (1997, p.295). She claimed societal and political changes since the 1970's – which can be briefly summarized as a combination of decreased governmental investment and heightened economic stimulation – had changed Europe into a hub of inequality, social fragmentation, homelessness and property speculation. She regarded the Netherlands however as a positive exception, where an open market was being combined with social benefits and -justice: "In those countries where national government has encouraged economic adaptation but simultaneously maintained a commitment to transferring resources through the state sector, cities have continued to display vitality and to guard against disinvestment and the creation of large districts inhabited only by people of very low income. They have done so within the context of a redistributive national state, (...) but they have also pursued local policies that reinforce the national direction" (p.298).

In 2010, Fainstein revised her earlier statements about the welfare state, proclaiming the new leading factors for cities were deindustrialization and globalization – a problematic situation, since this leads policy-makers to aspire for growth, rather than social equity. Problematic, because growth in itself is a strange goal from a societal viewpoint (Fainstein, 2010, p.7).

For the participatiesamenleving to fully flourish, the Dutch government – much like the Brits in their Big Society (Appendix I) – would largely eliminate the redistributive role of the national state, causing the equality and justice Fainstein commends to the Dutch for to decrease. The relation she assigns between governmental redistribution and equality

Fainstein suggests the opportunity for democracy in policy-making decreases when the scale of decision-making increases (author, 2015).

provides a worrying perspective for the participatiesamenleving, making attention to equality and justice into important focal points for future policy-makers.

Thus, the hypothesis for this graduation project (section 1.4.1: "*If implemented without extensive spatial deliberation, policies stemming from the participatiesamenleving concept will likely cause or aggravate segregation and spatial fragmentation between groups in society, when the rich and educated have the means and knowledge to take care of their own environment, but the more vulnerable citizens do not.*") comes back into the picture. Considering this hypothesis in the light of Fainstein's work, the participatiesamenleving policies should not only be supported by spatial deliberation (on justice and equality), but also include a more general consideration for the effects and dangers towards justice and equality in the Netherlands.

2.1.3 - Hajer

The Dutch urban and regional planner annex political scientist Maarten Hajer has been the director for the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency for several years now. He described the problems of the current governance system to be (a) a legitimacy deficit – citizens lack overview and understanding of current political issues, partially because of a lack of interest for politics as a whole – (b) an implementation deficit – solutions are decided on

Citizen participation: The government invites citizens to partake in their projects. Government participation: The government backs citizen initiatives when they ask for it, either through financial, intellectual or organizational support (by author, 2015).

too top-down, causing issues for implementation when it turns out they are detached from the real world – and (c) a learning deficit – the government is too selfabsorbed to welcome new creativity or develop their methodologies further (Hajer, 2011, p.25-26). Because of these deficits, the government has become detached from society. Hajer urges the government to actively try and gain insight into the societal dynamics as well as the conditions which determine people's behaviour – redefining the relation between government and citizen.
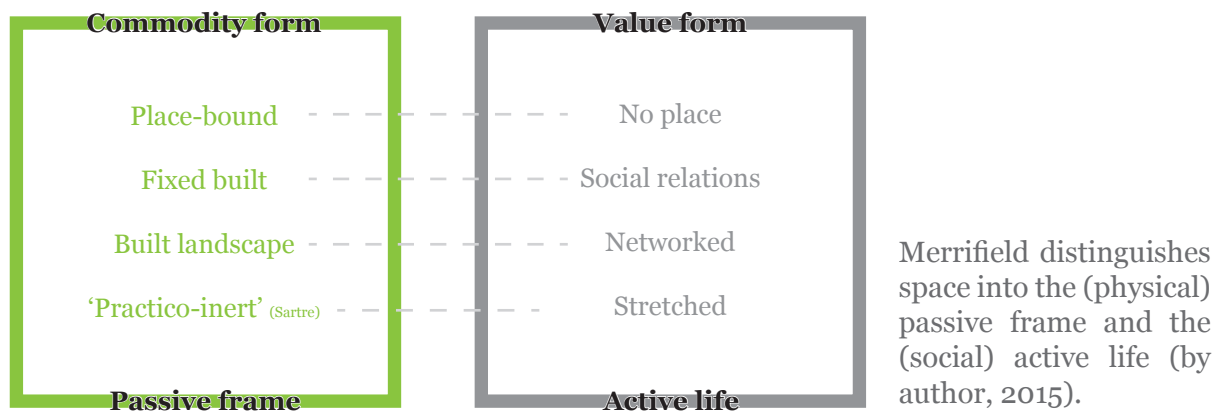
By introducing more citizen participation into governmental processes, the government has attempted to follow Hajer's suggestions. With their move towards the participatiesamenleving, a whole new form of participation is proposed: government participation. One could wonder whether the participatiesamenleving actually decreases the gap between government and society – responsibilities are moved from one towards the other, but no middle ground is defined.

2.2 - Planning

2.2.1 - Forester

American planning theorist John Forester – who focuses his work on participatory planning processes – describes planning as a communicative action, which should transcend the mere business of plans and implementation (1989, p.46; p.161). Progressive planning – as he calls his ideal practice – could be "at once a democratizing and a practical organizing process" (Forester, 1989, p.47), in which arguing, organizing and emancipation are key methods. According to Forester, planners should (a) raise public awareness, (b) define problems clearly, and (c) set agenda's; as such, he defines the role of the planner to be that of an activist, who should battle bad practices from the powerful through their anticipatory capabilities. Thus, Forester gives incentive to fellow planners to critically consider their organizational and political position (Fischler, 1989, p.127).

In the participatiesamenleving, urbanists and planners would fulfill a similar role, likely serving as a link between the people and the government. This would inspire some to become activists, and others to become more of a governmental advisor. However, in my opinion Forester downplays the spatial side of (urban) planning too heavily. If urbanists and planners merely focused their attention on their communicatory position, who would design the world around us? Of course, one might argue spatial design always ís a communicative tool, but that would imply ignoring the entire field of urban design as well as its implementation.

Commodity form	Value form
Place-bound	No place
Fixed built	Social relations
Built landscape	Networked
'Practico-inert' (Sartre)	Stretched
Passive frame	Active life

Merrifield distinguishes space into the (physical) passive frame and the (social) active life (by author, 2015).

2.2.2 - Merrifield

British urban theorist Andy Merrifield defines the 'urban' as more than just city related or spatial: he describes it as a way of life, a world on its own, an economical system. Quoting Lefebvre, Merrifield encourages us to "leave behind the bordered form of the city and embrace the formlessness of urban society" (2014, pp.6-10). In this context, Merrifield introduces the two sides of space: the passive frame and the active life (the illustration above elaborates on this). Interestingly, he still refers to the non-spatial ("the active life") as an aspect of space – in this, he resembles his great example Castells, who called the urban "both a distinctive object and an arena of political struggle" (Castells, 1977, p.237).

In this definition of the urban and the spatial, Merrifield introduces the notion of the modern day 'wild city': where government is downsized, where deregulation is key, and where public services are shrunk down or deleted altogether. In a way, these cities as well as their interior society mimic corporate businesses, focusing only on profitability (Merrifield, 2014, p.17-18).

The participatiesamenleving largely mirrors Merrifield's wild city-description. The key difference is the focus on people: the focus on money, which is key in Merrifield's rhetoric, is less evident in the participatiesamenleving, albeit it may be an underlying motive for the policies. The state which used to be purely focused on money is reintroducing people into the policies, trying to treat them as individuals rather than numbers.

2.3 - Space

2.3.1 - Soja

American political geographer annex urban planner Edward Soja pleads for mankind to start telling history from a spatial perspective instead of a time-bound one: the 'spatial turn'. He clarifies this as follows: "[our current environment is not just] a product of history, but rather – before all else – also a construction of human geography; a social construction of space and the continuous reshaping of geographic landscapes" (1989, p.10). As such, Soja goes against the widespread assumption in urbanism that geography is the neutral layer; geography is socially constructed, he believes it to be an integral part of social hierarchies and relationships (Bell, 2003, p.249). Space, he argues, is a complex network of flows and multi-layered temporalities – even justice has a geography, in which equitable distribution (of resources, services and access) should be defined to be a human right.

For the graduation project, Soja is relevant as a reference to explain why a political policy such as the participatiesamenleving should be viewed from a spatial perspective. Soja argues every space is constructed by society and by citizens, therefore a policy – which inherently attempts
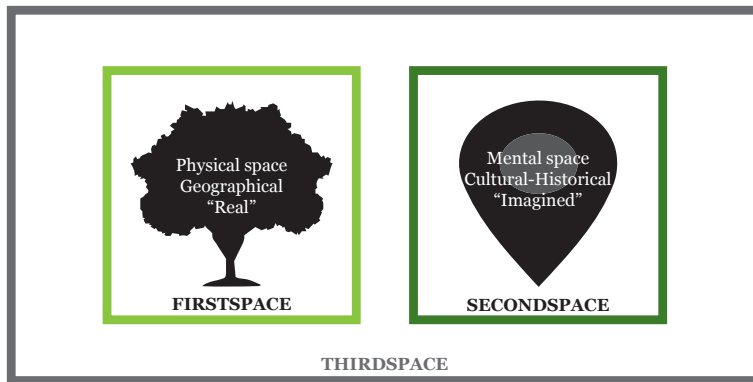
Soja describes three types of space: firstspace is the physical environment around us; secondspace is the historical and cultural context in which we live; and thirdspace is the combination of the two, encompassing everything which makes up human life (by author, 2015).

to change certain aspects of society – will always have a spatial component or effect.

On a critical note, Soja is often accused of attempting to overstate the importance of the spatial, trying to secure his own significance in the world (Juvan, 2013, p.2). This is something urbanists and planners probably need to be cautious about in general; not everything is spatial and not everything needs to be dealt with spatially.

2.3.2 - Hajer

Maarten Hajer – mentioned before in section 2.1.3 – published a report in 2011 which observed a certain "social energy present in society" (p.6) – combining citizen enthusiasm for participation to the energy-related sustainability problem the Dutch government is facing. Hajer refers to the spatial environment as a framework of opportunities and limitations, which needs to be balanced with the citizens (and their wishes and demands) and with the public common interest (2011, p.14). In order to achieve well-advised agreement, he proposes to work in 'frames' (p.24): explicating underlying assumptions actors have about the role of the citizens, of the businesses and of the government.

This methodological suggestion is very interesting for anyone working on or in the participatiesamenleving. By explicating their views on governance before starting on a particular (spatial) project or problem together, actors can have a clear understanding of everyone's tasks, capabilities and responsibilities.

2.4 - Amsterdam

2.4.1 - Fainstein
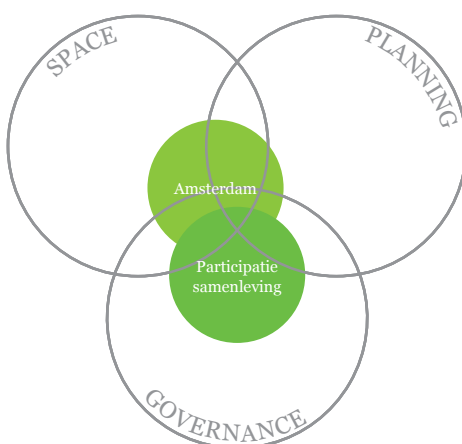
Amsterdam in the theoretical framework (by author, 2015).

Urban planner Fainstein discussed more than just politics (section 2.1.2): she also explored the city of Amsterdam in some of her works. In her eyes, Amsterdam is one of the most just cities in the world, due to its egalitarian (development) policies (including the scattering of social housing and the application of building subsidies). These policies deliver welfare, decrease class differences and raise the acceptance for the spatial mixing of groups in the same area (Fainstein, 1997, p. 298). In the seventies, she described the situation as follows: "In Amsterdam a combination of topographical factors, high densities, commitment to open space, and stress on historic preservation produces an extensive and costly system of land-use planning and housing

Equitable material distribution
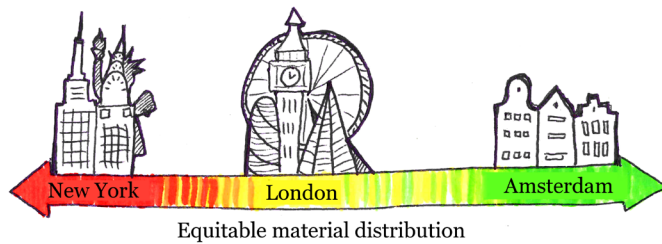
Fainstein compares New York, London and Amsterdam based on their equity, with Amsterdam leaving its competitors far behind (based on Fainstein, 2010, p.104; illustration by author, 2015).

subsidies (...) resulting in a city with no slums and with very low rents (...). Because the source of subsidy is the national government, the expense of the system is born nationally rather than by local residents" (Fainstein & Fainstein, 1978, p.132).

However, as discussed before, Fainstein worries the demise of the welfare state will affect Amsterdam negatively in the long run, when tourism and business development stimulate perverted development schemes and exterminate both the housing and (living) environment in and around Amsterdam. Since the 90's, the municipality has lowered their construction subsidies, causing over 70% of new-built housing to be non-social (Fainstein, 1997, p.299). This relates directly to the municipal intention to attract home-owners and high-income residents to the city: purposeful gentrification was thus practiced to compensate for the previous lack of non-single, non-poor residents. These policies transformed several central boroughs into more high-end areas.

Later, when the municipality recognized they might be overdoing the gentrification, the IJ waterfront was appointed to become more of a mixed (PPP) development. Fainstein warned the policy-makers specifically about this area: she feared the waterfront would turn into a monofunctional office district if insufficient investment was appointed (1997, p.301).

Fainstein's adoration of Amsterdam as the ultimate just city unfortunately is rapidly becoming outdated, with housing prices rising and waiting lists for social housing growing longer every year. The yuppification of the Dutch capital worries both urban planners and inhabitants, who see the city getting more and more exclusive to those who can afford to live the Amsterdam lifestyle (i.e. NUL20, 2009). Even in Amsterdam-Noord, which always used to be a comparably cheap borough, gentrification and yuppies are becoming terms used daily (Lysen and Sullivan, 2009; Aboutaleb, 2014; Pen, 2014).

The aforementioned need for extra attention to justice seems particularly important for the city of Amsterdam. Losing your status as most just city in the world isn't anything to be proud of, and as Amsterdam-Noord until recently provided an approachable in for new Amsterdammers, this area is particularly suitable to contribute to the recovery of Amsterdam's just image.

Fainstein describes Amsterdam's spatial structure as follows: the inner city (red) consists mainly of entertainment, residential and historical buildings. The (green) outer city houses businesses, offices, modernist developments, new-towns and suburbs (by author, 2015).

3 - Methodology
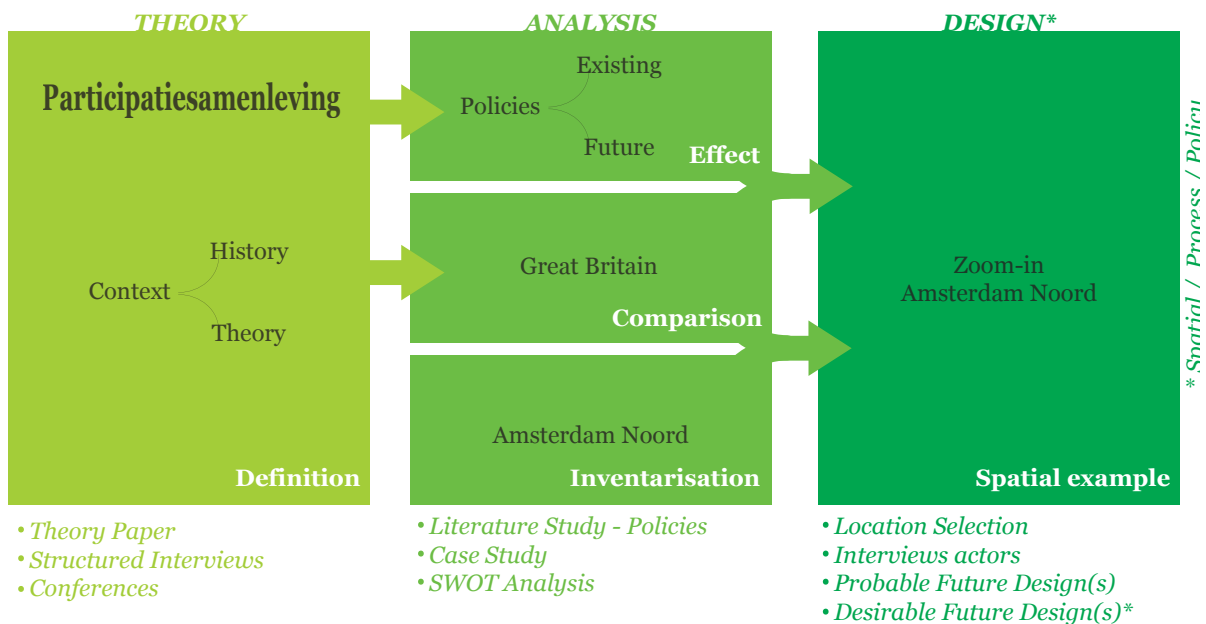
The methodology and time frame for the project are divided into three sections: the theory, the analysis and the design.

The theoretical basis was developed throughout the MSc3 semester, building towards a strong definition and understanding of the participatiesamenleving concept by looking at the history and theory behind the topic. The theory paper and the theoretical framework assemble these different theories from literature, conferences and interviews with academics.

The analytical phase will form the link between the theory and the design, by looking into specific concrete policies stemming from the participatiesamenleving concept, as well as doing a case study for a town in the UK and a spatial analysis for Amsterdam Noord. A SWOT analysis of the results of these researches should provide starting points for the spatial example.

The design section is pushed towards the second half of the time frame (past P2), so the design can benefit the most from the prior research. Concluding the analysis for Amsterdam Noord as a whole, a more specific location in Noord is chosen. In this location, the probable future will be explored, followed by a design for a desirable future. This research will be done using actor interviews, location visits and spatial analysis. However, the type of design remains to be specifically defined (Zonneveld, 2015). It will likely be a spatial design for a public space, combined with a process overview some policy suggestions.
A vision will provide a dreamed horizon, towards the realisation of which several projects will contribute. These projects could be snapshots of several moments where residents of Noord organize something together or for themselves, building on their very own environment.
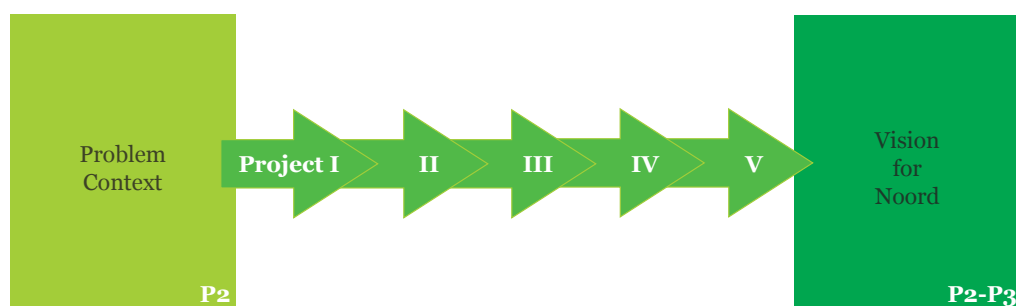
4 - Time-schedule

Now the P2 report has been handed in, the next item on the agenda is the vision development. Towards the presentation, a preliminary vision will be designed from the prior research and analysis.

Over the summer, of course a break is planned, although some research is particularly suited to be carried out during the holiday. Because of this, a series of location visits are planned in the summer months, as well as a proceeding of the spatial analysis and some actor interviews, so as to get a 'real' feel of the location.

After summer, most of the time is reserved for designing a desirable future for Amsterdam-Noord. The starting points which the British case study provided - a piece of research which will be presented at the presentation, but not in this report - will form a referential background for this design.

5 - Aims

5.1 - Scientific basis

The graduation project aims to provide a new insight into the relation between governmental policy and spatial organisation in the Netherlands. Especially a big overhaul of responsibilities – like the one the participatiesamenleving is supposed to deliver – causes a fundamental new interaction between the two. Therefore, a scientific basis for future spatial policies can deliver a better understanding for both policy-makers and urbanists/planners, allowing them to work more effectively and advised.

5.2 - Clarification

More specifically, the research is intended to offer a clear(er) definition of the participatiesamenleving concept for foreigners, Dutch citizens and urbanists alike, so as to facilitate the related debate. As of right now, there is still a lot of confusion about the concept, which causes discussions to get frustrated by misunderstandings and general assumptions.

5.3 - Theoretical background

Another aim for the project is to define the connection between design and theory. This topic is often ignored or misrepresented by urbanism students, whereas it is one of the major roles an urbanism graduate could fulfill. The main difference between an urbanist and a planner is the purely spatial way of thinking. Although the planner naturally understands policy, only the urbanist can provide a visual and attractive way of discussing and implementing design.

5.4 - Noord

The final goal for the graduation research is to present workable solutions for Amsterdam-Noord to achieve a pleasant environment for all groups. The current clash between different groups and the confusion about responsibilities cause undesirable situations throughout the borough. By offering design- and policy suggestions, an effort is made to revive Noord to transcend the sum of its parts.

6 - Reflection

In order to review the graduation topic, both the societal relevance and the academic relevance are important factors. If the topic is only relevant in a societal context, how academic is the research? And vice versa, if the subject only matters in an academic sense, does this contribute to the detachment of academic education from the 'real world'?

6.1 - Societal Relevance

The introduction of the participatiesamenleving caused a major uproar in the Netherlands, both when it was announced and when the first policies were suggested (Van Twist c.s., 2014, p.8). Partially, this is prompted by the lack of knowledge and understanding of the subject among Dutch citizens. The term is often used as a container concept, or as an ideological utopia (Balz, 2015).

Because the current government plans on continuing their participatiesamenleving-related path, it is important for Dutch society to get a clear(er) understanding of the meaning and possible implications of the concept. Recent local elections showed an ongoing support for the main governmental party, suggesting the next national elections will grant them another term of governing (Kiesraad, 2015) – and another term of implementing participatiesamenleving policies.

Also, since no spatial policies have been defined from the participatiesamenleving concept, policymakers can benefit from a preliminary exploration, to gather information about possible pitfalls and important factors. Expecting such great societal overhaul without considering the spatial consequences is reckless, especially considering the possible threats for social segregation: something we can all agree is highly undesirable

6.2 - Academic Relevance

As for the academic world, it is important to understand the role of governance in the field of Urbanism (Rocco, 2013, p.2). When the participatiesamenleving concept starts inspiring aforementioned spatial policies, this immediately impacts the role of governance in Urbanism. Both for students and other academics, this means a fundamental change in the understanding of Dutch planning mechanisms. If one does not take this into consideration, their research will be outdated before it was even finished.

Thus, for academics it is equally – if not more – important to understand and deal with the (consequences of) the participatiesamenleving. It would be a shame if this societal overhaul were to be ignored by the field, detaching the academia from the political reality in the Netherlands.

6.3 - Relevance within the Research Group

The graduation project will be supported by the Complex Cities research group from the TU Delft. This research group intends to "intervene in the built environment (...), by taking into account actual needs and trends and actual power structures and governance arrangements." (TU Delft, 2011, p.2). As the graduation project focuses on the relation between (political) policies, governance and the current trend of the participatiesamenleving concept, the Complex Cities studio provides a coherent framework, in which multiple views offer a broad spectrum of related themes. Also, the research oriented methodology for the project is embedded in the theoretical basis the Complex Cities research group offers, including Fainstein, Soja,

Merrifield, and Healey.

6.4 - Mentor Team

The graduation project will fall under the TU Delft Urbanism research group of Complex Cities, and the responsible mentor team consists of the following people.
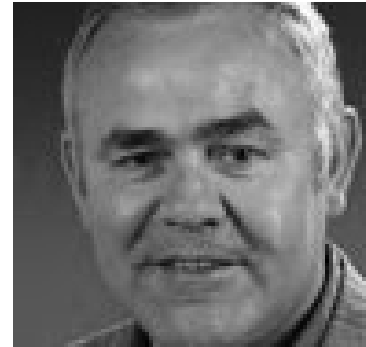
The mentors for the graduation project: First mentor Dr. Roberto Rocco (Complex Cities), Second mentor Dr. ir. Maurice Harteveld (Urban Fabrics) and Third mentor Dr. Arie Romein (OTB) (pictures courtesy of TU Delft and Harteveld, n.d.).

6.5 - Ethics

During the conduction of the graduation project, special attention needs to be paid to several ethical pitfalls.

First of all, I am a politically opiniated person. Because the graduation project discusses several political topics, it's important to take care not to judge based on prejudice.

Another thing to avoid is to assume I know everything about Amsterdam Noord beforehand. Being born and raised in Amsterdam, I tend to jump to conclusions about the city. Therefore, a evidence-based analysis of Amsterdam Noord is vital.

7 - Progress Report

This section will give an overview of the conducted (spatial) research made in the context of the graduation project up until the P2 report.

As discussed before (section 1.1.3), Amsterdam Noord is the location in which the more spatial section of the research will be conducted. I am familiar with Amsterdam in general and Noord in particular, due to my growing up in this borough of the capital. When gathering information on the aspects of the participatiesamenleving, several specificities struck me as being particbularly relevant for Amsterdam Noord.

7.1 - Amsterdam

Amsterdam is the capital city of the Netherlands, which lies in the province of Noord-Holland. It is made up of a central Canal District, around which several boroughs were built from the 19th century onwards. Amsterdam is the municipality with the most inhabitants in the Netherlands (see the image below).

Among urbanists and planners, Amsterdam is most known for its 'just' reputation (compare section 2.4.1 - Fainstein), for the level of central authority over planned developments and for the municipal plot distribution policies both in the past and present.

Inhabitants of Noord (x 100.000)

Inhabitants of the city of Amsterdam (x 100.000)

Inhabitants of the Amsterdam urban area (x 100.000)

Inhabitants of the Amsterdam metropolis (x 100.000)

Location of Amsterdam in the Netherlands (top right). Amount of inhabitants in the different legislative districts of Amsterdam (based on CBS, 2015, illustrations by author, 2015).

Amsterdam aerial picture and the location of Noord (Google Maps, 2015; author, 2015).

Amsterdam ranks second best in the world on the EIU list of cities to live in, and twelfth on the Mercer quality of living list (Mercer Consulting, 2012; EIU, 2012, p.3).

7.2 - Amsterdam Noord

7.2.1 - Amsterdam Noord's location

Amsterdam Noord is the most Northern borough of the city, housing abaout 10% of all inhabitants.

Noord is separated from the rest of the city by the IJ water, which used to be a bay in the Zuiderzee. When the Zuiderzee was closed off by the Afsluitdijk in the 1930's, turning it into the IJssellake, the IJ officially became a lake. However, the Dutch government officially regards the IJ water to be a river. Definitions aside, the IJ forms the waterfront of Amsterdam. In order to get to Amsterdam Noord, one must cross the IJ, using either one of the (bikefriendly) ferries, or one of the car-accessible bridges and tunnels.

The largest part of the borough is made up of open polders containing tiny villages: 'Rural Noord' (see the image on page 25). The built environment contains several garden villages, which are popular living areas, despite the limited size of most residences.

7.2.2 - Amsterdam Noord's governance

Noord is officially governed by its own district council - the 'stadsdeelraad'. The municipality is currently dismantling many of the cities independent district councils, moving the authority over the boroughs towards one central office. Until now, Noord has been able to avoid this fate.

Amsterdam Noord: a lot of green open spaces (by author, 2015).

Oostzanerwerf

Kadoelen

Northern IJ-
banks West

Tuindorp
Oostzaan

Van der Pekbuurt/
Bloemenbuurt

Tuindorp
Buiksloot

IJplein/
Vogelbuurt

Northern IJ-
banks East

Rural Noord

Waterland
pleinbuurt

Buikslotermeer

Tuindorp Nieuwendam

Banne Buiksloot

Nieuwendammerdijk/Buiksloterdijk
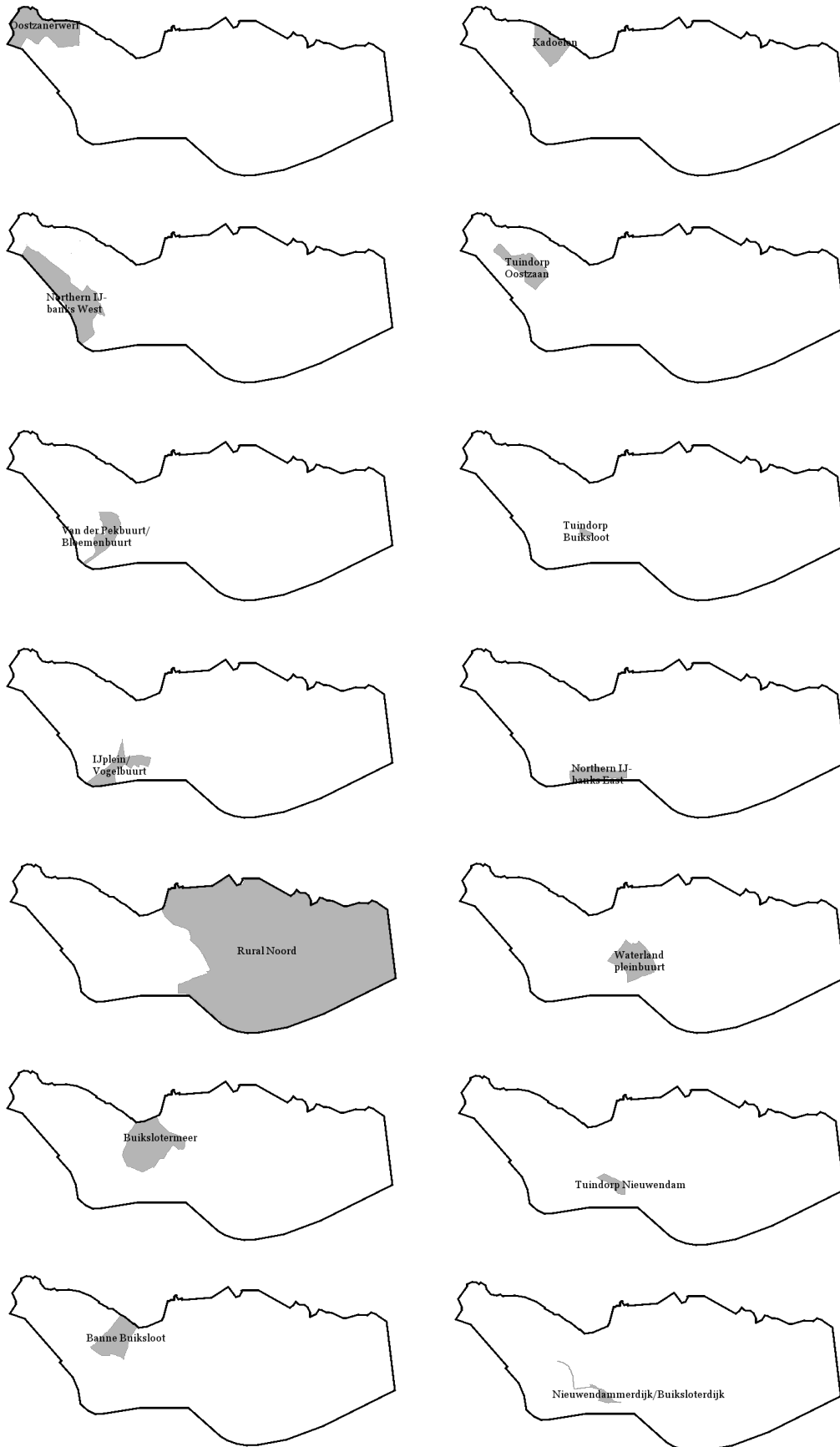
The neighbourhoods of Amsterdam Noord (by author, 2015).

The Noord district council regularly integrates citizen initiatives and -suggestions into their policies (i.e. the Buiksloterham, section 1.2.2), and has worked together with citizens to explore solutions for various problems. One example of the latter can be found at the community center De Driehoek. The existence of the center was threatened several years ago, when the supporting welfare organization went bankrupt. The municipality allowed local residents to take over the community center, thus providing steady jobs for a considerable group of unemployed inhabitants (Otten, 2015).

http://www.rodi.nl/widgets/1697-amsterdam-noord/nieuws/1031814-duizend-euro-voor-de-driehoek

Noord's district council granted the community enterprise - created for the sole purpose of saving De Driehoek - financial support.

7.2.2 - Amsterdam Noord's History

The history of Amsterdam Noord is quite grim: the little patch of land across the IJ used to be the location where the municipality placed the gallows. Because of the pristine visibility of the location, the area served as a warning sign for possible fellons. From the 18th century, this macabre function was abolished, after which the Northern waterfront of the IJ was used as a tollbooth.

It wasn't until the early 20th century that Noord became a proper part of Amsterdam, when the municipality appropriated some surrounding villages to become part of the city. The municipality had designated the area to contain housing, heavy industry and harbour functions, all which were developed over the course of the following decades - a decision which has been labeled a planning mistake by many sources in history (Donker, 2007). Nevertheless, from this time onwards the borough has grown steadily (illustration below).

7.2.3 - Amsterdam Noord's Economy

Nowadays, the harbour activities have almost completely abandoned Amsterdam Noord, leaving behind considerable patches of empty land. Former harbour locations, such as the NDSM-terrain, the ADM-terrain and the Shell-terrain have been redeveloped into (respectively) creative hubs, social housing and new-built residential areas.
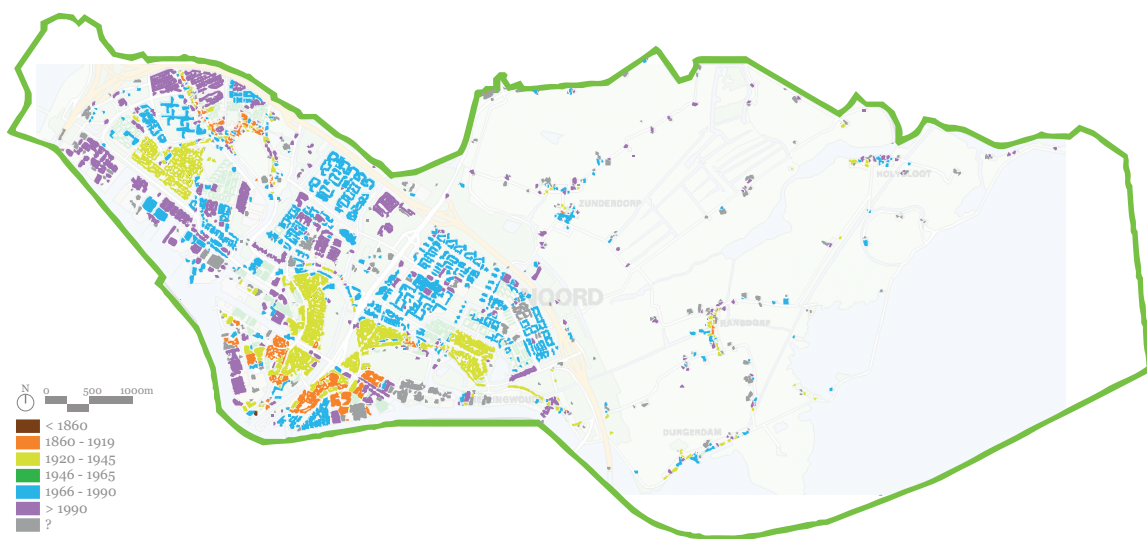
Building age of all buildings in Amsterdam Noord (based on http://maps.amsterdam.nl/bouwjaar/; illustration by author, 2015).

Currently, the main economic sectors in Noord are industry, retail, construction, transport & logisitics, services and wholesale (Stadsdeel Amsterdam-Noord, 2009). Even throughut the recent crisis years, employment has grown in the borough, which gained 7500 jobs between 2000 and 2013 - more than the rest of the city (Stadsdeel Amsterdam-Noord, 2013, p. 3). However, the average income level remains lower in Noord than elsewhere.

The latter might be related to the education levels of the residents of Noord, which are also below average. Although the number of dropouts is decreasing, and education opportunities are increasing, the vast majority of Noord students studies on a VMBO-level (pre-vocational education). There are no high schools teaching pre-university secondary education in the borough, condemning above-average students to travel across the IJ water daily (De Hoog and Vermeulen, 2009, p.20).

> € 14.500
Dutch average
< € 11.500

The average income level in different boroughs of Amsterdam shows Noord to be in the lowest category(based on De Hoog and Vermeulen, 2009, p.28; illustration by author, 2015).

he municipality of Amsterdam defined their goal for upcoming design research to start expanding the most potential sectors in the Amsterdam economy (De Hoog and Vermeulen, 2009, p.9).

7.2.4 - Amsterdam Noord's Buildings & Development

The crisis has not passed through Noord without effect - less houses were built, housing prices lowered (image below) - but the effect is considerably less than the Amsterdam average. The municipality expects a 25% increase in housing stock over the upcoming twenty years (Stadsdeel Amsterdam-Noord, 2013, p.10). They base this prospect on current development plans, some of which have already started. Among these are large scale waterfront developments, such

> € 5000 /m2
€ 4500 - € 5000
€ 4000 - € 4500
€ 3500 - € 4000
€ 3000 - € 3500
€ 2500 - € 3000
€ 2000 - € 2500
€ 1500 - € 2000
< €1500 /m2

Property valuation of all buildings in Amsterdam Noord (based on http://maps.amsterdam.nl/woningwaarde_wozm2/; illustration by author, 2015).
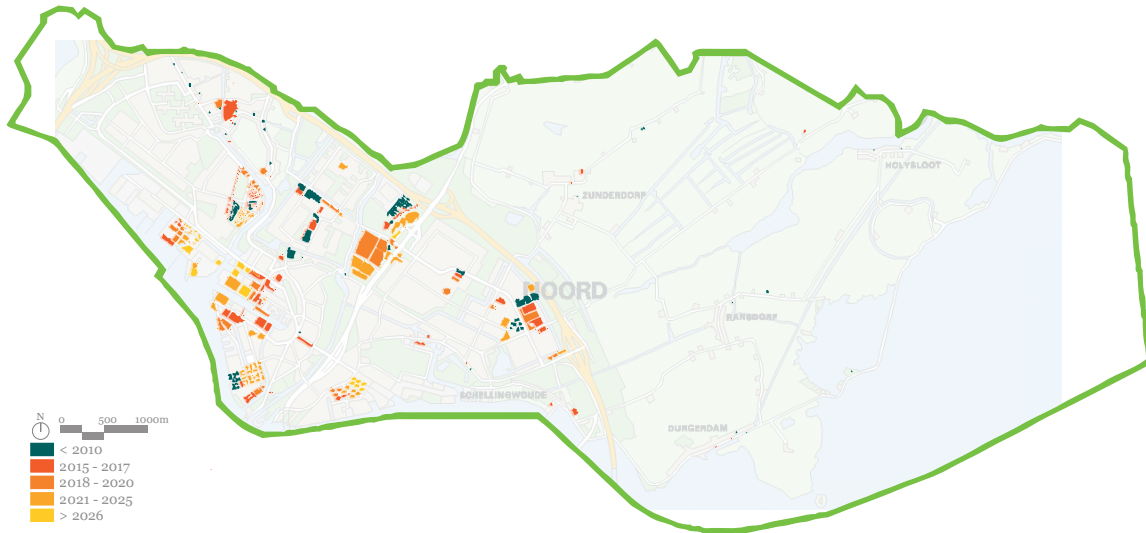
Short term building plans for Amsterdam Noord (based on http://maps.amsterdam.nl/woningbouwplannen/; illustration by author, 2015).

as the Buiksloterham and the Overhoeks, which are part of a city-wide program to reassign functions to the area around the IJ water.

An overview of all the current large scale planned projects is shown in the illustration below, as well as an inventarisation of all current building sites above.

Another large development taking place right now which relates to Amsterdam Noord is the Noord-Zuidlijn (North-Southline): a new metroline - for the first time ever connecting Noord to the center by railway. This very expensive project has already cost twice the time originally planned for it, and has repeatedly attracted criticism from both planners and inhabitants. Nonetheless, the project will definetely continue, seen as the municipality has made too many commitments to the project to back out now.

Considering all these developments, Amsterdam Noord will likely keep developing towards a stronger resemblance to the city center. Whether or not this is a desirable transition should be deliberated carefully.
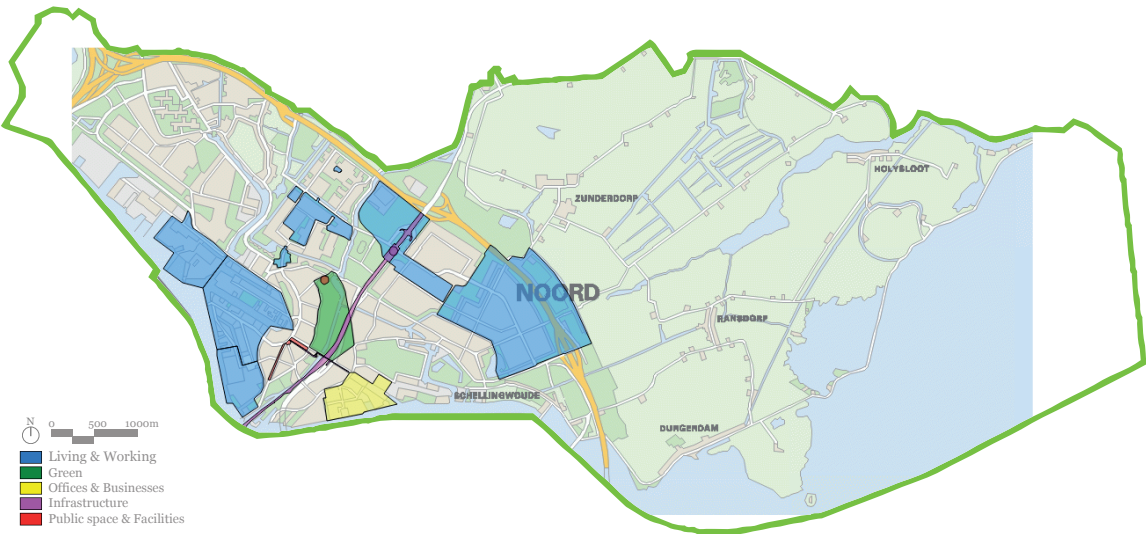
Long term large scale development plans for Amsterdam Noord (based on http://maps.amsterdam.nl/woningbouwplannen/; illustration by author, 2015).

Location of municipally backed creative hubs (red spots) in Amsterdam Noord (based on http://ilovenoord.nl; illustration by author, 2015).

7.2.5 - Amsterdam Noord's Participatiesamenleving

As mentioned earlier in this report, several aspects of the participatiesamenleving - which has been discussed thoroughly in chapter 2 - can be found in Amsterdam-Noord.

For one, hubs of likeminded citizens who decided to work together are plentiful in Amsterdam-Noord. Some of the most prominent ones are creative hubs, which are mapped above. This type of development is typical for the participatiesamenleving, because these hubs connect citizen's services to other citizens and their services, creating a micro-cosmos in which certain actors can find all of their needs in a very compact area.

Another example of the participatiesamenleving in Amsterdam Noord can be distinguished from the map below, which gathers recent large- and small scale initiatives in the area, and arranges them according to their amount of municipal involvement.

Location of citizen- and municipal initiatives in Amsterdam Noord (based on http://ilovenoord.nl; preliminary illustration by author, 2015).

7.2.6 - Early Conclusions for Amsterdam Noord's Participatiesamenleving

In many ways, Amsterdam Noord is increasingly starting to show similarities to the city center. Healey's analysis of Amsterdam (section 2.4.1) thus loses its actuality, with the relation between the inner city and the outer rings starting to look something like the image below.

Especially Amsterdam Noord, which used to be secluded from the center due to programmatic differences and residential demography, develops more large-city-functions as well as a gentrified population.

The participatiesamenleving causes Noord to become more successful in certain areaas, but also induces friction between different groups in society.

Edit of Fainsteins description of Amsterdam's spatial structure: the inner city (red) consists mainly of entertainment, residential and historical buildings. The outer boroughs increasingly start resembling the inner city both in programme and in problems (by author, 2015).

After P2, more research will be conducted on the demography and the spatial lay-out of Amsterdam Noord - which will be concluded through a SWOT analysis, thus providing starting points for a local spatial design.

8 - Final product

An exploratory spatial design could provide insight into the positive and negative effects of the policies, as well as provide a suggestion for further development and pitfalls to avoid. The design will have a spatial, a process-related, a a policy section, and will focus on a public space in Amsterdam-Noord which connects different groups in their participatiesamenleving activities.

At the P2 presentation, a preliminary vision will offer a suggestion for the direction of the design.

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Appendix I - Theory Paper

<u>Responsibility to the People!</u>
Comparing the British '*Big Society*'-policy to the Dutch '*Participatiesamenleving*'

Lynn van Calmthout

Abstract

In several countries, classic responsibility structures have changed in recent years, influenced by – among others – neoliberalism and the Great Recession (from 2008 onwards). Governments plea for more citizen initiative, proposing to move away from the welfare state and towards a 'do-democracy'; a civil society; a people-driven state.
Great Britain was one country to implement such policy, presented by prime minister Cameron in 2010 as *Big Society, not Big Government*. Three years later, the Dutch government has announced a shift towards a *Participatiesamenleving* – a similar concept. Insight into the preliminary effects of the British policy could provide a relevant prospect for the Netherlands.
An overview of the political, economic and societal developments from which the *Big Society*-concept has sprouted will serve as a background for further exploration into the specifics of the concepts. Finally, a definition of both policies will be given, as well as a comparison which reveals the British version to be the more rigorous of the two.

Key Words: Policies, Britain, The Netherlands, 'Big Society', 'Participatiesamenleving'

0. Introduction

Until recently, spatial design and urban planning used to be governmental responsibilities, organized in a top-down structure to offer citizens the best solutions for their (everyday) problems and needs. In several countries this classic structure has changed, influenced by (among other things) neo-liberalism (Hajer and Halsema, 1997, p.13) and the 2008 Great Recession (Van Twist c.s., 2014, p.8). Governments plea for decentralization and more citizen initiative, proposing to move away from the welfare state and towards a do-democracy (described as such by Ministerie van BZK, 2013), a civil society, a people-driven state (DaP, n.d.). Instead of citizen participation (where citizens take part in government initiatives), this would entail so-called government participation: where the government provides (financial) support only when citizens ask for help with their own initiatives (Verhoeven, 2015).

Great Britain was one country to implement such policy, presented in 2010 by prime minister Cameron as *Big Society, not Big Government*. In 2013, the Dutch government has announced the intention to shift to a *Participatiesamenleving* – a similar concept (Rijksoverheid, 2013).

In this paper, literature on the political, economic and societal background to the British policies will be compared to offer an insight into the 'container concept' that is the *Big Society*. In order to provide a clear overview of the concept, both the ideological basis and the practical policies will be examined. Thus, some insight can be offered into recent international trends: what is the *Big Society*-concept, and which changes does it induce?

Also, it is relevant to compare how the British ideas differ from their Dutch *Participatiesamenleving* counterparts.

To consider this subject, section one starts off describing the *Big Society* and the related policies, after which some critiques will be presented. The second section will provide an exploration of the neoliberalist ideologies, in which both the *Big Society* and the *Participatiesamenleving* find their roots (Merrifield, 2014) – as well as the worldwide economic slump originated in the 2008 crisis. All this will lead up to section four, where a definition of the *Participatiesamenleving* will be given, after which both concepts will be compared.

1. The *Big Society*

1.1 - Concept

The *Big Society* concept was introduced by British (Tory) prime minister Cameron in 2010, and was said to be aimed towards the integration of the free market with social solidarity – building on a basis of hierarchy and voluntarism. The underlying philosophies are believed to be conservative communitarianism and libertarian paternalism (Walker and Corbett, 2013, p.454): two concepts explained in illustration 1. The *Big Society* is based on the notion that the state is inefficient as a (social) service provider – a belief it shares with the Thatcherites (Beresford, 2011).
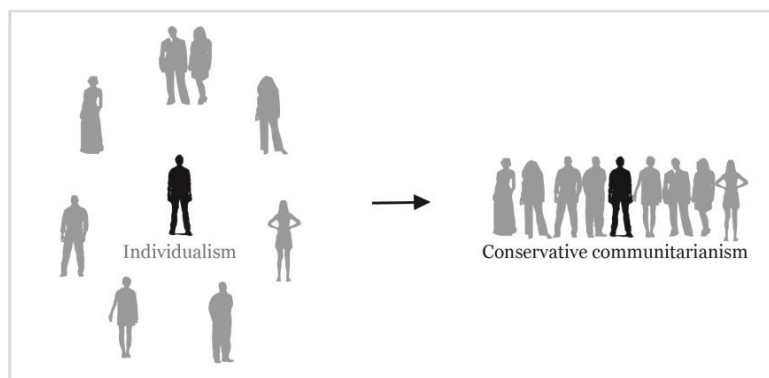
Illustration 1a. Conservative communitarianism: people are part of a community, not mere individuals – simultaneously molding- and being molded by the community (author, 2015).
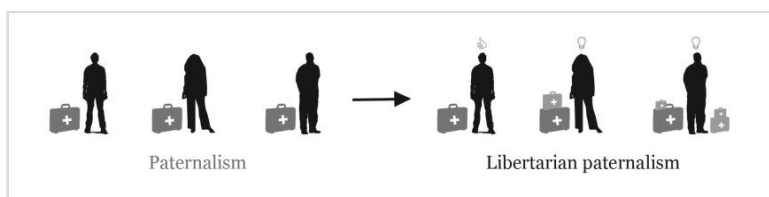
Illustration 1b. Libertarian paternalism: Offering citizens a default service, with the option to alter features as desired (author, 2015).

The priorities for the *Big Society* policies were to (1) empower communities, (2) encourage active citizen participation in their communities, (3) localize power away from central government, (4) provide support to non-profit organizations, and (5) publish governmental data (Hawkins, 2010).

1.2 - Policy

In order to build the *Big Society*, several institutions were founded on a national level.

As an investor, a '*Big Society* Bank' was proposed – which developed into reality in 2012 under the title '*Big Society* Capital' (BSC). This bank-like institution was to invest in social capital, combining social benefits with financial return (Walker and Corbett, 2012, p.1). Although it was originally launched by the government, today *Big Society* Capital operates as an independent social investment institution (BSC, n.d.).

Another institution to support the *Big Society* was the '*Big Society* Network' – founded in 2010. It was supposed to be a charity which should initiate, support and inform initiatives and citizens – Cameron described it as "an independently-funded and run voice of the citizen, enabler of the citizen and partner to Government" (Cabinet Office, 2010). In 2014, this institution was closed down after being accused of financial malpractice and accumulating excessive government debt (Wright, 2014).

The 2011 'National Citizen Service' was the name of a third policy initiative supporting the *Big Society*. In order to introduce young citizens to volunteering, willing teenagers can take part in a social development programme over the holidays. A combination of team-building exercises, volunteering work and community projects is meant to raise youth awareness for communal issues and voluntarism (NatCen c.s., 2013, pp. 1-3).

Several explicitly *Big Society*-related acts were introduced rapidly after the first announcement: the first was the Academies Act (2010), which accounted for state-funded schools, owned by trusts. It allowed regular schools to change into academies, thus gaining considerable freedom in both their budgetary and educational conduct. In 2011, the Localism Act was introduced secondly: a policy which extended communal organizations' rights, listed 'assets of community value' and simplified the communal take-over of such assets (Localism Act, 2011).

1.3 - Critiques

The *Big Society* policies were heavily criticized from their first introduction onwards by a wide range of actors and for various reasons.

Firstly, the disparaging of the Welfare State (Blond, 2010, p. 15) has gone too far for the taste of some (Walker & Corbett, 2013, p.464). Critics reproach the conservatives as 'rewriting history' and making 'unsupported claims' (Walker & Corbett, 2012, p.4). The same comments are made about the applicability of the *Big Society* policies towards saving expenses: insufficient empirical basis has been presented to support this notion (Corbett, 2015, p.167).

Another common criticism revolves around the emphasis of state power: the *Big Society* rhetoric neglects the powerful corporations and wealthy elites. The subsequently supposed zero-sum relation between society and the state presents a caricature of the British distribution of power: as if all citizens are (treated) equal(ly) and all politicians abuse their power. Meanwhile, the well-known class system poses a serious threat to the *Big Society* ideology, because the government can only decentralize part of their own power, not that which is in the hands of the elite (Kisby, 2010, p.485; Blond, 2011, cited in Roberts, 2011).

Therefore, class differences will likely grow, causing fragmentation and dislocation; the one thing critically lacking in the *Big Society* story is equality (Walker & Corbett, 2012, p.4).

Also, the democratic basis for the policies has been questioned. Several authors observe an 'anti-democratic' or 'anti-collectivist' approach to the *Big Society*, where responsibility is explicitly decentralized and individualized, but (all) power remains in the hands of the politicians (Walker & Corbett, 2012, p.5; Kisby, 2010, p.484).

Interestingly, one of Cameron's original counselors for the *Big Society* concept – Phillip Blond – has heavily criticized the affiliated policies, refusing any responsibility for this interpretation of his supporting research (Corbett, 2015, p.166). He renounces Cameron's focus on social volunteering, which Blond believes does not change anything drastical without economic reform. Another issue he addresses is the ignorance towards prerequisites and investments needed to achieve the desired society reform: Cameron seems to think the government could just pack up and go, and former public services would be sorted out immediately and automatically. Blond believes this to be a major threat to the *Big Society* thinking, which could sabotage the programme before it's even begun (2011, cited in Roberts, 2011; Blond, 2009).

Two other crucial objections the *Big Society* advocates have shrugged off and/or denied from the very introduction of the concept are (a) the notion that a neoliberalist ideology is unquestioned as a basis for the policies, and (b) the accusation of faking interest in social matters to cover up the real agenda of financial cuts to counteract the 2008 financial crisis. These topics will be discussed in the following section.

2. A Background for the *Big Society*

2.1 - Neoliberalism

Classical (19th century) liberalist ideology revolved around freedom of press, religion, speech, and assembly, as well as a belief in the free market as the main organizing economic principle. The government should serve as protector of individual citizen's freedom, placing the market above governmental influence – although financial crises were fully blamed on the rulers (Hudelson, 1999, pp.37-38).

Although the term 'neoliberalism' was already coined in the 1930's (Mirowski and Plehwe, 2009, p.14), its true implementation only took place some forty years later. Moving towards the 70's, the welfare state came to a bloom in most Western countries, providing a welcome rebound from the hardships of World War II. However, when those countries were hit by the economic crises of the 1970's, the welfare state was seen as exorbitant spending, hindering much desired globalization. Neoliberalism was reintroduced as a concept prioritizing price mechanisms, encouraging free enterprise and competition, supported by a strong (albeit restricted size-wise), impartial state. Key features included the free market as a main platform, and *laissez-faire* economics: the state should largely refrain from market interference (Peck, 2008, p.3).

Both British prime minister Thatcher and American president Reagan were among early famous advocates for neoliberalism, implementing policies which respected tradition whilst

promoting progress. Neoliberalism differs from its classical sister in its recognition of a need for a strong (but small), regulating state to support the free market: government may have a hand in causing crises, but it could also support recovery (Steger and Roy, 2010, pp.2-10).

According to the British *Big Society* agenda, the neoliberalism previous Labour-governments had practiced was responsible for destroying communities, and needed to be restrained as such. This however did not mean the Brits were planning on dropping their neoliberalist policies: they merely tweaked some of the details, especially those involving social justice (Dowling and Harvie, 2014, p.879). Especially in the economic sense, neoliberalism remains alive and kicking in the *Big Society* policies (Walker and Corbett, 2012, p.4).

Neoliberalism is also often regarded as one of the underlying causes to the 2008 financial crisis (i.e. Lavoie, 2013, p.215; Braedley and Luxton, 2010, p.3; McNally, 2009, p.40) – the topic for the following paragraph.

2.2 - The Great Recession

Around 2007 and 2008, stock markets all over the world crashed and 'housing bubbles' burst as international trade grinded to a halt, causing what the IMF describes as "the deepest post-World War II recession by far" (2009, p.xii). Important underlying causes were the extremely low interest rates maintained by (among others) the USA, as well as a rise in liquidity levels (Altman, 2009). Many years of excessive loaning, unsupported mortgages, and speculation resulted in a globally problematic economic situation. Trust in financial institutions, the market, the wealthy, and the government dropped to a low, while several countries went into sovereign default ("bankruptcy for countries") and unemployment rose. In Europe, a collective initiative was called into existence to limit the crisis's effects (Rijksoverheid, 2010), lending (ECB) money to governments in need – which entailed the largest financial policy action ever (Altman, 2009).

Many governments set up a support system for savings accounts and vulnerable banks, investing billions to keep the free market on its feet. Both England and the Netherlands – like many other nations – handle most of their economy on an international basis, making them extra fragile in the face of the Great Recession. To recover from the crisis, countries are forced to repay both their own- and their banks' debts, leaving many states with severe governmental budget deficit (Rijksoverheid, 2014). Thus a recurrence of governmental intervention took place, taking power from the hands of the private sector – if only temporarily (Altman, 2009). To deal with the massive costs made in this context, many governments saw a possibility for a win-win situation: while periodically saving money on expenses (decreasing the deficit), a dreamt utopia of government participation could be realised in one great overhaul (Dowling and Harvie, 2014, p.871; p.875; p.877; Blond, 2011, cited in Roberts, 2011).

3. The *Participatiesamenleving*

3.1 - Concept

In 2013, the Dutch government led by Liberal prime minister Rutte announced supporting a new trend in society: a heightened level of citizen participation in what used to be considered

as governmental tasks. In the yearly Troonrede speech, this phenomenon was labelled *Participatiesamenleving*. According to this speech, Dutch people are "clearly more empowered and independent than before", and seen as the governmental deficit needs to be reduced, this provides a framework to shift from a welfare state towards a *Participatiesamenleving*. Thus: "everybody who is capable to do so, is asked to take responsibility for their own life and environment" (Rijksoverheid, 2013; DaP, n.d.).

Of course, the notion of *Participatiesamenleving* was not a new one. In the Netherlands, the term was coined before on two separate occasions. Wim Kok (1991 cited in Plasterk, 2013), at that time prospective (Labour Party) prime minister, described the *zeitgeist* in 1991 as "a phase of transition, from a welfare state towards an active one, towards a *Participatiesamenleving*." Another Dutch politician to speak of the *Participatiesamenleving* was (Christian Democratic) prime minister Balkenende. He stated in 2005 (cited in Kalshoven, 2005) the Netherlands would need to "develop back to a *participatiemaatschappij* (...) filled with independent, emancipated people (...). Knowledge gets more important, hierarchy and centralism belong to the past (...). People are first and foremost responsible for their own future."

The major difference this time – compared to previous announcements of the *Participatiesamenleving* – is the intention and the enforcement. Whereas Kok only meant to observe a trend, Rutte pursues to support a societal overhaul. Where Balkenende described and desired the concept without ever achieving lasting policy, the current government immediately started building on the *Participatiesamenleving*. This rigorous approach is partially inspired by the *Big Society*, with prime ministers Rutte and Cameron discussing among themselves more than once.

3.2 - Policy

While the aforementioned previous accounts were mostly based on an ideological concept, current developments are supposedly necessary to diminish government deficit (Van Twist c.s., 2014, p.8). As such, related policies are easily defined and justified for the sake of cutting costs – similar to the ones described in the previous section. Still, few sectors have experienced a change in policy as of yet – health care being the major one (Jager-Vreugdenhil, 2012, p.13). Changes in the health care system include subsidy cuts and closing down of elderly housing, retirement homes and assisted living residences. Citizens are supposed to take care of their own family and friends, through a construction aptly named 'mantelzorg' – mantle care (Werk&Mantelzorg, 2015).

Other important overhauls related to the *Participatiesamenleving* concept include the decentralisation of decision making and responsibility. This aspect has a considerable impact on many levels, from the province and municipality to the citizens and their neighbourhood safety (Wiebusch and Moulijn, 2013, p.9). One of the related policy documents is called the 2015 'Participatiewet', which assigns responsibility for dependent work force citizens to municipalities – a former government task. This law also obligates recipients of social assistance to 'give something back to society', either by volunteering or other means (Rijksoverheid, 2015).

3.3 - Ideological Background?

In the Netherlands, neoliberalism has been a purely negative term for years, being used as a invective rather than a description of an ideology (Sommer, 2015). This can be explained in the Dutch context of 'poldering' – where ideology is less relevant than agreeing and compromising in order to achieve supported policies.

4. Conclusion

The notions of *Big Society* and *Participatiesamenleving* are container concepts, which are very similar but not exactly the same. They differ mostly in societal background and in the rigour of implementation.

Big Society is a set of policies, intended to slim the British government down and use societal structures to care for themselves and for each other. Several layers of decision making between the national and the local scale have already been diminished or deleted altogether, in order to achieve this goal for Britain. The *Big Society* is impacting (nearly) all sectors.

The *Participatiesamenleving* however has not left the concept phase yet. It differs from the British concept mostly in its degree of resolution. Whereas the Brits have decided (and started) to make a massive overhaul from an ideological and political-philosophical basis, the Dutch just try to follow an ongoing trend. The Dutch enjoy their welfare state, and will be less rigorous in their tearing down of this beloved system – they polder on. As such, more layers will remain existent between the national government and the citizen, and the Dutch will in all likelihood keep unfolding the *Participatiesamenleving* slowly but certainly. Although not all sectors have been affected, if the current government is reelected, more can and will follow.

Also, it seems the *Participatiesamenleving* has slightly different roots than the *Big Society*, since neoliberalism has never been officially accepted or mentioned in Dutch policy, nor have acclaimed critics been able to prove a connection between the ideology and the policy. As such, the Dutch aversion of ideology has once again prevented any big modification of society as it is.

This review paper has attempted to provide some insight into the recently introduced Dutch and British policies of *Big Society* and *Participatiesamenleving*. Of course, only a snapshot of the current situation can be offered. It would be interesting to see how the policies develop over time, and which specific spatial implications are related to their concepts.

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citizens development planning political Big work Hajer project urbanists Merrifield municipality responsibility active design important policies planning participation new needs planner society society Dutch government spatial urban concept defined

citizens development people environment processes effects community people

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future trend groups city government areas welfare spatial social justice

Dutch state space concept defined

knowledge reduced neighbours argues emancipation gentrification globalizing used desirable implications combined housing problem consider Netherlands question impact societal making methodologies worrying problematic borough definition framework perspective investment intended Vreugdenhil interesting graduation national residents provides discussed American specifically

particular consideration businesses fragmentation participatory stemming According suggestions Rutte construction involvement deficit capabilities understanding difference maintained interpreted illustration hypothesis role critical previous follows explored Minister refers actors subsidies aspects focused remains Soja relevant building expenses redistributive overhaul decided contributed services described causes attention organizing transcend equality explicating question

Buiksloterham sustainability theoretical introduces assumptions announced general supported neighbourhood course Healey similar position produced public start initiatives benefits economic comparably vulnerable inhabitants elaborated decentralization democratizing theory particularly decrease Forester resources direction distribution research current section British include possible situation statement aforementioned decision sharing years extensive sharing elderly Appendix relationships geography deliberation yuppification national attempted